

# **THE QUEEN OF AMERICA**

By

**Todd S. Parkhurst**

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Julia urges you to Keep Up To Date.

## THE QUEEN OF AMERICA

TP On a rainy day in 1878, a young woman lost her way on a back road in the state of Maine. She stopped at a farmhouse to inquire. The farmer's wife provided directions and asked the traveler's name. "Laura Howe," answered the traveler. "I know who you are!" The farmer's wife exclaimed. "You're the daughter of the Queen of America!" Almost forgotten now, Julia Ward Howe wrote the words for The Battle Hymn of the Republic during the Civil War. During an event-filled life stretching forty years before and forty years after that war, she was America's foremost abolitionist, feminist -- and its conscious. She was indeed America's Queen.

Julia Ward Howe was born in New York City in 1819. Through her father she descended from two governors of Rhode Island and from Roger Williams. Her grandmother was a descendent of Revolutionary war hero Francis Marion, "The Swamp Fox". Her father was a successful Wall Street venture capitalist, and her mother was a successful writer and poet. An expert in palm reading examined her hand and announced "You are of heroic and military blood; your hand shows it." Near the end of her life in 1910, she acknowledged the revolutions brought about by, in her words, "instant communications across oceans into every continent, travel whose swiftness changes the relations of space and time; the making of disease itself the minister of cure; the harnessing of light to keep for us the record of scenes and faces in the great pageant of time;" and she esteemed "the moral progress of the race; the decline of political and religious enmities, the growth of goodwill and mutual understanding between nations, the waning of popular superstition, the spread of civic ideas, the recognition of the mutual obligations of classes, the advancement of women to dignity in the household and now in the workplaces of labor and capital, and the efficiency of the state and the effectiveness of government."

Young Julia was the baby of the wealthy and privileged Ward banking family--related on one side to the Astors and on the other to the Cutlers, a wealthy, plantation owning family of Charleston South Carolina. A first baby daughter was born to the family in 1817, and was named Julia. Tiny Julia died at the age of two years and one month. Two weeks after that death, on May 27, 1819, another baby daughter was born, and in accordance with the custom of the time, this little Queen became Julia the Second.

Marion, a son, arrived in 1820, and then Louisa arrived. In the spring of 1824, little Annie was born, and three days later her mother died. Her brothers shared their childhoods with Julia the Second and her sisters for a few short years, and then the boys went off to school and work. Julia and her sisters stayed at home and learned the world of women from their "grandmama".

Unlike Julia the First who had been gentle and sweet throughout her short life, Julia the Second was high-strung, temperamental, moody, impulsive, difficult. But she was also highly intelligent, warmhearted, precocious, inquisitive and vivacious.

JWH -- My dear sir, I earnestly desire you desist from offensive appellations. Language of this sort simply burdens the social and civic discourse! In the words of your time and place, it's--like--repressive!

TP Ma'am --ma'am -- excuse me, I'm trying to read a paper here. Who are you?

JWH Allow me to be explicit, sir, though we have not been introduced: I am the subject of your remarks. (Curtsey) I was and remain a progressive activist, and I've marched, and demonstrated, and agitated, and written, and influenced the social and political life of America for 194 years, so get to it, bro, but in a socially and politically correct way. I am here to evaluate and educate if necessary, and if I agitate I will not be moved, and I will be heard!! (Fist up!!)

TP Uh huh... Well, when Julia's father died in 1839, Julia and her two sisters moved in with their elder brother Sam, who had recently married the wealthy Emily Astor, the granddaughter of John Jacob Astor. In this new home, Julia met Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Charles Dickens, Charles Sumner, Margaret Fuller, Dorothea Dix, Oliver Wendell Holmes -- and many other leading lights of Northeast America's Intellectual and Political society. But two years later, Emily Astor and her newborn son both died.

In April 1843, Julia Ward married Samuel Gridley Howe, a decorated hero of the Greek Revolution already known for his reform work for prisoners, and for his efforts in education for the blind. Denominated a Chevalier of Greece, he was thereafter known by family and friends as Chev. That summer Chev and Julia sailed on a wedding trip to Europe accompanied by Julia's younger sister Annie.

Much scholarship has been devoted to the analysis of the couple's well-documented and tumultuous relationship. Julia grew from being a coddled and cared-for, yet independent-minded New York heiress, into a wife and mother living in the remote, isolated quarters of the Perkins' Institute for the blind, in Watertown, Massachusetts (outside Boston), where her husband was engaged with his teaching and philanthropy. Sam established the family in an ancient cottage on several acres of land near the Institute, and made the old home habitable. When the family moved in on a lovely summer's day, wife Julia exclaimed "Oh, this is Green Peace!" And the name stuck, and became famous.

