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J. A. Smith

A P O E M,

READ AT THE

FIRST ANNIVERSARY

OF

HOWARD DIVISION, No. 21, S. OF T.,

NOVEMBER 16, 1866,

BY CHARLES W. [✓]HILLS, P. W. P.

WASHINGTON, D. C., 1866.
Chronicle Prntd.

NOTE.—At a meeting of Howard Division, No. 21, Sons of Temperance, held November 22, 1866, the following resolution was adopted:

Resolved, That the thanks of Howard Division be tendered Brother Charles W. Hills, P. W. P., for the Poem read by him on the occasion of our late Anniversary, and that he be requested to furnish the Division with a copy of the same for publication.

The undersigned were appointed a Committee to procure the publication of the poem.

Howard Division, No. 21, S. of T., instituted November, 26, 1865, with thirty-three charter members, and now numbering six hundred members, and lady-visitors, meets every Thursday evening, at 7 o'clock, at Union Hall, No. 481 Ninth street, between D and E streets.

WM. P. DREW, }
J. B. JOHNSON, } Committee.
GEO. L. VANCE, }

I.

O'er fated Egypt's deserts wide
God's cloudy pillar hung,
His chosen people's course to guide
The devious wilds among.

Reposing on the Red Sea's banks,
From Pharaoh's bondage free,
Glad shouts arose from Israel's ranks
In swelling jubilee.

Philistia's haughty hosts o'erthrown,
With Ashtaroth and gods untrue,
Old Samuel raised a sculptured stone—
"The Lord hath helped us hitherto."

Here ends our journey of a year;
Our brightest hopes surpassed,
Here our memorial pile we rear,
A land-mark of the past.

Triumphant on the wished-for coast
We sound our jubilee,
As Miriam's song from Israel's host
Swelled o'er the surging sea.

Strange memories, like a rushing flood
Released, go thronging by;
They thrill the nerves and stir the blood,
Like a sudden shot in a silent wood,
Resounding sharp and high.

Thoughts rise of nights of gloom profound.
When a faithful few would meet;
While the wintry wind, with a sullen sound,
Swept mournfully his chilling round
Through each deserted street.

When over a dark and ashen sky
 The wind-driven vapors swept,
 And the pattering rain, like a sobbing sigh,
 As the moaning wind went hurrying by,
 Its ceaseless music kept.

The gorgeous Spendthrift of the Year,
 Old Autumn, cloud-bedight,
 Storm-guarded, held his revel here
 One year ago to-night.

The murky clouds were piled on high,
 Like mountain-cliffs against the sky,
 And seemed, in wild and wrathful play,
 To mar the hope of coming day.

As friends to right, as foes to wrong,
 In numbers weak, in purpose strong,
 We met that night, and now we find
Six hundred more our ranks have joined.

Success on energy attends ;
 Sloth checks each grand reform,
 The faithless are fair-weather friends,
 The faithful dare the storm.

II.

When battling myriads trod the coast
 Of sacred Palestine,
 The Cross was to the Christian host
 A grand, all-conquering sign :
 The Moslem legions quailed and fled
 Before that symbol strange and dread.

Where swept the thunder-gust of war
 Like desert-born typhoon,
 Flashed swift-descending cimeter,
 Waved Islam's crescent moon,
 High flamed the Cross, and seemed to be
 The Avatar of Destiny.

Grandly before our ranks has moved
 Unchecked a sign of power;
 Our name a talisman has proved
 In every trying hour;
 The synonym of noble fame,
 Proudly we bear a HOWARD'S name.

No laurels deck the brows of those
 Who lead our battle's van;
 No trophies rich from conquered foes
 Repay the toil for man.
 In Right's great conflict heroes move
 Unsung of men, but known above.

In mythic days the brave in wars
 Upon the changeless sky
 Were fixed amid the fadeless stars,
 For immortality,
 In apotheosis sublime,
 In constellated pantomime.

