

War Pictures

By

F. O. C. DARLEY.

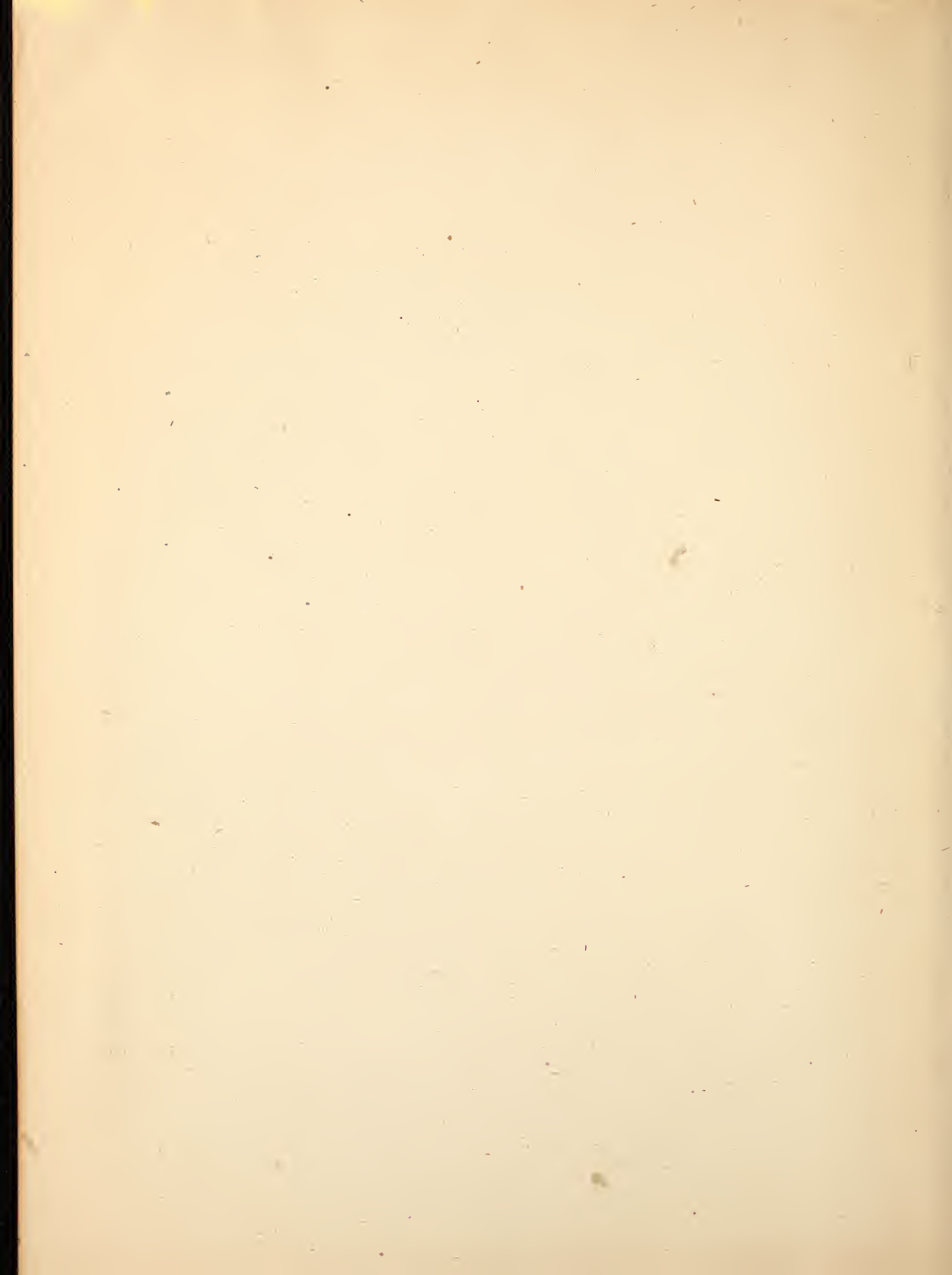
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Mrs J. L. Flagg—

With best regards.

