

# Chenango American.

Greene, Thursday, July 6, 1865.

## The 114th to the People.

NORWICH, June 19, 1865.

The scarred veterans of the One Hundred and Fourteenth New York returned from the severe conflicts of a sterner life, from the depths of overflowing hearts thank you, citizens of Chenango, for your glad welcome, for your ovations so grand and magnificent, for your greetings so completely overwhelming.

Thoughts of coming home again and meeting once more after so long and perilous an absence the dear friends, the loved ones and the little ones so long left behind, have been our support at all times, in all places and under circumstances the most trying. It has been to us too a source of consolation, beyond the power of language to express, that amid all our trials and hardships, our exposures and dangers, in order to perpetuate this glorious Union and transmit unimpaired to posterity our precious inheritance we have had the encouragement and support of the good people at home, have never been forgotten, especially by the true men, the fair women and the lovely daughters of Chenango and Madison. The heart and sympathies of the people have been with us. In their morning and evening devotions we know and have felt that their supplications have daily ascended to the Father of Mercies, to the God of battles, that we might be preserved amid the calamities and dangers incident to the soldier's life; and at length having accomplished our mission, having conquered a peace, crowned with glory and honor and blessings, we might be permitted to return to our families and homes. Your petitions have been a shield above us—a protection around about us.

Beset by temptation on every hand, and when the Syren song has allured to vice, thoughts of a mother, or a sister, or a faithful companion at home, or a letter perhaps fresh from the family fire-side, yet moistened with a tear, breathing words of confidence, fidelity and love, not unfrequently have restrained the thoughtless and the wayward and brought back the wonderer to the ways of virtue, to the path of peace.

And when enveloped in difficulties and dangers, seen and unseen, your blessings have fallen upon us like the gentle rain from Heaven upon the parched and thirsty earth—like the dew-drops of the night upon the drooping leaves and flowers—and when death stared us in the face and taken our

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companions from us, whether from the smoke of the stormy battle-field or from the hospital by wounds or lingering disease, your prayers have sustained them and us and accompanied the spirit of the dying soldier to the heaven of eternal rest.

There have ever been exercised toward us the same deep interest, the same anxiety for our welfare, the same devotion and tender regard, that were seen and manifested when of a Saturday afternoon in the month of early Autumn, nearly three years ago, we moved from our rendezvous with solemn step, yet with firm resolve, with determined yet with throbbing, aching hearts, and eyes like yours, suffused in tears, and launched our inexperienced bark upon the troubled waters.

Whether upon the quiet, sluggish stream or upon the heaving, surging waters; whether upon the barren shores of desolate islands, or upon the blooming verdant plain; whether in the swamps and morasses, or in the rolling, fertile valley; whether on the march, in the bivouac, or on the "tented field;" whether on the picket post, on the skirmish line, or in the battle's van, not a day nor an hour has passed that we have not shared your anxious thoughts or been objects of your hopes and fears. And, while we have kept bright the musket and scabbard, you my countryman, and especially my fair countrywoman have kept bright the golden links in the chain of social life, till they have vibrated to love like that of angels and you now can say to man and time and death, "*We defy you to break them.*"

Prayers uttered in tears in the holy sanctuary, around the family altar and in the secret chamber, have been graciously answered. Hope, long deferred, has been realised. Faith has received its own precious reward. The joy of all hearts has culminated in the festivities and rejoicings of our "welcome home." We said the joy of all hearts; would to God, in truth we could say as much. This is a solemn day. It is a day of sadness as well as rejoicing; a day of mourning as well as of thanksgiving. The army of the *dead* it is said is greater than that of the *living*. We need not ask where are the missing ones—the stalwart men, the athletes, the gifted youth, the noble boys, the patriotic and the brave, who went out with us to return no more forever? They filed in long line with us from our encampment through the streets of this village, with hopes as high as ours, and received with us the benedictions of grateful, loving hearts and a parting blessing. The sorrowful faces, the tearful eyes, the evidence of grief, this day witnessed, tell the mournful and impressive story.

As we march back to expectant towns and are welcomed with open arms, we

miss you bright-eyed eager boy, full of hope and of promise; we miss you, sturdy, and battle-scarred veteran of the Union; we miss the sun-burned and care worn face, with lines deepening upon it; the eager glance of many waiting eyes at home miss the faultless form that gladdened a mother's fond heart; they miss a kind father or a loving brother, and in bitterness of spirit turn fearfully away. Alas, the anguish of such waiting, when waiting is in vain. "If he had but lived to come back with them—even scarred and wounded—if he had come back!" Many have fallen—gloriously fallen! They sleep upon the mountains and in the valley, where the tramp of armed men, the roar of canon, and the shriek of battle can awake them no more. They rest in church yards, in hospital grounds, in forest and in field. Their bones are bleaching upon burning sands in desolate places and lie beside the bank of the grand water.

