

Pro Patria

Florence Earle Coates



1917

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PHILADELPHIA

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BETTER TO DIE

Better to die, where gallant men are dying,
 Than to live on with them that basely fly:
Better to fall, the soulless Fates defying,
Than unassailed to wander vainly, trying
 To turn one's face from an accusing sky!

Days matter not, nor years to the undaunted;
 To live is nothing,—but to *nobly* live!
The poorest visions of the honor-haunted
Are better worth than pleasure-masks enchanted,
 And they win life who life for others give.

The planets in their watchful course behold them—
 To live is nothing,—but to nobly live!—
For though the Earth with mother-hands remold them,
Though Ocean in his billowy arms enfold them,
 They are as gods, who life to others give!

AMERICA

Patient she is—long-suffering, our Land;
Wise with the strength of one whose soul in calm
Weighs and considers, and would understand
Ere it gives way to anger: fearing wrong
Of her own doing more than any planned
Against her peace by others deemed more strong.

Mother of many children alien born,
Whom she has gathered into her kind arms,—
Safe-guarding most the weakest, most forlorn,—
The mother's patience she has learned to know,
Which passes trifles by with smiling scorn—
The mother's hopefulness, to anger slow.

Yet, oh, beware! nor, over-bold, presume
Upon a gentleness enlivened with Power!
Her torch still burns, to kindle or consume,
And 'gainst the time when she must prove her might,
Vast energy is stored in her soul's room—
Undreamed of strength to battle for the Right!

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TO THE ALLIES

If they tell you that we hold

Right and wrong are much the same:
That with equal share of blame
The defender of the fold
And the ravening wolf we name—
Don't believe it!

If they tell you that we think,
When the robber comes by night
And we see 'neath murderous Might
Innocence unfriended sink,
We should be "too proud to fight"—
Don't believe it!

If they tell you we are cold
When strong men, and maids as brave,
May not life from bondage save—
We who gave unstinted gold,
And our heart's blood, for the slave!—
Don't believe it!

If—O gallant souls and true!—
If they tell you we judge well
Ways of Heaven and ways of Hell:
That the honor dear to you
Also in our souls doth dwell—
Oh, believe it!

If they tell you our heart's cry:
That, whate'er the danger near,
One, one only loss we fear;
And are ready, too, to—die
For the things that you hold dear—
Oh, believe it!

UNDER THE FLAG

February 5, 1917

Under our own flag, still we will sail her—
Gallantly sail her, our own Ship of State;
Faiths we have lived by still shall avail her,
Hope at her prow, wing'd, expectant, elate!

Over the deeps of a perilous ocean,
Honor compelling, we still will sail on;
Giving, unfearing, a loyal devotion,
Until, in life—in death, danger is gone.

Deem not that we, whom our fathers before us
Taught to love freedom and died to make free,
Coward shall fly, while the Heavens are o'er us,

Craft of the ether or boats under sea.

There is in valor that hearkens to duty—
 Something that dearer may be than long years;
And in man's service may be a beauty
 Higher than glory, and deeper than tears.

In unhesitating obedience to what I deem my constitutional duty, I advise that the Congress declare the recent course of the Imperial German Government to be in fact nothing less than war against the Government and people of the United States; that it formally accept the status of belligerent which has thus been thrust upon it and that it take immediately steps to exert all its power and employ all its resources to bring the Government of the German Empire to terms and end the war.

* * * * *

To such a task we can dedicate our lives and our fortunes, everything that we are and everything that we have, with the pride of those who know that the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other.—*Address of President Wilson to the Congress of the United States, April 2, 1917.*

AMERICA SPEAKS

*"For what avail or plough, or sail,
Or land, or life, if freedom fail?"*

We have been sleeping—dreaming. Now,
Thank God! we are awake!
Awake, and ready with a will
The nobler part to take!

No more shall a pretended Peace
Our souls from duty sever;
We dedicate our lives to God
And Liberty—forever!

We, who have looked with anguished eyes
On things no eye should see,
Beholding all that may be wrought
By ruthless Tyranny,
Join hands with you, devoted Lands,
A liberated Nation
That wills to share your sacrifice,
That knows your exaltation!

A lofty voice has spoken words
That bring the world relief;
Our Land has joined the league of Right,
Led onward by her Chief—
Her Chief who large has writ his name
With Lincoln's in the story
Of that dear land which still may call
The flag she loves, "Old Glory!"

THE UNION OF THE FLAGS

May 9, 1917

We have hung out the flags that we love best—
The British, the French and our own;
Adoring we see them together,
That never together were flown!
And we feel in the bond is a blessing
For every grief to atone.

O flag of my own Land, give welcome!
Be proud to embrace, fold with fold,
These emblems of service heroic
Whose measure can never be told:
These banners that speak to the future
Of honor that shall not grow old!

Across them is *Sacrifice* written;
They voice peoples generous, brave,
Who, suffering all men can suffer
This side of eternity, gave
Their best with unflinching devotion,
The wronged and the helpless to save.

They poured out their hearts' blood for freedom;
They stood in the terrible way,
And bore the full brunt of the onslaught
That darkened the sun at noonday.

We gaze with dimmed eyes on their Colors,
Our souls strong for duty as they!

We will stand with high hearts by our Allies,
With fear of no evil but shame;
We will face coward Death and outface him,
In Liberty's eloquent name;
For we're of the brood of the Lion
That Tyranny never could tame!

LIVE THY LIFE

Live thy life gallantly and undismayed:
Whatever harms may hide within the shade,
Be thou of *fear*, my spirit! more afraid.

In earthly pathways evil springeth rife;
But dread not thou, too much, or pain or strife
That plunge thee to the greater depths of life!

What though the storm-cloud holds the bolt that sears?
The eagle of the crag, that nothing fears,
Still, still is young after a hundred years!

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