STEPHEN CRANE

STORIES FROM THE WAR

EXTENDED ANNOTATED EDITION

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Contents:

Stories from the War, S. Crane
Jazzybee Verlag Jürgen Beck
86450 Altenmünster, Loschberg 9
Germany

ISBN: 9783849644970

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Stephen Crane – A Biographical Sketch

By Thomas L. Raymond

Stephen Crane is a name which suggests a Newarker as strongly as any name can. One of the seven men who represented Newark in a boundary settlement, with some men from Elizabeth, on a hill out in Weequahic Park, was Jasper Crane, who was one of the founders of Newark, two hundred and fifty-five years ago, and whose farm came to

the southwest corner of Broad and Market streets. One of his descendants, Stephen Crane, was a member of the Continental Congress and had four sons who were soldiers in the Revolution. From Jasper Crane and Stephen Crane was descended our Stephen Crane, who also won fame, but not the sort his ancestors had, for he won his in the world of letters, as a great artist of his craft.

His father, the Reverend Jonathan Townley Crane, D.D., was born in Connecticut Farms and later moved to Newark. He became a Methodist, — his family had been Presbyterians, I fancy, until his generation,— and was Pastor of the Central Methodist Church on Market Street, and later Presiding Elder of the Methodist Conference for Newark. His wife was Mary Helen Peck, and both were strong in intellect, writers, he of theology, she, after his death, for the "New York Tribune." It was in Newark, at 14 Mulberry Place, that Stephen Crane, whose memory we honor tonight, was born on November 1,1871. The simple red brick three-story house still stands there, a ghost of the dear old Newark of the seventies and eighties, when its streets were quiet and shady and its life serene. To realize that such a life as Crane's came from such a house and such surroundings requires some forcing of the imagination. He was the youngest of fourteen children, and it is evident that the family supply of theology and religious piety had run out before this last Crane was born, for he does not seem a likely heir of such ancestors. He was taken from Newark in 1874, when his father, in the itinerancy of his ministry, was called elsewhere.

The Cranes moved from Newark to Bloomington, which is across the Raritan River from Bound Brook, where they lived for two years. Stephen's brother Edmund tells some amusing stories of him in his early years. The boys, of whom there were seven in the family at this time, used to

go down to the river to swim, taking Stevie with them. He says: "We often took Stevie bathing with us in the Raritan River about half a mile above the bridge. There was a smooth, sandy bar extending from the south bank across the river, very shallow near the shore and growing deeper toward the middle of the river. Stevie would wade in the shallows watched by one of us. Wading breast deep in water he would stretch out his arms and waving his hands, would achieve what he called 'fimming.' He started to 'fim' to 'Wee-wee' (Willie), my next older brother, who was farther out in the river. As the depth gradually increased the water came up to his chin, then to his mouth, and then to his eyes, but he kept steadily on, and I plucked him out, gasping but unscared, just as his yellow hair was going under. We boys were naturally delighted with his grit."

From Bloomington the family removed to Paterson and two years later to Port Jervis, where Stephen first went to school. He was eight years old before beginning school. Because of his delicate health he had not been sent to school before this and it seems his parents had not attempted to teach him in any formal way; but his mind was active and bright and he soon passed from class to class until he was studying in classes with children older than himself. In 1880 his father died and his mother took the family to Newark, where they lived for a short while in the Roseville section, then went to live again in Port Jervis. About two years later they removed to Asbury Park, where Townley Crane, an older brother, was in charge of a news bureau for the "New York Herald" and "Sun" and the "Philadelphia Press." Stephen attended school in Asbury Park, and in 1888 we find him reporting "Shore News" as an aid to his brother Townley. Mrs. Crane at this time was reporting the religious news of Ocean Grove. Townley's connection with the "Tribune" was terminated abruptly in the fall of 1888 through a very amusing incident. It seems

that young Stephen reported a parade of a certain patriotic order in Asbury Park in the summer of 1892, but in his report of it, he gave full play to his sense of humor and "made a burlesque of the whole performance," ridiculing the marchers, their clothes, and the way they marched. The order was growing very strong in numbers and influence at this time, and the Republicans were anxious to obtain their votes for Harrison and Reid, who were that year running for President and Vice-President. The story Crane had written was approved by William J. Devereux, who was in charge of the news bureau because of Townley's absence, without careful reading. Thinking it of little importance, he sent it on and it duly appeared the next morning in print. It caused great indignation among the men of the order in the State of New York, and in fact everywhere, and since Whitelaw Reid was the editor of the "Tribune" and Republican candidate for Vice-President, it turned them against the ticket.

The state, the vote of which decided the election, was carried by Cleveland by about a thousand votes, and so it has been said that Crane made Cleveland President of the United States. This is Mr. Devereux's account of the incident, and it appeared contemporaneously, I believe, in the "Trenton Times." Others tell of a parade of labor men upon which Crane's comments were equally unwelcome, but in which he treated the subject from another point of view, that of the social psychologist, and we are left to choose between the two accounts. Both stories relate to the same incident, however, but Billy Devereux's is far more colorful.

