



THE CRUTCH.

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THE CRUTCH.

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Cavalry Song--The Starlight Charge.

Our good steeds snuff the evening air,
Our pulses with their purpose tingle;
The foe's fires are twinkling there,
He leaps to rear our sabres jingle!

HALT!

Each carbine sent a whizzing ball;
Now, clang! clang! forward all,
Into the fight!

Dash on beneath the smoking dome,
Thro' level lightnings gallop nearer;
One look to Heaven! No thought of home,
The guidons that we bear are dearer.

CHARGE!

Clang! clang! forward all!
Heaven help those whose horses fall;
Cut left and right!

They flee before our fierce attack!
They fall! they spread in broken surges.
Now, comrades, bear our wounded back,
And leave the foe to his dirges.

WHEEL!

The bugles sound the swift recall.
Clang! clang! backward all!
Home, and good night!

An Eastern man writes us that a stage driver, by whose side he was riding on the box a few weeks ago, told him the following story as they passed a wretched looking farm-house, and the old farmer lounging about the door. The driver said: "A Boston trader called at that house some time ago to buy cheese, but when he came to look at the lot, he concluded not to take it, it was too full of *skippers*. As he was going off, the farmer said to him, 'Look here, Mister, how can I get my cheese down to Boston the cheapest?'"

The trader took another look at it, and seeing more and more evidence of its being alive, replied, "Well, let it be a day or two longer, and I guess you can drive it right down!"

Cumpton keeps a nine-pin alley, and one day he was seen leaning up against the outside of it weeping as if his heart would break. "What's the matter?" inquired one of his friends, who was passing. "Matter enough," he said. "I'm clean done over; my boy Charley's dead. I'm mighty misfortunate in babies.—Just as soon as they gets big enough to set up the pins they dies!" And poor Cumpton sobbed on.

Six brothers from Vermont, named Hall, enlisted together at the commencement of the war. The last survivor of the six was killed in one of the recent battles.

For the Crutch.

War, a Blessing.

All current literature of the day, teems with painful comments, upon the character of the war that the American people are engaged in, for self-existence as a nation.

The same spirit of misgiving and deprecation pervades almost every discourse, from the pulpit, down to the profane, boisterous harangue of the mob in the street. We are not disposed either to under-estimate, or to shut our eyes to the stern fact, that all war, even in its mildest practical developments, is a horrid reality, and cruelty, despite all its painted scenes of honor, of glory, and of romance. It would seem however, a reflection upon the wisdom and benevolence of Him who rules in righteousness, to suppose that even in the midst of all these trials and sacrifices, there were not some silent but certain influences at work, and revealing themselves in the form of positive, direct benefit and blessing.

We notice first the general effect of army and campaign life, upon the personal character of the soldier himself. Almost every man, or "boy," as the phrase is, in the field service of his country, for a term of years, becomes either better or worse. The change is so great, from civil to military life, that, even those whose sun of life has well nigh reached its meridian, are more or less affected by it, either favorably or otherwise. Much has been written, and perhaps justly, of intemperance, dissipation, and demoralization of the army. The sincerity and veracity of those giving to the public such unqualified representations, is not doubted, while their discretion, and their discriminating judgement, is certainly not to be commended. Whoever has anything like a just comprehension of the great work to be done in the United States, is in daily contemplation of the grandest themes that ever engaged the attention of men. Under the pressure of trying circumstances, and while grappling difficulties, and struggling against obstacles, that seem quite insurmountable, the soldier will ask himself a thousand times a day, "For what am I making these sacrifices, and enduring these privations and trials?" If he reasons from right principles, which alone lead to correct conclusions, he will find satisfactory answers for all such inquiries, and be inspired day by day with fresh courage, to stand up firmer in the face of all enemies, more conscious of the moral strength and power of his native manhood, than he has ever been before. The principles and interests which are subjects of personal thought, are also subjects of conversation, in the company and regiment. All the leading constitutional principles which are connected with the causes, the progress, and results of the war, are discussed as eloquently, and in many respects, as thoroughly around the camp fires, as they have ever been in the halls of the American Congress. It may perhaps be said without vain boasting, that the soldiers will be the statesmen and law makers of the land, for the next half century. There is something in the discipline, the duties and labors of active field service that brings out and develops the sterling qualities of a superior manhood, which ordinary pursuits of civil life do not afford.

The moral associations and influences of the war, are supposed to be injurious. This may be so to a certain extent, but not altogether. True, we do not have the surroundings and privileges of organized society, that

have been considered in years past, indispensable to our moral safety, and salvation; but we can conceive that it is quite possible for God to reach the hearts of men, and to lead them into a knowledge of his ways, and to an acceptance of his truth, by means and agencies of his own choosing, and which may be wholly unknown to any, save the parties concerned.

If our reflections thus far are correct, they lead us to the conclusion that the rank and file of the army is not wholly demoralized at heart, and we believe nothing more firmly, than that it can be shown, by a just and philosophical course of reasoning, that a majority of the soldiers who come out of this war, though maimed in body, will present to the world a *character*, the like of which has not before been seen in our country. A character that should add strength to our churches, stability to local communities, and encourage peace, prosperity, and more than all, maintain unity throughout the land. We should be greatly surprised to learn that there are not hundreds and thousands of brave, loyal, manly hearts in all the varied circumstances of life in the army, from the front line of battle, to the most retired and quiet Hospital, saying to-day in all their fullness and sincerity, that the scenes and sacrifices and trials, of the war have been, and are still a blessing, and not a curse.

Many times, "by the discipline of sorrow, by the hand of rebel cruelty, the soul is purified, and led to seek its true rest." There are others upon whose personal character, the events and discipline of the war, are having a beneficial influence, namely, our relatives and friends at home. We do well perhaps to speak of our own personal sacrifices and trials, but who shall fail to remember that there are others not in the dust and smoke of the contest, who have sacrificed in staying at home even more than we have in going to the war. The sacrifice is in that wealth of affection, the worth of which is not to be measured by any treasures of earth. How these frequent calls upon the mothers, the sisters, and the companions, in the loyal States, for the services of those who they have ever held dear in life, how these have been responded to, is best known to Him, without whose notice and permission "not a sparrow falleth." The poets of Napoleon's day sang of "fair woman and brave men." It is hoped that the poets and the historians of our time, will not forget to tell us of *brave*, as well as of *fair* women. We have all seen displays of heroism on the part of those we speak of, that would not have been considered possible, three years ago. The "boys" are not few, who, were they to speak out the true sentiments of their hearts, tell us, that they did not know they had such mothers, until since they have been separated from them by the country's call to arms. It may perhaps be truly remarked of them, that they were not previous to the war, the mothers they are *now*, in devotion, and in self-sacrificing heroism. Every consideration leads us to suppose that there is in our distant homes at present, a more filial spirit, and a purer sentiment of piety, than was possible while those peaceful families remained unbroken. What is true of the single household may also be said of the community, the church, and the state.

Without any extraordinary stretch of fancy, we can see thousands and thousands of homes all over our land, draped in mourning for the fallen brave. Unto such, we doubt not, God reveals himself in His own infinite fullness. Afflictions are sanctified, and work out for the bereaved, an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory. Thus we see that these events which we are wont to look upon as most deplorable, are in reality bringing with them the richest of Heaven's blessings. They are means employed by the Great Disposer of all destinies, to lead us through blessed ways of penitence and faith, to the consummation of all earthly hopes in a heavenly rest.

August 1863.

S. H. J.