

# *The Liberty*

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The Author

Mildred Agnew

July 16, 1877







"The dawn is on the mountain tops."



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# LIBERTY

AS DELIVERED BY

*The Goddess*

AT HER UNVEILING

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OFFICE OF  
AMERICAN COMMITTEE  
OF THE  
*Statue of Liberty.*

NEW YORK, NOV 6, 1886.

HE following poem was prepared for the Inaugural Ceremony of the Statue of Liberty, with the expectation that after it had been submitted to the Committee it would, in case of its approval, have been delivered by the author on that occasion.

It is at once to be distinguished from all other poems written for the occasion by the fact that it was the only poem out of all that were offered which came before the Committee for consideration.

It gives me great pleasure to state that the judgment of the Committee, as well as that of my own, regarding the literary merits of the poem, has been most gratifyingly confirmed by three of America's greatest poets in their letters of commendation to the Committee.

It has been a source of the deepest regret that in view of

the severe inclemency of the occasion, the extreme length of the programme in spite of its abbreviation in every possible way, coupled with the length of the poem as finally completed, rendered it necessary at the last moment to omit it from the programme in the face of those more imperative obligations that crowded the ceremony.

The commendable behaviour of the poet under this most trying ordeal has won for him so warmly the respect and regard of his friends that I beg to repeat in connection with this publication the request which I made to the *New York World*, but which unfortunately failed to reach its editor in time, viz: that this poem be printed in connection with the Inaugural Ceremony of the Statue of Liberty, in the Harbor of New York, October 28, 1886, to the end that its historic relation to that great event may be preserved beyond peradventure.

RICHARD BUTLER,  
*Secretary American Committee.*

## *Preface.*

**T**AKE off of others all responsibility for any of the sentiments of this poem from which they may dissent and put it solely on myself. I am pure in my purpose, in endeavoring to interpret the idea of Liberty in its genius and integrity for all lands and for all peoples, to bring to it, lest it be belittled in the eyes of men, that breadth of thought and of treatment which seeks not only to trace it in its development from great, inexorable laws of natural growth up through history and humanity to its present stage, but also to perceive the prophetic handwriting which its great Limner-Queen shall throw on the Future in characters of leading light.

I beg to thank most thoroughly the members of the committee for the generous subscriptions which have enabled me to put this print into the hands of my fellow men for the future judgment of mankind, and in thanking them to thank particularly the Secretary of that Committee, with whose noble efforts in its behalf this attempt must ever stand connected.

MILLER HAGEMAN.

*Brooklyn, Nov. 8, 1886.*





Dedicated  
to  
Humanity.





## *Liberty.*



THE dawn is on the mountain tops, the night  
is flying fast,  
The light the world hath waited for so long  
hath come at last ;

That light whose flattery never fell on summit  
or on sea,  
That beaconing light, my countrymen, the light of  
Liberty.

Deep in the caverns of the dark, doubled in gorgeous  
gloom,  
Bound hand and foot, lay Liberty, like morn in mid-  
night's tomb.

Bursting her fetters she came forth with Freedom's  
scroll unfurled,  
And in her tireless hand the torch whose light shines  
round the world.

Lone Goddess of the granite height, with daybreak  
on thy brow,

What royal greeting waits thy grace? whence,  
stranger, camest thou?

Art thou a Persian that thy hand salutes the rising  
sun?

A grave Chaldean signalling the wise stars one by  
one?

Art thou a bright archangel clad in the black robe of  
night,

Who, through thy awful frown of bronze, dost smile  
down on our sight?

Ask of the land beyond the sea toward which thy  
face is set,

The land that saved our liberty, the land of La-  
fayette.

When, for the creed of equal rights, for conscience  
and for thought;

When, for the freedom of her sons, this young Repub-  
lic fought;

When, through the angry gloom she saw the con-  
quering foe advance,  
A light streamed out upon the sky—the oriflamb of  
France.

Our drooping banner caught that gleam when hope  
was almost gone,  
While, as it robbed heaven of its first bright  
colors of the dawn,

Red flamed its stripes of morning light, bright  
streaked its silver bars,  
And, breaking through the azure blue, shone out the  
morning stars.

It stirred, it thrilled, it curled, it clomb, it waved  
away the night,  
And flung o'er Freedom's continent its courier-bird  
of light.

Wafted from off its wings that light across the  
water gleamed,  
Till, with twin freedom on its folds, the French tri-  
color streamed.

