

THE BADGE OF BLUE

"I must no longer tarry here,"
Said Helen, with lowered eyes,
"But, truth to tell, before I go,
You're right in your surmise."
"Your soldier marched with colors high,
And uniform so fine,
Had he returned, all spent and maimed,
What answer would be thine?"

"What answer? Can you ask me, sir?"
Reproachful were her eyes;
"But, ah! Neal's dead," she softly said,
"Somewhere his cold heart lies."
The soldier doffed his battered cap,
And from his bosom drew
A little, faded, brodered thing,
It was the badge of blue.

His brow now bared, at once she knew
It was her own brave Neal.
"Neal!" in ecstasy she cried,
"You are not dead, dear Neal?"
"No, I'm not dead, my Helen fair,
For here am I, you see,
But I am broken, worn and maimed,
And no fit mate for thee."