From E. B. Linn

Christmas 1864.







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A SELECTION  
OF  
WAR LYRICS.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS ON WOOD

BY

F. O. C. DARLEY.

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“ALL QUIET ALONG THE POTOMAC.”

“ALL quiet along the Potomac,” they say,  
“Except now and then a stray picket  
Is shot, as he walks on his beat, to and fro,  
By a rifleman hid in the thicket.  
'Tis nothing—a private or two, now and then,  
Will not count in the news of the battle;  
Not an officer lost—only one of the men,  
Moaning out, all alone, the death-rattle.”

WAR LYRICS.

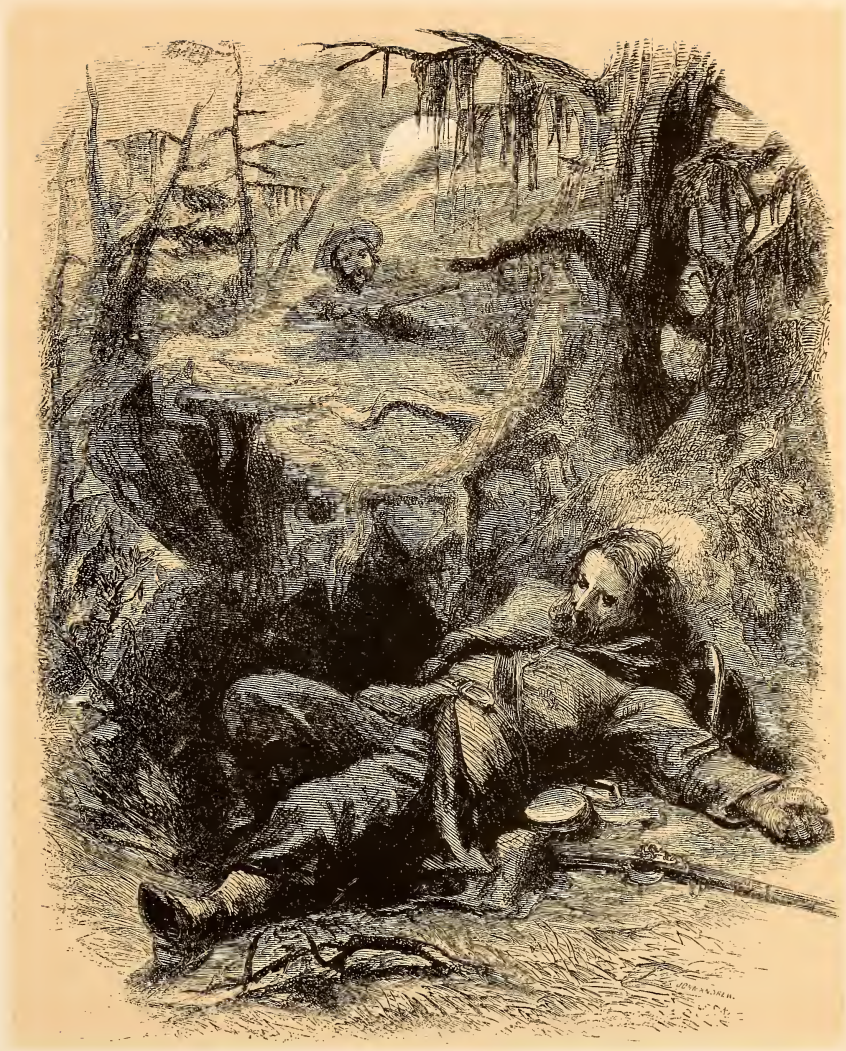
All quiet along the Potomac to-night,  
Where the soldiers lie peacefully dreaming;  
Their tents, in the rays of the clear autumn moon,  
Or the light of the watch-fires are gleaming.  
A tremulous sigh of the gentle night-wind  
Through the forest leaves softly is creeping;  
While stars up above, with their glittering eyes,  
Keep guard—for the army is sleeping.

