

DEFENCE OF FORT M'HENRY.

The annexed song was composed under the following circumstances.—A gentleman had left Baltimore, in a flag of truce for the purpose of getting released from the British fleet, a friend of his who had been captured at Marlborough.—He went as far as the mouth of the Patuxent, and was not permitted to return lest the intended attack on Baltimore should be disclosed. He was therefore brought up the Bay to the mouth of the Patuxent, where the flag vessel was kept under the guns of a frigate, and he was compelled to witness the bombardment of Fort M'Henry, which the Admiral had boasted that he would carry in a few hours, and that the city must fall. He watched the flag at the Fort through the whole day with an anxiety that can be better felt than described, until the night prevented him from seeing it. In the night he watched the Bomb Shells, and at early dawn his eye was again greeted by the proudly waving flag of his country.

Tune—ANACREON IN HEAVEN.

O! say can you see by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming,
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watch'd, were so gallantly streaming?
And the Rocket's red glare, the Bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our Flag was still there;
O! say does that star-spangled Banner yet wave,
O'er the Land of the free, and the home of the brave?

On the shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected new shines in the stream,

'Tis the star-spangled banner, O! long may it wave
O'er the Land of the free and the home of the brave.

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion,
A home and a country, shall leave us no more?
Their blood has wash'd out their foul footsteps' pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave,
From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave,
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave,
O'er the Land of the Free, and the Home of the Brave.

O! thus be it ever when freemen shall stand,
Between their lov'd home, and the war's desolation,
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the heav'n rescued land,
Praise the Power that hath made and preserv'd us a nation!
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto—"In God is our Trust;"
And the star-spangled Banner in triumph shall wave,
O'er the Land of the Free, and the Home of the Brave.

The Defence of Fort McHenry

During the War of 1812, the British troops were eager to capture the port city of Baltimore, at the time America's third largest city. The Battle of Baltimore took place from September 12 through September 14, 1814. Unable to capture the city by land, the British tried to attack by sea, where British ships bombarded Fort McHenry for 25 hours. Major George Armistead refused to lower the American flag and surrender. Thus, the British were unsuccessful in capturing Baltimore and sailed away.

To the left is the first known printing of the Francis Scott Key poem, *The Star Spangled Banner*. It was probably printed in Baltimore on September 17, 1814. Set to the tune of a popular English song called, "Anacreon in Heaven," this is the poem that would later become our official National Anthem in 1931.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the poem actually about? What is the story that it tells?
2. Why do you think this song was chosen to be our National Anthem?
3. There are three more verses to the song. Why don't we sing the whole thing?
4. Why is the flag so important to Americans? What does the flag represent to us?
5. There is a very famous photo of firefighters in New York City after September 11 hoisting up the flag that once stood on the World Trade Center. How is the experience of September 11 similar or different to the experience of the Battle of Fort McHenry?