

**The 165th
New York Volunteers**

Written by
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And read by
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(late surgeon of the 165th)

On Decoration Day, May 30th, 1890, at Tottenville,
Staten Island

The 165th New York Volunteers

Near thirty years have passed away
 Since eighteen hundred and sixty-one,
When our sleep of Peace was broken in twain
 By the echoing sound of Sumpter's gun,
Like a solemn death-knell tolling slow,
 Rumbling, rolling, thundering loud,
And the murky clouds from the cannon's mouth
 To some seemed the Nation's burial shroud.

Message and rumor were borne on the wind
 With each report of the fatal gun,
'Till Supter had fallen, and we all knew
 The war between brothers at last had begun.
We laughed and jeered at he vaunting boasts,
 And thought them armed with David's slings,
Unruly boys who had broken away
 From the dear old mothers' apron strings.

But we found the foemen fierce and bold,
 Who thought the side of the quarrel just,
Who left their teams in the half ploughed field
 And drew the sword from the scabbard's rust.
And though all histories tell of blood,
 They never have told the story yet
Of a war as brave and gallantly fought,
 For with us two American armies met.

On an April day the Merrimac sailed
 Out of our harbor's yawning mouth,
Bearing a knot of armed men
 Under sealed orders sailing south ;
And they waved farewell to Camp Washington
 'Till the shores of the bay re-echoed their cheers,
And the westerning sun smiled out a "God speed"
 To the Hundred and Sixty-fifth Volunteers.

We took up arms for our Country's sake,
 Not like the stories soldiers of old,
Who fought under Pompey's and Hannibal's sway
 With naught in their hearts but the enemy's gold ;
Not like the great Alexander for a lewd queen,
 Not like Caesar for Empire and coveted ground ;
We fought not to bring back our captives fast chained
 To our chariot wheels, fettered and bound ;
But we fought for our own, for our glorious flag,
 That sheltering canopy stretching so far,
For us a protection, for usurping foes
 With a thundering tempest in each stripe and star.

'Twas a question of principle, not one of gain,
 We fought for our homes, not for possible hoard,
'Twas unrav'ling another Gordian knot
 And, like Alexander, we took up the sword.

At the President's call, at the roll of the drum
 Came the soldiers in blue from the East, North, and West,
Our land was in sorrow, her visage was sad,
 And the furrows of bullets wrinkled her breast ;
Her brow wore the solemn expression of war,
 And the life-blood of patriots made up her tears,
'Twas to staunch those poor wounds we shouldered our arms
 The One Hundred and Sixty-fifth Volunteers.

We left office and store-house, workshop and desk,
While the eyes of our mothers and wives filled with tears,
'Twas *Our Mother* we fought for, the land of our birth,
And her bugle and fife notes we answered with cheers.
Our country stood then like a ship far at sea,
With the storms of Rebellion tearing her shrouds,
But *Duty* was Pilot, with *Hope* at the helm,
And the Beacon-light *Union* lit the blood-tinted clouds.

On, on sped the ship, loyal winds filled her sails,
On, on to the land of palmetto and pine,
While we all breathed a prayer in our innermost hearts
For a speedy attack on the enemy's line.
On, on to the Gulf---through the Great River's mouth---
Drums beating---fifes playing---our starry flag set---
Past the fair Crescent City---past bayou and swamp---
'Till the trod Rebel ground at Camp Parapet.

Ponchatoula first taught us the war bugle's blast---
On *Plain Stores* we rushed at the word of command---
At Berryville---*Bisland*---*Fisher's Hall*---*Cedar Creek*---
We planted our flag in Confederate land ;
At *Deep Bottom*---*Cane River*---and *Carrion Crow*---
We answered with bullets each wild "Johnnie's yell,"
At *Mansaura*---*Pleasant Hill* and *Vermillion Bayou*
We carried our banner 'mid shrapnel and shell.

For forty odd days we stood to our guns,
Through the heat of the day, through the cool of the night,
The One Hundred and Sixty-fifth nerved for the fray
In the battle of history---Port Hudson's fight---
Through the timber we rushed like a whirlwind let loose---
To the clearing beyond---then down the ravine---
A mark for the fire from the enemy's works
In that field of ploughed stubble-land lying between
The attack like a demon-dance led on to death,
A wild pandemonium of strife and turmoil,
Worse then Greek meeting Greek, for Abel or Cain
On that battle-scarred, bullet-strewn, blood-blotted soil.

To the Charge ! rang the bugle---For our flag ! cried the men---
 'Twas an echo from Concord and Old Lexington,
'Twas "surrender or die" 'till the "Rebs" grounded arms
 And Port Hudson was ours---the great fight was won.

We need for our deeds not the statue or bust
 That politics, riches and influence carves,
The War of the Rebellion, the list of its fights,
 Tells in part of the fame of the Second Zouaves ;
No deep sculptured tablet recording the war
 Boasts of the Hundred and Sixty-fifth's part,
Search our name in our *acts* and 'tis also engraved
 In the core of the Nation's innermost heart.
Not a craven among us, no traitor or spy ;
 Where the fighting was hottest our boys met their fate ;
Our record was clear from Camp Parapet
 'Till we gave our rent banners back again to the State.

To-day there are meeting mere handfuls of men,
 The aftermath spared by the grim reaper's hand,
We are scattering garlands of memory's flowers
 On the graves of our dead, East and West, through the land.
Graves with rare chiseled monuments towering high,
 Graves in mountains and valley, in woodland and dell,
Graves dug with the sad hearts in the battle-field's sod
 Where a tiny flag tells how each brave soldier fell.
No color-guard raises those badges of love,
 Fair as maiden's first blush they greet the sunlight,
They drop at no signal, furl at no sunset gun,
 But hang heavy with dew through eternity's night.

Flag of Union and Freedom, of Liberty's sons,
 Defying the thunder and lightning's keen darts,
Each thread of your tissue was woven and spun
 From fibres of loyal American Hearts.

'Tis waving to-day from Alaska to Maine,
A continent nestles secure 'neath its fold,
'Tis the boast of its children,
The envy of worlds,
It was modeled by Gods
Who have broken the mould
May it float over mansion, homestead and farm
May it clothe us in infancy, serve as our pall---
May its silver stars light us to love, honor and peace---
May the Star Spangled Banner wave over all.