

## THE MOTHER'S BLESSING.

There in her high-backed chair she sits,  
Sad-eyed dame with the silver hair;  
The shadows lengthen, the daylight flits,  
And she seems to listen, as still she knits,  
For the sound of the step on the silent stair.

The lamps flash out in the twilight street,  
And many a neighbouring casement gleams  
A beacon of home to hurrying feet;  
But the white-haired dame in the high backed  
seat  
Heeds them not, as she knits and dreams--

Dreams of a boy, long years ago,  
Clasped her neck on a summer day,  
Begged her blessing, kissed her, and so  
Fled with the speed of a hunted doe  
Down to the sea, and sailed away!

A boy with an eye as blue and bright  
As the cloudless noon of a tropic sky;  
A fair haired lad, and his heart was right,  
"Was it ten? Yes, ten long years to-night?  
Shall I bless him again before I die?"

"Here at my knee his prayer he said:  
"Our Father, all-hallowed be thy name;  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
Passing my hand o'er his golden head,  
While o'er the tears in his blue eyes came."

Hark! a step on the silent stair!  
A soft, quick step, and a breathing light!  
A form kneels low by the high backed chair,  
And lo! the curls of her boy's fair hair  
The mother's fingers are twined to night.

Is it a dream? or can it be,  
This tall man with the beard of gold  
That kneels so low by his mother's knee,  
Is the blue eyed boy that fled to sea  
That sunny morn, in the day of old?

Yes it is he, for the joyful tears  
Drop from her eyes in a holy rain;  
"Our Father" anew, from his lips she hears,  
And the mother's blessing of bygone years  
Has brought her prodigal home again.

## SOME NEW BOOKS.

## GEN. JOHNSTON'S NARRATIVE OF THE WAR.

The *Narrative of Military Operations* by Joseph E. Johnston, General C.S.A. (D Appleton & Co.), has been looked for with much curiosity, on account of the high rank and distinguished services of the author both in the United States army and that of the so called Confederacy: Nevertheless we judge, after reading it with great care, that it will be generally received with exceeding disappointment, and especially for the reason that Gen. Johnston enjoys among us a very high reputation as a professional and intellectual man, due very much to the generous appreciation of Gen. Sherman and his lieutenants, who always beat him and praised him with equal cordiality.

It will be remembered that Johnston was the only general officer who resigned from the United States army to take part in the rebellion, and that a rule was adopted by the Confederate States Congress requiring that officers who had served in the United States army and resigned to join the rebellion, should in the same grade take precedence according to their relative rank in the United States service. This rule strictly applied would have given Gen. Johnston the position of General in Chief of the Confederate army, Lee, Beauregard, Albert Sidney Johnston, Bragg, Hardee, and others having held no higher grade than that of colonel or lieutenant colonel in the old service. Indeed, it appears from the Narrative that Gen. Johnston was assigned at the commencement of hostilities to what Mr. Davis evidently regarded as the most important command within the probable theatre of war—that of the troops in and around Harper's Ferry. His instructions delivered at Montgomery showed that Davis regarded that place as of great strategic consequence, in view of its strong natural features and proximity to the border of the Northern States.

Gen. Johnston accepted this command, perfectly aware that his superiors looked upon it as of a special importance, and yet he had scarcely reached his post when he proposed its evacuation, and opened a correspondence with the Confederate War Department to that end. His reasons were possibly sound enough in themselves, but such a movement at that stage of the game could not have been very encouraging to the seceding States, nor reassuring to their Government. Indeed, the latter did all it could to induce him to hold the advanced post to which he had been assigned, but in vain. He abandoned the place before it had really been threatened, and thereby seriously and very naturally shook the confidence of Davis in his discretion if not in his courage.

Shortly after withdrawing from Harper's Ferry, Gen. Johnston marched and transported his command by rail to Manassas Junction, where Beauregard was confronting McDowell, and as is well known, thereby secured to the Confederate arms their first great victory at Bull Run. Whether he made this junction of his own volition or under the repeated orders of Davis and his Secretary of War is a question not yet settled between the disputants, though the facts detailed in this volume seem to leave the probability in favour of Johnston. Under the enthusiasm engendered throughout the South by the victory, Johnston's name became very prominent, and he was left in command notwithstanding his failure to advance against the defeated army of McDowell.

