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LINCOLN  
AND  
ANN RUTLEDGE

An Idyllic Epos of the Early North-West.

SOUVENIR

of Abraham Lincoln's Birth-Day, 1912

BY

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# Lincoln and Ann Rutledge.

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## Book First.

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### *New Salem.*

List to the clang of the bell with its clamorous  
trills from the belfry,  
Rollicking round the little red schoolhouse  
perched on the hillock,  
Calling together the town to the resonant  
clack of its clapper,  
Tinkling far over the valley its silvery un-  
dulations,  
Till it drops to a warble in tune with the  
Sangamon's ripple,  
'And in a whisper of music it dies on the dis-  
tant prairie.

Hark! how it breathes its last breath in melodious carols concentric,  
Weaving with wavelets of sound the tremulous heart of the hearer,  
Who in harmonious throbs for a moment floats over the border  
Till he is rapt to the rhythm of spheres in chorus majestic,  
Feeling afar the cosmical echo of ancient creation,  
When the sun and the moon and the stars were singing together.

Now the tongue of the bell has lisped its mellifluous message,  
And has enwreathed in its tenderest rounds the listening farm-house  
To the first milestone from town at the prayerful calm of the noon-tide;  
Even the ox of the field knows it well, and looks up from his grazing,  
While the dog in response will utter a howl from the barnyard,  
And the big chanticleer will perch on the top of his dunghill,  
Strutting amid his polygamous household and crowing defiance.

Meantime the farmer has quitted his labor of  
    cradling the harvest,  
And the raking and sheaving and shocking  
    the sheaves of the grainfield;  
Soon he has saddled old sorrel and starts on  
    a jog to the village  
Where he will meet all his neighbors and lis-  
    ten to Abraham Lincoln  
Telling the manful task of the time in drollery  
    storied,  
How the migration of peoples has swept from  
    the East to the Westland,  
Bringing the dawn of a world which is new  
    in the line of the ages,  
Piloting over the prairies the passage of civ-  
    ilisation.

Gathered already in arguing groups are the  
    chiefs of the township,  
Through their talk oft buzzes the name of  
    President Jackson,  
Now the well-head of words for every tongue  
    in the Nation,  
Who had the power of doing the deed attuned  
    to the folk-soul,  
Also of writing his name on the land in lum-  
    inous letters,  
Which would always relume in the flame of  
    party discussion.

Stout Ebenezer, the Squire, well rounded in  
brain and in body,  
Right decider of lawsuits, the voice of the  
village's justice,  
Strides up the knoll to the well-sweep and  
dips out a drink of fresh water,  
With the new gourd which hung at the well  
in front of the schoolhouse.  
Worthy ambition was his: to be the commun-  
ity's builder,  
And overseer self-appointed in charge of the  
general welfare;  
With him are talking in shirt sleeves two  
workmen of handicraft clever,  
Gray-haired William the wainwright, and  
big-thewed Peter the blacksmith,  
Both of them integral men of the town's best  
communal spirit.

Doctor Palmetto was present, snapping satir-  
ical flashes  
Openly at the whole world which slyly includ-  
ed himself, too,  
Chiefly, however, at Lincoln he fired his bat-  
tery scornful.  
He was the one only man in the town who  
had studied at college,  
Crumbs of his lore he strewed in his talk, for  
instance, the names of the muscles.

Grave James Rutledge failed not, erst the  
community's founder,  
Aged but lofty in mien and retaining his chi-  
valrous manner,  
Father of blooming Ann, the rarest rose of  
the village;  
And she also had come to see and to hear  
with her parent  
Just this orator Lincoln, whose words had a  
heart in their cadence,  
While his tenderest tones would tremble in  
tune with her glances.

Soon the tillers had flocked from their toil  
on each side of the country,  
Blent with their spirit and speech still lay  
the great fight with the Indian,  
And their perils upon the frontier when the  
land was first settled,  
When the savage's tomahawk spared not even  
the suckling.  
Every man in the crowd had his valorous  
venture to tell of,  
How he waylaid and slew in his trap the  
treacherous red-skin,  
Or had driven him headlong over the wroth  
Mississippi.  
Living and throbbing in rage still rose the  
strife of the races,

Which enkindled the border in furious blazes  
of warfare  
For the lands of the Northwest, aye for the  
continent total.  
And that struggle each borderer bore in his  
bosom down deepest,  
Long in a line transmitted from father and  
grandfather also,  
E'en from the grandfather's father descend-  
ed the heritage hostile,  
Bringing the ancestor's feud from the shore  
of the distant Atlantic.

So the people assembled, still wrought up with  
memories warlike,  
And they had their own hero now present,  
Abraham Lincoln,  
Who had fought against Black Hawk, the  
reddest of all the red devils,  
Who had headed the volunteers valiant of  
Sangamon County  
Up to the foe's front line, but never got sight  
of an Indian.  
Him all the people had chosen as Captain in  
stress of their struggle,  
Thrice he enlisted to fight and stayed till the  
danger was over.

True pioneer, he was stamped with the traits  
of his fathers before him,  
Who had faced the frontier of their country  
for five generations,  
Ever in movement along with the stride of  
their race to the westward.  
Abraham Lincoln's grandfather also was Ab-  
raham Lincoln,  
Who had been slain by an Indian's bullet  
shot from an ambush;  
Still that bullet would throb at times in the  
brain of the grandson,  
Making him feel the vengeance of race e'en  
when he resisted,  
For the two sides, to avenge and forgive,  
lurked deep in his nature.  
All the folk were flocking around him, whose  
soul he well represented,  
Getting ready to vote for themselves in vot-  
ing for Lincoln,  
For he had lived just their life, and gone  
through their fiery trial.  
Soldiers were there who bragged of the deeds  
of their valorous captain,  
And repeated the stories he told in the lull  
of the campaign;  
Thus were tripping the tongues of a hundred  
that day in New Salem,  
All were electioneering and fighting anew  
the old battles.

Look! a character weaves of a sudden around  
     through the masses,  
 That was Jack Kelso, good fellow general,  
     yet good for nothing,  
 Never once missing his chance at a verse or  
     his turn at the bottle,  
 Long since known to the town as its poet,  
     and laureled its rhymesmith,  
 Needful vocation as well as that of the doc-  
     tor or blacksmith,  
 Though he must work for nothing and add his  
     own board to the bargain,  
 Poesy being its own sweet reward on the San-  
     gamon sluggish.

But forget not the man, the living conduit of  
     knowledge  
 For the young and the old of the village, the  
     schoolmaster Graham;  
 To whose name the true title had slid down  
     the ages from Homer—  
 Mentor of yore, the appearance divine of the  
     Goddess of Wisdom.  
 To the youth who was longing to learn of the  
     deeds of the fathers.  
 Mentor Graham, the master, all named him  
     by right of his office,  
 Frontier pedagogue, bearing the torch of the  
     past to the future



Right on the line of division between them,  
the zone of their mingling;  
Charactered was he in word and in deed by  
his life on the border,  
With a gleam of prophecy in him, which  
shone resurrection,  
Nor were wanting some far-back flashes of  
sage superstition,  
Which believed still the fact of the Fates and  
retributive Furies.  
Though he knew no Greek, some scraps he  
had picked up of Latin  
From an old grammar he learned once by  
heart, and from an old law book;  
But as he sauntered one day deep-sorrowed  
around in a graveyard,  
From a tombstone he took and treasured the  
word most real of his soul's faith—  
That was the word he chose for the motto in-  
scribed on the school-bell  
When it rose perched on the belfry to ring  
overhead to the town-folk—  
Hoary device with letters antique in the old  
Roman language,  
Word invoking a weird meditation in all who  
might see it,  
Mystical name of a world that seems going  
yet coming—RESURGAM.

## Book Second.

---

### *Doctor and Squire.*

“What is the matter? This town has already  
slowed up to a standstill;  
Climbing its hill-side it stops—why, even it  
starts to go backward—  
Sick is the place, I say, with a mortal malady  
dying.”

Wroth was the mood of the Doctor, whisking  
his tongue like a skalpel,  
Loving with words to draw blood on the  
world, as if lancing a patient—  
Doctor Palmetto, lettered leech of the San-  
gamon Valley,  
Quick to spy the disease and delighting to  
dwell on the symptoms,

Be the seat of disorder in man or the State  
or the Nation.  
But just now he was feeling the pulse of ailing  
New Salem,  
Little town of the border, once eager to be  
the great city,  
Dreaming to rival old Rome in its swell of  
an empire's ambition,  
But with a droop in its hope now unable to  
take a step further;  
Still the Doctor's fast breath kept winnow-  
ing words like a wind-mill,  
Which could never be stayed till the whiz of  
its wheel was expended;  
Thus he pumped up the past in speeches of  
sore reminiscence:

“Three years ago I reached here—what a  
life on this hill-top!  
Houses sprang up over night, the mechanic  
and merchant  
Hurried hitherward after the throng of the  
onstreaming people;  
In the wake of their wains which sailed one  
after the other  
Over the prairie's green ocean, I floated  
prospecting my future,  
Which uplifted itself a colossus just where  
I stand now,

Bidding me halt on this spot and tie down  
my fate to this hillock.  
That was soon after I quitted with honors  
my Medical College,  
With a diploma which scoffing me looks from  
its frame in my office;  
Maledict be the day I strode up yon slope to  
your village!"

Swiftly the storm-stressed Doctor, through  
the tense strain of his feeling,  
Gave a spank with the flat of his hand to the  
innocent pine-box  
Which he sat on to argue in front of the store  
with the town-folk.  
Yet he told not all—he kept hidden the point  
of his story,  
Deftly enwreathing it round with excuses and  
far-fancied reasons  
Why he suddenly stopped one day at New  
Salem and hung out his shingle.  
Business he won and its prize—and still he  
proclaimed himself loser;  
Everybody suspected the cause, though keep-  
ing it silent,  
Lest if, but breathed, it might swell up the  
wind to a prairial cyclone.

To him stood talking the Squire of the town,  
Ebenezer, well-rounded  
With five decades of dinners of hominy, corn-  
pone, and turkey.  
Days of youth he had seen in Kentucky, that  
lucky Kentucky  
Eloquent ever through lips of her men and  
looks of her women.  
Now he was judge of the township, the even  
dispenser of justice  
Unto the people, who never disputed his law  
or his judgment.  
Weighing his words in the scales of his of-  
fice, the Squire responded:

“Nay, I cannot agree with you there, if you  
please, my good Doctor;  
You have given one side of the case, you being  
the plaintiff.  
Hear now the other which Justice demands  
should not be forgotten,  
Let me, though I be judge, state the side of  
the voiceless defendant.”  
But the Doctor could hardly be stayed in his  
argument’s flood-tide,  
He uprose from the store-box and stressed  
his speech with his gestures:

“Well I remember the day I arrived—the  
town and the country  
Had assembled and perched on the bluff  
overlooking the river;  
Up the full channel came puffing in labor tri-  
umphant a steamboat  
Named the Talisman, which in the folds of  
its vaporous magic  
Played before every eye on the hilltop the  
phantom colossal  
Of a great city here destined to rise on this  
river.  
Lofty a Capitol grew in the clouds with its  
dome and its columns,  
First embracing the town and the county  
within its small circuit,  
Which kept widening, widening, till the whole  
State it had rounded,  
Then beyond and beyond, when at last it en-  
circled the Nation,  
While the Sangamon swelled to the roar of  
the huge Mississippi,  
Bearing aloft on its bosom a spectral fleet  
to the Ocean.  
Such was that Talisman, Father of Lies, in  
the form of a steamboat,  
Foaming up stream and dancing delusion be-  
fore all the people.  
Lincoln was pilot, plying its paddle against  
the high waters,

Him too magnified bravely that magical Tal-  
isman's witch-work  
Throwing his shadow up to the Capitol build-  
ed in cloudland,  
Till he rose to be pilot supreme of the storm-  
girt welkin,  
High overarching us all to the bound of the  
farthest horizon.  
That was a specter at which the whole peo-  
ple ran mad with delusion,  
Riotous fantasy suddenly routed and captived  
man's reason,  
And some still feel the spell of that ghost  
in our sinking New Salem."

Then the Doctor would snort a contemptuous  
sniff through the nostrils,  
Jealous, twice jealous he was of the tall  
young man of the people,  
For between them rivalry rose for the vil-  
lage's honors  
All of which focused to fire in the glance of  
a beautiful maiden.

