

I STILL LIVE.

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A

POEM FOR THE TIMES.

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BY MISS A. W. SPRAGUE.

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TO THE BRAVE AND LOYAL HEARTS,  
OFFERING THEIR LIVES AT THE SHRINE OF LIBERTY,  
IS THIS LITTLE VOICE FOR  
FREEDOM DEDICATED WITH THE DEEPEST  
GRATITUDE AND  
EARNEST PRAYERS OF ITS  
AUTHOR.

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## I STILL LIVE.

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Columbia's statesman in the hour of death  
Seemed twice immortal: with expiring breath,  
And when the damp stood heavy on his brow,  
He answered, "I still live." He could not bow  
His soul to death: it stood in power and might  
Like some great statue looming up in night,  
For from his thoughts the light of future life  
Dispelled the mists of turmoil, care and strife;  
Great souls like his, such watchword well may give  
To all the coming races, "I still live."

When great men die, no eye, no heart should weep,  
No nation mournful vigils o'er them keep,  
For when the awful shadows darkly roll,  
They never whelm or wreck the passing soul.  
Amid the darkness and the hours of pain,  
The law of life says, "man shall live again,"  
Immortal still beyond the dreary tomb,  
Where mind for all its work finds ample room.  
And more than this, when some great Solon dies,  
Does not Confucius or a Plato rise?  
And power that spoke, thro' ages past away,  
In Greek or Roman, may be born to day.



Still greater minds live in each coming race,  
 So like the ancient sires when backward traced,  
 Except they brighter burn with added fire  
 Of power and genius, ever reaching higher.  
 Does Cincinnatus fall, his work half done?  
 The same great virtue lives in Washington,  
 When Cæsar dies the world may well forgive,  
 In some Napoleon he will more than live,  
 When Kosciusko falls for Freedom's sake,  
 His place a Garibaldi lives to take;  
 The world can never lose its strength and power,  
 They grow but brighter in each passing hour,  
 And all great souls that any race might give,  
 In their own sons repeat it—"I still live."

And Truth, and Right, and Justice never die,  
 Tho' prostrate, helpless, long they seem to lie,  
 Still upward springing at some clarion voice,  
 They speak again, and thousands' hearts rejoice.  
 And principles that men proved true and good,  
 For which they offered up their best heart's blood,  
 Tho' captive led by some dark tyrant's chain,  
 By virtue of their strength shall rise again.  
 Old Socrates his hemlock well might drink,  
 Galileo aloud not dare to think,  
 Each knew his hated, persecuted thought,  
 By after ages would with prayers be sought.  
 And Science crushed and tortured on the rack,  
 With starlike eye will still pursue her track,

Each new Columbus sail his unknown sea,  
 Each new Bozzarris strike for Liberty.  
 And Christ may nobly die upon his cross,  
 And still the world receive more gain than loss,  
 Perchance that world his teachings had withstood,  
 Had he not sealed them in his death with blood?  
 The truths he taught, like him can never die,  
 They live again despite old tyranny;  
 The words for which the people round him clung,  
 Die not, though spoken by another tongue,  
 For true religion, though her Christ were dead,  
 Should make earth tremble with her potent tread.  
 Old Bigotry may lift her iron rod,  
 And point the way for all to worship God,  
 And crush the devotee at each strange shrine,  
 (But like the grape they yield the bitter wine,)  
 Yet when she dreams the unbelieving hand  
 Dares not upraise in prayer through all the land,  
 She finds some Mayflower on the ocean wave,  
 They have a country, when she wished—a grave.  
 Church after church may towering rise and fall,  
 But true Religion—Christlike—lives through all:  
 The Christ, the Word, the Life, the Truth they give,  
 Forever boldly utter, “I still live.”