There's only the sound of the lone sentry's tread,  
As he tramps from the rock to the fountain,  
And thinks of the two in the low trundle-bed,  
Far away in the cot on the mountain.  
His musket falls slack—his face, dark and grim,  
Grows gentle with memories tender,  
As he mutters a prayer for the children asleep,—  
For their mother,—may Heaven defend her!

The moon seems to shine just as brightly as then,  
That night, when the love yet unspoken  
Leaped up to his lips,—when low murmured vows  
Were pledged to be ever unbroken.  
Then drawing his sleeve roughly over his eyes,  
He dashes off tears that are welling,  
And gathers his gun closer up to its place,  
As if to keep down the heart-swelling!

He passes the fountain, the blasted pine-tree—  
The footstep is lagging and weary;  
Yet onward he goes, through the broad belt of light,  
Towards the shades of the forest so dreary.  
Hark! was it the night-wind that rustled the leaves?  
Was it moonlight so wondrously flashing?  
It looked like a rifle—"Ha! MARY, good-by!"  
And the life-blood is ebbing and plashing.

\* \* \* \* \*



WAR LYRICS.

All quiet along the Potomac to-night,—  
No sound save the rush of the river;  
While soft falls the dew on the face of the dead—  
The picket's off duty forever.

---

THE COLOR-SERGEANT.

You say that in every battle  
No soldier was braver than he,  
As, aloft in the roar and the rattle,  
He carried the flag of the Free:  
I knew, ah! I knew he'd ne'er falter,  
I could trust him, the dutiful boy:  
My Robert was wilful,—but Walter,  
Dear Walter, was ever a joy.

And if he was true to his mother,  
Do you think he his trust would betray,  
And give up his place to another,  
Or turn from the danger away?  
He knew while afar he was straying,  
He felt in the thick of the fight,  
That at home his poor mother was praying  
For him and the cause of the Right!

Tell me, comrade, who saw him when dying,  
What he said, what he did, if you can;  
On the field in his agony lying,  
Did he suffer and die like a man?  
Do you think he once wished he had never  
Borne arms for the Right and the True?  
*Nay, he shouted Our country forever!*  
*When he died he was praying for you!*



WAR LYRICS.

O my darling! my youngest and fairest,  
Whom I gathered so close to my breast;  
I called thee my dearest and rarest,  
And thou wert my purest and best!  
I tell you, O friend! as a mother,  
Whose full heart is breaking to-day,  
The infinite Father—none other—  
Can know what He's taken away.

I thank you once more for your kindness:  
For this lock of his bright auburn hair;—  
Perhaps 'tis the one I in blindness  
Last touched, as we parted just there!  
When he asked, through his tears, should he linger  
From duty, I answered him, Nay:  
And he smiled, as he placed on my finger  
The ring I am wearing to-day.

I watched him leap into that meadow;  
There, a child, he with others, had played;  
I saw him pass slowly the shadow  
Of the trees where his father was laid;  
And there, where the road meets two others,  
Without turning he went on his way:  
Once his face towards the foe—not his mother's  
Should unman him, or cause him delay.

It may be that some day your duty  
Will carry you that way again;  
When the field shall be riper in beauty,  
Enriched by the blood of the slain;  
Would you see if the grasses are growing  
On the grave of my boy? Will you see  
If a flower, e'en the smallest, is blowing,  
And pluck it, and send it to me?



THE COLOR SERGEANT.

Don't think, in my grief, I'm complaining;  
I gave him, God took him; 'tis right;  
And the cry of his mother remaining  
Shall strengthen his comrades in fight.  
Not for vengeance, to-day, in my weeping,  
Goes my prayer to the Infinite Throne.  
God pity the foe when he's reaping  
The harvest of what he has sown!

