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Reflections of a Soldier.

BY DR. HILL.

Hark! what means these measured sounds of tolling bells; this lavish perfume, gift and bestowal of sweet scented flowers upon uniformed soldiers, their muskets in hand with gleaming bayonets on? All over the land, they are marching today, stepping with the beat of drum to the silent camping grounds in every church yard round, throughout this broad country with accompanying hosts of old and young, of every caste, high and low, rich and poor, each with a floral tribute of love, honor, and respect to place upon the silent resting place of the departed soldier! And this is memorial day! A day set apart by the nation to be observed and kept in honor and commemoration of the great sacrifice of life and limb made by the bravest of men, upon the nation's altar, for the preservation of the Union cemented in the blood of our fathers!

Many years have passed since the eventful period, in which the fiery Mars last visited this nation with his furious decrees of battle, carnage, woe, death, and destruction. The American union must be tried. The war cloud gathers, thickens, and spreads; at length from out its sombre blackness, artillery flashes blaze forth, terrific sounds rend the air, and the bonds of peace are broken. The beat of drum and martial music announce a combat. The cannons roar shakes the hills and the earth trembles 'neath the maddened tread of contending hosts; and the smoke of battle rises thick and fast from the hill tops, plains and valleys like the breath of monster beasts in some wild and furious fray. The eyes of the world are turned to the setting sun as if to read in its crimson blush the destiny of this young Republic. Clearly enough, the life of the nation is at stake. Its fate must now be the issue of the contest. Most shamefully the Union flag is fired upon by those whom its folds have protected and blessed with the harvests of peace and prosperity. The most gigantic civil war ever recorded in the history of man has now commenced. Men of every station, and from every profession, manfully respond and

hasten forth in answer to the Nation's call for help. The mighty struggle, for four long years, continues severe and cruel. The warm life blood of husbands, fathers, and sons bedew the fated fields, and a wail of sorrow goes up to mingle with the shouts of victory! And, but for the volunteer soldier, this Union must have been severed and the blood bought gift of our fathers trampled upon by rebel hosts, and the bright star of the west, in the firmament of nations be obscured forever! But loyal hearts, heroic and brave, were enough, ready and willing. and from every workshop, hamlet, and field, men enlisted under the stars and stripes in defense of the honor, unity, life and prosperity of the whole country. The old "Ship of State" is thus manned with a brave and determined crew, and though she groans and labors while her timbers creak and her bulwarks tremble in the fury of the storm, she weathers it through, though many of her crew are swept from her deck into the ocean of eternity. At last the storm is spent and the victory won; but at what a fearful cost. All over the land in the midst of rejoicing there yet is sorrow. There is a vacant place in the family circle where memory loves to linger. All over the land, hearts expectant and anxious, are watching for the home-coming of loved and cherished ones; but they come not; for they have fallen upon the battle-field made warm and wet with the blood of the wounded and slain in defense of the Union, now twice cemented in the best blood of a nation. No they cannot come; for they have crossed the dark river to join their comrades in the great company ground beyond. But, clothed with immortality, they are living yet in the hearts, memories, and affections of a grateful people; and so long as the sun shines, and May flowers bloom let these demonstrations continue to duly attest the invaluable services of our "boys in blue," never to be forgotten; and to inspire the rising generation with that degree of valor and patriotism so essential to our national welfare and the perpetuity of the Union.



Flag of the 37th Pennsylvania Infantry
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