

**THE MIGHT OF
MANHATTAN,
AND OTHER POEMS**

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The might of Manhattan, and other poems by Joseph D McManus

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JOSEPH D MCMANUS

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THE MIGHT OF MANHATTAN

I

HOW MIGHTY is the forest oak whose span
Broad centuries of steady growth uprear!
But mightier are the towering works of man
Wrought in the narrow compass of a year,
And mightiest on Manhattan they appear
To grace this wonder isle,—this throbbing mart,—
Which drains the pulses of a hemisphere
To claim the best that Wealth and Skill impart
And lift a lofty skyline, radiant with Art.

II

A diadem by day, a great glow-worm
At night, encanopies the hives of trade,
Where Mammon's lure, deep, sentiment and firm,
Holds myriad minions fretful and afraid
Lest they be gripped so tightly, all plans laid
For winning or for gaining fall to ground;
Yet, over all, the spirit that has made
Manhattan's grit and greatness world-renowned
Shines in that superb skyline where success is
crowned.

III

Huge panoramic signboard where, behold!
Proud Progress paints her own advertisement;
Can Commerce cast herself in statelier mold
Or Business build a worthier monument?
The practical and artistic here are blent
In harmony: Colossal towers and domes
Are silhouetted in the firmament
With splendours that were once Imperial Rome's
Chief boast, in public pomp and luxury of homes.

IV

Mount, mimic miniature Alps! in serried files
Of many-storied structures reared in pride,
Within a radius of a dozen miles
Here half-a-dozen million souls reside,—
A medley of all nations unified
In mutual uplift to participate:
Consider what this ever-rising tide
Of compact human energy will create
For generations, yet unborn, to contemplate.

V

Charmed crucible! wherein constructive force
Enfeters those twin-tyrants, Time and Space,
With marvels of invention and resource
That comfort and convenience find a place:
Unrivalled is Manhattan in the race
For world supremacy; can fate withstand
Intensive Industry's prodigious pace
Which Destiny and Duty both demand, —
The hope of humankind when armaments disband.

VI

But if earth's potentates in league with Mars
Ordain that all millennium efforts cease,
That Science seek her laurel wreaths in wars,
That arms are indispensable to peace,
Then let the nation's armaments increase
And multiply the arsenals and forts
To be prepared for challenge or caprice
Of foreign foes that plan with trained cohorts
To levy tribute on the richest of seaports.

VII

The ideal state is where the people's voice
Is heard and heeded for the common weal,
Not where conscripted troops, the despot's choice,
Implant subservience with an iron heel,
From whose oppression there is no appeal;
To rule by right divine is feudal creed
Founded on myth, by monarchs urged with zeal
To thwart the hopes for equal rights that feed
On fruits of Liberty and Learning's mingled seed.