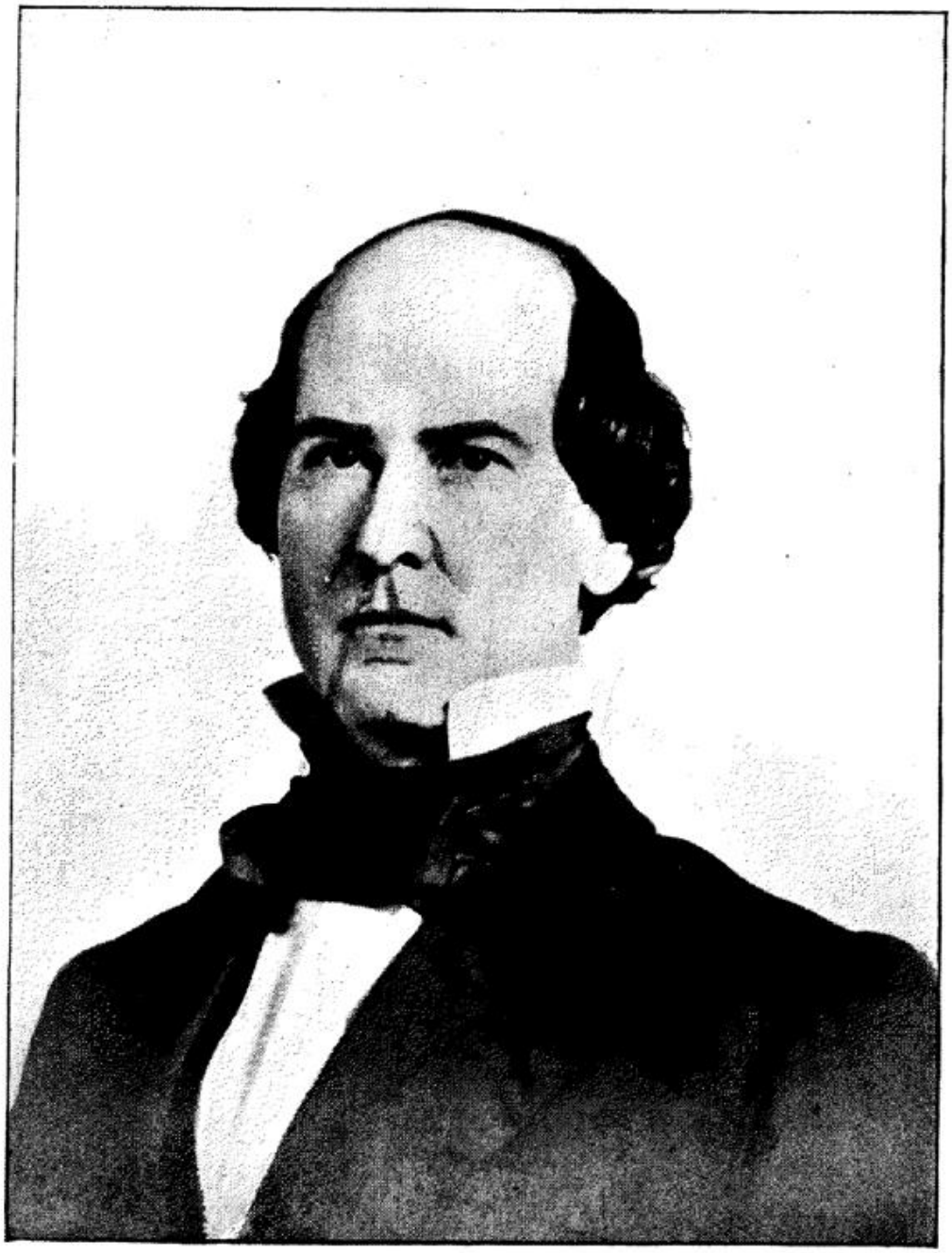

Theodore O'Hara.

THE

BIVOUAC OF THE DEAD

AND ITS AUTHOR

BY

GEORGE W. RANCK

Author of "History of Lexington, Ky.," "Girty, the White Indian," "The Travelling Church," "The Story of Bryan's Station," etc.

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TO ONE

WHOSE LIFE WAS A POEM

THIS LITTLE VOLUME

IS INSCRIBED

ILLUSTRATIONS.

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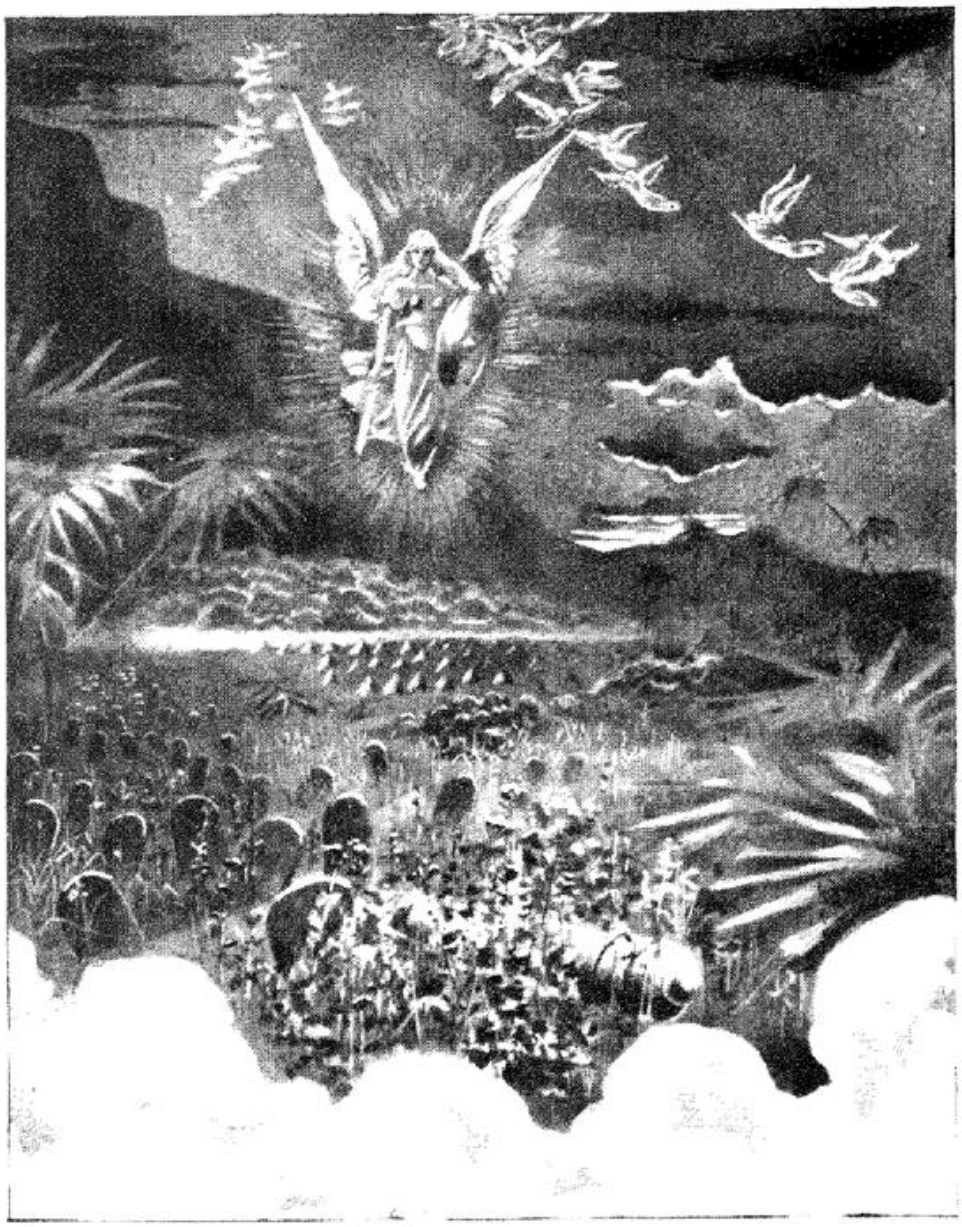