When tyranny shall lift its red, right hand,  
 And stalk with iron heel throughout the land,  
 When dark oppression holds its bleeding slave,  
 Because there lives no hand that dares to save,



When Austria pours her legions on her prey,  
 When Russia triumphs with imperial sway,  
 When Liberty seems tottering to her fall,  
 And even God unconscious of her call,  
 Her sons illustrious numbered with the dead,  
 Her lights extinguished and her honor fled,  
 Then rises, like an angel, some great mind,  
 The despot's fetters bravely to unbind,  
 To wake the fire again in patriot hearts,  
 Till through the tyrant speeds the avenging darts,  
 The captives from their dungeons to set free,  
 And wipe the dust and stains from Liberty,  
 An impulse to the sinking heart to give,  
 And roll these echos onward, "*I still live.*"

The living statesmen of the present hour,  
 Who feel the spirit of the past, its power,  
 When they behold the country torn and rent,  
 To base oppression half its sinews lent,  
 This famed Republic, ever said to be  
 Bright Freedom's cradle, home of Liberty,  
 With banner soiled, and stars from out its blue,  
 And "*treason*" written where 'twas "*good and true,*"  
 When they behold the crisis of the age  
 Just hovering now o'er history's great page,  
 And fear for what the angel's pen shall write  
 Of their own nation—less the living light  
 Of God's own heaven shall shine and show it sin,  
 A patriot's heart without, a traitor in—

The living statesmen, are there none, we say,  
 The actors in the drama of to day ;  
 Remembering now that Adams is no more,  
 That Jefferson's stern days of toil are o'er,  
 That he, our greatest, sleeps in Vernon's shade,  
 (Oh God! in traitor soil why is he laid?)  
 And are there none with mighty heart to try,  
 And work as if those heroes still were by?  
 None Curtius-like into the gap to leap,  
 And die to wake the nation from its sleep,  
 A loftier spirit to this strife to give,  
 And thunder forth, "*America shall live.*"

Should Freedom close her burning eye to-day,  
 Upon our soil, and tyrants bear the sway,  
 Her altar desecrate, her banner torn,  
 Not for Columbia's sake alone I mourn.  
 But, exponent and type of Liberty—  
 Between what was and what is yet to be  
 She stands—proclaiming in her glorious plan,  
 The crime of tyrants and the "rights of man,"  
 And in her people, through each passing hour,  
 Gives brilliant hopes of some forthcoming power.  
 Not her alone that falls; age after age  
 For freedom's sake has had some blotted page,  
 And through the efforts of all noble minds,  
 Has come the freedom that our country finds;  
 For every soul that struggled to be free,  
 Though dying, made a "*path for liberty.*"



And every nation, waiting, suffering long,  
 That rose at last to overcome the wrong,  
 Though failing, gave an impulse to the world,  
 By which some later tyrant has been hurled  
 Down from his throne, and buried in the dust,  
 To make a broader highway for the just.  
 Though Poland fell while struggling with her chains,  
 The love of freedom in her sons remains,  
 Though other lands—in past and present hours  
 Too weak to rise above the tyrant's powers—  
 Yet every effort that the patriot gave,  
 His country from the tyrant's hand to save,  
 Has lived: though for his land has rung the knell,  
 Its tolling struck anew great Freedom's bell.  
 And all the efforts of these thousand years,  
 Its captives' chains, its burning grief and tears,  
 Its struggles, every fetter to unbind,  
 Still, still more free to make the human mind,  
 Have grown but stronger in each age that's past,  
 And culminates at Freedom's shrine at last;  
 The last, last shrine built to her glorious name,  
 (Shall traitor tongues now put that word to shame?)  
 Thou hast that shrine, America, 'tis well,  
 And through thy land the thrilling voice would swell.  
 In those old days when tyranny grew strong, [wrong,  
 And might seemed right, or right seemed changed to  
 Yes, in those days when the great fire that burned  
 Through all the ages, ere its power was learned,  
 Had planted, though in weakness, here a shrine,



