

RICHMOND IS A HARD ROAD TO TRAVEL

Words by John R. Thompson – 1863. Tune Dan Emmett.

Would you like to hear my song, I'm afraid it's rather long,
Of the famous road to Richmond, double trouble,
Of the half a dozen trips and the half a dozen slips,
And the very latest bursting of the bubble?
It's pretty hard to sing, and, like a rolling ring,
It's a dreadful, knotty puzzle to unravel
Though all the papers swore when we reached Virginia's shore
That Richmond is a hard road to travel

Then haul off your overcoat and roll up your sleeves,
Richmond is a hard road to travel,
Haul off your overcoat and roll up your sleeves,
Richmond is a hard road to travel, I believe.

First McDowell, bright and gay, set forth the shortest way
By Manassas in the pleasant summer weather,
But unfortunately ran on a Stonewall, foolish man,
He had a rocky journey altogether.
He found it rather hard to ride over Beauregard
And Johnston proved a deuce of a bother,
It was clear beyond a doubt that he didn't like the route,
And a second time would have to find another.

Then haul off your overcoat and roll up your sleeves,
Manassas is a hard road to travel,
Manassas gave us fits and Bull Run made us grieve,
And Richmond is a hard road to travel, I believe.

Next came the wooly horse with an overwhelming force
To march down to Richmond by the valley,
But he couldn't find the road, and his onward motion showed
His campaigning was no more than shilly shally.
And "Commissary" Banks with his motley foreign ranks
Kicking up a great noise, fuss and flurry,
Left the whole of his supplies, and with tears in his eyes
From Stonewall ran away in a hurry.

Then haul off your overcoat and roll up your sleeves,
The valley is a hard road to travel,
The valley wouldn't do and we all had to leave,
And Richmond is a hard road to travel, I believe.

Then the great Galena came, with her portholes all aflame,
And the Monitor, that famous naval wonder,
But the guns at Drury's Bluff showed them speedily enough,
The loudest sort of reg'lar Rebel thunder.
The Galena was astonished, the Monitor admonished,
Our patent shot and shells were mocked at,
While the dreadful Naugatuck, by the hardest kind of luck,
Was knocked into a reg'lar cocked hat.

Then haul off your overcoat and roll up your sleeves,
James River is a hard road to travel,
The gunboats gave it up in terror and despair
And Richmond is a hard road to travel, I declare.

Well McClellan followed soon, with both spade and balloon,
To try the peninsular approaches,
But one and all agreed that his best rate of speed
Was no faster than the slowest of slow coaches.
And instead of easy ground at Williamsburg, he found
A Longstreet indeed, and nothing shorter,
And it put him in the dumps that spades wasn't trumps,
And the Hills he couldn't level as he orter.

Then haul off your overcoat and roll up your sleeves
Longstreet is a hard road to travel
Put down the shovel and throw away the spade,
And Richmond is a hard road to travel, I'm afraid.

Then Lincoln said to Pope, you can make the trip I hope,
I will save the universal Yankee nation.
To make sure of no defeat, I'll leave no lines of retreat,
And I'll issue a famous Proclamation.
But that same dreadful Jackson, that fellow laid his whacks on,
Which made him by compulsion a seceder,
And Pope took rapid flight in the middle of the night
'Twas his very last appearance as a leader.

Then haul off your overcoat and roll up your sleeves,
Stonewall is a hard road to travel,
He did his very best but was evidently sold,
And Richmond is a hard road to travel, I am told.

Last of all the brave Burnside, with his pontoon bridges tried
A road no one had thought of before him,
With two hundred thousand men for the Rebels' slaughter pen
And the blessed Union banner waving o'er him.
But he met a fire like hell of canister and shell,
The troops were mowed down with great slaughter
'Twas a dreadful sight to view, that second Waterloo
Why the river ran with more blood than water.

Then haul off your overcoat and roll up your sleeves
Rappahannock is a hard road to travel
Burnside got into a trap which caused him to grieve,
Richmond is a hard road to travel, I believe

We are very much perplexed to know who is the next
To command the next Richmond expedition
But the Capital must blaze, and that in ninety days,
And Jeff and his men be sent to Perdition.
We'll take the cursed town, then we'll burn it down,
We'll plunder and hang up each cursed Rebel,
Though the contraband was right when he said they would fight
Those Rebels they fight like the devil

Then haul off your overcoat and roll up your sleeves,
Richmond is a hard road to travel,
Haul off your overcoat and roll up your sleeves,
Richmond is a hard road to travel, I believe.

Yes, haul off your overcoat and roll up your sleeves,
Richmond is a hard road to travel,
Haul off your overcoat and roll up your sleeves,
Richmond is a hard road to travel, I believe.

As Sung on Judy Cook's CD "Lincoln's America"

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