

# THE SPECTATOR

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## POETRY.

### A SONG FOR AMERICAN CHILDREN IN PRAISE OF JOHNNY APPLESEED.

(BORN, 1775. DIED, 1847.)

I.—OVER THE APPALACHIAN BARRICADE.\*

In the days of President  
Washington,  
The glory of the nations,  
The weirdest, blackest clouds  
blew west,  
Crossed the Appalachians,  
And turned to snow and coats of  
sleet  
In the forest.  
Hay and oats and wheat blew  
west,  
Crossed the Appalachians,  
Found the glades of rotting  
leaves, the soft deer pastures,  
The farms of the far-off future,  
In the forest.  
Ashes and poisonous dust blew  
west,  
Crossed the Appalachians,  
Turned to tremendous ferns and  
toadstools  
In the forest.  
Bees blew west,  
Crossed the Appalachians,  
Buzzed and stung and blundered,  
Stored with endless sweet the  
hollow trees  
For the big brown bears  
Of the forest.  
Stripedest, kickingest kittens  
escaped,  
Caterwauling "Yankee doodle  
dandy,"  
Renounced their poor relations,  
Crossed the Appalachians,  
And turned to tiny tigers  
In the humorous forest.  
Chickens escaped  
From farmyard congregations,  
Crossed the Appalachians,  
And turned to amber trumpets  
On the ramparts of our Hoosier's  
nest and citadel,  
Millennial heralds  
Of the mazy forest.  
Gloomy, mooney calves broke  
loose, wobbled west,  
With misty observations  
Crossed the Appalachians,  
And turned to red-eyed buffalo  
bulla  
Of the forest.  
Pigs broke loose, scrambled west,  
Scorned their loathsome stations,  
Crossed the Appalachians,  
Turned to roaming, foaming wild  
boars  
Of the forest.  
The smallest, blindest puppies  
toddl'd west,  
While their eyes were coming  
open,  
And, spreading devastations,  
Crossed the Appalachians,  
Barked, barked, barked,  
At the glow worms and the lightning  
bugs,  
And turned to ravening wolves  
Of the forest.  
Colts jumped the fence,  
Snorting "Yankee doodle  
dandy,"  
With gastronomic calculations  
Crossed the Appalachians—  
The east walls of our citadel—  
And turned to gold-horned uni-  
corns,  
Feasting in the succulent blue-  
grass pastures  
Of the forest.  
Loveliest, haughtiest swans and  
peacocks flew west,  
And, despite soft derivations,  
Crossed the Appalachians,  
And turned to blazing warrior  
angels  
Of the forest.  
Crazy parrots and canaries flew  
west,  
Drunk on Maytime revelations,  
Crossed the Appalachians,  
And turned to delirious, flower-  
dressed fairies  
Of the lazy forest,  
Singing the ways  
Of the ancient of Days  
And the "old continentals,"  
In their ragged regimentals,"  
With bard's imaginations  
Crossed the Appalachians. . . .  
And  
A boy  
Blew west,  
And with prayers and incanta-  
tions,  
And "Yankee doodle dandy,"  
Crossed the Appalachians,  
And was "young John Chap-  
man,"  
Then, "Johnny Appleseed,  
Johnny Applesed,"  
Chief of the fastnesses, dappled  
and vast,  
In a pack on his back,  
In a deer-hide sack,  
The beautiful orchards of the  
past,  
And the ghosts of all the forests  
and the groves,  
In that pack on his back,  
In that tallman sack,  
Seeds and tree-souls, precious  
things,  
Feathered with microscopic  
wings,  
Dreams of grapes and red rasp-  
berries,  
To-morrow's peaches, pears and  
cherries,

\* This whole section to be recited as one musical unit, "in one long breath," but based on a soft slow pronunciation of the word "forest," and with a slight pause between each line.

