

Harvey C. Grumbine, Lebanon, Pa.
~~908 Gorgie Street~~
~~Cape May, New Jersey~~

LINCOLN

I

His steps were shadowed by the purple cat
Of melancholy, so that when he stood
Enwrapt in thought, she crept into his mood
Purring, or nonchalantly, when he sat,
Scrabbled up to his head to scout some bat
Of overconfidence, some huddling brood
Of vanities, some littered ruck of lewd
Fancies gendering underneath his hat.
It so befell his tongue, once rough, uncouth,
His hand once hard with labor, head unkempt,
Features of leather, rude as sun-baked clay,
Hefted the sceptre with a touch so smooth
Uttered an eloquence so sweetly dreamt,
His name is said when saints kneel down to pray.

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LINCOLN

II

This thing to this man, that to that, he gave,
Keeping his counsel to one purpose level,
Sifting the gold from dross, the good from evil,
Riding their thought, not being ridden save
Rider and ridden went his way. The wave
Of obloquy, the contumelious revel
Of gross abuse, the scorn, the lust, the cavil
Of hate, sleep now in the assassin's grave.
His was the artist's hand. Raw circumstance
Shaped to his touch. The granite of men's minds
Grew wax beneath his words. His homespun wit
Wove its defence against malevolence.
Even the shot that sped his death but finds
The sanction of his fame as part of it.

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III

"The world will little note nor long remember
What we say here." With ringing voice the words
Flew to the audience like singing birds,
But scarcely heard as in a sleeping ember
Is hardly seen the kindling flame. They clamber
With craning necks to look for swashing swords
And flash of cannon routing rebel hordes
Streaking the sky with smoky grey and amber.
Instead thereof there rose a croon of doves,
A murmuring of winds among the hills,
A moving of illimitable waters
Amid the plains, a stirring in the groves
Like summer rain bringing the peace that fills
Loud fields of battle hushed from many slaughters.

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IV

The crowd listened but heard not, ears keyed taut
To other tunes, ears deafened by the roar
Of rancor, hate and malice, ears no more
Remembering, save faintly, battles fought
In brotherhood against a foe who sought
In former days to close and bar a door
Across the path of freemen gone before -
Ears heedless of the common good they wrought; -
Hands eager to destroy, eyes blind with lust,
They little noted what he said that day
Nor guessed what angel trumpet touched his tongue,
Nor yet what just acclaim when they were dust
Would write those syllables in gold alway
And keep their power perennially young.

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LINCOLN

V

"Oh God! And have I given him up to die,
My husband!" Tenderly they laid his limbs
Down on the bed, the face, once bright with whims,
Backward upon the pillow; glazed the eye,
Twisted the furrowed cheek as asking Why
The sudden blow, and why the darkness dims
The torch around whose whitest ray now rims
The smoke of doom - the torch he held so high
For freedom. Forth his soul against the gloom
Fared hand in hand with Ossawatomie's,
The halo of their torches growing, streaming.
But Mary Todd at midday in a room
Shuttered against the sunshine, on her knees
Would light a candle* for her soul's redeeming.

HARVEY CARSON GRUMBINE.

*See William E. Barton's Life of Lincoln, II., p. 421