The process of educating Stephen Crane was never completed in the academic sense. It is said that he went to Pennington Seminary, then to the Hudson River Institute at Claverack, New York, a military school, then to Lafayette

College in 1890, where he remained but two terms, then to Syracuse University, which he left after one year, in 1891. Though endowed with a fine mind and a penetrating intelligence, he was a poor scholar; bad in his English, fond of going out of nights and smoking a pipe; not a hard worker; unreasonably often absent from his classes, a possible cause of the abrupt termination of his stay at Lafayette; but "a good fellow," considerate, gentle, though ready to use his fists in a good cause with effect when necessary; a baseball player, and a good one. Finally, we are told that while at college he spent what time he could in typesetting rooms of local newspapers, and that this very elementary stage in literature inspired him with the desire to write. One more item of interest about his college days: he read a great deal, but out of his courses, and into late hours of the night. This is the picture of Stephen Crane at school and college which I gather from the many sources of information placed in my hands. It is a probable picture, and his later life gives no contradiction to the truth of it. It is very interesting also. Genius cannot be harnessed; the school of genius is unorganized and undisciplined, and we cannot but feel that all through these years, no doubt vastly irksome to him, he had his eye on his goal, he knew what he was about; consciously or unconsciously he was fitting himself for his remarkable career.

On leaving college he was fated, however, to find himself in a far more bitter school — the school of poverty and disappointment, of fruitless effort and failure of recognition; a school in which he paid with hunger for the printing of his first book; in which he once said: "I would give my future literary career for twenty-three dollars in cash at this minute." After leaving college he sought work without success on some New York newspaper, toiling through Park Row, upstairs and downstairs, from one editor's office to another; but was obliged to take a position

in a mercantile house, which he soon gave up. He went through all the poverty and privation in these days that one must know who determines to live his own life and express his own soul, but at last was employed by the "Tribune," on the staff of which he worked for over a year. Crane later joined the staff of the "Newark Morning Times," a journal whose short career will be recalled by some of us old grayheads. He worked for the "Times" a short while for $10 a week and then returned to New York City. Here he lived a life of great poverty, writing special articles for Sunday newspapers and doing any writing he could to make a living.

He came to know the men who were then prominent in the literary circle of New York —Richard Watson Gilder, Hamlin Garland, Thomas Masson, Edward Townsend, and others. He investigated the life of the East Side and of the slums. The urge of art was strong in him and he wrote his first novel, "Maggie, a Girl of the Streets," a story of a sordid family of the slums, for which he unsuccessfully tried to find a publisher. Eventually it was privately printed and published under the pseudonym of Johnstone Smith, and came to the notice of William Dean Howells, who recognized at once the genius of its author. From this time Howells was his friend, encouraging him, helping him, and giving him his start. Then came the book that proved the turning-point in his career, bringing him from obscurity into full light as a writer of great force and imagination, "The Red Badge of Courage," published by Appleton in 1895, after first appearing in a Philadelphia newspaper. "The Black Riders and Other Lines" followed, published by Copeland and Day in Boston in 1895 in beautiful form, a choice little book which I predict collectors will seize upon. This was followed by "George's Mother" (1896); "The Little Regiment and Other Episodes of the American Civil War" (1896); "The Third Violet" (1897); "The Open Boat and

Other Tales of Adventure" (1898); "The Monster" (1899); "Whilomville Stories" (1900); "Wounds in the Rain" (1900); "Great Battles of the World" (1901); "The O'Ruddy" (1903), which at his death was unfinished and was completed by his friend Robert Barr.

Upon these books the judgment of Stephen Crane as an artist must be based. It is, I think, a rich product for so short a life. It is apparent that writing books in New York City, lover of action and adventure that he was, had made him restless, and no doubt Crane gladly seized the opportunity to go to Cuba, where the uprising that led to the Spanish-American War was well under way. In the fall of 1896 he was engaged as correspondent for the "New York Journal." Having determined upon this adventure, he was obliged to await the secret sailing of the filibustering ship that was to take him to Cuba. Receiving sudden notice of its time of departure, and having no opportunity to arrange his private affairs, he wrote his brother hasty directions for their disposition in case of his death, which he evidently anticipated as a likely result of his enterprise. The steamer was wrecked off the Florida coast, and for several days and nights he and three others of the crew were tossed about on "the abrupt waves," as he calls them. He tells his story in "The Open Boat," and splendid reading it is! They were at last rescued, dragged up on the beach, one of them dead, after Crane and one of the others had done all the rowing, taking their turns at rest in the wet bottom of the storm-tossed little boat. This fearful experience must have injured his health permanently; still he did not give up his intention of going on to Cuba but waited around to find other means of getting there. After futile efforts, he writes his brother in March, 1897: "I have been for over a month among the swamps further South [of Jacksonville], wading miserably to and fro in an attempt to

avoid our darned U. S. navy. It can't be done. I am through trying. I have changed all my plans and am going to Crete."