Tell his comrades these words of his mother:  
All over the wide land to-day,  
The Rachels, who weep with each other,  
Together in agony pray.  
They know, in their great tribulation,  
By the blood of their children outpoured,  
We shall smite down the foes of the Nation,  
In the terrible day of the Lord.

WAR LYRICS.

THE CAVALRY CHARGE.

FROM "ALICE OF MONMOUTH."

OUR good steeds snuff the evening air,  
Our pulses with their purpose tingle;  
The foeman's fires are twinkling there;  
He leaps to hear our sabres jingle!

HALT!

Each carbine send its whizzing ball:  
Now, cling! clang! forward all,  
Into the fight!

Dash on beneath the smoking dome:  
Thro' level lightnings gallop nearer!  
One look to Heaven! No thoughts of home:  
The guidons that we bear are dearer.

CHARGE!

Cling! clang! forward all!  
Heaven help those whose horses fall:  
Cut left and right!

They flee before our fierce attack!  
They fall! they spread in broken surges.  
Now, comrades, bear our wounded back,  
And leave the foeman to his dirges.

WHEEL!

The bugles sound the swift recall:  
Cling! clang! backward all!  
Home and good-night!



WAR LYRICS.

THE LITTLE DRUMMER.

'Tis of a little drummer,  
The story I shall tell:  
Of how he marched to battle,  
And all that there befell.  
Out in the West with Lyon  
(For once the name was true),  
For whom the little drummer beat  
His *rat-tat-too*.

Our army rose at midnight,  
Ten thousand men as one,  
Each slinging on his knapsack,  
And snatching up his gun:  
“*Forward!*” and off they started  
As all good soldiers do,  
When the little drummer beats for them  
The *rat-tat-too*.

Across a rolling country,  
Where the mist began to rise;  
Past many a blackened farm-house,  
Till the sun was in the skies:  
Then we met the rebel pickets,  
Who skirmished and withdrew,  
While the little drummer beat and beat  
The *rat-tat-too*.

Along the wooded hollows  
The line of battle ran.  
Our centre poured a volley,  
And the fight at once began;  
For the rebels answered shouting,  
And a shower of bullets flew;  
But still the little drummer beat  
His *rat-tat-too*.

THE LITTLE DRUMMER.

He stood among his comrades,  
As they quickly formed the line,  
And when they raised their muskets  
He watched the barrels shine!  
And when the volley broke, he started,  
For war to him was new:  
But still the little drummer beat  
His *rat-tat-too*.

It was a sight to see them,  
That early autumn day,  
Our soldiers in their blue coats,  
And the rebel ranks in gray;  
The smoke that rolled between them,  
The balls that whistled through,  
And the little drummer as he beat  
His *rat-tat-too*.

His comrades dropped around him,—  
By fives and tens they fell,  
Some pierced by Minie bullets,  
Some torn by shot and shell.  
They played against our cannon,  
And a caisson's splinters flew:  
But still the little drummer beat  
His *rat-tat-too*.

The right, the left, the centre—  
The fight was everywhere:  
They pushed us here,—we wavered,—  
We drove and broke them there.  
The gray-backs fixed their bayonets,  
And charged the coats of blue,  
But still the little drummer beat  
His *rat-tat-too*.

WAR LYRICS.

“Where is our little drummer?”  
His nearest comrades say,  
When the dreadful fight is over,  
And the smoke has cleared away.  
As the rebel corps was scattering,  
He urged them to pursue;  
So, furiously he beat and beat  
The *rat-tat-too!*

He stood no more among them,  
For a bullet as it sped  
Had glanced and struck his ankle,  
And stretched him with the dead!  
He crawled behind a cannon,  
And pale and paler grew:  
But still the little drummer beat  
His *rat-tat-too!*

They bore him to the surgeon,  
A busy man was he:  
“A drummer-boy—what ails him?”  
His comrades answered, “See!”  
As they took him from the stretcher,  
A heavy breath he drew,  
And his little fingers strove to beat  
The *rat-tat-too!*

The ball had spent its fury:  
“A scratch,” the surgeon said,  
As he wound the snowy bandage  
Which the lint was staining red!  
“I must leave you now, old fellow.”  
“O take me back with you,  
For I know the men are missing me,  
And the *rat-tat-too!*”



THE LITTLE DRUMMER.