From design by George W. Ranck.

"AND GLORY GUARDS WITH SOLEMN ROUND
THE BIVOUAC OF THE DEAD."

THE BIVOUAC OF THE DEAD.

THE muffled drum's sad roll has beat
The soldier's last tattoo;
No more on life's parade shall meet
The brave and daring few.
On Fame's eternal camping-ground
Their silent tents are spread,
And Glory guards with solemn round
The bivouac of the dead.

NO rumor of the foe's advance
Now swells upon the wind;
No troubled thought at midnight haunts
Of loved ones left behind,
No vision of the morrow's strife
The warrior's dream alarms;
No braying horn nor screaming fife
At dawn shall call to arms.

THEIR shivered swords are red
with rust,
Their plumed heads are bowed;
Their haughty banner trailed in dust
Is now their martial shroud,
And plenteous funeral tears have washed
The red stains from each brow,
And their proud forms in battle gashed
Are free from anguish now.

THE neighing steed, the flashing blade,
The trumpet's stirring blast,
The charge, the dreadful cannonade,
The din and shout are past;
No war's wild note, nor glory's peal,
Shall thrill with fierce delight
Those breasts that never more shall feel
The rapture of the fight.

LIKE the dread northern hurricane
That sweeps his broad plateau,
Flushed with the triumph yet to gain
Came down the serried foe;
Our heroes felt the shock, and leapt
To meet them on the plain;
And long the pitying sky hath wept
Above our gallant slain.

SONS of our consecrated ground,
Ye must not slumber there,
Where stranger steps and tongues resound
Along the heedless air.
Your own proud land's heroic soil
Shall be your fitter grave;
She claims from War his richest spoil—
The ashes of her brave.

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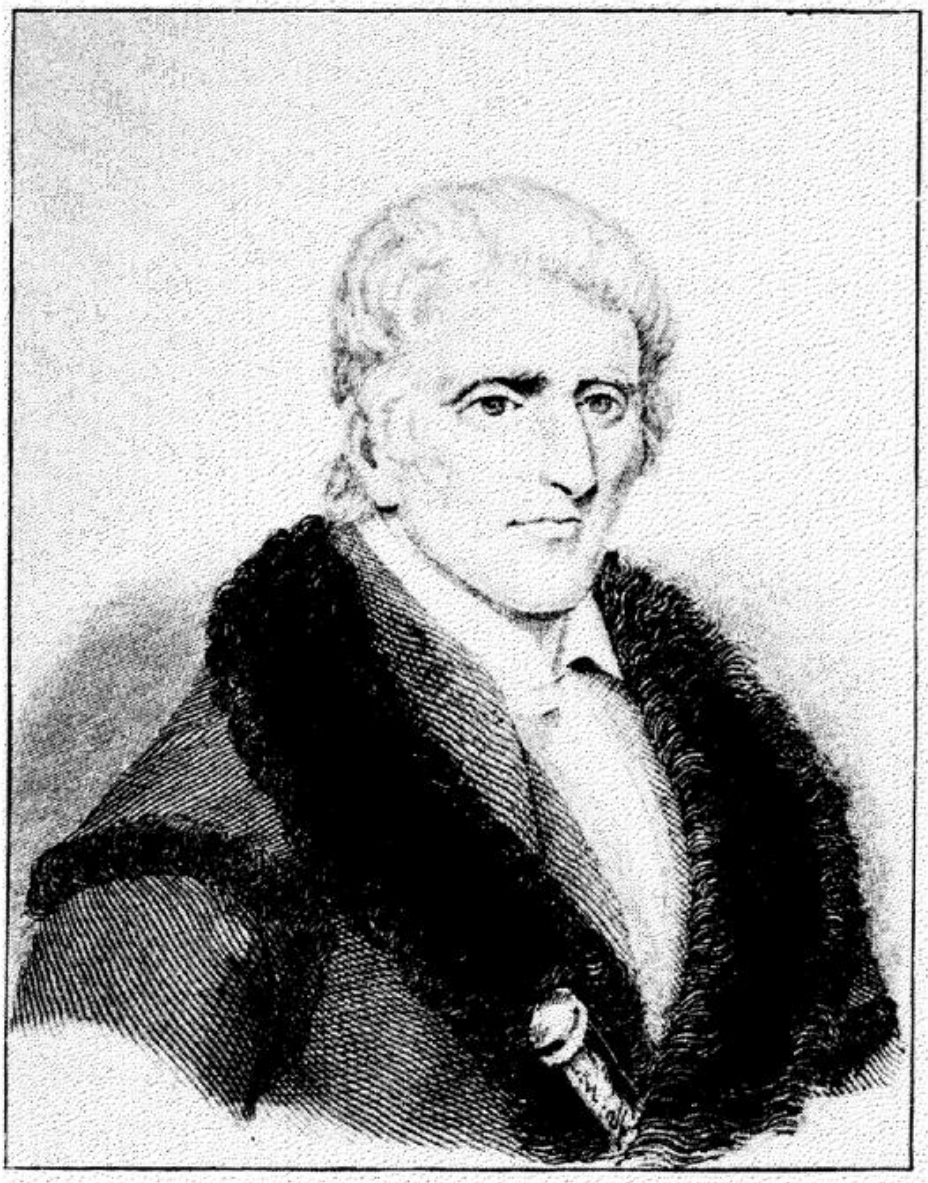
STATE MILITARY MONUMENT AT FRANKFORT, KY.
On the soldiers' lot, where O'Hara wrote "The Bivouac of the Dead," and where he is buried.

SO 'neath their parent turf they rest,
Far from the gory field;
Borne to a Spartan mother's breast
On many a bloody shield;
The sunshine of their native sky
Smiles sadly on them here,
And kindred hearts and eyes watch by
The heroes' sepulcher.

REST on, embalmed and sainted dead!

