

The Dandy Fifth - song lyrics

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THE DANDY FIFTH.

By Frank H. Gassaway.

'Twas the time of the workingmen's great strike, when all the land stood still
At the sudden roar from the hungry mouths that labor could not fill;
When the thunder of the railroad censed, and startled towns could spy
A hundred blazing factories painting each midnight aky.

Through Philadelphia's surging streets marched the brown ranks of toil,
The grimy legions of the shops, the tillers of the soil.
White-faced militia-men looked on, while women shrank with dread;
'Twas muscle against money then-'twas riches against bread.

Once, as the mighty mob tramped on, a carriage stopped the way,
Upon the silken seat of which a young patrician lay;
And as, with haughty glance, he swept along the jeering crowd,
A white-haired blacksmith in the ranks took off his cap and bowed.

That night the Labor League was met, and soon the chairman said:
"There hides a Judas in our midst, one man who bows his head,
Who bends the coward's servile knee when capital rolls by."
"Down with him! Kill the traitor curl!" rang out the savage cry.

Up rose the blacksmith, then, and held erect his head of gray:
"I am no traitor, though I bowed to a rich man's son to-day;
And though you kill me as I stand-as like you mean to do-
I want to tell you a story short, And I ask you'll hear me through.

"I was one of those who enlisted first, the old flag to defend,
With Pope And Halleck, with 'Mac' and Grant, I followed to the end;
And 'twas somewhere down on the Rapidan, when the Union cause looked drear,
That a regiment of rich young bloods came down to us from here.

"Their uniforms were by tailors cut: they brought hampers of good wine;
And every squad had a servant, too, to keep their boots in shine;
They'd naught to say to us dusty 'vets.' and, through the whole brigade,
We called them the kid-gloved Dandy Fifth, when we passed them on parade.

"Well, they were sent to hold a fort the Rebs tried hard to take;
'Twas the key of all our line, which naught, while it held out, could break.
But a fearful fight we lost just then-the reserve came up too late;
And on that fort, And the Dundy Fifth, hung the whole division's fate.

"Three times we tried to take them aid, and each time back we fell,
Though once we could hear the fort's far guns boom like a funeral knell,
Till at length Joe Hooker's corps came up, und then straight through we broke:
How we cheered as we saw those dandy coats still back of the drifting smoke!

"With the bands all front and our colors spread we swarmed up the parapet,
But the sight that silenced our welcome shout I shah never in life forget.
Four days before had their water gone-they had dreaded that the most-
The next their last scant ration went, and each man looked a ghost.

"As he stood, gaunt-eyed, behind his gun, like a crippled stag at bay,
And watched starvation-though not defeat-draw nearer every day.
Of all the Fifth not fourscore men Could in their places stand.
And their white lips told a fearful tale, as we grasped each bloodless band.

"The rest In the stupor of famine lay, save here and there a few
In death eat rigid against the guns, grim sentinels in blue;
And their Colonel, he could not speak or stir, but we saw his proud eye thrill,
As he simply glanced to the shot-scarred stuff where the old flag floated still.

"Now, I hate the tyrants who grind as down, while the wolf snarls at our door,
And the men who've risen from us-to laugh at the misery of the poor;
But I tell you, mates, while this weak old hand I have left the strength to lift,
It will touch my cap to the proudest swell who fought in the Dandy Fifth."

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