And all the fruits the child-heart  
knows,  
And the apple, red with delight,  
Sun of his day and his night,  
The apple allied to the thorn,  
Child of the rose.  
Porches untrod of forest houses  
All before him, all day long,  
Yankee doodle still his song,  
Leaving behind august Virginia,  
Proud Massachusetts and proud  
Maine,  
Planting the trees that would  
march and train,  
On, in his name to the great  
Pacific,  
Like Birnamwood to Dunsinane,  
Johnny Applesseed swept on,  
Every shackel gone,

### II. THE INDIANS DO HIM GREAT HONOUR, BUT HE HURRIES ON ALONE.

Painted kings in the midst of the  
clearing  
Heard him ask his friends the egl  
To guard each planted seed  
and seedling.  
So he was a god, to the red-man's  
dreaming,  
And the chiefs brought treasures  
funny and fair,  
Trinkets indeed, and pipes and  
guns,  
Beads and furs from tent and  
lair,  
Dyed feathers in his hair,  
Hailed him with austere delight,  
Johnny Applesseed, oak of the  
night.  
While the late snow blew from  
far Lako Erie,  
Scourging red man, and forest  
denizen,  
All night long they made great  
medicine,  
All night long they made great  
medicine,  
For marvelling Johnny Apples-  
seed,  
Soul of the apple,  
Soul of the wild rose,  
Soul of the weed.

And as though his heart were a  
wind-blown wheat sheaf,  
As though his heart were a new  
built nest,  
As though their heaven-house  
was his breast,  
In swoop the snow-birds singing  
"glory"  
And I hear his bird heart beat  
its story,  
Hear yet how the ghost of the  
forest shivers . . .  
. . . Listen to the cry of the  
grey old orchards,  
Dim, decaying by the rivers,  
And the delicate ghosts of the  
bird wings beating,  
Listen to the cry of old Lako  
Erie,  
Listen to the spring-cries, death-  
cries, love-cries,  
And the Indian tom-toms never  
weary,  
Starting over,  
Never completing,  
Listen to the tom-toms beating,  
beating.

### III. JOHNNY APPLESEED'S OLD AOK.†

Long, long after,  
When settlers put up beam and  
rafter,  
They asked of the soil, "Who  
gave this fruit?"  
Who watched this fence till the  
seeds took root?  
Who gave these boughs?" they  
asked the sky,  
And there was no reply.  
Ah, he was far to the west, my  
friend,

Loving every sloezy brale,  
Loving every skunk and snake,  
Loving every leathery weed,  
Johnny Applesseed, J o h n n y  
Applesseed,  
Master and ruler of the bear-  
growing forest,  
The wild-cat forest,  
The rooster-trumpeting, buffalo-  
bellowing, boar-fencing forest,  
The unicorn-ramping forest,  
The angel-blast, fairy-enchanted  
forest,  
Stupendous and endless,  
Searching its perilous ways  
In the name of the Ancient of  
Days.

But he left their wigwags and  
their laws,  
By the hour of dawn was proud  
and stark,  
Kissed the Indian babes with a  
sigh,  
Went forth to live on roots and  
bark,  
Sleep in the trees while the years  
howled by,  
Slaying never a living thing,  
With the lean-necked eagles  
boxing and shouting,  
With the gorgeous turkey gob-  
blers laughing,  
Putting their feathers in his hair  
—Trading hearts—with all of  
them,  
He swept on winged, and wonder-  
crested,  
Loving even the serpent's sting,  
Bare-armed, bare-footed and  
bare-breasted.  
The maples shedding green-  
winged seeds,  
Vast chestnut trees with their  
butterfly nations,  
Called to his apple-seeds in the  
ground,  
The chipmunk turned a sumer-  
set,  
And the foxes danced the Vir-  
ginia reel,  
Forgotting winter's aggravations,  
And the daisy and dog-toothed  
violet  
With fanciful faint ostentations,  
Called to his apple-seeds in the  
ground.  
Hawthorn and crabthorn bent  
above him,  
And dropped their flowers in his  
night-black hair,  
And the soft lawns stopped for  
his porcupinations,  
And his black eyes shone through  
the forest glaze,  
And he plunged young hands  
into new-turned earth,  
And prayed each orchard boughs  
into birth,  
And he ran with the rabbit, and  
slept with the stream.‡

And so for us he made great  
medicine,  
And so for us he made great  
medicine,  
In the presidency of Washing-  
ton.

Near old Fort Wayne,  
At his long life's end,  
Self-scourged like a monk with a  
throne for wages,  
Stripped like the iron-souled  
Hindu sages,  
Draped like a statue, in strings  
like a scare-crow,  
They say his hat was an old tin  
wash-pan,  
But, worn in the love of the  
heart of man,

More sane than the helm of  
Tamerlane,  
Do you dream long tusks within  
his jaws?  
Do you think of his finger-nails  
like claws?  
In his farms that had nor mete  
nor bound  
Was he torn by the teeth of the  
furious years?  
Do you think of him ravening  
like a hound  
With terrible hydrophobia?