Dear as the blood you gave,
No impious footsteps here shall tread
The herbage of your grave;
Nor shall your glory be forgot
While Fame her record keeps,
Or Honor points the hallowed spot
Where Valor proudly sleeps.

YON marble minstrel's voiceless stone
In deathless songs shall tell,
When many a vanished age hath flown,
The story how ye fell;
Nor wreck, nor change, or winter's blight
Nor Time's remorseless doom,
Shall dim one ray of holy light
That gilds your glorious tomb.



Daniel Boone

From original by Chester Harding.

THE OLD PIONEER.

A DIRGE for the brave old pioneer!
Knight-errant of the wood!
Calmly beneath the green sod here,
He rests from field and flood;
The war-whoop and the panther's screams
No more his soul shall rouse,
For well the aged hunter dreams
Beside his good old spouse.

A dirge for the brave old pioneer!
Hushed now his rifle's peal—
The dews of many a vanish'd year
Are on his rusted steel:
His horn and pouch lie moldering
Upon the cabin door—
The elk rests by the salted spring,
Nor flees the fierce wild boar.

A dirge for the brave old pioneer!
Old Druid of the West!
His offering was the fleet wild deer,
His shrine the mountain's crest.
Within his wildwood temple's space
An empire's towers nod,
Where erst, alone of all his race,
He knelt to nature's God.

A dirge for the brave old pioneer!
Columbus of the land!
Who guided freedom's proud career
Beyond the conquer'd strand;
And gave her pilgrim sons a home
No monarch's step profanes,
Free as the chainless winds that roam
Upon its boundless plains.

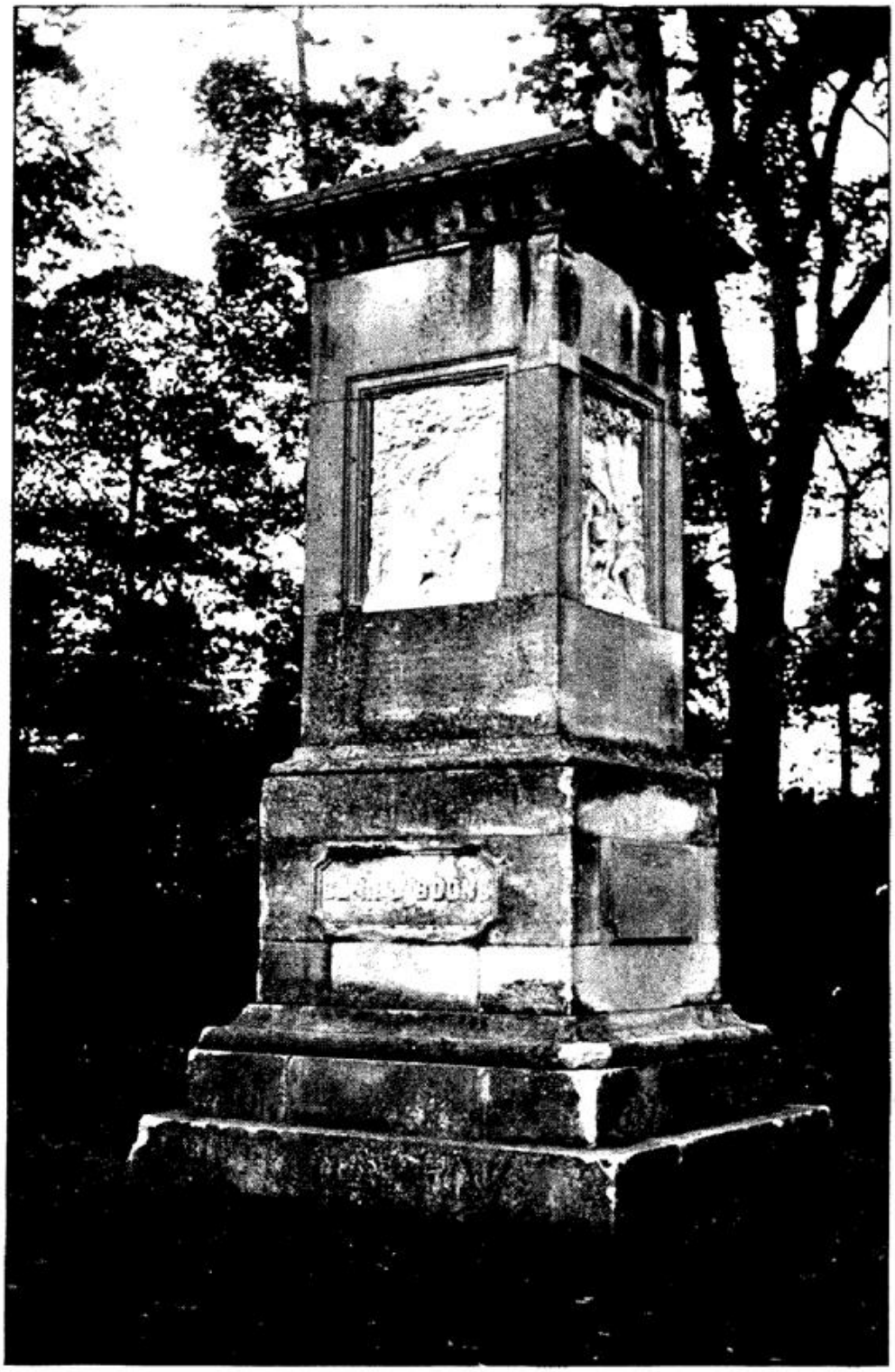
A dirge for the brave old pioneer!
The muffled drum resound!
A warrior is slumb'ring here
Beneath his battle ground.
For not alone with beast of prey
The bloody strife he waged,
Foremost where'er the deadly fray
Of savage combat raged.

A dirge for the brave old pioneer!
A dirge for his old spouse!
For her who blest his forest cheer,
And kept his birchen house.
Now soundly by her chieftain may
The brave old dame sleep on,
The red man's step is far away,
The wolf's dread howl is gone.

A dirge for the brave old pioneer!
His pilgrimage is done;
He hunts no more the grizzly bear
About the setting sun.
Weary at last of chase and life
He laid him here to rest,
Nor recks he now what sport or strife
Would tempt him further West.

A dirge for the brave old pioneer!
The patriarch of his tribe!
He sleeps, no pompous pile marks where,
No lines his deeds describe.
They raised no stone above him here,*
Nor carved his deathless name—
An Empire is his sepulcher,
His epitaph is Fame.

* This poem was written before the Boone monument was erected.



THE BOONE MONUMENT IN THE CEMETERY AT FRANKFORT, KY.

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THE BIVOUAC OF THE DEAD AND ITS AUTHOR

"THE SOUND OF A VOICE THAT IS STILL."

The author of this little volume is doubly obligated now to publish the following lines, for the writer of them has passed from earth. She was a sister of Theodore O'Hara, wonderfully like him in both scholarly and poetic endowments, and ever watchful of his fame. The extract is from a letter written by her after she had placed all the poet's papers in the author's hands. It is as follows:

"Near FRANKFORT, KY., *Aug.* 15, 1875.