Behold ! by thy great sculptor's hand, up to the  
altar led,  
Bless thou with benediction prayer the worlds thy  
light shall wed.

While trails the red arbutus vine across the winter  
snow,  
As if with flowering drops of blood our bleeding  
tracks to show ;

While rolls the sunset-crimsoned Seine into the  
crimsoning sea,  
France and Columbia shall stand forever one in  
thee.

Scarce from the narrow bounds of men, scarce  
had'st thou turned thy face,  
To steep thy chafing soul in all the amplitude of  
space ;

Scarce had'st thou breathed the boundless air and  
heard the north wind blow,  
And felt the billows break against thy massy base  
below ;

Scarce had the lightning leaping down its spirit to  
thee lent,  
Before thy arm was raised to show what all that  
Freedom meant ;

Till, scoffing at the night that came to mock thee  
in the dark,  
Thy heart with one electric throb shot out yon  
quivering spark,

The currents of whose truth shall thrill till all the  
sons of earth  
Shall feel what Liberty hath cost and what its light is  
worth.

Alive—with all thy memories, with all that thou dost  
mean,  
In the great name of Liberty we hail its Linner-  
Queen!

Steal thou, bright maid, the morning's blush, the  
sunset's ruddy glow,  
To greet the nations as they come, to bless them  
as they go.

Thou art as one from out the heavens, whom God  
himself hath sent,  
To seal forever Slavery's tomb as Freedom's monu-  
ment.

Thou art, with thorn-girt crown, that marks man's  
struggle to be free,  
A rapt prophetic seer of all thy glory yet to  
be.

Amid the starry march of worlds, peering with  
breathless pause,  
On that grand vision beyond sight of thy unfinished  
cause,

How dark thy dawning glory soon shall seem as  
ages gone,  
While from far suns across thy face that wave of  
light rolls on.

For well thou know'st, though man hath wrought,  
e're thy long watch was set,  
Great things for human liberty, man hath but  
little yet.

*Whence sprang the light that lit thy torch?*

——— And as

the vision broke,

Pointing the Prophecy of Time, the silent Goddess  
spoke :

“Shut up within the darkened soul, there yearned  
since Time began

“The light of that immortal truth—the liberty of  
man ;

“Through the long, tortuous labyrinth of ignorance  
and doubt,

“The slow procession of the Past is winding dimly  
out.

“Borne not with outward signs of pomp the warder  
heard or saw,

“That light came forth the latent power of universal  
law ;

“The light that in an opal holds the rainbow in the  
rock,

“That smiles out in its unborn sleep, a cherub in the  
block,

- “ Works in the crucible of earth the chemistry of  
change,
- “ Rends in the nodule of an Alp the ruddy moun-  
tain-range,
- “ Pushes with gentle violence through seed and leaf  
and spray,
- “ Drives on with steady doom of growth and blossoms  
into day,
- “ Opens at morn with noiseless keys the ivory gates  
of night,
- “ Sets its red sandal on the sky, the cloud, the snow-  
capped height,
- “ Steps from the stained crag to the palm, the shrub,  
the daisy’s cup,
- “ Stirs the still couch with unseen hand and lights  
Creation up ;
- “ The light that in the march of mind, from age to  
age, hath wrought
- “ The bright discoveries that have flashed about the  
forge of thought ;



- “ That hews the mountains, climbs the heavens, leaps  
oceans at a bound,  
“ Unveils the future, limns the dead, and speaks with-  
out a sound ;  
“ The light that quickens in the soul, that fires the  
eager face,  
“ Inspires the hope, kindles the truth that thrills from  
race to race ;  
“ The light that warms the Golden Page, that tells men  
they are free,  
“ Gleamed forth on the historic steps of human  
liberty.  
“ It twinkled out, a lonely Star, upon the heavens of  
old,  
“ By whose pale ray of prophecy that light was first  
foretold.  
“ It glimmered on the Orient upon a race of slaves,  
“ It led them forth as conquerors beyond the clos-  
ing waves.

“ It glinted on Phœnicia and at its sail-caught  
smiles

“ The shuttles of her ships knit all her sandal-scented  
isles.

“ It shed a broken gleam on Greece, and, with its glory  
wreathed,

“ She shone with mighty words that burned and mar-  
ble gods that breathed.

