**Battle Hymn of the Republic - History and Words**



In 1861, after a visit to a Union Army camp, [Julia Ward Howe](http://womenshistory.about.com/library/bio/blbio_howe_julia_ward.htm) wrote the poem that came to be called "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." It was published in February, 1862, in *The Atlantic Monthly.*

Howe reported in her autobiography that she wrote the verses to meet a challenge by a friend, Rev. James Freeman Clarke. As an unofficial anthem, Union soldiers sang "John Brown's Body." Confederate soldiers sang it with their own version of the words. But Clarke thought that there should be more uplifting words to the tune.

Howe met Clarke's challenge. The poem has become perhaps the best-known Civil War song of the Union Army, and has come to be a well-loved American patriotic anthem.

The words as published in the February, 1862, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* are slightly different from her [original manuscript version](http://womenshistory.about.com/library/etext/bl_howe_battle_hymn2.htm) as documented in her *Reminiscences 1819-1899,* published in 1899. [Later versions](http://womenshistory.about.com/library/etext/bl_howe_battle_hymn3.htm) have been adapted to more modern usage and to the theological inclinations of the groups using the song.

**First Published Version**

*Here is "Battle Hymn of the Republic" as written by Julia Ward Howe when she published it in February, 1862, in the Atlantic Monthly:*

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 watch-fires 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.

I have read a fiery gospel writ in burnished rows of steel:
"As ye deal with my contemners, so with you my grace shall deal;
Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel,
Since God is marching on."

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.