Upon his comrade's shoulder  
They lifted him so grand,  
With his dusty drum before him,  
And his drum-sticks in his hand!  
To the fiery front of battle,  
That nearer, nearer drew,—  
And evermore he beat, and beat,  
His *rat-tat-too!*

The wounded as he passed them  
Looked up and gave a cheer:  
And one in dying blessed him,  
Between a smile and tear!  
And the gray-backs—they are flying  
Before the coats of blue,  
For whom the little drummer beats  
His *rat-tat-too.*

When the west was red with sunset,  
The last pursuit was o'er;  
Brave Lyon rode the foremost,  
And looked the name he bore!  
And before him on his saddle,  
As a weary child would do,  
Sat the little drummer fast asleep,  
With his *rat-tat-too.*



“PICCIOLA.”

“PICCIOLA.”

It was a sergeant old and gray,  
Well singed and bronzed from siege and pillage,  
Went tramping in an army's wake,  
Along the turnpike of the village.

For days and nights the winding host  
Had through the little place been marching,  
And ever loud the rustics cheered,  
Till ev'ry throat was hoarse and parching.

The squire and farmer, maid and dame,  
All took the sight's electric stirring,  
And hats were waved, and staves were sung,  
And 'kerchiefs white were countless whirling.

They only saw a gallant show  
Of heroes stalwart under banners,  
And in the fierce heroic glow  
'Twas theirs to yield but wild hosannas.

The sergeant heard the shrill hurrahs,  
Where he behind in step was keeping;  
But glancing down beside the road,  
He saw a little maid sit weeping.

“And how is this?” he gruffly said,  
A moment pausing to regard her;  
“Why weepest thou, my little chit?”  
And then she only cried the harder.

WAR LYRICS.

“And how is this, my little chit?”  
The sturdy trooper straight repeated,—  
“When all the village cheers us on,  
That you, in tears, apart are seated?”

“We march two hundred thousand strong!  
And that’s a sight, my baby beauty,  
To quicken silence into song,  
And glorify the soldier’s duty.”

“It’s very, very grand, I know,”  
The little maid gave soft replying;  
“And father, mother, brother, too,  
All say ‘hurrah’ while I am crying.

“But think—O Mr. Soldier, think,  
How many little sisters’ brothers  
Are going all away to fight,  
Who may be *killed*, as well as others!”

“Why, bless thee, child,” the sergeant said,  
His brawny hand her curls caressing,  
“’Tis left for little ones like you  
To find that war’s not all a blessing.”

And “bless thee!” once again he cried;  
Then cleared his throat and looked indignant,  
And marched away with wrinkled brow  
To stop the straggling tear benignant.

And still the ringing shouts went up  
From doorway, thatch, and fields of tillage;  
The pall behind the standard seen  
By one alone, of all the village.



WAR LYRICS.

The oak and cedar bend and writhe  
When roars the wind through gap and braken;  
But 'tis the tenderest reed of all  
That trembles first when earth is shaken.

---

ON THE SHORES OF TENNESSEE.

“MOVE my arm-chair, faithful Pompey,  
In the sunshine bright and strong,  
For this world is fading, Pompey,—  
Massa won't be with you long;  
And I fain would hear the south wind  
Bring once more the sound to me,  
Of the wavelets softly breaking  
On the shores of Tennessee.

“Mournful though the ripples murmur,  
As they still the story tell,  
How no vessels float the banner  
That I've loved so long and well;  
I shall listen to their music,  
Dreaming that again I see  
Stars and Stripes on sloop and shallop  
Sailing up the Tennessee.

