

“Cantata”

Monroe, Harriet, 1860-1936

Sung at the dedication of the Chicago Auditorium, December 9, 1889.

Hail to thee, fair Chicago! On thy brow
 America, thy mother, lays a crown,
Bravest among her daughters brave art thou,
 Most strong of all her heirs of high renown.
Thine elder sisters from the peopled East,
 Throned by the surging sea,
Lift foaming cups to pledge thy crownal feast,
 Calling, All hail! to thee.
Down in the mellow regions where time dozes,
 Rocked by soft winds, warmed by the lazy sun,
Sweet southern cities gather wealth of roses
 To wreath for thee the garlands thou hast won.
And the young West rings out a glad acclaim;
 Children new-born to fame,
Bold sister cities, generous and free,
 Call hail to thee!
From misty rivers, from the lofty plains
 Rimmed round with hoary guardians grim and old,
From the rich realm beyond, where summer reigns,
 And the warm ocean sleeps in robes of gold,
From far and near the choral praises ring —
The wise world wakes, thy festal song to sing.

The ages trailed enwrap in dreams
 Along the tideless sea.
The marsh-grass waved in sluggish streams,
 The snipe piped bold and free.
The prairies lay beflowered and gay,
 And time knew naught of thee.

And feather-crested chieftains met
 Upon thy sandy shore,
Before their lurid sun had set
 Afar, to rise no more.
They could not hear Fate's liegemen near,
 Nor see the flag they bore.

But the soul of the river lay pondering there
Of the wonderful days to be:
My bosom the wealth of the world shall bear
When the white ships rest with me,
When the spirit of steam and the spirit of air
Shall waft me a race like the sunlight fair,
As strong as hope
Fate's doors to ope
To realms that are rich for the souls that dare.

And the sweet blue lake that doth dream of the sky,
Or sing of the sea when the surge rolls high,
Came crested with foam to the shell-strewn strand,
And murmured: I hear thee, O River!
My waters shall waft to land
A race for whom God the Giver
Hath opened his opulent hand.
And a fabric of purple and gold and blue,
From the rays of the morning spun,
For the robes of his joy in this kingdom new
We have woven — I and the sun.

And weary nations heard
As they dreamed on the breast of time,
Till the yearning world was stirred
With the thrill of a birth sublime.
And the spirits that wait with God —
Freedom and Faith and Power —
Looked down in men's eyes and trod
The earth, as in earth's first hour.
And they wrought for the world and sang
Till the morn with music rang:

A mighty nation shall arise,
Whose power shall perish never;
A valiant people, free and wise,
The chains of hate shall sever.
A city brave and fair
Their flag of hope shall bear.
In liberty and love,
Like hosts of God above,
Glad states shall march forever.

A rush of leathern wings
From shadowed depths of shame
Rose thunderous; and evil things,
Whose brows were wheeled with flame,
Came hissing: Nay — beware!
Ye speed on to despair.

And one said: I am War!
I will cleave your land in twain,
And the star-strewn blue of that banner new
Shall be wet with a crimson rain.

Fierce Fire hissed: Would you rear
A city of delight?
Lo! I will wander near
And waste it in a night I

And Anarchy upreared
A visage haggard, bleared,
That screeched: Your flag is a brilliant rag!
Will it shine so fair
When its stripes I tear,
And its stars in the mire I drag?

And Greed sneered: Fold on fold
I will dim its hues with gold.
The light of hope shall shine no more
Beyond the night, above the roar
That darkens, maddens all the world,
When bound with gold that flag lies furled.

And all hell's brood shrieked: No I
Love dies, but hate shall grow.

But God's bright host said: Peace!
And snows of silence fell.
Fear not! these woes shall cease —
He doeth all things well.
The morning light shall purge away each stain
That flag must bear.
Like April, smiling after every rain
More pure and fair,
The land shall wake to rapture from her pain,
Of love aware.

And when the banner city wounded falls,
 When ashes fill her halls,
Her heart shall fail not, for the suppliant years
 Shall bid her dry her tears
And come to them. New glory in her eyes,
New courage in her soul, she shall arise.

City of freedom! city of our love!
 The golden harvests of the world are thine.
Green fields around thee, fields of blue above,
 Glad in exultant youth, in power divine,
Thou smilest on the marge of shining seas,
 Pure as their robes of light.
Strange glories trail across with every breeze —
 Slow pomp of day and night.
Enthroned in majesty, thou claimest now
 Thine heritage of beauty— robes impearled,
Mantles of purple, jewels for thy brow,
 Splendors new-wrought to rouse the aging world.
Thine they shall be. Here to thy hall of state —
 The temple of our sacred liberty,
Where young Democracy, proud priest of fate,
 Shall shout afar full many a brave decree —
Hither comes trooping a resplendent train
 Bedecked with flowers;
The loving arts shall ease thy breast of pain
 Long golden hours.

New thoughts are thine; new visions rise
 Before thy clear prophetic eyes.
On to the future, where the light
 Streams over fields of glory,
Thy soul doth take its morning flight
 From slumberous ages hoary.
Out of the dark an eagle to the sun
Speeds on. Awake! 'T is day! The night is done.

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