William Blake, â??A War Song to Englishmenâ?•

Description

WILLIAM BLAKE

â??A War Song to Englishmenâ?•

Prepare, prepare, the iron helm of war,
Bring forth the lots, cast in the spacious orb**;**
Thâ?? Angel of Fate turns them with mighty hands,
And casts them out upon the darkenâ??d earth!
Prepare, prepare.

Prepare your hearts for Deathâ??s cold hand! prepare
Your souls for flight, your bodies for the earth!
Prepare your arms for glorious victory!
Prepare your eyes to meet a holy God!
Prepare, prepare.

Whose fatal scroll is that? Methinks â??tis mine!
Why sinks my heart, why faultereth my tongue?
Had I three lives, Iâ??d die in such a cause,
And rise, with ghosts, over the well-fought field.
Prepare, prepare.

The arrows of Almighty God are drawn!
Angels of Death stand in the lowâ??ring heavens!
Thousands of souls must seek the realms of light,
And walk together on the clouds of heaven!
Prepare, prepare.

Soldiers, prepare! Our cause is Heavenâ??s cause**;**
Soldiers, prepare! Be worthy of our cause**:**
Prepare to meet our fathers in the sky**:**
Prepare, O troops, that are to fall to-day!
Prepare, prepare.

Alfred shall smile, and make his harp rejoice**;**
The Norman William, and the learned Clerk,
And Lion Heart, and black-browâ??d Edward, with
His loyal queen shall rise, and welcome us!
Prepare, prepare.

NOTES:

26 *Alfred* Alfred the Great (849-899), King of Wessex, 871-899, â??a Saxon kingdom in southwestern England. He prevented England from falling to the Danesâ?• (*Britannica*).

27 *William* William the Conqueror (c. 1028-1087), the first Norman King of England, ruled as William I from 1066 (*Britannica*); *Clerk* Probably a reference to Lanfranc (c. 1005-1089), â??archbishop of Canterbury and trusted councellor of Williamâ?• (*Britannica*).

28 *Lion Heart* King Richard I (1157-1199) reigned from 1189 to 1199, known for his â??prowess in the Third Crusade (1189-1192â?• (*Britannica*); *Edward* King Edward IV (1442-1483), reigned â??from 1461-1470, and again from April 1471-1483).â?• He was a leading orchestrator of the Wars of the Roses (*Britannica*).

29 *His loyal queen* King Edward IV secretly married Elizabeth Woodville (1437-1492) in 1464. She was a daughter of Lancastrians, which angered the Yorkists during the Wars of the Roses (*Britannica*).

SOURCE: *Poetical Sketches* (London 1783), pp. 58-59. [Google Books]

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