

Battle Hymn of the Republic



In 1862, a prominent Boston woman and her husband were visiting Washington, D.C., shortly after the outbreak of the Civil War. They witnessed an impressive military review one day and were headed back to their hotel with some friends in a carriage when their way was blocked by several columns of soldiers.

To pass the time, Julia Ward Howe and her friends began to sing popular Army songs, including *John Brown's Body*. The soldiers cheered the singing, but one of her friends suggested to Mrs. Howe that the lyrics could be improved.

Early the next morning, she arose in her hotel room and quickly scribbled out some new lyrics, inspired by her memory of the soldiers from the day before.

Her new words were published in the spring of 1862 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*, and the *Battle Hymn of the Republic* became the major war song of the Union forces.

The opening words and the refrain are certainly familiar: "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord ... Glory, hallelujah! His truth is marching on."

Battle Hymn of the Republic remains today an extremely popular and well-known American patriotic song. Its message to us in the 21st century is no less important than the day it was written. Here it is:

*Mine eyes have seen the glory
Of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage
Where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning
Of His terrible swift sword;
His truth is marching on.*

*I have seen Him in the watchfires
Of a hundred circling camps
They have builded Him an altar
In the evening dews and damps;
I can read His righteous sentence
By the dim and flaring lamps;
His day is marching on.*

(more)

Battle-Hymn of the Republic.

He has sounded forth the trumpet
That shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men
Before His judgment seat;
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him;
Be jubilant, my feet;
Our God is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies
Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom
That transfigures you and me;
As He died to make men holy,
Let us die to make men free;
While God is marching on.

(And the chorus)

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!
His truth is marching on.

In these troubled times, our God is marching on! Glory! Hallelujah!

— Beecher Hunter

Julia Ward Howe.