The moral hero yet will find,
 Though toiling all unseen,
 His noble actions deep-enshrined
 Within the hearts of men;
 Better than blackened corpses hid
 In heaven-aspiring pyramid.

Age-shaken towers that tottering stand
 Or lie disjointedly,
 Half-buried in the drifting sand,
 Attest too mournfully
 How powerless are such piles to shed
 True glory on the builder's head.

Defaced, unread, sand-buried lies
 Each lofty cenotaph;

The patient worker, when he dies,
 Requires no epitaph ;
 When life's great harvest-field he leaves,
 With joy he brings his gathered sheaves.

A quaint old proverb the Arabs tell
 Evermore, like a midnight cry,
 Is haunting my dreams — a nightmare spell—
 It rings in my ears like a tolling bell,
 "The remembrance of youth is a sigh—"

III.

Towering above the glaciers cold,
 Of rugged Switzerland,
 In morn's uncertain light behold
 A spectral figure stand!
 Grim, shadowy, Titan-like—its form
 Mist-shrouded, throned amid the storm.

Uprising, on the startled air
 The ghostly shape intrudes,
 And towers, like palm in desert bare,
 Mid nature's solitudes,
 A stately, cloud-wrapped sentinel,
 Mute warder o'er the land of Tell.

Awe-struck the early traveller views,
 Projecting crags between,
 His every motion reproduced
 Upon that mighty screen ;
 A giant show—an acted dream—
 A grand, colossal pantomime !

Upon the future's curtained wall
 Man's every act shall live,
 Pictures to please, or to appal,
 Alike must all survive ;
 The impress made, the figure traced,
 It lives, and cannot be effaced.

No quaint device the actor screens,
 No change at mortal's nod,
 But angel hands adjust the scenes,
 The audience, a God!
 The curtain, dread futurity!
 The period, all eternity!

IV.

Dark misery broods in awe and dread
 On sin-cursed man's estate,
 And ruin stalks with fatal tread
 O'er hearth-stones desolate:
 Intemperance carries want and fright
 To many a wretched home to-night.

On cloud-veiled Sinai, thunder-riven,
 Before Jehovah's nod,
 To waiting Israel were given
 The oracles of God;
 But modern Solons overawe
 God's grand prohibitory law.

The wretch who vends hell's poison here,
 Go wander where he will,
 On land, on sea, must plainly hear,
 Forever thundering in his ear,
 The law—"Thou shalt not kill!"

The wailing wind will sound a dirge,
 The storm a victim's moan,
 And in the boom of every surge,
 He'll hear a dying groan.

In awful retribution just,
 From Heaven why rushes not
 A vengeful fire to lick the dust
 From each polluted spot
 Where, nightly, Satan's agents true
 Their master's murderous work pursue?

O, God! who, prayer-restrained,
 Spared Moab's pious sire,
 When on doomed Sodom rained
 Heaven's all-devouring fire,
 Spare Thou, nor blot from earth again,
 The modern Cities of the Plain!

V.

Sin-hardened weaklings villify
 Our cause, and on it cast,
 Like weak, time-serving Shimei
 When grief-bowed David passed,
 Jeers, scoffs, and sneers—we can forgive,
 The truth can never die,
 And still the SONS OF TEMPERANCE live
 To bless humanity.

Its work-stained banners borne aloft,
 Still first in order moves
 Old *Number One*, whose shelter oft
 To many a wanderer proves,
 In time of doubt and sorest need,
 A GOOD SAMARITAN indeed.

No bard, though skilled in numbers due,
 And thoughts and words sublime,
 Could make the name of *Number Two*
 Adorn a modern rhyme:
 But firm in faith, in numbers few,
 Its strength approves its members true.

A host of workers, rescued, free,
 Triumphantly attest
 In doing good that *Number Three*
 Is EQUAL with the best.

EXCELSIOR'S record will remain;
 Still wrongs demand redress,

And *rising*, it may yet attain
 To *higher* usefulness.

