

America The Beautiful

By

THOMAS FREEMAN

"Old Sol" rose majestically over the eastern hills and shed his rays like a mantle of joy over the earth. A call—I know not whence it came, even though I had heard it before—stirred my soul and impelled me from the noisy city out to my nook of meditation, my rendezvous with the Spiritual, here, on the soft breast of nature with her cool breath caressing my face, here where my inner self would meet with its Creator to get stimulation and food for growth.

Suddenly I was startled by a louder, harsher note, being wafted over the vale from the city to me. Our brass band was blaring out the strains of **America the Beautiful**. I had forgotten that it was the Fourth of July. I felt elated with the music and softly sang over the words.

"O Beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purpled mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!"

"O America," I shouted in my ecstasy, "what a privilege it is to be one of your sons." "Surely," I mused when I had settled down again, "surely Katherine Lee Bates was inspired when she penned that wonderful piece. No mortal hand could do that unassisted." As I mused, the city before me grew indistinct, and in its stead I saw our beautiful national parks, and our great cities, our splendid schools and colleges. I saw our beautiful farms, our tremendous natural resources which made possible our great industrial system, our railways, aircraft, autos, and ships.

"What a wonderful country I have," I mused aloud. "Why, it's the greatest in the world."

"Pardon me," spoke a voice behind me,

"but I couldn't help overhearing your soliloquy." Startled, I turned to see a simple but dignified country gentleman.

"Oh that's all right," I said. "I was just glorying in our beautiful scenery, and unrivalled culture. We have a wonderful heritage, but I sometimes regret that it is just a heritage."

"Why, what do you mean, man? We are not living off our heritage, we are progressive! We have built parks, highways, cities, and our great army and navy in recent years. What do you mean, heritage?"

"Just what I say, my young friend. All of the natural beauty of our country is the gift of God, who keeps it up and changes it every season to avoid monotony. Our government is the work of humble men, and Christians. God-founded and Christ-sustained it is. Praying men, like Washington, whose plea on bended knee in the bitter cold of Valley Forge was answered by this, have given us a heritage which we seem to be wasting. We have ceased to regard Him who gave us all we have. As a result we are not producing the great writers, philosophers, statesmen, lawyers, doctors, teachers, and musicians which we could and should produce. American youth are trained to make money, and waste the greatest heritage in the world. Those who do not waste it let it decay from lack of use." As if a burden had been lifted from his shoulders, the old man straightened and walked away.

In a little while the strains of the song came to me again. This time I joined the refrain, not in pride, but in prayer.

"America! America! May God thy gold refine
Till all success be nobleness, and every gain divine!"

colonists, as there were when the Constitution was signed, the inhabitants of our country now number more than 125,000,000. And with this enormous increase in population and the accompanying advance of civilization has come a quickening of the national pulse. A sound world-consciousness has caused a nervous strain.

The talk about heroes of America! One has to be a hero to live in America today and live uprightly. Beneath the social pressure exerted upon us we are restless, dissatisfied, absorbed in shallow cares. In this modern age, to be contemporary—to keep pace with the rest of our reckless, racing, purposeless world—is our dominating desire; and we have all but lost sight of those principles for which our forefathers paid so dearly. Existence has been made easy; life has been made hard.

Sadly our thoughts wander back to the

We Are So Weak

By

EUGENE BRISSIE

We stood silently just a pace from each other, each expecting a word from the other. He seemed to hesitate as he thumbed the rejection notice, expecting me to say something. He seemed ashamed of his obvious unhappiness, because America was a happy land.

"Maybe you'll find a job in another plant," I said trying to imagine his feeling. He only looked into my eyes, and I shot a glance toward his face, which was bronzed from the sun.

"Perhaps," he said. Perhaps; it seemed so doubtful. He cast a glance back to the gate of the mill yard where his timid wife and six year old son awaited his return in nervous anticipation.

I noticed that he was of foreign nationality, German, I concluded from his Teutonic features. With his head bowed he kicked at the loose gravel of the walk. I wanted to say something, but I couldn't find words to replace the lump in my throat. Defeat was clearly portrayed in the expression that seemed frozen upon his profile.

Yes, he was foreign-German, and he came to America ten years ago—to escape being dictated to; here he had not been told what to do, but what not to do—because he wouldn't join a labor union, he told me in broken English.

"Life is still good," I told him, reassuringly.

"Yes, good", he responded without raising his head, "but we are so weak."

He turned slowly to leave, and I almost reached out to grasp his hand, but I feared no more could be said. With light, almost tragic steps he strode to the gate. Soon he disappeared behind a fence, gone, yet his still ghost stood before me and murmured, "Life is good, but we are so weak."

On Heroes

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portunity of owning land and building his own home, and in an honorable means of providing crude comforts and the necessities of life for himself and those he loved.

What a change has come over our country in the brief centuries since its discovery! The forests are gone; the mountains and plains are populated; a strong government affords protection and offers the freedom for which our forefathers died. Roaring industrial plants all over the nation stand out in striking contrast to the self-sufficient homes of pioneer days. Huge ocean liners, powerful automobiles and airplanes, efficient radios and wireless telegraphy link our nation with every part of the known world. Instead of 5,000,000 struggling

stalwart pioneer who lived by a simple code of honor and who cherished the integrity of his own character above every other possession. We are almost persuaded that the days of heroes are written into dim history. But wait! With the changing conceptions of modern civilization, shall we retain our old-fashioned ideas of heroes? Strength and bravery are still the fundamental requisites for a hero—but it is moral strength he needs today. If it took courage to live two hundred years ago in the simplicity of pioneer days, it takes heroism now in our complicated civilization. That boy lacks nothing of being a hero; that girl, of being a heroine who dares to defy public opinion, to rise above confusing temptations, and to strive toward a real purpose in life, adhering always to the principles upon which American democracy is founded.