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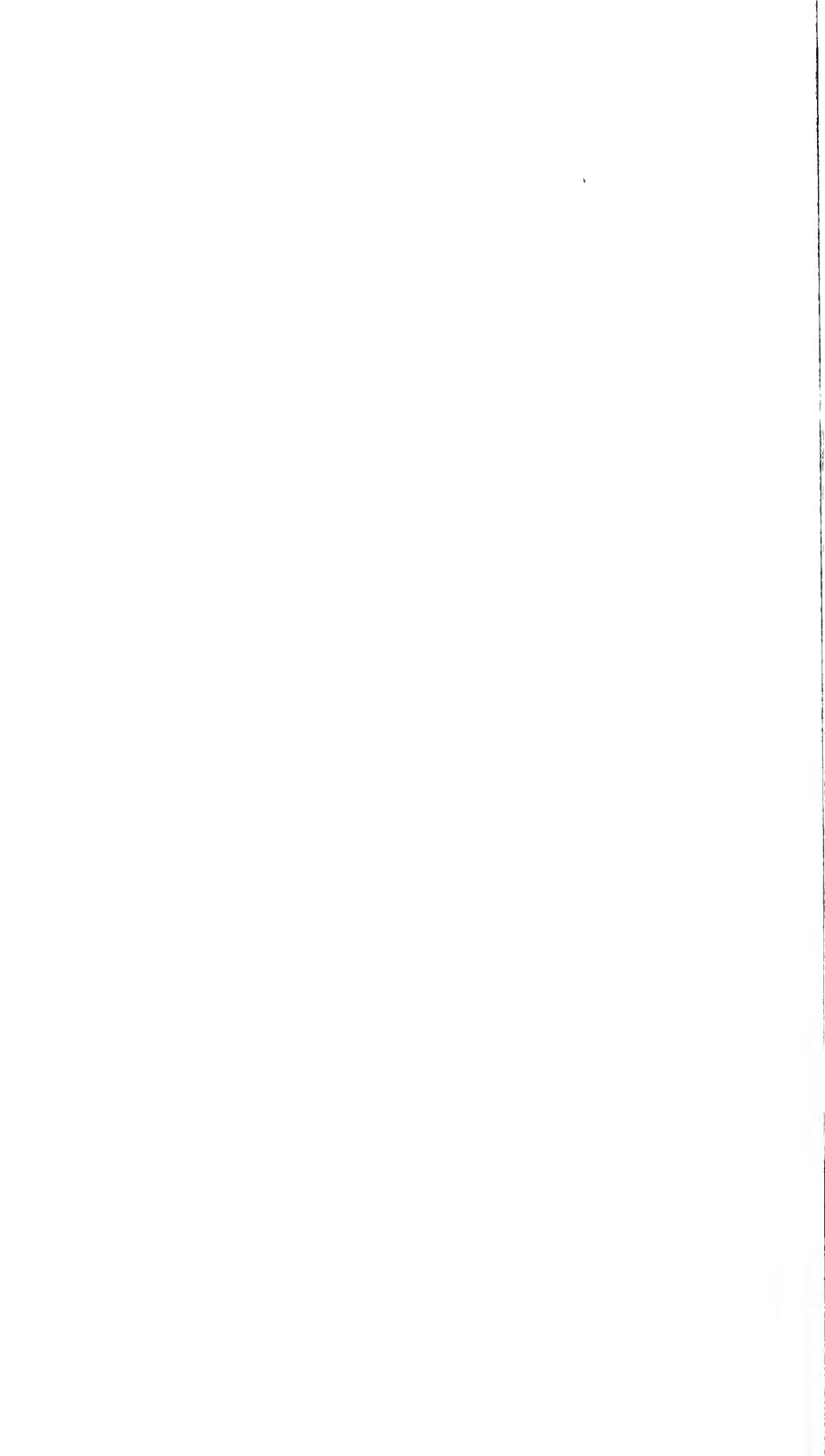
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Class _____

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Desirableness of Active Service.

A S E R M O N

PREACHED TO THE

TENTH CONNECTICUT REGIMENT,

AT ST. AUGUSTINE, FLA.,

ON SABBATH, APRIL 10th, 1864.