Where man could think, and act, and be divine ;  
 When in those days the tyrant came in wrath,  
 And scattered blood and death along his path,  
 The beacon fires were lit in every heart,  
 And each resolved to nobly act his part,  
 As side by side they made a breast-work deep,  
 The shrine of Liberty unstained to keep.  
 'Twas found the brave, true hearts that built the shrine,  
 Had given sons to keep it still divine,  
 'Twas found that Liberty knew where to come,  
 Through ages wandering, here to find her home.  
 The tyrant's voice came echoing through the land,  
 And patriots sprung up armed, and hand in hand,  
 They met the foe to nobly do or die,  
 How well, let Lexington and Bunker Hill reply.  
 Let many a place made sacred by their blood,  
 Attest how valiantly our fathers stood,  
 And while the clouds hung threatening, and the sun  
 Was veiled in darkness, ere the work was done,  
 Still firm and trusting, weak but strong, they stood,  
 Or nobly fell to make that country's good ;  
 While scarce one hope the bravest heart could give,  
 By word and deed was uttered, "I still live."

And shall their sons in this eventful day,  
 Be less the patriots, less the brave than they ?  
 Shall they, grown strong and wealthy in their pride,  
 Forget that strength when standing side by side ?  
 Shall they, disheartened by the traitor foe,

See piece by piece the Constitution go ?  
 And watch them fall like stars from out the heaven,  
 State after State by the old fathers given ?  
 'Tis true *they* struggled with a foreign foe,  
 More quickly conquered, for more strong the blow,  
 While now, internal strife distracts the State,  
 Once hidden treason rears its head so late,  
 And civil war, a nation's deadly sin,  
 The sons of those old fathers must begin ;  
 Yet is their power and strength still greater far  
 To point the way to freedom's guiding star.  
 For years the nation strong and stronger grown,  
 In its own strength this hour should stand alone,  
 And though a house divided shall not stand,  
 There's strength enough in half our wide spread land  
 To hold the Union, if each heart is true,  
 To pierce the nation's dark sin through and through.  
 'Tis sad, and yet 'tis well : each power must die  
 That keeps not to its native purity.  
 And while we've grown in strength, and power, and might  
 And lofty pride, have we still held to right ?  
 Sin finds its cure in its effects so dread,  
 They turn and visit vengeance on its head.  
 So now at once let's strike it to its core,  
 And let this civil strife be quickly o'er.  
 The fathers wrought, and toiled, and gave this power,  
 To bless their children in each future hour,  
 But oh, they left one deadly Upas tree,  
 That poisons half the breath of liberty,



They deemed that tree of its dread self would die,  
 By virtue of its own necessity,  
 But like foul seed sown broadcast in rich soil,  
 It upward springs, all other growth to spoil ;  
 They left that plague-spot for each future son,  
 While in all else true freedom had been won.  
 We will not blame the fathers, in their day  
 That they believed so soon 'twould pass away,  
 But oh, a sad mistake, and full of pain,  
 The nation's incubus has been that stain.  
 Year after year their sons have tried to wave  
 The dire effects arising from the slave,  
 By compromise, and yielding more and more,  
 Until the time, thank God, to yield is o'er.  
 Enough of that old sin that gives to might,  
 Though forced to rob the treasury of Right,  
 Enough of compromise, of words enough,  
 The Capitol has rung with such vile stuff.  
 There's left yet one way good, and only one,  
 That now unflinchingly the right be done,  
 No matter where the blow may fall, or when,  
 For blocks and stones are such, and men are men.  
 A nation that pretends to hold this truth,  
 Its first great, granite corner stone in youth,  
 That men are born all equal in His sight,  
 Who rights all wrongs—His might is *always* right—  
 For such a nation to have tread its soil,  
 A captive in his chains, the tyrant's spoil,  
 To have captivity bend low and weep



