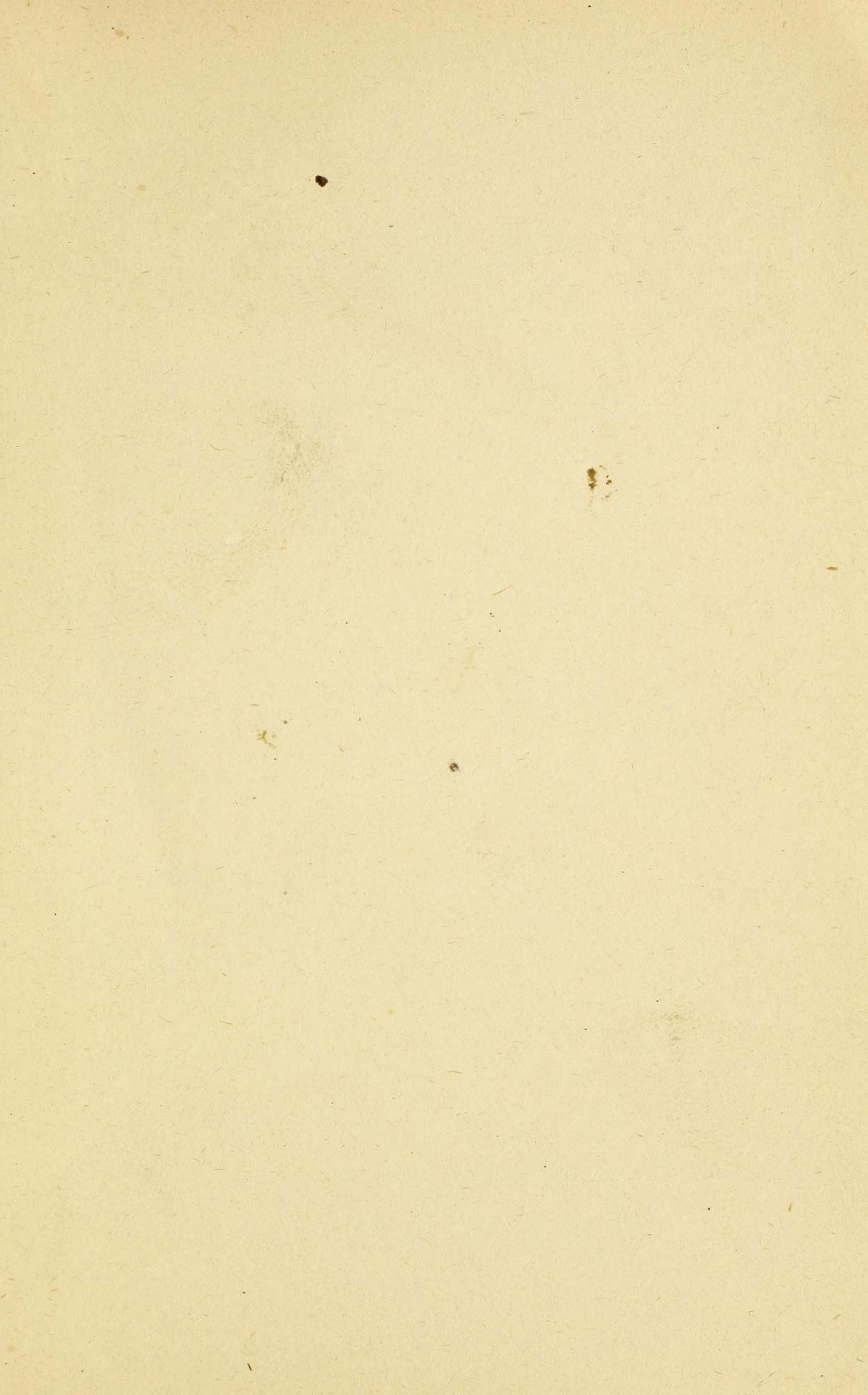




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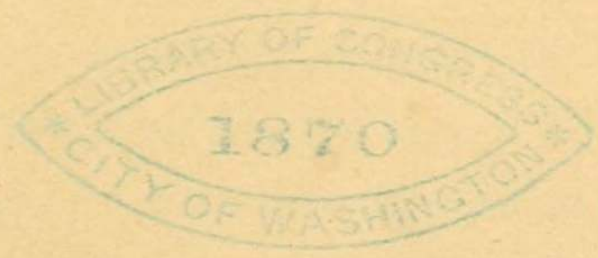
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GETTYSBURG.

JOHN R. BAKER.