Forceful shot the retort of the Squire, the  
just Ebenezer,  
Passionate friend of the townsmen's hero,  
Abraham Lincoln:

“Aye, that pilot we soon are intending to  
 start for Vandalia—  
 Capital now of the State, and yet but a step  
 in the ascent—  
 That he may rise with the years to the stat-  
 ure which we have dreamed him.  
 Candidate he has been named for making the  
 laws of the people;  
 Soon the election comes off—and you must  
 vote for him, Doctor.”

But disdain gave a twitch to the lips of Doc-  
 tor Palmetto,  
 Aristocratic disdain for Lincoln, the popular  
 fabler,  
 Who already was famed for his art in spin-  
 ning a story,  
 And for the wit of his ways in winning the  
 love of the people.  
 But another's love he had won, and that was  
 the trouble—  
 That was the point of the poison which stung  
 in the soul of the Doctor.  
 Still he continued his travail of chewing the  
 cud of his wormwood,  
 In his own pain he somehow could take a  
 malevolent pleasure,  
 Willing to show all his torture of heart by  
 jealousy's demon,



Making himself unhappy today by memories  
bitter.

So he spoke up again, while circling the glo-  
bular Squire there

On the pine-box reclining at peace with him-  
self and the world, too:

“Never since then has a steamboat been seen  
here—never!

Rapidly that one had to retreat when the wa-  
ters receded.

With it has vanished the air-built Capitol  
lofty of cloudland,

Which then seemed on the point of dropping  
to earth at New Salem.

Do you know the sight of that boat was my  
future undoing?

'Twas the illusion which charmed me to stay  
in this dolorous village.”

Here he took off his hat and thrust it, re-  
peating his statement,

Down on the pine-box till it was broken to  
creases not to be smoothed out,

While the face of the Squire had put on a  
quizzical silence,

As if secretly doubting, in spite of the em-  
phasis double,

For Ebenezer often had heard of a contrary story.

Then replacing his hat, the upstrung Doctor continued:

“I had just come from a bit of a town by the Michigan lakeside,  
Eager to win the topmost prize in life’s lottery regnant,  
And I chose for my fate New Salem instead of Chicago!”

Whereat he toned down his nerves in a taciturn stride round the store-box,  
For there throbbed in his heart the true motive for his selection,  
Which he would never let out, although it were couched on his tongue-tip.  
Soon he returned to his words, still ensconcing his thoughts in his bosom:

“Both towns then were the same in size with similar outlook,  
But see their difference now in grappling scythed Time by the forelock,  
And in outspeeding the slash of his weapon, the doom of the mortal!  
But that Talisman lured me to choosing the dwarf instead of the giant,

Dazzling my fantasy into a cataract golden of  
fortune  
Which fell pouring its treasure out of the  
future down on my pathway.  
Hope herself I dreamed I saw perched on  
the top of this hillock,  
Giving me many a courteous smile as if she  
would woo me:  
But the prize of my life I have lost, e'en if  
I go elsewhere,  
Never I can it recover—that upspring of  
heart I once felt here.”

So the Doctor complained, diagnosing the  
case of New Salem,  
Fallen out with himself and the world, he  
told his own ailment,  
All the pain of his town and his time in tone  
he reflected,  
While a personal tinge would color each word  
of his censure,  
And underneath disappointment outspoken  
lay something unspoken;  
Blaming the Talisman blameless, he only  
could blame what himself was.  
From the hot-blooded South he had come  
where thrives the Palmetto  
Stamping itself on the State of his birth as  
a seal with its symbol;

Bitterly he was the hater of President An-  
drew Jackson,  
In the Jacksonian town of good democratic  
New Salem,  
Valiant, vociferous hater, armed to the teeth  
for a word-war,  
Hence the citizens laughingly labeled him  
Doctor Palmetto,  
Loyal son of the State defying Old Hickory's  
power.

Won all the lore of his medical calling, his  
way he turned westward,  
Flinging his future into the flow of the peo-  
ple's migration  
To the wide West in the North, where dawned  
the new Nation.  
He was the one only man in the township who  
could read Latin,  
Which in odd bits of old Virgil he pompously  
mouthed to the rustics,  
Oft in response to Jack Kelso, the town's  
Shakespearean spouter,  
When he declaimed to the crowd at the cor-  
ner the bad dream of Gloster.  
But again the just Squire made ready to an-  
swer the Doctor,  
Balancing nicely the right on the edge of his  
tongue as a knife-blade,

Telling him not to impute his own fault to  
the fault of the village,  
And to see in himself the malady which he  
complained of.

But the Doctor upsprang as soon as the sen-  
tence was spoken,  
Cutting the air with forefinger pointed in  
throes of excitement,  
Quite foreclosing the lips of the Squire with  
passionate outburst,  
For he felt Ebenezer's sly thrust to the seat  
of his temper.

Thus at his country he hurled in a breath  
his thunderbolt final:

“I believe not only this town is going to  
pieces,  
Aye this Nation is breaking up into the units  
that made it,  
Those original States first joined will dissolve  
next this Union.”

Such was his thrust at the Squire who had  
pricked down into his heart's sore,  
Which, unconfessed, turned all of his words  
to a poignant confession.  
So with his woes he flooded the world from  
his perch at New Salem,

Spreading them over the land to the White-  
house in Washington City,  
Reading himself disappointed into the fate  
of his country.

Scarce outspoken had been the vibrant tones  
of the Doctor,  
When a neighboring farmer drove up to the  
store with his wagon,  
Catching on time the last fleet words of the  
passionate speaker.  
One of the wheels was untired and broken,  
another was shaky;  
While the old wain-bed crazily lopped and the  
harness was cranky.  
Excellent man was this farmer, yet bearing  
the stamp of the border,  
Born pioneer and bred, and so were his fath-  
ers before him.  
Long they had stood on the line dividing the  
red and the white man;  
Where that line would advance, the True-  
bloods also advanced there,  
Taking unbidden their place to the fore of  
the marching frontiersmen.  
Uncle George he was called, in full George  
Washington Trueblood.  
Telling his little misfortune, he snapped the  
thread of discussion :

“I was bringing to town some truck, some  
potatoes and pumpkins,  
Suddenly down went my wagon, and tossed  
me into a puddle,  
Now I am rolling around on three wheels, and  
instead of the fourth one  
See this pole of a hickory sapling which holds  
up the axle.  
It was Lincoln who came to me helping me  
out of my trouble;  
Somehow the tire quit the wheel, refusing to  
bind it together,  
One of the feloes slipped off from the spokes  
and left a big gap there,  
So that no rim ran round to fasten the rest  
of the feloes;  
Then I picked up the pieces and brought them  
along in my wain-bed.  
But that Lincoln I like whose knack is to come  
at the right time,  
Helpful he sprang to my aid from under the  
mulberry shade-tree  
Where on his bench he was sitting and talk-  
ing to lovely Ann Rutledge,  
Who then shot down the path to the Lady  
Eulalia Lovelace.  
Soon my load of eatable truck we piled by  
the roadside,  
Hiding it under a cover of leaves and of  
brambles we gathered;

It I hope still to market to you, if the hogs  
do not get it.

But this wagon I have to restore to a run-  
ning condition,

And I now scheme to make stronger than  
ever my wheel from its fragments.”

So the brave man would mend each rent in  
the garment of living,

And at the same time thriftily show the mind  
of the farmer.

See the Doctor turn cloudy with streaks of  
rubicund lightning

Flashing over his face at the praises of Abra-  
ham Lincoln.

Deeper still stirred him the news of that  
couple conversing together

Under the mulberry tree, the resort of the  
village’s lovers.

But he kept his hot heartburn unworded in  
spite of its torture,

Though a venomous sarcasm coiled on his  
lips for a moment,

Still he suppressed it in pride and feelingly  
spoke to the farmer:



“Bad is your luck today in this turn of the  
wheel, Uncle Georgie,  
Wheel of misfortune is yours and the world’s  
and ever keeps whirling—  
But it is common—common to you and to  
me and to all of us present,”  
Sighed sympathetic the Doctor for others,  
yet for himself, too;

“Also my cart—the truth I confess you—has  
gone all to pieces,  
And to the town itself has been lost not only  
its tire-ring  
But the hub and the spoke and the feloe of  
wood are now floating—  
Floating, methinks, each part by itself down  
the Sangamon’s stream-bed  
Into the mad Mississippi away to the limit-  
less Ocean—  
Aye, much else around me I see that is going  
to pieces.”

But right then the firm voice of the judge,  
just Squire Ebenezer,  
Who was calmly surveying the injured mem-  
ber before him  
Could be heard with gravity’s mien deliver-  
ing judgment:

“Easily all these parts can again be made  
 whole—and yet better—  
 By the wainwright William just yonder, with  
 help of his blacksmith;  
 Doctors they are of sick wheels, even able to  
 doctor the Doctor.”

But George Washington Trueblood—well  
 worthy his name and his namesake—  
 Pondered not only his wagon, but also he  
 thought of his country;  
 For as he came he caught the bodeful retort  
 of Palmetto,  
 Patriotic he answered the sneer of the cynical  
 critic:

“Do you know, as I trundled along, I thought  
 of our Nation  
 Holding together the States like a wheel by  
 the tire of the Union,  
 And I remembered your State which struck  
 at the bond that has bound us;  
 Some years ago that was, but still is working  
 the ferment.”

Fiery flushed the Doctor, his sensitive spot  
 had been tingled

By the sudden sharp prick of a tongue like  
the point of a needle,  
For he was born underneath the shade of the  
fan-leafed Palmetto,  
And its image seemed still to be blooming  
within his hot bosom  
As if planted amid the warm fens of the Caro-  
line sea-coast.

But Ebenezer the Squire, bright bringer of  
peace and of justice,  
Saw wrath rising between the two speakers,  
the Northern and Southern,  
And foreboding a war already between the  
two sections,  
Sprang right into the middle with words of  
mild mediation,  
Yet the strong lines of his visage gave them  
the force of a judgment:

“Come now, let us go down to the shop of  
William the wainwright  
Who can adjust so nicely the hub and the  
spoke and the feloe,  
That they all turn together as one whenever  
the wheel whirls.  
There we shall watch too the tire fresh-forged  
and new-banded of iron—

Iron which grapples the rotating members  
in grip adamantine,  
Bringing obedience unto the law like the roll  
of the planets.

Lincoln I think will be there, the big sledge  
he oft wields for the blacksmith,  
Circling his ponderous stroke on the anvil  
with swing of his arm's length,  
As did once the old Titan, whose fable I read  
in my Plutarch.

Possibly too a speech he will make us, and  
tell a new story,

Or a romance he may spin of adventure in  
war against Black Hawk—

Candidate popular soon to be sent to the next  
Legislature.”

But the Doctor failed not to spray out some  
jets of his gall-tongue,

Antipathetic he was to the people's own hero,  
tall Lincoln,

Who overtowered him far in stature as well  
as in temper,

Smaller the talent he owned, although his  
learning was greater.

Rumor too whispered around in the village  
that he was jealous,

And was looking at men and the world  
through love disappointed.

“Only two days ago I was called to prescribe  
for James Rutledge,”

So the Doctor began, intoning his utterance  
blandly,

“Who had been shaking with chills of bene-  
ficent Sangamon’s ague;

There I noticed fair Ann, his daughter, the  
village’s flower,

But not so blooming as when I beheld her  
the day I arrived here,

Nor so buoyant as when she engirdled the  
sword around Lincoln,

Loftiest, lankest Captain of words in the war  
against Black Hawk.

Absent-minded she seemed, with warring  
lines in her visage,

Spare of her eyes and stinted of smiles was  
the mien of the maiden,

She who once was so lively and lovely in cour-  
teous presence.

It is said her betrothed, for a year now gone  
on a journey,

Never has written her where he may be or  
what he is doing.”

Then the Doctor uprose from the pine-box  
and peered through the doorway:

“Look at this store paralytic, once leaping  
with life in its business,

Store of Abner the absent, ’tis sick of con-  
sumptive New Salem;

Many declare he has quit, forgetful of promise,  
or jealous,  
It is added that she has been shining her  
favor on Lincoln  
From the moment she clasped to his waist  
that sword-belt ancestral—  
He too with many an artful device is thrum-  
ming her heart-strings;  
She is not happy, I doubt she be healthy, filled  
with some soul-strife.  
Introverted was often her look as if in a  
struggle,  
Watching with sympathy double both sides  
of herself in a battle.”

So the shrewd Doctor tongued on in his bent,  
forecasting diseases,  
Giving a glimpse of himself as he dwelt on  
the troubles of others,  
Quite unable to quell into silence the fury prophetic.

Then they all looked down to the road of the  
Sangamon bottom,  
Seeing a line of white-covered wagons one  
after the other,  
As they threaded the flats and bended the  
bridge of the river.

