

"No, sir, I wish to be assigned to my company at once."

He knew that if he returned to Wapakoneta he would see Amy, and open anew the old wounds he was trying to heal. He longed to be again in active service, so that he might forget his troubles in the excitement of battle. It was a severe trial for him to forego the pleasure of seeing his dear mother and little sister, who, he knew, would be expecting him. He loved his mother with a deep, filial love, amounting almost to adoration, and when he finally made up his mind not to go home, he said to himself, "Dear mother, I know you will be disappointed, and perhaps blame me for my selfishness, but I think it for the best." He wrote a long letter, explaining why he could not come home, and gave it to one of his companions, with instructions to hand it to his mother.

"Tell her," said he, "that I am well and have enlisted for the war."

"Now, look here, Tom Norwood," said Ned Gray, "I'll do nothing of the kind. Do you want me to break your poor mother's heart? You just go and pack that knapsack and go home with us. I know you want to see the folks as bad as we do."

"No, Ned, I shall not go home with the company."

"Oh, you be blowed with such nonsense! I tell you you are going home with the us. Why, everybody in the country will be at the depot to meet us. Colonel Harrington telegraphed the captain that they were going to give us a rousing reception and a big dinner, big speeches and such, besides all the girls will be there; and all this you will miss by these moonshine notions of yours."

"Well, Ned, I hope you will have a good time, as you say, but I will not be there to enjoy it with you. I should like very much to go with the boys, and above all, to see mother and little Mamie, but I can not. I have reasons for the course I have adopted—reasons which I can not explain to you."

"Well, old boy," replied Ned, "you may have good reasons for acting the way you do, but, for the life of me, I can't see what there can be to keep you from going home to see your mother, unless"—and Ned stopped and looked quizzically at his friend a moment—"unless the colonel's daughter has gone back on you."

"Be that as it may, Ned, I shall not be in Wapakoneta to participate in the grand reception, which I feel sure the company will receive. Give the letter to mother, who, I suppose, will be at the depot on your arrival. Remember me to the folks at home, and take all the enjoyment you can before you return to the army, for this may be your last visit to your friends."

On the 5th of August, just four months after our citizen soldiers had left for the field, all was excitement in their native town, for they were expected to return on that day, and the streets were thronged with people, dressed in their holiday attire. As the time for the train, which was to bring them, approached, the crowd began gathering at the depot. The streets were filled with horses and wagons of every description. Men, wearing the badges of marshals, were riding through the crowd, trying to make room for a procession of citizens, which was headed by a band of music. Marching in the lead, was Josh Gundy, proudly carrying the stars and stripes. In the procession were carried several transparencies, with appropriate mottoes painted in black letters. Among them were "Welcome home," "We never forget our brave soldier boys," and "None so welcome as those who fight our battles." Colonel Harrington was in command of the procession, which he handled in true military style.

The people did not have long to wait, for the vibrations of the town clock in the cathedral tower had hardly ceased, after striking the hour of 2:00, when the train rounded the curve about half a mile from town, and soon came to a stop in front of the depot, amidst the cheers of the people assembled there to welcome the company back to their homes. The train had hardly come to a halt, when the boys began to alight and rush into the crowd, to grasp the hand of some friend, or to be clasped in the embrace of a wife, father, mother or sister. The band played "Johnnie Comes Marching Home" and "Hail to the Chief." Everyone did something to show welcome to the soldiers. Mothers, with tears of joy in their eyes, held up their babes to be kissed by their bronzed soldier fathers; fathers patted their sons on the backs, showing how proud they were of their soldier boys; young maidens gave their lovers a quiet, but heartfelt, welcome.

Standing apart from the many joyous ones, was a woman, having around her three small children—one a babe in her arms, and the other two clinging to her dress, and all crying as though their hearts would break. At length, one of the returned soldiers went up and took her by the hand, calling her Mrs. Johnson. When the woman recognized her old neighbor, and her husband's messmate, she broke into a perfect paroxysm of grief. Her husband had been a member of the company, and was killed at Bull Run; and to witness the return of the soldiers without him, brought to her mind his death on the battle field, so far away. The sad remembrance almost crazed her, and in agonizing tones, she cried—

"Oh, my husband! My poor husband!"

The widow Norwood was there, with little Mamie,