

My Country! My Mother! My God!!!

"'Twas midnight's holy hour, And
silence was brooding like a gentle spirit
O'er the still and pulseless world."

The new moon had climbed above the
trays and peaks of Pennsylvania and
turned her budding ^{hour's} in the eastern sky.
You sentinels, from their far off watch
houses, beheld the saddest sight that ever
met the gaze of mortal ^{man}. It was sad and
sickenning, and sorrowful! The war-steed
had pawed the dust of the valley and sniffed
the breeze of battle. Robert Edward Lee,
the modern Joshua, had sounded the war-
blast in Pennsylvania, and sixty thousand
ragged rebels "rushed to glory or the grave."
Among this great and goodly number there
was one, a beardless, gallant hero, whose young
heart had grown sick at the crier of op-
pressed and ~~surrounded~~ liberty. With a soul
blazing with patriotism and an eye beaming
with bravery, he shouldered his musket and

went forth to battle for the land of his birth - his own "Sunny South." Tearing himself from the fond embrace of a loving mother, the tender smiles of a darling sister, and the watchful caresses of a dotting father, boldly sacrificed his life upon the altar of his country. Methinks I see him now, walking his lone and dreary beat, listening, with a fluttering heart, for the first approach of the enemy's host. His thoughts run down the dim aisle of the sweet by-gone, and happy scenes of other days came thronging by. He can ^{see} the form of that darling mother, at whose knee he learned to hush the name of Jesus, and to repeat that little prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep!" Full well he remembered the day his old gray-headed father, with tears streaming down his care-worn cheeks, said to him, "Go, my boy, fight for Dixie, and, if need be, die in her defense." He recalls the happy hour when he and his darling ~~mother~~ ^{mother} Mary knelt at love's pure shrine and vowed to be all-in-all

to each other; or perchance, he dreams himself a furlough, and with sleeveless coat, shoeless feet, and breadless haversack, tramples ~~in~~ ^{to} his long-loved home. His heart beats quicker and faster as he nears the spot of his birth and the place of his boyhood. The tears tumble upon his weather-beaten cheek as he imagines he hears the familiar bark of the watch dog. But hark, what's that! nothing but the hoot of a lonesome owl, or the cry of a mournful whippoorwill. Brushing off the tears with his rough hands, he clutches his rusty weapon to his side and arouses from his reverie, to find himself, not at home, but keeping guard over the sleeping army of his great Chieftain, Robert E. Lee. But hark! hush!! listen!!! "and the picket's of duty forever." The "dread-angel" poised above his head, and while shaking the death's dew from his elbowing the noble-hearted boy drew forth a pocket Bible (no doubt the his mother gave him)

And wrote upon the fly leaf, "My Country!
My Mother!! My God!!!"

I come not with the pet saying of some
great and glorious statesman; I come
not with the death sentiment from one of
the world's immortal few, but I come with
the last thought of an obscure and ragged
rebel. I beg your attention then, while I
present to you tonight one of Dixie's noblest
heroes.

There was something above the ordinary
in the boy. A nobler heart never beat in
human breast! His last thoughts were of
his Country! - the idol of his heart; His
Mother! - the one dear form that gave
its sunlight to his boyhood; his God,
the great comforter of hearts in the hour
of death. "My Country! My Mother! My God!"
A beautiful chain linked to the throne of
the loftiest Archangel on high and ex-
tended to God's foot stool beneath. "My
Country!" it is the proudest aspiration
of this young heart to behold thee seated

in Fame's fair temple, the grandest
nation the world ever saw. "My Country!"
the fairest land that e'er a zephyr
kissed or an ocean bathed, the birth-
place of greatness, the home of liberty,
the land of patriotism, and the cradle
of genius. To be an American, is
prouder than it was to a Roman in
days of yore. "My Country!" holds within
her sacred embrace nobler dust than
ever slumbered in Westminster, or even
in the renowned Catacombs of the seven-
hilled city.

My Country, oh my Country! My heart-
strings are entwined around thee — "with
all thy faults I love thee still". "There is
a land of every land the pride, Beloved by
heaven o'er all the world beside; Thou shalt
find wherever thy footsteps roam, That land
thy Country, that spot thy home".

My Country! thou art freighted with genius
and Cargued with glory, and in thy ship-
~~the~~ wreck, if it ever be, the South, my

own dear sunny South, shall be the plank to which I shall cling.