“See yonder,” the Doctor broke in, “the  
great stream of migration  
Surges ahead to the broad Mississippi and  
possibly farther,  
Turning aside from our place with a scoff,  
not deigning to tarry  
Where no hope can be seen on the hill-top,  
bidding them hither.”

While the last word of the Doctor was pulsing  
its tune on the air-waves,  
Suddenly sounded the clang of the bell from  
the knoll of the school-house,  
In a kind of response, dingdonging the speech  
of the speaker,  
With a call to each child of the town to pre-  
pare for the future,  
And to each man of the town to keep himself  
young with new knowledge.  
When the Squire had heard the last echo  
whispering silence,  
Breathing its ghost tintinnabular into the  
sigh of the breezes,  
He peered over the valley afar and reflective-  
ly added:  
“Think! in their skull-pans uncombed those  
people are bearing the New World,  
Going forward to some young settlement, then  
again forward,

Ever creating afresh their free institutional  
     order,  
 Somehow driven by impulse to girdle the  
     earth with migration  
 From the far-off aforetime, bridging the past  
     to the present  
 In a long-linked chain made of towns whose  
     soul is their communal freedom.  
 Thus I came from Kentucky, my father thus  
     came from Virginia;  
 Still I remember the passage over the rough  
     Alleghenies,  
 And again I may start"—here he stopped the  
     push of his discourse,  
 Lest he might seem to relapse to the queru-  
     lous mood of the Doctor.  
 Then with a jolly round guffaw to which his  
     abdomen laughed echoes,  
 Up he sprang from the store-box, shaking  
     with life's satisfaction,  
 As he lipped in good-will strong words which  
     meant a decision:  
 " 'Tis enough! let us haste to the shop of Wil-  
     liam the wainwright  
 Who has a turn for splicing what's parted in  
     man or in matter,  
 And can feel in each stroke of his work the  
     beat of the world's soul.  
 Noble artisan is he, hating disease and divi-  
     sion,



Be it shown in the wheel of a wagon or mind  
of a mortal.”

Snapping his words the Doctor muttered an  
answer disdainful:

“I do not like him at all—that mad-eyed me-  
chanic and dreamer

Calling his shop in conceit philosophy’s home  
at New Salem;

Leave me alone here—nor can I abide the  
demagogue Lincoln,

Leader you praise him—misleader I damn  
him with all his flattering fables,

Tattered clown to the tatterdemalions, their  
sycophant silly.”

## Book Third.

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### *Wainwright and Blacksmith.*

Leisurely down the street from the store  
strolled Squire Ebenezer,  
Quite untuned at hearing his friends  
besmirched by the Doctor—  
Aye his two best friends and the two best  
men of the village—  
So he mused to himself about Lincoln and  
William the wainwright.

Following close at his side the sun-tanned  
tiller was driving  
His laborious team whose muscular bodies  
slow-stepping  
Ever were ready to play out a hearty full  
pull at each mud-hole.

On the rickety rim of his wayward wagon  
now balanced  
Farmer George Washington Trueblood  
turned and addressed his companion:  
“Yes, our Doctor is making his days all  
curdle to clabber  
From the sweet milk which Time, the old  
cow, lets drip from her udder.  
On his lips and his looks he dolefully wears  
a sour stomach,  
Life is a little too much for him here in our  
little New Salem,  
It were better he should before night set out  
for Chicago.  
Talent is his, but more highly esteemed by  
himself than by others;  
Learning he has too, and shows it, as when  
to us boors he talks Latin,  
But if I dare diagnose the Doctor himself  
diagnosing,  
In his heart turns acid a droplet of love dis-  
appointed;  
Best of the medicines which he can take is to  
flee to Chicago.”

Slowly weighing his words Ebenezer gave  
his decision:  
“Champion fault-finder always the Doctor  
has been—he was born so—

Childhood's balsamy breath, methinks, he  
     drew discontented,  
 Reared in the shadow disdainfully cast by  
     the haughty Palmetto—  
 The dissatisfied tree and blaming the rest of  
     the forest.  
 Then his profession is lure to hunt out the  
     malady hidden  
 Till he loves the pursuit of disease and loves  
     the disease too;  
 Keen espial of ill turns character, yea his  
     religion."

Thus one side of the case the Squire had  
     rightfully set forth,  
 But on the other side also he spoke a fair  
     word, as his wont was—  
 Since he could not help pleading for plaintiff  
     as well as defendant:  
 "Still I confess the critical speech of the  
     Doctor is true too,  
 As the medicine always is bitter, e'en if it  
     cure you;  
 No puffing Talisman ever will creep up again  
     through the channel  
 Flushed by yon Sangamon streamlet, so  
     shrunk is it now to our vision;  
 That fair dream has flitted far-off with the  
     treacherous steamboat,

And the canal is not going to flow this way  
by our doorsteps.  
How the great city we saw is downfallen even  
from cloudland!  
And our air-built Capitol's dome with its col-  
umns of marble  
Seems to be sportively waltzing away from  
us on the horizon,  
Circling around northeast as if ready to  
settle at Springfield,  
While we now have to sweat to keep anchored  
to earth our few cabins."

Then the Squire secretively muffled his voice  
for a moment  
As if unwilling to hear the words he was  
going to utter:  
"List, I feel in New Salem herself the sly  
throb of an impulse  
Growing the wings of migration once more  
for a flight to the westward;  
Still not dead are we yet, though unwell as  
the Doctor declares us—  
Only a Sangamon ague"—the Squire was  
suddenly silent,  
For he heard two strokes of the resonant clap  
of the school-bell  
Calling the time of the day from its belfry  
to gather the children,

While his bosom beat loud in response to its  
musical air-waves,  
Which then echoed his deed in helping the  
folk of the future  
That they possess their ancestral estate of  
man-building knowledge.  
But the farmer, mindless of mishap, broke  
out in a rapture,  
As there fell on his ear the sounds from the  
shop of the wainwright:

“How all roads of this country are lining  
just into one center!  
That is the magnet now turning to hope each  
lift of the footstep.  
Here is the shop of the wainwright, whose  
heart seems the heart of this village;  
As I look over the land, the highways are  
forming a network  
Like the outspreading spokes of a hub—that  
hub is this workshop,  
Where is the home of the wheel, the racer  
and bearer of burdens.  
What an upspring I take in leaving the look  
of the Doctor!  
Somehow I feel as if I am passing from  
ailing to healing.  
Tell me, why is it I enter a presence renew-  
ing, whole-making?

And a welcome within me I hear to the weal  
of this workshop?

Now I can draw a fresh thought that is sent  
from the soul of all being,

And I feel all misfortune, suffering, death to  
be part in my wholeness."

Even a breath in sign of relief he suggestively  
puffed forth.

Then replied Ebenezer, the cool, to the outburst  
rhapsodic:

"Yes, the people throng hither from over  
the bound of the township,

From the circumference streaming along each  
road to the center,

Loving the workshop, loving the workman,  
old William the wainwright,

For the excellent handicraft which is the  
pride of his spirit,

Eager to gaze at the musical strokes of the  
whirl of his fore-arm,

As he tunes into form with his tools the refractory  
oakwood,

Quite as if singing a strain of the secret of  
Nature by motion,

Which seems able to utter such thoughts far  
better than words can."

Both of the visitors gazed at that picture of  
new revelation,  
And they hearkened elate the harmonious hit  
of the hammer,  
Which kept time in the heart along with the  
bulge of the biceps.

But the Squire looked up at a log in the wall  
of the workshop:

“Do you know,” he musingly spoke, “it was  
I who cut down these—timbers,

Rolling them up to the site of this shop by  
the help of the handspike?

Thus the first seven log-cabins were built with  
floors made of puncheons,

Then we dammed up the river in summer,  
erecting the gristmill.

That was the birth of the infant New Salem  
—scant five years old now—

But in a day it seemed born and full-grown,  
as if planted from heaven;

Leaped up the shop and the store with the  
round red school-house as center,

And the best bell I could find in St. Louis I  
bought for its belfry,

Sweetly calling each child of the village to  
come to its lesson.

That the first duty I deemed, the schooling of  
all of our children.



Soon the increase of people ran up with the  
coming of babies,  
So we have young George Washingtons  
growing along with you old ones,  
Jeffersons many come bouncing to light  
among us Virginians,  
Several Andrew Jacksons have lately arrived  
to abide here,  
Lustily feeling at home in good democratic  
New Salem.  
So we still keep alive our great men reborn  
on the border.  
See! This log I remember—the adze slid  
from it and cut me.”

There the Squire hit a beam with his cane  
as they stood at the doorway,  
And he showed proudly the scar once  
stamped as a seal on his body.  
Then he spoke out more freely, delighting to  
hear his own accents:  
“Do you know, Uncle George, I would like  
to do all of it over—  
Build another community, also set it to run-  
ning,  
Till it would march of itself on the road I  
had made to the future;  
Some such passion lurks in me, again it may  
rise to the surface.”

As the twain trod over the sill, they were  
smit with a wonder;  
Silent they stood in a spell that bound for a  
minute their footing,  
And untongued them totally, viewing with  
vision voiceless  
Sunrise in an old man whose face overflowed  
with his radiance,  
Plowed in luminous furrows and sown with  
the light of his soul-world.  
Raying a wreath of gray hair which bristled  
with sunbeams his forehead  
He would shake out his heart in the shock of  
each laboring hand-stroke  
While his eye scintillant of soul would shoot  
forth its sparkles,  
Flamed with the cosmical thought of creation  
unwordable ever;  
Radiant every act was of love, of love the  
All-maker.

He was so sunk in his work that he hardly  
looked up at the comers:  
This was William the wainwright, making  
the wheel of a wagon.  
Into the hub the stiff spokes had already  
been cunningly fitted,  
Each jagged out by itself and thrust in  
another direction

Off from the rest of its mates, repellent it  
    seemed of its kindred,  
All in a flight from themselves and the center  
    from which they had started,  
Somehow striving to shun in a scorn society's  
    order,  
Fiercely refusing to join in the task of co-  
    operation.  
Each individual spoke of the hub shot defi-  
    antly outwards  
Seeking the rim of all space, but finding the  
    zero eternal.

Mark now the wainwright becoming a look  
    of affection enfeathered,  
As he joins them around in a circle with mal-  
    let and wimble,  
Fitting the feloes into a ring which clasps  
    them together,  
Shaping to one all the parts which hated  
    before, and divided.  
How he loved his vocation as godlike and  
    wrought in its spirit!  
By his labor he lived, still more his labor he  
    lived for.  
Food it brought to his body, food it gave to  
    his soul too;  
Making the wheel of a wagon, the world he  
    seemed to be making.

In his workshop he was himself the Creator's  
own image,  
And the whole universe saw he rise rounded  
to strokes of the Builder,  
Aye the big round of the universe whirling  
attuned to the wain-wheel  
While it would whelm all space to its sweep  
both inward and outward,  
Cycling the aeons of future and past to the  
tap of its timebeat.  
For the wainwright also was maker in small  
of creation,  
Which he renewed in each piece of his handi-  
work however little,  
For he felt God in the draw of his saw and  
the hit of his hammer,  
Felt the pulsation of Love divine which uni-  
fies all things.

Silent in awe the visitors stood as if present  
at worship,  
Till the Squire at last spoke up in words  
sympathetic:  
"You appear not to notice us, thrilled with  
the rapture of labor,  
As if praying you might be by work to the  
worker supernal,  
And you venerate what you are doing just in  
the doing,

Making yourself in your deed the reverent  
bearer of Godhood.  
Into the heart of your wheel your prayerful  
eye is now gleaming,  
Lifted to peer in its glances behind the drawn  
veil of all Nature.''

Slowly, almost unwillingly, William looked  
up from his labor,  
Though his hand still held the keen tool in  
the grip of its cunning,  
As if delaying to break the sweet bond of  
some hidden communion;  
But his speech was gentle, though tenderly  
trembling with age-throbs:  
"Yes I try to live out in my life the blessed  
old adage,  
Hymning it oft in a tune to my soul: *to labor  
is prayer.*  
All my deeds are chanting aloud their orisons  
holy,  
If you can hear their intimate song in the  
strokes of the workman.  
Maker I am through the Maker Himself ful-  
filling His promise,  
God the first Laborer is, Creator of all things  
each moment;  
For with each moment the whole is being  
renewed in His workshop.

Doing my own little task I pattern me after  
the Master,  
Making this wheel to-day I share in the act of  
creation,  
Realizing a model divine which I bear in my  
bosom,  
Through the toil of my hand I utter my fer-  
vent petition."

