

POEMS OF JAMES RYDER RANDALL

THE LONE SENTRY

Previous to the first battle of Manassas, when the troops under Stonewall Jackson had made a forced march, on halting at night they fell on the ground, exhausted and faint. The hour arrived for setting the watch for the night. The officer of the day went to the General's tent and said:

"General, the men are all wearied and there is not one but is asleep. Shall I wake them?"

"No," said the noble Jackson. "Let them sleep, and I will watch the camp tonight."

And all night long he rode around that lonely camp, the one lone sentinel for that brave, but weary, body of Virginia heroes. When glorious morning broke, the soldiers awoke fresh and ready for action, all unconscious of the vigil kept over their slumbers.

'Twas at the dying of the day,
The darkness grew so still
The drowsy pipe of evening birds
Was hushed upon the hill.
Athwart the shadows of the vale
Slumbered the men of might,
And one lone sentry paced his rounds
To watch the camp that night.

THE LONE SENTRY

A grave and solemn man was he,
With deep and somber brow;
The dreamful eyes seemed hoarding up
Some unaccomplished vow.
The wistful glance peered o'er the plain
Beneath the starry light,
And with the murmured name of God
He watched the camp that night.

The future opened unto him
Its grand and awful scroll—
Manassas and the Valley march
Came heaving o'er his soul,
Richmond and Sharpsburg thundered by
With that tremendous fight
That gave him to the angel host
Who watched the camp that night.

We mourn for him who died for us
With one resistless moan,
While up the Valley of the Lord
He marches to the Throne!
He kept the faith of men and saints
Sublime and pure and bright;
He sleeps—and all is well with him
Who watched the camp that night.

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Brothers! The midnight of our Cause
Is shrouded in our fate—
The demon Goths pollute our halls
With fire and lust and hate!
Be strong, be valiant, be assured—
Strike home for Heaven and Right!
The soul of Jackson stalks abroad
And guards the camp tonight.
