



SAND IN MY SHOES

by
Stephen Allen Dodge
SDodge53@aol.com

Letter from the Thirteenth Brooklyn Regiment; Camp Crook, Suffolk, Va., July 13, 1862

To the Editor of the Brooklyn Eagle:

Wednesday night a scene seldom to be witnessed and never to be forgotten occurred. A funeral at any time is sad enough, but, one at night under the circumstances in which it occurred is still more sad.

Our Hospital Steward, T. T. Dodge, who had been sick some two weeks, died after some considerable suffering, on Tuesday night about nine o'clock, from a disease of the heart. All that could be done under the circumstances was done for his comfort, and his bereaved friends may be assured that nothing was neglected either by physicians or nurses to preserve his life, and make the last moments of the dying soldier as easy as possible.

We had just returned from Brigade Drill, though the hour was late, after being dismissed for 15 minutes, we were again re-assembled to the beat of drums, and ordered to report with side arms only.

To the subdued notes of the drum we marched single file to a flat outside camp and formed a hollow square in four ranks around the grave, a detachment of the 25th Militia joined on our left.

Presently the roll of muffed drums accompanied by the sounds of the fife playing the Dead March, broke the solemn stillness and the escort with the body slowly approached and entered the square. As the body entered our lines, the coffin draped in the dear old Flag, every head was uncovered and a death-like stillness prevailed. After some fitting remarks by our Chaplain, Rev. D. C. Haines, and a prayer, the coffin was lowered into the grave amidst the deep roll of the muffed

drums.

What scene could be more solemn or calculated to leave a deep and lasting impression on the minds of those present? The closed ranks of silent, uncovered men, the chaplain, surrounded by other officers, standing by the open grave, the rows of rebel mounds just visible in the gloom, and the tall dark trees rising above our heads, while the flashing lightning in the North threw a fitful gleam now and then in the scene, the burning woods lit up the southern sky with a murky red, and the setting crescent moon, low in the West, scarce shedding any light, added still more impressiveness to the solemn scene.

The soldier's last tribute paid, the volleys sounded, the Benediction pronounced and the grave filled up, I stood with folded arms looking upon the scene, my heart filled with the tenderly solemn thoughts that naturally crowded it. I was well overcome, when looking up I saw shining through the dense branches a single star, one little star only, but it was enough to open visions of that bright hereafter, where there is no darkness, and neither sun nor stars are needed to give light, and my heart instinctively prayed that my death be like the righteous, and my last end be like his. I recalled to mind the words with which I had tried to comfort the dying man but a few days before, that death was the doorway to bliss, where we but prepared for the messenger, and that it really was but small matter whether we were called at home, or far away from it. Still it is very sad to be called upon to lay down one's life so, in a strange land, so far from all one loves, is it not? We all returned silently to our tents. How solemn the burial of our young soldier, so far from family and friends! Who can measure the solemnity of the tens, yes, hundreds of thousands of such burials that have been preformed. God be praised that it is in a worthy cause that all this distress is endured. Signed: H

From the Brooklyn Eagle Newspaper,
1862