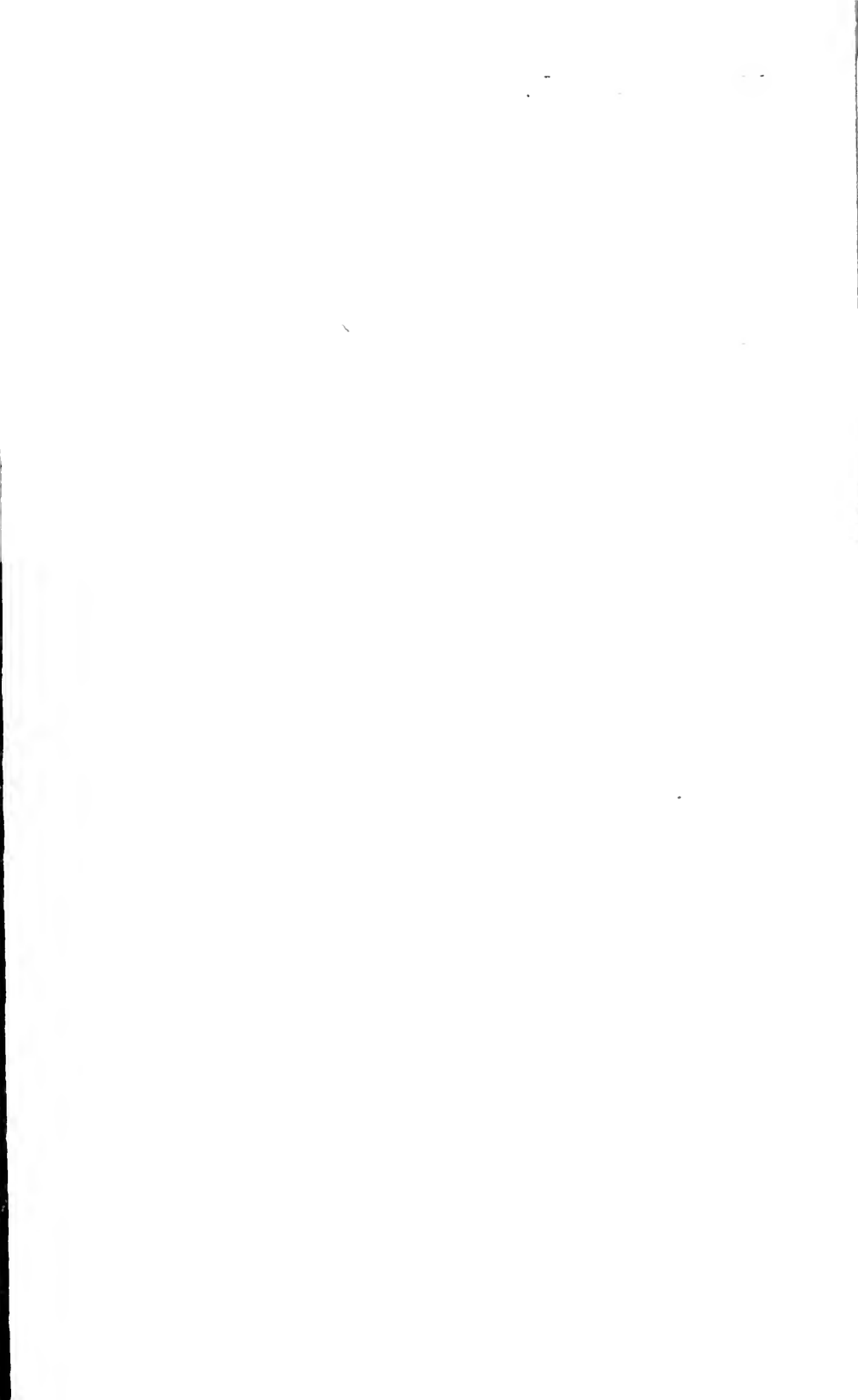
BY

CHAPLAIN H. CLAY TRUMBULL.

HARTFORD:

PRESS OF CASE, LOCKWOOD AND COMPANY.

1864.



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CORRESPONDENCE.

ST. AUGUSTINE, FLA., April 12th, 1864.

Chaplain H. C. TRUMBULL, }
10th Reg't C. V. }

Considering the sermon preached by you last Sabbath, to be peculiarly well adapted to the times, and believing that a wide circulation of it will prove beneficial to the service, I earnestly request that you furnish me a copy for publication.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

J. L. OTIS, Col.

Com'g the Reg't.

ST. AUGUSTINE, FLA., April 12th, 1864.