He was not yet weary of adventure. The Graeco-Turkish war had broken out, and before resting up from one terrible experience he was rushing to another, planning to go to the scene of war in Crete as correspondent of the "New York Journal." Apparently he went to Crete by way of England. This was his first visit to England, and it was here in all likelihood that he was engaged as field correspondent of the "Westminster Gazette." When the Spanish-American War broke out in 1898, he was back in New York, and the spirit of adventure took him off" again to Cuba as war correspondent of the "New York Journal" and the "New York World." He was at Guantanamo, Santiago, and Havana and in Porto Rico. He was mentioned in official dispatches for gallantry under fire with the marines near Guantanamo. Did he leave Cuba after the war by way of Mexico? It is merely a surmise of mine that he did, because some of his stories in "The Open Boat and Other Tales" indicate an intimate acquaintance with Mexico City, the Mexican plains, and Mexican life generally. He certainly knows the American bar in Mexico City, the adobe hut, the Mexican peasant, the Mexican sky and night. He knows his Texas also, and in all probability he came back to New York leisurely through Mexico and Texas, filling his mind on the way with those impressions, sharp of outline and rich in color, of what he saw and heard, of which he has written so beautifully in many short stories. I especially recall "The Bride comes to Yellow Sky,""The Five White Mice," "One Dash—Horses" as fine glimpses of life in Mexico and in Texas.

Though I have not seen any of his articles as war correspondent, several of the admirers of his literary work express the opinion that he made a great mistake in

attempting to do other than imaginative writing. He was evidently not a success at journalistic writing at any time in his career. Unhappily it was the hardships of the sort of journalistic work he had chosen that injured his health and laid the foundation for tuberculosis which developed later and brought his young and remarkable life to an all too early close. He had tasted of the sweets of life in England on his first visit there in 1897, and the lure seems to have called him back after his return from the war in Cuba. He had friends there; he was understood and appreciated by the best minds in literature; English life appealed to him, and no doubt his shattered health was a further motive in his determination to live in England. No wonder he felt the spell of England when we find he had such friends there as Joseph Conrad, H.G. Wells, and Ford Madox Hueffer. Each has written of him since his death in the highest appreciation of his art, and it is apparent that his personality was extremely attractive to each apart from his art. There are charming little personal touches of reminiscence in these few, too few, pages that these men have written. Conrad says: "My wife and I like best to remember him riding to meet us at the gate of the Park at Brede. Born master of his sincere impressions, he was also born horseman. He never appeared so happy or so much to advantage as on the back of a horse.... Those who have read his little tale 'Horses' and the story of 'The Open Boat,' in the volume of that name, know with what fine understanding he loved horses and the sea. And his passage on this earth was like that of a horseman riding swiftly in the dawn of a day fated to be short and without sunshine." These words are from one of the most eminent men of letters of today, and one considered by many the greatest living novelist in the English language. When he went to England with his wife, whom he had married in 1898, and whose maiden name was Cora Taylor, they lived

at first in a little house in Limpsfield, in Surrey, a short way out of London.

When I was in England in 1912 I spent most of my time in London, making trips to Oxford and Canterbury but otherwise seeing little of England. It is a curious coincidence, however, that I did spend several days in Limpsfield visiting some friends. It is but a short trip from London, but the little place is a charming example of an ancient English town, in the midst of English country, with its narrow winding principal street through the centre densely lined with very old and very diminutive houses, with casement windows of diamond paned leaded glass. At the head of the street is the thirteenth century parish church crumbling in its Gothic beauty, and outside the town is the great stretch of "common grounds" inevitable in an English village. There are, off from the main street, some beautiful houses, old and new, with their charming gardens and stately trees, and altogether one can hardly imagine a more delightful place for a writer to be in. I did not see the house in which Crane lived, but we have a vivid picture of him in those days from the pen of that fine writer, brave soldier, and generous friend and critic of young artists and young movements, Ford Madox Hueffer, in his recently published "Thus to Revisit." He was placed in a wonderful environment here for a young man of letters. Joseph Conrad and Hueffer lived nearby; a few miles away was the great Henry James, himself an American by birth; and I have a most delightful memory of a Mr. Pye and his interesting wife and daughters, who had one of those charming places off the main street, and whose wonderful house and garden have been an inspiration for me ever since. They were the friends of Rupert Brooke, Charles Ricketts, Robert Bridges, Sturge Moore, and many others of those finest intellects in England, and were no doubt typical of the residents of the place. This will give some

idea of the environment in which Crane found himself in Limpsfield.

