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The War - Prayer.

It was a time of great & exalting excitement. The country was up in arms, the war was on, in every breast burned the holy fire of patriotism; the drums were beating, the bands playing ^{OVER} ~~from every balcony~~ the flag ~~flashed~~ & flashed in the sun; daily the young volunteers marched ^{down the wide avenue} ~~the streets~~, gay & fine in their new uniforms, the proud fathers & mothers ~~steps~~ & sweethearts cheering them ^{with voices choked with happy emotion} as they swung by; ~~with voices choked with happy emotion~~ & nightly the packed mass-meetings listened, panting, to patriot oratory which stirred the deepest depths of their hearts, & which they interrupted at brief intervals with ^{cyclones} ~~storms~~ of applause, the tears running down their cheeks the while; in the churches, the

The toy pistols popping, the bunched fire crackers ^{hissing &} spluttering; ~~the~~
~~explosions~~ on every hand & far down the receding and
fading spread of roofs & balconies a fluttering
wilderness of flags

over

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pastors preached devotion to flag & country, & in-
voked the God of Battles, ~~beseeching~~ ^{beseeching} this aid in our
good cause in outpourings of fervid eloquence
which moved every listener. "It was indeed a glad
& gracious time, & the half dozen rash spirits that
ventured to disapprove of the war & cast a doubt
upon its righteousness ^{straightway got such a stern & angry warning} ~~went unsteadily so steadily~~
~~sideways~~ ^{quickly} that for their personal safety's
sake they ^{quickly} shrank out of sight & offended no more
in that way. ||

next day the battalions would leave for the front;

Sunday morning came, ^{the church} the church was filled;
the volunteers were there, ^{OVER} their tear eyes were with
them, proud, ^{happy} happy, & ^{surprised} surprised by the friends who
had no sons & brothers to send ^{to the front} ~~to the front~~. The service pro-
ceeded; ~~the~~ a war-chapter from the Old Testament
was read; the first ~~prayer~~ prayer was said; ^{it was} followed by

their young faces alight with martial dreams — visions of the
stern advance, the gathering momentum, the rushing charge,
the flashing sabres, the flight of the foe, the tumult, the enveloping
smoke, the fierce pursuit, the surrender! — then home from the
war, bronzed, scarred, welcomed, adored, submerged in golden
seas of glory! With the volunteers sat their dear ones, proud, happy,
& envied by the neighbors & friends who had no sons & brothers to send
~~forth~~ forth to the field of honor, there to win for the flag or, failing,
die the noblest of noble deaths.

over

+ with one impulse the

an organ-burst that shook the building, ~~at all the~~
 house rose, with glowing eyes & beating hearts &
 poured out that tremendous invocation -

"God the all-terrible! Thou who ordainest,
 Thunder thy ~~lightning~~ ^{clarion} & lightning thy sword!"

Then came the "long" prayer. None could remember
 the like of it for passionate pleading & moving & beautiful
 language. The burden of ~~it was~~
 its supplication was, that the ever-merciful & benignant
 Father of us all would watch over our noble young
 soldiers, ^{and} aid, ~~and~~ ^{comfort,} ^{and} encourage ~~them~~ them in
 their patriotic work; bless them, shield them in the
 day of battle & the hour of peril, ^{bear} ~~hold~~ them in His mighty
~~favor,~~ ^{hand,} make them strong & confident, invincible in the

bloody onset,

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~~field~~, help them to crush the foe, grant to them & to their
flag & country imperishable honor & glory —

A stranger entered, & moved ^{with} slow & noiseless
step up the main aisle, his eyes fixed upon the min-
ister, his long body clothed in a white robe that
reached to his feet, his head bare, his hair de-
scending in a black cataract to his shoulders,
his face unnaturally white, white even to
ghastliness. With all eyes ^{following} upon him & wondering,
he made his silent way; without pausing, he
ascended to the preacher's side & stood there, waiting.
With shut lids the preacher, unconscious of
his presence, continued his moving prayer,
& at last finished it with the words, uttered in

fervent appeal, "Bless our arms, grant us the victory, O Lord our God, Father & Protector of our land & flag!"

