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EDITORIAL

JULIA WARD HOWE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE venerable nonagenarian, whose passing away on the 17th of this month the Nation mourns, and for whose loss the civilized world drapes itself in mourning, is described as a writer of “ethnic, philosophic and theologic works,” as an author of “travels and science,” as “a poet of no mean attainments,” as “a dramatist” and as “a philanthropist.” Indeed, many are her works, vast the area covered by her sympathetic soul; nevertheless that for which her memory is and will remain wreathed in immortality is no work of ethnic research; is no flight of philosophy; is no soothing theological theory; is no product of scientific erudition; it is no thrilling traveler’s portrayal; it is no *Passion Flower* in rhyme and meter; no *Hippolytus* stage unveiling of human wrath and wretchedness; not even acts and words of benevolence. That for which Julia Ward Howe takes her place among the immortals is one short effort, and that ample,—*The Battle Hymn of the Republic*.

There is no philosophy, there is no theology, there is no science, there is no stage trick, and, as to philanthropy, in the common acceptation of the term, there is none of that either in the perfervid lines of the *Battle Hymn*. And yet, no work of science, theology or poetry fills the historic place, and achieved the task of that martial call. It was the right word uttered at the right time.

In 1861 America was in the throes of a Revolution essential to further progress. The generation of that day was called upon to snap the last link that fettered the Nation to feudal tenure. Chattel slavery was to be abolished. Science, statecraft and sentiment had spoken their last word. The moment for action, decisive action had come; a moment when Vengeance takes the field in the panoply of the Genius of the Hour, alone effective, alone healing. At that moment, in the stillness of the night the Spirit seized a Woman—she saw the Avenger “trampling out the wine {vineyard?} where the grapes of wrath were stored”; she saw “the fateful lightnings

of his terrible swift sword”; she saw “in the watch-fires of an hundred circling camps” the altar builded to the Nemesis; she read the “burning gospel writ in fiery rows of steel.” She rose. In the darkness of the night, as she herself graphically describes the experience, and, accustomed to write in the dark “in order not to disturb the children,” she transmitted the vision to paper—and then returned to bed and slept.

That Woman was that night humanity incarnate—sane, clear-sighted, virile, untrammelled. The message went forth. It was a trumpet blast that rolled up the scrolls of the Past and unrolled the fresh scroll of the Future.

The great historic epoch of 1861 marks the birth of a New Nation. That Nation’s cradle was rocked, as cradles of a Revolution ever have been and ever will be, by a Lullaby of War. In 1861 the Being that rocked the cradle and sane was Julia Ward Howe.

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