

The Sally Ann's Centenary

CHAUTAQUO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2013

For The Inter Ocean.

THE "SALLY ANN'S" CENTENARY.

BY R. B. G.

A Southern home with porches wide and deep,
Along which roses and wistaria creep,
Just kissed by errant sunbeams slanting through
The tender oak leaves gemmed with opal dew,
The bird-notes from the great o'er-arching trees
Strike lanceolate down through the drone of bees,
Beyond the grove's soft verge of amber light
A rusted cannon and a flagstaff white.
Upon the porch full-bearded men with reed-
stemmed pipes aglow,
Around them dames and daughters, and an eager
row
Of clamoring boys, with restless, flashing eyes;
Beyond dark faces lit with mild surprise.

"Yer want ter hear what the story is,
Of that ar' battered piece uv brass,
All covered with pizen verdigris
Till it's most ez green's the grass?
Jes tell 'em Shaddy; er Jack, will you?
We'd oughter hev Jim Gaut! That's true;
He'd tell it best of all our squad;
Joe Lane wuz good at a story, too;
But they're both of 'em under the sod,
An' a good many more; there's only we three,
An' Jim Blalock, in Texas, alive
Of all the boys in 'Battery D'
That served with 'Number Five.'

What's "Number Five?" Now, jes' look yere,
You youngster, I'm tallin' this tale
On particular purpose fer you to hear;
An' in order that I mayn't fail
Ef you'll jes' keep still till I get through
I'll do the very best I can
To make everything jest ez clear ter you
Ez 'tis to a growed up man.

An' fust then, Shaddy an' Jack an' me, with ten er
a dozen more,
Wuz a squad of men in "Battery D," of "Stone-
wall" Jackson's corps.
Bein' next to the left in "battery front," when all
the boys was alive,
An' we'd lost no guns by the battle's brunt, they
called us "Number Five."
Well, we hung together for four full years, we
three an' a few besides,
While war-clouds broke in tears an' blood flowed
a streamin' tide.
Jest at the fust it really seemed the luck was
gwin' ter be with we 'uns,
An' fer awhile we whooped it up and all the South-
land rang with peans.

I'll ne'er forget our fust big fight on that now fa-
mous field
Where our great captain's battle-name to fame
was doubly sealed.
Lord! How we worked our "Sally Ann"—that's
what we'd nicknamed "Number Five,"
And cheered, as back and forth we ran, as if
'twere fun alive.
The rifed guns on 'tother side, made wide gaps in
our ranks,
But Sally Ann won all our hearts a payin' back
the Yanks.
From Sudley Church to Cub Run Bridge we
chased the flyin' crowds,
The last shot, 'bout an hour of sun, right through
the rubble plowed.

But 'twasn't long 'fore all this changed, an'
through that four years' fight
Ther' wurn't much chance fer sech as we ter git a
blink of light.
But "Number Five" sho done her part; from
Shenando to Rapidan
Ther' wa'nt no gun that done more work, er
better, than ole Sally Ann.
An' we stuck by her, the same old squad, stuck by
through thick an' thin,
Though twasn't long before we knew ther' wurn't
no chance to win.
Of course, not jes' the same; some died a standin'
in ther' boots.
An' some went through the hospital an' give place
ter recruits;
But some on us went through it all—through all
them fiery days.
A givin' back a twelve-pound shell fer every rifed
cannon's blaze.
We served her off 'till breech grew hot, an' limber-
chest wuz bar'
Then run her back and let her cool while we'd lay
by and swar';
For war, say what you will, is a wicked sort of
trade.
That's sure to put the devil in the best man God
has made.
All "Stonewall's" corps knew Sally's voice; fer
mind ye, lads, it's queer
How keen the hush of battle makes the waiting
soldier's ear.
An' after lyin' under fire in a dozen fights or so,
The "laugh-boys" came each cannon's tone in-
stinctively to know.
That's "Number Two," they'd say, "and that's ole
Sally Ann," you see,
When we wuz workin' over 'em the guns of Bat-
tery D.

Wal, all the rest wuz lost—horjes an' men an'
guns;
Till all 'twas left of the battery wuz "Number
Five" and two Caissons.
Then we wuz "detached," sent off that is, from our
old corps.
Down here to Johnson's army, which we'd never
seen before.
An' here the surrender cotched us—right at yer
grandpap's door.
We camped jes down in yonder field—away out on
the wing.
Bein' we hadn't but jes one gun, nobody cared a
ding
What came uv us, so at least it seemed; but all the
same
It broke the last one of us up when finally orders
came

To turn the gun and caissons o'er an' hev the
men paroled.
We knew the eud was gettin' nigh, yet every heart
grew cold,
And every war-stained face was blanched with
sudden fear
When we stood, crushed and vanquished, beside a
nation's bier!