. . . . . .

And in conclusion, I have one request to make. When you publish your tribute to my brother Theodore, say that it is accompanied not only by the entire indorsement of his family, but by their warmest gratitude and love, for you have done more than all others to cause his poems to be properly appreciated, and you of all the world moved his fellow-citizens to that sacred act—the bringing home of those dear remains. You will comply with my request, for it is a sacred one, and besides you would not have us to appear ungrateful.

As ever your friend,

MARY O'HARA PRICE.

Mr. George W. Ranck,
Lexington, Ky.

THE BIVOUAC OF THE DEAD AND ITS AUTHOR.

By George W. Ranck.

The rise, so to speak, of "The Bivouac of the Dead," the greatest martial elegy in existence, is one of the unique things in literature. The poem marched to the front in detachments. Quotations from it became famous long before the lyric itself was familiar and even now, when it is taking its own exalted place, but little is known either of its author or the story of his poem.

This article is intended to supply these deficiencies, and it will be a satisfaction to the

reader of it to know that its facts were mainly obtained from papers and documents placed in the hands of the writer, and in his hands only, by the family of the poet himself.

EARLY DAYS IN THE BLUE GRASS.

Theodore O'Hara, author of "The Bivouac of the Dead," was born on the 11th of February, 1820, in the college town of Danville, Kentucky, where his father, Kane O'Hara, one of the best equipped of the early teachers of the commonwealth, conducted an academy. The father of the poet was an Irish gentleman and had received a collegiate training which turned out to be his most valuable possession. He had been a fellow rebel with Lord Edward Fitzgerald, in the Irish uprising of 1798, and when that chivalrous but illfated nobleman was betrayed, Kane O'Hara escaped to America,

bringing little with him but his education, which he put at once to practical use. He settled in Kentucky as a teacher, and lived and died distinguished for his superiority in that profession.

The maternal ancestors of the poet, who were Irish also, had emigrated to this country long before, with Lord Baltimore, rather than endure the disabilities then imposed upon Roman Catholics in their unhappy land. While Theodore O'Hara was still an infant, the family removed from Danville to a farm on the Elkhorn in Woodford county, and there in the heart of the famous Blue Grass Region, the scholarly father commenced himself the education of his children. They all subsequently settled in Frankfort, the capital of the state which became their permanent residence.

A characteristic of the early childhood of

Theodore O'Hara was his engrossing love for heroic verse, great deeds embalmed in song, which he seemed to absorb intuitively and to recite as the natural outpourings of his heart. His feats in this line excited the admiration of his old country kin, when the little lad was once taken by his father across the ocean to see them. They would call in the neighbors, mount him on a table, and loudly applaud his efforts as a reciter of stirring lays. This gift, which made him the delight of many a circle, he retained to the end of his life.

With Theodore O'Hara study was not the task, but the passion of his childhood, and fortunately he was trained by one who understood his nature. His education was conducted entirely by his father, until he went to St. Josephs, a Roman Catholic College at Bardstown, Kentucky, and then his loving teacher

had so thoroughly done his work that he was prepared to enter the senior class in all but the higher mathematics, which he mastered in a few weeks. He left the college genuinely accomplished as a scholar, especially in the ancient and modern classics, and after the compliment had been paid him of election, youth as he was, to the professorship of the Greek language. An admirer who was present when he made his graduating address has said: "It was the most perfect thing of its kind I ever heard, for elegance of style, depth of thought, truthfulness of sentiment, and beauty of composition." At nineteen he was studying law in the office of Judge Owsley, where he was a fellow-student of John C. Breckinridge, and the strong attachment there formed continued unbroken to the end.

A POET AND A SOLDIER.

In 1842, the handsome and scholarly young O'Hara was admitted to the bar, and for a short time he practiced law, or rather, as another scholar and poet said of himself, "he followed the law, he never could overtake it," for the restlessness of an adventurous nature, and a passion for the heroic and beautiful, warred against the substantial requirements of his profession. Inclined to meditations tinged with sadness, he spent many a thoughtful hour amid the soothing solitude of the Frankfort Cemetery, which suited just such a soul as his, for it is embowered in loveliness, crowns a height that is surpassingly picturesque, and commands a view fine enough to tempt the pencil of a master. Here, on the 13th of September, 1845, he witnessed the impressive re-interment of

Daniel Boone, and Rebecca, his wife. They were buried in a singularly romantic and appropriate spot, on the rugged summit of a cliff which overhangs the historic river which the world's most famous woodsman, solitary and alone, had seen in all its primeval beauty, and with which his name will be associated forever. Sitting that same autumn by the two mounds there made, and before the state had erected over them the marble memorial, now canopied by giant trees, O'Hara wrote his first known poem, "The Old Pioneer." He had sought to be a lawyer when he was already a poet. But both poetry and law had to succumb to the pressure of a narrow fortune, and a few weeks after this O'Hara was glad to accept a position in the Treasury department at Washington. From that time his life was overshadowed by the same dark clouds of misfor-

tune and disappointment, that seem so strangely to hang round the pathway of genius. The next year, 1846, when the Mexican War broke out, he promptly volunteered and was appointed Captain. He fought at Contreras, was badly wounded at Cherubusco, where he was brevetted for gallant and meritorius conduct, and was himself a witness in the land of the cactus, of all of arms, of glory, and of heroic death, that he soon depicted in verse. Brilliant and jovial, he was the life of many a camp fire, but it is evident that his poetic fancy was none the less revolving stirring but melancholy thoughts. He loved to repeat the then newly published Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers, which were animated with a spirit so like his own, and his comrades never forgot the look of his face nor the sound of his voice, when at their request he gave them "Edinburgh After Flodden," or

"The Burial March of Dundee," inspiring the sounding sentences with the very scream of the bag-pipe and the roll of the drum. On the 20th of July, 1847, while O'Hara was still in Mexico, the Commonwealth of Kentucky gave her soldiers who had fallen at Buena Vista, and had been buried upon the battle field, a great public funeral at her capital, and McKee, and Clay, and Vaughn, and Carty, and all "the brave and daring few," were re-interred on a commanding site provided by the state, in the Frankfort Cemetery, and public sentiment, in advance of the Legislature, decided that an appropriate monument should mark the spot. It was in the fall of this year, while the war enthusiasm was high in Kentucky, and shortly after O'Hara had returned to Frankfort with wounds and honors gained at Cherubusco, that he wrote "The Bivouac of the Dead." The

poem was suggested by the sight of the graves of his comrades of Buena Vista, and the first rough draft of it was written while he sat near them, resting after one of his strolls through the Cemetery which he frequented more than ever during his convalescence. It was written with a view to its use at a possible dedication of the contemplated soldier's monument which is referred to in the poem under the exquisite guise of a "marble minstrel," and which was duly completed and erected, June 25, 1850. The happy accordance of time, place and circumstances with the writer and the writing of "The Bivouac of the Dead," is one of the most unique and striking things in literature. It is doubtful if a poem was ever written more in harmony with the eternal fitness of things.

