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Army Series.]

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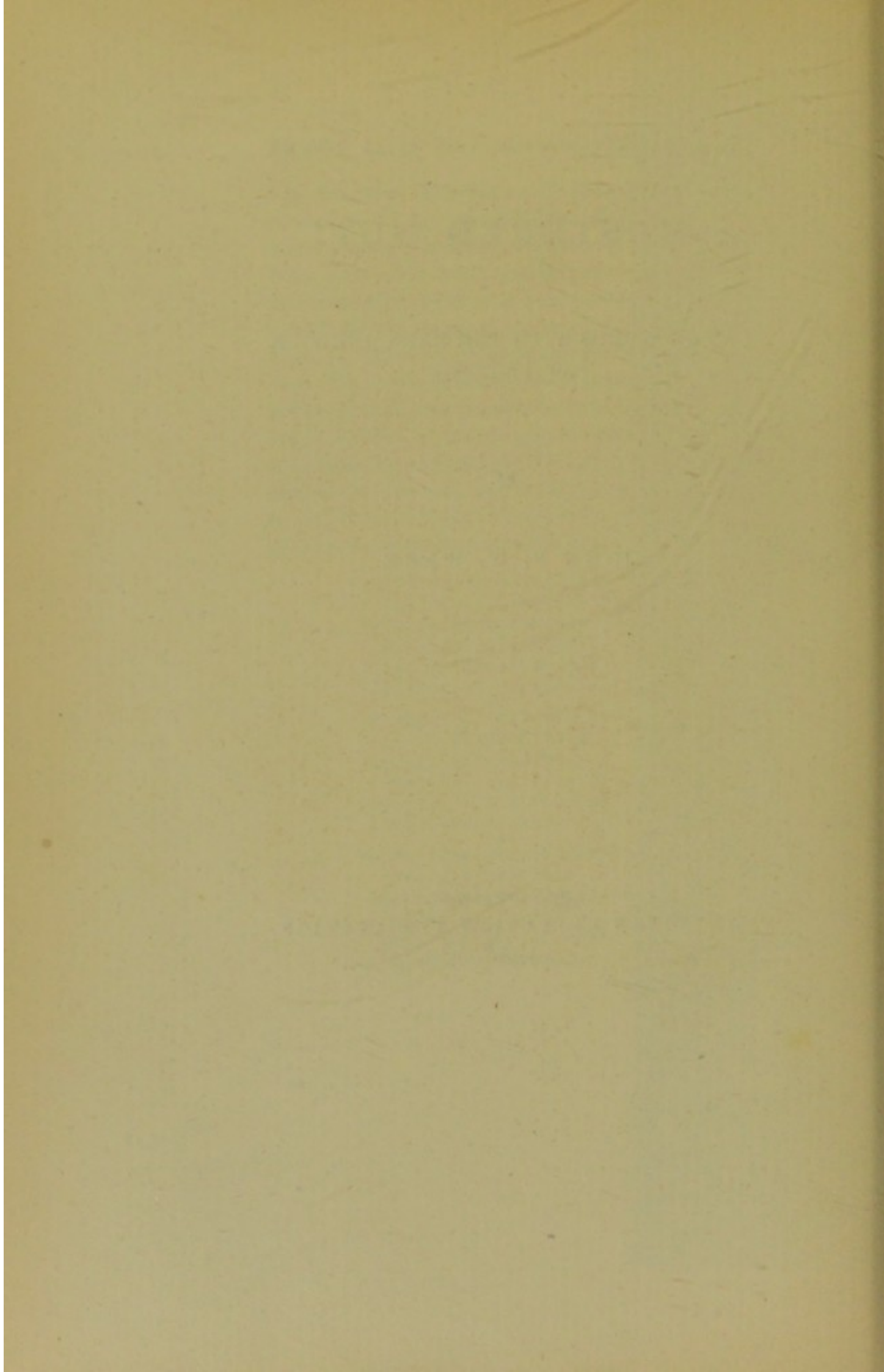
MUSTERED OUT!