Pointing his look at a flower that eyed him  
with blooms at his window,  
Like so many sweet glances of love for his  
age's renewal,  
And then rolling his vision skyward, spake  
William the wainwright:  
"See this cowslip—it is a wheel—and a per-  
fect wheel-maker—  
Rounding and ever repeating its hub and its  
spoke and its feloe,  
And even painting its parts in a green and a  
white and a golden,  
So it applauds me with glances of hope and  
woos me to work well,  
Often recalling a flowery love which from  
me once vanished.  
Is not the earth too a wheel, revolving around  
on its axis,  
As it rolls on its sky-made road encircling  
the sun with its girdle?"

Even the cosmical wheel I have glimpsed in  
a moment supernal,  
Rimmed with the galaxy starry and bowling  
the universe Godward.”  
So his spirit took voice in a rapture of lofty  
communion  
With some inner experience not understood  
by the others.

But to the glow of the wainwright responded  
the cool Ebenezer:  
“Let us come back to our earth here, speckled  
with little New Salem,  
Which cannot use your big wheels of the  
globe or the sun or the cosmos.  
Be it yours to connect us with neighboring  
towns and their peoples  
By your handicraft subtle here shown in this  
rotary wood-work,  
Which will bear us around on the earth till  
we mount to the firmament stellar,  
Since the Sangamon sullen has failed us, yea  
the canal too.”

Thus was William's fair dreamland drenched  
with the prose of the present.  
But unquenched in his ecstasy spake he, fore-  
casting the future:

“Listen! a greater than mine is soon coming  
     —far greater, far stronger—  
 Tis a wheel I still mean—I see it now roll on  
     the prairie,  
 Not made of wood like this one of mine so  
     light and so slender,  
 Bearing a burden more heavy and circling  
     its axle more swiftly,  
 Roaring it runs, fire-breathing its nostrils,  
     the dragon of fable  
 Is to be harnessed for work, aye saddled and  
     reined for the rider.  
 This is my lot and my hope and my prayer:  
     I shall be transcended.”

Look, the last feloe is fitted, the rim now  
     beveled and rounded;  
 Soon the wheel is released from its block,  
     and caressed by the master,  
 Whose delight is perfection within the small  
     bounds of his wheelcraft,  
 Feeling the flawless All can be put in the  
     small of the smallest.  
 Rolling his wheel roundabout and revealing  
     its rotary virtue  
 He admired its blameless behavior as well as  
     its shape without blemish;  
 Playful he teased it as if it might be his  
     dearest companion.



Then to his action was suited the word of  
William the wainwright:

“Now we must trundle it over the alley to  
Peter the blacksmith,

Practical Peter, my half for completing my  
work and my soul too,

Who will hoop it with iron around this rim  
of the feloes,

That they be held to their place and their  
task in their circular union,

Made to withstand the stress and the strain  
of all coming disruption.

He will iron the hub too with bands and rivet  
them tightly,

That the center may yield not, whatever the  
thrust of its lading,

And disrupt not, however mighty the quake  
of collision—

Peter can do it, my counterpart, making me  
whole in my wheelcraft.

There we may see too the man of the future,  
young Abraham Lincoln,

Whom we purpose to send by our votes to  
Vandalia law-making.

Not unlike to wheel-making is, to my mind,  
the vocation,

As it builds to a harmony whole man's doings  
discordant,

Trying to legislate for him the make of the  
cosmical order,  
For on the Law the universe stamps itself as  
the first model.”

So they all started to rolling the wheel to  
the shop of the blacksmith,  
Peter, whose labor was love but whose love  
was very laborious,  
When of a sudden the farmer woke up with a  
lapsed reminiscence:  
“What! Abe Lincoln! I saw him this morn-  
ing under the shade-tree  
As my vehicle broke with its load and  
splashed in a mud-hole.  
There he sat with Ann Rutledge upon a  
looped settle of grapevines  
Which he once bent to embraces and wound  
in a seat for two persons;  
For what purpose it was I wondered until I  
had seen them;  
Happy he looked in reading some verses, to  
judge by the jingle;  
They did not see me, so occupied were they  
with rhymes and themselves too,  
Till the crack of my axle crashed into their  
happiest moment,  
Dragging them down to the world which was  
clashing and swashing about them.

Ann sprang up with a blush and sped off to  
the four-pillared mansion,  
Home of that gracious soul, the Lady Eulalia  
Lovelace,  
Ready to reconcile troubles of heart for wife  
and for maiden,  
Ever the healer of wounded hope for all of  
the towns-folk.  
Lincoln had meanwhile skipped to my wagon,  
he took off his hat too,  
How he stammered his words, not so fluent  
they ran as his wont was :

‘Here Uncle George, is your newspaper which  
you receive from St. Louis,  
Old French town on the river, unsainted in  
spite of its saintship,  
Name of a royal crusader far back in the  
time medieval,  
Marching to capture his heathenish foe, he  
himself was the capture—  
Sometimes I muse if that city will share in  
the fate of its patron.’

Never before did Lincoln so wander when-  
ever I heard him,  
Jolt so his words through his windpipe which  
seemed a corduroy roadbed;

Still he kept forcing his tones on the air  
 though flushed all his forehead:  
 ‘You are aware I am Postmaster now of this  
 town of New Salem,  
 Mail I came to deliver, Miss Rutledge ex-  
 pected a letter,  
 But it did not arrive, I had then to see her  
 and tell her.’ ”

Here the old farmer knowingly winked and  
 nudged Ebenezer  
 In the broad-belted midriff, then he went on  
 with his prattle:  
 “Ended this story so happily, what a relief to  
 our Lincoln  
 Pumping his lungs for a word which rose  
 from sources unwilling!  
 See now! the flow of his speech jets up like  
 a fountain Artesian:  
 ‘Look at this hat here,’ said he, unwrinkling  
 the stress of his visage  
 ‘Veteran ’tis of many campaigns, an office  
 it has too  
 For its long service in warfare of wear—our  
 Postoffice ’tis now—  
 Letters three and newspapers two, but un-  
 wrapped, for I read them  
 With each subscriber’s consent—that is  
 yours,’ and he reached me my paper

Which I skim with delight for its praise of  
my President Jackson.  
Then he clapped on his long lank hair his  
rickety head-gear  
With its contents, yet one wee letter I  
glimpsed in his hurry;  
No address was on it outside, but a heart  
drawn in red-ink,  
Deftly he tucked it in under the rest, as if  
trying to hide it;  
At his big bony fingers crooking so nimbly I  
wondered.  
I was going to quiz him but swiftly a word he  
now thrust in  
Just before me, and whirled round my mind  
on myself in a moment,  
Saying right at the point of my trouble where  
I was straitened:

‘Dear Uncle George, I see you have struck a  
small snag of misfortune,  
Come, let me prop up your axle here sunk till  
you get to the wainwright  
Who can refit your wheel and make it run  
better than ever.  
Mender he is by nature, not only of broken-  
down wagons  
But of spirits sore-breached in the battle so  
stressful, distressful,

Which life kindles in all who are born in this  
world's separation,—  
Which the man wins by the help of his  
friends, but helping himself too.'

Thus bespoke me in sympathy's tones the  
soft-hearted Lincoln  
Watchful of mishap befallen us mortals and  
ready to stem it,  
Reaching us aid at the pinch unforeseen, as  
a Providence human.  
So he said, so he did; then turning aside he  
addressed me:

'Now I am off, but later to-day I hope I may  
see you,  
When from my hat I have emptied these  
pieces of mail to their owners,  
And have got back my tongue for telling the  
people a story.  
Let me confess you my mind has been plan-  
ning a speech of some moment,  
This afternoon I am going to give it at Peter  
the blacksmith's.'

Off he sped through the meadow, unwilling to  
drop me a fable,

Though I asked him to fit to my case some  
beast out of Esop.

Always had been so chatty his wont, that a  
moment I pondered."

Thus the farmer's frank tongue kept flushing  
in gossipy freedom,  
While the wheel went bowling along to the  
shop of the blacksmith—  
Man of big brawn, most muscular arm of the  
village, but peaceful,  
Yet in support of the Law ever ready to smite  
the wrong-doer,  
Or the public disturber, if Squire Ebenezer  
should call him—  
Never quite able to wash from his forehead  
the grime of his workshop,  
Which would cling to the roots of his hair  
through soft soap and water;  
Still the massed might of his fortress rose  
up the tower of labor,  
And unless he had ironed the wheel, it could  
never have run long  
Crushed to earth in its wood-made members  
with burden of carriage;  
Aye the communal wheel he helped iron with  
character massive.

Peter the real, symmetrical half of William  
 the ideal—  
 Friend of the dreamful wainwright, but too  
 his complement solid,  
 Making him workable who in his thought was  
 the talent transcendent,  
 Fusing terrestrial Will with Intellect dwell-  
 ing in Heaven.

William had kept in his heart and trans-  
 figured an image departed  
 Yet eternally present within him and  
 glimpsed in his labor,  
 Furnishing ever the fountain of Life with  
 Love the renewer.  
 That was the spirit the people could see in  
 the stroke of the workman,  
 And could hear in an undertone tender of  
 voice from his soul-world,  
 When he would speak of the pain and the  
 gain of all living and dying,  
 E'en sympathetic with Death for the sake of  
 Life's reconstruction,  
 Loving the loss of the loved in the blessed  
 return of the spirit—  
 Spirit absent in Time, but becoming Eter-  
 nity's presence—  
 For without Death, he would say there never  
 can be Resurrection.



## Book Fourth.

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### *Abraham Lincoln.*

Laughter in unison greeted the three ap-  
proaching the smithy,  
From a roundabout rout of men encircling  
a speaker  
Who overtopped them all by the length and  
the strength of his stature,  
Needing no platform to lift him above the  
yeomen around him,  
Who would waken the clouds from their slum-  
berous dream in the welkin  
With an echo of joy as he popped out the  
point of his story.  
That was candidate Lincoln electioneering  
the people  
If perchance they would send him as law-  
maker down to Vandalia,

Whence he might start on the trail that leads  
    from the State to the Nation,  
For at the end of that lane he could glimpse  
    in the distance the White House,  
As every lad of the land could, declaiming  
    the speeches of Webster.

But when the orator saw the sage wain-  
    wright slip up and listen  
With Ebenezer the hard-headed Squire and  
    Trueblood the farmer,  
Aye, George Washington Trueblood, the  
    rough-palmed plowman of prairies,  
Who with his practical sense united a love  
    of the fable,  
There was a change in his look attuning the  
    words of his discourse;  
(These he deftly directed to tap a fresh note  
    on the eardrums  
Which the new hearers were stretching to  
    throb in response to the speaker,  
Who then opened a fountain sonorous that  
    welled from his soul's source,  
As he started to image his world like his  
    favorite Esop—  
Him who imparted the word to the things  
    that Nature left wordless:

“Once on a time the horse was pulling a  
well-loaded wagon  
When from behind of a sudden the wheel  
in a fit began groaning:  
‘Oh my hard lot! this burden to bear I am  
able no longer!  
Splinters soon I shall be, crushed under the  
weight of oppression!’  
Then it broke and it fell with a crash and  
a splash in the mudhole  
Where it lay in its ruin bespattered and  
mired,” murmured Lincoln,  
Touched to a sigh by his own fellow-feeling  
with words of his picture.

Then he suddenly stopped and wistfully  
gazed for a moment,  
Over the heads of the crowd in the distance:  
at whom was he gazing?  
Look! he is balking right at the pivotal pull  
of his discourse,  
All of his glances seem kindled to love in  
a revery wordless;  
But he recovered: “the horse looked around  
and neighed back reproaches:  
‘Weakling wooden and worthless, shrilling  
the shriek of a coward!  
Not to bravely upbear what I painfully pull  
with my labor!

Still I am glad of this happy mishap for I  
can rest now,

Yea, I shall prance to yon pasture and crop  
to my fill its lush grasses!—

So the horse in good luck was taunting his  
neighbor unlucky,

When the load was lifted and plumped on  
his back without mercy.

See him in turn fall down by the side of  
the wheel in the mudhole,

For the burden has broken him too with its  
ponderous treasure,

Which is now strewn in the stress of the  
owner along the wet wayside,

Pumpkins, potatoes, and apples, fine food  
for the swine and for man too.”

“That is the fact, it all happened to me,”  
broke in Uncle Georgie.

“Abraham, let yourself out; and spin me  
here into a fable.”

