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 stern and blood-drenched war, to the homes and hearths of their dear ones. They have been received with bountiful thanks and loving 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, have been our support at all times, in all places and under circumstances the most trying. It has been to us 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 in the secret chamber, have been 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 moistured with a tear, breathing words of confidence, fidelity and love, not unfrequently have restrained the thoughtless and the wayward and brought back the wanderer 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 dew-drops of the night upon the drooping leaves and flowers—when death stared us in the face and taken our 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 and us and accompanied the spirit of the dying soldier to the haven 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 is said is greater than that of the living. We need not ask where are the missing ones—the sturdiest 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 fell 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 expression 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
will come forth. Some who went out in response to the trumpet call, sum-bitted to the will of their country, have returned upon their grounds, in forest and in field. Their rest in church yards, in hospital battle can awake them no more. They valley, where the tramp of armed men, closed their earthly battles.

The gallant Knowlton, the heroic Burn and Best, Thomas and Lewis, yes, and the conscientious grant 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 po-titions, among whom may be named a Morse and Waver, Skinner and Skillman, a Crampin and Jackson, a Tomp-son 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 their 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 com-rades, 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 lives, and not as a mere sacrifice, but as the loss of a true friend, a valued brother, and in bitterness of spirit turn fearfully away. Als, the anguish of such waiting, when waiting is in vain, "If he had but lived to come back with them—ever scarred and wounded—if death 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 trumpet call, summoning all to appear and answer to the muster roll in the last great day, some shall answer, others who filled less conspicuous, but no less honorable or dangerous po-titions, among whom may be named a Morse and Waver, Skinner and Skillman, a Crampin and Jackson, a Tomp-son 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 their alarm.

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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. Switz had not, "as true, received a military educat on. Yet, with the energy of his earnest nature, after prayerfully deciding what was duty, in answer to the call of his country, he throw 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 strate-gist. Indeed, time and opportunity were not permitted him to develop the 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 comfort 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 wreathe for their brows garlands of unfading glory. Though the flowers that shall blossom over their graves will wither for the guilt of their Destroyer, yet shall they be redolent with the perfume of their patriotic devotions.

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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 testimonials 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 cheques were more impressively observed. He, too, sleeps in a soldier's grave! Here in this beautiful valley, with which his name is 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 unceasing 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, Shenando, whose pure heart beats 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 gale, 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 race of this country in the past three years. It forms a web 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 shattered banners, and pierced and ravaged guidons, tell of the close contact, 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 acquired itself well—died nobly. In the severer trials of the Shenandoah it is 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 enfilading 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 Penrose, Tucker, Bocker, Longwell and Searle were severely wounded and busy 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 enfilade was 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 memorials, 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
The 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 thy wanderers to the fold,
And be thine Shepherd as of old.

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