The literary crowd in England sought Crane out and made much of him, and evidently took him to their hearts at the same time rendering full appreciation of his genius; nevertheless he had very hard sledding, incurred large debts, and was greatly worried about his future; but he lived the wild kind of life he loved, sitting around in his shirt sleeves, wearing riding breeches and leggings with a great Colt in his belt, and roaming over the country on what Hueffer calls "a great coach horse." Hueffer was visiting at his house one evening, awaiting with his wife his return from London. When Crane arrived he announced that he had received a commission to write anything he was moved to at twenty pounds for a thousand words. He radiated gladness that night, and proceeded to rent an abandoned and unrestored Elizabethan manor house, called Brede Place. There he lived the life of a Tudor baron of the sixteenth century. The floors were covered with rushes, and bones were thrown from the table to be gnawed by the stray dogs and lost cats that filled the house. Hosts of miscellaneous guests partook of the bizarre hospitality of its master, who sat upstairs in a little room over the front porch writing to earn the money to support it all. This is Hueffer's picture. Meanwhile a dread disease was sapping away his life, and finally he went to the Black Forest in Germany in the vain hope of recovery; but his hardships and exposure in the wars had too deeply marked him, and he died at Badenweiler on June 5, 1900. He is buried in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Thus passed from this world in his thirtieth year one who in a short life had made for his name a permanent place in English literature. The Newark-born boy had strayed far from home in thought as well as in deed. His legend is in

the making. I have tried to gather all the fragments of information together and make a consecutive story of them, but have been obliged to resort freely to conjecture. No attempt seems to have been made to write his biography, and such facts as I have been able to make use of have been gathered through the enterprise and interest of Professor Max Herzberg, Mr. William Hamilton Osborne and others, who have most kindly placed at my disposal the results of their efforts.

Crane was a lovable fellow, inspiring affection in all who knew him, every one calling him "Stevie," "dear Stevie," "poor Stevie"; he was careless of his material affairs; he liked the active life—horseback riding, baseball playing; he was fond of the sea, of horses, of guns; he loved adventure, free living, and outdoor life; and he was brave, indeed he wore his own red badge of courage. He was short and slight of figure, his hair light, his eyes blue, and his complexion swarthy—the ensemble was handsome. He lived the life of privation, of poverty, and of adventure so typical of genius; he preferred independence to comfort, and an interesting life to a dull and prosperous one, that he might express himself and have his say. He was quiet and thoughtful in manner but brilliant in conversation, adopting the rough speech of the street though quite capable on occasion of using the splendid English of the classics.

The East Side of New York and the life of the very poor, the gangster, the woman of the streets, the bartender of the slums, the Mexican greaser, the Texas cowboy, the ordinary sailor,—these were an open book to him and the material for his art. He mastered their manners and their speech, and could think in their terms. Yet he knew letters! One cannot read him without feeling that He knew English and French literature. He had studied Flaubert, Maupassant, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Henry James. He used "the most

economical forms,"—to quote Hueffer again, a phrase that I like,— wrote forcibly and simply; he was a master of words, and hated extra words and digressions, as well as both rhyme and formal meter. In short, he had a method and knew what he was doing.

In this he is rare. In this he was, unconsciously probably, one of the founders of a school. We must recall that he wrote in the famous nineties, was of the nineties, and was in England during the nineties. This was one of the most marvelous periods of flowering that the arts have known; a great renaissance in writing and the graphic arts was under way, and an English critic like Hueffer can place Crane beside Henry James, Joseph Conrad, and William H. Hudson as the pioneers of a new method of writing English fiction, a method in which effect was not to be gained by sensational plot, by rhetorical descriptions, by padding out the story, by unnecessary words and lines, but one in which "the most economical of forms" was used, in which truth was aimed at, in which the effect came from reality rather than from artificial means. And yet such writing is all art. The highest craftsmanship is required. The effects appearing so simple on the page are far from being arrived at as simply as it would seem.

"The Black Riders and Other Lines" is one of the earliest volumes of so-called free verse, though the mighty Whitman, of course, had begun to use it fifty years before. I look upon "The Black Riders "as a momentous book in English verse, and it was in this and in the free verse of Hueffer that the splendid modern school of Ezra Pound, T. S. Elliot, and others had its source.

Hear this poem:

In Heaven,

Some little blades of grass
Stood before God.
"What did you do?"
Then all save one of the little blades
Began eagerly to relate
The merits of their lives.
This one stayed a small way behind,
Ashamed.
Presently, God said,
"And what did you do?"
The little blade answered,
"Oh, my Lord,
"Memory is bitter to me,
"For if ever I did good deeds,
"I know not of them."
Then God, in all his splendor,
Arose from his throne.
"Oh, best little blade of grass!" he said.
This is another:

There were many who went in huddled procession,
They knew not whither;
But, at any rate, success or calamity,
Would attend all in equality.
There was one who sought a new road.
He went into direful thickets,
And ultimately he died thus, alone;
But they said he had courage.