“And, Pompey, while old Massa's waiting  
For Death's last dispatch to come,  
If that exiled, starry banner  
Should come proudly sailing home,  
You shall greet it, slave no longer;—  
Voice and hand shall both be free  
That shout and point to Union colors  
On the waves of Tennessee.”

ON THE SHORES OF TENNESSEE.

“ Massa’s berry kind to Pompey ;  
But ole darkey’s happy here,  
Where he’s tended corn and cotton  
For ’ese many a long-gone year.  
Over yonder Missis’ sleeping,—  
No one tends her grave like me ;  
Mebbe she would miss the flowers  
She used to love in Tennessee.

“ ’Pears like she was watching, Massa—  
If Pompey should beside him stay ;  
Mebbe she’d remember better  
How for him she used to pray ;  
Telling him that way up yonder  
White as snow his soul would be,  
If he served the Lord of Heaven  
While he lived in Tennessee.”

Silently the tears were rolling  
Down the poor old dusky face.  
As he stepped behind his master,  
In his long-accustomed place.  
Then a silence fell around them,  
As they gazed on rock and tree  
Pictured in the placid waters  
Of the rolling Tennessee :

Master, dreaming of the battle  
Where he fought by Marion’s side,  
When he bid the haughty Tarleton  
Stoop his lordly crest of pride ;  
Man, remembering how yon sleeper  
Once he held upon his knee,  
Ere she loved the gallant soldier,  
Ralph Vervair, of Tennessee.

ON THE SHORES OF TENNESSEE.

Still the south wind fondly lingers  
    ' Mid the veteran's silver hair ;  
Still the bondman close beside him  
    Stands behind the old arm-chair.  
With his dark-hued hand uplifted,  
    Shading eyes, he bends to see  
Where the woodland, boldly jutting  
    Turns aside the Tennessee.

Thus he watches cloud-born shadows  
    Glide from tree to mountain crest,  
Softly creeping, aye and ever  
    To the river's yielding breast.  
Ha! above the foliage yonder  
    Something flutters wild and free!  
" Massa! Massa! Hallelujah!  
    The flag's come back to Tennessee!"

" Pompey, hold me on your shoulder,  
    Help me stand on foot once more"  
That I may salute the colors  
    As they pass my cabin door ;  
Here's the paper signed that frees you,  
    Give a freeman's shout with me —  
" God and Union!" be our watchword  
    Evermore in Tennessee."

Then the trembling voice grew fainter,  
    And the limbs refused to stand ;  
One prayer to Jesus—and the soldier  
    Glided to that better land.  
When the flag went down the river  
    Man and master both were free,  
While the ringdove's note was mingled  
    With the rippling Tennessee.



ON BOARD THE CUMBERLAND.

ON BOARD THE CUMBERLAND.

*March 7th, 1862.*

“STAND to your guns, men!” Morris cried.  
Small need to pass the word;  
Our men at quarters ranged themselves  
Before the drum was heard.

And then began the sailors’ jests:  
“What thing is that, I say?”  
“A long-shore meeting-house adrift  
Is standing down the bay!”

A frown came over Morris’ face;  
The strange, dark craft he knew:  
“That is the iron Merrimac,  
Manned by a rebel crew.

“So shot your guns, and point them straight;  
Before this day goes by,  
We’ll try of what her metal’s made.”  
A cheer was our reply.

“Remember, boys, this flag of ours  
Has seldom left its place;  
And where it falls, the deck it strikes  
Is covered with disgrace.

“I ask but this; or sink or swim,  
Or live or nobly die,  
My last sight upon earth may be  
To see that ensign fly!”



ON BOARD THE CUMBERLAND.

Meanwhile the shapeless iron mass  
Came moving o'er the wave,  
As gloomy as a passing hearse,  
As silent as the grave.

Her ports were closed; from stem to stern  
No sign of life appeared.  
We wondered, questioned, strained our eyes,  
Joked—every thing but feared.

She reached our range. Our broadside rang,  
Our heavy pivots roared;  
And shot and shell, a fire of hell,  
Against her sides we poured.

