

POEMS OF
AMERICAN PATRIOTISM

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BOSTON

SICUT PATRIBUS, SIT DEUS NOBIS RALPH WALDO EMERSON

[sidenote: Dec. 16, 1773] *This poem was read in Faneuil Hall, on the Centennial Anniversary of the "Boston Tea-Party," at which a band of men disguised as Indians had quietly emptied into the sea the taxed tea-chests of three British ships.*

The rocky nook with hill-tops three
Looked eastward from the farms,
And twice each day the flowing sea
Took Boston in its arms;
The men of yore were stout and poor,
And sailed for bread to every shore.

And where they went on trade intent
They did what freemen can,
Their dauntless ways did all men praise,
The merchant was a man.
The world was made for honest trade,—
To plant and eat be none afraid.

The waves that rocked them on the deep
To them their secret told;
Said the winds that sung the lads to sleep,
"Like us be free and bold!"
The honest waves refuse to slaves
The empire of the ocean caves.

Old Europe groans with palaces,
Has lords enough and more;—
We plant and build by foaming seas
A city of the poor;—
For day by day could Boston Bay
Their honest labor overpay.

We grant no dukedoms to the few,
We hold like rights and shall;—
Equal on Sunday in the pew,
On Monday in the mall.
For what avail the plough or sail,
Or land or life, if freedom fail?

The noble craftsmen we promote,
Disown the knave and fool;
Each honest man shall have his vote,
Each child shall have his school.
A union then of honest men,
Or union nevermore again.

The wild rose and the barberry thorn
Hung out their summer pride
Where now on heated pavements worn
The feet of millions stride.

Fair rose the planted hills behind
The good town on the bay,
And where the western hills declined
The prairie stretched away.

What care though rival cities soar
Along the stormy coast:

Penn's town, New York, and Baltimore,
If Boston knew the most!

They laughed to know the world so wide;
The mountains said: "Good-day!
We greet you well, you Saxon men,
Up with your towns and stay!"
The world was made for honest trade,—
To plant and eat be none afraid.

"For you," they said, "no barriers be,
For you no sluggard rest;
Each street leads downward to the sea,
Or landward to the West."

O happy town beside the sea,
Whose roads lead everywhere to all;
Than thine no deeper moat can be,
No stouter fence, no steeper wall!

Bad news from George on the English throne:
"You are thriving well," said he;
"Now by these presents be it known,
You shall pay us a tax on tea;
'T is very small,—no load at all,—
Honor enough that we send the call."

"Not so," said Boston, "good my lord,
We pay your governors here
Abundant for their bed and board,
Six thousand pounds a year.
(Your highness knows our homely word,)
Millions for self-government,

But for tribute never a cent."

The cargo came! and who could blame
If *Indians* seized the tea,
And, chest by chest, let down the same
Into the laughing sea?

For what avail the plough or sail
Or land or life, if freedom fail?

The townsmen braved the English king,
Found friendship in the French,
And Honor joined the patriot ring
Low on their wooden bench.

O bounteous seas that never fail!
O day remembered yet!
O happy port that spied the sail
Which wafted Lafayette!
Pole-star of light in Europe's night,
That never faltered from the right.

Kings shook with fear, old empires crave
The secret force to find
Which fired the little State to save
The rights of all mankind.

But right is might through all the world;
Province to province faithful clung,
Through good and ill the war-bolt hurled,
Till Freedom cheered and the joy-bells rung.

The sea returning day by day
Restores the world-wide mart;
So let each dweller on the Bay

Fold Boston in his heart,
Till these echoes be choked with snows,
Or over the town blue ocean flows.

Let the blood of her hundred thousands
Throb in each manly vein;
And the wit of all her wisest
Make sunshine in her brain.

For you can teach the lightning speech,
And round the globe your voices reach.

And each shall care for other,
And each to each shall bend,
To the poor a noble brother,
To the good an equal friend.

A blessing through the ages thus
Shield all thy roofs and towers!
God with the fathers, so with us,
Thou darling town of ours!

PAUL REVERE'S RIDE

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

[Sidenote: April 18, 1775] *This poem is the "Landlord's Tale," the first of the "Tales of a Wayside Inn."*

Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five:
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year.