“ It cast a beam on Italy and, as its scroll un-  
furled,

“ A power came forth upon the earth that governed  
all the world.

“ It threw a ray on Runnymede from pennon, spear  
and tent,

“ And, born of Magna Charta, bred the Briton’s Parlia-  
ment.

“ It shot a glance on Germany across the Zuyder-  
Zee,

“ Where stamped with brave Reformer’s blood men  
printed—Liberty.

“ It flashed upon the knights of Spain and, on the  
trampled corse,

“ The man on foot, with musket raised, challenged  
the man on horse.

“ It quickened Russia's frozen heart that long refused to  
flow,

“ Till with emancipated serfs it beat from out the  
snow.

“ It dawned upon Columbia and first to freemen  
gave

“ A liberty her Martyr-Chief proclaimed to every  
slave.

“ It fired the peasantry of France weighed down with  
heavy woes,

“ And round a feudal monarchy a free republic  
rose.

“ In every country of the earth since years were in  
their youth,

“ The greatest friend to liberty hath been the light of  
truth.

“In every nation of the past whose glory hath decreased,

“The greatest foe to liberty, the craft of king and priest.

“Bred up by grand, heroic deeds, by agonizing throes,

“By suffering whose lines have wrought this resolute repose :

“Forth with majestic stride from out the dusky files of men,

“On whose great like man ne'er hath looked and ne'er shall look again :

“Behold ! great Freedom's *first-born* child, historic heir of Time,

“Whose crown hath caught those scattered rays of every race and clime.

“Behold ! my first bright trophy won—the Bastile's flaming key,

“That yet shall open every door to bolted liberty.

“ Freedom, but never for the heart within this bosom  
warm,  
“ The anarch brood, that darkly dash against it in  
the storm ;  
“ Blind sea birds, saddening stupidly the island with  
their dead,  
“ And claiming liberty for that whence all its  
charms were fled.  
“ Freedom, but not by demagogues, bred up in  
courts of fools ;  
“ Freedom for men to use their powers by right of  
Nature’s rules ;  
“ The laws that hold the world in leash, the laws that  
set men free,  
“ For, save through knowledge of her laws, there is no  
liberty.  
“ Freedom for every living man that stands upon the  
earth,  
“ For all that be he black or white belongs to him by  
birth.

- “ Freedom for every man to come and every man to go,
- “ Freedom for every man to reap whatever he can sow.
- “ Freedom from party prejudice, from threat of craft or guild,
- “ Freedom for every man to vote, for every man to build ;
- “ For every man to own himself, to act his manhood out,
- “ Free to believe or disbelieve and doubly free to doubt.
- “ Freedom from aping forms of cant, that snivels drawls and brags,
- “ From fashions that adorn the dust, but leave the soul in rags ;
- “ From sounding titles strung on names, as coins upon a clown :
- “ Put up the eagle at the peak but take the peacock down.

“ Freedom from all alliances between the Church and State.

“ That whelm the body politic with sacerdotal weight.

“ Freedom from old paternal power, drivell of dotard lands,

“ Freedom—for power is only safe in all the people’s hands.

“ Freedom for scholar and for school, for pulpit, press and speech,

“ For creeds that once have ceased to learn have also ceased to teach.

“ Freedom from ignorance whose god is superstition’s ghost,

“ From dogmas that have made the cross a martyr’s pillory-post.

“ Freedom for man to think before tradition’s musty shelf,

“ Once for the text, twice for the gloss, and three times for himself.

- “Freedom in all its shining forms, for science and  
for art,
- “Freedom for all the industries that multiply the  
mart.
- “Freedom from those restrictive laws whose revenues  
have ceased,—
- “Freedom—for the best government is that which  
governs least.
- “There is a law in things themselves that regulates  
their life,
- “That is not quickened or delayed by statute or by  
strife.
- “The greater sphere a law doth fill the greater its con-  
trol;
- “A little liberty is not so safe as is the whole.
- “Where freedom reigns there virtue thrives, there  
truth and justice dwell ;
- “Where freedom sinks there wealth decays, there  
gone is glory’s spell.



“’Tis from the bottom to the top the social fabric  
dies;

“Go to the ground, there, only there, the hope of  
nations lies.

“O many-fountained mother earth! behold, when  
morn hath pressed

“In iris-winking drops of dew the milk-beads from  
thy breast;

“Behold the fainting myriads on that full bosom  
fall,

“While lapt in sated luxury a few men own it  
all.