At Freedom's shrine while Freedom lies asleep,  
 To have the poor slave walk and clank his chain,  
 Or fly for freedom o'er the raging main,  
 From this *Republic* to a land of kings,  
 For safety to the British Lion cling;  
 To have the land of freedom hold a slave,  
 Then spill its blood for "equal rights," and crave  
 Of God His blessing and His watchful eye,  
 To guard the shrine where sits poor Liberty,  
 With half-closed eye lest she might see a slave—  
 (Oh, inconsistency, where is thy grave?)  
 It cannot be. Either a king must reign,  
 And men go back to Royalty again,  
 Either the tyrant have the power to rule,  
 And call the common people knaves or fool,  
 Or must the "rights of man" be well maintained,  
 The rights of *all* be kept uncramped, unstained,  
 Each have the power, if red, or black or white,  
 To stand unblushing in his freeborn right.  
 But if the question left for future years,  
 The slave still doomed to weep his bitter tears,  
 By that great law of progress' mighty sway,  
 That sometime clears for every race the way,  
 This same poor slave shall grow to strength and power,  
 No longer at his master's feet to cower,  
 And brooding over wrongs and miseries past,  
 Shall rise in strength, in vengeance at the last,  
 While burning with the wrongs no soul forgives,  
 Shall seal in blood these words, "The black man lives."

Which way you turn, the question must be met,  
 Or freedom's star, America's, shall set,  
 To rise again on some far, future shore,  
 (For never can its reign on earth be o'er,) [power,  
 Though this the land that should have strength and  
 To grow more free in every coming hour ;  
 Yet must it fall, or worse, must cease to be  
 Thy home, oh, star-eyed, swift-winged liberty.  
 Now who, with principles like these at stake,  
 Shall through old notions and opinions break,  
 And this great truth, deep rooted, fully see—  
 Strike not for country but for liberty ;  
 Strike not for race, or blood, or power or fame,  
 Strike not to keep thy country's flag or name,  
 Strike not that other nations feel its might,  
 But strike alone in the defense of right.  
 Ask not the country, color, race or name,  
 It puts thy democratic truths to shame ;  
 For principles stretch broader than the shore,  
 And truth is truth whoever opes the door.  
 The world has always been too small and straight,  
 And truth must enter at its narrow gate ;  
 It suits the code of bigot and of king,  
 To crush truth down to seem so small a thing,  
 'Tis in fair keeping with their law and rule,  
 It better makes the people but their tool,  
 For king, for country, they consistent fight,  
 To them it bears the form of law and right,  
 The corner stone is narrow, small and thin,  
 The monument must end as they begin ;



So who shall blame aristocratic blood  
 If it disdains to work for general good ?  
 There let it rest, the ruler be himself,  
 His only wish for sordid gain or pelf,  
 Let kingdoms still be kingdoms if they must,  
 Time yet will bring them right, they turn to dust.  
 But when a nation lays its corner stone  
 On God's eternal truths, and these alone,  
 When principles unlimited have sway,  
 And petty policy is swept away ;  
 When bonds of Union are such bonds as make  
 Each individual love it for its sake,  
 When men claim grand, inalienable rights,  
 'Tis pitiful to see such humbling sights ;  
 To find a noble work so well begun—  
 We grieve to say it—miserably done.  
 There's no excuse for tyranny's dark sway,  
 The game of kings, Republics have the day,  
 And after bringing such great truths to light,  
 'Tis terrible to see them set in night.  
 Why, men that found a government in truth,  
 If true, shall see it stronger than in youth,  
 And though they have a country and a name,  
 Its principles are *broad*er in their claim,  
 And stretch so mightily o'er all the land,  
 That in its breadth they find not room to stand,  
 But leap the ocean, every heart to cheer,  
 And clasp and bind in love each hemisphere.  
 The world becomes the country, all a part  
 Of one great nation with its throbbing heart,



And though the people's strength may not arise,  
 With power to pierce each error till it dies,  
 And force sufficient to expel all wrong,  
 And bid the weak stand up beside the strong,  
 Yet must their motto and their effort be,  
 "We will maintain a world-wide liberty ;  
 And we as loyal men will have no part  
 With sins that strike into the nation's heart."

"Our country right or wrong" should never be  
 The motto of the good, the brave, the free.  
 But this, "our country right, we'll help to keep,  
 And never at our posts of honor sleep,  
 Our country wrong, we'll strike it where it lies,  
 Until its wrong like serpent bleeding dies,  
 Then bind the wound with pity's tender love,  
 And lift our hearts and thank the God above,  
 While freedom, truth and virtue, each shall give  
 This shout, "Old Error dies, yet "I still live."