Fellow school-boys, do you remember the day you bade farewell to the old homestead, and waved an adieu to the scenes of your childhood? Who threw her arms around your neck, and, with eyes swimming in tears, breathed a prayer that God might bless and save her boy? Who handed you that Bible when you started for college, and wrote on the fly-leaf, "My son, remember that her ways are of pleasantness and all her paths are peace?" Who watched over you when you lay in your cradle, a helpless, innocent babe? Who carried you and loved you better than she did her own life? Who used to take you, when a little barefooted boy, to her sacred place of prayer and then clasp your little hands for you and teach you how to petition the great Giver? I seem to hear a still sweet echo in each heart, "My Mother!"—Among the very last thoughts of my noble-hearted hers.

What an influence the mother has over the wild impulses of her boy, although he may be wild and reckless, debased in morals and dissipated in habits, yet a way in the depths of his heart his mother's name is enthroned forever. "Mother!" the first word his little tongue learns to prattle. When Joshua Soule was dying, some one standing near remarked: "Bishop, you've done the world great good" "If I have" said he, "I owe it to my mother."

No mathematician's brain can compute the good they have done the world. Their influence is hallowed, their examples are worshipful. As flowers purify the air we breathe, so mothers purify the moral atmosphere around them. Did you ever follow the hearse as it nodded its dark plumes towards that mother's grave? Did you ever stand upon its brink and listen to the "Clogs of the Valley" as they rumbled mournfully upon the coffin? If so, then you have sounded the depths of your love for her. Although the grave may rob you of her body,

yet, glorious thought, it cannot rob you of her memory, it is embalmed in your heart and photographed upon your soul forever.

were it not for praying mothers, the world would be sunk in deeper degradation.

O Mothers! your influence will be known only in the ceaseless ages of eternity. Your mother thinks of you when you think little of her. I'll venture the assertion, that tonight those dear old hands are clasped in holy prayer and those lips are pleading your Cause before God with the grandest eloquence of human heart. "My Mother!" a beautiful word translated from the language of heaven. "My mother!" the breath of deity - the whisper of an angel.

"My God!" - he was thinking of eternity and eternal things the hereafter as well as the heretofore. He was thinking of the great God, who stands out upon the brow of nothing and holds this "old exiled orb" in the palm of his hand. He was thinking of the Jerusalem above, of her jasper walls,

her pearly gates and streets of shimmering gold.
He was thinking of the Myriads of Angels
and archangels that go flitting o'er the glory
fields of Eden singing and shouting, "The Lord
God omnipotent reigneth!" "My God!" he
was thinking of the Great Being who watched
with an all-seeing eye those shimmering worlds
that glitter along the golden hills of heaven
and who owns and controls those little stars
away yonder on the outskirts of Creation that
will shine on for untold time "My God!"
At his bidding you blazing Comet "flies away
to sparkle for a while in the trackless void
and returns again to tell man the wonders
of its azure home." "My God!" he was
thinking of the Great I am, whose all
powerful hand swept a haughty ^{nation} from the
earth and leveled the walls of proud Jerico
with the dust. "My God" his great finger
marked out the path through eternal space, in
which this beautiful world of ours has

traveled six thousand years. "My God" what did that imply? It implied that he was an heir of glory and that his inheritance was "incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away." He did not shudder and recoil at the "wild leap in the dark", but he died gloriously, like a soldier, like a hero, like a Christian - thinking not of worldly honor or earthly show but only of his Country, his Mother, his God.

When he died no marshalled host followed him to his grave. There are no booming Cannons, no waving banners, no peal of musketry in behalf of his humble memory. No; he was rudely dragged by the heels and thrown into a vulgar hole, there to sleep until that Archangel shall stand with one foot ~~of~~ on land and one on sea, and with one blast from his clarion trumpet shall summon the nations of the earth to the bar of God.

Yes; "he sleeps the sleep that knows no waking." No sister's tender hand plants the weeping willow above his hallowed dust.

No loving mother bedews it with her tears,
but the rank grass, green from the soil
of Carnage, waves above his head his
Crushed and mouldering skeleton.

If merit were awarded to whom merit
is due, ~~instead~~ ^{this} instead of ^{this} boy's humble
head-board marked "UNKNOWN", would
be erected a grand and shining Mausoleum,
its spire glittering in the sunlight of
heaven, and upon it his epitaph
carved by the finger of an angel,
"My Country! My Mother! My God!!!".

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