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# “PREPARE!”

AN APPEAL  
TO BRITONS



BY  
G. A. S.



*For Edmund & Lady Walker  
with the compliments of the  
Author.*

A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS CRYING

“PREPARE!”

*[Faint, illegible handwriting]*

"An  
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"A thousand years scarce seem to form a state  
An hour may lay it in the dust"  
Byron

I

Oh! for the eloquence of fervid speech!  
The rhetoric which drives the will to duty,  
The all persuasive force and power to teach,  
The glowing words instinct with strength and beauty,  
Oh! were these mine,—perchance I should be heard,  
Dulled ears would hearken to my cry appealing,  
And torpid hearts to action might be stirred,  
Each deadened sense again aroused to feeling,—  
But, lacking these,—let simple words prevail;  
These armed with Truth,—Conviction can not fail.

II

A vision haunts me of twin seagirt isles,  
The rock-bound throne of England's realm enfolding,  
Upon whose surface verdant beauty smiles,  
Enchanting prospect to the eye beholding,  
A favoured land! by tempered waters laved,  
Beneath whose waves rich harvests are awaiting  
Her hardy sons, who from their youth have braved  
The wrackful storms, nor stayed for their abating,  
But boldly sailed their ploughing keels to sea,  
Inured to danger, fearless, strong and free.

### III

THERE interspersed with mountain, hill and plain,  
Fringed lakes like mirrors 'neath the sun are gleam-  
ing,  
And silvery streams cut luscious meads in twain,  
And restful Peace on flowery banks lies dreaming.  
Homes rise midst sylvan charms and gardens rare,  
Where art and nature in effect combining,  
Adorn each plot with colours bright and fair,  
And deck the cottage porch with roses climbing.  
Only in Thee, sweet Motherland, I ween,  
Can so much loveliness on earth be seen.

IV

THERE mighty cities, growth of Ages past,  
Ere Roman eagles triumphed o'er their fall,  
Now shelter millions in their areas vast,  
Yet scarce can give a resting place for all;  
Hence the unsatisfied ambitious young,  
Leaving the land which erstwhile gave them birth,  
Seek out new homes midst every clime and tongue,  
Till now they form a girdle round the earth,  
And raise the flag their conquering fathers bore  
From England's ports to every ocean's shore.



## V

Oh! Mother England! whom we dearly love,  
Thou brightest jewel in an Empire's crown,  
My feeble voice shall rise to heaven above,  
Nor shall the ruth of Fate my prayer drown,  
That having purged thyself of every wrong,  
Sins of the past—or Duty left undone—  
Thou'lt scorn to trust to mercy from the strong;  
But, having over thyself a victory won  
And trained thy sons to arms—all fear shall cease;  
Prepared for War—thou shalt be true to Peace.

VI

ARISE young manhood of her ripened age!  
Inheritors of Glory, won by sires  
Whose deeds are writ on Fame's enduring page.  
Pursue not wealth alone, nor vain desires.  
Thy great estate by noble deeds was gained,  
By Valour proved, by sacrifice of life,  
And only thus by thee may be maintained,  
When those who envy draw the sword in strife,  
And launch their legions 'gainst thy shores and state.  
Then be prepared—or heedless, meet thy fate!

VII

FREE were you born,—If free you would remain,  
Then serve the state. Such service keeps you free.  
On him who serves not, hurl your just disdain,  
For sloth or coward he must surely be.  
Who leaves his motherland an open prey  
To rapine and dishonour by the foe.  
Such shall be slaves beneath a foreign sway  
And reach the hell pit of all human woe;  
Remorse shall hold them in the fearful gloom  
Which shrouds their own and their lost country's  
doom.

## VIII

WHY are you now content to watch the game  
Which others play, whilst you sit idly by?  
Is Honour dead, and every sense of shame,  
That when you hear your mother's urgent cry  
You turn your backs upon her in her need,—  
Relying on the few who hear her call,—  
Whilst you insensate, ruthless, give no heed  
Nor raise a hand to aid her lest she fall?  
Ungrateful sons! If words like whips could flay,  
Scorn should chastise till witless wills obey.

IX

IN unbelief you pass all dangers by,—  
For ignorant Presumption blinds your sight.  
Truth spurned,—you eagerly accept the lie  
That Heaven will surely aid you in the fight.  
“And should invaders dare their front to show  
“Our manhood shall arise in might and main,  
“And by the force of numbers overthrow  
“And hurl them headlong to the sea again.”  
O monstrous Fiction! Born of sloth and pride,  
Which History and Science both deride!

X

THINK you, when perils come, brave mobs prevail  
'Gainst serried ranks of veterans trained to War?  
What shall your phrenzied efforts then avail  
The onward march of enemies to bar?  
For, though by Courage held, you scorn to fly,  
And, like the grass beneath the scythe, lie low;  
What profit hath your Country when you die  
In having felt and not returned the blow?  
A useless loss when England's sons are few—  
A waste of manhood, and a thing to rue!

