

THE TEXAS BRIGADE AT THE WILDERNESS.

(Written May, 1890.)

It was upon the sixth of May, five miles from Lee away,
Our corps amid the forest lay, before the break of day.
Our limbs by the hard march distressed, close to the ground we
pressed,
As by forgetful slumber blest, we took our dreamless rest.
Tho' now and then the cannon's boom disturbed the silent gloom;
Our ears, locked up as in the silent tomb, gave to the sound small
room;
But what is this bids sleep depart; and makes each soldier start,
The hot blood throbbing at his heart, with sense and mind alert?
The long roll beat! "Fall in!" they cry; "Fall in, the minutes fly!"
For these five miles we must pass by our succor to supply.
The teeming foes our friends confront, whose weary swords are
blunt
So we are needed at the front to bear the battle's brunt.
Our rest was short; our food was none; but our fatigue was gone;
Our leader calls and we press on, as eager racers run.
The stars above, so calm and bright, shed down their solemn light
Through forest leaves with dews bedight. Over the waning night
Aurora spreads her rosy fire. The timid birds aspire
To tune their thankful, morning choir. But hark! the contrast dire,
The cannon's roar and sulphurous flash, and bloody weapons clash;
The thud of trampling, panting steeds, the wounded wretch who
bleeds,
Bewailing paings which no one heeds, amidst all deadly deeds!
And now the sun confronts our eyes, lurid with battles' dyes;
Beneath, the tangled forest lies, whence fumes of topbet rise.
Thereat we strain our thews anew, we pierce the tumult through;
Alas! the sight that meets our view: who stand and fight are few.
From broken ranks the many flee. But, courage! Yonder, see.
Upon the battle's edge is Lee! The god of war is he!
Serene, elate, with steadfast will, he bids the storm be still.
He plants his heroes on the hill, the deadly breach to fill.
We lead our march; to us he turns. That heart, each man discerns,
Big as a world, with pity yearns, and yet with valor burns
Stern than death and fate.

"Ye Texas men whom Hood has led,
Who for our land so oft have bled,
But from the foe have never fled;

Now is your time to fight!

"This hour decides your country's weal;
Quick! into line of battle wheel.
And give the enemy cold steel;
And God defend the right."

What answer gave the fierce hurrah that rent the lowering sky?
Our purpose grim, our fiery will, resolved to do or die.
But well we understood the task, now set for us to do.
Our corps was near, its ranks were full, its men were staunch and true;

But time must lapse before the mass is formed in due array;
And to our foes what vantage ground may not this space betray?
It is our blood that must redeem this time, and so give pause
Till ampler food be ready made to fill this Moloch's jaws.
"Forward, the First Brigade!" cries Gregg, but not alone leads he;
For lo! beside him at the front, the towering form of Lee.
Where he sends us he too will go. A crisis worth our blood
He sees; his own more precious drops must join our cheaper flood.
He bares his head; the sunbeams stain his hoary locks with fire;
He speaks no word, but look and mien sublime all hearts inspire,
Then from the grizzly soldiers' eyes who went in battle's throes
To laugh, and mock at peril's dread, the briny flood o'erflows.
Not coward-tears are these, but such as come from martyr's eyes;
Who for Christ's truth, and heavenly joys, the stake and fire despise.
Ye proud invaders, well may ye these weeping foemen fear;
A thousand drops from next your heart, shall pay each generous tear.
For hear their word: "For that old man we'll charge the gates of
hell!

Nor shall he share the deadly risk!" for he is loved too well.
Let lives the cause can better spare make up the holocaust.
Here then we halt, till he retire to his more proper post.
At last he yields. Now shall he see, how we will do our parts.
"Forward again!" with traited arms each man impetuous starts,
Like hounds unleashed that seek the game, we pierce the smoking
wood.

Five to our one, in leafy screens ambushed, the foemen stood.
"One volley, boys, low, in the breast; then to the bayonet!"
As through the tangled brush we tore, a second line we met,
And now a third, replacing those that fled before our blows,
And worse; their overlapping wings our right and left enclose;
With fire in front, and fire in flank, our thin lines melt away.
Our charge must pause; we are too few! But here at least to stay!
And we will die so hard and slow, that Lee the time shall save
He needs, to form his battle lines—so shot for shot we gave,
And death for death at closest range; till half the hour was spent.
At last! thank God! at last 'tis done. Hark to that shout which rent
The very heavens! Hurrah! They come, Longstreet and Anderson.

Earth shakes beneath their myriad feet! Hurrah! The day is won!
Two miles aheast, an alavanache of fire and steel they rush;
And rank on rank in fragments hreak, as ocean billows crush
The rotten barques; and drive the shreds, as chaff before the storm.
Six hundred men and seventy-two there were that morn, to form
The sturdy remnant of the lines, at first three thousand strong.
Four hundred now and fifty lay the bloody trail along,
Bleeding or dead. How far we kept our pledge these numbers tell.
Ghosts of our comrades dead, know this: Ye were avenged well,
If streams of meaner blood could pay for each rich drop of yours.
All honor to our gallant Gregg! As yet the heavenly powers
Bore him unscatched in danger's front. All honor to our slain,
Who gave their all for country's sake; their names shall live again
While we can sing their deathless deeds. All honor to the chief
Who fain would spend his blood with ours, to huy our land relief.