Samuel Gridley Howe was twenty years older than his young wife, and upon their marriage (and against the protestations of Julia's family), he took charge of the income received from her large estate. Julia was not to have charge of her economic affairs until her husband died in 1876. At that point, though, due to a series of bad investments by her husband, her uncle and her brothers, much of the money was gone. Julia found herself a widow with a very meager income. By the end of her own life Julia was a working woman, earning her own money and in control of her life. But at the time of her marriage circumstances were quite different.

Samuel Gridley Howe was a strong willed and autocratic husband. He forbade Julia from working outside the home. His views on the roles of married women required them to forge a career out of 'wifely duties' and motherhood. Julia Ward Howe spent the first several years of her marriage engaged in rearing children and reading philosophy, and in attempting to reconcile herself to her new life just outside Boston. Her letters to her sisters during this period indicate that this was a difficult time for the couple. Julia expresses depression and sorrow, and she describes the struggles of a 19th century woman seeking independence and understanding.

Trouble between Sam and Julia escalated, and in 1852 the couple separated. Julia and her two youngest children stayed with her sister while her two eldest daughters remained in Boston with their father. During this period a family dynamic emerged between the couple and their children that would remain throughout their lives.

Not long after Julia partially reconciled with her husband and returned to the family home, she broke with her husband's wishes about making public her work. "Passion Flowers," a collection

of her poems was published anonymously. However the author's identity soon became known, probably because many of the poems were so personally descriptive. While the poetry itself was not well received, the sentiments presented were sensational. The poems revealed the intimate affairs of a 'real' man and 'real' woman, hinted at infidelity, openly challenged her husband's authority and generally exposed the author in a manner which Boston society found shocking from a woman. Sam was devastated by what he perceived to be his wife's disobedience and betrayal. Their marriage remained strained. Julia retreated into depression, yet it is clear that she had developed a new resolve.

Julia became very involved in reform movements and supported issues such as abolition, women's rights, prison reform and education. She developed close friendships with members of the Boston intellectual elite -- William Ellery Channing, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and Theodore Parker.

Despite his objections to Julia's working outside the home, Sam relied heavily on his wife as editor and writer for his newspaper, "The Commonwealth." This short-lived venture was seen by many as incendiary propaganda for the abolition movement. As the Civil War approached, Sam Howe became heavily involved in the funding of John Brown's revolution.

JWH Sometime in the 1850s, my husband spoke to me of a very remarkable man, of whom he said, I should be sure to hear sooner or later. This man, Dr. Howe said, seemed to intend to devote his life to the redemption of the colored race from slavery, even as Christ had willingly offered his life for the salvation of mankind. It was enjoined upon me that I should not mention to anyone this confidential communication; and to make sure that I should not, I allowed the whole matter to pass out of my thoughts. It may have been a year or more later that Dr. Howe said to me: "Do you remember that man of whom I spoke to you,--the one who wished to be a savior for the Negro race?" I replied in the affirmative. "That man," said the doctor, "will call here this afternoon. You will receive him. His name is John Brown." Thus admonished, I watched for the visitor, and prepared to admit him myself when he should ring at the door. At the expected time I heard the bell ring, and on answering it, beheld a middle-aged, middle-sized man, with hair and beard of amber color, streaked with gray. He looked to be an updated Puritan, forceful, concentrated, and self-contained. We had a brief interview, of which I only

remember my great gratification at meeting one of whom I had heard so good an account. I saw him once again at Dr. Howe's office, and thereafter heard no more of him for some time.

I cannot tell how long after this it was that I took up the "Transcript" newspaper one evening, and read of an attack made by a small body of men on the Arsenal at Harper's Ferry. Dr. Howe presently came in, and I told him what I had just read. "Brown has got to work," he said. I had already arrived at the same conclusion. The rest of the story is a matter of history: the failure of the slaves to support the movement initiated for their emancipation, the brief contest, the inevitable defeat and surrender, the death of the rash, brave man upon the scaffold. All this is known, and need not be repeated here. And speaking of it, my husband assured me that John Brown's plan had not been so impossible of realization as it appeared to have been after its failure. Brown had been led to hope that, upon a certain signal, the slaves from many plantations would come to him in such numbers that he and they would become masters of the situation with little or no bloodshed. Neither he or those who were concerned with him had it at all in mind to stir up the slaves to acts of cruelty and revenge. The plan was simply to combine them in large numbers, and in a position so strong that the question of their freedom would be decided then and there, possibly without even a battle."