So much for the form of his verse; its substance is that of a gentle, generous, but blindingly true and sharp view of this complicated life of ours and its problems; it is the attitude of one who says," We know not good nor evil"; of the divine One who said, "Judge not that ye be not judged." It is the pitiless picture of us as we are in our own hearts and in our

own souls as contrasted with the agreeable and smug portrait we draw of ourselves to make our lives easier.

"The Red Badge of Courage" is an amazing book. Written by one who had never seen or smelled the smoke of battle, he lives for us again the life of a young soldier boy from a farm in New York State, in his late teens, who goes out to war gaily enough, but who is subjected to months of inaction in camp. What troubles him under the tension of camp life is how he will act under fire when fire comes. He is not at all sure of himself, but dares not confess to his comrades. He tries in vain to find some similar emotion in his fellow soldiers. He stands bravely, if unconsciously so, the first violent impact of war. The enemy retreats; he and the other troops relax, relieved immensely; but no sooner have they thrown their weary bodies on the ground than the enemy is seen coming toward them again. Many run away in panic and he with them. Crane lives the life of this boy, who later wins glory on the field, and for four days—the action of the book is but four days—we know him as we know ourselves or better. It is magnificent writing: no word is wasted, we can skip no page, we must follow this mind as long as the mirror is upheld for us. This book must take its place and will among the great books of English literature.

Confucius once said: "In the beginning of my relations with men I heard their words, and I believed their actions conformed to them. Now, in my relations with men, I hear their words, but I examine their actions." This is true psychology, and Crane is very much interested in this phase of psychology. His characters are continually saying what they do not mean from one motive or another. In "The Red Badge of Courage," Henry Fleming, the hero, himself full of doubt about his own courage, but never expressing the doubt, seeks to find the thoughts of the other soldiers, but their words convey no sign of the fear in their hearts. In

"The Third Violet" we find two lovers continually saying what they do not mean. The cowardice of love makes liars of them, and each is helpless to discover the mind of the other. And we find this same theme running through many of his books. Men's faces and words are a stone wall behind which we cannot penetrate the thought. This is the phenomenon of life that attracts him; the impact of personalities whose motives are inscrutable, one to the other. It is one of the deepest studies in which man can engage—the interpreting of the human mind. During the years that I have been reading, I have come to feel a sort of personal presence of the writers whose works attract me. With such a man as Crane, as with Whitman or Walter Pater, Dostoevsky or Henry James, I can read anything they have written with delight because their minds have become familiar to me and reading them is like hearing them talk. It becomes more and more the man and less and less his work, as is the case with certain friends we have known. His works are merely an expression of him, part of the atmosphere he radiates. He has no good and no bad novels or essays or poems for me, because in all he says I come to know him better, and can talk with him more intimately. Of course I know his work varies in quality; but he is my friend, my guide, my inspiration—part of my life. I have felt this curiously enough about Stephen Crane. This may not be intelligent criticism, but I know if I can stand as much of any one friend's society as he will give me, there must be something unusually fine about that friend, and so I feel about Stephen Crane. I say it is curious that I should feel this of Stephen Crane because he died so young. Yet he had made his great pilgrimage through life, he had felt, he had learned, he had known. His soul was afire. He was rich in vast experience though his years were few. You feel there is an immense residue of Crane which he does not express, has not had time to express, maybe could not have expressed, which gives every word he writes a value, which

lends a grace to his life and his thought. Some of his work I have not been able to find, but I feel a delightful sense of having more of him in store for me.

We can safely give him a high place to-day, and I believe we can rest assured he will hold it. He is part of that fine procession of genius which has made our new world eminent in the arts: Emerson, Whitman, Whistler, La Farge, Henry James, Lafcadio Hearn, Charles Eliot Norton, Stephen Crane—each in his chosen form of expression has compelled the admiration of the whole world. It seems provincial to claim Crane for Newark, but Newark should be glad of him and Newark may well take pride in him. But had he been born in Central Africa, we might well meet here to do his memory honor. It is fine of you Schoolmen to have erected a tablet to his memory. Let those who say that there is no inspiration here in our city to high triumphs in the splendid world of art stand before that tablet, read it, and know that through privation and suffering, in spite of uninspiring surroundings and lack of sympathetic understanding, in spite of ill health and poverty, one born Newarker gallantly pushed ahead to his goal, courageously fought the fight for art, and gained for himself a place of eminence and distinction recognized by two continents.

The Little Regiment

I

The fog made the clothes of the men of the column in the roadway seem of a luminous quality. It imparted to the heavy infantry overcoats a new colour, a kind of blue which was so pale that a regiment might have been merely a long,

low shadow in the mist. However, a muttering, one part grumble, three parts joke, hovered in the air above the thick ranks, and blended in an undertoned roar, which was the voice of the column.