There is no doubt now that he erred greatly in not pressing forward after Bull Run with his entire army, much of which, according to his own narrative, had not been engaged, and all of which must have been inspired with the highest enthusiasm. Holmes, Ewell and others reported and asked for orders after the firing had ceased, but they were told their troops "would not be wanted, and were requested to lead them back to camp." Considered purely as a matter of duty to the cause in which Johnston was engaged, these orders were in the highest degree unmilitary, and showed that the General was not equal to the great emergency of the time.

Writers upon warfare generally agree as to the best method of conducting a battle. There are some circumstances which justify the defensive, and some which make the offensive absolutely necessary. At the battle of Bull Run the Union commander chose the latter, and was right in doing so, and thus perforce compelled Johnston to take the former till he had gained the victory; but then, according to all rules and all the great precedents of generalship, he should have assumed the offensive, and completed his success. He could not have suffered more than a repulse, and might have captured Washington. In spite of the large force gathered there, the chances were ninety nine out of a hundred in his favor. The opinion of the best officers in the Union army was that he would have swept everything before him. Victory would have given him arms, munitions, and supplies of every description. His excuse is that the strength of the Union army and its position were too formidable to be successfully assailed, and that his own force was "more disorganized by victory than the Union army by defeat." This cannot be true, for a large part of his army had not fired a shot; but if true, there was this difference, which he should never have lost sight of, namely, that while he had in his favor the

disorganization of victory, which added ten fold to the confidence, however much it might have shaken the coherence of his troops, McDowell's troops were flying under the disorganization of defeat, accompanied by panic, which rendered them entirely uncontrollable for the time being. It is not to be wondered at that Davis, a military man himself, and one who, notwithstanding his arbitrary and injudicious character, held the Confederacy to its work with a constancy and courage rarely surpassed, should have been disheartened by Johnston's lack of aggressive temper and good generalship, and should have sought to supersede him by an officer of superior rank.

Gen. Johnston's pages make it clear that the Northern people were deceived after Bull Run, and even till the present time, in the belief that he was then in favor of a vigorous forward movement, and was restrained by the Confederate Government. Indeed, it appears that he was not only not in favor of any aggressive policy with the means at his disposal, but shortly after the battle of Bull Run began considering the project of falling back beyond the Rappahannock, and finally selected a new position behind that stream, and against the wishes if not the protest of Davis evacuated his strongly entrenched camp at Manassas Junction, abandoned his *quaker* guns and considerable stores at that place and at Thoroughfare Gap, and retreated without having been even seriously menaced, much less followed by the Union army, then under McClellan. He now maintains that the stores had been collected and sent forward in much larger quantities than required by him, and against his protest, and that he abandoned them because there was too much danger in waiting for them to be sent to the rear. Danger from what? Certainly not from Union army, for that was commanded by McClellan, who had no idea of advancing by that line, and even if he had, his timidity was greater than that of Johnston, and might have safely been depended upon, as the sequel showed, long enough to permit the withdrawal of all the stores which had been accumulated for Johnston's army. General Johnston shows that he protested against the accumulation of these stores at points so far advanced, and he thereby leaves fair ground for the presumption, if the fact were not already apparent by his own admissions, that it was no part of his plan to advance further with his army; but it does not seem to have ever occurred to him that it might have been the essence of Davis's policy to capture Washington at least.

Under these circumstances, although it may have been a stretch of authority, it was natural and every way justifiable for Davis, in appointing the generals of full rank authorized by the Confederate Congress, to overslaugh Johnston by putting Lee and Albert Sidney Johnston ahead of him; and herein seems to lie the entire cause of the trouble which never ceased to exist between Gen. Johnston and the Confederate authorities. Their disagreements were continuous, and they form the theme upon which this Narrative is strung. They mar the symmetry of the story, and while their exposition throws light upon the history of the Confederacy, they also cast a shade upon a character which has hitherto been regarded by many as one of the most symmetrical of all in the rebellion. The more they are studied, the more will they damage the reputation of Gen. Johnston, though it is not probable that they will much benefit that of Mr. Davis. So strongly is the Narrative colored by the interest, passions, and heartburnings of the