XI

"FREE men are we," you answer,—and you sing  
The lofty strain, "Britannia rules the waves"—  
Then swell the chorus till the rafters ring,  
With "Britons never, never shall be slaves"  
But say—What have you *done* to this great end?  
What sacrifice of self for Her dear sake?  
What effort made her tattered force to mend?  
What service given?—that you so freely take  
And live as parasites on other's blood—  
Content to see her die,—so you have food!

XII

DARE you despise the warning of the Chief  
Who led your armies to successful War?  
Will you not hearken to his firm belief  
That for Defence all unprepared you are?  
Shall he in vain amidst his Peers proclaim  
That danger lurks and ready is to spring,  
That you yourselves and rulers are to blame,  
And rude, one day, may be your reckoning!  
Choose now—and act upon the truths he spoke,  
Or bend your necks to wear a foreign yoke!



### XIII

How many thousands idly haunt your streets  
And beg their bread unused to labour's sweat?  
Whilst alien sailors man your trading fleets,  
And reap the wage your idle men should get.  
How many acres left to noxious weeds  
Lie unproductive, whilst the barren soil  
Untilled and hungry for the food it needs,  
And lacking husbandmen for needful toil,  
Makes no return? Yet city slums are filled  
With weakling wastrels almost hunger killed.

#### XIV

You say—"Tis well that all the aged should be

"Freed from life's struggle in declining years—

"Fit subjects these for England's charity

"When destitution's squalid state appears."

This being so—forget not,—Thrift supplies

The needed millions for the thriftless poor;

Not only crumbs from rich men's luxuries,

But hard won loaves from every cottage door.

If this be just, then sure may Justice claim

From manhood, service, ere it win the same!

XV

"WE will not brook compulsion,"—Thus you say—

"For he who heedless of our rights should dare

"Our hard won liberties to take away—

"Let him the People's righteous wrath beware!

"That the attempt hath proved of priceless cost.

"The Royal Stuart found, in bootless strife,

"In armies vanquished, and in banners lost—

"Hurled from a throne, and e'en bereft of life.

"Compulsion shall not drive us, nor the rod;

"The People's voice is here the voice of God!"

XVI

If this be so, my brothers, to the end,  
May Wisdom guide the Nation's counsels here,  
So *rule yourselves* that parlous times may mend,  
And Panic's shame may cease, and senseless Fear.  
Oh! that my cry to every soul might come  
And move you all to Duty freely given,  
To bring Security to every home.  
So shall the people's voice be voice of Heaven.  
Freely you have received, then freely give,  
For only thus in Honour may you live!

XVII

WHEN will you learn that Union is the ring  
Which binds a nation with a belt of brass?—  
That all must serve,—from peasant to the King,—  
Whose labours for his people none surpass?  
For if the Crown by merit could be won,  
By ceaseless effort for the Empire's good,  
By lofty deeds, and duty nobly done,  
Surely by these King Edward highest stood.  
Though Right Divine be waived, he was alone  
The rightful Sovereign to the Empire's throne.

XVIII

SOME will not serve their country—oh! the shame!

Some will not work nor labour for their bread.

Shall these be free, who will not play the game?

Useless in life and carrion when dead!

Must you who labour give these Pariahs food

To roam the land, to beg, perchance to steal?

Shall Discipline not guide them for their good,

And teach them what true citizens should feel?

*Must* these be free, or trained to useful toil

Be made to earn a living from the soil?

XIX

How long shall slumber hold your lid-closed eyes?  
Or being roused from sleep, will you not see  
This canker worm which threatens the destinies  
And saps the life of England's royal tree?  
The glorious oak with branches widely spread,—  
Whose thousand years of growth have made it rise  
Till o'er earth's forests sways its leaf-crowned head,  
And firmly rooted every storm defies!  
Alas! dead branches, stark, already show,  
That rodent Folly saps the roots below.

XX

OR are you deaf, or hearing, will not heed  
The warning cry of those who tell the Truth?  
The men of knowledge who can rightly read  
The signs of decadence in very sooth,  
And point the way which leads to perfect health.  
Are you so fatuous and selfish grown  
That all thoughts merge in the pursuit of wealth,  
And happiness is gauged by what you own?  
When Reason tells—that only to the strong  
Can Riches, in security, belong.



XXI

It needs no voice prophetic,—eye of seer  
To read the fate of Empires grown supine.  
On History's tablets it is written clear—  
And bears the sanction of a law divine.  
Shall Carthage cry in vain to rouse your fears,  
And Rome the Conqueror no warning give,  
That Unpreparedness is drowned in tears,  
And that the Strong alone have right to live?  
The Paradise of Fools lies on the brink,  
And prone to depths of Tartarus must sink.

XXII

O FOOLISH generation and perverse!  
Can no voice move you till one dead arise,  
And the fell future's bloody scenes rehearse  
Which shall befall you vanquished by surprise?  
"Too late! Too late" will be your vain regret  
Should Ruin fall upon a land once free.  
Stir up our hearts and minds lest we forget  
O God! the dues we owe for Liberty.  
Oh England! Mother! of this fate beware  
And teach each son his duty to Prepare!