The town on the southern shore of the little river loomed spectrally, a faint etching upon the grey cloud-masses which were shifting with oily languor. A long row of guns upon the northern bank had been pitiless in their hatred, but a little battered belfry could be dimly seen still pointing with invincible resolution toward the heavens.

The enclouded air vibrated with noises made by hidden colossal things. The infantry tramplings, the heavy rumbling of the artillery, made the earth speak of gigantic preparation. Guns on distant heights thundered from time to time with sudden, nervous roar, as if unable to endure in silence a knowledge of hostile troops massing, other guns going to position. These sounds, near and remote, defined an immense battle-ground, described the tremendous width of the stage of the prospective drama. The voices of the guns, slightly casual, unexcited in their challenges and warnings, could not destroy the unutterable eloquence of the word in the air, a meaning of impending struggle which made the breath halt at the lips.

The column in the roadway was ankle-deep in mud. The men swore piously at the rain which drizzled upon them, compelling them to stand always very erect in fear of the drops that would sweep in under their coat-collars. The fog was as cold as wet cloths. The men stuffed their hands deep in their pockets, and huddled their muskets in their arms. The machinery of orders had rooted these soldiers deeply into the mud, precisely as almighty nature roots mullein stalks.

They listened and speculated when a tumult of fighting came from the dim town across the river. When the noise lulled for a time they resumed their descriptions of the mud and graphically exaggerated the number of hours they had been kept waiting. The general commanding their division rode along the ranks, and they cheered admiringly, affectionately, crying out to him gleeful prophecies of the coming battle. Each man scanned him with a peculiarly keen personal interest, and afterward spoke of him with unquestioning devotion and confidence, narrating anecdotes which were mainly untrue.

When the jokers lifted the shrill voices which invariably belonged to them, flinging witticisms at their comrades, a loud laugh would sweep from rank to rank, and soldiers who had not heard would lean forward and demand repetition. When were borne past them some wounded men with grey and blood-smeared faces, and eyes that rolled in that helpless beseeching for assistance from the sky which comes with supreme pain, the soldiers in the mud watched intently, and from time to time asked of the bearers an account of the affair. Frequently they bragged of their corps, their division, their brigade, their regiment. Anon they referred to the mud and the cold drizzle. Upon this threshold of a wild scene of death they, in short, defied the proportion of events with that splendour of heedlessness which belongs only to veterans.

"Like a lot of wooden soldiers," swore Billie Dempster, moving his feet in the thick mass, and casting a vindictive glance indefinitely: "standing in the mud for a hundred years."

"Oh, shut up!" murmured his brother Dan. The manner of his words implied that this fraternal voice near him was an indescribable bore.

"Why should I shut up?" demanded Billie.

"Because you're a fool," cried Dan, taking no time to debate it; "the biggest fool in the regiment."

There was but one man between them, and he was habituated. These insults from brother to brother had swept across his chest, flown past his face, many times during two long campaigns. Upon this occasion he simply grinned first at one, then at the other.

The way of these brothers was not an unknown topic in regimental gossip. They had enlisted simultaneously, with each sneering loudly at the other for doing it. They left their little town, and went forward with the flag, exchanging protestations of undying suspicion. In the camp life they so openly despised each other that, when entertaining quarrels were lacking, their companions often contrived situations calculated to bring forth display of this fraternal dislike.

Both were large-limbed, strong young men, and often fought with friends in camp unless one was near to interfere with the other. This latter happened rather frequently, because Dan, preposterously willing for any manner of combat, had a very great horror of seeing Billie in a fight; and Billie, almost odiously ready himself, simply refused to see Dan stripped to his shirt and with his fists aloft. This sat queerly upon them, and made them the objects of plots.

When Dan jumped through a ring of eager soldiers and dragged forth his raving brother by the arm, a thing often predicted would almost come to pass. When Billie performed the same office for Dan, the prediction would

again miss fulfilment by an inch. But indeed they never fought together, although they were perpetually upon the verge.

They expressed longing for such conflict. As a matter of truth, they had at one time made full arrangement for it, but even with the encouragement and interest of half of the regiment they somehow failed to achieve collision.

If Dan became a victim of police duty, no jeering was so destructive to the feelings as Billie's comment. If Billie got a call to appear at the headquarters, none would so genially prophesy his complete undoing as Dan. Small misfortunes to one were, in truth, invariably greeted with hilarity by the other, who seemed to see in them great re-enforcement of his opinion.

As soldiers, they expressed each for each a scorn intense and blasting. After a certain battle, Billie was promoted to corporal. When Dan was told of it, he seemed smitten dumb with astonishment and patriotic indignation. He stared in silence, while the dark blood rushed to Billie's forehead, and he shifted his weight from foot to foot. Dan at last found his tongue, and said: "Well, I'm durned!" If he had heard that an army mule had been appointed to the post of corps commander, his tone could not have had more derision in it. Afterward, he adopted a fervid insubordination, an almost religious reluctance to obey the new corporal's orders, which came near to developing the desired strife.