“Curs’d be the law that grants away horizoned  
leagues of land,

“That reads God’s title to the globe, grasped by a  
dead man’s hand;

“That leaves a scion of the soil in poverty to go

“Without a home above the ground, without a grave  
below.

“Curs'd be that blinding octopus whose phosphorescent charms

“Clutch all the shuddering crafts that come within its spiderous arms ;

“That stares out with its deep red eyes across the rolling sea,

“And cries, ‘Come up, and be ye searched’ and calls that—liberty.

“Cursed be those vast complexities that smuggle fraud and pelf ;

“Take—take the simple way and go straight to the thing itself.

“There's not a handicraft that plumes the marts of foreign powers,

“Worth half so much to us as theirs as 'tis to us as ours :

“There's not a thing that man can give, a thing that man can take,

“But leaves him for its interchange more than its want can make.

“ We want the things that others have, we want  
their very best ;

“ Break off the chains between all lands, nor leave the  
lack confessed.

“ Take off of things the heavy toll, the tariff and the  
tax,

“ Those two great burdens that their dupes hug  
blindly to their backs ;

“ Take off of men the angry wrongs that cry against  
the land,

“ Take—take your thumb off of their throat and take  
them by the hand.

“ Honor the proletariat, but spurn the guilty  
wretch,

“ Who corners Nature’s gifts for what the pinch of want  
will fetch.

“ Cursed be the law, aye doubly cursed, that dun-  
geons men for debt,

“ That huddles vice behind its bars and frees it viler  
yet;

“That heaps a treasury for spoils, that seats without rebuke,

“On thrones of corporative power, a coronetted duke;

“The law, high crime at law itself, that says, ‘thou shalt not kill,’

“Yet licenses two murderers, the brothel and the still;

“Feels in its heart the curse of Cain branded upon its face,

“That deep, degenerative taint that rots into the race;

“Reels, staggers, falls, arrests itself, and handcuffed shouts, ‘I’m free,’—

“The dignitary of the ditch—the slave of liberty.

“Before the law was written down with parchment or with pen,

“Before the law made citizens, the moral law made men.

“ Law stands for human rights, but when it fails those  
rights to give,

“ Then let law die, my brothers, but let human beings  
live.

“ Justice ! O Liberty, to whom the people's rights  
belong,

“ Justice ! lest be in thine own light thou stand a  
brazen wrong :

“ Well have ye made great Themis blind, where Jus-  
tice stands appraised,

“ Lest she have horror of her scales if once those eyes  
were raised.

“ Light for the women of the world that mould the  
mothered age,

“ Light for the eyes pressed down to death with pen-  
ny-weighted' wage ;

“ Light for the thrones till kings grow blind, light till  
the sceptre falls,

“ Light for the serfs, the hinds, the slaves, light  
through the dungeon walls ;

“ Light for the lock-step in the mines, the toilers on  
the sea,  
“ Light for the poor and the oppressed, light for  
humanity ;  
“ Light—never till this lancing light lays bare each  
human woe,  
“ Sheathed be its bloodless sword save in the bowels  
of the foe ;  
“ Light—and as oft, O Liberty, the world shall lift its  
eye,  
“ To watch, through coming centuries, that light  
against the sky ;  
“ Let not men see its glory fade upon a ruined  
land,  
“ On cities sacked by anarchy or swept by blackened  
brand ;  
“ On broken columns, where the owl mopes by the  
mouldering walls,  
“ On stony squalors, o’er whose heaps the moony mid-  
night falls ;

- “ On streets that mock the traveller’s step, on squares  
whose roar is dumb,  
“ On hulls that leave no trails of smoke, no harbored  
clink or hum.
- “ O let men rather see that light o’er all this land of  
thine,  
“ On flashing forms of industry, with rays reflected  
shine ;
- “ On glowing forge, on flying wheel, on snort of iron  
steed ;  
“ On ships that pant from port to port with flaming  
manes of speed ;
- “ On human homes of happiness, of virtue and of  
health,  
“ On hills that break with billowy bloom in golden  
waves of wealth ;
- “ On churches, with no sect below, no sect beyond  
the sky,  
“ On love, the Maker’s only creed, divinest liberty ;

“ On princely charities that walk through the white  
wards of pain,

“ On broad humanities that bond the common peo-  
ple’s reign ;

“ On states that know no North, no South, whatever  
fate befall,

“ One truth, one law, one heart, one flag, one Union  
for us all.