God's mercy! from her sloping roof  
The iron tempest glanced,  
As hail bounds from a cottage thatch,  
And round her leaped and danced;

Or when against her dusky hull  
We struck a fair, full blow,  
The mighty, solid iron globes,  
Were crumbled up like snow.

On, on, with fast increasing speed,  
The silent monster came;  
Though all our starboard battery  
Was one long line of flame.

She heeded not, no gun she fired,  
Straight on our bow she bore;  
Through riving plank and crashing frame  
Her furious way she tore.

WAR LYRICS.

Alas! our beautiful keen bow,  
That in the fiercest blast  
So gently folded back the seas,  
They hardly felt we passed!

Alas! alas! my Cumberland,  
That ne'er knew grief before,  
To be so gored, to feel so deep  
The tusk of that sea-boar!

Once more she backward drew a space,  
Once more our side she rent;  
Then, in the wantonness of hate,  
Her broadside through us sent.

The dead and dying round us lay,  
But our foemen lay abeam;  
Her open portholes maddened us;  
We fired with shout and scream.

We felt our vessel settling fast,  
We knew our time was brief.  
"Ho! man the pumps!" but they who worked,  
And fought not, wept with grief.

"Oh! keep us but an hour afloat!  
Oh! give us only time  
To mete upon the traitors' heads  
The measure of their crime!"

From captain down to powder-boy  
No hand was idle then;  
Two soldiers, but by chance aboard,  
Fought on like sailor men.



WAR LYRICS.

And when a gun's crew lost a hand,  
Some bold marine stepped out,  
And jerked his braided jacket off,  
And hauled the gun about.

Our forward magazine was drowned;  
And up from the sick bay  
Crawled out the wounded, red with blood,  
And round us gasping lay.

Yes, cheering, calling us by name  
Struggling with failing breath,  
To keep their shipmates at the posts  
Where Glory strove with Death.

With decks afloat, and powder gone,  
The last broadside we gave  
From the guns' heated iron lips  
Burst out beneath the wave.

So sponges, rammers, and handspike—  
As men-of-war's-men should—  
We placed within their proper racks,  
And at our quarters stood.

“Up to the spar-deck! save yourselves!”  
Cried Selfridge. “Up, my men!  
God grant that some of us may live  
To fight yon ship again!”

We turned—we did not like to go:  
Yet staying seemed but vain,  
Knee-deep in water; so we left;  
Some swore, some groaned with pain.

ON BOARD THE CUMBERLAND.

We reached the deck. There Randall stood:

“Another turn, men—so!”

Calmly he aimed his pivot gun:

“Now, Tenny, let her go!”

It did our sore hearts good to hear  
The song our pivot sang,  
As rushing on from wave to wave  
The whirring bombshell sprang.

Brave Randall leaped upon the gun,  
And waved his cap in sport;  
“Well done! well aimed! I saw that shell  
Go through an open port.”

It was our last, our deadliest shot;  
The deck was overflowed;  
The poor ship staggered, lurched to port,  
And gave a living groan.

Down, down, as headlong through the waves  
Our gallant vessel rushed,  
A thousand gurgling watery sounds  
Around my senses gushed.

Then I remember little more.  
One look to heaven I gave,  
Where, like an angel's wing, I saw  
Our spotless ensign wave.

I tried to cheer. I cannot say  
Whether I swam or sank;  
A blue mist closed around my eyes,  
And every thing was blank.

ON BOARD THE CUMBERLAND.

When I awoke, a soldier lad,  
All dripping from the sea,  
With two great tears upon his cheeks,  
Was bending over me.

I tried to speak. He understood  
The wish I could not speak.  
He turned me. There, thank God! the flag  
Still fluttered at the peak!

