

Graham's American Monthly Magazine Burial of Volunteer Poem

Burial of a Volunteer Poem by Park Benjamin

'T is eve! one brightly-beaming star

Shines from the eastern heavens afar,

To light the footsteps of the brave,

Slow marching to a comrade's grave.

The Northern wind has sunk to sleep;

The sweet South breathes; as low and deep

The martial clang is heard, the tread

Of those who bear the silent dead.

And whose the form, all stark and cold,

Thus ready for the loosened mould; [sic]

Thus stretched upon so rude a bier?

Thine, soldier, thine-the volunteer!

Poor volunteer! the shot, the blow,

Or fell disease hath laid him low -

And few his early loss deplore -

His battle done, his journey o'er.

Alas! no fond wife's arms caressed,

His cheeks no tender mother pressed,

No pitying soul was by his side,

As, lonely in his tent, he died.

He died - the volunteer - at noon;
At evening came the small platoon;
And soon they'll leave him to his rest,
With sods upon his manly breast.

Hark to their fire! his only knell,
More solemn than the passing bell;
For ah! it tells a spirit flown
Without a prayer or sigh, alone!

His name and fate shall fade away,
Forgotten since his dying day,
And never on the roll of fame
Shall be inscribed his humble name.

Alas! like him how many more
Lie cold on Rio Grande's shore;
How many green, unnoted graves
Are bordered by those turbid waves!

Sleep, soldier, sleep! from sorrow free.
And sin and strife: 't is well with thee!
'T is well, though not a single tear
Laments the buried volunteer.