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PHILADELPHIA.

1866.

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51

GETTYSBURG.

I.

The war-clouds have rifted, and hope from the sky,
Dances down by her ladder of light to each eye;—
In the officers' quarters the chorus goes round,
And the private his weariness flings to the ground :
Now a squadron steps off to the roll of the drum ;
Hence, fatigue-parties go, thence, fatigue-parties
 come,
Who will throw a scant cov'ring of earth o'er the
 dead,
Who have borne off the living to hospital shed ;
—Such frightful humanity, shattered, bereft,
That scarcely a trace of God's image is left :—
Here, some cook their rations, there, some seek
 repose,
For the fight has been heavy, and stubborn the foes :
Yet wounded or scatheless the Southron hearts thrill
To the shout that greets vict'ry at Chancellorsville.

Hope mounts to resolve;—the commands fly apace;
 Battalions are strengthened, and conscripts in place;
 The arms, they are burnished, the batteries drilled,
 Ammunition provided, the haversacks filled:—
 And an army,—in force fourscore thousands and ten
 Of the flow'r of the South, brave and resolute men,—
 Waits the word:—Yes! the signs of endurance are
 there,

In those bronze-visaged soldiers, who sturdily bear
 Ev'ry want and privation, in spirit so light,
 They were heroes, if battling for freedom and right;
 With oppression familiar, in arrogance strong,
 They are marshalled the champions of slav'ry and
 wrong.

And the stern hoary chieftain, at whose lightest call,
 Spring these myriads so eager to triumph or fall;
 —Who has turned his good sword 'gainst his country
 at need,
 —Who has struck at the hand that first taught him
 to lead,
 —Who has forfeited honor, to soldier so dear,
 By deserting his flag when the trial drew near;—
 What of him, and what visions arise in his brain?
 In silence he broods o'er the coming campaign.
 “It shall be a decisive and glorious blow!”

“Through the valley at speed, e'er recovers the foe,
 “Forward, march! what with plenty of cannon and
 * men,
 “We'll dictate our own terms on the broad fields of
 Penn!”

Gloom sits on the nation's heart;
 Gloom pervades the crowded mart;
 Far from valley, hill and plain,
 Hope and joy have winged amain.—
 This is not the pang that thrills,
 When we face the thousand ills,
 War engenders:—not the grief
 Tears express, when no relief,
 No attentions, can restore,
 Wasted forms to pow'rs of yore,
 Nor devotion's self, supply
 Limb to cripple, sight to eye,
 Bidding back expression's sign,
 Godlike, to the face divine:—
 This is not that look of mourning,
 Set in sable weeds adorning
 Mother, sister, widow grieving;—
 Not the shocks of much bereaving:
 These are freely given; all
 Answers to a country's call;

Gift of each, none else may measure ;
 Who dare sum the total treasure ?
 Limbs and lives and tears, must be
 Priceless Cost of Liberty!—
 This is apathetic sadness,
 Weight, relieved by naught of gladness,
 Mental mill-stone, turning still
 Grains of hope, to current ill ;
 Deadly food to treason haters,
 Dainties, craved by northern traitors,
 --Moral wolves, that scout for prey
 In the hour before the day.—
 Rise! ye patriot spirits bright,
 Rise and shine with cheering light!
 Where the ocean wildly dashes,
 When the tempest loudest crashes,
 Scatter beams of hope afar
 Through this night! nor moon, nor star,
 Sheds the constant guiding rays ;
 Shine, with clear prophetic blaze!—
 Spirits such there were, of yore,
 Beacons on this storm-tossed shore,
 Such now are ;—resplendent, free,
 Lights to coming history.

Hist! rumors fill the southern breeze, they freight
the nerve-like wire ;

A subtle spirit,—lightning-kin,—leaps forth with
instant fire

To compass space,—forgot is time,—and finite soul
must bow

To symbol mute of life divine,—th' immense, eternal
NOW.

Swift on the action flies the news ;—“ the rebel van-
guard sweeps

“ The valley through, in roaring flood ; before its
crest are heaps

“ Of flying columns, lumb'ring trains, in wild dis-
order strown

“ Across Potomac's friendly line,—an out-post over-
thrown ;—

“ Th' invading force is pressing on, like shadows,
close and fast,

“ And strong divisions in support, Potomac's stream
have passed :

“ In force they march on Hagerstown, on Union
soil they stand ;

“ In line compact, across the hills, they strike in
desp'rate band

“ Onward, through Pennsylvania's bounds to ravage
farm and town,

“And on, in foul, unbroken stream they pour the
mountains down;

“Before them, dread—behind them, woe—and ere
the two unite,

“Convulsions dire shall shake the land;—defend,
great God, the right!