The stranger touched his arm, motioned him to step aside — which the startled minister did — & took his place. During some moments he surveyed the spell-bound audience with solemn eyes, in which burned an unceasing light; then in a deep voice he said —

"I come from the Throne — bearing a message from ^{Almighty} God!" The words smote the house with a shock; if the stranger perceived it he gave it no attention. "He has heard the prayer of His ^{your shepherd,} servant, & will grant it if such shall be your desire after I, His

messenger, shall have explained to you its import. —
that is to say, its full import. For it is like unto many
of the prayers of men, in that it asks for more than
he who utters it is aware of — except he pause &
think.

"God's servant & yours has prayed his prayer. Has
he paused, & taken thought? Is it one prayer? No,
it is two — one uttered, the other not. Both have reached
the ear of Him who heareth all supplications, the
spoken & the unspoken." ^{Ponder this — Keep it in mind:}
~~Know this:~~ if you would

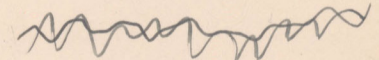
~~pray~~ beseech a blessing upon yourself, beware!
lest ^{without intent} you invoke a curse upon a neighbor
at the same time, ~~without wishing it~~. If you pray
for the blessing of rain upon your crop which needs it,
by that act you are ^{possibly} praying for a curse upon

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Some neighbor's crop which ^{may} ~~does~~ not need ^{rain & can} ~~be~~ injured by it.

"You have heard your servant's prayer - the uttered part of it. I am commissioned of God to put into words the other part of it - that part which ^{the pastor - and} also you in your hearts, fervently pray, ~~silently~~ ^{silently}. And ignorantly & unthinkingly? God grant that it ^{was} so! You heard these words: "Grant us the victory, O Lord our God!" That is sufficient. The whole of the uttered prayer is compacted into these pregnant words.// Elaborations were not necessary. When you have prayed for victory you have prayed for ~~many unmentioned results which are unavoidably embraced~~ results which follow victory - must follow it, cannot help but follow

of
~~it~~ it. Upon the listening spirit of God the Father
fell ^{also} the unspoken part of the prayer. ^{He commandeth me to put it into} ~~these~~
words. Listen!

"O Lord, our Father, our young patriots, idols
of our hearts, go forth to battle ^{near} the ~~front~~ there!
With them ⁱⁿ spirit ^{we} also go for the ^{the sweet peace of our} front, ~~and~~
beloved firesides to smite the foe. 

O. M. In so many words? No;
 why should they? It would not have
 a pleasant sound. They have prayed
 the one thing, & that includes the
 other. It is odd that they always ~~pray~~
 use the one form to pray for
 two things; odd that they don't
 turn it around, sometimes
 for the relief of change.

Y. M. ^{Turn.} Change it around?
 How?

O M. Why, by wording it thus:
 O Lord, ^{our God,} help us to tear their ^{Christian} sol-
 diers to bloody shreds with our
 shells; help us to cover their smirking
 fields with the pale forms of their
^{patriot} dead; help us to drown the thunder
 of the guns with the ~~pleasant~~
~~music of the~~ shrieks of their
 wounded, writhing in pain; help
 us to lay waste their humble
 homes with a hurricane of fire;
 help us to wring the hearts of their

unoffending widows with ~~their~~
 unavailing grief; help us to turn
 them out roofless with their little
 children to wander unfriended
^{the wastes of}
 their desolated land in rags &
 hunger & thirst, sport of the zephy-
 rous winds
 flames of summer or the ~~storms~~
 of winter, broken in spirit, worn with travail,
~~storms of winter, mendicants, beggars,~~
 imploring thee for the refuge of
^{the grave}
~~the grave~~, & denied it — for our sakes
 who adore thee, Lord, blast their
 hopes, blight their lives, protract
 their bitter pilgrimage, make
 heavy their ~~tired~~ steps, water
 their ~~weary~~ way with their
 tears, stain the whiteness with the blood of their wounded feet!
~~We~~ We ask it, in the spirit
 of love, of Him Who is the Source
 of Love, & Who is the ever-faithful
 refuge & friend of all that are
 sore beset & seek ~~this~~ aid ~~the~~
 with humble & contrite hearts.
 Grant our prayer, O Lord, & Thine
 shall be the praise & honor &
 glory, now & ever, Amen."

[After a pause.] "Ye have prayed it; if ye still desire it, speak! — The messenger of the Most High waits."

It was believed, afterwards, that the man was a lunatic, because there was no sense in what he said.

Mark Twain

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