TP     At 4:30 AM on April 12, 1861, Confederate forces fired on Fort Sumter in Charleston South Carolina. The Great Crusade was on, the holy war begun. Old John Brown, the Moses of the North, lay "a moldering in his grave," but his "soul" was marching on. The skirmishes that had been fought in the past 10 years to rescue fugitive slaves and Bleeding Kansas, Brown's Raid at Harpers Ferry, and finally his capture and execution had prepared all but the most extreme pacifists for war. It now became obvious that the North was not fighting to free the slaves but to preserve the Union, and even the abolitionists who had earlier preached the new American creed of humanitarianism and democracy began to look upon the war as a crusade to save the nation as a whole from sin and corruption and not simply to bring an end to slavery.

Within weeks after the firing on Fort Sumter, Chev Howe's request to serve his country was honored, though he was far too old to act as a soldier. He was appointed to head the Sanitary Commission of the United States Army, with its headquarters in the Treasury Building in

Washington DC. The Commission was organized to inspect the union troops and facilities for cleanliness and health, and to care for the wounded.

In November of 1861, Julia Ward Howe and her husband traveled to Washington. They met, with others, with President Lincoln. Julia later recalled -- if I may describe this without interruption -- that President Lincoln (make quote marks) "received us in one of the drawing rooms of the White House. I remember the sad expression of Mr. Lincoln's deep blue eyes, the only feature of his face which could be called other than plain. He said to us, apropos of I know not what, "I onct heerd Geawge Sumnah teel a stooree." The unusual pronunciation fixed in my memory this one unimportant sentence."

When they had taken leave of the president, Mr. James Freeman Clarke said of Mr. Lincoln, "we have seen it in his face, hopeless honesty. That is all." He said it as if he felt that it was far from enough. None of that small party knew then how deeply God's wisdom had touched and inspired that devout and patient soul. At the moment, few people praised or trusted him. But on good report, he was listening for the mandate which comes to one alone, bringing with it the decision of a mind convinced and of a conscience resolved. When the right moment came, he issued a proclamation of emancipation to the slaves. He sent his generals into the enemy's country. He lived to welcome them back as victors, to resurrect a civil world with a simple, sincere speech, to fall by the hand of an assassin, to bequeath to his country the most tragic and sacred of her memories."

JWH (Step on line) I distinctly remember that a feeling of discouragement came over me as I drew near the city of Washington at the time of this visit. Shortly after our visit with the president, we were invited to attend a review of troops at some distance from the town. While we were engaged in watching the maneuvers, a sudden movement of the enemy necessitated immediate action. The review was discontinued, and we saw a detachment of soldiers come to the assistance of a small body of our men who were in imminent danger of being surrounded and cut off from retreat. We returned to the city very slowly, of necessity, for troops nearly filled the road. To beguile the rather tedious drive, we sang from time to time snatches of the Army songs so popular at that time, concluding with "John Brown's body lies a-moldering in the ground; his



soul is marching on." Mr. Clarke, my traveling companion, said "Mrs. Howe, why do you not write some good words for that stirring tune?"

Arriving at our rooms in The Willard Hotel, I went to bed that night as usual, and slept, according to my wont, quite soundly. I awoke in the gray of the morning twilight; and as I lay waiting for the dawn, the long lines of the desired poem began to twine themselves in my mind. Having thought out all the stanzas, I said to myself, "I must get up and write these verses down, lest I fall asleep again and forget them." So, with a sudden effort, I sprang out of bed, and found in the dimness an old stump of a pen which I remembered to have used the day before. I scrawled the verses almost without looking at the paper. I had learned to do this when, on previous occasions, attacks of versification have visited me in the night, and I feared to have recourse to a light lest I should wake my baby, who slept near me. I was always obliged to decipher my scrawl before another night should intervene, as it was only legible while the matter was fresh in my mind. At this time, having completed my writing, I returned to bed and fell asleep, saying to myself, "I like this better than most things I have written."

TP The poem, which was soon after published in the Atlantic Monthly, was praised on its appearance, and the poem soon found its way to the army camps. It soon became one of the leading lyrics of the war. In view of its success, one of Julia's friend said, 'Mrs. Howe ought to die now, for she has done the best that she will ever do.' She replied that she was "not of this opinion, feeling myself still full of good days works."

