

11 A CHILD'S QUESTION

Loud rings the bell from many a tower;
The year is eighty three
A father by the window sits
With a child upon his knee,
And hears the gladsome notes proclaim
The birthday of the free.
The banner which our fathers loved,
And which their sons shall prize,
With not a single star effaced,
Floats proudly to the skies--
The emblem of a nation's strength
No foeman dare despise.
"Dear father," now with earnest voice
Outspeaks the eager son,
"My teacher told me yesterday
What glorious deeds were done
In the war that burst upon the land
In eighteen sixty-one.
"She told me with what patient hearts
Our noble soldiers bore
The toilsome march, the frugal fare,
The hardships of the war;
The greatest--so my teacher says--
That History ever saw.
I wish I had been living then,
I'd be a soldier too,
and help defend the noble flag
From all the rebel crew;
I'd be ashamed to stay behind;
Dear father, wouldn't you?"
Upon the listening father's face
A painful flush there came;
The patriot soldier's need of praise
He could in nowise claim,
And the question of his little son
Smote him with sudden shame.
Young men, your country calls today
For loyal men and true;
She has enough of earnest work
For earnest men to do,
Give heed, lest in the coming days.
Your children blush for you.

Sources:

Harper's Weekly, July 25, 1863. (Anonymous)

Boston Transcript, November 30, 1863.

Newsboy, October-November, 1981.