It is here finally to be recorded also that Dan, most ferociously profane in speech, very rarely swore in the presence of his brother; and that Billie, whose oaths came from his lips with the grace of falling pebbles, was seldom

known to express himself in this manner when near his brother Dan.

At last the afternoon contained a suggestion of evening. Metallic cries rang suddenly from end to end of the column. They inspired at once a quick, business-like adjustment. The long thing stirred in the mud. The men had hushed, and were looking across the river. A moment later the shadowy mass of pale blue figures was moving steadily toward the stream. There could be heard from the town a clash of swift fighting and cheering. The noise of the shooting coming through the heavy air had its sharpness taken from it, and sounded in thuds.

There was a halt upon the bank above the pontoons. When the column went winding down the incline, and streamed out upon the bridge, the fog had faded to a great degree, and in the clearer dusk the guns on a distant ridge were enabled to perceive the crossing. The long whirling outcries of the shells came into the air above the men. An occasional solid shot struck the surface of the river, and dashed into view a sudden vertical jet. The distance was subtly illuminated by the lightning from the deep-booming guns. One by one the batteries on the northern shore aroused, the innumerable guns bellowing in angry oration at the distant ridge. The rolling thunder crashed and reverberated as a wild surf sounds on a still night, and to this music the column marched across the pontoons.

The waters of the grim river curled away in a smile from the ends of the great boats, and slid swiftly beneath the planking. The dark, riddled walls of the town upreared before the troops, and from a region hidden by these hammered and tumbled houses came incessantly the yells and firings of a prolonged and close skirmish.

When Dan had called his brother a fool, his voice had been so decisive, so brightly assured, that many men had laughed, considering it to be great humour under the circumstances. The incident happened to rankle deep in Billie. It was not any strange thing that his brother had called him a fool. In fact, he often called him a fool with exactly the same amount of cheerful and prompt conviction, and before large audiences, too. Billie wondered in his own mind why he took such profound offence in this case; but, at any rate, as he slid down the bank and on to the bridge with his regiment, he was searching his knowledge for something that would pierce Dan's blithesome spirit. But he could contrive nothing at this time, and his impotency made the glance which he was once able to give his brother still more malignant.

The guns far and near were roaring a fearful and grand introduction for this column which was marching upon the stage of death. Billie felt it, but only in a numb way. His heart was cased in that curious dissonant metal which covers a man's emotions at such times. The terrible voices from the hills told him that in this wide conflict his life was an insignificant fact, and that his death would be an insignificant fact. They portended the whirlwind to which he would be as necessary as a butterfly's waved wing. The solemnity, the sadness of it came near enough to make him wonder why he was neither solemn nor sad. When his mind vaguely adjusted events according to their importance to him, it appeared that the uppermost thing was the fact that upon the eve of battle, and before many comrades, his brother had called him a fool.

Dan was in a particularly happy mood. "Hurray! Look at 'em shoot," he said, when the long witches' croon of the shells came into the air. It enraged Billie when he felt the

little thorn in him, and saw at the same time that his brother had completely forgotten it.

The column went from the bridge into more mud. At this southern end there was a chaos of hoarse directions and commands. Darkness was coming upon the earth, and regiments were being hurried up the slippery bank. As Billie floundered in the black mud, amid the swearing, sliding crowd, he suddenly resolved that, in the absence of other means of hurting Dan, he would avoid looking at him, refrain from speaking to him, pay absolutely no heed to his existence; and this done skilfully would, he imagined, soon reduce his brother to a poignant sensitiveness.

At the top of the bank the column again halted and rearranged itself, as a man after a climb rearranges his clothing. Presently the great steel-backed brigade, an infinitely graceful thing in the rhythm and ease of its veteran movement, swung up a little narrow, slanting street.

Evening had come so swiftly that the fighting on the remote borders of the town was indicated by thin flashes of flame. Some building was on fire, and its reflection upon the clouds was an oval of delicate pink.

II

All demeanour of rural serenity had been wrenched violently from the little town by the guns and by the waves of men which had surged through it. The hand of war laid upon this village had in an instant changed it to a thing of remnants. It resembled the place of a monstrous shaking of the earth itself. The windows, now mere unsightly holes, made the tumbled and blackened dwellings seem skeletons.