WITH THE CHARGING LINES.

The close of the Mexican War left O'Hara enriched only in reputation. He returned to Washington City and again attempted the practice of law, but soon abandoned it and was an editorial writer for the Frankfort Yeoman, when with many other adventurous spirits he was induced to embark in the Cuban Expedition of 1850, in which he ranked as Colonel and was second in command to General Lopez. The short and mournful story of that invasion, its collapse, the execution of Lopez, and the tragic death of his brave Kentuckians, will not be soon forgotten. O'Hara fought gallantly but was stricken down by a bullet, carried helpless on board a vessel of the expedition, and was fortunate enough to escape to the United States. A few years later, undaunted

by this experience, he figured for a short time in Walker's Expedition to Nicaragua. In 1854, when the remains of the distinguished William T. Barry, of Kentucky, arrived from Europe and were re-interred in the State Cemetery at Frankfort, O'Hara delivered the funeral oration, but though he was gifted as a speaker, he rarely figured as such, and this oration is one of the very few specimens extant, of his ability in this line. It exhibits no little of the same glowing language and lofty sentiment that characterizes his poetry. In 1855, O'Hara was appointed Captain in the famous Second Cavalry of the regular army, a regiment pre-eminent for the astonishing number of general officers it furnished later on, to the Federal and Confederate armies. Robert E. Lee, George H. Thomas, Albert Sidney Johnston, Stoneman, Hood, and Kirby Smith, forming part of the

illustrious list. The friendship that now sprung up between O'Hara and the Kentucky Colonel of the regiment, Albert Sidney Johnston, was afterwards touchingly illustrated on the then undreamed-of field of Shiloh. The regiment was ordered to Texas to keep depredating Indians in check, and O'Hara's company was stationed for a time on the Clear Fork of the Brazos, where the monotony was seldom seriously interrupted. Once indeed there was an adventure. Shortly after his arrival, and while going with a party to Fort Mason, some buffaloes thundered across his front, and in the excitement of the moment he dashed off across the prairie after one of them, and was out of sight of his companions before he realized that some one else was after the same animal. It was a Comanche Indian, who, like himself, had been so carried away by the sportsman's

passion, as to forget that he was on the war-path. A fellow-feeling made them bury the hatchet for that particular occasion, and together they killed the buffalo, instead of each other, O'Hara leaving his share of the game to the watchful savage, while he made his way back to his companions with a whole scalp. But garrison life was too dull for the nervous and high-strung nature of O'Hara. He soon resigned and betook himself again to journalism, in which his literary and scholarly attainments, and his political knowledge, were always wielded with especial brilliancy. In fact so much of O'Hara's time was given up to newspaper work, that it may be said of him that when he was not a soldier he was an editor. During the absence of the able John Forsythe as minister to Mexico, in 1857 and 1858, and up to the beginning of the late war between

the states, O'Hara was editor of the Mobile Register. In this capacity, while the clouds of sectional strife were gathering so rapidly, he not only devoted his pen to the defense of the land and the people he loved so well, but dedicated his sword to their service also. In November, 1860, nearly a month before the secession of South Carolina, he raised and commanded the Mobile Light Dragoons, which, it is claimed, was the first military company formed in the South, with reference to the probability of war. In January, 1861, O'Hara took command of a few volunteers he had gathered in less than a day, hurried them over to Pensacola harbor, and seized Fort Barancas and put the dilapidated old work in as good condition as circumstances would permit. The following July he was appointed Lieutenant Colonel of the Twelfth Alabama Regiment of

Infantry, formed in Richmond of companies that had quickly arrived from Alabama, and had tendered their services separately to the Confederate Government. The Colonelcy of the regiment was given to Robert T. Jones, of Alabama, a graduate of West Point, and who afterwards fell, while gallantly fighting at Seven Pines. Some weeks after the formation of the Twelfth, and while the work of military organization was going on, Colonel Jones was appointed to the command of another regiment, and O'Hara was promoted to the vacant Colonelcy. Colonel Jones was however soon re-appointed to his old position, while O'Hara was transferred, with the rank of Colonel, to the West. There he served on the staff of that great soldier, Albert Sidney Johnston, stemmed with him the fiery flood of Shiloh, and received his beloved chief in his arms, when he fell upon

that ensanguined field. A few weeks later he shared in the Seven Days Battles before Richmond, after which he was chief of staff to General John C. Breckinridge, participating with him in the terrible struggle at Stone River, in the defense of Jackson, Miss., and in many a hard fought campaign. True to the last to the friend of his youth, he shared with him the bitterness of those last bitter days, when one of the grandest dreams of modern times dissolved, and never left him until he had reached Florida, *en route* to a foreign land.

THE GOLDEN BOWL IS BROKEN.

The close of this war also found O'Hara without a dollar, but like thousands who had fought with him, he set at once to work in the very midst of the heart-breaking ruins of his people and his hopes. He went to Columbus,

Georgia, and engaged in the cotton business with a relative, but misfortune again overtook him, for he and his partner lost all by fire. Undismayed, he retired to a plantation a few miles distant, on the Alabama side of the Chattahoochie, near Guerryton, and was there laboring successfully, when he was attacked by bilious fever, of which he died, on Friday, June 6, 1867. His latest hours were cheered by the affectionate attentions of devoted relatives and friends, the final sacrament of his church was administered, and while the warm southern breeze rustled the leaves of the cotton he had watched, and brought to him the fragrance of the jessamine he loved, the worn and weary soldier-poet fell asleep. He was buried in Columbus, Georgia, and there remained until the state upon which his genius had been reflected, claimed his ashes. In the

summer of 1874, in accordance with a resolution of the Kentucky Legislature, all that was mortal of the poet was brought to Frankfort, and on the 15th of September of that year, his remains, together with those of Governors Greenup and Madison, and several distinguished officers of the Mexican War, were re-interred there, and he slept at last in that cemetery which had always had for him so great a charm, and which his poems and his grave will make celebrated. The final tribute was paid by mourning relatives, by state troops, and comrades of two wars, by the Governor and officers of the Commonwealth, and by a throng of sorrowing admirers. The solemn boom of the minute gun, and the "sad roll" of "the muffled drum," mingled with the funeral dirge, and the shadow of the tattered banner under which he had fought on "Angostura's

bloody plains," rested silently and lovingly upon his bier. And so he was carried along the rugged winding way that he had often trod, up to the monumental hill top, where time and again he had watched the exquisite landscape at the glorious setting of the sun, and on under the white extended arms of the familiar sycamores and beneath the sadly drooping foliage of the weeping willows, to the hallowed spot where a stately shaft of emblazoned marble towered to the memory of the departed Soldiers of the Commonwealth, whose—

> "Silent tents are spread
> On Fame's eternal camping ground."

