

Tales and Sketches.

THE SONG OF THE CAMP.

A CRIMEAN INCIDENT.

At the dinner given in New York recently to Bayard Taylor, the subjoined poem was handed about by Pierrepont, who related that twenty two years since he was so impressed with its merit that he had it printed at the office of the *Evening Post*, to give to his friends:

"Give us a song!" the soldiers cried,
The outer trenches guarding,
When the heated guns of the camps allied
Grew weary of bombarding.

The dark Redan, in silent scoff,
Lay, grim and threat'ning, under;
And the tawny mound of the Malakoff
No longer belched its thunder.

There was a pause. The guardsmen said:
"We storm the forts to-morrow;
Sing while we may, another day
Will bring enough of sorrow."

Then lay along the battery's side,
Below the smoking cannon—
Brave hearts, from Severn and from Clyde,
And from the banks of Shannon.

They sang of love and not of fame;
Forgot was Britain's glory;
Each heart recalled a different name,
But all sang "Annie Laurie."

Voice after voice caught up the song,
Until its tender passion
Rose like an anthem rich and strong—
Their battle eve confession.

Dear girl, her name he dared not speak,
Yet, as the song grew louder,
Something upon the soldier's cheek
Washed off the stains of powder.

Beyond the dark'ning ocean burned
The bloody sunset's embers,
While the Crimean valleys learned
How British love remembers.

And once again a fire of hell
Rained from the Russian quarters,
With scream of shot, and burst of shell,
And bellowing of the mortars.

And Irish Norah's eyes are dim
For a singer, dumb and gory;
And English Mary mourns for him
Who sang of "Annie Laurie."

Ah, soldiers! to your honored rest
Your truth and valor bearing;
The bravest are the tenderest—
The loving are the daring.

—Bayard Taylor.

HOW OLD BATTLES FOUGHT TO ESCAPE A DRUNK-
ARD'S GRAVE, AND CONQUERED.

"They call you Old Battles, don't they?" The surgeon addressed a large, brawny man, lying in the hospital.

"Yes."

"And they call you the bravest man in the regiment, too?"

"I believe so," was answered with the utmost indifference.

Old Battles was one of the boldest, most fearless, most terrible men in our ranks. He received his name from having been in so many battles. In the smoke and flash and fire, 'mid balls and shells and cannon, when the roar and strife and carnage were most fearful, he was in his element. The balls might fall like hail—might riddle him—he fought on while he could stand and load. He was a kind of army chronicle in person. Scarce a limb but had been wounded, and to each he had given the name of the battle in which it had been honored. He always called his right shoulder

"South Mountain;" one of his arms was "Gainesville;" a leg "Bull Run;" his breast "Antietam;" and one of his hips was "Fredericksburg."

Fierce and terrible in battle, he was still and meek in the hospital. The surgeon came again, tried to rally him; spoke to him of his bravery.

"I don't feel so very brave now."

"Why not? You'll be better soon. You'll soon shoulder your gun again."

"That may be, but I wa'n't thinkin' o' that. Surgeon, stop a minute."

The surgeon waited. "Sit down on the edge of my cot."

The surgeon sat down. "They call me 'Old Battles,' you know, but there's mo'n one kind o' fighting, and when I lie here I never feel brave, for I think then o' the battles that I am always beat in the battle with strong drink. Teach me to pray, surgeon."

"Pity me, O God! help me!" Let that be your first prayer."

"Oh, yes. 'Pity me, O God! help me!'" prayed the man of battles.

"Pity me, O God!" and he wept like a child.

The surgeon visited other wounded men; still "Old Battles" prayed, "Pity me, O God! Pity me, O God! Help me! Pity me, O God." And God heard and pitied, and sent help. When the well loved cup was offered him, he turned away with this upon his lips; he asked strength of God, and obtained it—strength to give a firm refusal. His comrades looked upon him with admiration, and thought him even braver in his resolution than he had shown himself before the foe. One more battle—the last—and again he lay in the hospital. His old friend, the surgeon, came.

"How now, Battles? You've another glorious scar."

"No, surgeon, this last wound will never heal into a scar."

"Don't say that! Keep up your heart! I expect yet to hear your name changed from 'Old Battles' to 'Old Victory.'"

"Now, surgeon, let me tell you, the best battle I ever fought was without sword or gun—I fought with that little prayer; that conquered in the fightings within, harder than any I ever had with the enemy without. That little prayer has made me conqueror over the worst of appetites—that for strong drink. I have conquered! I have conquered! God be praised, and that is enough."—*Anvil.*

THE ENGINEER'S STORY.

"Let me put my name down first—I can't stay long!"

It was a blue ribbon meeting, and the man was a locomotive engineer, bronzed and strong, and having eyes full of deep determination. He signed his name in a bold, plain hand, tied a blue ribbon in his button hole, and as he left the hall he said:

"As the Lord looks down upon me, I'll never touch liquor again."

"Have you been a hard drinker?" queried a man who walked beside the engineer.

"No. I have never been drunk in my life. I've swallowed considerable whisky, but I never went far enough to get drunk. I shouldn't miss it, or be the worse off for an hour, if all the intoxicating drink in the world was drained into the ocean."

"But you seemed eager to sign the pledge."

"So I was, and I'll keep it through thick and thin, and talk temperance to every man on the road."

"You must have strong reasons?"

"Well, if you walk down to the depot, I'll tell you a story on the way. It hasn't been in the papers, and only a few of us know the facts. You know I run the night express on the B—— road. We always have at least two sleepers and a coach, and sometimes we had as many as two hundred passengers. It's a good road, level as a floor, and pretty straight, though there is a bad spot or two. The night express has the right o' way, and we make fast time. It is no rare thing to skim along at the rate of fifty miles an hour, for thirty or forty miles, and we rarely go below thirty. One night I pulled out of Detroit with two sleepers, two coaches and the baggage and mail cars. Nearly all the berths in both sleepers were full, and most of the seats of the coaches were occupied. It was a cold night, threatening all the time to rain, and a lonesome wind whistled around the cab as we left the city behind. We were seventeen minutes late, and that meant fast time all the way through.

Everything ran along all right up to midnight. The main track was kept clear for us, the engine was in good spirits, and ran into D—— as smooth as you please. The train coming east was to meet us fifteen miles west of D—— but the operator at the station had failed to receive his usual report below. That was strange, and yet it was not, and after a little consultation the conductor sent me ahead. We were to keep the main track, while the other trains would run in on the side track. Night after night our time had been so close that we did not keep them waiting over two minutes, and were generally in sight when they switched in.

"When we left D—— we went ahead at a rattling speed, fully believing that the other train would be on time. Nine miles from D—— is the little village of Porto. There was a telegraph office there, but the operator had no night work. He closed his office and went home at nine o'clock, and any messages on the wires were held above or below until next morning. When I sighted the station I saw a red lantern swinging between the rails. Greatly astonished I pulled up the heavy train and got a bit of news that almost lifted me out of my boots. It was God's mercy as plain as a "