

A Sharpshooter's Last Sleep. ✓

A burial party, searching for dead on the borders of the Gettysburg battle-field, found, in a secluded spot, a sharpshooter lying as he fell when struck by the bullet. His cap and gun were evidently thrown behind him by the violence of the shock, and the blanket, partly shown, indicates that he had selected this as a permanent position from which to annoy the enemy. How many skeletons of such men are bleaching to-day in out of the way places no one can tell. Now and then the visitor to a battle-field finds the bones of some man shot as this one was, but there are hundreds that will never be known of, and will moulder into nothingness among the rocks. There were several regiments of Sharpshooters employed on both sides during the war, and many distinguished officers lost their lives at the hands of the riflemen. The first regiment was composed of men selected from each of the Loyal States, who brought their own rifles, and could snuff a candle at a hundred yards. Some of the regiments tried almost every variety of arms, but generally found the Western rifle most effective. The men were seldom used in line, but were taken to the front and allowed to choose their own positions. Some climbed into bushy trees, and lashed themselves to the branches to avoid falling if wounded. Others secreted themselves behind logs and rocks, and not a few dug little pits, into which they crept, lying close to the ground and rendering it almost impossible for an enemy to hit them. Occasionally a Federal and Confederate Sharpshooter would be brought face to face, when each would resort to every artifice to kill the other. Hats would be elevated upon sticks, and powder flashed on a piece of paper, to draw the opponent's fire, not always with success, however, and sometimes many hours would elapse before either party could get a favorable shot. When the armies were entrenched, as at Vicksburg and Richmond, the sharpshooters frequently secreted themselves so as to defy discovery, and picked off officers without the Confederate riflemen being able to return the fire.