And there he was buried. His grave was strewn with flowers, and over it the attendant companies of the State Guard fired the farewell volleys of musketry, and the solemn obsequies at the cemetery ended. Later in the day a

funeral oration was delivered by General William Preston, and The Bivouac of the Dead was read by H. T. Stanton.

A white marble slab, simple but artistic, now covers the ashes of O'Hara. It rises but a few feet above the blue grass, and bears upon its sloping surface the suggestive and appropriate design of a sword and scabbard crossed and surmounted by a wreath of laurel and oak, and beneath it the legend—

THEODORE O'HARA,
MAJOR AND A. D. C.
DIED JUNE 6, 1867.

The inscription is conspicuous for what it omits, as O'Hara was a Colonel, and will be remembered as a poet. Let us hope that an appreciative legislature, with a view to the encouragement of literature, and in justice both to Kentucky's greatest poet, and to the heroes

he commemorated, will rectify this and other omissions akin to it. Let us hope that very soon the space under the crossed swords will hold nothing but the short and eloquent sentence—

THEODORE O'HARA,
Author of
THE BIVOUAC OF THE DEAD.

That the stately column he heralded will be inscribed with his most famous quatrain, and that an unmutilated monument to Boone will catch glints of beauty from "The Old Pioneer." Surely at the home and last resting-place of O'Hara one should be reminded of his poems, as much as at national cemeteries and foreign battle-fields.

HOW LOOKED HE?

Colonel O'Hara was handsome and always looked the soldier that he was. He was a

little over five feet eight inches in height, slender, graceful, very erect in his carriage, and scrupulously neat in his dress. He had a fine head and almost classic features, but his dark hair was always thin, and by the time he had attained middle life, the front of his head had become somewhat bald. His eyes, which were dark hazel, and full of fire and expression, attracted especial attention, and were not easily forgotten. Though sensitive, refined and retiring, and inclined to reflection toned with sadness, he was daring, alert and decided in the field, where, to use the words of one of his soldiers, "his knightly bearing, flashing eye and quick magnetic tone of command, inspired his men with ardor." In a chosen circle of friends he was a lively companion, conspicuous for good fellowship, happy social gifts, and brilliant conversational powers, and for his

impulsive, but warm and generous heart. Attractive as he was, he never married, he lived and died a bachelor, and that fact, and the changes and requirements of a military life, largely account for the scarcity of personal mementoes of him. A picture of him, taken after his return from the Cuban Expedition, still exists, a copy of which is herewith presented, his sword is in the possession of the State of Kentucky, and his autograph is owned by the writer. His portfolio containing many of his articles, both printed and in manuscript, was lost in the confusion that marked the ending of the late war between the states, so that we will never certainly know how much he had written, either of poetry or of prose.

PERFECTING HIS MASTERPIECE.

Modest as O'Hara was, it is evident that he was not unconscious of the merits of his masterpiece, from the efforts he made to perfect it. He corrected it as often as Gray corrected his famous Elegy, and twice he changed it as radically as Poe changed his immortal "Bells." Unfortunately these various versions were published, their conflicting texts causing bewilderment and misapprehension in the minds of persons ignorant of the changes and improvements successively made by the poet in his work. In 1858, while O'Hara was editor of the Mobile Register, the original version of the poem appeared in that journal. "It was then published under his own supervision," says his friend and companion, Major W. T. Walthall, who was in Mobile at the time.

Shortly after this, O'Hara made his first general revision of the Elegy, and in 1860 it appeared in an improved form. Both versions are in the possession of the writer of this article. That of 1860, like the original, is composed of twelve stanzas, and like it is restricted by its marked local and descriptive features, the improvement consisting in the substitution of more appropriate and expressive words and phrases. Some idea of the changes made in the original draft, may be had by comparing the last stanza of that draft with the same stanza of subsequent versions. In the original it reads—

"Yon faithful heralds blazoned stone
With mournful pride shall tell
When many a vanished age hath flown
The story how ye fell
Nor wreck, nor change nor winters blight
Nor times remorseless doom
Shall mar one ray of glory's light
That gilds your deathless tomb."

Even in the midst of the distractions of the late war, the fastidious author took time to give a few more polishing touches to his Elegy, as it stood in 1860. This is exhibited in the improved text of the poem obtained from him during that struggle, by his old comrade, Col. John T. Pickett, who said of it: "This version was repeated to me by the author himself, and by me written down at the time, and supervised by him, when together in the city of Mobile, in 1863." But O'Hara was not satisfied with the version of 1863, and he subsequently reduced it from twelve stanzas to nine, by eliminating weak sentences and descriptive parts, and by divesting it of that local and provincial character, which allusions to "Spain," "Angostura," and the "Dark and Bloody Ground," had always given it. In this change he dispensed with two stanzas of that version alto-

gether—the sixth and seventh—while the fifth and eighth were, with the aid of two new lines, condensed into one stanza. Thus, vastly strengthened, and far more perfect than it had ever been, he left it at his death. And so we gave it to the public years ago, verbatim as it came to us from the hands of his accomplished sister, Mrs. Mary O'Hara Price. And so we give it now, minus two typographical errors then apparent, one at the beginning of the second stanza, and the other at the end of the first line of the last stanza. The words "rumor" in the first case and "stone" in the second, are O'Hara's own, and occur in all his preceding versions, including the original. In this case the poet makes his own corrections. The copy of the poem as finally revised by O'Hara, and as entrusted to his sister, is the copy he meant for posterity, and will be valued

accordingly, by all who would do justice to his memory and to his genius.

FOR ALL THE SOLDIER DEAD.

The Bivouac of the Dead is in the strictest sense, a martial elegy, for it raises its notes of sorrow, and sounds its peans of praise, for the soldier dead alone. And it does this with an eloquence and a power so rare and so impressive, that it stands easily at the head of all American military requiems, even after the many additions that have been made to them in the shape of poetic tributes to the gallant slain of the late war between the states. It can not, therefore, be justly compared with any but the masterpieces of its kind, and this test not only demonstrates that it too must be regarded as a classic, but reveals the fact that it possesses qualities that they do not possess, qualities that lift it above

them, and give it a place in literature peculiarly its own. The mind naturally reverts in this connection to martial elegies whose merits have made them familiar to the reading world. We think at once of that short but exquisite production of the unfortunate William Collins, "How Sleep the Brave?" It is as elegantly proportioned, as clearly cut, and as delicately finished, as one of Canova's sepulchral mourners, but its sadness touches us no more than the sculptured sadness of those marble figures, and we feel too that it is meant for none of the brave, but those who died for freedom. Another famous lyric presents itself—"The Burial of Sir John Moore," which came so unheralded, but with so true a stamp, from the pen of the unknown curate, Charles Wolf. Fine as it is,—and it is so fine that it was at first attributed to both Byron and Campbell,—it is of necessity

restricted, for it is local and incidental, and can apply to no hero but the British one it commemorates. And so it is also with Aytoun's "Funeral March of Dundee," which opens with the ringing command to—

> "Sound the pipe and cry the slogan,
> Let the pibroch shake the air."