A FEW WORDS WITH THE RANK AND FILE,
AT PARTING.

BY

JOHN F. W. WARE.

BOSTON:
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.
1865.



MUSTERED OUT!

WELL, friends, the war is over, ended as every loyal man knew it would end. The good cause has triumphed. There is no more any rebellion. Secession is dead. It has no resurrection. Through your patient fidelity it is that peace returns, and though our maidens come not with songs and dances out to welcome you as warriors, though we may not manifest that exuberance of joy you may have hoped to witness and we had hoped to feel,—for the shadow of a great woe is upon us,—our hearts go out to you with deep, unspoken gratitude. You have saved the Republic. You have restored its integrity. You have effaced the one spot upon its fair name. Your toil, your blood, the blood of the brave who have fallen, are the seeds of the new civilization. The night is passed. The day dawns.

The war is over, and you are *mustered out!* Ah! how you have longed for the time,—in weary march, in comfortless bivouac, in pitiless storm and cold, on exposed picket, on the bed of the hospital! Through the years, it has been the day-dream and

the night-dream. Hope has drooped as it delayed, the whole heart grown faint, and it has taken all the loyalty and all the manhood sometimes to carry you on bravely. Now the end is come; the war is over. You are *mustered out!* How the tidings have made glad the dear old far-away home, — the home you left so sadly, the home that has been so true to you, the home that has been your memory and your hope, your guiding and your guardian angel! How the good wife has grown young again under its charm! how wild with impatience are the children become! how eloquent is the dear face of the mother with its alternate smile and tear! how pride swells up in the heart of the father, — pride that he speaks not, but keeps there! how brothers and sisters long to clasp you once more! O the wealth of love and joy that throbs for and waits you in those homes whose long and patient and wasting agonies only the good God has witnessed, whose silent martyrdom, without monument or record, he has accepted and blessed. *Joy, joy* in the farmhouse! *joy, joy* by the hillside! *joy, joy* in the city! *joy, joy* east and west, through the whole land! The terror is over. The war is at end. Sweet peace is come, and the loved ones are coming, — *mustered out!*

THANK GOD! Thank God, too, that you have lived until now; thank God that you have had part in this great work of regeneration. Comrades have

fallen. The green sod covers some of the noblest and best. There are homes not to be made glad as yours, which shall watch and wait and listen in vain, — homes sad and dark and dreary, to whom the peace-anthem is as a funeral dirge. Their loved ones come not back again. They have been "*mustered out!*"

In the years that are gone I have ventured to tell you a few things that I thought might help you in camp and in hospital. I feel it a shame to my manhood that I have not been bodily with you, while I thank God that some words of mine have found their way out to you in proof that I have been with you in spirit. There are a few things I want to say to you now, for I want you to make the going home a thing of as much joy as those waiting for you expect it to be. The mere excitement and sensation of return will quickly be over. That kind of gladness is fleeting. The novelty with them and with you will pass. Life cannot wait, and treat you as guests. You go back to live, to fill old places of duty, to take up old responsibilities, to become again husbands and parents, neighbors and citizens, and every one expects more of you in every sphere because of the discipline and experience of your service. We are all looking for a new order of manhood to spring out of the war. We expect to find you ennobled, and we trust that the joy of return and of meeting is to be increased and made

perfect and perennial by the fidelity with which you shall take hold of duties, new and old.

