

**SPRING NOTES  
FROM TENNESSEE**

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Spring notes from Tennessee by Bradford Torrey

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**BRADFORD TORREY**

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# SPRING NOTES FROM TENNESSEE

BY

BRADFORD TORREY .

We travelled in the print of olden wars;  
Yet all the land was green.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.



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## SPRING NOTES FROM TENNESSEE.

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### AN IDLER ON MISSIONARY RIDGE.

I REACHED Chattanooga on the evening of April 26th, in the midst of a rattling thunder-shower, — which, to look back upon it, seems to have been prophetic, — and the next morning, after an early breakfast, took an electric car for Missionary Ridge. Among my fellow-passengers were four Louisiana veterans fresh from their annual reunion at Birmingham, where, doubtless, their hearts had been kindled by much fervent oratory, as well as by much private talk of those bygone days when they did everything but die for the cause they loved. As the car mounted the Ridge, one of them called his companions' attention to a place down the valley where "the Rebels and the Yankees" (his own words) used to meet to play cards. "A regular gambling-hole," he called it. Their boys brought back lots

## 2 *AN IDLER ON MISSIONARY RIDGE.*

of coffee. In another direction was a spot where the Rebels once "had a regular picnic," killing some extraordinary number of Yankees in some incredibly brief time. I interrupted the conversation, and at the same time made myself known as a stranger and a Northerner, by inquiring after the whereabouts of Orchard Knob, General Grant's headquarters; and the same man, who seemed to be the spokesman of the party, after pointing out the place, a savinsprinkled knoll between us and the city, kindly invited me to go with him and his comrades up to the tower, — on the site of General Bragg's headquarters, — where he would show me the whole battlefield and tell me about the fight.

We left the car together for that purpose, and walked up the slope to the foot of the observatory, — an open structure of iron, erected by the national government; but just then my ear caught somewhere beyond us the song of a Bachman's finch, — a song I had heard a year before in the pine woods of Florida, and, in my ignorance, was unprepared for here. I must see the bird and make sure of its identity. It led me a little

chase, and when I had seen it I must look also at a summer tanager, a chat, and so on, one thing leading to another; and by the time I returned to the observatory the veterans had come down and were under some apple-trees, from one of which the spokesman was cutting a big walking-stick. He had stood under those trees — which were now in bloom — thirty years before, he said, with General Bragg himself.

I was sorry to have missed his story of the battle, and ashamed to have seemed ungrateful and rude, but I forget what apology I offered. At this distance it is hard to see how I could have got out of the affair with much dignity. I might have heard all about the battle from a man who was there, and instead I went off to listen to a sparrow singing in a bush. I thought, to be sure, that the men would be longer upon the observatory, and that I should still be in season. Probably that was my excuse, if I made one; and in all likelihood the veteran was too completely taken up with his own concerns to think twice about the vagaries of a stray Yankee, who seemed to be an odd stick, to say nothing worse of him. Well,