

The Runner

Behind him on the road some toil, but few
Can match his pace. The clam'ring crowd grows shrill
As he, his burden light, ascends the hill;
They strew palm fronds upon the avenue.
The others when they pass run this same road,
But nature's will has not ordained their fate
To lead them yet to wreathes; they plod and wait
Until this power will deign to lift their load.
He forces on, but slower, now his back
Is bent, his heart grown weary with new pounds,
While to his throbbing ears the cadence sounds
Of steady steps, familiar with their pack.
He crosses last and pleads his load was great—
But all were judged and all had equal weight.

—Nancy Hendricks.

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The Modern Atlas

Atlas am I; the earth rests on my back
And makes so lame my speech and slow my walk;
I groan for scars that granite mountains scratch.
Depressed by treaty, jarred by jingo talk,
I fast for common pangs; my toes are cold;
All men remark this stooping frame and jeer;

The stars remain unseen when mists enfold,
And alien laugh gives way to friendly tear.
But wait; I hurl away the heavy earth;
I was not acting when its play was cast;
For bowing shoulders there is no applause—
I will not hold it up and doubt its worth:
In vain a Grecian urn reveals the past;
We see effects and cannot find a cause.

—Ina Marshall.

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