

**CHILD OF THE
AMAZONS. AND
OTHER POEMS**

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Child of the Amazons. And Other Poems by Max Eastman

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MAX EASTMAN

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BY MAX EASTMAN
ENJOYMENT OF POETRY

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CHILD OF THE AMAZONS

The Amazons, according to a fable not without historic significance, were a tribe of female warriors who dwelt upon the river Thermodon, near the Euxine Sea. Annually, to perpetuate their race, they joined the men of a fighting nation upon Mount Caucasus; but of the offspring of these unions they saved only the girls. Their patron deity was the virgin Artemis, who is here identified with a star visible at dawn. Their queen, Penthesilea, was slain by Achilles in the fight at Troy.

CHILD OF THE AMAZONS

I

WHEN in the orient the almighty sun
Swings up his burning shield, and brandishes
A shaft of light against the leaguèd skies,
When the sea smoketh, and the forest oaks
Forget the storm gone over them and tremble
In the furious rising of the dawn—
Then join her councillors to counsel war!
Then throng they out unto the forest old,
The high and awful chamber of their queen,
Bringing in sinewy hands their iron spears,
Her captains—who are women old and wild,
Homeless, unchaste, worn with the battle anger
And the weight of weapons swung in heat.
No mirth, no music, no barbaric splendor
Doth explain them, or adorn their pride.
Scarred and unloved and terrible they are!
Yet not the experienced earth doth go thro' heaven
With a more tempered majesty and power,

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Than they go thro' the verdurous colonnades
And living aisles of their uncovered temple.

For where the trees unveil unto the dawn
A summit old, a windy sanctuary,
There doth the royal warrior summon them.
There by her savage altar doth she stand,
Immense with beauty, like a sexless god,
Imperial oaks lifting their arms behind her,
And the East nourishing her limbs with light.

She, as they come, doth lift her voice to them
In high and ardent music:

'O ye powers,
Free-clad, armed like the sun with javelins!
Deeds would become you well, so well arrayed!
Have ye not lingered by this stream enough,
And paced along the murmurous strand, and dozed,
And watched this bay yawning beside the sea?
O, are ye sick with hunger for events?
Then ye shall have them! Ye shall ride with me.