COLONEL:

I am glad that the sermon referred to in your kind note of this date so met your approval. Hoping that it may prove of service as you suggest, I cheerfully submit it to your discretion. And am,

Very respectfully and cordially,

Your Chaplain,

H. C. TRUMBULL.

Col. J. L. OTIS, Com'g 10th C. V.

[NOTE.—In partial explanation of the scripture parallelism of this sermon, it should be mentioned that the 10th C. V. left the North in the autumn of 1863, as a part of the "Burnside Expedition" to North Carolina—long delayed off Hatteras. In the fall of 1863, after a full share in the exhausting siege-work on Morris Island, it was sent to St. Augustine, where it remained until ordered, in April, 1864, to the front in Virginia.

SERMON.

NUMBERS, 32 : 6. SHALL YOUR BRETHREN GO TO WAR, AND
SHALL YE SIT HERE ?

THE children of Israel were engaged in a struggle for their own national inheritance. They were battling for possession of the land transmitted to them by Abraham and Jacob, their pilgrim fathers, and assured to them by the Divine promise. The war, which seemed likely, at its opening, to prove of but brief duration, had been prolonged beyond the anticipations of any, and some were already quite tired of the contest. The army of Israel had been in the main successful in its many encounters with the stubborn foe. It had seized and occupied cities deemed strongholds of the enemy. It had encircled fully the territory it claimed. And, although peaceful possession was still denied by disloyal inhabitants, it was gradually, at bloody cost, establishing rightful rule in all the land. In a severe pitched battle with the five confederate kings of Midian, it had been,

once more, victorious, and was now resting on the soil recovered from the foe.

A new campaign was about to open. Moses was to retire from command. Joshua, an energetic and experienced General, was to succeed him at the head of the armies, and himself in the field, was to lead the entire host in a vigorous, determined move into the heart of the enemy's territory, which should, as it did, prove the termination of the struggle, the last great campaign of the war. Then it was that the soldiers of Reuben and of Gad shrunk from the advance and expressed a desire to rest where they were.

It does not appear that these troops were lacking in either courage or patriotism, but for the time they were thinking of themselves rather than of their country and comrades, and their hearts went out with natural longing for the blessings of peace and of home enjoyment in place of the privations of the field and the perils of the front. They had already done good service for a number of years, enduring nobly and fighting often and well. They felt that they had performed their share of the national work, and earned fairly the privilege of standing by while others went on to complete the undertaking they had thus far prosecuted so vigorously. The war for which they had enlisted was so nearly at an end, that

the thought of now falling before its close, and having no part in the benefits accruing from it, was by no means a pleasant one. They had had such bitter experience of marching and of battle, that military life had to them lost much of its romance and attractiveness, and they were in no sense inclined to dispute its glory or its rewards with those who had still a liking for it. As a mere matter of choice, they would not ask to be ever again within sling or javelin range, even though their banner had no inscription of another blood-bought field added to the long list already emblazoning its folds. Perhaps, too, the fact that their first move must be across the *water*, impressed them unpleasantly in remembrance of their earliest experience after the opening of the war. They may have shrunk from another Red Sea expedition, which, although finally successful, had caused much of murmuring and of anxiety ere the passage of the forbidding deep was providentially accomplished. And under no circumstances, apparently, did they wish to join the army of the Jordan.

Moreover, the long inaction of the Gadites and Reubenites in the place of their then abode had, doubtless, its influence in shaping their desires and moulding their tastes. While they remained in the sand desert, where they suffered most and had most

to do, they would have hailed gladly any order for a forward move which gave promise of hastening the longed for end of the struggle in which they had a part, especially in a new department and under a new commander. But now, they had had a fresh taste of the delights of civilized life. They had made acquaintances among the subjugated Midianites. They had become attached to some of the children and young Misses who had escaped the victor's sword, and this acquaintance and intercourse had not, in every case, elevated the standard of either morality or patriotism.

Then, the region itself in which they had found a rest, was truly attractive. Gilead was on the Eastern border of the land of promise, stretching "unto the sea of the plain even the salt sea." It was the land of the pine and the cedar, the cypress, the palm, and the olive. It was a health-giving locality, the balm of Gilead being a synonym of panacea, the universal restorative. It appears, also, by the way, to have been the cattle growing region of the confederate kings; according to the sacred record, "a land for cattle," and "behold the place was a place for cattle." As a whole, it was a locality so well suited to the tastes and needs of the war-sick soldiers that many of them were willing to pass the remaining days of not only their enlistment but their

lives there, and officers and men sought a title to its soil, that there their home might be. “And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben, came and spake unto Moses and to Eleazer the priest, and unto the princes of the congregation, saying, * * * if we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan.”

