

The Ride Of Jennie Mcneal - song lyrics

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THE RIDE OF JENNIE McNEAL

By Will Carleton.

Paul Revere was a rider bold-
Well has his valorous deed been told,
Sheridan's ride was a glorious one-
Often it has been dwelt upon,
But why should men do all the deeds
On which the love of a patriot feeds?
Hearken to me, while I reveal
The dashing ride of Jennie McNeal:

On a spot as pretty as might be found
In the dangerous length of the Neutral Ground,
In a cottage, cosy, and all their own,
She and her mother lived alone,
Safe were the two, with their frugal store,
From all of the many who passed their door;
For Jennie's mother was strange to fears,
And Jennie was large for fifteen years;
And while the friends who knew her well
The sweetness of her heart could tell,
A gun that hung on the kitchen wall
Looked solemnly quick to heed her call;
And they who were evil-minded knew
Her nerve was strong, And her aim was true,
So all kind words and acts did deal
To generous, black-eyed Jennie McNeal.

One night, when the sun had crept to bed,
And rain-clouds lingered overhead,
Close after a knock at the outer door,
There entered a dozen dragoons or more.
Their red coats, stained by the muddy road,
That they were British soldiers showed;
The captain his hostess bent to greet,
Saying: "Madam, please give us a bit to eat;
We will pay you well, And, if may be,
This bright-eyed girl for pouring our tea;
Then we must dash ten miles ahead,
To catch a rebel colonel abed.
he visited home, as doth appear;
We will make his pleasure coat him dear."
And they fell on the hasty supper with zeal,
Close-watched the while by Jennie McNeal.

For the gray-haired colonel they hovered near
Had been her true friend, kind and dear;
And oft, in her younger days, had he
Right proudly perched her upon his knee,
And told her stories, many a one,
Concerning the French war, lately done.
She had hunted by his fatherly side,
He had shown her how to fence and ride;
And once had said: "The time may be,
Your skill and courage may stand by me."
So sorrow for him she could but feel,
Brave, grateful-hearted Jennie McNeal.

With never a thought or a moment more,
Bare-headed she slipped from the cottage door,
Ran out where the horses were left to feed,
Unhitched and mounted the captain's steed,
And down the hilly and rock-strewn way
She urged the fiery horse of gray.
Around her slender And cloakless form
Pattered and moaned the ceaseless storm;

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Secure And tight, a gloveless hand
Grasps the reins with stern command;
And full and black her long hair streamed,
Whenever the ragged lightning gleamed.
And on she rushed for the colonel's weal,
Brave, lioness-hearted Jennie McNeal.

Hark! from the hills, a moment mute,
Came a clatter of hoofs in hot pursuit;
And a cry from the foremost trooper said:
"Halt) or your blood be on your head! "
She heeded it not, and not in vain,
She lashed the horse with the bridle-rein,
So into the night the gray horse strode;
his shoes hewed fire from the rocky road;
And the high-born courage that never dies
Flashed from his rider's coal-black eyes.
The pebbles flew from the fearful race,
The rain-drops gasped at her glowing face.
"On, on, brave beast! "with loud appeal,
Cried eager, resolute Jennie McNeal.

"Halt!" once more came the voice of dread;
"Halt! or your blood be on your head!"
Then, no one answering to the calls,
Sped after her a volley of halls.
They passed her in her rapid flight,
They screamed to her left, they screamed to her right;
But, rushing still o'er the slippery track,
Sue sent no token of answer back,
Except a silvery laughter-peal,
Brave, merry-hearted Jennie McNeal.

So on she rushed, at her own good will,
Through wood and valley, o'er plain And hill;
The gray horse did his duty well,
Till all at once he stumbled and fell,
Himself escaping the nets of barm,
But flinging the girl with a broken arm.
Still, undismayed by the numbing pain,
She clung to the horse's bridle-rein,

And gently bidding him to stand,
Petted him with her able band:
Then sprung again to the saddle how
And shouted: "One more trial now!"
As if ashamed of the heedless fall,
He gathered his strength once more for all,
And galloping down a hill-side steep,
Gained on the troopers at every leap:
No more the high-bred steed did reel,
But ran his best for Jennie McNeal.

They were a furlong behind, or more,
When the girl burst through the colonel's door,
Her poor arm helpless, hanging with pain,
And she all drabbled And drenched with rain,
But her cheeks as red as firebrands are,
And her eyes as bright as a blazing star,
And shouted: "Quick! be quick, I say:
They come! they come! Away! away!"
Then sunk on the rude white floor of deal,
Poor, brave, exhausted Jennie McNeal.

The startled colonel sprung, And pressed
The wife and children to his breast,
And turned away from his fireside bright,
And glided into the stormy night;
Then soon And safely made his way
To where the patriot army lay;
But first he bent in the dim firelight,

And kissed the forehead broad And white,
And blessed the girl who had ridden so well,
To keep him out of a prison cell.
The girl roused up at the martial din,
Just as the troopers came rushing in,

And laughed, e'en In the midst of a moan,
Saying, "Good sirs, your bird has flown.
'Tis I who have scared him from his nest;
So deal with me now as you think best."
But the grand young captain bowed, And said:
" Never you hold a moment's dread.
Of womankind I must crown you queen;
So brave a girl I have never seen.
Wear this gold ring as your valor's due,
And when peace comes I will come for you."
But Jennie's face an arch smile wore,
As she said: "There's a lad in Putnam's corps,
Who told me the same, long time ago;
You two would never agree, I know.
I promised my love to be true as steel,"
Said good, sure-hearted Jennie McNeal.