Look at crown'd Europe, see her listening stand,  
 Stretching her vision o'er this darkened land,  
 Grasping her scepter : closer still her crown,  
 With show of friendship—ready with her frown.  
 Long has she looked with dark and envious eye,  
 And hoped the young Republic soon would die ;  
 She watched its size, its sudden growth, its power,  
 She saw it still increasing every hour,  
 And felt its free and liberal views, the name  
 Of Royalty some hour might put to shame ;

And with a jealous eye she saw a power  
 To stand her rival in some coming hour,  
 To stretch its hand across the ocean wave,  
 And in its strength give Royalty a grave.  
 She feared that sometime it might hold the sea,  
 The mistress of the world in times to be,  
 Take true democracy from pole to pole,  
 Until it grew and swallowed up the whole.  
 She feared its power, because she knew its sons  
 Were bound to do what men had ever done,  
 That not the few were wise, and learned and great,  
 While common people at their beck must wait,  
 But each, though poor and low, that nobly tries,  
 To honor, wisdom, power and fame may rise;  
 And while no aristocracy they claim,  
 They win a title, this—an honored name.  
 They saw no race of puny kings, but men  
 Should answer back from that new land again,  
 And that the interests of the whole were bound,  
 And in such union greatest strength was found;  
 They saw no standing army in the land,  
 Yet one great army, the united band,  
 No body guard to gather round a king,  
 They would not stoop to save so small a thing,  
 No bowing down to rules grown old with time,  
 But true devotion to their native clime,  
 Their laws, the Union, and each inborn right,  
 Their banner clustered o'er with stars of light.  
 They saw a sinew in the common thought,



That gave the power proud kings so long had sought.  
 They said, "the common people are not strong  
 And wise to keep the nation's might; ere long  
 The power that's vested in the mass to-day,  
 Unstable as the waves, shall pass away,"  
 Yet feared the power, while half they mocked in scorn,  
 And thought, 'twere better had it ne'er been born,  
 And watched and waited for some coming cloud  
 To wrap young Freedom in its blackened shroud.  
 And now it comes, and comes by her own sons,  
 By "you too, Brutus," has the deed been done,  
 And all that love oppression's iron rule,  
 All who are trained in her dark, narrow school,  
 Rejoice to see the treachery of those  
 Who had no right to be the country's foes;  
 And seek pretense, excuse, to send some power  
 To help divide the country in this hour,  
 And let America no longer be  
 The land of promise far beyond the sea:  
 But rent, divided, left the spoil of kings,  
 Her sons to mourn that ruin round her clings.  
 'Tis strange, 'tis more than strange, that England, too,  
 With all her promises still good and new,  
 Forgetting the old feud long past away,  
 To stand like brothers, hand in hand to-day,  
 Now seeks to send her waiting legions o'er,  
 Through all our land like Egypt's plagues to pour,  
 And hound them bloody on bright Freedom's track,  
 (She'd find some Washington to send them back.)



Has she forgotten that she bears no slave,  
 And yet the southern "rights in man" would save?  
 Has she forgotten that their corner stone  
 Is "slavery forever" as begun?

Ah, hide thy face, recording angel there,  
 Nor write the words we speak and then despair.  
 Why, England's looms need cotton, she would save  
 Her own wealth first, and after that the slave,  
 Not right and justice, mercy, truth she holds,  
 But cotton must be had and there 'tis sold.

And rather than dispense with this great gain,  
 She'd see the southern master bind his chain  
 Around the bleeding form of dark browed men,  
 Nor dare to shout "Emancipation" then.

Ah, well, "our policy," the word of kings,  
 "We love that most that most to us will bring  
 Gold to our coffers, honor to our crown—  
 Do captives block the way, why, crush them down."

But even in that land of crowns and kings,  
 In under tones the voice of Freedom rings,  
 And while the tyrant, bigot laughs to-day,  
 The lovers of true freedom kneel and pray.