It is a splendid expression of proud grief and defiant loyalty, that can belong to no region but the highlands of Scotland, that can suit no lips but those of a bitter partisan of the repudiated Stuarts, and that will never be applied to any other soldier but he of whom it sings, the savage royalist, the trooper with a heart as cruel but as kingly as a lion's, Graham of Claverhouse, who harried the Covenanters to their death, and perished at Killickrankie. The Bivouac of the Dead will bear comparison with lyrics even such as these. It is the very

embodiment of that spirit of sadness which is the first and largest quality of an elegy. We feel in every line of it the spontaneous and heartfelt grief of the comrade and soldier who wrote it, and are moved as we can not be moved by the poets we have quoted, who never shared a soldier's life nor felt a soldier's sorrow. It is unique in its loftiness. It pictures the sorrow of no ignoble creature. It is the sorrow of a knightly mourner, of one who is as gentle and as generous as he is brave, of a soul that stricken as it is, exults in the heroism of the dead, and in the immortality of their glory, and in its exultation soars above and beyond all meaner things. It is marred by no sentiment of revenge, no partisan bitterness, no vulgar prejudice, and contains no little-souled depreciation of the enemy, who is represented as sweeping like a hurricane and

with unbroken ranks to the very shock of battle and gallantly fighting to the end. There is no other great martial elegy so broad in its spirit and so comprehensive in its application. It is not a tribute to the illustrious chieftain alone, nor is it applicable to the martyrs of but one cause, but is a requiem to the soldier whoever, wherever, and whatever he may be, who bravely died in the discharge of his duty—a requiem that swells with equal grandeur and beauty to the memory of the gallant dead of every land and country, regardless of sect or party, rank or station.

Upward Flights of Genius.

But it is when we look at The Bivouac of the Dead in the light of those higher qualities which constitute the excellence of all true poetry, that we fully comprehend its merit and

power. In the perfect harmony of the tone and style of his verse with that of his subject, and in the moving and solemn accord of the measure of his own spirit with that of his song, these lines of O'Hara are unsurpassed. The soul of the writer moves and sings with the soul of his subject. Indeed he times his verse not only to the martial measure, but to the solemn spirit tread with which we would imagine his departed comrades to march o'er—

"Fame's eternal camping ground."

The heroic, yet mournful and mysterious beating of the feet of the song, seems the same as that of Glory, as with "solemn round" she guards "the bivouac of the dead." But the ode is instinct with a second and a rarer charm imparted by that power possessed by but few poets, the reaching out and touching of the borders of the unseen. This quality is de-

veloped by Longfellow in his beautiful lines, "The Footsteps of the Angels," but in this O'Hara goes beyond him. Longfellow invites the dwellers of the spirit realm into our homes and "lays their angel hands in ours," but moved by the breath of eternal song, the blossoms of O'Hara's soul not only bend and blow toward that mystic and shadowy land, but he visits himself the dwelling-place of spirits, lives and moves among their shining legions, and opens to us the gates of the unseen world, that we too may look again upon those once familiar "proud forms" and "plumed heads." It is this difference between the heroic and the tender that endows The Bivouac of the Dead with its impressive majesty and sublime beauty.

The elegy is endowed with another quality, subtle and almost indefinable, but none the

less real and remarkable. It is not outwardly developed in any word or figure, but makes itself felt to the sympathetic reader, who finds himself inhaling that peculiar, sad, and solemn atmosphere of prophecy, which so strangely and mournfully hangs about the spirits of some of the gifted of earth. The nature of the soul and song of the writer seem to be attuned so exactly to that of the departed heroes of whom he sings, that behind the martial measure of his verse there seems to move a muffled fate, which whispers that their home will soon be his. The combination of spirit reach and spirit prescience which so strangely moves the soul in this elegy, is one of the most exalted and solemn manifestations of poetic genius.

THE EPITAPH SUBLIME.

But if the elegy had no other claim on life but the sublimely beautiful metaphor in the first stanza, that alone would preserve it through the ages. Where, in the English language, is there a bolder, grander, or loftier conception, than that in which our departed heroes are represented as encamped on the illimitable plains of immortality, while the guardian spirit of the brave watches with untiring vigilance over the shadowy sleepers of those silent tents? There is no quatrain in the whole range of martial elegiac poetry to compare with this, and if it had never been perpetuated in any other way, it would have become immortal as an epitaph. In fact, no poem of equal length ever written, has, in the same length of time, furnished so many martial

epitaphs, for no other contains so many couplets, quatrains, and stanzas, so exquisitely adapted to that purpose. This is not the least remarkable feature of The Bivouac of the Dead. These epitaphs, which are elegies in themselves, short but complete, touching in their expression of sorrow, and sublime in prophecies of tender remembrance, adorn many a battlefield, soldier's cemetery, and military monument, not only in O'Hara's native South, but throughout the land. But in no part of the country has his genius been paid so high a tribute in this way as at the North, for there his lines have been given the first place by the men against whom he fought. This is especially noticeable at the National Cemetery at Washington, where his most famous stanza is inscribed over the gateway, and in Antietam Cemetery, where it is said

the whole poem could be reconstructed from the various parts of it there used as epitaphs. So extensive indeed have inscriptions from O'Hara's greatest lyric thus been used, that a Northern writer was moved to say in a published communication, that "A stroll through any of our national cemeteries will suggest the idea that the War Department has official knowledge of but one elegiac poem." As that happens to be the only really great American elegy, the country is to be congratulated that it had a War Department so conspicuous for good taste, broad-mindedness, and American spirit. Enlightened Englishmen of today glory in the splendid qualities of their race, whether displayed by the squadrons of Cromwell or the followers of Prince Rupert, and with enlightened Americans the genius of their people is honored at last, whether found under

the banner of the chivalric Lee, or under the flag of the magnanimous Grant. But no one country can gather for its sole and separate use the products of its genius. This poem of O'Hara, so broad in its humanity and so universal in its application, is destined not only to be printed in every tongue, but to be perpetuated in epitaphs on the military memorials of every civilized land.

THE OLD PIONEER.

Next to his masterpiece comes the simple but noble tribute penned by O'Hara at the grave of Daniel Boone. These are the only verses the writer has ever seen that do justice to the "Old Druid of the West," and we love the brave hunter more than ever, and appreciate his big honest heart, his undaunted spirit, and the grandeur of his mission, tenfold more

after reading them. In Canto VIII. of Don Juan, Byron introduces a number of stanzas descriptive of Boone and his backwoods life, but with all his poetic power even the bard of Newstead Abbey, on this field at least, must lower his plume to O'Hara. It is true that both the measure and the style of the stanzas compared are different, but in that which both attempt—a delineation of the simple, rugged nature of the man and his wild-wood home—Lord Byron has not met with the success of O'Hara. The sad notes of this sweet and solemn dirge will linger with undying cadence for generations to come around the name of Daniel Boone—

> "Columbus of the land
> Who guided freedom's proud career
> Beyond the conquered strand."

