

Wants of Man

John Quincy Adams (1767-1848)

*"Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long."
'Tis not with me exactly so;
But 'tis so in the song.
My wants are many and, if told,
Would muster many a score;
And were each wish a mint of gold,
I still should long for more.*

*What first I want is daily bread-
And canvas — backs — and wine
And all the realms of nature spread
Before me, when I dine.
Four courses scarcely can provide
My appetite to quell;
With four choice cooks from France beside,
To dress my dinner well.*

*What next I want, at princely cost,
Is elegant attire:
Black sable furs for winter's frost,
And silks for summer's fire,
And Cashmere shawls, and Brussels lace
My bosom's front to deck-
And diamond rings my hands to grace,
And rubies for my neck.*

*I want (who does not want?) a wife-
Affectionate and fair;
To solace all the woes of life,
And all its joys to share.
Of temper sweet, of yielding will,
Of firm, yet placid mind-
With all my faults to love me still
With sentiment refined.*

*And as Time's car incessant runs,
And Fortune fills my store,
I want of daughters and of sons
From eight to half a score.*

*I want (alas! Can mortal dare
Such bliss on earth to crave?)
That all the girls be chaste an fair,
The boys all wise and brave.*

*I want a warm and faithful friend,
To cheer the adverse hour;
Who ne'er to flatter will descend,
Nor bend the knee to power —
A friend to chide me when I'm wrong,
My inmost soul to see;
And that my friendship prove as strong
For him as his for me.*

*I want the seals of power and place,
The ensigns of command;
Charged by the People's unbought grace
To rule my native land
Nor crown nor scepter would I ask
But from my country's will,
By day, by night, to ply the task
Her cup of bliss to full.*

*I want the voice of honest praise
To follow me behind,
And to be thought in future days
The friend of human kind,
That after ages, as they rise,
Exulting may proclaim
In choral union to the skies
Their blessings on my name.*

*These are the Wants of mortal Man-
I cannot want them long,
For life itself is but a span,
And earthly bliss — a song.
My last great want — absorbing all —
Is, when beneath the sod,
And summoned to my final call,
The Mercy of My God.*



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