When the sea shall give up its dead in response to the rumpet call, summoning all to appear and answer to the muster roll in the last great day, some will come forth. Some who went out with us to do battle for their country's liberty, have returned upon their shields. A noble struggle—in some instances brief—amid the tempest of war, closed their earthly battles.

The gallant KNOWLTON, the heroic BURCH and BREED, THURBER and LEWIS, yes, and the conscientious GILBERT who died early in the strife from disease, although they rest in home bought grounds, sleep in soldier's graves. So if others who filled less conspicuous, but no less honorable or dangerous position, among whom may be named a MORSE and WEAVER, SKINNER and SKILLMAN, a CRAMPHIN and JACKSON, a TOMPSON and a TEW. Having with others cheerfully laid down their lives that their country might live, they have gone to meet their reward, where war and rumors of war no more disturb nor alarm.

Although dead, they still live! They live in influence and example—live, fresh and green in the recollections of this fearful contest for a nation's life—in the remembrance of surviving comrades, in the depths of sorrowing hearts. Their spirits hover over the scene of this day, whispering words of consolation and comfort to the bereaved, of cheer and encouragement to brave companions, who fought and bled with them side by side. Long shall we miss and mourn them. When we meet, as I trust we often may, to commemorate their services and valorous deeds; when we gather around our fire-sides, to speak of their virtues, to bear in remembrance their goodness and sorrow for their loss, it will be with a solemn conviction that that loss is a personal one, that it enters our own

households, disturbs our own family circles and our most intimate family relations. Yet is our native land dearer to our hearts, dearer because of their sacrifice and their blood. When Liberty seeks to reward her fallen heroes, now that the strife is ended, she will wreath for their brows garlands of unfading glory. Though the flowers that shall blossom over their graves will blush for the guilt of their Destroyer, yet shall they be redolent with the perfume of their patriotic devotions.

One whose name has not been mentioned, and we regret mention cannot be made of all, has not been forgotten. Frank, generous, warm-hearted and true-hearted, with a face beaming with intelligence and open as the day, it is not surprising that he has hosts of friends and was greatly beloved by all. Col. SMITH had not, 'tis true, received a military education. Yet, with the energy of his earnest nature, after prayerfully deciding what was duty, in answer to the call of his country, he threw his soul into the world of fitting himself for his responsible position, and he early manifested those peculiar gifts which fitted him to influence and command. It is not necessary to claim for him qualities which he did not possess. It is not asserted that he was a great military man—a great strategist. Indeed, time and opportunity

were not permitted him to develop his capabilities, or the power and extent of his military genius. Others, we know, not more promising or conspicuous in the beginning, have acquired national renown. In the varying and changing fortunes of war, in the pulling down of one and the setting up of another we had marked out for him, had he lived, a brilliant career and great success.—That he was a good disciplinarian cannot be questioned. Prompt obedience to orders, which is one of the brightest qualities of a true soldier, whether in the rank or high in command, was regarded by him almost as a religious duty, and enforced with equal exactness upon the men of his command. When off duty, with all the tenderness of his loving nature, with the solicitude and anxiety of a father or a brother, he went among the men, extending aid and sympathy in all their troubles and trials. When ill, as he was on several occasions in Louisiana, from the effect of a Southern climate, the deepest anxiety was ever manifested for his safety and welfare. When mangled and bleeding in the trenches of Port Hudson, almost within the gates of the citadel, we well remember how brave hearts were grieved, and when dying in the hospital constructed of trees and boughs, many a returned veteran will remember how the spot was thronged day and night by the men and officers of the "old Brigade" which he led in that

fatal charge, extending their sympathies and giving expressions of sorrow. When the sad news of his death reached this home and this community you know better than we the deep feeling here produced. The spontaneous outpouring of every heart in a community is the highest panegyric that can be offered to departed worth. No higher eulogiums could be bestowed upon any man, than the sincerity of the popular manifestation of esteem over his grave. No man, probably, who has ever lived in this community died more universally beloved, or was more universally mourned. No obseques were more impressively observed. *He, too, sleeps in a soldier's grave!* Here in this beautiful valley, with which his name is so inseparably associated, our first beloved commander lies sleeping. Around him the "everlasting hills" keep eternal guard and the deep and unwavering love of his stricken family, who "refuse to be comforted because he is not," watch with tender devotion his sacred dust. Cycles may roll their untiring rounds, generations may pass from the stage of action, the works of man may crumble and decay, but the name of him who led us forth to battle will still be revered and honored. And when the last trump shall sound, and the dim light of the resurrection morn shall break away the gloom that overshadows the world, Chenango, whose pure heart beats but for God and duty, will be found watching at the portals of his tomb!