He said to his friend, "If the British march
By land or sea from the town to-night,
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch
Of the North Church tower as a signal-light,
One, if by land, and two, if by sea;
And I on the opposite shore will be,
Ready to ride and spread the alarm
Through every Middlesex village and farm,
For the country folk to be up and to arm."

Then he said, Good-night! and with muffled oar
Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore,
Just as the moon rose over the bay,
Where swinging wide at her moorings lay
The Somerset, British man-of-war;
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar
Across the moon like a prison-bar,
And a huge black hulk, that was magnified
By its own reflection in the tide.

Meanwhile, his friend, through alley and street
Wanders and watches with eager ears,
Till in the silence around him he hears
The muster of men at the barrack door,
The sound of arms, and the tramp of feet,
And the measured tread of the grenadiers,
Marching down to their boats on the shore.

Then he climbed to the tower of the Old North Church
By the wooden stairs, with stealthy tread,
To the belfry-chamber overhead,
And startled the pigeons from their perch
On the sombre rafters, that round him made
Masses and moving shapes of shade,—
By the trembling ladder, steep and tall,
To the highest window in the wall,
Where he paused to listen and look down
A moment on the roofs of the town,
And the moonlight flowing over all.

Beneath, in the churchyard, lay the dead,
In their night-encampment on the hill,
Wrapped in silence so deep and still
That he could hear, like a sentinel's tread,
The watchful night-wind, as it went
Creeping along from tent to tent,
And seeming to whisper, "All is well!"
A moment only he feels the spell
Of the place and the hour, and the secret dread
Of the lonely belfry and the dead;
For suddenly all his thoughts are bent

On a shadowy something far away,
Where the river widens to meet the bay,—
A line of black that bends and floats
On the rising tide, like a bridge of boats.

Meanwhile, impatient to mount and ride,
Booted and spurred, with a heavy stride
On the opposite shore walked Paul Revere.
Now he patted his horse's side,
Now gazed at the landscape far and near,
Then, impetuous, stamped the earth,
And turned and tightened his saddle-girth;
But mostly he watched with eager search
The belfry-tower of the Old North Church,
As it rose above the graves on the hill,
Lonely, and spectral, and sombre and still.

And lo! as he looks, on the belfry's height
A glimmer, and then a gleam of light!
He springs to the saddle, the bridle he turns,
But lingers and gazes, till full on his sight
A second lamp in the belfry burns!
A hurry of hoofs in a village street,
A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark,
And beneath, from the pebbles, in passing, a spark
Struck out by a steed flying fearless and fleet:
That was all! And yet, through the gloom and the light,
The fate of a nation was riding that night;
And the spark struck out by that steed, in his flight,
Kindled the land into flame with its heat.

He has left the village and mounted the steep,

And beneath him, tranquil and broad and deep,
Is the Mystic, meeting the ocean tides;
And under the alders, that skirt its edge,
Now soft on the sand, now loud on the ledge,
Is heard the tramp of his steed as he rides.

It was twelve by the village clock
When he crossed the bridge into Medford town.
He heard the crowing of the cock,
And the barking of the farmer's dog,
And felt the damp of the river fog,
That rises after the sun goes down.

It was one by the village clock,
When he rode into Lexington.
He saw the gilded weathercock
Swim in the moonlight as he passed,
And the meeting-house windows, blank and bare,
Gaze at him with a spectral glare,
As if they already stood aghast
At the bloody work they would look upon.

It was two by the village clock,
When he came to the bridge in Concord town.
He heard the bleating of the flock,
And the twitter of birds among the trees,
And felt the breath of the morning breeze
Blowing over the meadows brown.
And one was safe and asleep in his bed
Who at the bridge would be first to fall,
Who that day would be lying dead,
Pierced by a British musket-ball.

You know the rest. In the books you have read,
How the British Regulars fired and fled,—
How the farmers gave them ball for ball,
From behind each fence and farm-yard wall,
Chasing the red-coats down the lane,
Then crossing the fields to emerge again
Under the trees at the turn of the road,
And only pausing to fire and load.

So through the night rode Paul Revere;
And so through the night went his cry of alarm
To every Middlesex village and farm,—
A cry of defiance and not of fear,
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,
And a word that shall echo forevermore!
For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,
Through all our history, to the last,
In the hour of darkness and peril and need,
The people will waken and listen to hear
The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,
And the midnight message of Paul Revere.