Now it is not going to be easy to set yourselves down in the old places, to the old tasks. Soldier life has been a life of excitement, of change and uncertainty. It is a very unnatural life, and in order to become used to and bend yourself to it, you have had to give up some things that belong to a man. *The soldier is made at the expense of the man.* You must now resume your manhood, get yourselves back to the old attitude, and learn to accept and to work under the old, and somewhat tame, conditions. I suspect it is a terrible time of trial for the soldier when he has got through seeing his friends and telling his story, and he ceases to be the one centre of interest, and wakes to the sense that he is only the ordinary man he used to be, with the ordinary demands of life upon him. It is something of a shock, followed by a weary disinclination to take hold of anything, a morbid, restless desire for the wild, exciting life he has left. That is a crisis to test and try your manhood. Once pass that, and the rest is comparatively easy; yield to it, and it is the first step in the breaking up of all persistent and useful habit and labor. Let me beg you, as you value your own happiness and that of those who love you, to resist with your utmost power this temptation. Do not give it any time to grow upon you. It will require a little real courage and patience. *Go to*

work at once, and by work keep at bay the busy devil, who may still annoy, but cannot conquer you. Take rest so long as you really need it, and it is healthy. Beyond that, rest not a moment at your peril!

I think it is going to be somewhat difficult for you to resume charge of yourselves. It is a strange and complete change that the routine of the army works. No one, who has not witnessed it, will believe how quickly a man, brought under command and compelled to do as other men tell him, loses the desire and the faculty to do for himself, and submits to the decision of the merest stripling, provided he be a military superior. It is strange what power there comes to reside in a shoulder-strap. Why, men who have been leaders in church, and society, and politics, at home, in the army have lost, through habit, the ability or the will to care for themselves in very simple things. It is really sad to see how army discipline has had the power of crushing out the individual. And yet this is, to an extent, a necessity. The individual must be sunk, must be held back, or there is no army. At first, our army was little better than a debating-club. Every man wanted to talk, to give opinion; no one wanted to obey, and so, disaster. At last, it became a thorough-working machine, — a compact unit under one mind, and then, *victory*. Implicit obedience is the one law, and men held under command, knowing

that the command must be obeyed, living and moving, day by day, upon other men's decisions, lose, not only the habit, but, it would seem, the power, of acting for themselves. Surgeons have told me that they had to watch their men just like children; officers have spoken in surprise at the matters brought to them, such as no one, at home, would think of asking advice about. Again and again have I encountered this helplessness, in ways sometimes ludicrous: as when, in a strange city, at midnight, a perfectly sober soldier begged for my escort lest he should be robbed of his pay, which he showed me. You, probably, are conscious of this in yourselves, — or have, at least, seen it in others.

Not a few fear that peace is to let loose upon the land a horde of men in whom this habit of implicit obedience has destroyed self-respect, — who have become so enervated by years of unquestioning obedience as to be unable to resume care over themselves. This is a very lamentable prospect, and deplorable indeed would it be if they who have broken the bonds for others were, by that act, to be themselves enslaved. I will not, I cannot, believe it. What you want, is to be conscious of, and set yourselves to recover from, the false position in which war has placed you. As citizens, you must resume the habit of self-mastery which, as soldiers, you have laid aside. It was your privilege, your pride, before the war, to think, to act, for yourselves,

to call no man master, to believe in your own supremacy. Even a little too self-willed, self-confident, you were. That was your characteristic as Americans, and, though it has its drawbacks, that has made America; and I am not going to believe that you who went out great, strong, self-reliant, self-respecting men, are going to come back to us all broken down in integrity, puny, and weak, and helpless. I do not share the fear, but I put you on your guard. If your service have taken anything of your self-reliance or self-respect, see to it at once. No man can do anything if his self-respect be gone, or even impaired. No man has any reliance if he cannot rely on himself.

I am one of those who have always felt that the mere fighting is the least of the dangers into which secession has plunged us. That has required a certain class of courage, called out and established one phase of national manhood. Peace has always its dangers and trials, and this peace has many, both new and grave. Our country enters a new career. For the first time she is really a *nation*, a power in and to herself, as well as a power recognized among the peoples of the earth. The root of death that was in her, whose fibres penetrated and pervaded every part of her system, is cut up, plucked out, cast away. It is a new history she is to make. To-day opens the grandest chapter in the annals of peace, — the record *not of the profession, but the fact of liberty.*

