

## WILL PIETY HILL AND MODESTY GULCH WANT ME?

Thomas Starr King was a great orator and a great patriot for the Union during the Civil War. As well as serving as minister of the First Unitarian Church of San Francisco, he traveled throughout California and Oregon speaking and raising funds for the Union. Violence was commonplace in the mining towns, and there were plenty of Confederate sympathizers around. His life was threatened, but to him the cause was just, and he was the man of the hour. And so he went.

His wit never failed him. "Tonight," he wrote from the mining town of Yreka, "I am to speak in a village with the sweet name of Dead Wood; and tomorrow at the very important and cultivated settlement of Rough and Ready. Scott's Bar wants me; Horsetown is after me; Mugginsville bids high; Oro Fino applies with a long petition of names. Mad Mule has not yet sent in a request; nor Piety hill, nor Modesty Gulch; but doubtless they will be heard from in due time. The Union sentiment is strong; but the secessionists are watchful and not in despair."

The power of Starr King's oratory may be gleaned from these excerpts from his speeches. "Rebellion," he wrote, "sins against the Mississippi, it sins against the coast line, it sins against the ballot box, it sins against the oaths of allegiance, it sins against the public and beneficent progress and history and hope—the worth of the laborer, the rights of man. It strikes for barbarism against civilization." And on the long anticipated Emancipation Proclamation: "O, that the President would soon speak that electric sentence, – inspiration to the loyal North, doom to the traitorous aristocracy whose cup of guilt is full. Let him say that it is a war of mass against class, of America against feudalism, of the school-master against the slave-master, of workmen against the barons, of the ballot box against the Barrocoon. This is what the struggle means. Proclaim it so, and what a light breaks through our leaden sky! The ocean wave rolls then with the impetus and weight of an idea."

It is no wonder that a campaign was launched to elect Starr King as a U.S. Senator, and that he one of only two chosen by the state to represent California in the Statuary Hall of the U.S. Capitol in Washington.

Ref.: Charles W. Wendte, *Thomas Starr King: Patriot and Preacher* (Boston, 1921), pp. 180-181, 195.