THE BATTLE OF LEXINGTON

SIDNEY LANIER

[Sidenote: April 19, 1775] *The skirmish at Lexington and the fight at Concord closed all political bickering between Great Britain and her colonies and began the War of the Revolution. The following verses are a fragment of the "Psalm of the West."*

Then haste ye, Prescott and Revere!
Bring all the men of Lincoln here;
Let Chelmsford, Littleton, Carlisle,
Let Acton, Bedford, hither file—
Oh, hither file, and plainly see
Out of a wound leap Liberty.

Say, Woodman April! all in green,
Say, Robin April! hast thou seen
In all thy travel round the earth
Ever a morn of calmer birth?
But Morning's eye alone serene
Can gaze across yon village-green
To where the trooping British run
Through Lexington.
Good men in fustian, stand ye still;
The men in red come o'er the hill,
Lay down your arms, damned rebels! cry
The men in red full haughtily.
But never a grounding gun is heard;
The men in fustian stand unstirred;

Dead calm, save maybe a wise bluebird
Puts in his little heavenly word.
O men in red! if ye but knew
The half as much as bluebirds do,
Now in this little tender calm
Each hand would out, and every palm
With patriot palm strike brotherhood's stroke
Or ere these lines of battle broke.

O men in red! if ye but knew
The least of all that bluebirds do,
Now in this little godly calm
Yon voice might sing the Future's Psalm—
The Psalm of Love with the brotherly eyes
Who pardons and is very wise—
Yon voice that shouts, high-hoarse with ire,
Fire!

The red-coats fire, the homespuns fall:
The homespuns' anxious voices call,
Brother, art hurt? and Where hit, John?
And, Wipe this blood, and Men, come on,
And Neighbor, do but lift my head,
And Who is wounded? Who is dead?
Seven are killed. My God! my God!
Seven lie dead on the village sod.
Two Harringtons, Parker, Hadley, Brown,
Monroe and Porter,—these are down.
Nay, look! stout Harrington not yet dead.
He crooks his elbow, lifts his head.
He lies at the step of his own house-door;
He crawls and makes a path of gore.

The wife from the window hath seen, and rushed;
He hath reached the step, but the blood hath gushed;
He hath crawled to the step of his own house-door,
But his head hath dropped: he will crawl no more.
Clasp Wife, and kiss, and lift the head,
Harrington lies at his doorstep dead.

But, O ye Six that round him lay
And bloodied up that April day!
As Harrington fell, ye likewise fell—
At the door of the House wherein ye dwell;
As Harrington came, ye likewise came
And died at the door of your House of Fame.

HYMN

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

[Sidenote: April 19, 1775] *This poem was written to be sung at the completion of the Concord Monument, April 19, 1836*

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 to-day 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, or leave their children free,
Bid Time and Nature gently spare
The shaft we raise to them and thee.

TICONDEROGA

V. B. WILSON

[Sidenote: May 10, 1775] After the news of Concord fight, a volunteer expedition from Vermont and Connecticut, under Ethan Alien and Benedict Arnold, seized Ticonderoga and Crown Point, whose military stores were of great service. From its chime of bells, the French called Ticonderoga "Carillon."

The cold, gray light of the dawning
On old Carillon falls,
And dim in the mist of the morning
Stand the grim old fortress walls.
No sound disturbs the stillness
Save the cataract's mellow roar,
Silent as death is the fortress,
Silent the misty shore.

But up from the wakening waters
Comes the cool, fresh morning breeze,
Lifting the banner of Britain,
And whispering to the trees
Of the swift gliding boats on the waters
That are nearing the fog-shrouded land,
With the old Green Mountain Lion,
And his daring patriot band.

But the sentinel at the postern
Heard not the whisper low;
He is dreaming of the banks of the Shannon

As he walks on his beat to and fro,
Of the starry eyes in Green Erin
That were dim when he marched away,
And a tear down his bronzed cheek courses,
'T is the first for many a day.

A sound breaks the misty stillness,
And quickly he glances around;
Through the mist, forms like towering giants
Seem rising out of the ground;
A challenge, the firelock flashes,
A sword cleaves the quivering air,
And the sentry lies dead by the postern,
Blood staining his bright yellow hair.