Lincoln swerved not to reply but gleamed  
as if probing the center,

That he might bring to the surface the in-  
nermost sense of his story:

“That old wheel of the ages lies shattered,  
e’en should it be mended,

To the thrust of the time no longer it shows  
itself equal;

And that horse too is fallen beneath the  
fresh pull of our epoch,  
Wagon and wheel and horse must win a new  
soul with its body,  
Spirits, methinks I can see them, awaiting  
a grand transformation,  
Aged, decrepit in shape, but in throes of a  
youthful renewal—  
Even unreasoning things must have too a  
regeneration.”

Here the fabulist halted, stemming the soar  
of his fancy,  
Glaring a glance inquisitive into the face of  
the farmer  
Whom he had helped from the mud at the  
mulberry tree in the morning;  
Nor did he falter to peer far down in the  
eyes of the wainwright,  
Whose approval he caught in the radiant  
sport of their sparkles,  
Which illumined the path of his soul to its  
nethermost fountain.

Then a fresh coin the fabulist fused in the  
mint of his fable,  
Giving a visible form to his fantasy's farth-  
est outreach:

“Yes, a new horse must be reared to race  
on our Western prairie,  
Steed with the speed of the storm, he never  
gets tired or lazy;  
And a new wheel must be forged for his  
wagon far swifter and stronger  
Than the old one was ever, and whirling  
along a new road-bed.  
All of them are to be formed of the fiercest  
material metallic—  
All the wheel and its pathway of rails and  
the horse, too, of iron;  
They have started already to fleeting along  
the Atlantic,  
But they now must be turned to the home  
which Nature foreplanned them,  
To our new world’s domain, the newest in  
time and in spirit.”

Strangely the orator fluent now lapsed at  
a word to a stammer;  
Once more over the heads of the people he  
peered in the distance,  
But when he noted one hearer to turn for  
a look in the same way,  
Quickly he picked up the thought he had  
dropped, and mended his discourse,  
Though they all unwittingly wondered just  
why he had wandered:

“Now to the practical point I come of my  
fabling fantastic:  
Give me your suffrages that I may go to  
Vandalia this winter,  
Helping to forge to the deed my airy witch-  
work of dreamland,  
And to harness the new-born horse of the  
age to his wagon  
That I too may become for my folk a wise  
wainwright.”

Loudly upstormed the applause, but louder  
the cheer of sage William  
Rang over all of the voices together in waves  
sympathetic,  
Seeing his favorite wheel endowed with a  
new incarnation,  
For of that work he often had dreamed in  
rapture prophetic.  
Made to his mind the civilized world must  
be wheeled in its progress,  
Barbary only is wheelless, such is the bar-  
barous Indian.

Feeling the worth of the moment, the speaker  
now pointed his discourse  
That it might prick to the brain of his hearers  
and prod them to action:

“Thus, only thus, can we ever be one with  
the rest of our country,  
And our country in turn be united in bonds  
adamantine;  
We shall become a part of the life of the  
globe in its wholeness,  
Live to ourselves in a corner we cannot, we  
have to associate,  
Long has that been the dearest ambition of  
little New Salem.  
It would feel the full heart of the world in  
its own petty pulse-beat,  
And would share in the purposeful plan of  
the ages, divinely aspiring”.

So the tall Lincoln spake to one man and  
grew taller than ever,  
That one man whom he saw to the soul was  
William the wainwright.  
Slowly he took off his eyes and turned them  
to glancing elsewhere,  
Down to the rivulet shallow and stagnant  
which stank in its stream-bed,  
Pensively musing, “Once I believed in the  
Sangamon yonder,  
And I piloted hitherward up the full stream  
the first steamboat,  
While I floated above on a billowy river far  
larger—



River of Hope that fell like a waterfall golden  
from cloudland;  
But the treacherous boat in a panic retreated  
forever,  
And the high vision of Hope fled after it,  
shunning the valley.  
No more delusion, O friends; instead of the  
lie of a shadow  
Now the substance itself of our striving we  
grip by our ballot,  
Capturing with it the horse and the wheel  
and the highway of iron.  
I would the hammer be, forging again the  
refractory metal,  
If you will send me to sledge in the work-  
shop of law at Vandalia.”

Scarce had the word left the throb of his  
lips when the shout of the blacksmith  
Shot to the ear of the speaker, hallooming a  
summons to labor,  
That he might prove by his deed just what  
he had said to the people:

“Come now, Abraham, sledge me this tire  
whose hoop I am rounding  
For the new wheel which hither was rolled  
by William the wainwright

Restless until he beholds the work of his  
handicraft finished,  
That it may rival the starlit wheel of the  
dome of the heavens.  
Then you can make a new speech on your  
sledging, a better than this one,  
And a fresh fable you surely can forge from  
the blast of my bellows,  
Or an old tale you can pick from the bounti-  
ful pouch of your noddle.  
Come, you are the best sledger that ever here  
wielded my hammer,  
Striking the brawniest blow to subdue the  
rebellious metal,  
Making it yield to the law and welding both  
sides into union.”

Soon then Peter the blacksmith was plying  
the pole of his bellows,  
Playing it up and down in the clutch of his  
fist and his forearm;  
And the shop grew grim to a choke with the  
grime of the charcoal  
Through whose cloud-wreaths spitefully  
snapped the sputtering sparkles,  
Like the scintillas of lightning along the  
dark seams of the sky-rack,  
Over whose black-browed crags leap thunders  
pursuing the flashes.

See now, the iron is hot to a hiss at the line  
of division;  
Peter the smith with a twitch of the tongs  
took the tire from the blazes,  
Whirling it down by a dexterous turn to the  
top of the anvil,  
Which kept clinking and clanking afar with  
its clangerous cling-clang,  
As the tire he smote white hot in the glow  
of its fusion,  
Shrilling its scream in response to the stroke  
of his one-handed hammer.  
Mightily bulged at each blow the muscular  
brace of his biceps,  
While the thews of his neck would swell up  
to battle responsive,  
And from his forehead the runnels of soot  
would stream down his cheek-bones,  
Till they would drop from his chin and the  
tip of his nose too,  
Like the Sangamon's channel o'erflowing its  
banks in the springtide,  
And on its surface eddying all of the ooze  
of the upland.

Still intoned he a song attuned to the ring  
of the iron,  
Or would whistle bravouras piercing the  
clang of the anvil,

Which to the sound of the tire would shriek  
with the wail of the tempest,  
Hit by the hammer of Peter the smith at the  
point of their contact,  
As he welded their severing parts to har-  
monious wholeness,  
While in the swing of his voice he re-echoed  
the music of labor,  
Crooning some long-gone ballad of love and  
piping the chorus.

But still mightier blows must be struck at  
the tick of the crisis  
Rightly to round out the tire to its circle  
of iron unbroken.  
Up steps Lincoln, clutching the sledge in  
the grip of his knuckles  
When he had carefully hung up his hat on  
the peg of a tie-beam—  
Post-office hat, it was famed for holding the  
mail of the township.  
Wide was the sweep of his arms as he swung  
his implement massive;  
Clutching the handle with both of his fists,  
in rotation concentric  
Over his head through the air he whizzed the  
ponderous hammer,  
Till it smote down on the tire and welded the  
line of disjunction,

Rounding the ring of the wheel to a musical  
cycle completed,  
Cunningly winding its melody into the song  
of the smithy,  
With a far-away echo like to a spheral con-  
cordance.

Next the iron enringing the rim was clamped  
on the feloes,  
Bending them slowly together into a union  
forever.  
Nor was the hub forgotten, it too was band-  
ed with iron  
Lest in a strain it might split by the stress  
of the spokes at the center.

Hark! in the midst of the notes of the smithy  
and piercing the smoke-cloud  
Tolled the time-telling call of the school-bell  
rung from the belfry,  
Waving its way to the workshop in throbbing  
circles concordant,  
With whose ring and refrain it mingled its  
musical cadence.

Lincoln harkened the strokes of the bell as  
they gave him the time-beat  
From above somewhere, with resonance ton-  
ing the darkness,

To whose dulcet vibrations accordant he  
    sledged with his hammer,  
Stressing all of the school-bell's measures  
    with accent Titanic.  
Thus the orchestra played in that workshop  
    of Peter the blacksmith  
On its instruments chimed to the stroke of  
    the strong-boned musicians,  
Far attuning the town to the resonant key-  
    note of labor,  
Hovering over the Sangamon valley in wavy  
    caresses.

All had noticed how carefully Lincoln had  
    lifted his head-gear,  
Precious post-office hat like a jewelled crown  
    of a monarch,  
High straw-hat with a tetering brim and a  
    dent in its top-knot,  
Hanging it high on a peg where none but  
    himself could get at it.  
Strangely forethoughtful he seemed in that  
    act and in eyeing oft thither,  
For he had given out all of the mail that day  
    to its owners  
In the political round of the town that he  
    made in the morning.  
Yet of that broad-brimmed bee-hive of straw,  
    why so tenderly watchful?

Right in the whirl of his sledge he would  
train on the hat a sharp eye-shot.  
Some rare mystery hides there of which he  
is veiling the secret,  
Dual the man is, a half on his work, but a  
half has strayed elsewhere.

But now the labor is done and the hammer  
is put in its corner,  
Firmly united the parts, the whole wheel will  
run on the prairie,  
Doing its share of the work of the world  
without going to pieces.  
All applauded the workmanship deft of Peter  
the blacksmith,  
All applauded the powerful deed of the can-  
didate sledging.  
In it they felt the forecast of something  
that lay in his future;  
What it might be they knew not, but wished  
to be tuned to his spirit.  
So they called for a speech from their spokes-  
man—a fact or a fable  
Drawn from the Black Hawk War, with  
fringes of fun and of fancy,  
Whose light play would bring to them all a  
tickle in common,  
But might likewise ensconce the deepest  
thought of the era.

Then the wainwright slid from the crowd  
with a look of approval,  
Quickly he stepped on a stool, as if to re-  
spond to the speaker,  
But he reached to the peg and took down the  
hat which hung high there,  
Courteously handing it over with compliment  
heaped on the owner,  
Who had hurried at once to the spot on see-  
ing the danger.

But just look at the luck! for out of the hat  
flew a letter  
Like a dove white-winged it fluttered around  
in the coal-smoke;  
Down it fell in the floorless dust much-trod  
of the smithy.

Not a trace of writ was upon it, no name, no  
postmark—  
Yet a heart with its blood-tint was drawn on  
the cover in red-ink.  
Lincoln jumped at a leap ten feet to the spot  
when he saw it,  
Picked it up with a blush and tucked it into  
his bosom.



All were shouting with guffaws, "Abraham,  
read us that letter,  
Never could it have come by mail, it is one  
of your own make;  
Tell us who is the girl, and whether she goes  
to Vandalia.  
Now instead of the speech, just give us the  
nub of the letter.  
We shall not vote for you, Abe, unless you  
read us that letter."  
Then they yelled the refrain in chorus: "the  
letter! the letter!"

See the tall candidate plucking his hat from  
the hand of the wainwright,  
Who had soulfully glimpsed from afar a  
glint of his meaning;  
More profusely rolled watery drops on the  
slant of his forehead  
Than even when he was whirling the sledge  
for Peter the blacksmith.  
Strange! the wan of his cheek had suddenly  
flushed to a ruby  
While his eyes sped their sparks on the  
ground but not on the people,  
And his lips had a smile, as if merrily tasting  
a gallnut.  
All his body grew stiff, on stilts he seemed  
to be stalking,

As he strode out the shop in long strides e'en  
while he was saying:

“Friends, good day to you—elsewhere busi-  
ness I have now to see to.”

So young Lincoln bore off in his breast the  
embarrassing secret.

Outside next to his heart lay the letter, with  
symbol ensanguined,

While the crowd much wondered about that  
mysterious missive,

Guessing whom it was meant for and what  
was its purport—

Why should Lincoln so blaze up in feature,  
and hurry to hide it?

Only one man there present had seen it be-  
fore on the outside,

Uncle George Trueblood, who now spake out  
his limited knowledge:

“Well I remember that heart with its red  
on the white of the letter,

When the postmaster took off his hat to hand  
me my paper,

Near the mulberry tree where Lincoln had  
sat with Miss Rutledge;

Strange it seemed then, but I somehow for-  
got to ask him about it.”

So this riddle with others is left for the fu-  
ture to settle,  
Which, untying one knot, will tie up another  
and greater.

Meanwhile Lincoln had sped out of sight of  
the shop of the wainwright,  
When a wag in his humor gave voice to the  
common suspicion:

“Let me dare it foresay that Lincoln again  
has a business  
Which will charm him awhile underneath the  
mulberry shade-tree.”

