AMERICA

A LITANY OF NATIONS

BY

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PREFATORY NOTE

The great migratory movement to the Western World that, beginning in the days of the Norsemen and Christopher Columbus, has not even now reached its climax, furnishes a theme of epic largeness. Nevertheless, the singers and seers of the great Teutonic race that peoples and dominates this hemisphere have never approached the subject from a broadly human point of view. They have sung of "un-guarded gates" without attempting to read in the past the triumph of the future, or observing with awe the miraculous welding of heterogeneous elements into the American nation.

Even now the voice of the Know-nothing is raised against foreign immigration, and his representatives in Congress are at work putting out the light of which Emma Lazarus has so eloquently sung. America could, at this moment, digest the whole population of Europe and still have breathing room. Yet self-acclaimed prophets in the manner of H. G. Wells express their horror at the patient, hard-working multitudes that are clamoring for entrance at our portal.

For this reason it has been thought pertinent to give utterance to the spirit of optimism that has ever been the loadstar of our nation. Still we need the alien blood to swell the life-arteries of our land. Still, like the fathers of this republic, must we regard as enemies of the country's prosperity those who, in the language of the Declaration of Independence, "endeavor to prevent the population of these
States." There is no need for pessimism as to our assimilative power if we read history in the light of logic. . . . Nor should we close the doors of hope that have swung open hospitably to us in the face of desirable aftercomers. A Jewish playwright once wittily remarked: "The Americans are a happy people. . . . Why? . . . They came here before immigration restriction laws were in force." This attitude all liberal Americans should appreciate, whether their fathers have landed at Ellis Island or at Plymouth.

The authors of the poems encompassed in this small collection were, with one exception, born under the star-spangled banner. Their names are for the most part too well known to lovers of poetry to need comment here. They speak inspired and without bias. Their voice is the voice of truth: They are patriots and poets.

G. S. V.
The New Colossus
THE NEW COLOSSUS

This sonnet stands engraved on the Bartholdi Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor.

NOT LIKE THE BRAZEN GIANT OF GREEK FAME,
WITH CONQUERING LIMBS, ASTRIDE FROM LAND TO LAND;
HERE AT OUR SEA-WASHED SUNSET-GATES SHALL STAND
A MIGHTY WOMAN, WITH A TORCH WHOSE FLAME
IS THE IMPRISONED LIGHTNING, AND HER NAME
MOTHER OF EXILES; FROM HER BEACON-HAND
GLOWS WORLD-WIDE WELCOME; HER MILD EYES COMMAND
THE AIR-BRIDGED HARBOR, THAT TWIN CITIES FRAME.

"KEEP ANCIENT LANDS YOUR STORIED POMP," CRIES SHE
WITH SILENT LIPS, "GIVE ME YOUR TIRED, YOUR POOR,
YOUR HUDDLED MASSES YEARNING TO BREATHE FREE,
THE WRETCHED REFUSE OF YOUR TEEMING SHORE;
SEND THESE, THE HOMELESS, TEMPEST-TOSSED TO ME;
I LEAVE MY LAMP BESIDE THE GOLDEN DOOR!"

—EMMA LAZARUS.
The New Colossus in 1907
THE NEW COLOSSUS IN 1907

Behold the myriads at the gate
Who from the Old World saw thy light,
Thy hand is strong to bless or smite
These pilgrims, and thy "yea" is fate.

They as our fathers come from far;
From shores where blazes Dante's sun,
And from the bleak dominion
Where fell the lashes of the Czar.

Their strong untiring arms have hewn
A path o'er Alpine mountain crest,
Them England nurtured at her breast,
And over them rose Erin's moon.

Yet though their necks for menial toil
Are bent to build our empire, they
Shall bear within no distant day
Strong sons and daughters of this soil.

But now we need their labor; mute
Our engines lie in barren rest,
And in our gardens south and west
Ungarnered rots the mellow fruit

And the white cotton. We are shorn
Of many gifts of priceless worth;
The yellow gold cries from the earth
And from our fields the yellow corn.

They shall reap wealth from ore and coal
Such as no Eastern king beheld,
And build the iron roads that weld
Our nation in one splendid whole.
Not only bent on distant quest
    In tropic skies, thou shalt at length
    Bethink thee of thy native strength,
Young Titan of the boundless West!

Within the compass God has set,
    Between these shores from main to main,
    Thou hast new victories to gain,
And thou hast worlds to conquer yet!