From my hasty and necessarily imperfect allusions to the dead, it must not be inferred that the living, those who have withstood through long years the infections and exposures of the camp, the fatigues of the weary march, the carnage and desolation of the battle-field, and the brunt of the stormy shock, are not entitled to gratitude and eternal regard. The bullet marks upon the persons and the tortuous course of the fated missiles, which in a miraculous manner have saved the destruction of life-sustaining tissues and the deadly mangling of arteries, tell of the hair-breadth escape. Some come back with empty and useless sleeves and bodies maimed—and all come back heroes; but the living are with us, the spared monuments of the amazing goodness and mercy of God; and can answer for themselves. We cannot rehearse at length the services of this noble regiment or dwell upon its trials—its victories and triumphs. Its history is an integral part of the history of the rebellion for the past three years. It forms a woof in the web, a link in the chain, which binds and grapples it to the affection and gratitude of the country in a bright and happy future. Its battered shields and tattered banners, and pierced and ravaged guidons, tell of the close contact,

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of the terrible struggle with the inveterate foe, of "the fierce thunder-storm and iron hail," of hotly contested battle-fields.

It was baptised at Fort Bisland. In the forty days' siege and investment of Port Hudson it rendered its name immortal! With the First Division of the Nineteenth Corps it turned the tide of an inglorious defeat at Sabine Cross Roads, and saved the army in Louisiana. At Pleasant Hill, Cane River, Mansura and Yellow Bayou it acquitted itself well—did nobly. In the se-

verer trials of the Shenandoah it more than maintained the reputation it had previously acquired. On the 19th of September, at the battle of Opequan, for upwards of half an hour, entirely unsupported and alone, subjected to a galling front and enflading fire, it held in check a whole rebel line, for some minutes withholding its own fire for fear of injury to friends, from the intervening tide of our own men retreating.

Here it was that PERLEE, TURNER, BOCKEE, LONGWELL and SEARLE were severely wounded and BREED fell. One hundred and eighty-eight men and officers in killed and wounded, being three-fifths of the number it took into action, were the glorious offering of that eventful day.

At Cedar Creek a month later it bravely resisted the surprise and night attack of the audacious EARLY, and when the broken and disorganized ranks were gathered up the enrollment rectified, and the tide of battle changed, the army being reinforced by only one man, it entered the van in hot pursuit of the flying foe.

The scars which our brave men carry upon their persons are their own enduring mementoes, more precious and honorable than the insignia of greatness, the fading wealth of Kings or the ephemeral crowns of honor. A grateful and discriminating public will do justice to the valor of her devoted sons, award the meed of praise to the living—commemorate the virtues and services of her heroic dead.

Upon the scroll of honor as with the pen of a diamond will be written in characters of living light, "*Well done good and faithful servants.*" The work of the sword is at an end. We have an end of strategy and sieges and fortifications. There is an end of campaigns and marches and battles, and of consequent carnage and desolation. The American Rebellion, conceived in wicked men's hearts and hatched in the nest of treason, has found a fitting *finale*, or soon will, *in the halter*. The rebellion, as an armed institution has at length found "*the last ditch!*" The rebellion as a military contrivance has passed into history. Our battle-fields become pilgrim-shrines, and the

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schemes of master minds belong to the fire-side and the romance. *The war is over!* Our work is done, our mission is ended, and amid the plaudits and welcome of a grateful people we return to you to-day, comparatively a "feeble remnant," to live with you, and die with you, and to go forth to war no more forever. We beat our implements of warfare into implements of husbandry. Having acquired martial renown we come back to plough and pruning hook, to our accustomed avocations and the pursuits of peace. Some have feared that we were drifting upon despotism because of the exercise of military power—some have taken alarm lest we were becoming a nation of warriors. Four or five years have demonstrated to the foes of the Republic, at home and abroad, to the enemies of free institutions everywhere, that *we are a nation of warriors!* We have learned the art of war as well as the arts of peace. We are a nation of warriors, who propose to spin, and weave, and plant, and sow, and reap, and hammer, and at the same time protect the "old Flag," the flag of our country and the flag of our fathers, whether upon the sea or upon the land, and keep the peace of the American Continent to the end of time. We do not come to bring you peace or the glad tidings of its near approach. We come to enjoy with you the blessed boon, the glorious fruition rendered an hundred fold more precious because of the sacrifice it has cost to procure it.

And to-day, as we set up our banners anew as in the name of our God, without hypocrisy or dissimulation, we inscribe upon them, "LIBERTY AND UNION, NOW AND FOREVER, ONE AND INSEPARABLE." It now remains for us, my countrymen, to heal as far as possible the wounds which wicked war has made; to help the helpless and the maimed, to comfort the bereaved and pour into the wounded broken heart the oil of consolation. Rejoicing evermore in a peace enduring while time shall last, and in the hope and assurance that no deluge of secession will ever again endanger the liberties of the people or the stability of our nation, let us in heart and soul adopt the poet's invocation:

"Now, Father lay thy healing hand  
In mercy on our stricken land;  
Oh! lead its wanderers to the fold,  
And be its Shepherd as of old.

"So shall our Nation's song ascend  
To Thee, our Ruler, Father, Friend,  
While Heaven's wide arch resounds again  
With peace on earth, good will to men."