

A SILENCED BATTERY

BY GRACE KING.

Let me tell you a story.

It was during the war between the Northern and Southern States. A great battle had been fought. It had extended far beyond the geographical limits set by the tacticians; it had raged far beyond the ferocity expected of the man.

A battery had been charged again and again. Each time the hostile flag led the column of uniforms and bayonets nearer and nearer, each time the intrenched artillery drove it back with greater havoc, and each time the curtain of smoke lifted over a ground thick with fallen soldiers.

Finally for one moment the two flags touched, the colors of the uniforms mingled, tossed at the ends of glittering bayonets; then there was a terrible explosion; an earthquake shook the ground; the curtain of smoke was too heavy to lift; the battery was silenced; so were the silencers.

The battle turned in another direction; the guns sounded from another quarter of the heavens. When the sun set it set on the field, but not on the struggle. Night fell, but not to cloak the slumbers of exhausted humanity; the darkness was used to conceal the stealthy forwarding of re-inforcements to this point, ammunition to that. The moon rose over the day's accomplishment, over the fields of trampled grain, over the evacuated camps, over the prostrate rank and file, over the silenced battery.

The smoke all cleared away; a dewy coolness refreshed the parched air, and made it balm to parched lips and burning skins. A breeze rose with the moon. It swept gently over the field, so gently—as it feared to hurt the sore wounds, gathering all the sounds that were falling unheeded from stiffened lips and falling hearts, and bearing them all on—sighs, groans, plaints, prayers, blue and gray together—into one common neutral prayer that rose and fell fitfully, like the strains of an Æolian harp. It was an Æolian harp with human strings.

Around the battery the moon's rays seldom hit the ground, so thick were the bodies, or fragments of them, and the breeze seemed to thicken perceptibly with sound as it passed over what had been the breastworks. With the fitful sounds there were fitful awakenings from what seemed the sleep of death; eyelids quivered into feeble liftings; fingers twitched, glassy eyes gleamed with a momentary light, bodies rolled over, legs or arms moved, like a preliminary movement before resurrection.

From under a heap of mortal and military debris on top of the embankment a whole head raised itself; it seemed festively alone in its life. Its staring wide eyes glittered with fever, its groans and sighs broke in bloody bubbles over its face; there seemed no mouth or member left to utter them. All around were blood and blue and gray, bayonets, corpses, and disjecta membra of corpses; there was nothing else to see, for the moon to show him. Below the ghastly, bloody head—in touching distance if the hands could have moved to touch them; in speaking distance if there had been a tongue to speak—lay in a bright glare of light two forms. They were still clasped together in the tight, convulsive, desperate grasp with which they had clung when they were threatened by the same flash, mangled by the same shell. Underneath them were their two flags, undistinguishable from the dye of blood.

"Water! water!" gasped one. A groan came from the other. They made an effort, but could not move one from the other. "You—you are a Yankee?" came from one. "You—you are a—" "Confederate." The wounded, bloody, gazing man would fall back, from weakness, into unconsciousness, which held sweet visions; but the air, getting always purer and fresher, would wake him out of them with a morning alertness. With facial ties cleared and rested, he would open his eyes eagerly, raise his head, and see always the same picture, hear always the same Æolian harp of mortal anguish.

"If I could only move!" complained one of the figures near him. "Don't—don't leave me," implored the other. All through the night, among the sounds borne by the breeze, the man could hear those two voices from the dying man clasped in each other's arms. Their talking went into his own delirious imaginings, and started all sorts of fancies. It was low and sweet, like the talking of angels or women or children. What they said he never could precisely unravel. Sometimes he could remember a long conversation between them; sometimes it was all a blur in his mind.

He thought while their tones came to him of boys playing out in the meadows; of children in their night-clothes saying their evening "Our Father"; of homesick students crying for "mother"; of companions on a railway journey exchanging names and addresses; of parting relatives sending long messages home, as people do at a "goodby"; of the congregation in a country church repeating the creed; of the Saviour forgiving his enemies; of weeping mothers; of sorrowing penitents; of angels in long robes, with upward-pointed wings, rising to Heaven across a moonlit sky. Then there was a confused babbling of both voices, like the babbling of the fever in his own brain. After what appeared an eternity of this, a cloud came over the moon and rain fell.

The rain being so long and heavy as to render the roads impassable, the battle surprised both armies again by terminating suddenly in an unfinished condition. Squads were immediately detailed on each side to look after the killed and wounded. A prominent family in Boston telegraphed to friends in their army to spare no expense that the body of so-and-so, aged twenty, five feet ten, regular features, black hair, etc., etc., might be sent home for burial. A prominent family in Richmond telegraphed to relatives in their army that nothing be left undone to secure the remains of so-and-so and send them home for burial; send either, five feet nine, light hair, regular features, etc., etc.