Awake, ye sluggards! let your souls to lofty action
soar!

Quick, with your muskets rally! march! the foes
are at the door!

They come, and slav’ry in their train with double
gyves is found,

One, binds the serf to endless toil,—with one shall
you be bound!

They come in locust bands to feed upon your fertile
soil,

The moments of their onward march outmeasure
years of toil!

Still news!—returning hope at last, the tense-drawn
wire has found;

A thousand harp-like chords vibrate, ten thousand
hearts resound

“They move! our brave defenders move!” the
horsemen at their head

With redden’d spurs and panting steeds full many a
mile have sped!

The Union army,—mobile wall, that stands our
 fears before,
 To break the rebel-crested waves that o'er our bor-
 ders pour,
 That bids us of the hither side in rippling rest re-
 cline ;
 “The army moves, to save the land by shortest,
 surest line!”
 A thunder-bolt unseen, shall strike 'mid smoke
 ascending high,
 And shouts shall ring, and blood shall flow, and
 countless heroes die:
 When lifts the veil,—or Freedom's grave, the world's
 strained eyes shall see,
 Or—“God our trust”—the starry flag shall float for
 bond and free.

II.

Living gems be-spangle field,
 Fruity honors crown the trees ;
 Varied perfumes on the breeze,
 Sweet harmonious minglings yield.
 Heaven's arch is filled with light,
 Forests woo, where densest shade,
 —Em'rald woven,—carpets glade :
 Summer days, so long, so bright,

Tremble o'er the heated plain :—
 Distant mountains, softly blue,
 Bound the circle of my view ;—
 Nearer slopes are gold in grain.—
 Charming landscape, peaceful town !
 Gettysburg ! thy fairest crown
 Learning gave thee ; not in vain !
 Yet thy rampart-circling hills,
 —Those eternal hills of thine,—
 All the lore at learning's shrine
 Ne'er can stay the hast'ning ills !

The summer's op'ning month has waned ;—
 That landscape's beauty charms no more ;
 Invading legions, unrestrained,
 In column after column, pour
 The nearer grain-crowned slopes adown,
 To pillage this distracted town.
 The middle distance writhes with motion,
 And winds like Kraken of the ocean,
 As pressing high a threat'ning crest,
 It drags its heaving length to view ;
 Then fines the tap'ring line to rest,
 Along the far horizon blue.
 Sweet peace,—now prized as ne'er before,—
 O'er homes and loved ones smiles no more :

Suspense broods over dark despair;—
Where is the Union army, where?

Oh joy! now thanks to God on high!

Three brave videttes at speed and keen
Ride in; “The Cavalry is nigh!”

The army’s *eyes*, survey the scene:
“The boys in blue, tramp close behind!”

Their songs on summer breezes ringing,
A country’s trust within them shrined,
A country’s aid, true hands are bringing:
And where the nearest foe is found,
Shall hence be known as battle ground.

July is here; her op’ning day
Has lighted up the rebel way,

Down ev’ry hill they come:—
Buford is here; the note of war
Sounds from his batt’ries loud and far;

With answ’ring roll of drum,
Reynolds and Howard seek the fight,
And form along a shelt’ring height

Their dauntless battle line:—
Advance! they move nor feel the weight
Of odds against them ne’er so great,
Nor show of fear the sign:

But tried as true, they bear the shock
Of charge on charge like waves on rock,

And one to three contest the ground,

'Mid ringing rebel yell,

In blood and fire and fearful sound

Of death-bespeaking shell.—

Morn brightens into noon, and yet

The Union forces, sore beset,

Have borne them brave and well;

For, should they triumph,—should they yield,

—Equal the praise; to choose a field

They fought, and Reynolds fell.

To yield is need—from ev'ry height,

New foes crush in the Fed'ral right.

South of the town and battle-field,

On length'ning slope of rising hill,

A quiet city stands revealed,

Intrenched, secure from mortal ill.

The dwellers there,—in pageant borne,—

Possess,—each one,—a home serene;

This, columned marble may adorn;

O'er-roofed is that, with em'rald green:

Here, humbler ones seem capped with clay,

Still others, crowned in russet stone,

Severe and lofty forms display:—

The whole,—a picture, calm in tone,
So solemn, yet so fair.

A crowding city, ne'er decreasing,—
And yet its silence so unceasing;

Unseen its people there:

No signs of work, no bustling mart;

Their very homes of foreign art,

Of other hands, the care.