“Sounding and glittering generality” no more, it has been graven by the point of the bayonet so as the ages cannot destroy it, that the assertion that “all men are born with certain inalienable rights” is a truth indisputable and immortal. *Glory be to God!* But the truth must not be left alone, it must not be blazoned upon banners and monuments, and, backward-looking, time must not tell of it as of a thing once established. To be the immortal thing it is, you, and we all, must watch it, forward it, live it, — not *make free* others, but *be free* ourselves; and there is a great and grand and imperative work, in the days of reconstruction, to be done in this direction. The mere truth will not make free, but we must work out freedom by the truth. I feel that there are sore hours of travail before the Republic yet, but I look with hope still to you, and whatever selfishness of party and trick of politicians may endeavor, in your hands should be the great conservative power to uphold and protect that for which you have so suffered.

“Mustered out of the service” is not mustered out of duty. Duty is life’s demand and life’s toil. Nobly have you stood up to the duty of the hour. Never had country juster cause to be proud of her sons, — never had sons more cause to exult in their country. Out from the darkness has she issued into a marvellous light, — out from her shame is she come into abounding glory. *Under God* you are

her saviours. Safely through these perils, HE, *by you*, has brought her. But your work is not yet done. Mustered out of her service you are, not yet mustered out of His! The great, broad demand of God, which is *Duty*, is still upon you. Every man is wanted. All things are to be made new. The era of reconstruction is come, — reconstruction, that beginning in the man shall spread till it reach and leaven the law and the life of the nation. It is a new day, and you must go back to the old home not so much to resume the old life as to assume a new one, — deeper, broader, higher, nobler, truer, freer, — a life of firmer root and grander aspiration, to be checked by no timidity or compromise, or half attainment, but to press on till soul and nation, rid of every thrall, stand out in the power and glory, and honor and immortality, God gives His perfect things.

I hope to see the government — or better, the people — up to the mark of its duty toward all of you who have so suffered as to be cut off from the ordinary, active pursuits of life. I wish Congress would sanction the wearing of the old corps badges by all, so that we may recognize you that are whole, as well as you that are maimed, when we meet you. As to the wounded, the crippled, the sick, I do not want it to be recorded of this generation that its heroes, having given their best to it, were rewarded with the alms-house, or were left to

beg or compelled to steal. I want the nation to be just. I do not ask it to be grateful or generous. The demand is one of simple justice. Every one who has been honest and brave and temperate and long-suffering, — who can show in his body the mark and badge of his service, who cannot care for himself, — I want to see made comfortable at the nation's charge, not supported as a burden and an idler, but in some way that shall keep up the tone of his manhood, give him adequate occupation and foster his self-respect. It is a project worthy the immediate and the broadest thought of the wise. I trust that the right thing in the right way will be planned and done at once, — something grander than England or France has conceived, something worthy of ourselves, of the cause and of you, which shall elevate the recipients while it ennobles the donors, — *some grand, all-embracing, national institution*, branching from a centre out into every State, *dedicated to the memory of Abraham Lincoln, the martyr*. I want to see no unmeaning stone raised to him, no bronze or marble, no over-endowing of his family, — but a monument that shall pass to the generations, a witness of the nation's justice to you, a nation's respect to him.

The seed of liberty God gave the fathers they planted and watered, and the water wherewith they watered it was blood. It had wilted in a dry and arid soil. It needed water, — and again the water is

blood, — blood so costly, so dear, so abundant, that we have shrunk again and again, and cried “How long, O God, how long!” The fair young boy, the grave, gray-haired man, the humble private, the trusted leader, they are gone, and, as crowning our holocaust, — alas that it must be! — our great-hearted, loyal, loving President. What a baptism that we knew not of must this our cause be baptized with! How goodly and how grand the noble martyr host who in this great conflict have been *mustered out*.

Friends, farewell! Life is yours. Let life be duty, — then, when *mustered out* of the service here, like those who have honorably fallen in the struggle, you shall be *mustered in* at the calling of the new roll in the new kingdom!

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