

MY COUNTRY

POEMS OF HISTORY FOR YOUNG AMERICANS

Selected and Edited by
BURTON STEVENSON



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

1932

COPYRIGHT, 1932
BY BURTON ROBERT STEVENSON
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The poems in this collection are reprinted by permission of and special arrangement with the proprietors of their respective copyrights.

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE - MASSACHUSETTS
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

PREFACE

THE great events of American history cannot be retold too often, for man's memory is short, and even the recent past soon grows blurred and dim. So with the principles upon which the Republic was founded and the ideals which have grown up about it. They should have frequent restatement, not only because they are admirable in themselves, but because they form the foundation of what has come to be known as Americanism — that devotion to justice and liberty and human rights which has ennobled the country's past and by which its future will be shaped.

Far more than any other form of government, a Republic depends for its existence upon the intelligence and devotion of its citizens. They *are* the government. It consists only of them. They must be proud of their country. They must believe in its destiny and be united in defense of its ideals. It must be first in their hearts. When this is so, it is invincible. Like the towns of ancient Sparta, its citizens are its walls.

No nation exists today of which its people have a better right to be proud than these United States. This book is an effort to show why this is so. It tells again the story of America in terms of poetry, much of it stirring poetry, which sets that story in bold relief and presents it graphically to the imagination. It would be absurd, of course, to pretend that these poems constitute a balanced history, but they do, at least, illumine those gallant and dramatic incidents which appeal most strongly to American patriotism and which Americans have most reason to remember.

Many of them have to do with war, because it is in war that the sort of gallantry and drama which lend themselves to poetry are most conspicuous. But America has no reason to be ashamed of any of her wars, and every reason to be very proud of two of them, which were motivated by a fine ardor

One native maiden waited the command
 Of the young Princess of Virginia's strand;
 And that dark youth, the Page of Cedar Isle,
 Who wept her woes, and shared her sad exile,
 With his loved bride, who owned the royal blood,
 And near the forest Queen majestically stood.

Some others bent beside the rural shrine
 In adoration to the Power divine;
 When at the altar knelt, with minds serene,
 The gallant Soldier and the dark-browed Queen.

These, for the love they bore her guileless youth,
 Paid the high fealty of the warm heart's truth;
 And with its homage satisfied, gone o'er
 Each vision bright that graced their natal shore.

Those, with forebodings dread and brimful eyes,
 Bade holy angels guard the destinies
 Of one on whom had fallen the chrism of light
 With unction pure; the youthful neophyte
 Of that fair clime where millions yet unborn
 Shall raise the choral hymn from eve till morn.

Mrs. M. M. WEBSTER

In 1616 Pocahontas was taken to England, where she was received at court, renewed her acquaintance with Captain John Smith, had her portrait painted, and led a fashionable life generally. It did not agree with the wild forest creature, she developed consumption, and died at Gravesend, March 27, 1617

THE LAST MEETING OF POCAHONTAS AND THE GREAT CAPTAIN

[June, 1616]

IN A stately hall at Brentford, when the English June was green,
 Sat the Indian Princess, summoned that her graces might be
 seen,
 For the rumor of her beauty filled the ear of court and Queen.

There for audience as she waited, with half-scornful, silent
 air
 All undazzled by the splendor gleaming round her every
 where,
 Dight in broidered hose and doublet, came a courtier down
 the stair.

As with striding step he hasted, burdened with the Queen's
 command,
 Loud he cried, in tones that tingled, "*Welcome, welcome, to
 my land!*"
 But a tremor seized the Princess, and she drooped upon her
 hand.

"What! no word, my Sparkling-Water? must I come on
 bended knee?
 I were slain within the forest, I were dead beyond the
 sea;
 On the banks of wild Pamunkey, I had perished *but for thee*.
 "Ah, I keep a heart right loyal, that can nevermore for-
 get!
 I can hear the rush, the breathing; I can see the eyelids
 wet;
 I can feel the sudden tightening of thine arms about me
 yet.

"Nay, look up. Thy father's daughter never feared the face
 of man,
 Shrank not from the forest darkness when her doe-like foot
 steps ran
 To my cabin, bringing tidings of the craft of Powhatan."

With extended arms, entreating, stood the stalwart Captain
 there,
 While the courtiers press around her, and the passing pages
 stare;
 But no sign gave Pocahontas underneath her veil of hair.

All her lithe and willowy figure quivered like an aspen-leaf,
And she crouched as if she shrivelled, frost-touched by some
sudden grief,
Turning only on her husband, Rolfe, one glance, sharp,
searching, brief.

At the Captain's haughty gesture, back the curious courtiers
fell,
And with soothest word and accent he besought that she
would tell
Why she turned away, nor greeted him whom she had served
so well.

But for two long hours the Princess dumbly sat and bowed
her head,
Moveless as the statue near her. When at last she spake,
she said:
"White man's tongue is false. It told me — told me — *that*
my brave was dead.

"And I lay upon my deerskins all one moon of falling leaves
(Who hath care for song or corn-dance, when the voice within
her grieves?),
Looking westward where the souls go, up the path the sunset
weaves.

Call me 'child' now. It is over. On my husband's arm
I lean;
Never shadow, *Nenemoosa*, our twain hearts shall come be-
tween;
Take my hand, and let us follow the great Captain to his
Queen."

MARGARET JUNKIN PRESTON

MEANWHILE, Jamestown dwindled away, was destroyed by fire
during Bacon's Rebellion, and was never rebuilt. But a new com-
pany was formed, of which Lord De La Warr was one of the princi-