

BOOK XVIII

A Broadway Pageant

1

Over the Western sea hither from Nippon come,
Courteous, the swart-cheek'd two-sworded envoys,
Leaning back in their open barouches, bare-headed, impassive,
Ride to-day through Manhattan.

Libertad! I do not know whether others behold what I behold,
In the procession along with the nobles of Nippon, the errand-bearers,
Bringing up the rear, hovering above, around, or in the ranks marching,
But I will sing you a song of what I behold Libertad.

When million-footed Manhattan unpent descends to her pavements,
When the thunder-cracking guns arouse me with the proud roar love,
When the round-mouth'd guns out of the smoke and smell I love
spit their salutes,

When the fire-flashing guns have fully alerted me, and
heaven-clouds canopy my city with a delicate thin haze,

When gorgeous the countless straight stems, the forests at the
wharves, thicken with colors,

When every ship richly drest carries her flag at the peak,

When pennants trail and street-festoons hang from the windows,

When Broadway is entirely given up to foot-passengers and
foot-standers, when the mass is densest,
When the facades of the houses are alive with people, when eyes
gaze riveted tens of thousands at a time,
When the guests from the islands advance, when the pageant moves
forward visible,
When the summons is made, when the answer that waited thousands
of years answers,
I too arising, answering, descend to the pavements, merge with the
crowd, and gaze with them.

2

Superb-faced Manhattan!
Comrade Americanos! to us, then at last the Orient comes.
To us, my city,
Where our tall-topt marble and iron beauties range on opposite
sides, to walk in the space between,
To-day our Antipodes comes.

The Originatress comes,
The nest of languages, the bequeather of poems, the race of eld,
Florid with blood, pensive, rapt with musings, hot with passion,
Sultry with perfume, with ample and flowing garments,
With sunburnt visage, with intense soul and glittering eyes,
The race of Brahma comes.

See my cantabile! these and more are flashing to us from the procession,
As it moves changing, a kaleidoscope divine it moves changing before us.

For not the envoys nor the tann'd Japanee from his island only,
Lithe and silent the Hindoo appears, the Asiatic continent itself
 appears, the past, the dead,
The murky night-morning of wonder and fable inscrutable,
The envelop'd mysteries, the old and unknown hive-bees,
The north, the sweltering south, eastern Assyria, the Hebrews, the
 ancient of ancients,
Vast desolated cities, the gliding present, all of these and more
 are in the pageant-procession.

Geography, the world, is in it,
The Great Sea, the brood of islands, Polynesia, the coast beyond,
The coast you henceforth are facing--you Libertad! from your Western
 golden shores,
The countries there with their populations, the millions en-masse
 are curiously here,
The swarming market-places, the temples with idols ranged along the
 sides or at the end, bonze, brahmin, and llama,
Mandarin, farmer, merchant, mechanic, and fisherman,
The singing-girl and the dancing-girl, the ecstatic persons, the
 secluded emperors,
Confucius himself, the great poets and heroes, the warriors, the castes,

all,

Trooping up, crowding from all directions, from the Altay mountains,
From Thibet, from the four winding and far-flowing rivers of China,
From the southern peninsulas and the demi-continental islands, from
Malaysia,

These and whatever belongs to them palpable show forth to me, and
are seiz'd by me,

And I am seiz'd by them, and friendlily held by them,

Till as here them all I chant, Libertad! for themselves and for you.

For I too raising my voice join the ranks of this pageant,

I am the chanter, I chant aloud over the pageant,

I chant the world on my Western sea,

I chant copious the islands beyond, thick as stars in the sky,

I chant the new empire grander than any before, as in a vision it
comes to me,

I chant America the mistress, I chant a greater supremacy,

I chant projected a thousand blooming cities yet in time on those
groups of sea-islands,

My sail-ships and steam-ships threading the archipelagoes,

My stars and stripes fluttering in the wind,

Commerce opening, the sleep of ages having done its work, races
reborn, refresh'd,

Lives, works resumed--the object I know not--but the old, the Asiatic
renew'd as it must be,

Commencing from this day surrounded by the world.

3

And you Libertad of the world!

You shall sit in the middle well-pois'd thousands and thousands of years,

As to-day from one side the nobles of Asia come to you,

As to-morrow from the other side the queen of England sends her

eldest son to you.

The sign is reversing, the orb is enclosed,

The ring is circled, the journey is done,

The box-lid is but perceptibly open'd, nevertheless the perfume

pours copiously out of the whole box.

Young Libertad! with the venerable Asia, the all-mother,

Be considerate with her now and ever hot Libertad, for you are all,

Bend your proud neck to the long-off mother now sending messages

over the archipelagoes to you,

Bend your proud neck low for once, young Libertad.

Here the children straying westward so long? so wide the tramping?

Were the precedent dim ages debouching westward from Paradise so long?

Were the centuries steadily footing it that way, all the while

unknown, for you, for reasons?

They are justified, they are accomplish'd, they shall now be turn'd

the other way also, to travel toward you thence,

They shall now also march obediently eastward for your sake Libertad.