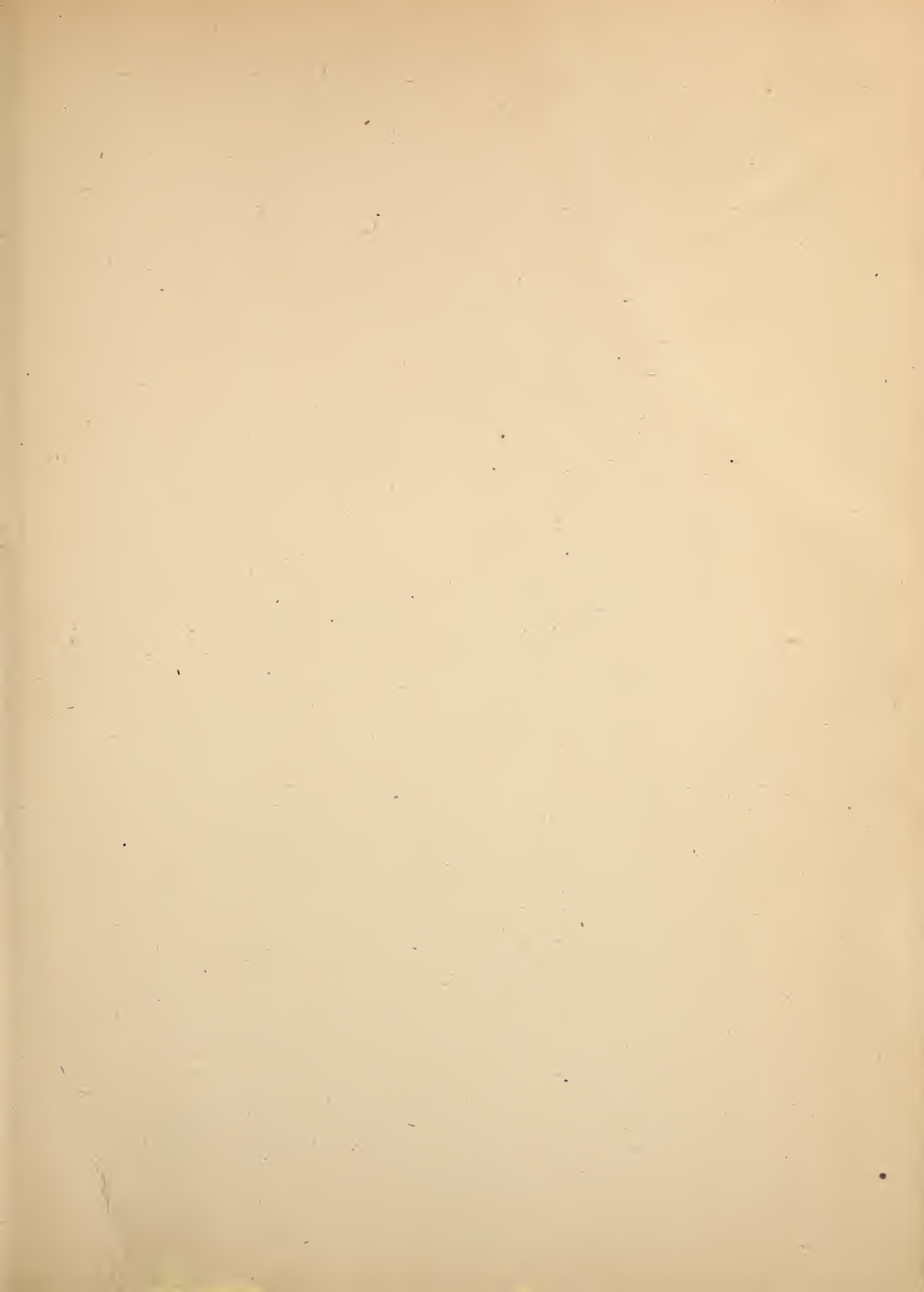
And there, while thread shall hang to thread,  
Oh, let that ensign fly!  
The noblest constellation set  
Against our northern sky.

A sign that we who live may claim  
The peerage of the brave;  
A monument, that needs no scroll,  
For those beneath the wave.











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