His romantic life and providential work can

not be forgotten while these stanzas live. The children of our children's children will read them, and see in fancy—

> "His horn and pouch lie moldering
> Upon the cabin door,"

and will realize that the conqueror of the wilderness

> "Hunts no more the grizzly bear
> About the setting sun."

But this poem is not only a tender dirge, it is an elevated and inspiring song of praise, a grand anthem to celebrate the glory, the mystery, and the majesty of nature. It carries the reader back to the darkling woods which Boone saw in all their solitary and primeval splendor, when the fleet wild deer was his sacrifice, the mountain's crest his altar, and—

> "Where erst alone of all his race
> He knelt to Nature's God."

No wonder that Byron, with all his genius,

failed to fully come up to this subject. He only could do justice to "the brave old pioneer," who lived where he had lived, who breathed the air that he had breathed, whose eyes and soul had drunk in the natural beauties of Boone's old Kentucky home, and who had roamed among the very scenes where once the war-whoop and the panther's scream had thrilled the old hunter's heart. It was left to O'Hara, who was born and reared in the home of Boone, to conceive the lofty imagery and sing the tender and melancholy notes of this song. Need one apologize for the state pride, which points to it as a poem peculiarly and absolutely Kentuckian? The Marseillaise Hymn is not more distinctly a French production, than is this lyric a child of Kentucky.

If it is true, as has been repeatedly asserted, and as this elegy strongly indicates, that the

growth and quality of the literature of a people are largely influenced by, and dependent upon, their natural surroundings, may we not reasonably hope much from the future of a state so blessed in physical charms and characteristics, as the hunting-ground of the "Old Pioneer." Who will say that the free, fresh air, the rugged scenery, and the inspiring associations of old Scotia, had nothing to do with the development of the genius of Sir Walter Scott? Could Rob Roy and the Heart of Mid Lothian, could Marmion and The Lay of the Last Minstrel, ever have been written, but by a native of the land they depicted? No! their author could only have been one who had roamed her lonely moors and trod her fragrant heather; who loved her gray old rocks and beetling crags; who heard the roar of the cataract in her romantic glens, and the scream of the

eagle in her mountain fastnesses, and whose soul had been stirred by the weird music of the moaning pines, that stand like sentinels upon the shores of her beautiful lakes. If scenes like these foster and develop genius, then we can understand one, at least, of the elements that have entered into the creation of the orators and soldiers of this most picturesque old Commonwealth, and we may reasonably expect her to be the cradle of illustrious poets also. The Highlands of Scotland are not more wildly beautiful than mountain regions of Kentucky. Her Blue Grass lands are as lovely, and more fertile, than the Campagna of Italy. Her forests, in autumn, are galleries of Nature's own most glorious handiwork. The sublimity of her vast, silent, and awe-inspiring caves, is recognized the wide world over; and that most picturesque of rivers, the

Kentucky, with its towering cliffs and wooded heights, its rugged bed, shadowy shores, and miniature cascades, and its bold and hoary old rocks crowned with feathery ferns, decked with beautiful mosses, and wrapped in fantastic vines, needs but ruined castles and crumbling battlements, to make it outvie the vaunted river Rhine. It was amid these triumphs of Nature's power, that Theodore O'Hara was born; at the shrine of Kentucky scenery he worshiped like an Eastern idolater, and his ode to Boone was the natural result.

THE CHAPLET COMES AT LAST.

Why is it that the fame of such a poet has grown so slowly, and that his name has not long ago been familiar wherever genius is admired? The answer is only another illustration of the power of circumstances. The

modesty of O'Hara has already been mentioned. We have seen that he did not reveal his authorship of The Bivouac of the Dead even to an old comrade, long after the poem had been written, and for many years his name was but little connected with it. Frank and free as he was in his immediate circle of friends, he was far from asserting himself as he should have done before the public, and seemed utterly incapable of pushing his own just claims. While so like Gray in this respect, as he was in tastes, scholarly acquirements, and the character of his genius, he was no such favored child of literary fortune. Slender as his income was, Gray was rich in his surroundings. He lived either in the classic and appreciative atmosphere of ancient seats of learning, or in the literary metropolis of the English world. All things were at hand to insure

success, and his splendid elegy needed but the nod his powerful patron gave, to make him famous. Poor and sensitive, O'Hara wrote far distant from any fame-conferring seat of American letters. No rich and influential Walpole proclaimed the greatness of his elegy. There was no "monthly" of high estate among his people to publish it and send it, already stamped with success, to Holland Houses and Adisonian Clubs, and no giant commerce carried his poem and his name to the uttermost parts of the earth. To all these obstacles must be added the underestimated influence of prejudice. The poems of O'Hara were just beginning to be appreciated, when the late war between the States occurred, and then, and for years after, until partisan feeling had subsided, genius had to wait. While passion reigned, the Northern press had but few

eulogies to devote to a Southern poem. And so it has been in all ages and among all peoples. Even Milton himself knew what it was to have been an adherent of a "Lost Cause." While the loyal Cowley, now so seldom mentioned, was toasted and admired by the literati of the Restoration, the greatest writer of Cromwell's era, blind and ignored, was barely allowed to live among the ruins of the Commonwealth he had battled for with so noble a pen. Poor and obscure, he struggled for nearly two years to find a publisher for Paradise Lost, sold it for the beggarly sum of five pounds, and it had been printed forty years, before a majority of the English people even knew there was such a book. Could O'Hara expect any better fate than befell the author of one of the grandest epics of all the ages? But that ironical and post-mortem justice, which finally proclaimed

the blind old bard to be "the glory of English literature," will come to O'Hara also, and after his ashes have mingled with their mother Earth for more than a generation, will proclaim him to be the one great elegiac poet of American literature. The chaplet that ought to have been placed upon his brow, will be hung upon his tomb.

AND WHERE HE SUNG HE SLEEPS.

O'Hara sleeps his last sleep on that beautiful hill-top that he loved so well; where the harp-strings of his soul first gave forth their sad but immortal notes, and which seems to have been fitted by Nature for a poet's tomb. In death, as in life, he seems the twin brother of Gray. One was the author of the greatest moral-heroic elegy that literature has ever known. The other was the author of the grandest

martial elegy ever given to the world. Each will be remembered for two or three short but finished productions, and both sleep at last amid the scenes and near the objects clothed with the glory of their inspiration. Gray slumbers in sight of the "antique towers" of Eton College, whose praises he sung, and in the churchyard where oft—

"The curfew tolled the knell of parting day."

O'Hara reposes in sight of the tomb of—

"the brave old Pioneer."

whose deathless dirge he sung, and in that cemetery where sleep the warriors whose requiem he chanted, and where—

"Glory guards with solemn round
The bivouac of the dead."