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# THE CRUTCH.

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## THE CRUTCH,

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## The Paroled Prisoner.

BY SARAH H. POWELL.

The flag of France boat came,  
Bearing her living freight of human woe,  
And from her decks half-stifled moans of pain,  
Came sad and low.  
Among the rest was one—  
A youth of twenty summers, scarcely more,  
I followed, as they bore his wasted form,  
On to the shore.

A soldier walked beside—"Is he your son?"  
I asked,—he turned, his bronzed face showed a scar,  
"He's from my State," he said, "we've comrades been,  
All through this war."  
"I love him as a son, I'm glad 'tis given  
To me to see him safe beneath the fold  
Of our old flag! Oh! how we have prayed to Heaven,  
To be paroled!"  
The sick youth spoke—"Boys, on this green  
Fresh grass," he said, "a moment rest me here;  
Let me drink in the beauty of this scene,  
So wondrous fair!"

"Field, stream, and wood; how they enchant mine eye,  
Ah! me, it seems so long since I have seen  
Aught but a narrow strip of the blue sky,  
With bars between!"  
"The cool, fresh air seems rife;  
With health, as I inhale its fragrant breath,  
For me, it does but fan the flame of life  
Brighter ere death."

"Comrade! come near, my heart is rent with pain—  
This small gold ring, (ah! what old memories stir!)  
If you should see our Hampshire hills again,  
Give this—to her!"  
"This all I have to send her  
Ah! could I think that but one tear for me,  
Would dim the lustre of her eye's dark splendor,  
How sweet 't would be—"  
"To die and win such sorrow, It grows dark!  
Yet, no, yes! lights!—lights in our cottage home,  
And friends come forth to greet—they call me, hark!  
Mother!—I come!"

He ceased,—to meet his God,  
The bright young gentl' passed,  
They raised him gently from the sod,  
Paroled at last!

## The Cooking Wagon.

"As soon as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine." John xxi.—9, 12.  
I must refer particularly to one prominent feature of their work for weary, wounded bodies on this day, which, for its novelty and usefulness, deserves especial attention. Some of the newspapers, have mentioned a new cooking wagon, presented by the inventor to the Christian Commission, which is thoroughly *suo generis*. It is constructed somewhat like a battery-caisson, so that the parts can be unlimbered and separated from each other. The "limber," or forward part bears a large chest which is divided into compartments, to contain coffee, tea, sugar, and corn starch, with a place also for two grid-irons and an axe. From the rear portion rise three tall smoke-pipes, above three large boilers, under which there is a place for the fire, and under the fire a box for the fuel. Each boiler will hold fourteen gallons; and it is estimated that in each one, on the march, ten gallons of tea, or coffee, or chocolate, could be made in twenty minutes—thus giving ninety gallons of nourishing drink every hour. It is truly a most ingenious and beneficent invention.

There was a call for coffee. A party of delegates at once volunteered to respond to the call. The fires were lighted, the water boiled, the coffee made, and soon the vehicle drawn by two powerful horses, and attended by a half score of willing laborers, was on its way, from division to division. Up the hospital avenue it rumbled and rolled, passed the long rows of white tents, stopping at this cluster, and that, giving to all from its generous supply.

You should have seen the wondering look of the men as it passed by. They rolled themselves over to get a glimpse of it. They stretched their necks for a sight at it. The wounded heads forgot to ache, and the wounded limbs almost forgot to cry for nursing in that moment of eager curiosity. Was it a new sort of umbulance?—It didn't look like one. What did those three pipes mean, and those three glowing fires? Is it a steam fire engine, and are they going to give us a shower bath?—But the savory odor that saluted their nostrils, and the delicious beverage the engine poured into their tin cups, soon put the matter beyond all doubt. They soon found that there was no necromancy about it, for it had a substantial blessing for each one of them, and they gave it their blessings in return. One by one such as were able, crowded about it with curious faces, and the wagon, as it stood steaming and glowing in the midst, was the theme of many affectionate comments.

"I say, Bill, ain't that a bully machine?"  
"Yes, sir, it's the greatest institution I ever saw!"  
"That's what you might call the Christian Light Artillery," says a third.

"Good deal pleasanter ammunition in it than the Rebs sent us this morning!"  
"Well, Doctor," said a delegate to a surgeon, "what do you think of this?"  
"I thank the Lord for it. That's all I can say," was the reply.

And so on a sudden, the new invention was crowned with the praise and benedictions of the admiring crowd. It was a marked feature in the work of the day, and must be set down as one of the "peculiar institutions" of the Commission.

## Help Yourself.

This, says the Yankee Blade, is the true secret of success, the master-key that unlocks all difficulties, in the various paths of life. *Aide-toi, et le ciel t'aidera*, as the French have it—help yourself, and Heaven will help you. The greatest affliction that can befall a young man is, to be the recipient of charity—to lean, for any length of time, upon others for support. He who begins with crutches, will end with crutches. It is not in the sheltered garden, but on the rugged Alpine cliffs, where the storm beats most violently, that the hardiest plants are reared. It is not by the use of corks, bladders, and life-preservers, that you can best learn to swim, but by plunging courageously into the wave, and buffeting it, like Caesar and Cassius, "with lusty sinews." The monied charity of individuals is one of the greatest curses that afflict society. It is the Upas tree, that paralyzes and reduces to the last grasp the moral energy of every man who inhales its poisonous atmosphere. Under the appearance of aiding, it weakens its victims, and keeps them in perpetual slavery and degradation. Cold, consequential, and patronizing, it freezes the recipient into humiliation, and there leaves him, as firmly wooged as Sir John Franklin amid the thick-ribbed ice of the Arctic Ocean.

Money bestowed this way is nine times out of ten more truly wasted than if thrown into the sea. It is labor bestowed upon a worthless soil, incapable of yielding anything but a crop of weeds, or feeble plants which never reach maturity. God never intended that strong, independent human beings should be reared by clinging to others, like the ivy to the oak, for support. The difficulties, hardships, and trials of life—the obstacles that one encounters in the road of fortune—are positive blessings. They knit his muscles more firmly, and teach him self-reliance; just as by wrestling with an athlete, who is superior to us, we increase our own strength, and learn the secret of his skill. Read the history of the rich and poor in all ages and countries, and if you do not find that the "lucky dogs," as they are called, began life at the foot of the ladder, without a finger's "lift" from anybody, while the "unfortunates," who flit along the paths of life more like scarecrows than human beings, attribute the first declension in their fortunes to having been bolstered and propped up by others—we will resign all pretensions to philosophy. All experience shows that this boasted benevolence tends to extinguish the faint sparks of energy in those who partake of it, till, having fallen into the despair and independence inseparable from themselves as beyond the pale of hope, and at last lose even the wish for independence.

In a town in Connecticut resides a man who made a fortune in the milk business, by not giving full measure. As he grew rich he thought he would change his occupation to something more respectable, and accordingly bought a grist-mill. In conversation with his wife he said he did not feel right about the cheating which he had practiced in the milk business, and wished some way could be devised whereby he could repay in the grist-mill what he had cheated in the other. At last they settled on the following plan, which was to have the measures made which they took toll with, as much too large, as the milk-measures were too small.