Others kept citing the past with its crop of  
rumors fantastic,  
Nor was forgotten the gossip which gushed  
from the Talisman’s visit,  
When the whole town had a rollicking dance  
on board of the steamboat.

Still in the practical matter before them there  
was an agreement:

All resolved on the spot to vote for Abraham  
Lincoln,  
Even if he ran off to get rid of reading the  
letter,  
And of relieving the people’s suspense by  
confessing the picture.

Not the new wheel nor the horse nor the wonderful railway of iron,  
Had been able to stir up the talk of the folk  
of New Salem  
Like the wafture so weird of the sign of the  
red-heart presageful,  
And of Lincoln's attempt to hide it at once  
in his bosom.

When he had fled, the company melted away  
from its center,  
William the wainwright and Squire Ebenezer  
and Trueblood the farmer,  
Each on a line leading homeward dreamily  
drifted asunder,  
With the citizens who had hearkened the  
speech, and still marveled  
Not alone at the sayings, but at the silences  
also—  
More mysterious were the deep silences than  
the deep sayings—  
Which had oracled Lincoln's whole conduct  
and left him a riddle.

Still was heard from the shop of the blacksmith  
the clangor of iron,  
With his joyous shrill whistle which fided to  
the drum of his labor,

Whistle which tuned all the puff of his bel-  
lows and clink of his hammer,  
As he pounded and rounded the metal in time  
with his music,  
Puckering up to a point his muscular lips for  
an air-hole  
Through whose vent he would drive out his  
breath with the might of the windstorm,  
Mid the spirt of the sparkles which shot in  
the smoke of the worksnop,  
Like the links of the lightning which rattles  
its chain down the welkin,  
Making his stithy the home of a Titan's huge  
harmony happy.

Then on the hill-top would chime the sym-  
phonious note of the school-bell,  
Blent with keen cadences welling up out of  
the shop of the blacksmith,  
Tenderly wreathing in concord of sounds  
each house of New Salem,  
Sounds undulating together in love far over  
the landscape,  
Till they lisped out their mutual sighs to a  
swoon in the distance.

## Book Fifth.

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*Ann Rutledge.*

Just when Lincoln had sharpened his speech  
to the point of his fable,  
Trumpeting far the miraculous change of the  
wheel into iron,  
In the roll of his voice upturning the folds  
of the future,  
Over the square he glanced and glimpsed the  
form of a maiden  
Whose light trip he well knew, for he often  
in rapture had watched it,  
As it seemed lifting on wings the gracious  
turn of her body,  
While she sped up the street away from the  
house of her father,  
Thrilling the air with an ecstasy born of her  
beautiful motion,

Causing the orator just for a moment to stam-  
mer forgetful  
Till he had picked up the stitch he had  
dropped in knitting the sentence,  
So he soon healed in his hearers the ominous  
breach of attention.

That was Ann Rutledge, the flower of all the  
village's maidhood,  
Since the hope of her heart was blooming  
from every feature,  
And was shedding its magical spell on the  
eye of each gazer;  
Not untinged by a sorrow, which tingled a  
chord in the bosom,  
Trembled her look sympathetic with others,  
yet with herself too.  
She was going to ply at a quilting her dex-  
terous needle,  
And perchance to gossip a little about the  
last wedding,  
But still more she would take off her mind  
from the struggle within her,  
Which she no longer could leave in its stress  
altogether unspoken.

Balm she knew would be ready to drop with  
the word of a woman

Who a solacer was in the throes of the conflict of mortals,  
Pouring the weal of her sympathy into the woe of the stricken.

Also that woman was famed as the Lady, the neighborhood's Lady,  
Crowned with the title by all—the Lady Eulalia Lovelace—

Widow she was of an officer highly esteemed in the army,

Who in the bloom of his youthful promise had fallen in battle,

Gallantly fighting the foes of his country along the wild border,

Only a year or two after he quitted his home in Virginia,

Whither she wished to return, awaiting her father's arrival,

For she still longed, like an exile, for the old manor ancestral

By the seaboard, with its hoar line of heritage English.

Now she dwelt with her two young sons at the edge of the village

Where stood her mansion spacious, garlanded round with a garden;

Propped was the roof of the porch in front with massive Greek columns,



While it heartily faced to the world with the  
gracious look of a giver,  
Famed the best house on the road, of gener-  
ous structure colonial,  
Always ready to give to the stranger a cour-  
teous welcome.

Thither the maiden was pensively tracing the  
line of her footsteps,  
And was turning a corner not far from the  
shop of the wainwright,  
When she heard the applause of a crowd mid  
gushes of laughter,  
While the tall form of a man addressing them  
rose on her vision  
With a loud thump of the heart to see the  
success of the speaker,  
Who beheld her in turn and balked at the pith  
of his story,  
Just for a moment upset by the sudden sur-  
prise of her eye-shot.

But she shied from the spot and tripped more  
rapidly onward,  
Hardly she glanced at the store as she passed  
it, of Abner the Absent,  
Though it waked in her soul the tremulous  
thrill of a discord,

Which in a pain she would flee from, although  
it would ever go with her—  
For the owner was still her betrothed, in  
spite of his strange disappearance.  
Soon she had come to the round red school-  
house perched on its hillock,  
Where was centered the mind of the town—  
the head of its shoulders—  
There she felt a relief as she thought of her  
happier school-days  
Which she and Lincoln had spent in their  
studies, growing together  
Into a union of soul no blow of Fate could dis-  
sever.

There her memory stopped her a minute to  
look at the belfry  
Which like a hat was set on the conical head  
of the schoolhouse,  
When it suddenly started in tones well known  
to address her—  
Tones of the bell which so often had joyously  
throbbled to her heart-beats,  
Bidding the young to their lesson, and calling  
the people together,  
Whispering also to her a sweet hope mid the  
lines of her school-book.

Tenderly mused she the time when she went  
to the sapient master,  
Mentor Graham, the faithful, hard hitter in  
word and in action,  
Till each pupil had learned how to read and  
to write and to figure;  
Yet the teacher selected the best for higher  
instruction,  
Which he gave to the boy and the girl of tal-  
ent transcendent.  
Well his brusque tongue was liked, in spite of  
one little suspicion  
That the deep folds of his brain secreted a  
doctrine forbidden.

Hardly to think it she dared, but the circular  
walls of the schoolhouse  
Had enclosed her whole heart, and brought  
it to beat from that center  
Where she the counterpart found of life's  
most intimate kinship  
Subtly ingrown with herself, ere she knew it  
in each aspiration,  
Though already her hand she had promised  
in troth to another.  
That was the perilous edge to which Time had  
been leading the maiden,  
The remediless strife between two duties, to  
love and to promise,

Was now cleaving her bosom atwain in their  
mutual warfare,  
Which to avoid she hurried away with her  
eyes insphered in their tearballs.  
Hardly would she confess to herself the love  
that had sprouted  
And was daily ensnaring her life in its intri-  
cate network;  
She, the promised, loves him who never has  
promised though hopeful;  
He, the unpromised, loves her who has given  
away her first promise.  
Conscience kept slashing her soul both ways,  
in duty divided,  
As she recalled a hot sermon on Hell by Cart-  
right, the preacher;  
For the sense of the sinful lay charactered  
deepest within her,  
And would rend her atwain in the throes of  
her tragedy's conflict.

Pensive, forebodeful she flew on her path to  
the end of the village,  
As if to run from her fantasies which like  
dragons pursued her,  
Quitting the bell-tongued schoolhouse tipped  
with the clang of its belfry,  
Which now fell from above like a knell on the  
ear of the maiden.

But how can she escape from the mightiest  
power within her?  
Running away from her giant, into his arms  
she has fallen,  
Fleeing out of her soul-world, the more she  
has to stay in it.

Soon she has glided beneath the mulberry  
tree by the wayside,  
One by one now dropping its leaves in the  
lap of their mother,  
The proliferous Earth who entombs in her  
womb her dead children  
That she may bear them anew to life in a glad  
resurrection,  
After ripe autumn's decline and the death of  
gray winter,  
Ever fulfilling her motherly part in the round  
of creation.  
Under that tree was the rustic seat of cut  
twigs and of grapevines  
Deftly intertwined together to many a turn and  
contortion  
By the hand of Lincoln who made it the favor-  
ite place of his trysting,  
Lonely for one and large, for two it was fitted  
so neatly  
As it lay on the way to the Lady Eulalia  
Lovelace.

Now in spite of an inner forbiddance, Ann  
went and reclined there,  
Giving herself to memories golden which  
washed out her struggle  
Till of a sudden she looked at the ring en-  
circling her finger,  
With a quick jerk of her breath as if she were  
gasping in wrestle.  
That was the symbol of shadowy promise to  
one who was absent  
Twinned with a love unbetrothed, but impas-  
sioned, for one who is present.  
Duty again is flaying her heart with double  
reproaches,  
Secretly hoping for what she may dare not  
openly pray for,  
How can she banish the throb of her heart  
forbidden by conscience!

So her token of love is evoking her fates to  
their duel,  
Still she declares to herself the word of her  
promise unbroken,  
Though underneath it there runs a feeling of  
lorn resignation.  
Up she springs from the spot which seems  
to be clamping her down there,  
While the sight of the ring keeps tugging her  
back from her heart's push.

Two are the presences here which fiercely are  
clashing within her;  
From their combat she flees, and yet she must  
take it along too.

But she dares not look back at the tree with  
its tussle of demons  
Till she steps on the door-sill of Lady Eulalia  
Lovelace,  
Who was already awaiting her skill in the  
work of the quilting.  
Ann soon darted the end of a thread through  
the eye of her needle  
And began running in mazes the tortuous  
lines of her stitches  
Pricking the many meandering plans to the  
thrust of her thimble  
Wreathing in graceful curves the finger and  
hand with the forearm,  
As she sewed into harmony all of the mani-  
fold patches  
Which were a variance vast in shape and in  
size and color.

Both were well in their work and tuned to the  
time of their stitches,  
Lady Eulalia bettered the moments with mer-  
ciful chit-chat:

“Not unlike to our life is this quilt whose  
shreds we are patching!  
My next neighbor, the prosperous farmer, fell  
out with his helpmeet  
Tearing to pieces the family, scattering also  
the children,  
Rent to rags was the household, even the  
clothes needed mending,  
When I went down to their home, and sewed  
all the fragments together.  
Easy to darn was the dress, but to patch up  
the breach of the spirit,  
Was a task far deeper; methinks no mortal is  
able  
Quite to point out the spot where the shifting  
wound of the soul bleeds,  
For the soul is the world ever-present in  
mind and in body.  
More discolored and ragged that family  
seemed in its temper  
Than these obstinate pieces, which have to be  
suited together  
Into a concord of tints which pairs with the  
harmony inner,  
Smoothing and soothing the struggle of life  
in a rainbow of solace.  
Just see here in this draggled handful of  
shreds of all colors,  
Red and yellow, blue and green—what a sport  
of the spectrum!



Now 'tis a bright strip, now 'tis a shaded, yet  
both must be wedded.  
So I am driven to picture the manifold hues  
of all marriage,  
Not omitting my own in the buoyant pride  
of my girlhood  
When I quitted for love my father's centur-  
ied homestead."

Thus the Lady Eulalia made of herself the  
confession,  
For she too had been taught by the years  
some lessons in living,  
Which she imparted expecting the like in re-  
turn from the maiden,  
Who still kept her deep heartthrobs unsaid  
in the plies of her bosom.  
But once more a sweet tongue the kind lady  
put into the silence:  
"So the moments and moods of our days are  
a crazy quilt total,  
Where the cloud and the sunshine go irides-  
cently dancing  
Over the spaces of life, ever twinned as in-  
separate partners,  
Painting on Time as it rolls the shifts of the  
soul's panorama,  
Till in our own little self whirl the turns of  
omnipotent selfhood."

Carefully balancing words thus spake to the  
    maiden the lady,  
Who had dimly forefelt already the dawn of  
    the struggle,  
Seeking to stem in advance the rush and the  
    crush of upheaval.  
Only a soulful look Ann Rutledge repaid to  
    the speaker,  
But she said not a word of the storm of the  
    thought she was thinking,  
Though the Lady Eulalia glimpsed, keen-  
    sighted, the message  
Which had been sent from within, and  
    prompted the turn of her question:

“Tell me, dear girl, what hear you these days  
    from the one who is absent?  
When will he come and bring us the hour of  
    happy espousals?”  
Undertoned with a sigh then welled up the  
    voice of the maiden:

“It is strange; from Abner no letter for  
    months I have gotten,  
Nor has he sent any sign, not even the print  
    of a paper.  
I have written again and again to his home in  
    New York State,

Not a word returns, from his folks I have  
begged for an answer,  
All in vain—but he may be ill—or something  
the matter.”