JWH -- hey! Sweet pea! I have photocopies of that Willard Hotel draft of the poem lyrics. We'll just pass these out...

TP Wait...what... you have photocopies of a holographic document you wrote in 1861?

JWH Ohhh, yeeesss... Chet Carlson and I've been likethat (two fingers) ever since he died and came up in 1968.

TP Uuuhh... Who is Chet Carlson?

JWH Ohh, facryinoutloud... Chester Carlson invented the Xerox machine!! Got his first patent just before he died!!! Chee... for a patent attorney, you sure are ignorant and uninformed. Goes with being a political regressive, I suppose....

TP Well...thank you..

The "Battle Hymn of the Republic" brought Julia Ward Howe instant celebrity, and the song made her one of the most famous women in 19th century America. We have a musician here, and the handouts include copies of the revised and current lyrics, so please sing along!

[Play and sing Battle Hymn of the Republic)

JWH -- (whips out cell phone) "Scuse me! S'cuse me! Gotta take this call. It's from Chuckie! (claps cell phone to her ear under her bonnet) Hey, Sweetpea!! How ya hangin? Ce Pasa!! , (To audience:) it's Chuck... Charlie... yes, Charles Dickens.) Chuckie, sweetie, I can't talk now... nope... I'm taking a meeting at that old Chicago Literary Club!! Yes, can you believe it?? Do you remember you and I were going to come out here together in 1876, and go to one of these meetings, but you got sick and died right around then? So you couldn't come? And do you remember that I did come out here a few years later when I was still living? And I went to one of these Chicago Literary Club meetings? And they wouldn't let me in because I was a woman? And so one of the guys hid me behind a curtain and I listened in? ....Boooring!! Well, they admit women now... well, evidently Arthur Abt got past his chauvinism about lighting up cigars in front of women, so not so boring now.(looks around) Ooops, sorry, sorry. Chas, I really gotta get off. kisses!! Keep it up!! (sits)

TP Madam, the custom of the 21st century is to turn one's cell phone OFF during a public address!... After the war, Julia continued her study and her work for social and political reform. Women's Suffrage was the cause she was most involved in and she began to be known for her strong and outspoken views. While Sam objected to Julia's work, he did not always stop her from doing it; and while Julia was prevented from attending to some of the work she wished to engage in, she managed to free herself from her husband's demands and secure her own interests.

Her marriage had now settled into a workable arrangement. Her fame brought her even more autonomy, and her ambitions were beginning to be realized. By the time her husband died in 1876, she had established a career for herself as a preacher, a reformer, a writer and a poet.

In the first journal entry after her husband's death Julia wrote, "Start my new life today," and indeed she did. For the next forty some years she was a strong force. She answered to no one except herself and God. Julia traveled the world promoting Women's Rights, Peace, Prison and Education Reforms as a preacher, lecturer and dignitary. She was seen as a bridge between Society and Reform and she used her celebrity and social status to further her ideology.

She was also co-editor and writer for *The Woman's Journal*, which lobbied for suffrage and human rights. She was instrumental in creating Mother's Day, which she envisioned as a day of solemn council where women from all over the world could meet to discuss the means whereby to achieve world peace. They would also convene as mothers, keeping in mind the duty of protecting their children. She became the first woman elected to the Society of Arts and Letters, and a biography of her, written by her children, won the Pulitzer Prize.

In addition to her reform work, Julia Ward Howe wrote travel books, children's fiction and music. Oscar Wilde paid her a visit in Newport. William Dean Howell regretted not knowing her better. And Samuel Clemens was a cohort and friend. Julia Ward Howe's letters and diaries read like a who's-who of 19th century history, and her ideas are as pertinent today as they were during her own lifetime.

Julia Ward Howe had her faults, and none is more notable than her vanity. She thought very well of herself and was not afraid to voice her less than generous assessments of others. She often revealed her own ignorance and stubbornness, and perhaps this accounts for the solitude she encountered during her early years in Boston. However, over time, she outlived many of her detractors and her status as an American icon became almost mythical. She was and still is "The Queen of America."

JWH -- That last assessment is obviously fascist rant for the most part, but I really have to fly. Mr. President, if you will please adjourn this meeting, I will toss down a small glass, and have

one or two of those party weenies and a bite of cheese; and then I really have to fly. Charlie is waiting, and the sheets are warm. Thanks everybody! Keep Up To Date!!

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