“And Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war and shall ye sit here?” Moses knew his soldiers. He understood how true and reliable were those who petitioned him; and, in all confidence in their courage, their generosity and their patriotism, he reminded them, in a few fitting words, of their duty to themselves and to others, and of the folly of seeking peace and safety against the commands of their Divine Ruler. He suggested that the war in which they had fought thus far, was still going on, and that they could not honorably turn aside from it. He called to mind those who had battled with them, and who again needed their co-operation and support, and asked if they would leave them now to struggle unaided or to fall unavenged. He held before them the fact of history, to show how God,—the Great Disposer—had caused to perish, almost an entire generation of Israel, because of their sinful

shrinking from a contest to which He had summoned them.

Thus Moses reasoned. Thus Moses appealed. What was the result?

The Gadites and Reubenites—brave and noble soldiers as they were—had no sooner considered the facts presented by their General, and heard his stirring words, than as a man, they sprang forward to the work proposed, and expressing renewed determination to battle to the end, asked it as a privilege that they might form the van guard of all the host, that they might lead, not follow, might do the skirmishing through all the yet unrecovered possessions of the foe. “We ourselves,” they said, “will go ready armed *before* the children of Israel, until we have brought them unto their place. * * We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance.” “And Moses said unto them, If ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the Lord to war, and will go *all of you* armed over Jordan before the Lord, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him, and the land be subdued before the Lord: then afterward ye shall return, and be guiltless before the Lord, and before Israel; and *this land* shall be your possession before the Lord. But if ye will not do so, behold ye have sinned against the Lord:

and be sure your sin will find you out." "And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben spake unto Moses, saying, Thy servants will do as my Lord commandeth. * * * Thy servants will pass over, every man armed for war, before the Lord to battle, as my Lord saith."

It does not by any means appear that all of the soldiers of Gad and Reuben had hesitation, even at the outset, as to the proposed movement. Doubtless, there were many among them who from the very start, hailed gladly the prospect of active service. But it is manifest that "every man" expressed his readiness to pass over the river, "armed for war," so soon as the matter was clearly understood.

The campaign was opened. Gad and Reuben crossed the Jordan. Israel followed, Joshua proved himself the successful General. Brilliant victories closed the war. Finally, there was peace in Judea, and rest in Gilead. The gallant men of the advance who survived the struggle returned to their homes with the approving consciousness of performed duty, and, in the enjoyment of dearly purchased blessings, found such contentment and delight as they never could have known, but for their cheerful sacrifices and their prolonged endurance. Those who fell, fell honorably, fell in a holy cause, and their memory was precious to those for whom they dared and died.

and will be cherished gratefully so long as history gives its record, and there is admiration in the world for noble men of noble deeds.

Thus, with the Gadites and Reubenites, in the land of Giléad and of Judea, in the long gone days! Is there no lesson for us in the record of their course? Were the circumstances of their rest, and of their prospective move, in every way dissimilar from ours. Have none here had any of the feelings which influenced them when first they contemplated a renewal of service in the field? However these things may be, of one point I am sure. Among the soldiers of Reuben and of Gad were no braver, nobler, more loyal or more generous men than are of the regiment I love and now address. They were not more ready to be foremost in the fight, or more reliable to battle on untiringly, than you—comrades of the Tenth will be, when *you* act *yourselves*, act deliberately, act understandingly.

There *is* a prospect of our being again—and that right speedily—in the field and at the front. Over this prospect let us rejoice together—*rejoice*; and why? Because just now, active service is our duty; active service is our pleasure; active service is for our interest.

I. *Active service is our duty.*

This war is not one of aggression but of defense. It is not for conquest, not for revenge ; but for national honor and for national life. Our government—Divinely ordained ; over us for good ; involving every earthly interest for us and for ours—is assailed by rebels in arms, and must be protected and preserved, or we are ruined and lost. If in this struggle we are overpowered, there is to us no earthly present, no earthly future. No cost is too great for success in such a contest. Even though men fall as fall the autumn leaves ;—even though every wife becomes a widow, every mother sonless, every child loses a father, and every sister a brother ;—even though the nation is bankrupt and gaunt famine stalks the land ; better, far better, this, than peace before victory. Not until we lose all love of self, all love of family, all love of country, all love of God, shall we entertain the thought of suspending effort to preserve unimpaired that which represents and involves the whole of these.