Then she laid down her needle, and spake out  
her thoughts more bravely:

“Aid I have sought of our Postmaster Lin-  
coln, to all so obliging,  
And a note of inquiry he sent to the town’s  
chief official,  
But no response has come thence, so still in a  
hope I am waiting.”

Here she paused in the flow of her speech as  
if thinking elsewhither,

Even she lay down her needle upon the red  
spot of her quilting,

Lincoln’s name seemed prompting a mood  
perceptibly tenser,

While the word was picked up and skillfully  
turned by the lady:

“How that youth keeps growing, perchance  
no longer in stature,

Yet in the people’s esteem which sees him  
waxing the hero!

Candidate is he just now, but speedily will be  
elected;

Yesterday heard I till here the crowd ap-  
plauding the speaker,

Whom I somehow foreshadow afar as the  
 man of the future.  
 I remember him first when he daringly boated  
 the milldam;  
 Then you know when he went to the war, for  
 I saw you engird him  
 With the sword of your ancestors, sword of  
 the Rutledges fame-wreathed,  
 Which, as your father once said, again you  
 may have to belt round him—  
 Words which often have caused me to roam  
 in fantasy's fame-hall  
 Whirling me weirdly aback to my home by the  
 sea-side Atlantic  
 Where I heard for a moment a clash—my  
 mad premonition."

In a far-away revery was seeming the maiden  
 to wander,  
 Though she took up her needle again and  
 threaded it deftly.  
 Then she sewed in her trance but knew not  
 what she was sewing,  
 - Till she awoke at the call of the Lady Eulalia  
 Lovelace:

"Ann, just look at what you are doing! You  
 take the wrong pieces,

They are no longer inwrought to a pattern  
around the one center,  
But are flying away from each other in every  
direction;  
Where should have been that shadowy patch  
you have put a bright red one,  
Strip of shot silk, which glistens and races  
in ripples of color—  
Crazy my quilt will be surely with all its  
fantastic caprices.”

Smiling the Lady Eulalia patted the cheek  
of Ann Rutledge:

“Child, methinks you are piecing the parts  
of yourself in this cover,  
Shreds reflecting the mood of your mind you  
have sewed to a mirror,  
Which is a gossipy tattler, telling some stor-  
ies about you.  
Come, let us rip out this last insertion, which  
is not happy;  
Here behold the right strip to be put in the  
place of the other,  
For the mad strife of hues it allays to the  
calm of its presence.  
Peace is the boon of the household, peace in  
the act and the object,  
Peace I would fain patch up in the quarrel-  
some tints of my bed-quilt.”

Ann took her scissors and snipped each well-  
stitched seam of her sewing,  
Till the piece was loosed from its place and  
unthreaded completely;  
But the point of the blade seemed thrust to  
shearing her heart-strings,  
And at each cut of the pitiless edge she felt  
a slight shiver.  
When the new strip she had hastily sewed in  
the place of the other,  
And had threaded her needle afresh for re-  
newing her labor,  
Scarce could she throw her first stitch—she  
stopped in the whirl of the second,  
Tips of her fingers and thumb refused to  
close on the needle,  
Arm revolted from flexing its muscles back-  
ward and forward,  
So oppressed she felt with her burden of in-  
ner convulsion  
Which upseethed to the surface out of an un-  
derworld troubled.

Turning her hand she glimpsed the glistening  
ring of betrothal,  
Silent she gazed at the blood-grained ruby  
set in the center,  
Suddenly dropping her needle and thread she  
sighed out her soul thus:

“Aunt Eulalia, this is now all I can do for  
the quilting;  
Not very sound is my body today, nor even  
my temper,  
But tomorrow perchance I shall come when I  
hope to do better.  
Just at present I have to go home and recover  
my balance,  
Also my household task to fulfill in helping  
my mother.”

Though she had given no sound of the rage of  
the tempest within her,  
Lady Eulalia noticed a change, but left it un-  
spoken,  
Thinking it wiser to let the dark clouds fleet  
out of her soul-world,  
Or in secret to rain down their contents re-  
lieving the heart-break.  
Ann had also her happier task at home in  
weaving a garment;  
But on this work of her loom her lips were  
sealed to a silence.  
Lightly she tripped down the way, though  
throb fought throb in her bosom,  
Meanwhile resolving to shun the mulberry's  
shadow persuasive,  
Lest she might hearken too long its witching  
temptations to dreamland.

But behold as she passed, on the seat sat  
Abraham Lincoln  
Under the tree with a gratified look of seem-  
ing expectance;  
But Ann Rutledge, summoning all of her  
might of resistance,  
Merely saluted "Good evening," yet with a  
smile of approval,  
For she well knew what he came for, aye, she  
in secret applauded.  
Then she added on going, "Home I must  
haste to a task there."  
What that task might be she breathed not a  
syllable faintly,  
Though the thought of it lifted each footstep  
in joy from the highway.

Soon she had passed by the well-sweep in  
front of the round red schoolhouse,  
Over the public square and into the door of  
her father.  
Slyly she slid out of sight till she came all  
alone to her work-room,  
Where the sound of her loom gave instant  
relief to her struggle,  
For she was weaving a garment in which  
seemed woven her brain-throbs,  
As she played out the thread of the shuttle  
to shifts of the treadle.



So the pair were parted that day, though  
    joined in their heart-beats,  
Each had felt the tense stretch of the other's  
    innermost conflict,  
Each was bearing a secret within, uncon-  
    fessed to the other.  
Lincoln had written the letter stained with  
    the figure of crimson,  
But to deliver it then, he failed in the fetch  
    of his courage.  
Ann in her turn had in mind a new handsel  
    she was preparing,  
But about it she kept her tongue tied in the  
    presence of Lincoln.

Thus both hid from each other in silence their  
    mutual tokens,  
Hid from each other in silence alike their mu-  
    tual love-sighs,  
Though their tale-telling eyes had tattled of  
    each to the other.  
Lincoln, so baffled, at first felt embittered,  
    even rejected,  
For a moment he tasted the wormwood of  
    love disappointed;  
But from his own reproaches he soon is de-  
    fending the maiden  
All to himself, and praising her just for her  
    deed of refusal:

“Then she was strong—I admire her the more  
 —when she quit me though wishing;  
 Stronger than I was in this that I ought not,  
 I know, to have come here.  
 She has taught me a lesson—a living example  
 of duty.”

Quickly he rose and started away with good  
 resolutions  
 To be dutiful also, and drive out his bosom  
 the love-fiend,  
 Who had sneaked in upon him, a demon en-  
 snaring his conscience;  
 But from this poignant attack on himself he  
 soon will recover,  
 Oneness of Love overmasters twoness of du-  
 bious Duty.

Happily hymned the maiden her heart to the  
 tune of her hand-stroke,  
 Love of her work with the work of her love  
 was merrily married  
 As she thought of the man for whom the new  
 vesture was woven,  
 Even she dreamed she was making a fabric to  
 last him a life-time,  
 Which he might wear in his heart unforgotten  
 for all of his future.

## Book Sixth.

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### *The People.*

Listen again to the bell on the top of the  
    little red schoolhouse,  
Rollicking resonant roundels over the val-  
    ley and woodland,  
With its hemisphere musical layered above  
    and about it,  
In the windless calm of the evening intoning  
    its far-away echoes,  
Till they drop to a tingle that taps on the ear  
    of the farmer  
Who in response at once sets out for the hill  
    of New Salem,  
Where the people now gather to hear the can-  
    didate Lincoln,  
And to vote him the lawmaker new to be sent  
    to Vandalia.

So he will start his career from the town and  
the State to the Nation,  
On the way up to the top where perches now  
President Jackson.  
For the humblest can mount to the highest  
position in office,  
Such is the quest of the world, which is  
marching this road to its future.  
Each bright boy of the village has heard the  
prophecy splendid,  
“You will get to be President, such is your  
wonderful talent,”  
Ever unsealing within him the sources of  
high aspiration;  
This prediction was bruited to Lincoln and  
thousands of others.

So on the hillock was hiving the swarm of  
the busy-tongued people,  
Who had winged to the spot from the farthest  
rim of the township,  
Loving the buzz of their talk sweet-tipped  
with anecdote's honey,  
Waiting, however, to taste of the humor of  
Lincoln's last story,  
Which would make their glad diaphragms  
dance in a chorus of laughter,  
And would paint in bright tints all the clouds  
of the turbulent welkin.

But behold of a sudden a change in the mood  
of the Many!  
All are sorrowed to see the lachrymal look  
of Jack Kelso  
As he shuffled among them with downcast  
eye penitential,  
Every man in low voice was asking his neigh-  
bor: "What can be the matter?"  
Still they saluted him cheerily, but how  
changed from his grinning!  
Soberly streaked is the flood of his face for  
the first in a life-time!

In the foray with Black Hawk he followed  
the soldiers and Lincoln,  
As the reciter of ballads of which his brain  
was the storehouse;  
Chiefly of Shakespeare's lines he became the  
mighty intoner,  
Voicing the reverberation of thunderous  
words from his fog-horn;  
Then would Doctor Palmetto bemock him in  
verses of Latin  
From the old classical measures sung by Ver-  
gil and Horace,  
Which not a soul understood when the laugh  
of the crowd was the loudest.  
But how otherwise now have become Jack's  
word and his action!

Thin in his face, demure in his look, and his  
 figure stoops humbled!  
 That is Jack Kelso, not as he once was, but  
 as he now is;  
 Once defiant of fate and of duty and even of  
 conscience,  
 Living the life untasked, and pursuing the  
 wayward Muses.

Merrily rose the cry of the crowd, at his pres-  
 ence delighted:  
 "Come, Jack, thunder us mightily Antony's  
 speech over Caesar.  
 Swell up your voice and make it as big as the  
 words of Will Shakespeare."  
 But not a line will he cite or grandly declaim  
 as his wont was;  
 "Nay," he responded, reproving the crowd,  
 "No more of his verses!  
 That unhallowed bard of Avon! I spurn him  
 forever!  
 I permit not one of his lines to slip from my  
 tongue-tip,  
 My abhorrence of what I once loved I confess  
 with a sorrow,  
 Deeply repentant I feel of all of my former  
 devotion."

Then Jack Kelso repeated with unction a  
verse of the Bible,  
Giving a lurid recital of fiery woes of In-  
ferno;  
Also he chanted in fervor ecstatic old hymns  
of the backwoods.  
Wonderful transformation! His favorite  
grog he renounced too,  
Even his fiddle he broke into slivers as some-  
thing Satanic,  
Lest with its strains it might lead him away  
into paths of temptation,  
Playing the music of dancers of jigs and of  
reels and of hornpipes.  
But to hard toil he could not be broken by any  
conversion;  
Still his love was to laze on a log in the sun-  
shine recumbent,  
Fishing away his happiest days in the San-  
gamon's ripples.

What was the power which wrought such a  
change in the sinner Jack Kelso?  
Through all the cabins along the wild border  
and over the prairies  
Had resounded a voice like the call of the  
trumpet from Heaven,  
That of old Peter Cartright, the Methodist  
preacher Titanic

Preaching the gospel of peace and bidding  
prepare for last Judgment.  
Yet a good fighter he went with his people  
against the red Indian,  
Who was the Canaanite doomed from on high  
to be landless and lifeless.  
So in the Black Hawk war he too as a soldier  
enlisted,  
And he prayed as he shot at the foes of the  
God-chosen people,  
Heathenish red-skinned foes, usurping the  
land of white Christians.

Only last month a religious revival had  
stormed through New Salem,  
Stirring all of the underworld's depths of  
seething emotion  
Which had been layered down in the soul with  
the lapse of the ages.  
But it was tapped by the tongue of Cartright  
and burst to the surface,  
Overwhelming each man in a tide from the  
ocean within him,  
Crushing to earth the smit sinner beneath  
the words adamantine  
Till he would gasp and groan and shout in  
agony hellish,  
For the revenge in his heart which sprang  
of his life in the backwoods.



That was his sin—revenge—which he felt as  
his devil and master,  
Which remained in his heart long after the  
Indian departed,  
And transmitted the feud to the borderer  
wreaking his grudges.

Aye, the preacher himself partook of the sin  
of his people,  
And his mighty damnation was also his secret  
confession,  
For he too was aware of the guilt of revenge  
in his bosom.  
That was the source of his power in depicting  
the blazes of Hell-fire;  
Torturing victims of wrath, he tortured him-  
self as a victim;  
There lay his worth—he would punish him-  
self with the lashes of conscience,  
Voicing the penalty due to the world for the  
same kind of sinning.