—George Sylvester Viereck.
The Litany of Nations
THE ENGLISH IN AMERICA

These are the sons of them who gave us speech,
Who sounded on our hills the clarion
Of freedom: who in deathless years tolled on
To make a people. Theirs it was to teach
New-risen lands beyond the ultimate reach
Of antique wisdom how the soul is won,
And now, the immortal labor nobly done,
Shall at our churlish gates their sons beseech?

Nay, as we reverence ourselves, thrust wide
These gates, lest it be said to shame that we
Forget the gifts of England and her name;
Mother of many nations that abide
Thy sons unquestioned must our brethren be,
As ours the glory of thy sacred fame!

—Ludwig Lewisohn.
THE GERMANS IN AMERICA

Here to the home where past and future meet
By myriads you come, your wistful hearts
Aflame with hope. You traffic in the marts,
And with the very mortar of the street
You mix your dreams. Your fields of waving wheat
Banner the West; your tireless mining starts
The fires of nations, while the new world's arts
Owe to the land of Faust and Marguerite

Treasures of virile beauty. Brain and brawn,
O Rhineland! you have giv'n us, and profound
Are your seed-thoughts sown in our mental ground.
Your son it was who hailed the social dawn;
Your sons they were whose harmonies have drawn
Our future music from the caves of sound.

—Elsa Barker.
THE IRISH IN AMERICA

Oh, there's more of us a-comin', from Donegal and Clare,
From Meath and Tipperary—ye will want us over there!
We have heard there's work a-plenty just waitin' to begin,
An' ye've a big wide countrhy—ye've the room to take us in.

Ye will take no dirty loafers? Well, 'tis not that kind we are.
'Tis to make an honest livin' that we go from home so far.
We are men that's used to labor at the forge and on the farm,
And iv'ry mother's son of us has got a good strong arm.

Ye have seen our like before us, ye have seen the work we've done—
'Tis all across America from rise to set of sun.
An' if the countrhy needs us to defend its threatened right,
The men that followed Sheridan, they know if we can fight.

Ye have millions yet of acres, where the rint won't break our heart,
An' we're not too proud for diggin' nor for drivin' of a cart.
So if ye like the taste ye've had of thim that's of our kin,
Ye will set the door wide open, ye will surely take us in!

—A. I. du Pont Coleman.
THE JEWS IN AMERICA

Singer of hymns, by Sinai who adored
  The Fire, the Trumpet, the Eternal Law;
  Builder of temples, from Zion's hill who saw
Dawn smite the Heathen with Jehovah's sword;
Exiled of nations, long for no reward
  Keeping thy Sabbaths and thy Feasts with awe;
  Victor of sorrows, on a bed of straw,
Come unto us, O Israel of the Lord!

Here, past the Gentile seas, the stars by name
  Shine with the ages' welcome; here anew
  The rainbow towers; here the mountains wait:
Come! and then fill us with thy holy flame:—
  We have a word to speak, a work to do,
  If once, like thine, our soul be consecrate!

—William Ellery Leonard.
THE GIFT OF HOLLAND

Dedicated to GEORGE V. BROWER, Esq.

Not to the fabled East her wise men fared,
Not to the East, but ever to the West.
For they had seen a strange and brighter star,
That beckoned to a far Nativity,—
To One foretold, beyond the sunset born,
For saving of the nations. On they steered,
Thrilling with expectation, on and on,
Over the desert ocean, day on day,
And, night on night, over the chartless deep,
And stood at last enchanted: in their ken
Beautiful visions, like fair isles of dream
In seas of sleeping music. And they sang,
Lifting immaculate devotions. Yea,
With eager voices and divining eyes
They worshipped her, and named her Wonderful,
That naked laughter, born of virgin skies,
Cradled in charm, the rainbow’s only child,
Of whom wild rumors ran upon the wind,
America, the saviour of the sad!

Not to the ancient East her wise men fared,
But to the young, the undominationed West.
Manhattan was their holy Bethlehem!
And faith was on their faces as they sailed
To find that perilous Wonder in the sea.
And when, wave-wearied, after stormy ways,
They glimpsed the glory of her aureole
They knelt, adoring; round that cradle long
Chanting their creed of dear democracy.
Wild was that forest-manger, wild that shore,
Where, rocked by breezes, wrapt in summer, lay
That Babe of Battle, beautiful of brow,
Guessing at stars. And to her infant hands,
Her happy hands of innocent appeal,
Those Norland lions nurtured of the sea,
Those bold sea-lions bearded with the foam,
Gave their great hearts and their great riches gave
And gave the proud protection of their arms.

