

Source: Orpheus C. Kerr [pseud. Robert Henry Newell], *The Palace Beautiful and Other Poems* (New York: Carleton, 1865) 43-48.

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AVENGED!

God's scales of Justice hang between
The deed Unjust and the end Unseen,
And the sparrow's fall in the one is weigh'd
By the Lord's own Hand in the other laid.

In the prairie path to our Sunset gate, [5]
In the flow'ring heart of a new-born State,
Are the hopes of an old man's waning years,
'Neath headstones worn by an old man's tears.

When the bright sun sinks in the rose-lipp'd West,
His last red ray is the headstone's crest; [10]
And the mounds he laves in a crimson flood,
Are a Soldier's wealth baptized in blood!

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Do ye ask who rear'd those headstones there,
And crown'd with thorns a sire's grey hair?
And by whom the Land's great debt was paid
To the Soldier old, in the graves they made? [15]

Shrink, Pity! shrink, at the question dire;
And, Honor, burn in a blush of fire!
Turn, Angel, turn from the page thine eyes,
Or the Sin, once written, never dies!

They were men of the Land he had fought to save [20]
From a foreign foe that had cross'd the wave,
When his sunlit youth was a martial song,
And shook a throne as it swell'd along.

They were sons of the clime whose soft, warm breath [25]
Is the soul of earth, and a life in death;
Where the Summer dreams on the couch of Spring,
And the songs of birds through the whole year ring;

Where the falling leaf is the cup that grew
To catch the gems of the new leaf's dew,
And the winds that through the vine-leaves creep [30]
Are the sighs of Time in a pleasant sleep.

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But there lurk'd a taint in the clime so blest,
Like a serpent coil'd in a ring-dove's nest,
And the human sounds to the ear it gave,
Were the clank of chains on a low-brow'd Slave! [35]

The Soldier old, at his sentry-post,
Where the sun's last trail of light is lost,
Beheld the shame of the Land he loved,
And the old old love in his bosom moved.

He cried to the land, Beware, Beware [40]
Of the symbol'd Curse in the Bondman there!
And a prophet's soul in fire came down
To live in the voice of old John Brown.

He cried; and the ingrate answer came [45]
In words of steel from a tongue of flame;
They dyed his hearth in the blood of kin,
And his dear ones fell for the Nation's Sin!

Oh, matchless deed! that a fiend might scorn,
Oh, deed of shame! for a world to mourn;
A Soldier's pay in his blood most dear, [50]
And a land to mock at a Father's tear!

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Is't strange that the tranquil soul of age
Was turn'd to strife in a madman's rage?
Is't strange that the cry of blood did seem
Like the roll of drums in a martial dream? [60]

Is't strange the clank of the Helot's chain
Should drive the Wrong to the old man's brain,
To fire his heart with a santon's zeal,
And mate his arm to the Soldier's steel?

The bane of Wrong to its depth had gone, [65]
And the sword of Right from its sheath was drawn;
But the cabin'd Slave heard not his cry,
And the old man arm'd him but to die.

Ye may call him Mad, that he did not quail [70]
When his stout blade broke on the unblest mail;
Ye may call him Mad, that he struck alone,
And made the land's dark Curse his own;

But the Eye of God look'd down and saw
A just life lost by an unjust law;
And black was the day with God's own frown [75]
When the Southern Cross was a martyr's Crown!

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Apostate clime! the blood then shed,
Fell thick with vengeance on thy head,
To weigh it down 'neath the coming rod
When thy red right hand should be stretch'd to God. [80]

Behold the price of the life ye took;
At the death ye gave 'twas a world that shook;
And the despot deed that one heart broke,
From their slavish sleep a Million woke!

Not all alone did the victim fall, [85]
Whose wrongs first brought him to your thrall;
The old man play'd a Nation's part,
And ye struck your blow at a Nation's heart!

The freemen-host is at your door,
And a Voice goes forth with a stern "No More!" [90]
To the deadly Curse, whose swift redeem
Was the vision'd thought of John Brown's dream.

To the Country's Wrong, and the Country's stain,
It shall prove as the scythe to the yielding grain;
And the dauntless pow'r to spread it forth, [95]
Is the free-born soul of the chainless North.

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From the East, and West, and North they come,
To the bugle's call and the roll of drum;
And a form walks viewless by their side—
A form that was born when the Old Man died! [100]

The Soldier old in his grave may rest,
Afar with his dead in the prairie West;
But a red ray falls on the headstone there,
Like a God's reply to a Soldier's pray'r.

He may sleep in peace 'neath the greenwood pall, [105]
For the land's great heart hath heard his call;
And a people's Will and a people's Might,
Shall right the Wrong and proclaim the Right.

The foe may howl at the fiat just, [110]
And gnash his fangs in the trodden dust;
But the battle leaves his bark a wreck,
And the Freeman's heel is on his neck.

Not all in vain is the lesson taught, [115]
That a great soul's Dream is the world's New Thought;
And the Scaffold mark'd with a death sublime
Is the Throne ordain'd for the coming time.