Nor morn's alarm, nor wav'ring legion,

That seeks with hurried tramp, this region,

Can stir one peaceful bed:—

Th' archangel's voice and trump of God

Alone, shall rouse each sleeping clod:

A City of the Dead.

High, rolling hills on either flank

Sweep from its curve in lines expanding,
To gird a space that well may rank

A fort of nature's own commanding.

Here, sheltered from the storm of morn,

The gallant squadrons, broken, torn,

Repose; and know that not in vain,

Such vantage-ground of war to gain,

Were courage, life and martial skill,

And founts of blood so freely spent,

When Meade's brave troops march in and fill

Each crowning height and curved descent.
—Time of depressing, anxious care;

The day's reverse, the forced retreat,
E'en these munitions; could they bear

The iron storm about to beat?—

To work! to work! now ply the spade,
Let lines of rifle-pits be made!

The weaker points shall skill beset,

With trench and crowning parapet:

Plant living walls and guns behind!

Be wood and hill with batt'ries lined!

Throw out the guard, relieve the worn,

And anxious, watchful, wait the morn!

The day-god veils his fiery blaze,

But calm and red, through filmy haze

Reveals a hostile host,

Whose centre holds the town in strength,

Whose cannon stud each fav'ring height,

Whose strong divisions stretch their length,

Far down upon the Union right,

And coming triumphs boast.

Westward, from ridge and leafy hill,

O'er fruitful slope and grassy field,

Vast legions march, whose ready will

Obeys; nor seeks the plan concealed,

That plan in silence is perfected;
 The forces wait the sign expected:
 —As stealthy lion, crouched to spring,
 Drags toward the prey his lengthened form,
 So Rebel foe to Union wing;—
 The left,—*our* left,—that sign shall storm.

The day grows old, the sun declines,
 And yet no dash from hostile lines;
 That sultry calm; would God 'twere broken!
 That calm, the earthquake must foretoken:
 —Deep booming sounds,—a sharp report,
 —A crash of hell with demon-singing,
 —Quick echoing bolts from hilly fort,
 In mingled roar and double ringing,
 —The shouts of men,—the muskets glancing,
 —The long dark line of foes advancing,
 Bewilder eye and ear:

The surge is like a living ocean,
 Each distant speck, with rolling motion,
 Chases a breaker here.

Now Sickles in!—he leads the way,
 And dauntless stems the 'whelming tide,
 That crests above in bloody spray,
 And threatens doom on ev'ry side.

—Pushed back! pushed back! not Hancock's aid
 And strong support might win success :
 Not gallant Sykes the flood has stayed ;
 So thick, so close the rebels press :
 —Already seems their triumph nigh,
 Alternate yells and cheers rise high ;—
 Still pressing on, they mount the height
 Where Crawford, chafing, marks the fight ;
 His veteran troops are held in hand ;
 —Like staghounds leashed, they strain, yet stanch,
 Await the "forward!" of command.
 —When down from Alp, the avalanche
 Sweeps hind'ring rock and root and branch,
 A rolling chaos fills the vale,
 And few may haply tell the tale ;
 The piercing shriek, for aye is hushed,
 As sudden, hopeless ruin rushed
 O'er hamlet, home and man :—
 So the Reserves, from Round Top height,
 With pent-up spring and gathered might
 Roll o'er th' advancing rebel right ;
 To bury rear and van
 In charge so crushing and complete,
 It snatched out vict'ry from defeat.

 Long ere this timely work is done,
 And length'ning shadows herald night,

A fiercer struggle has begun,
 And rages now on Fed'ral right.
 Tremendous volleys shake the ground
 Where fortress front and weakened flank
 Repel th' assailants' desp'rate bound,
 And sweep them earthward rank on rank;
 As thronging hill and crowding vale,
 O'er fallen comrades, how they fall!
 —The scarred old trees yet tell the tale
 Of round-shot, shell and musket-ball.—
 Such slaughter tracks their coming way,
 Such crimson fringes their retreat;
 The hopes, that rose with rising day,
 Wane, with the summer twilight sweet.
 One weakly-guarded point alone,
 The foes at night could claim their own.