A genius with a statesman's  
game,  
Ecstatic, in America's name,  
From his birth till his death  
He breathed great breath,  
And a wiser, bolder scholar who  
knows?  
Hairy Ainu, wild Man of Borneo,  
Robinson Crusoe, Johnny  
Applesseed!  
Sowing wilderness lands to the  
far dim west  
With the apple, the sun of his  
burning breast,  
The apple allied to the thorn,  
Child of the rose . . .

### IV. THE DEATH OF

Twenty days ahead of the Indian,  
Twenty years ahead of the white  
man,  
At last the Indian overtook him,  
At last the Indian hurried past  
him,  
At last the white man overtook  
him,  
At last the white man hurried  
past him,  
At last his own trees overtook  
him,  
At last his own trees hurried  
past him.  
Many cats were tame again,  
Many ponies tame again,  
Many pigs were tame again,  
Many canaries tame again,  
And the real frontier was his  
sunburnt breast.  
From the frey core of that apple  
the earth  
Sprang apple-amaranths divine,  
Love's orchards climbed to the  
Heavens of the west,  
And snowed the gleaming sod  
with flowers,  
Farms hands of the terraces of the  
blaze  
Danced on the mists with their  
ladine fins,  
And Johnny Applesseed laughed  
with his dreams,  
And swam once more the ice-cold  
streams,  
And the doves of the spirit  
swept through the hours,  
With doom calls, love-calls,  
death calls, dream-calls,  
And Johnny Applesseed, all the  
year  
Lifted his hands to the farm-  
filled sky,  
To the apple harvesters busy on  
high,  
And so, once more his youth  
began,  
And so for us he made great  
medicine,  
Johnny Applesseed, medicine  
man.

Washington buried in Virginia,  
Jackson buried in Tennessee,  
Young Lincoln dreaming in  
Illinois,  
And Johnny Applesseed, swift and  
free,  
Gnarled and strange, past  
seventy years,  
Still planted on, as though alone,  
Ohio and young Indiana,  
These were his lonely altar  
stone,  
Where still he burst out fresh and  
bono.  
He won each settler's wondering  
heart,  
Yet kept himself high-priest,  
apart,  
And so, for us, he made great  
medicine,  
Over all the new made Western  
map,  
Between Fort Wayne and Mas-  
sillon!  
In the four-poster bed Johnny  
Applesseed built,  
Autumn rains were the curtains,  
autumn leaves were the quilt.  
He laid him down sweetly, and  
slept through each night  
Like a bump on a log, like a stone  
washed white.

### JOHNNY APPLESEED.\*

Then the sun was that turned-up  
barrel,  
Out of which their apples rolled,  
Down Jacob's ladder,  
Thumping across the gold,  
A ballot box in each apple,  
An angel in each apple,  
Great high schools in each apple,  
Great colleges in each apple,  
American farms in each apple,  
A state capital in each apple  
That touched the forest mould,  
Like scrolls and like bolts of silk  
He saw the fruits unfold,  
And the boughs bent down with  
their alchemy,  
Perfumed air, and thoughts of  
wonder.  
And the dew on the grass, and  
his own cold tears  
Were one in brooding mystery,  
Though Death's loud thunder  
came upon him,  
The boughs and the proud  
thoughts ruled the thunder,  
And he saw our nation, each  
state a flower.  
Each petal a park for holy feet,  
With wild lawns merry on every  
street!  
And there stood by his side, as he  
died,  
As he faced the west, and the sun,  
Buddha, St. Francis,  
No others could praise him,  
They were there in the name of  
the Ancient of Days.  
Hear the lazy woods murmuring,  
Bays and laves whispering,  
From Michigan to Texas,  
California to Maine,  
Listen to the eagles, screaming,  
calling!—  
"Johnny Applesseed, J o h n n y  
Applesseed,"  
There by the doors of old Fort  
Wayne,

YACHEL LINDRAY.

\* This section to be recited in a whisper to a delicate slow drum-beat.

† Still in the manner of an incantation, but not whispered, and all in rhythmic relation to the last three lines of the section.

‡ Let the recitation of this portion of the narrative be to the tune of those last three lines.

§ With the manner of incantation still continued unbroken, and building towards the rhythm of the phrase, "a stone washed white."

\* This entire section in the open oratorical manner of a funeral eulogy. † The only loud lines in the poem. To the same rhythm as the close of the Indian section.