



AT THE SUMMIT OF THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT



BY ARTHUR SELWYN

Look North! A white-clad city fills
This valley to its sloping hills;
Here gleams the modest house of white,
The statesman's longed-for, dizzy height.
Beyond, a pledge of love to one
Who in two lands was Freedom's son—
The holder of an endless debt—
Our nation's brother, Lafayette.
But yonder lines of costly homes
And bristling spires and swelling domes,
And far away from the spreading farms
Where thrift displays substantial charms,
And hamlets creeping out of sight,
And cities full of wealth and might,
Must own the fatherhood of him
Whose glory Time can never dim.
All who can reckon Freedom's worth
Would write across this whole broad earth,
With pen dipped in the golden sun,
The magic name of Washington!
If we can keep the rules he gave
This land he more than fought to save,
Our future fame will glisten forth
Grand as the winter-lighted North!

Look South!—where, in its coat of gray,
The broad Potomac creeps away,
And seeks the blue of distant skies;
But pauses where the great chief lies
Within his humble, hallowed tomb,
Amid Mount Vernon's deathless bloom.
As glides this stream, the great course, past thee,
Firt to the bay, and then the sea,
So flowed they life to rural rest,
Ere thou wast heaven's eternal guest.
Oh strong, high man! Whose patriot heart
Climbed from all common greeds apart;
To whom men's selfish ways were small,
As from this tower, serenely tall
(built that all years thy fame may know),
Men look while creeping there below!
How weak was power to thy clear gaze,
Builder of nations joined in one,
Kindler of splendors still to blaze,
Finder of glories just begun!
Live on, great sleeper! As this stone,
Highest from earth than man has known,
So shall be ranked thy solid worth,
Highest of heroes on the earth!
Happy, secure, and cherished name,
Love is the pillar of thy fame;
Thy praise comes from each patriot's mouth,
Warm as the sunbeams of the South!

Look east! The Nation's Castle walls
Spread out in massive beauty now;
Their lofty dome and pictured halls
In homage to this summit bow.
Oh, well that from these placid lands
The marble spire obeisance win;
But for the one for whom it stands,
This chieftain-town had never been!
Yon plot, so full of brain and will,
Had staid a bleak and lonely hill!
If at five thousand dizzy feet
This shaft the whirling clouds could meet,
Until our gaze for miles, might be,
To the uncrowned by royal sea,
'Twere not too much honor then,
To grant our crownless king of men.
You who the Nation's laws indite,
Look to this summit's honest white,
Where, throned on walls that must endure,
Pure fame entreats you to be pure;
Until our glory be increased,
Like sunbeams from the dazzling East!

Look West! There lie the hilly fields
Where brothers fought through days of dread,
Where mothers brooded o'er their dead,
And soil the thrift of carnage yields;
Where cannon roared and bullets sung,
Till every hillock had a tongue.
O Nation being and to be,
That silent blood speaks loud to thee!
God grant, if e'er our guns again
Must tear the quivering flesh of men,
The leaden hail-storm may be pressed
Against some foul invader's breast—
Against some alien tribe and zone—
And not, as then, to kill our own!
May all the fruitful strives of peace
The thrilling bonds of love increase;
May yonder orb, in his quick change
From mountain range to mountain range,
From valley to rich valley o'er,
From river shore to river shore,
From wave to wave—may yonder sun
One Nation count, and only one;
Until he dips his fiery crest
Into the ocean of the West!

Look up! The phantom clouds of gray—
Grim ghosts of storm—have passed away;
The veiling of the sky is done,
And downward shines the welcome sun.
He kindles grand and peaceful fires
Upon the city's domes and spires;
He sends his strong magnetic flow
Through yonder moving throngs below.
Thou art, O sky serene and clear,
A symbol of our country here!
What land in all this world of pain,
This earth, where millions toil in vain,
Where famine, pestilence, and strife
Play careless games with human life,
Where Superstition clouds the soul,
And heartless brains sad hearts control—
What country, framed in frost of flowers,
Can see so clear a sky as ours?
Peace throws her mantle, broad and free,
O'er all who peaceable will be;
Plenty her sheltering flag doth wave
O'er those who will but toil and save;
Enlightenment each day shall rise
For all who do not cloud their eyes;
While Liberty from every race
Has made this land a refuge-place.
Let our deep thanks forever fly
Far as the reaches of the sky!