From both sides officers came to the battery to search for the missing ones, and found them lying back to back, almost lip to lip, hardly more than one mangled body between them, two battered flags beneath. There could be no separation without mutilation. All that was possible was done. The men were dug out under and around them, and both sets together in a common trench, were both covered by one blanket. Both sets of officers were generally amenable to secure identification of the spot. A picket-fence was put up around it, and boards lettered with the necessary record. Among the wounded in the battery a man with his jawbone shattered and tongue shot away was discovered in voiceless delirium. He was sent to the nearest hospital, and there with difficulty recognized as Marcot; the caricaturist and newspaper correspondent, an amateur soldier unattached to any command. The war ended; peace was restored. From his hospital, Marcot—the hideous, deformed Marcot—wrote his account of the death scene of the two soldiers, and published it over his signature in papers North and South; but he had forgotten, if he had ever heard, the names. He then left America forever to hide his ugliness and dumbness, and seek amelioration of his sufferings at some obscure bath in Europe.

The battle-field grew over with weeds and grasses; the earth settled into quiet uniformity over the place where the two great armies had fought, where the half of both of them lay buried. A whitewashed picket-fence, surrounding a double-ridged grave, marked the elevated site of the battery. Near by, the fresh timbers of a new dwelling replaced the old homestead which had been shot away in the introductory movement to the battle. The thrifty old couple, who had been scared away at the time from their property, returned like birds to their roost as soon as the disturbance was over. They were honestly proud of the honor conferred on their small territory, and lived in simple subjection to it. The old man was superstitiously careful to till only in those secluded spots unenriched by human gore, and was piously glad when a proven sterility of soil diminished his crop and endorsed his judgment. He was very old and childless, and so deaf that he looked as if nothing had penetrated his brain except the shrieks of his wife. The old woman was as cheerful and energetic as she had ever been. When her day's work was over she would sit with her knitting on the porch that faced the public road, and think aloud her daily increasing wonderment at a battle in her own native State and on her own little scrap of land, a battery in her own cornfield.

But the battle itself was a cheap home-made production and the day a faded representation to the battle and day called Buena Vista. Her only son and child had been killed there and then, some twenty years before. The very name meant to her the clashing of swords and the shining of the panoply of the arch-angels. Whenever people talked to her of the last war and the fighting in it, she would simply ask them if they had ever heard of the battle of Buena Vista; that was all.

On the anniversary of the battle, the battle that took place in the corn fields, which they determined to keep with the Sabbath-like propriety of clean clothes and no work, a hack drove up the road from the station and stopped at their gate. A lady in deep mourning alighted, followed by a little boy. She walked straight to the cottage, paused to ask a question, but seeing the grave in the distance, she burst into tears, and hastened to the path toward it, motioning to the little boy to remain behind. He sat down, shy and embarrassed, on the lowest step. The old woman, looking after the lady, saw her drop on her knees, and she took rest her head against the fence around the grave. The white of the northern-bound train was heard, and shortly after the same hack returned with another fare; and stopped at the gate. A thin, gray-haired lady in shabby mourning descended, holding a toddling little girl by the hand. She would not be detained by a word. Hastily putting the little girl on the steps, she pointed to the grave, and ran toward it, not by the path, but over the field, which took her straight and quicker. She too fell on her knees in the grass outside the fence, and seemed to sob heavily. The old woman saw the first corner rise from her knees, and then the other rose, and both women confronted each other over the fence, looking across the grave.

Each mother looked into the face of the mother of the killer of her son, and the hatred that dried the tears in their eyes, and silenced the prayers on their lips. What wrongs and outrages each one remembered, what the war had left unavenged each heart only knew. They raised their hands to point, and opened their lips to speak, but a simultaneous thought of feeling drove them again to their knees. Each mother got out her little store of relics and spread them on the grass. The gray cap, lock of fair hair, trinkets and photographs on one side, the blue cap, dark hair, trinkets and photographs on the other, with the little pieces of each flag which the kind-hearted officers had cut out for them the day their boys were buried, and the sob of one pointed to the oars of the other, and their prayers, intermingled, until the hackman came, first for the passenger on the Northern train, then for the passenger who wished to go South.

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Each mother looked into the face of the mother of the killer of her son, and the hatred that dried the tears in their eyes, and silenced the prayers on their lips. What wrongs and outrages each one remembered, what the war had left unavenged each heart only knew. They raised their hands to point, and opened their lips to speak, but a simultaneous thought of feeling drove them again to their knees. Each mother got out her little store of relics and spread them on the grass. The gray cap, lock of fair hair, trinkets and photographs on one side, the blue cap, dark hair, trinkets and photographs on the other, with the little pieces of each flag which the kind-hearted officers had cut out for them the day their boys were buried, and the sob of one pointed to the oars of the other, and their prayers, intermingled, until the hackman came, first for the passenger on the Northern train, then for the passenger who wished to go South.

The old woman had given the little children a cup of milk apiece, and put them to play. While they were laughing and racing together the little girl stopped suddenly and pouted, and would have nothing more to do with the boy. "What is the matter with you?" he begged. "Go away!" she answered. "Won't you play with me some more?" "No, I won't play with you any more." "Why won't you play with me any more?" "Because I hate you." "But why do you hate me?" "Because you are a Yankee." "But you are a nice little girl, and I love you."