Doors lay splintered to fragments. Chimneys had flung their bricks everywhere. The artillery fire had not neglected the rows of gentle shade-trees which had lined the streets. Branches and heavy trunks cluttered the mud in driftwood tangles, while a few shattered forms had contrived to remain dejectedly, mournfully upright. They expressed an innocence, a helplessness, which perforce created a pity for their happening into this caldron of battle. Furthermore, there was under foot a vast collection of odd things reminiscent of the charge, the fight, the retreat. There were boxes and barrels filled with earth, behind which riflemen had lain snugly, and in these little trenches were the dead in blue with the dead in grey, the poses eloquent of the struggles for possession of the town, until the history of the whole conflict was written plainly in the streets.

And yet the spirit of this little city, its quaint individuality, poised in the air above the ruins, defying the guns, the sweeping volleys; holding in contempt those avaricious blazes which had attacked many dwellings. The hard earthen sidewalks proclaimed the games that had been played there during long lazy days, in the careful, shadows of the trees. "General Merchandise," in faint letters upon a long board, had to be read with a slanted glance, for the sign dangled by one end; but the porch of the old store was a palpable legend of wide-hatted men, smoking.

This subtle essence, this soul of the life that had been, brushed like invisible wings the thoughts of the men in the swift columns that came up from the river.

In the darkness a loud and endless humming arose from the great blue crowds bivouacked in the streets. From time to time a sharp spatter of firing from far picket lines

entered this bass chorus. The smell from the smouldering ruins floated on the cold night breeze.

Dan, seated ruefully upon the doorstep of a shot-pierced house, was proclaiming the campaign badly managed. Orders had been issued forbidding camp-fires.

Suddenly he ceased his oration, and scanning the group of his comrades, said: "Where's Billie? Do you know?"

"Gone on picket."

"Get out! Has he?" said Dan. "No business to go on picket. Why don't some of them other corporals take their turn?"

A bearded private was smoking his pipe of confiscated tobacco, seated comfortably upon a horse-hair trunk which he had dragged from the house. He observed: "Was his turn."

"No such thing," cried Dan. He and the man on the horse-hair trunk held discussion in which Dan stoutly maintained that if his brother had been sent on picket it was an injustice. He ceased his argument when another soldier, upon whose arms could faintly be seen the two stripes of a corporal, entered the circle. "Humph," said Dan, "where you been?"

The corporal made no answer. Presently Dan said: "Billie, where you been?"

His brother did not seem to hear these inquiries. He glanced at the house which towered above them, and remarked casually to the man on the horse-hair trunk: "Funny, ain't it? After the pelting this town got, you'd think there wouldn't be one brick left on another."

"Oh," said Dan, glowering at his brother's back. "Getting mighty smart, ain't you?"

The absence of camp-fires allowed the evening to make apparent its quality of faint silver light in which the blue clothes of the throng became black, and the faces became white expanses, void of expression. There was considerable excitement a short distance from the group around the doorstep. A soldier had chanced upon a hoop-skirt, and arrayed in it he was performing a dance amid the applause of his companions. Billie and a greater part of the men immediately poured over there to witness the exhibition.

"What's the matter with Billie?" demanded Dan of the man upon the horse-hair trunk.

"How do I know?" rejoined the other in mild resentment. He arose and walked away. When he returned he said briefly, in a weather-wise tone, that it would rain during the night.

Dan took a seat upon one end of the horse-hair trunk. He was facing the crowd around the dancer, which in its hilarity swung this way and that way. At times he imagined that he could recognise his brother's face.

He and the man on the other end of the trunk thoughtfully talked of the army's position. To their minds, infantry and artillery were in a most precarious jumble in the streets of the town; but they did not grow nervous over it, for they were used to having the army appear in a precarious jumble to their minds. They had learned to accept such puzzling situations as a consequence of their position in the ranks, and were now usually in possession of a simple but perfectly immovable faith that somebody understood the

jumble. Even if they had been convinced that the army was a headless monster, they would merely have nodded with the veteran's singular cynicism. It was none of their business as soldiers. Their duty was to grab sleep and food when occasion permitted, and cheerfully fight wherever their feet were planted until more orders came. This was a task sufficiently absorbing.

They spoke of other corps, and this talk being confidential, their voices dropped to tones of awe. "The Ninth"—"The First"—"The Fifth"—"The Sixth"—"The Third"—the simple numerals rang with eloquence, each having a meaning which was to float through many years as no intangible arithmetical mist, but as pregnant with individuality as the names of cities.

Of their own corps they spoke with a deep veneration, an idolatry, a supreme confidence which apparently would not blanch to see it match against everything.

It was as if their respect for other corps was due partly to a wonder that organisations not blessed with their own famous numeral could take such an interest in war. They could prove that their division was the best in the corps, and that their brigade was the best in the division. And their regiment—it was plain that no fortune of life was equal to the chance which caused a man to be born, so to speak, into this command, the keystone of the defending arch.

At times Dan covered with insults the character of a vague, unnamed general to whose petulance and busy-body spirit he ascribed the order which made hot coffee impossible.

Dan said that victory was certain in the coming battle. The other man seemed rather dubious. He remarked upon the