

UPON LOOKING AT FRENCH'S "JOHN HARVARD"

by

Marion Manning Hiers

Millions rise ever to call your name blest,
Brave Pioneer, who once sailed to the West,
Leaving sweet memories of Avon and Thames,
Choosing for values intrinsic fair gems
Of liberty, freedom of worship and speech,
The passion to lift and the chance to beseech
The five thousand colonists settling the Bay
To follow that One who is Light, Truth and Way.
Scholar and gentleman, lover of books,
Circumspect cleric of delicate looks,
When thirty short summers had scarce passed you by,
Like the frail autumn leaf, you seemed destined to die;
And tho you succumbed to the mists of the fen,
Your spirit indomitable lives among men.

Deftly the sculptor has sought to disclose
Your image ideal cast in bronze for its pose.
Your skull cap, knee breeches and full, flowing cloak
One's thoughts of the Puritan clergy evoke.
Your long flowing locks frame a face so benign -
A countenance glowing with fire all-divine.
What grave meditation, John Harvard, I pray,
Lays claim to your thoughts in a land far away?
Of Tabard or Bear's Head or Thames' silver stream,
Saint Saviour's, Emmanuel, or Globe do you dream?
Perhaps it's that wilderness centuries past,
From which you envisioned a future surpassed
By none which the sages had named in their tome,
With the glory of Greece and the grandeur of Rome.

Your gift so munificent made long ago,
Sparked first in our great lamp of knowledge its glow;
For truly, the breath of your soul's divine fire
Gave birth to a flame that will never expire.
This great Alma Mater, long bearing your name,
Has sent forth her sons everywhere to proclaim
Advancement of learning, belles-lettres, with stress
On science and art, and true godliness.
Long after patina's crust has held sway,
And silvery-rain chlorides have wrought their decay,
Your fame will live on while the Charles waters roll,
Whispering sweet requiems unto your soul.
O true Benefactor, devoid of all pelf,
You've builded a monument unto yourself!

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attending Harvard in August, 1953

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