

Poetry



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293 THE BIRTH OF OLD GLORY.

From Painting by Howard.



Concord Hymn

By: Ralph Waldo Emerson

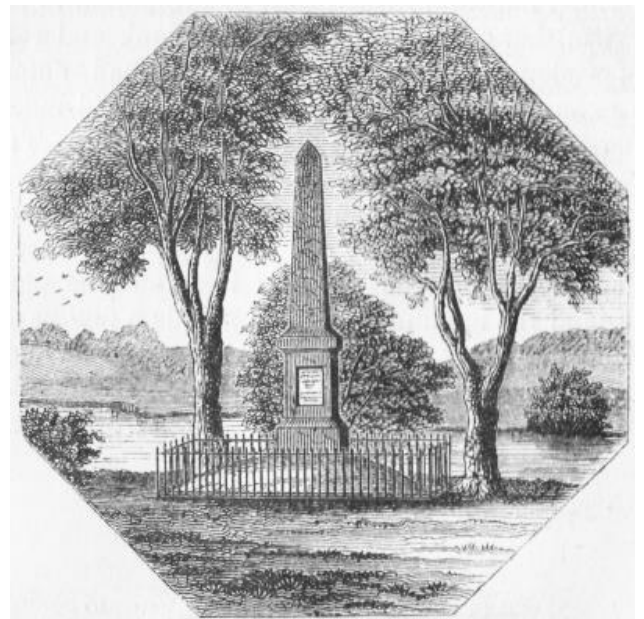
*Sung at the Completion of the Battle Monument,
July 4, 1837*

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world.

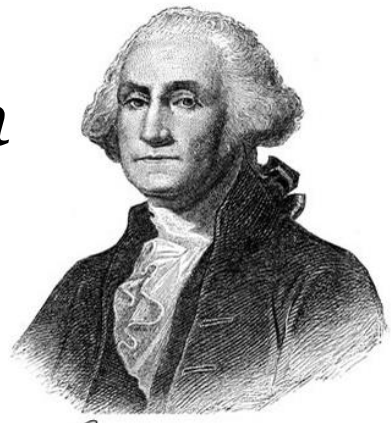
The foe long since in silence slept;
Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;
And Time the ruined bridge has swept
Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream,
We set today a votive stone;
That memory may their deed redeem,
When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Spirit, that made those heroes dare
To die, and leave their children free,
Bid Time and Nature gently spare
The shaft we raise to them and thee.



George Washington



*Sing hey! for bold George Washington,
That jolly British tar,
King George's famous admiral
From Hull to Zanzibar!*

No-waita minute-something's wrong-
George *wished* to sail the foam.
But, when his mother thought, aghast,
Of Georgie shinning up a mast,
Her tears and protests flowed so fast
That George remained at home.

*Sing ho! for grave George Washington,
The staid Virginia squire,
Who farms his fields and hunts his hounds
And aims at nothing higher!*

Stop, stop, it's going wrong again!
George *liked* to live on farms,
But, when the Colonies agreed
They could and should and would be freed,
They called on George to do the deed
And George cried "Shoulder arms!"

*Sing ho! for Emperor Washington,
That hero of renown,
Who freed his land from Britain's rule
To win a golden crown!*

No, no, that's what George *might* have won
But didn't, for he said,
"There's not much point about a king,
They're pretty but they're apt to sting
And, as for crowns-the heavy thing
Would only hurt my head!"

*Sing ho! for our George Washington!
(At last I've got it straight.)*

The first in war, the first in peace,
The godly and the great.
But, when you think about him now,
From here to Valley Forge,
Remember this-he might have been
A highly different specimen,
And, where on earth would we be, then?
I'm glad that George Was George.

-Stephen Vincent Benet

A Tragic Story

By: William Makepeace Thackeray

There lived a sage in days of yore,
And he a handsome pigtail wore;
But wondered much and sorrowed more,
Because it hung behind him.

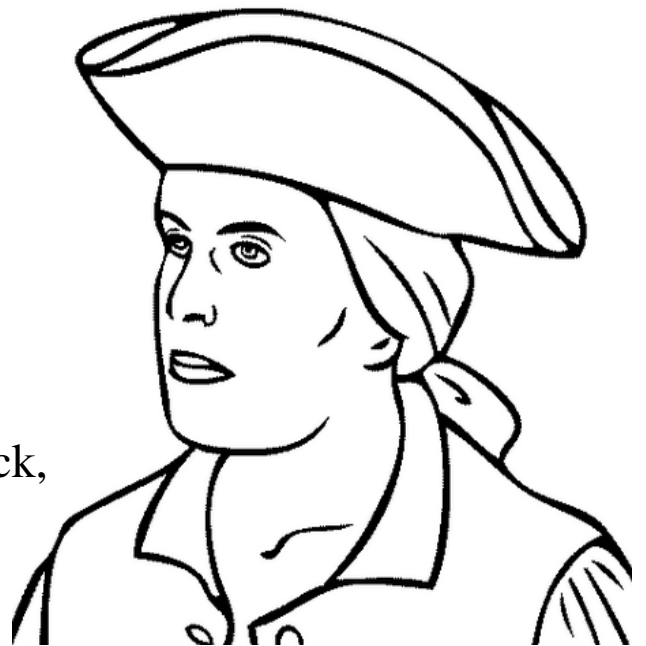
He mused upon this curious case,
And swore he'd change the pigtail's place,
And have it hanging at his face,
Not dangling there behind him.

Says he, "The mystery I've found -
Says he, "The mystery I've found!
I'll turn me round," - he turned him round;
But still it hung behind him.

Then round and round, and out and in,
All day the puzzled sage did spin;
In vain - it mattered not a pin -
The pigtail hung behind him.

And right and left and round about,
And up and down and in and out
He turned; but still the pigtail stout
Hung steadily behind him.

And though his efforts never slack,
And though he twist and twirl, and tack,
Alas! Still faithful to his back,
The pigtail hangs behind him.



A Nation's Strength

By: Ralph Waldo Emerson

What makes a nation's pillars high
And its foundations strong?
What makes it mighty to defy
The foes that round it throng?

It is not gold. Its kingdoms grand
Go down in battle shock;
Its shafts are laid on sinking sand,
Not on abiding rock.

Is it the sword? Ask the red dust
Of empires passed away;
The blood has turned their stones to rust,
Their glory to decay.



And is it pride? Ah, that bright crown
Has seemed to nations sweet;
But God has struck its luster down
In ashes at his feet.

Not gold but only men can make
A people great and strong;
Men who for truth and honor's sake
Stand fast and suffer long.

Brave men who work while others sleep,
Who dare while others fly...
They build a nation's pillars deep
And lift them to the sky.

The Flag



I raised a flag today
A flag with fifty stars
I raised a flag today
A flag with thirteen bars.

I raised a flag today
To honor those who died
I raised a flag today
And then I stood and cried.

I wept and cursed and prayed
And had to wonder "why?"
Angst and anger welled inside me
And then I saw it fly.

The flag snapped briskly in the wind
It unfurled in the sky
Its glory rose above my fears
Its freedom was not denied.

The symbol of our country
The banner of our pride
The flag of these United States
Flew boldly at my side.

I raised a flag today
But the flag, it lifted me.
I raised a flag today
For all the world to see.

I raised a flag today
And upon seeing it, I knew:
Above the ashen gray would rise
The red, the white, and the blue.

Anonymous