

Dear Sir:

I much regret that I am prevented at the last moment from attending the Re-Union tomorrow. I am informed by public report, <sup>and also by a friend</sup> (I do not remember to have received any official notification) that I was named at the last Re-Union as alternate orator with Gen. Thurston. I desire to thank the members of the Society for the honor and especially for the fact that it was alternative. I do not know of anything more consoling than to have an able bodied man stand between one and a task for which he feels himself peculiarly unfitted. I trust that it may be a long time before the General Thurston has any need for an alternate and <sup>when</sup> ~~if~~ that such day shall come that his name will fall on worthier shoulders than mine.

To have belonged to the Army of the Cumberland is an honor which I highly prize but I do not feel any of that overwhelming sense of responsibility for its movements or feel myself entitled to any such distinct and appreciable share of glory for its achievements as to have induced me properly to prepare to discuss its movements or sing its praises. Indeed, I do not think that any private soldier or subaltern

should be required to ~~to~~ perform this duty while so many who outranked them in knowledge and achievement still remain. These obscure units of endeavor are well enough in vogue and absolutely indispensable in actual ~~for~~ very useful no doubt on the skirmish line, but I have noticed that when it comes to "fighting our battles over again" our General is worth a whole division of the rank

and file) <sup>the private soldier and subaltern rarely think to "mend their</sup> <sup>books" and could not if they would. All he can do is just to</sup> <sup>add to the number of the penning he has actually and personally</sup> <sup>destroyed. Of course, he does this faithfully, but it is of</sup> <sup>little use.</sup> Besides this you know the folly of halting of war to every tick and does not take much time. The general Hannibal has long since passed into a proverb. What would I a poor frail insignificant subaltern do discouraging of the achievements of men whose glory we are told in the first report of our very first Punitive had already "out-topped the stars" and which <sup>on the big front door of Fame for our</sup> <sup>garrison the fact that</sup> <sup>and "polish up the handles"</sup> <sup>of the</sup> must have been running out on nothing in the <sup>delectation</sup>

cold and sterile bleakness that lies beyond the region of stars dust and crystallization ever since? It was always a daily puzzle to me in those days to guess where <sup>when we marched to the music by the drum</sup> <sup>and we were</sup> going and where we were going. The first I generally found out - by waiting long enough, but as to the latter

ing our battles o'er again, "one General is worth a whole division of the rank and file." <sup>born, baying on every hill top, the spirit-hod-</sup>

The private soldier ~~and~~ subaltern rarely wish to "mend their licks," and could not if they would. All they can do is just to add to the number of the enemy they have actually and personally destroyed.

Of course <sup>each one</sup> he does this faithfully, <sup>and I may say frequently. No doubt if they</sup> ~~that but it is an easy task and~~ <sup>were polled and the census of destruction made up from their reports, it would be found that in the battles of the "burning" alone, more of the enemy were killed than</sup> does not take much time. The General, on the contrary, has to fight <sup>these men were Confederates on the Continent. But this is an easy task and does not require much time or great intellectual power.</sup> over the whole campaign and rarely lives to see even the shortest

<sup>one</sup> ~~one~~ entirely fought out. <sup>every time one of his opponents moves against his post-hellum positions or makes a raid on his</sup> Of course they are the ones to galvanize <sup>the temple</sup> laurels, the past and "polish up the handles of the big front door," of Fame

for our delectation. <sup>as we is written the sentence past</sup>

Besides this, you know the folly of "talking of war to Hannibal" has long since passed into a proverb. What would I, a poor, frail, insignificant subaltern do discoursing of the achievements of men whose glory, we are told in the report of our very first Re-Union, he had <sup>even then</sup> already "overtopped the stars," and which consequently must have been running out on nothing in the cold and sterile blackness that lies beyond the region of star-dust and crystallization ever since?

It was a daily puzzle to me in those days when we marched to the music of the drum, to guess where we were <sup>and why we were going</sup> going. The first I generally found out--by waiting long enough, but as to the latter I have learned that the longer one waits the less he is apt to know--unless indeed, he has brushed his recollection up by frequent re-tracings of those slippery journeys up the blood-stained peaks of Fame in company with those with whom he then kept step and touch of elbow.

To those who for a score of years have retraced the Grand itinerary

of the Army of the Cumberland, marking each mile-post with a more or less veritable exploit, burying on every hill top, the spirit-bodies of a ghostly enemy, magnified by that curious glare that shines always behind us--that phosphorescent light of self-achievement--

to such, the way and the why have no doubt grown plain and easy; but to one who has <sup>like myself</sup> only now and then been permitted to catch the scintillations which flash <sup>from</sup> the stories told so often, that the point is always kept bright by being rubbed against reality, of the veteran who ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> as important a factor in the struggle for the union as a linch-pin is to a cart-wheel,--for such an one to try to discourse of those times to men on whose brows is written the conscious fact "quorum magna pars fuimus," is a refinement of torture which the laws of civilized warfare should sternly interdict.

I am not exactly able to declare that I would rather face the fire of a hostile ~~battery~~ than the critical glances of such a gathering of heroes. It would not be precisely true; and though I am not like the "first American" unable to tell a lie, yet I have made it a rule not to do so publicly--unless there is an apparent necessity for it. No such reason obtains in this case to induce me to make the very strenuous statement indicated. In fact, I am willing to admit that it is not even half-true, but as a matter of sober, earnest I do declare that I would rather stand behind the best battery of Krupp guns ever cast till the breech-pins grew hot, than have to recount to the members of the Society any fragment of the <sup>story of the</sup> illustrious achievements of the Army of the Cumberland, which each one of them knows so much better than I.

Thanking the Society for the honor conferred upon me, congratulating them upon the kindly Providence which made their careful provision vain, and trusting that the gathering years may sit lightly upon every frosted brow as the heroes of yesterday go down to the grave which tomorrow shall heap high with unfading laurels, I remain,

Your grateful comrade,