

Lincoln

Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2010 with funding from  
The Institute of Museum and Library Services through an Indiana State Library LSTA Grant

# IS LINCOLN DEAD?



JOHN GAYLORD DAVENPORT

It was the writer's privilege to be in New York City at the time of Mr. Lincoln's death, and during the exciting days that followed. He heard the dirge with which a thousand German singers welcomed the body of the illustrious President to the City Hall. Twice among the small hours of the morning he looked upon his face as it was exposed to view in the historic Governor's Room. He attended with uncounted thousands the funeral service held on Union Square, and tearfully watched the cortege that with muffled drums and subdued funeral marches swept through the city on its way to the final resting-place in Springfield, Ill. New York was draped in mourning and wonderful mottoes and quotations of every sort attempted to express the love and sorrow of the people.

## LINCOLN.

The world has said  
That Lincoln is dead,  
That his spirit has flown  
From the sorrows here known  
Where the pitiless tempest broke over his head.  
In fact we beheld him with fast-closed eyes  
Laid low on the couch whence he never should rise,  
And the cheeks were sunken, the lips were still,  
And the rugged hands were pale and chill,  
And there was no throbbing of pulse or breath,  
And we mournfully murmured, "This is death."

The walls about him portraits bore  
Of great and honored ones of yore:  
Founders, patriots, chiefs were there,  
Faces of rulers, grand and rare,  
Men who the city's praises share,  
And into his face they all looked down  
From the height of their splendor and renown,  
Looked inquiringly, "Why just here  
In this lustrous spot have they set thy bier?  
What is thy name?  
What is thy claim  
To a place with us, the sons of fame?"  
But he, the grandest man of time,  
Wakened not from his sleep sublime.

And past his couch the city swept,  
And strong men groaned and women wept:  
Adown hard faces stole the tear,  
For both the peasant and the peer  
With sorrow unrestrained drew near.  
From many a hand sweet blossoms fell,  
The giver's tender love to tell:  
Forget-me-nots of heavenly blue  
And violets of rarest hue:

Rose-red buds with lips apart,  
Lilies as pure as a maiden's heart,  
That told the tale of affection true,  
And whispered of deepest reverence due.  
But, underneath the robe of flowers  
He slept through all the mournful hours,

Nor murmured thanks for favors shown,  
Nor noted the ceaseless sob and moan.  
So silent he lay on his stately bed  
We knew that the princely man was dead.  
And forth they bore him with tender hands,  
Their swords enswathed in funeral bands,  
And dirges swelled and muffled drums  
Sadly announced, "The hero comes!"  
And heads were bared, and tears like rain  
Disclosed the city's love and pain.  
And History, in great Bancroft, told  
The story of the man enrolled  
With knights and conquerors of old.  
And Bryant sang a noble strain  
Of him who'd joined the martyr train:

"O slow to smite, and swift to spare,  
Gentle and merciful and just,  
Who in the fear of God didst bear  
The sword of power, a nation's trust!

Pure was thy life: its bloody close  
Hath placed thee with the sons of light,  
Among the noblest host of those  
Who perished in the cause of Right."

And while the thousands reverent stood,  
He passed from view, the great, the good.  
"Good night," a legend him addressed,  
"And angels wing thee to thy rest!"  
Homeward we turned with drooping head,  
And with our grief-choked voices said,  
"Our loved and honored chief is dead."

They bore him to the prairied west  
And left him to his glorious rest,  
Unrippled peace within his breast,  
Pillowed forever on the love  
Of earth below and heaven above,  
Honored as none has been before  
On this his native western shore.  
A mighty nation its blessing shed  
On its president, saviour, hero, dead.  
The years have passed as a troubled dream  
Since from our vision faded the gleam  
Of the splendid pageant, draped in woe,  
That bore our chief, when his work was done,

Toward his dreamless rest 'neath the setting sun,  
There to sleep while the centuries flow :  
And the world its dews of grief has shed  
O'er the marble couch of the mighty dead.