Columbia, oh how many a weeping eye  
 Prays that the young Republic may not die,  
 How many a soul turns restless to this land,  
 And lifts to God with solemn vow the hand,  
 And says, "should Freedom be triumphant there,  
 We will no longer in our night despair."

A mighty nucleus America will be,

Around whose shrine shall kneel the brave and free,  
 And she shall send her watchword through the world,  
 Till every tyrant from his throne is hurled,  
 And when we see her triumph in her power,  
 We'll strike for Freedom in the self same hour.  
 How many a nation for long years so crushed,  
 Whose voice in silence has been strangely hushed,  
 How many a hero in his Fatherland,  
 Who dares not now for Freedom raise his hand,  
 Shall leap exultant when the true and brave  
 This bright, fair land from tyranny shall save,  
 And say, "we'll light our torch at that great sun,  
 And finish here what she has well begun."  
 America, when kings would frown thee down,  
 And trample thee because thou hast no crown—  
 Save that thy children wear when strong and pure,  
 And standing in the paths of virtue sure—  
 When crushed and bleeding hearts long silent, long,  
 That brood in misery o'er pain and wrong,  
 And year by year and centuries pass away,  
 And yet they have not strength and power to say,  
 "Stern justice to the tyrant will I give,  
 And let my sword speak for me, 'I still live,'"

America, when bleeding hearts like these,  
 Are waiting, hoping, watching o'er the seas,  
 When crushed, down-trodden nations wildly yearn  
 To thee for hope, to thy success now turn,  
 Is there one moment left to falter given,



Till every chain from Liberty is riven,  
 And thou hast sprung up armed, and strong, and free,  
 And sent such message to them o'er the sea?  
 Expectant nations wait: one to rejoice  
 If hushed and silent is thy clarion voice,  
 One to fall prostrate in its deep despair,  
 If failing when thy sons most nobly dare.  
 Let thoughts like these be added to the rest,  
 Then strike the blow, and let it be thy best,  
 And wait not long before the blow strikes home,  
 Else darker hours to this Republic come:  
 Send booming o'er the waters of the sea,  
 This voice to friend and foe, "*all* shall be free."  
 As long as Freedom's sons delay to strike,  
 All other nations treat them as they like,  
 While faltering, trembling still to find their place,  
 Oppression laughs and mocks them to their face.  
 But when determined, they shall take their stand,  
 And bear to battle, Right within their hand,  
 And bid defiance unto all the world  
 Until Oppression from his throne is hurled—  
 Like Spartans in their own Thermopylæ,  
 Stand until death, or live but to be free—  
 Then shall the world look on in awe, and know  
 A race of true men. Let the future go,  
 But live the present—that the future makes—  
 And into beauty all the world awakes.  
 Live worthy of this era—*make* the day,  
 And in such life the wrong will pass away; [blood,  
 And though through darkness and through fire and



The "Pass" that leads to Freedom's greatest good,  
 Yet not too high the price that thou shalt give,  
 The world thy words shall echo, "I still live."

And those three words have mightier meaning still—  
 "America its mission shall fulfill"—

And when the world repeats those words for thee,  
 They ring the watchword of true Liberty.

"Still, still I live," great Webster well might say,  
 In that strange hour in which he passed away,

"Still, still I live," may Washington repeat  
 From hallowed Vernon's beautiful retreat,

"Still, still I live : for these my later sons  
 Shall falter never till the victory's won ;

Till Freedom weeps no more low at her shrine,  
 Till Liberty shall lift her eye divine,

And wave her star-bright banner through the sky,  
 And wake the eagle on his eyrie high,

Till leagued oppression finds its own made grave,  
 And Freedom's piercing eye beholds no slave.

Till every living soul that walks the land,  
 Shall raise towards Heaven in majesty its hand,

And lifting, toward the blue, o'er-arching sky,  
 A calm, a clear, a freedom loving eye,

Shall give alone to God the bended knee,  
 And link his loyal name with Liberty,"

Thought, mind and soul to Virtue's cause will give,  
 Not words but *acts* repeating, "I still live."

ASA PERRIN  
ROYALTON  
VT