“They that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” Having appealed to the trial of arms, the enemies of our government are to be met by arms—to be subdued by arms. Those who are loyal, able-bodied, and so circumstanced that they can leave their homes, must now “go armed before the Lord

to war," as went the Gadites and Reubenites across the Jordan. The only present limit to every American's duty to be fighting in the field, is the call of the government and his ability to respond,—not his inclination, nor the assistance he has already rendered. Military service, just now in our land, is not as a levied tax of a certain percentage, to be paid by those who have ample means without their impoverishment, but it is the claim as a positive necessity, upon every man's fullest possessions, in a matter of life and of death. There are no works of supererogation in a struggle for personal or national existence within the bounds of man's might, and his right. Those of our regiment who laid down their lives at Roanoke, or New Berne, or Kinston, or Seabrook, or St. Augustine, or in the hospital, or at home, or by the way, performed their whole duty to their country. Thus with those disabled in service. Thus with those whose years or health now render them exempts. Thus will it be with those whose personal or family circumstances shall prevent their re-enlisting at the close of their present term. Thus with these, but not with any who are or may be needed and *can* respond. Even if a man had been in every great battle of the war, from the defense of Sumpter, in April, three years ago, to the present day, and never had a furlough in all that time, if still his strength was unimpaired, and no family now needed

him, and his country required his further services, he would not yet have performed his whole duty as an American citizen; for, whatever he is, and whatever on earth, he has, is due unreservedly to his government in its hour of imminent peril.

“I’ve given one life for liberty,” said Corporal Wheaton of our regiment, in his dying hour, “and I only wish I could give another.” The same spirit showed itself in one of Belger’s brave boys at the battle of Whitehall. His shattered hand had been amputated at the wrist. Looking at the bandaged stump, he said, sadly, “Oh dear! its gone now. I don’t care for myself, but what will my poor mother do?” Then after a pause, he added with a sigh, “Oh how I wish I was ——” “At home?” I asked. “No! with the battery,” he said warmly, for his heart was in the fight. As with individuals, so with regiments. The question should be with us of the Tenth, not what *have we done?* but what *can we do?* It was truly said in a charity sermon that, as to our offerings, God looks not so much at what we have *given* as at what we have *left.*” Our country is to be saved, under God, by hard fighting. Its best fighting men are needed now. Our regiment fights hard, fights well. Let it go forward! We did not leave our homes to avoid danger, to enjoy social life, to have an easy time. We came out to fight, to follow up

the enemies of the government until they were all in subjection. The work is yet incomplete. We have strength left for it. Our enlistment still holds. The call comes to us. The way is open. Duty clearly points us on. And,

II. *So does inclination, while our comrades are engaged.*

Shall our brethren go to war, and shall we sit here? Not if we are wanted and can follow. It is a privilege rather than a duty to make sacrifices for those whom we love. Who deems it a task to prepare a windmill or a kite for a child who has won his affections? What son feels the care of his good mother a burden, or begrudges the money he stints himself to bestow upon her? Who but a cowardly villain would stand tamely by while his sister was insulted, lest by interfering for her protection, he should endanger his precious person? Ah, I remember full well when the news reached us on James Island of the first unsuccessful assault on Fort Wagner. We heard that the Seventh Connecticut had charged boldly up to the parapet and been betrayed by the failure of regiments on which it relied for support. The report of casualties was greatly exaggerated, and the loss of brave Connecticut boys was said to be fearfully large. The disaster was in all

mouths; yet, throughout our entire regiment, as I passed from man to man, I heard it never said by any, "I am glad we were out of that;" but, only, "Oh if *we* could have been there. Those boys would have had a support." And they would have had, and those slaughtered thousands of the subsequent siege and assaults would have been spared for other service. When Gen. Foster was shut up in Little Washington, I ask how many of you would have preferred safety behind the intrenchments of Seabrook Island to imminent peril in his attempted succor, had the choice been tendered you as a mere matter of taste, independently of the question of duty or honor? I believe but few if any who had known him and fought in his command. And thus I am sure it would be with you always, when brought to the test. I know your generosity. I have been witness of your acts of bravery and sacrifice. You have but to understand that others need your help, and it is given at any cost or risk, and given cheerfully and with heartiness. Your comrades require your presence and support elsewhere than here this Spring. You will aid none of them by garrisoning Fort Marion or doing provost duty in the streets of Augustine. In North Carolina, or Virginia, or at the West; under the gallant Burnside, or other noble leader; side by side with Massachusetts and Connecticut

companions in former dangers and successes, you may be of incalculable service to many. It is by no means impossible that you should do as much the coming season, as you might have done had you been with the Seventh Connecticut on Morris Island on the eleventh of last July. Your valor, your firmness, your experience, may save an army, decide a battle, conclude the war. Let us then rejoice that as our brethren in all the army of the government are moving forward in a new campaign, we need not sit inactive here; for it were better, far, that we should fall in death beside them, than that they should know defeat from lack of our co-operating services.