Season of rest, mysterious night!
 —Time's subtle alchemist, transmuting
 Toil's waste to golden worth and bright;—
 Sweet is the spell of thy recruiting!
 Such soft repose to weary limb,
 Such dream-born quick'ning of the brain;
 The real, opes in vision dim,
 And waking-life, seems dull and vain.
 Then buds the wish, and blooms and bears;

Hope, ever-longing, wildly tastes ;
 E'en sickness for a moment, wears
 Health's smile;—then back to suff'ring hastes.
 Thy mantle spread on billowy shore,
 'Mid solemn music woos to rest ;
 Or flung the rural landscape o'er,
 Through leafy casement soothes th' opprest.
 But night of lattle ! thou, between
 The day of slaughter, and a morrow,
 Whose dawn may light a bloodier scene,
 Whose noon, a nation's pride or sorrow,
 How dread art thou !—the sentinel
Feels death thick strown his beat around ;
 And groan and wail in piercing swell
 Rend heart and ear from glory's ground ;
 To wearied soldier comes not sleep ;
 The foe unseen, e'en now is massing
 His strength on weakened line to leap,
 While shadows to the west are passing.
 Work on ! watch on ! the stern demand,
 Fall in ! quick, march ! the hoarse command.
 Hark ! Slocum's guns salute the day !
 Grape-shot and shells are flying
 In hurtling storm upon the way
 The rebels gained at twilight gray,

And where they now are lying.
 The serried columns wrapped in smoke
 Spring to the fierce attack,
 Ere resting nature fairly woke,
 Or e'en the startled Echo spoke
 Her mystic answer back.
 With calm despair, the stubborn foe
 Calls up his steadiest skill ;
 Here, tries defence ; there, strikes a blow ;
 The conflict rages to and fro,
 As will meets sterner will.
 Long hours of carnage, toil and din ;
 For high resolve of patriot birth,
 Than skilled despair, holds surer worth,
 When both resolve to win.
 With broken ranks and spirits crushed,
 O'er piles of wounded, mounds of dead,
 The driven rebels wildly rushed
 Before the victors' bounding tread :
 The hope, new-fledged, that soared to fame
 Falls lifeless, into depths of shame.

 As sounds of strife wax faint and die,
 A silence reigns, of dread portent :—
 Hour-like, the moments drag them by ;
 To hours, the weight of days is lent :

Such anxious calm,—suspense so still,
 Precedes the rage:—then ev'ry hill,
 And ridge and wood with light'nings flashed,
 From countless guns the thunders crashed,
 And lines of murd'rous hailstones dashed
 Against the Fed'ral wall;
 Here, where the dead serenely sleep,
 Huge round-shot bowl the tombs, and leap
 Clean through the columns tall;
 Swift screaming shells burst high in air,
 Or plough the graves, and ev'ry where
 A shatt'ring ruin deal:
 And crossing lines of hailstones fly,
 From hence, the answ'ring screams rise high,
 Deep, Union thunders boom reply,
 Responding peal for peal.
 Again the solemn stillness falls,
 Again suspense the heart appals;
 When slowly from the ridgy height,
 Two darkling columns wind to sight,
 Where Hancock holds his honor bright.
 Through orchard, mead and standing grain,
 The lines debouch upon the plain,
 With springy tread and quickened breath;
 The march begins; the march of death:

Grim heralds sweep in whirlwinds dire,
Of shell and shot and sulph'rous fire ;

In triple line they press.

Their gaps are filled, their way seems won,
Their work,—in prospect,—almost done,

Hope whispers, with success.

One instant,—then the charge rings out,
Replies a wild, unearthly shout ;

One instant,—loyal hearts beat high ;

Ten thousand flashes fiercely fly,

Ten thousand thunders shake the earth,

And demon-myriads leap to birth,

Each with his message, flies to rest

Within a daring stormer's breast.

—As cradler, through the standing wheat,

Swings round the bladed hand,

The windrows grow beneath his feet,

On levelled harvest land ;—

So stand the rebels ;—so they lie ;

Death-cradled as the bullets fly.

One sweeping charge ! the gleaning's done ;

Nor ends the work with set of sun.

That night,—with show of guarded rear,

With many a backward glance of fear,

With trailing banners, stealthy tread,

Th' invading troops,—defeated,—fled:
 So thinned their ranks, then first they learned,
 “For two who came, but one returned;”
 Rebellion's star had passed its height,
 Ere Freedom's birth-morn dawned to sight.

Ye patriot brave! who soundly sleep
 Beneath the field you died to keep!
 Each living, loyal heart shall hold
 Your names and deeds enshrined in gold:
 Your tombs by future pilgrims sought,
 Ye dead, at Gettysburg who fought!

Ye limbless heroes! ye shall be
 Loved, honored, by the good and free;
 Your worth,—and yours, ye sound and whole!
 Live in your country's brightest roll,
 Conjoined with actions, nobly done
 When bloody Gettysburg was won!

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