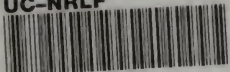


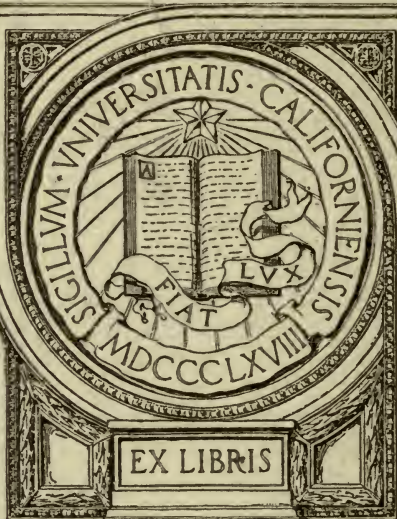
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“OUR COUNTRY”

FROM A SPEECH DELIVERED BY

WILLIAM H. MCCARTHY



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“OUR COUNTRY”

FROM A SPEECH DELIVERED BY

WILLIAM H. MCCARTHY

AT THE BANQUET OF

SAN FRANCISCO LODGE, No. 3

BENEVOLENT PROTECTIVE ORDER ELKS

ST. FRANCIS HOTEL, SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.

APRIL 25, 1917

Into a bitter conflict, which has scourged humanity such as no war or famine or pestilence has ever done; into a war which has brought Europe to its knees, crushed and bowed and broken for the millions whose lives have been sacrificed, for the land that has been pillaged and sacked and ruined, for the homes that have been destroyed; into the greatest, and please God, the last of the world wars with more pain, more suffering and death, more heart-aches and grief, more pitiless woe to mankind; into a World's Gethsemene of anguish and sorrow and up the steep slopes of a new Calvary, where Liberty and Humanity hang crucified, this land of ours—this great United States—has at last been drawn.

Patiently have we endured the crimes and indignities. Our property destroyed, the lives of our citizens sacrificed, our flag dishonored, our treaties broken, the free use of the seas denied us, until at last entreaty gave way with endurance tried beyond bounds. The German government

had issued its challenge to mankind and civilization itself trembled in the balance. Then, just as in '76 Jefferson wrote his Declaration of Independence, declaring "We hold these truths to be self evident; that all men are created equally free and independent; that they possess certain inalienable rights and that amongst them are the preservation of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." And even as in '61 Lincoln proclaimed his Doctrine of Emancipation to prove that the government of the people, for the people and by the people should not perish from the face of the earth, so in Nineteen Seventeen it was given to Woodrow Wilson to take up the gauntlet and accept the challenge for "Liberty and Humanity," I believe that if there be one man, the luster and glory of whose name, the power of whose position commands the confidence of his people, who can bring forth our loyalty and faith to cling to the flag in the dark hours, to work for it, fight for it, pray for it—if there be one man of this generation whom Americans treasure in their hearts, that man is he who sits a silent, sorrowful sentinel in the White House, Woodrow Wilson. And along side the words of Jefferson and Lincoln, future generations will read from his message to Congress.

"It is a fearful thing to lead this great country into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars, civilization itself seeming to be in the balance. But the right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts, for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own government, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free.

"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."

And tonight, we stand again "as the heirs of a priceless and imperiled birthright; the defenders of an endangered nation." "We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make." Our task is but to embalm into the hearts of the world, those institutions of freedom, of liberty and of humanity, in which the freest and best elements of existing systems are blended with the revelations and experience of buried ages and epochs.

Last Wednesday we commemorated the one hundred and forty-second anniversary of the Battle of Lexington. One hundred and forty-two years ago our forefathers braved for seven years the greatest power on earth and endured all the hardships and pangs of civilized war, with the added horrors of the tomahawk and scalping knife. They were sustained by an unfaltering purpose. What was it? It was to plant the tree of constitutional liberty for all. It was planted at Bunker Hill and the acorn has grown to the oak. Through the years it has stood, braving the storm and winds, sticking its roots more deeply into the soil, its lofty head exalted and its arms ever broadening out, and beneath its sheltering branches a great people has grown and thrived and prospered. Beneath it too, a homogeneous and harmonious republic, based upon human rights and human liberties, was established, its people strong in their self forgetfulness, self sacrifice and lofty patriotism.

For their ideals, for the rights of free men and free government, the American people have ever contended. From the Minute Men of Concord to the men of our day,

the cry has ever ever been the same. This, it is now our peculiar privilege to remember. In distant generations, in conflicts great and small, by land and sea, we have played our part and played it nobly. But whether with the bare-footed Continentals of Washington, trailing their blood prints on the snows of Valley Forge, with Crockett at the Alamo, with Taylor at Buena Vista, with Grant at Vicksburg or with Lee at Appomatox, the battle was not for conquest or territorial aggrandizement, but that the fundamental principles, upon which this great experiment of a free government were founded, might be preserved. And in our own day, the men who stormed the hills of San Juan and bore our flag with honor to the forbidden city of Peking and the Jungles of Luzon, have followed the ideals, the hopes and the ambitions of their progenitors. The unflinching cry of every American Army that has ever answered the bugle call or stepped to the tap of a drum, has been "Liberty and Humanity" and the Stars and Stripes have never floated in any region, or over any people, but in benediction.

