

Henry Frederick Mellenbruch

Company F 39 Indiana Volunteer Infantry

[Editor's Note: This poem is probably my favorite, unless the love poems are. I feel that this reveals some of his feelings as he lay on the battlefield.

Harvey and I had visited this site at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and also went through the museum there. We saw the cedars and the stream that the poet talks about. We had also visited many of the battle fields of Sherman's march to the sea.

One reason that I feel that this was his poem are the several corrections and changes that he made after the first writing, as in the fifth verse.]

BATTLE OF STONE [sic] RIVER

Among the pine trees that overlook  
Stone [sic] River's rocky bed.  
Columbia knows full many a son  
There numbered with the dead.

Chorus-

How many thousands gone to rest;  
We know that they are free;  
Their bodies moldering in the dust  
On the plains of Tennessee.

T's [sic] hard to die mid scenes of strife  
No friends or kindred near  
To wipe the death damp from the brow  
Or shed affection's tear.

Chorus-

To soothe the sufferer in his pain  
With words of holy cheer;  
Or bend the knee in earnest prayer  
For the dying volunteer.

Chorus-

'Twas [sic] by the ford we crossed that day,  
That ground so dearly bought,  
[crossed out: Where Miller led his steward-men]  
Where heroes brave and stalwart men  
[crossed out: And gallant Moody fought]  
Held their ground and fought.

Chorus-

'Twas [sic] all along our lines that day  
Rained showers of shot and shell  
Thus many a brave young soldier died  
Thus many a hero fell.

Chorus-

When night closed o'er the bloody scene  
Returning o'er the ground,  
I heard the piteous moans of one  
Laid low by mortal wound.

Chorus-

The wounded soldier's cheek was wan  
And beamless was his eye;  
I knew before another morn  
The wounded man must die.

Chorus-

I built a fire of cedar wood  
The air was cold and damp.  
I filled his canteen from the spring  
Below the river bank.

Chorus-

And then I sat me down to ask  
If he would wish to send  
A last request or parting word  
To mother, sister, friend.

Chorus-

I have some word, the boy replied,  
My friends would love to hear  
'Twould [sic] fill my sister's soul with joy  
My mothers hear would cheer.

Chorus-

Tell them I died a soldier's death  
Upon the battle field  
But I lived to see the day was ours  
And saw the rebels yield.

Chorus-

That e'er I died their colors fell  
Their columns broke and then  
I heard the wild, victorious shout  
Of Negley's valiant men.

Chorus-

But most of all I'd have them know  
That in my latest breath  
I spoke of Him I loved in life  
'Twas [sic] joy and peace in death.

Chorus-

Tell sister I have read with care  
For holy ties and dear  
The Bible Mother gave to me  
Before I volunteered.

Chorus-

I'm very tired with talking now  
Please raise my head some higher  
And fold my blanket closely round  
And build a larger fire.

Chorus-

The air is very cold tonight  
I raised his head with care  
He closed his eyes as if to sleep  
And clasped his hands in prayer.

Chorus-

In silent converse [sic] with his God  
The wounded soldier lay  
It seemed to be communion sweet  
No agony to pray.

Chorus-

He smiles as does the gentle child  
When angels whisper near,  
No anguish worked upon his brow,  
Nor blushed his cheek with pain.

Chorus-

I saw that death was coming fast  
His mind was all in prayer,  
I asked him for his regiment  
And who his comrades were.

Chorus-

My Captain's dead, the boy replied,  
In accents low and mild,  
I've heard my mother speak of Him

When I was but a child.

Chorus-

I knew his mind was wandering  
That he was thinking then  
Of Him who gave His life to save  
His vallant [sic] faithful men.

Chorus-

And then he died that stormy night,  
No friend nor kindred near  
To wipe the damp from his brow  
and shed affection's tear.

Chorus-

And thus I've seen the love of God  
Joy peace and comfort yield  
To one who fell by mortal wound  
Upon the battle field.

Chorus-

And should you wander o'er the ground  
Where fell so many and brave  
Among the cedars on the hill  
There lies his lonely grave.

Chorus-

The flowers will soon light up with smiles  
Stone [sic] River's rocky shore  
His spirit knows a brighter clime  
Where flowers bloom ever more.

Chorus-

But mild-eyed peace may visit soon

Stone [sic] River's rocky shore,  
But Murphy's charming sabbath bell  
Will never wake him now.

Chorus- How many thousand's gone to rest  
We know that they are free  
Their bodies moldering in the dust  
On plains of Tennessee.