

The Yank and The Reb By Lucius Perry Hills

White fingers were strewing memorial flowers where the fallen Confederates lay, The boys who had fought 'neath the stars and the bars in their ragged old suits of gray, And I laid a white rose on a grave at my side, a token tender and true, To the courage of those who had fought as my foes, as I was wearing the blue.

Near by stood a veteran, grizzled and bent, who held in his trembling hand A tattered old flag that in many a fight had led his Confederate band And I saw the tears start to his dim, misty eyes as he gazed on that banner there, And folded it round the bullet-scarred staff with a sad and reverent air.

Then one who had worn not the blue nor the gray, standing there by the graves of the dead, With a cold, sneering smile on his lips the while, in a tone of mockery said: "Just see that crippled old Johnny there, with his worn-out shred of a flag, Wiping the tears from his watery eyes at the sight of the old rebel rag.

The flag of a cause that he knew was unjust and of ignominious birth, That represented no tangible thing in the heavens or on the green earth; A flag . . . "Now" Hold a moment, my friend," I said, "while I ask you a question or two: Where were you then, in the sixties, when the Gray was fighting the Blue? Not following where that old banner led, or you would acknowledge, I ween, That it represented a courage as great as the world has ever seen; Nor bravely facing those legions in gray, or you would certainly know, That none but a coward would cast a slur on a gallant but fallen foe.

I stood on the line in many a fight, and heard the wild Rebel yell, And saw those ragged old legions charge through storms of shot and shell; And my heart said then, and repeats it now, as every true heart must, That never an army fought like that for a cause they deemed unjust.

I thought they were wrong, and I think so still, for I am a Yank, you see; But through triumph and rout I had never a doubt they were thinking the same of me; For no hypocrite host could ever boast of soldiers who fought so well, Of those who would face with an equal grace the battle's raging hell; And I yield no jot of my loyal pride, or of love for the flag of the free, When I bow my head o'er the graves of the dead who fell in the ranks of Lee, And I claim the right of a soldier, who did his best for the Union flag, To honor the vet whose eyes grow wet at the sight of that battle-torn rag.

For 'tis proof to me of a loyal soul, that will never desert a fight, But will bravely defend to the bitter end the cause he deems the right; And I know that henceforth he will prove more true to the Union stripes and stars, Because he will not dishonor now the fallen stars and bars.

And whenever within our time, my friend, a foreign foeman comes, And a call to arms, with the rude alarms of the bugles and the drums, Then you, once more, as you did before, safe at your home may stay, While your country's foes will be thrashed by those who wore both the blue and the gray.