Then, with a shout that awakens
All the echoes of hillside and glen,
Through the low, frowning gate of the fortress,
Sword in hand, rush the Green Mountain men.
The scarce wakened troops of the garrison
Yield up their trust pale with fear;
And down comes the bright British banner,
And out rings a Green Mountain cheer.

Flushed with pride, the whole eastern heavens
With crimson and gold are ablaze;
And up springs the sun in his splendor
And flings down his arrowy rays,
Bathing in sunlight the fortress,
Turning to gold the grim walls,
While louder and clearer and higher
Rings the song of the waterfalls.

Since the taking of Ticonderoga
A century has rolled away;
But with pride the nation remembers
That glorious morning in May.
And the cataract's silvery music
Forever the story tells,
Of the capture of old Carillon,
The chime of the silver bells.

GRANDMOTHER'S STORY OF BUNKER HILL BATTLE AS SHE SAW IT FROM THE BELFRY

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

[Sidenote: June 17, 1775]

'Tis like stirring living embers when, at eighty, one
remembers

All the achings and the quakings of "the times that
tried men's souls";

When I talk of *Whig* and *Tory*, when I tell the
Rebel story,

To you the words are ashes, but to me they're burning coals.

I had heard the muskets' rattle of the April running
battle;

Lord Percy's hunted soldiers, I can see their red coats still;
But a deadly chill comes o'er me, as the day looms up before
me,

When a thousand men lay bleeding on the slopes of
Bunker's Hill.

'Twas a peaceful summer's morning, when the first thing
gave

us warning

Was the booming of the cannon from the river and the shore:
"Child," says grandma, "what's the matter, what is all this
noise and clatter?"

Have those scalping Indian devils come to murder us once more?"

Poor old soul! my sides were shaking in the midst of all my quaking

To hear her talk of Indians when the guns began to roar:

She had seen the burning village, and the slaughter and the pillage,

When the Mohawks killed her father, with their bullets through

his door.

Then I said, "Now, dear old granny, don't you fret and worry any,

For I'll soon come back and tell you whether this is work or play;

There can't be mischief in it, so I won't be gone a minute"—

For a minute then I started. I was gone the livelong day.

No time for bodice-lacing or for looking-glass grimacing;
Down my hair went as I hurried, tumbling half-way to my heels;

God forbid your ever knowing, when there's blood around her

flowing,

How the lonely, helpless daughter of a quiet household feels!

In the street I heard a thumping; and I knew it was the stumping

Of the Corporal, our old neighbor, on that wooden leg he wore,

With a knot of women round him,—it was lucky I had found him,—

So I followed with the others, and the Corporal marched before.

They were making for the steeple,—the old soldier and his people;

The pigeons circled round us as we climbed the creaking stair,

Just across the narrow river—O, so close it made me shiver!—

Stood a fortress on the hilltop that but yesterday was bare.

Not slow our eyes to find it; well we knew who stood behind it,

Though the earthwork hid them from us, and the stubborn walls were dumb:

Here were sister, wife, and mother, looking wild upon each other,

And their lips were white with terror as they said, THE HOUR

HAS COME!

The morning slowly wasted, not a morsel had we tasted,
And our heads were almost splitting with the cannons'
deafening thrill,

When a figure tall and stately round the rampart strode sedately;

It was PRESCOTT, one since told me; he commanded on the hill.

Every woman's heart grew bigger when we saw his manly figure,

With the banyan buckled round it, standing up so straight and tall;

Like a gentleman of leisure who is strolling out for pleasure,
Through the storm of shells and cannon-shot he walked
around
the wall.

At eleven the streets were swarming, for the red-coats'
ranks

were forming;

At noon in marching order they were moving to the piers;
How the bayonets gleamed and glistened, as we looked far
down and listened

To the trampling and the drum-beat of the belted grenadiers!

At length the men have started, with a cheer (it seemed
faint-hearted),

In their scarlet regimentals, with their knapsacks on their
backs,

And the reddening, rippling water, as after a sea-fight's
slaughter,

Round the barges gliding onward blushed like blood along
their tracks.

So they crossed to the other border, and again they
formed in order;

And the boats came back for soldiers, came for soldiers,
soldiers still:

The time seemed everlasting to us women faint and
fasting,—

At last they're moving, marching, marching proudly up the
hill.