V.M.I. Cadets in Battle of New Market

Opposite is the enemies lines of grey belching forth fire and smoke. Those immediately in front of us are comparatively inactive. They have not yet mended their broken fences. We look to the further end of the rebel line. Out from an orchid slips a small body of gray clad troops. Something about them attracts our attention - their marching and allignment are perfect, their step is unlike that of the veterans who marched against our front. Their movements are those of a crack battalion on dress parade. They look like boys! the strong glass show they are boys. It is the battalion of pupils from the Virginia Military Institute 225 in number. Those little fellows whose ages range from fourteen to sixteen years, drawn from the best families of the old Dominion, have ~~Has~~ closed their books for the summer vacation, but instead of returning to their homes and making glad the hearts of fond parents and brothers and sisters, were told to take their cadet muskets and join the army in the Valley. They have just arrived and are eagerly marching to their baptism of blood. War is cruel at best, but who can excuse the cruelty that risks such bright young lives even in a Kitchener's cause.

Opposite them holding the right of our line is a battery of 12 pounders. The Commander has observed the Cadet battalion and opened fire on it. The shells burst among the boys but they don't seem to be disturbed in the least. Forward towards the black monsters the line moves as tho parading on the smooth lawn of the Military institute whence they come. Poling are being snacked from their fence but they close up and present an unbroken ~~front~~ line. We ask ourselves can they be so rash as to charge the battery? It is commencing

to look that way: On they march their line as straight as a rule. More pailing are knocked from their living fence and repairs are made as before, but the fence is shorter - They are also in Cannister range. Surely they will face about and retrace their steps! but no, the little heads are bent lower as they face the iron storm - The little muskets are grasped tighter as on they rush. God have mercy on them! The deadly Cannister sweeps through their ranks; shorter and shorter grows the line. Heaven have pity on their poor mothers, whose prayers are even now rising to Heaven for their darlings safely. Oh! that some pitying hand would stretch out and slay them; but on on on they ~~go~~ march right into the jaws of ~~death~~ the black monsters. Now they enter the smoke and disappear. The thunder of the six great guns is silenced a juvenile shout is heard and the survivors of that little band of heroes have captured the battery. Scarcely have we realized they are victors, until we found they man the captured guns and turn them down our lines

(In a letter from Mr Howard Morton - a Federal Soldier - in a Scrap book of C.A. Richardson - Published in Pick. Mind dispatch)

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