And while that service is a positive duty to God, our country, and our comrades, we may also feel, that

III. *It is for our interest to re-enter the field.*

Army life as a whole, improves rather than deteriorates those who pursue it. The manly and the moral standard is higher with soldiers than with others. And, as the most effective military service is rendered in the field, it is there that the soldier appears to best advantage. Active campaigning is as much better—for officers and men—than camp and garrison duty, as the latter is above the occupa-

tion of the mere money seekers or lovers of ease and security. Said a prominent General of our army—whom all knew to have felt the truth in his own experience—“The baptism of battle and of blood, makes men braver, nobler, holier.” And it is so. A life of effort, a life of sacrifice, lifts men out of, and above themselves, as could no life of inaction or passive enjoyment of temporal advantages. In mental powers and physical ability, as in worldly goods, it is more blessed to give than to receive.”

“For the heart grows rich in giving!
 All its wealth is living grain,—
 Seeds, which mildew in the garner,
 Scattered, fill with gold the plain.”

Although no trial “for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” Those soldiers who survive this war are to be better men among their fellows, than they could have been, but for all its blood and all its suffering; and those who fall have fallen that the race might rise.

But our regiment would suffer by remaining in such a place and life as now, longer than is necessary to recruit its health and prepare it for new and effective service at the front.

We have reason for thanksgiving that we are again to be under the hallowing influence of battle, and as to the question of personal peril, we know that a man is never safe except in doing his duty. Jonah gained nothing in comfort or security by fleeing to the sea when God commanded him to face his fellows at Nineveh. The soldier who shirks in the hour of danger not only fears man, but defies God; and, in consequence, it is often found that "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life, [i. e. be willing to] shall preserve it." What regiments lost most men in the Morris Island trenches? Those having most stragglers,—most who were out of place, seeking their own ease and safety rather than obeying orders and doing their duty. The old story of the brief action on the British man-of-war, at the close of which the only man found injured was a coward who had concealed himself in a coil of rope in the lower hold, and been killed by the falling of a spent shot on his head, is hardly more remarkable than frequent experiences in the war now going on. One of the officers captured at Wagner, in the first assault, told me of a man who had just started to run to the rear, when a shell struck him and literally cut him in two, while comrades near him, in their proper place, were uninjured. Some of you may recollect an in-

cident occurring on the morning of the James Island fight, while we stood in line of battle facing the foe. A man of our regiment fell out and was moving to the rear, when an officer called him back, and insisted on his again taking his place in the ranks. Hardly had this been done, when a huge shell from the Pawnee struck in the very direction in which that man had been moving, and as it burst, scattered desolation far and wide, causing all who observed it to feel that the soldier who was afraid to stand at his post had his life or limbs preserved by being forced to do his duty.

Thus it is, that while God rules we must trust Him for protection, feeling assured that we can never obtain it for ourselves by avoiding the path that in his providence He opens before us. Some of us will, doubtless, be shot down when next in action. But even more might fall by disease if we were permitted to remain in this locality. We know not what is for our safety, or what is for our good, except that God's way is the only right way. In that, we should always move cheerfully, and in confidence, rejoicing that we are led by One who knoweth the end from the beginning.

“ Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
 However dark it be !
 Lead me by thine own hand,
 Choose out the path for me.

* * * * *

“I dare not choose my lot :
 I would not, if I might ;
 Choose thou for me, my God,
 So shall I walk aright.”

Of the sad truth that not all of you are ready to meet the death which you may find on the battlefield, I am by no means unmindful. Yet, even this induces no desire on my part, that you should be kept back from active service when your country demands your labors at the front. You should seek forgiveness of your sins and hope of salvation through Christ, not because you must die, but because this seeking is your duty. “Now is the accepted time” to come and give yourselves in trust to Jesus. I entreat you to improve it. But, to do this, you have not to turn aside from the soldier’s path of privilege or obligation ; you have not to forget your country, nor to fail her in her hour of need. “Duties never conflict.” You can best be fitted for the future while being faithful in the present. You can work and pray at the same time. You can move toward the enemies of your government without moving any further from God,—yea, even while drawing yet nearer to Him.