What have I said?  
Is Lincoln dead?  
For him hath there no trumpet blown?  
Has he no resurrection known?

If not, what means the vast display  
Upon each anniversary day  
Of music, oratory, praise?  
Why does the land with banners blaze?  
Why floats on every breeze his name,  
While glowing lips declare his fame  
And all his excellence proclaim?  
Why does the nation of to-day  
The broad and firm foundations lay  
Of noble structures that shall rise  
Far toward the sympathetic skies,  
And in their grand proportions tell  
To generations yet unborn  
Of him we know and love so well,  
Whose memory naught can more adorn?  
Why does our literature rehearse  
In stately period, glowing verse,

In terms as radiant as sincere,  
His simple and sublime career?  
And why does music pour its strains  
In melodies whose note enchains  
As it his regal worth maintains?  
Why turns the statesman to the page  
Illumined by his utterance sage,  
Seeking the vision he attained,  
The secret of the height he gained?  
Why both from lordly marble hall  
And from the smoke-stained cabin wall,  
Peer forth the features, rough yet kind,  
Bright with the luster of the mind  
That ever sought the truth to find,  
And softened by the generous heart  
That never knew deception's art?  
Why stays the nation from its toil  
To honor him who from the soil,  
Unaided by the claims of birth,  
Rose to the loftiest peak of earth?  
Why hastes the world to yield him praise,  
Marking his anniversary days  
As points of light that throw their rays  
Over time's oft unfruitful ways,  
Awaking in cathedrals old  
The stately words that half unfold  
The story that can ne'er be told,  
Bidding the flags of all the earth  
Unfurl their splendor for the birth  
Of him who came with matchless worth?  
Is so much thought and favor shed  
Over a hero, pulseless, dead?

No! Lincoln lives! His life intense  
The Union that he saved cements.  
Into the twentieth century strides  
This tallest, tenderest of our guides.  
It feels his genial, generous power,  
His spirit moulds its every hour.  
No loftier, dearer figure stands  
Within our circling oceans' strands:



Honored adown Pacific's shore  
As where Atlantic's billows roar:  
Praised where the lakes uplift their waves  
As where the gulf its corals laves:  
Beneath the Rockies' purple shade  
As in the sunny southern glade:  
In stately legislative halls  
Where conscience pleads and justice calls  
And light from hoary wisdom falls:  
Where commerce plans her purpose broad  
And guards from folly and from fraud:  
Where kings of industry combine  
With enterprise as shrewd as fine:  
Beneath the classic college dome  
As in the lowly laborer's home:  
With men of sterling weight and worth  
Mellowed by Lincoln's genial mirth:  
With fervid, glowing souls that still  
With Lincoln's melting pathos thrill,  
He lives, he moves, he gently sways  
Amid these twentieth century days.  
No spirit such as he can die  
For with him traits immortal lie,  
Traits linking him with brother man  
Of every race and tribe and clan,  
Traits linking him with God above  
In tenderest sympathy and love.  
We crown him as the finest bloom  
To which our soil has given room:  
The great Republic's grandest son,  
Both now and while the ages run.

Then on each anniversary day  
Let all to him their homage pay.  
Let north and south with joy combine  
Their richest honors to entwine,  
And in their wealth his soul enshrine.  
Let east to west his growing fame  
By lightning messenger proclaim,  
While prairie vast with myriad strings  
His lofty life and labor sings,

And ocean waves their chorus blend  
To liberty's undying friend.  
And far abroad, in sunrise lands,  
Where proudly now our flag expands,  
With stars preserved by Lincoln's hands,  
Let those emancipated know  
To whom their glorious boon they owe,  
While sovereigns all in him behold  
A monarch of superior mould.

Kentucky, well be thou elate,  
Our honored Lincoln's native state!  
And Illinois, a holy trust  
Is thine to keep his sacred dust!  
America, exult and sing  
And praises lift to heaven's King,  
For that a century ago  
A priceless gift He did bestow,  
Whose worth, while centuries onward flow  
More and more fully earth will know.



71.2009.084.03722