"No, you don't." "Not I do." "That's history." "Then his mother called him to get into the hack." Each anniversary of the battle brought the mothers to the grave. They never spoke. They wept and prayed together when it could not be avoided, and separated, each one resembling more and more bitterly the presence of the other's son in her son's grave. The old woman cared for them both, one just as tenderly as the other, welcoming and speeding them, and invariably asking them if they had ever heard of the battle of Buena Vista. The children always had their glass of milk and played pleasantly together, until the little girl would remember that she hated the little boy. Then no prayers or entreaties would move her to speak to him.

ASHFIELD.
From our own correspondent.
Council met Aug. 29th. Minutes of former meeting read and signed. According to bylaw the county rate is 2 2-10 mills on the dollar; local rate, 14 mills. The reeve and treasurer were asked to borrow \$400 for three months to meet current expenses. Assessors paid: E. Andrew, inspecting gravelling, \$5; E. Armstrong, inspecting gravelling, \$1.25; F. J. J. J., \$1.35; T. Baird, \$1.68; P. Fisher, gravelling, \$3.74; D. Keys, bridge, con. 10, \$1.79; J. Vint, gravelling, culvert and inspecting, \$2.50; E. Twomey, gravelling, \$3.50; D. Allen, inspecting gravelling, \$1.25; Wm. Mours, gravelling, \$5.50; J. Drennan, culvert and repairing road, \$9.50; J. Kilpatrick, balance on work on Richard-son's Hill and repairing scraper, \$12.75; Mrs. Glenn, gravel, \$16; W. Rutherford, gravelling, \$25.20; J. Thompson, culvert, \$14.25; D. McIntyre, inspecting gravelling, \$2.50; J. Lannan, filling gravel pit, \$2.50; J. Mahaffy, plank to pathmasters, \$3.68; H. O'way, funeral expenses for the late Mrs. Martin, \$3.30; J. Sullivan, repairing hill, \$4; J. Buckley, inspecting gravelling, \$12; J. Dalton, culvert, \$3; F. McLennan, repairing culvert, \$1.50; J. McNain, balance on Pritchard's bridge, \$8; Ed. Hannah, gravelling, \$102.86; C. Murray, drain, \$2; A. Drenney, repairing road, \$8.50; T. Congram, work on road, \$2; T. Culbert, work on road, \$2; G. Harris, lumber, \$2.60; D. McWhinney, gravelling, \$43.75; W. Kilpatrick, equalizing union school sections, \$20, and underdrain, \$4; W. H. Maize, inspecting gravelling, \$14.37; Wawanooch Agri. Society, \$25; J. Murphy, spreading gravelling, \$8; T. Ford, work on road, \$6; T. Disher, repairing bridge, \$55.70. The clerk was asked to write W. T. Pollock, respecting change in course of river at his mill. Council meets again Oct. 18. W. LANE, clerk.

A single scratch may cause a festering sore. Victoria Carbolio Salve rapidly heals cuts, wounds, bruises, burns and all sores. 1m

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"I have used Paine's Celery Compound and it has had a salutary effect. It invigorated the system and I feel like a new man. It improves the appetite and facilitates digestion." J. T. CORNELL, Primus, S. C.
Spring medicine means more now—a day than it did ten years ago. The winter of 1888-89 has left the nerves all fagged out. The nerves must be strengthened, the blood purified, liver and bowels regulated. Paine's Celery Compound—the Spring medicine of to-day—does all this, as nothing else can. Prescribed by Physicians. Recommended by Druggists, Endorsed by Ministers, Guaranteed by the Manufacturers to be

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"In the spring of 1881 it all run down. I would get up in the morning with so tired a feeling, and was so weak that I could hardly get around. I bought a bottle of Paine's Celery Compound, and before I had taken it a week I felt very much better. I can cheerfully recommend it to all who need a building up and strengthening medicine." Mrs. R. A. Dow, Burlington, Vt.

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Trains arrive and depart at Goderich as follows:
ARRIVE.
Mail and Express..... 1.50 p.m.
Mixed..... 3.35 p.m.
Mixed..... 11.00 a.m.
Mixed..... 7.35 p.m.
DEPART.
Mail and Express..... 7.00 a.m.
Mixed..... 1.55 p.m.
Mixed..... 1.40 p.m.

Whereas much disease is caused by wrong action of the liver, kidneys, bowels and blood, and whereas Burdock Blood Bitters is guaranteed to cure or relieve dyspepsia, kidney complaint, liver complaint, dropsy, rheumatism, sick headache, etc. Therefore, Be it Resolved that all sufferers should use B. B. B. and be restored to health.

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NASAL BALM
OSNABURCK, DIXONS P.O., Ont. May 11th, 1887.
My wife suffered for five years with that distressing disease, catarrh. Her case was one of the worst known in these parts. She tried all of the catarrh remedies I ever saw advertised, but they were of no use. I finally procured a bottle of Nasal Balm. She has used only one half of it, and now feels like a new person. I feel it my duty to say that Nasal Balm "cannot be TOO HIGHLY recommended for catarrh troubles, and am pleased to have all such sufferers know through its use they will receive instant relief and CURE."
CHAS. MCGILL, Farmer