As now, war is a necessity ; and brave and experienced soldiers are demanded ; and your comrades

are re-entering the field; and you are especially summoned to the front; I rejoice with you in the probabilities of the immediate future; and I urge you to be ready for whatever God shall call you to—trusting in Him, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to give you, finally, rest here, or rest hereafter;—happiness in an earthly home, if you survive the war; happiness in a heavenly home if you fall on the field, or wherever you die. Work, now! Rest, by and by!

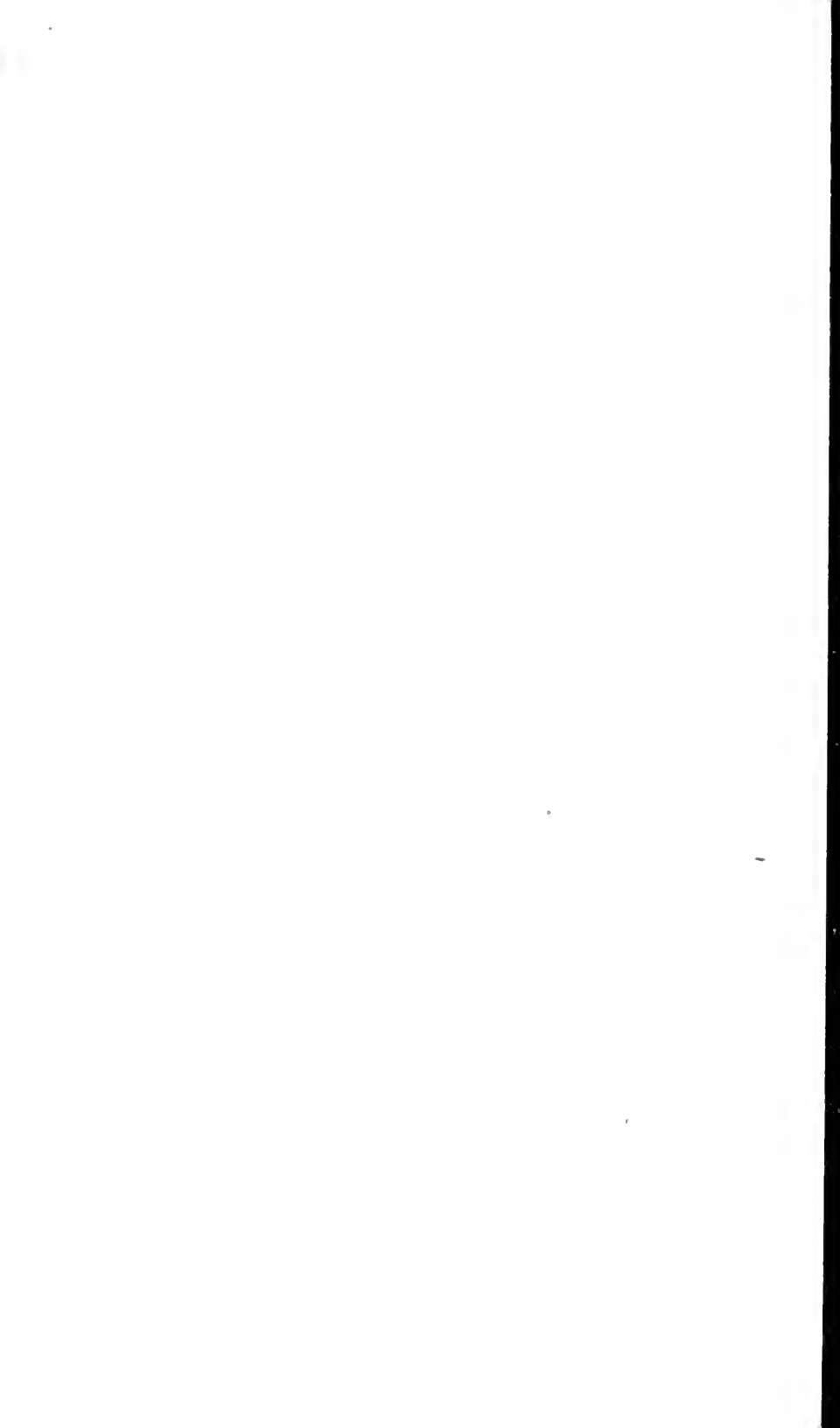
“ Finish thy work, the time is short;
 The sun is in the West;
 The night is coming down—till then,
 Think not of rest.