May old POTOMAC combat wrong
 While rolls Potomac's tide along ;
 To fainting ones may *Twenty-Three*
 A FOUNTAIN in the desert be.

Far-reaching in the peaceful vale,
 Unmoved by floods of wrong,
 A cable tried that cannot fail,
 An anchor sure and strong,
 May HOPE remain, the cheering bow
 Of promise, spanning gulfs of woe.

On battle-scarred Virginia's soil
 MOUNT VERNON gathers fame;
 And proudly may those workers toil
 Who bear a Lincoln's name.

Far in the east—Judea's realm,
 A star rose on the sight,
 And, resting over Bethlehem,
 Dispelled a moral night :
 But here, reversing nature's law,
 Shining amid the mist,
 The parting clouds reveal a star
 Ascending in the west.
 Its cheering light the gloom pervades,
 No storms its brightness mar ;
 May Time grow old ere sinks or fades
 Our glorious WESTERN STAR!

And WESTERN MISSION, latest born,
 With strong, unyielding will,
 And patient zeal, is struggling on,
 Its *mission* to fulfill.
 When battle joins with vice and sin
 May triumph greet our Benjamin.

VI.

As, tracking westward with the sun,
 Sweep scourges pestilent
 From steaming pools and marshes dank
 In torrid Orient;
 So sweeps, unchecked, a wasting plague,
 Far worse to sinful man
 Than dire diseases jungle-bred
 In fated Hindostan.

An old tradition, strange and vague,
 A fearful tale of woe,
 Of the time when the desolating plague
 Raged in London long ago,
 Obtrudes upon my memory,
 As fevers come and go.

Death stalked unchecked, with noiseless tread,
 Through street and silent hall,
 And a nameless terror, a shuddering dread,
 Descended, a dismal pall,
 Over perishing hundreds leprous and red
 With the curse of the primal fall

The vials of God's just wrath
 Were emptied above them at last,
 And full upon their path
 Down swept, like a rushing blast,
 The gathered doom of years,
 While fitfully hurrying past
 Trooped phantoms of formless fears.

Men quivering died, and stranger hands
 To the charnel-houses bore
 Each festering corpse; grim horror stands
 By each grave forever more,
 Like a fog-wrapped tower on the dreary sands
 Of a dreaded, storm-swept shore.

Undisturbed by the dash of a single oar,
 Each hovel and palace past,
 With a surging rush and a gurgling roar,
 Flowed the turbid river fast,
 Glossed with slimy ooze and tainted gore
 Dropped from the death-carts trundling past.

Unscared lurks the thief in the grass-grown street,
 In an awful solitude,
 And turret and dome, unentered, secrete
 The vulture's filthy brood,
 And lazily flapping their shadowy wings
 They fly in search of food.

Thank God! through the foggy, pestilent air
 Resounds, in quavering swell,
 From an old cathedral's turret square,
 The toll of a single bell.
 Oh! heaven, how sweetly that melody rare
 On the pallid listeners fell!

Like the morning sun glad hope broke then
 Through the all-pervading gloom,
 And proclaimed the lifting once again
 Of the overshadowing doom;
 That men could mourn for their fellow-men
 And follow them to the tomb.

O, bell, on the age-battled turrets of time,
 Ring the knell of woes long borne,
 Commingling your tones, in chorus sublime,
 With the rending of fetters long worn,
 And proclaiming abroad, in exultant chime,
 That men may *cease* to mourn!

In hope we await the era of right
 By visioned prophet foretold,



When legalized wrong and arrogant might
Shall fall; and when none shall behold
To the Devil, clad like an angel of light,
Men sell their souls for gold.

O, speed the long-expected day
When, like wicked, Godless states,
Dark evil and wrong shall pass away;
When over each city's gates
Inscribed, undimmed, shall shine for aye,
"Behold, the plague abates!"

When the wretch who heeds not misery's cry,
Shall feel that our God is just,
That the high and the low by the Deity
Were framed from a common dust;
When a soulless faith and apathy
Shall yield to a higher trust!



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