“ While Truth, in silence from these lips, speaks as if  
thunder spoke,

“ Looks the whole world full in the face, and strikes  
with lightning stroke,

“ Ye need no other arsenal, no navies and no  
forts,

“ No standing armies and no guns to guard your coun-  
try’s ports.

“ Here stack your weapons, sheathe your swords ;  
within the sentried vault,

“ Behold ! I stand ’mid clashing hosts, to call eternal  
halt !



“ Defiant as the stormless truth that guards a nation’s  
trust :

“ Peace is the virtue of a land, and War a palsy-  
ing lust.

“ Ye tyrants scoff, ye war-clouds hurl your bright-  
veined bolts about,

“ Lit at the altar of its God that light shall not go  
out.

“ Go, drape the spangles of the night, go, veil the  
rising dawn,

“ Go, quench the sun, the moon, the stars, go, bid  
them all be gone ;

“ Go, memory, forget the dead,—still round this  
lighted shrine,

“ On Heaven’s sublime Olympus set, Oblivion’s gods  
shall shine.

“ Great Heaven’s Olympus, as of old, spread with  
fresh gods again,

“ Gods, not of marble or of gold, gods of immortal  
men :

“ What gods?—the Lords' anointed, clothed with a  
divine decree?

“ No!—for at every step they blocked the way to  
liberty.

“ What gods?—the scholars in their stalls, dishonestly  
devout ?

“ No—for they scoured the candlestick, but put the  
candle out.

“ Whence come thy gods, O Liberty, from cloisters,  
senates, thrones ?

“ Answer, ye racks, ye wheels, ye stakes, ye chains, ye  
dungeoned groans.

“ Who are these gods? popes? judges? kings? enshrined  
with storied bust ?

“ Answer, ye waters and ye winds that waft the  
martyrs' dust :

“ Answer, ye heroes from the flame, ye wild beasts  
from the pit,

“ Be they thy gods, O Liberty, by whom that torch was  
lit.

“Come from your faggots and your fires, come from  
your hunted caves,  
“Come from your ratchets and your racks, come from  
your nameless graves ;  
“Come curs'd, come bless'd ; the martyrs' smile con-  
quers the monarch's frown,  
“The stake becomes the sceptre and the gallows-cap  
the crown.”

So spake the Goddess and from that grand vision  
beyond sight,  
Came martyr-voices crying out of everlasting  
light :

“Smite, toying heaven's bright thunderbolts above  
thy scathless head,  
“Smite war, smite wrong, smite tyranny, smite dragon-  
darkness dead ;  
“Watch with eternal vigilance, let no man take thy  
crown ;  
“Upon thy deep, colossal calm the centuries look  
down.

“ Watch—such a charge as thou dost keep, by all thy  
sons on high,  
“ Brooks not one tremor of the hand, one closing of  
the eye.  
“ By that immortal robe of thine thy form so warmly  
wears,  
“ Welded together with our blood and woven from  
our prayers ;  
“ By every thread, by every fold, by every fila-  
ment,  
“ By every fibre of thy frame through which our life  
is sent ;  
“ By all who suffered for thy sake, by all who died  
for thee,  
“ Hold up that hand for Liberty till all the world is  
free.  
“ And when at length thy lonely task of Prophecy is  
done,  
“ Come up, thou daughter of the dawn, and stand  
within the sun.”

Slowly the dragon crouched away as snatched from  
clutch and jaw,  
Loomed that shrived wonder that the Seer on lonely  
island saw.

Lo! on transfiguration's height, translated from the  
earth,  
A queen cried out before the throne in throes of  
royal birth :

“Call trumpeters,” and lo, they thrilled each strong  
triumphant pang ;

“Call seraphims,” and lo, with song the vast rotunda  
rang ;

“Call worlds,” and lo, with rushing pace through archi-  
trave and arch,  
Came rolling up from cycling orbs the music of  
their march ;

While, as the wheeling planet swung through all the  
heavens of space,  
As He who was the light of men smiled in his  
mother's face :

Trampling the moon beneath her feet, the pale stars  
one by one,

Behold! in heaven, a woman stood all clothed on  
with the sun:

Still, with apocalyptic hand uplifted to the  
throne;

Liberty—signalling—lost in light—no light but God  
alone!















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