

# Just Before the Battle, Mother

George F. Root

G C D7

6 G C

12 D7 G

18 C D7

24 G C D7

30 G Chorus C

36 D7 G

42 C D7 G

48

1. Just before the battle, mother,  
I am thinking most of you,  
While upon the field we're watching  
With the enemy in view.  
Comrades brave are 'round me lying,  
Filled with thoughts of home and God  
For well they know that on the morrow,  
Some will sleep beneath the sod.

**Chorus:**

Farewell, mother, you may never  
Press me to your heart again,  
But, oh, you'll not forget me, mother,  
If I'm numbered with the slain.

2. Oh, I long to see you, mother,  
And the loving ones at home,  
But I'll never leave our banner,  
Till in honor I can come.  
Tell the traitors all around you  
That their cruel words we know,  
In every battle kill our soldiers  
By the help they give the foe.

**Chorus**

3. Hark! I hear the bugles sounding,  
'Tis the signal for the fight,  
Now, may God protect us, mother,  
As He ever does the right.  
Hear the "Battle-Cry of Freedom,"  
How it swells upon the air,  
Oh, yes, we'll rally 'round the standard,  
Or we'll perish nobly there.

**Chorus**

---

"Just before the Battle, Mother" was a popular song during the Civil War, particularly among troops in the Union Army. It was written and published by Chicago-based George F. Root (1820-1895). Root also wrote some of the best known songs of the Civil War era including "Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!", "The Vacant Chair" and "The Battle Cry of Freedom". It enjoyed great success overseas as well. The British, in fact, believed that the song was about the Crimean War and had been written by an Englishman.

The "traitors" mentioned in the second verse of the song were not Confederates but Northern Copperheads, who wished to see the War end through a negotiated peace and recognition of a new Confederate nation.

Root also indulged in a bit of self-promotion by mentioning his own "The Battle Cry of Freedom" in the song.

"Just before the Battle, Mother" was recorded by Tennessee Ernie Ford on his album **Tennessee Ernie Ford Sings Civil War Songs of the North** which is where I learned it.

Other Civil War era songs in this collection are:

"The Bonnie Blue Flag"

"Dixie"

"The Faded Coat of Blue"

"Goober Peas"

"Lorena"

"Marching Through Georgia"

"Union! Dixie"

"The Vacant Chair"

"The Year of Jubilo"