The men of today are as good as the Americans of yesterday and the men of tomorrow will be the same. They tell us now that we are unprepared and unfortunately they tell us the truth. But when will we be prepared? Will it be when Prussian Militarism has crushed Europe and civilization and "Der Tag" has dawned? Will it be when the Hindenburgs and the Hapsburgs and the Hohenzollerns have unloosened their hell in America? We are not, but we will be prepared and prepared with money, men and arms, for here every citizen is a soldier and here each is or should be willing to give his all. Sometimes, when I read of what can happen or what may happen, I go back to a speech that I read as a boy and I think of what Lord Chatham, William Pitt, said to the House of Lords, one year after the commencement of the revolution. "I love and I honor the English troops. No man thinks more highly

of them than I do. I know they can achieve anything, except impossibilities and I know that the conquest of English America is an impossibility * * * You may swell every expense and effort, still more extravagantly, pile and accumulate every assistance you can buy or borrow; traffic and barter with every little pitiful German prince who will sell his subjects to the shambles for a foreign power, but you cannot, my lords, I repeat it, you cannot conquer America."

I do not fear the outcome of the war. It may be months or it may be years, but the potential power of a great people fortified by right, must and will ultimately prevail. That there will be dark hours, I fear. Already some of our own boys have marched away. Others must follow and some may not return. Of them some future poet shall write again:

"On Fame's Eternal Camping Ground
Their silent tents are spread
While Glory guards, with solemn round,
The Bivouac of the dead."

God help and God pity the mothers. Theirs the backs that must bend, and theirs the hearts that must break at the cruel sacrifices of war. Like Abraham of old, upon the altar of their country must they lay the children of their breasts, to make the greatest sacrifice of all. Far across the dark waters to-night the tears of a million mothers, who have given their sons to war, are falling fast. Every rifle shot and every bullet that sings its death song, as it whisks on its deadly way to find its billet in the heart of either friend or foe, reaches also to the heart of somebody's mother. God help and God pity the mothers. But this is war. The die is cast. There is no turning back. Better by far to die "fighting for the ashes of his fathers and the temples of his gods"; better to die midst the cannon roar, with the last thought of home and the

last look at the "old flag"; better the mothers' tears, than dishonor and disgrace; better a thousand times to die than to live a craven thing, a man without a flag—without a country.

If this be the supreme test of our existence, then must we be prepared to make the supreme sacrifice. Each must do his part; each must give of the best that is in him. Daily from the White House come the appeals to the people and patriotism consists of deeds and not of words. You have read them all and repetition would be more than idle. I have the most abiding faith in the American people. I know that they are slow to act but when once aroused, they are invincible. So I repeat that this is the time for each man to ask himself, what can I do.

From my heart, I hope the universal conscription bill, or the selective draft bill will be passed by Congress. It was magnificent to see with what unanimity Congress passed the appropriation bill of seven billions of dollars, a larger sum than it took to finance the entire Civil War. If they are willing to vote dollars, without a single dissenting vote, why not vote men with the same unanimity. The volunteer system never did and never could produce any other result than to sacrifice the best. Under this new bill all would be drawn and I would not limit the age to twenty-five or thirty-five or forty-five. Some will be sent to the front and some to the forge, but each will be detailed to that particular duty for which he is best fitted. Then, with our armies in the field and our armies in industry can we hope to make up for the delays of the past. I have no patience with the patriots whose war cry is "Let George do it." I have, I hope, sufficient love for my country and sufficient veneration and respect for my flag, not to want to whisk a broom while others shoulder the musket. I do not believe in the kind of patriotism that pictures Patria and hides

itself in the colors of the Star Spangled Banner just as it drinks rum and preaches Rominger. And I have only the most profound contempt for the men whose sole idea of sacrifice is to act as wet nurses for the war brides at home.

But I believe in that sort of patriotism that thrills and hopes and endures and sacrifices. Like James Whitcomb Riley's—

“Old Glory; the story we're wanting to hear
Is what the plain facts of your christening were,
For your name—just to hear it
Repeat it and cheer it 's a tang to the spirit
As salt as a tear
And seeing you fly, and the boys marching by
There's a shout in the throat and a blur in the eye
And an aching to live for you always, or die
If dying we still keep you waving on high.”

Do you remember eleven years ago tonight? San Francisco in dust and ashes and ruin. And can you tell me that the men who had the courage, the pride and the patriotism to rebuild out of the sorrow and ashes, this great, new magnificent city, will fail the nation now? Never, no never! And that is the patriotism we need now.

There can be, there will be, there must be but one outcome to this war. And when Peace comes—a long lasting world Peace—each ship that sails, like a white cap messenger to distant lands and foreign seas, shall proclaim again that here, in this land of freedom and aspiring hopes, the ideals for which our fathers fought, have been preserved and within our hospitable confines, the exile from every land may still find a home, where his days may be spent in peace, in plenty and in prosperity. And each shall turn to that flag, emblematic of a world's freedom

and a world's democracy, whispering as it waves to the
"loyal winds that love it best" its tale of human rights
and human liberties, and prayfully proclaim—

"Flag of the free hearts, hope and home,
By Angel hands to valor given,
Thy stars have lit the welkin dome
And all thy hues were born in Heaven.
Forever float, that standard sheet
Where breathes the foe but falls before us,
With Freedom's soil, beneath our feet,
And Freedom's banner waving o'er us."



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