All gifts of beauty to the West she bore,
Immortal Holland, mother of the free,
And brought the jewels of her Wisdom, brought
Her pearls of truth, her rubies of renown,
With precious frankincense of goodly names:
Orange, Erasmus, Grotius, Barneveldt,
Rembrandt, à Kempis and Spinoza: these
And the clear vision of that glorious seer,
Jubilant Vondel, to our land she bore,
And freedom's famed three-colored gonfalon
And weapons for just battle and just peace
And love's rare tolerance and equity
And all sweet sanctities of hearth and home.
Such fare she brought and called the world to feast
And broke with all the bread of brotherhood.

Such was thy birth, my country, such thy boon,
O, happy nation, nursed on Holland's breast!
Launcher of colonies, she bred thy thews
And bred thy holy daring. From her heart
That pulse of freedom leaping in thy veins!
For they were free, who made thee free, and knew
No dread command, no code Draconian,
And not to fear. But born to overcome,
Facing the future, founded on a rock
Thy proud and magical supremacy.
For liberty they left the chainèd past,
Left kings behind and the red curse of kings,
First of that eagle-brood American
Whose goal is God!—first of that golden line
Whence Lincoln sprang and peerless Washington!

And thou, Manhattan, House of many mansions,
Metropolis of triumphs, Queen of peace,
Be thou not proud; but mild and pitiful
Search out the darkness, send into the night
The million-saving mission of thine eyes.
Oh! be not proud, be tender: open wide
Thy yearning arms, thine everlasting gates—
Wide as the love of God! Close to thy breast
Clasp the chaste gift of Holland; cherish deep
That granite will and stern integrity,
And verily thou shalt have riches, be
Transfigured into grandeur, to the world
Its Holy City, bountiful of grace:
The Mother of the long millenniums,
A lordly Benediction, lifting up
The fallen to the stature of a star!
The lost shall praise thee and the found shall praise,
And men shall call thee Blessèd evermore.

—Leonard van Noppen,
THE FRENCH IN AMERICA

Serene, majestic at the gate
Where patient thousands hourly wait
The word that bids them enter, see
Where France has reared us Liberty!
Yet not the sculptured form alone,
But Freedom's living self has grown
By Frenchmen's hands and Frenchmen's swords.
What churl would loose the gracious cords
Inextricably intertwined
About the memory of their kind,
Who sprang, as in a new Crusade,
To lend the young republic aid?
What, turn away the waiting file
Quick-witted, frugal, versatile,
From yon fair city on the Seine,
From sunny meadows of Touraine,
Who come their lot with ours to cast?
Then close the record of the past!
Let no man speak for very shame
What was the consecrated name
Of young, chivalric Lafayette.
Let none remind us of our debt:
And, by our wondrous leader's side,
To share with him in Yorktown's pride,
Henceforth no heedless painter show
The gallant form of Rochambeau!

—A. I. du Pont Coleman.
THE SLAV IN AMERICA
(The Flame and the Star.)

1.
Tho' Famine strewed the heath with bones,
Tho' Kings took from ye flag and name,
Tho' Slaughter fouled your altar stones,
Yet still within ye burns the flame.
Tho' mist-wind blows o'er Volga's snows
Round the veiled spectre of the Czar,
Tho' clouds be gray o'er steppes and snows,
Beyond the seas ye mark the star.

2.
I hear a freeman's ode begun,
By Lowell wrought with Lermontoff;
And Tolstoi tells with Emerson
A vision that men thought far off;
And, vanquished one and victor one,
Shall Kosciusko's carven name
Be read where men read Washington
In our Hall of Fame.

3.
Methinks that well the fires they meet
(The flame of fire, the star of fire)—
Thus shall be born, for men to greet,
A beauty of a world's desire—
A sound of deeper violins,
A wider brotherhood of man,
A peace that every conflict wins,
A joy, a strength American.

—W. E. Leonard.
THE RETURN OF THE NORSEMEN

A dragon prow came over the rim,
With forty sweating galley-slaves to drag the bending blades.
Forty miles before them the land lay dim.
“Oh, we are sick of sailing and the bloody path of raids;
Beach her where the sand is soft and leave us to our maids.”

So said the men of Ericson,
While chains clanked loud beneath their feet and broad backs bent and rose:
“Leave us to our roof-trees and the peace we’ve won;
Perchance among those clouded hills we still may bend our bows,
With the black moose of the hemlocks and the gray wolves for our foes.”

Oh, foolish sons of war were they.
With axe and plow between their hands the heavy years crawled slow.
They hewed another dragon and sailed one day
Where hot blood ran the redder and dyed a whiter snow,—
And signal-smokes from hill to hill rose up to see them go.