Men die and are forgot;
Nations may live and not;
Ours died that it might live
To win a glory only death can give.

We could not see—we only felt
The passing spirit's thrill!
We knew the altar where we knelt
Had suddenly grown chill!

And all that day, in the spring-time shade, we sat
in groups of two or three
And smoked and sighed and wondered when the
apotheosis would be.
An' when at sundown we housed the gun with the
old tarpaulin we always kept—
Though tents were scarce and the nights were
cold—

For the brave old gal, worth her weight in gold,
There wasn't a man of us all but sobbed and wept.
And when, at the close of our last parade,
The order came and we obeyed:
"Right face! Break ranks!" there wasn't an eye
In all the squad that was half-way dry!

All day long, we had fed our pride
With tales of the havoc she'd scattered wide.
And many an angry fierce caress
On her war-worn muzzle our hands would press
As we tenderly counted the brazen scars
"Number five," had won 'neath the "stars and
bars!"

An' five of us fellows, we three an' two more,
Who have gone on ahead to the evergreen shore.
We swore that the touch of a Gunkin han'
Should never dishonor our brave "Sully arm."
So out of the camp we quietly crept
And hauled her away whilst the others slept,
An' long before sunrise had buried her deep,
The tarpaulin around her, in honor to sleep,
Till the "lost cause" should summon our sons to
the fore,
To fight for the rights of the Southland once more.

It's twenty-four years an' perhaps a few days,
Since we hid her away from our shame an' disgrace.

Last night we went out, Jack, Shaddy and me,
An' exhumed the old gun as you youngsters may
see.

The tarpaulin had rotted, and yonder green slime
That covers her scars, shows the kindness of time,
Who hides all the bruises an' saves all the fame
Of a cause that deserved to live only in name.
He has healed our hurts too, has dried up our tears;
Shown how vain were our hopes and how foolish
our fears.

It's God's way, you see, of showing to man
How the finite fits into the infinite plan:
The service we rendered, it's plain to a boy,
Showed how foolish it was to attempt to destroy
A Union He'd founded—to pull down a state
He meant to endure, be one, and be great!

We rejoice that the nation we fought for is dead;
That the flag of the old one floats o'er us instead!
We thought we were right, yet though wrong, not
in vain

Was the blood that was shed, for never again,
While history tells the brave deeds of our men,
Will man seek to sever the Union in twain!

To-day the world will celebrate
The hundredth birthday of the new world state,
And we've brought out old "Number Five,"
To prophesy that it will live long and thrive.
Come, 'om, we'll swab and load, and Shoddy
man the breech.

We'll teach old Sally Ann another sort of speech;
An' you lads serve the cartridges! One at a time
now, steady!

An' you black fellows, man the halcyards there, and
send the flag up when we're ready.

Now, boys, make ready! Let the old beauty hear
At least "one rebel yell" that rings out just
clear

For freedom and right, as a Yankee cheer!
It's a fine thing, lads, like a hero to fight:
But a grander thing to uphold the right!
And we the most nobly shall honor our dead
By righting the wrongs to maintain which they
bled!

Come, Jack, my old crony, this is something quite
new,
Though I've handled a rammer right often with
you.

All ready now, Shaddy? Then just you stand by
her!

Home with it now, Jack! Hats off. Hurray!
Fire!!

Pass primers an' cartridges, lads! Lively, now!
A hundred rounds on a single gun
Is no light thing, as you'll allow,
An' sure to be something more than fun
For three old fellows that hav'n't bent
To home a cartridge or thumb a vent
For twenty-four years, ye know!
Steady an' slow, boys, steady an' slow!
A hundred times ye must come and go!

How the pulses throb as the echoes roar,
And the clouds grow white
In the sun's hot light!
God! How the bitter powder-smoke
Burns the eyeballs and seems to choke
The peaceful present down into the grave
Of the errant past! Oh, comrades brave!
We fought for the wrong, in the long ago,
That our children may fight, may die, let us pray,
For the truth and the right, for aye and aye!
Send an' slow, boys! "Steady an' slow!"