Finish thy work, then wipe thy brow,
 Ungird thee from thy toil;
 Take breath and from each weary limb
 Shake off the soil.

Finish thy work, then go in peace;
 Life's battle fought and won;
 Hear from the Throne the Master's voice,
 ‘ Well done! Well done!’ ”

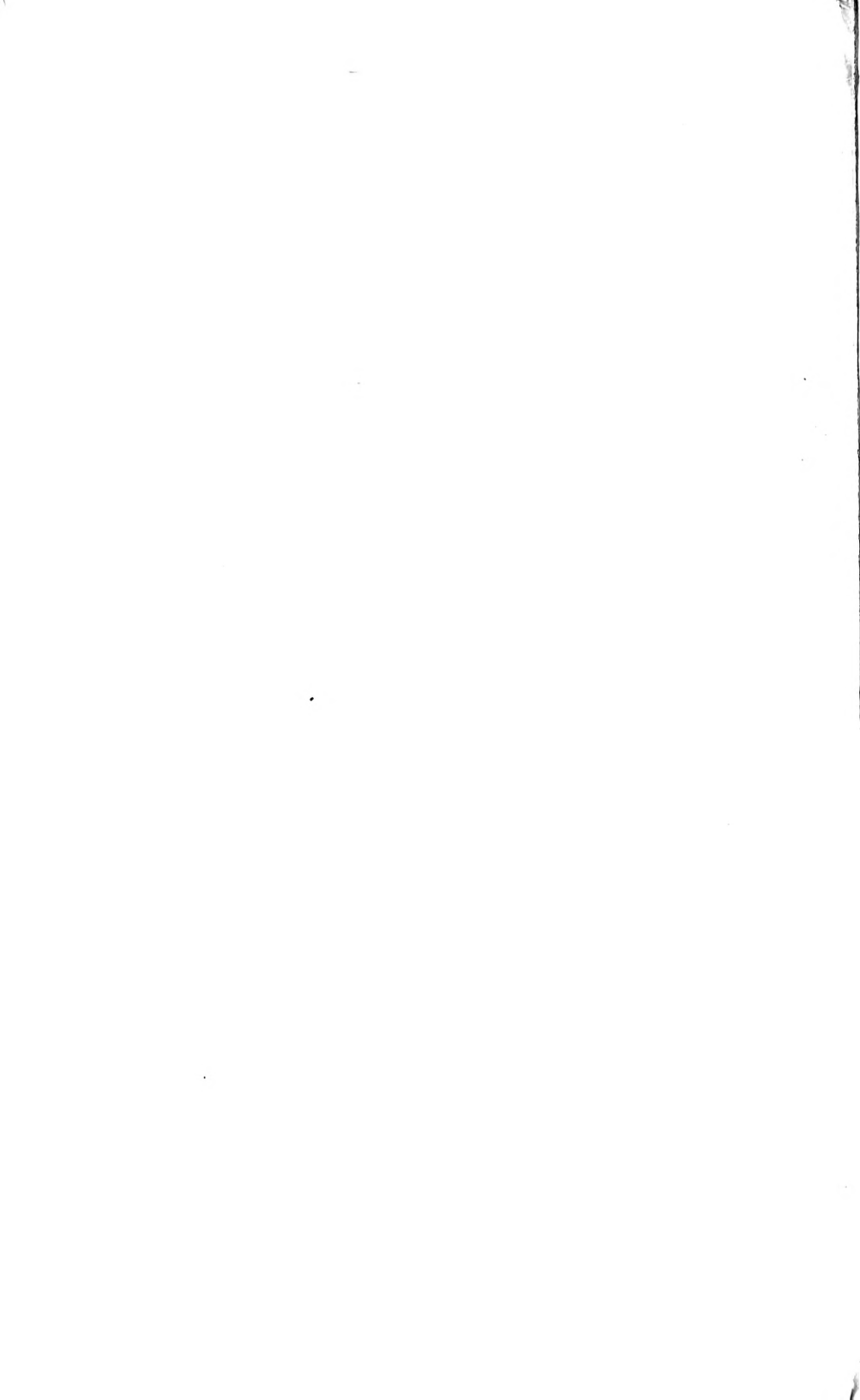


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