Then Spain’s cruel hand came out of the East;
And the Fleur-de-lys grew wild and white in a blacker, richer loam;
And a thousand dripping scalps graced the red-man’s feast.
Till ominous above the rim, white clouds above the foam,
The Saxon ships came crowding in to find another home.
To-day the battle-flags are furled.
Let Saxons keep their rugged land—for who can say them nay?
But their battered gates stand open to the whole wide world.
Then, Norsemen, build your dragon-ships; where once they would not stay
Bury them deep among the sands, and sail no more away.

—Lloyd Roberts.
SONG OF THE ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS

From Rome are we and Genoa
    And the warm southern vine-lands, too,
Naples and all Italla
Remember us in dreams—but Ah!
    Our hearts have chosen you.

Great unknown country over-seas,
    America! Will you deny
Our prayer? or raise us from our knees
With leave to labor as the bees
    All day without a sigh?

Italia's sons no toils dismay:
    We raised the Colosseum's wall,
We laid the peerless Appian way
Never to crumble till the day
    When all old things shall fall.

We are Colombo's kindred, we
    Follow the star that called him far
To find thy cradle in the sea,
Light of the world, Land of the free!
    Unbar thy doors, unbar!

—Elsa Barker.
ROMAIOS

'Twas in the crowded avenue; o'erhead
Thundered the trains; below the pavement shook
With quivering cables. Everywhere the crush
Of horses, wheels and men eddied and swirled.
A river of humanity swept by
With faces hard as ice. I stopped beside
A little push-cart filled with Southern fruits
And dickered with the huckster, "Three for five?"
"No, two," in broken English. There we stood—
He shabby, stooping, wolfish, all intent
Upon a penny, I to him no more
Than just another stranger from the throng
Trampling each other in this fierce New World.

Then looking in his sordid eyes I said,
Using the tongue of Plato and of Paul,
"Art thou a Roman?" Never magic word
Of wizard or enchanter wrought more sure.
The man erect, transfigured, eyes on fire,
Lips parted, breath drawn fast, thrust in my hands
His double handful. Huckster? No, a king!
"Could I speak Roman? Did I share it all—
The memories, the pride, the grief, the hope?"
Then welcome to the best of all he had.

Wouldst know, self-glorified American,
The name that sums the grandest heritage
Race ever owned? 'Tis "Roman" spoke in Greek:
ROMAIOS they call it. Constantine the Great
Fixed with new capital where East meets West,
Brought Rome's imperial law, the Cross of Christ,
The art and tongue of Greece—the whole world's best;
And in that fairest spot new Christian Rome
Reigned queen a thousand years, until the Turk
Fell like a blight, and darkness shrouded all.
But still that name lives in the exile's dreams,
All glories, Hebrew, Christian, Roman, Greek,
Blend in that one unequalled ROMAIOS.
Abraham, Moses, Homer, Phidas,
Caesar, Paul, Chrysostom, Justinian,
Bozzaris, Ypsilanti, Byron, all
Are his. O blessed America, these men
That come in rags bring jewels in their hearts
To shine resplendent in thy future's crown!

—W. G. Ballantine.
The Future in America
THE FUTURE IN AMERICA

(To H. G. Wells.)

I stood on Ellis Island, and mine eyes
Dwelled on the fleet that in the harbor lies
Whereof each ship bears in its Titan womb
Seed of prodigious futures. "Is there room,"
I cried aghast, "and is it wise that we
Should teach the alien bondsman to be free,
To speak the tongue of Shakespeare and of him
Who heard the pinions of the Cherubim
Flap with insurgent thunder? These men share
Not in the annals of our past nor care."
Then from the sea of faces eager-eyed
Surging from Old World havens with the tide,
—By never a dike of stern restriction bound—
Yea, from this Babel of confusing sound,
Rose in my sight as by some magic law
A wondrous vision. With mine eyes I saw
The elder nations. In her arms a gift
Each held unto our children; brawn and thrift,
Vine, songbirds, thought, their learning's splendid store,
Music, and God's and poets' sacred lore.
And through the veil of ages I saw one
Clad with the glory of the rising sun,
Strong-limbed and lithe,—with stars for eyes wherein
Shone such sweet light as never I had seen
Reflected from the heavens—decked with grace,
With every bounty laden. Face to face
We stood; then spake the vision: "I am he
Who shall be. Marking, know of me:
Crowned with the gift each alien nation brings,
Your future sons will be a race of kings."

—George Sylvester Viereck.