Such was the preacher's luminous gift in  
lighting Inferno  
Over the prairie, along the border, in every  
hamlet,  
Wreaking return of the deed in the heart of  
the vengeful transgressor.

All the town had been sulphured and  
scourged through that fiery furnace  
By the revivalist just on this spot of the little  
red schoolhouse,  
Which in his furious words would seem to be  
blazing in brimstone.  
Women would wail, and men would moan, mid  
curses Satanic;  
Some fell down in a fit, turned stark and chill  
in the body  
Through the mighty downpour of the preach-  
er's fulminated perdition;  
Others more balanced, secretly vowed to be  
good in the future,  
Not quite willing to wear their repentance in  
view of the public.

Even the gentle Ann Rutledge was touched  
with a twinge of her conscience—  
Maidenly innocence deeply responsive to ter-  
ror religious,  
Bearing back home a cleft soul now aware of  
its innermost conflict,  
When she had listened to Cartright's furious  
discourse on passion,  
Which he had kindled from Jezebel's deed as  
told in the Scriptures.

But another still source of her soul was  
    stirred by the preacher  
Tenderly talking now: "God is Love, but  
    Love unfulfilled here,  
God is Love undying, but realized only by  
    dying,  
Love of Duty is manly, but Duty of Love is  
    Godlike."  
All this sank in the soul of young Ann, the  
    innocent maiden,  
Where the criss-cross of Life had planted al-  
    ready the future—  
Sensitive soul to the least little prick of  
    priestly monition.

Somehow Lincoln kept out of that flood of fer-  
    vor volcanic,  
Too tender-hearted to hearken the torture of  
    saint or of sinner,  
Or refusing to hate the All-hater, even the  
    Devil.

Now Jack Kelso was one of those caught in  
    the cyclone religious  
Which oft swept the frontier and bore all in  
    its path up to Heaven

With a mysterious might irresistible, deemed  
superhuman.  
All his poetry was burnt out of him like a dry  
prairie,  
Not a verse could he sing any more, the psalm  
song excepted,  
Which he led at the church edifying to all of  
the people.  
Even his friend, kind Lincoln, he shunned,  
who would plague him for verses,  
Who, unregenerate still, might tempt him by  
funning to laughter,  
Or bewitch him with charms of old fables, the  
lies of the Devil,  
Aye, the worst sort of lies of the Father of  
Lies, the first Liar.

But the little red schoolhouse was witness to  
other excitements,  
As the common hot center of all the commun-  
ity's passions,  
Even the temperance talker could tease to  
intemperate anger,  
For the corngod too had his temple and wor-  
shippers zealous,  
Who would avenge any slanderous words  
blaspheming their idol.

Also the mesmeric lecturer raised by his art  
a small riot,  
As he in league with Satan was seen enchant-  
ing his victim,  
Or would read at a distance the minds of his  
spell-haunted people.

Oft on the grass nearby two wrestlers would  
meet in a challenge—  
Thus to settle the problem, which one of the  
twain was the better—  
Or perchance by trial to find the best man of  
the township;  
Each had his friends who failed not at last  
to take part in the tussle—  
Hard-fisted yeomanry, ready to fight in a min-  
ute the Indian,  
Or if he were not present, to have a free bout  
with each other.

So the village would surge far out on the  
boisterous border,  
Daring to vanguard the civilized world in  
front of the savage,  
Where the tempest is ready to rage on the  
outside and inside—  
With all the tumult of life sailing into the sea  
of Hereafter.

But the deepest upheaval that ever had  
shaken New Salem,  
Afterward keeping the town divided in  
thought and in feeling,  
Roared when the bold abolitionist came and  
began his harangue there,  
Scattering pamphlets in print and trumpet-  
ing talks from the schoolhouse,  
Which assailed black slavery and favored the  
freedom of negroes.  
Boys hissed on by Doctor Palmetto would an-  
swer with hooting,  
Then they bespattered the speaker with hens'  
eggs, not sparing the rotten,  
Till not an egg was left at the store of Abner  
the absent;  
Still the man kept talking in spite of the  
smear and the odor,  
Braving the threat which gave him an hour  
for quitting the village.

Four of the stalwart townsmen then seized  
the hapless offender,  
Bearing him down to the Sangamon's waters  
and ducking him under,  
Till he crawled out dripping and sat on a  
stone in the sunshine.  
Next they piled up the perilous pamphlets  
and set them to blazing,

Though some sought to dissuade them and  
took the wet man from his captors.

One of his rescuers was the roused school-  
master, Mentor presageful,  
Who dared threaten the boisterous mob with  
the whirl of his ferule,  
Though suspected himself of a bent to the  
damnable doctrine;  
He foresaid in the fit of his foresight the pen-  
alty coming:  
“For this deed you will yet have to give of  
yourselves the full payment;  
Something of yours, I proclaim, will soon  
have to burn for this burning,  
Fate you invoke on your town and the doom  
of retributive Furies.”

Lincoln also was present and lent his arm  
to the rescue,  
But to the crowd he spake a calm sentence,  
yet with a fore-cast:  
“I believe in free speech, though I may not  
agree with the speaker;  
But I shall dare foretell you the future which  
comes of repression:  
You will yet have to listen to what this man  
has been saying.”

Though some tongues wagged bitterly over  
the action of Lincoln,  
Then and afterward calling him nicknames  
with Doctor Palmetto,  
Who had now a new ground of dislike for the  
worth of his rival,  
Still the people forgave and forgot, e'en those  
not approving;  
History soon too remote was that deed in  
rapid New Salem,  
Though it had left on the village a shred of  
uncanny remembrance  
Which had better be buried by time in eerie  
oblivion,  
Than dug up for exploiting the pleasures of  
retaliation.

So the citizens flocked to the place at the call  
of the school-bell,  
And were talking in voluble groups, not spar-  
ing the village;  
Even another remove to the borderland sav-  
age was hinted,  
Once more obeying the transmitted impulse  
to turn to the sunset  
Which never failed to throb in the heart of  
the restless frontiersmen.



Even the well-weighing Squire made an eye  
    which glinted departure,  
And the wainwright, though old, was faced  
    with a smile of approval.

But behold! what is yonder, winding around  
    on the highway?  
Soon a slow train heaves up into town mid the  
    stare of the people;  
Three large wagons with covers of drilling  
    which vaulted their contents,  
Carrying household goods piled high with  
    women and children,  
Nor was wanting the new-born babe with its  
    well-bosomed mother.  
So they formed a full chain that linked from  
    the past to the future,  
Over whose line was fleeting the spark of the  
    spirit electric,  
Bearing History's soul to its new-world home  
    in the Northwest.

When the first wagon had come to the school-  
    house's tetering well-sweep,  
Youthful the owner leaped down to the  
    ground to water his horses,  
Which with many a puff had sturdily wound  
    up the hillside.

“Where are you going?” was asked by the  
throng that gathered about him;

“On to the wild Mississippi, aye, still onward  
across it,”

Said the youth as he thrust down the pole of  
the stone-balanced well-sweep,

While there pulsed in his voice the westering  
beat of migration.

All that crowd felt the throb and secretly  
wished to go with him,

As he leaped to his seat and clucked to his  
team to step forward,

Which then planted their hooves and straight-  
ened up stoutly the trace-chains.

Not a half dozen years had run since New  
Salem was founded,

Still its people are feeling today a fresh  
flight in their bosom.

Slowly a carriage now rolled up the knoll to  
the thirst-slaking waters;

Old was the driver who called in his need for  
help from his negro,

When to the question of Doctor Palmetto he  
plaintively answered:

“I unwilling have quitted my home and my  
blood in the coast-lands,

Where my ancestral family bloomed for six  
generations,

My armorial seal from England is stamped  
on this carriage.  
I dislike your prairies so level, they level me  
also,  
And I confess me not wholly in love with your  
one sort of freedom.  
But my young folks are dragging me onward  
until I turn backward.”  
Yet he tickled his steeds by his lash and  
trailed with the others.

Soon the third full wagon pulled up to the  
bountiful well-head,  
When a man climbed down by the hub of the  
wheel to the horse-trough.  
On his middle-aged face the years had writ-  
ten their message  
Which was telling a tale of the sorrow and  
joy of deliverance;  
To the question: “What state do you hail  
from?” he answered:  
“Over the mountains our journey has wound  
from distant Virginia;  
Loth I was, I acknowledge, to leave the loved  
land of my fathers,  
But I forefelt the hour of reckoning big with  
misfortune,  
And with my children I fled to your free  
Northwest from the Judgment.”

Some of his listeners dreamed what he meant,  
but one, and one only,  
Grasped the full sweep of his bodeful words  
—'twas Abraham Lincoln,  
Who with the crowd was watching the wavy  
procession of wagons,  
As they heaved up the road to the well, then  
sank down the hillside,  
Hazily vanishing out of the view in the San-  
gamon valley.

But the man who looked at them longest was  
Squire Ebenezer,  
Who had asked them to stay in New Salem,  
but none of them tarried.  
Over him came the old feeling to rear a new  
communal structure,  
Thrice in his life he had done it, and longed  
to do it the fourth time.  
Silent in wonder stood gazing the people  
adown from the hillock,  
For they saw too themselves in these emi-  
grants pushing to sunset—  
What they had done in the past and still  
might do in the future.

When the last wisp of the wavering wain to  
a cloudlet had sunken,

All turned round to the platform of scantling  
high-piled for the speaker,  
Candidate Lincoln, who speedily picked up  
the thought of the people;  
Thus he started to form it to words deep-  
hewn from his reason:

“Strange how man still keeps on his way  
round the world to the westward,  
Building his home, his town, his State, and  
also his Nation,  
That he may dwell with his kind in a house  
of invisible structure  
Safely, ever devote to the task of fulfilling  
his freedom!  
All this he bears in his brain more lasting  
than chattel or cattle,  
Making his weal what unites in one bond him-  
self and his fellow.  
Here the husbandman tills his own lot, and  
is lord of it wholly,  
Still he belongs to an order above him, and  
has to pay taxes.  
Ownership first of the soil is his motto writ  
in his heart’s blood  
Whose red drops he often has paid to the  
murderous savage;  
Then he is owner in fee of himself too, and  
rightly a freeman,

Able to make of the land a free world and  
     to rule it in freedom,  
 And he starts of himself on his way, without  
     king, without nobles;  
 Not from above, from below upwells now the  
     fount of the Time-stream;  
 Self-directed the man, himself in his might  
     his own patron,  
 Visible hews he his house out of wood and  
     other material,  
 But an invisible tenement also he builds of  
     his spirit,  
 Which he lives in with all his community  
     jointed together;  
 And methinks, too, himself he is building  
     meanwhile the new man,  
 Now first appearing as character writ on  
     history's pages—  
 Architect thrice—of his home, of himself, of  
     his own institution."

Lincoln now felt he had soared to the clouds  
     out of sight of his people,  
 One man only excepted; at once he swoops  
     down to the earth with an image:  
 "All your farms close-clustered around us  
     are cells of the bee-hive,  
 Each has its own busy occupant who, while  
     gathering honey,

Chooses the law to govern himself and  
chooses its maker,  
Whom I desire to be, and now solicit your  
suffrage:  
Choose ye, O children of God in this new  
promised land, me your Moses.”

So he spake, and the strong-boned tillers of  
Sangamon county  
Shouted assent to the flattering speech of  
their candidate lofty,  
For they all understood when he told them  
in words of the Scripture,  
Then he straightened himself to a plumb-  
line and sped his oration:

“Here we stand at the front of this Nation  
ever advancing,  
Stand at the front of civilization itself roll-  
ing onward,  
As it streams through our prairies up to the  
Father of Waters;  
Nor can it there be detained, but to the Pa-  
cific it surges.  
This little village has slid down the ages to  
hold us together;  
Hoary its ancestry reaches in time, if we  
knew how to trace it.

Just in that line of wagons we saw is borne  
a young harvest,  
Seeds of communities free, sown over the  
lands of the Northwest,  
Free of too many forefathers, free of too  
much tradition,  
Though we lovingly look at the ancestor back  
where we left him.  
We have fled from our own old world along  
the Atlantic,  
Over the mountains down into the one Great  
Valley united,  
There to build the new world which puts into  
order man's freedom,  
If the new lawgiver may but appear in the  
halls of Vandalia.  
Who he is I might guess, were I not by my  
modesty tongue-tied."

Here one man of them all broke into a titter  
disdainful,  
That was Doctor Palmetto, the finder of  
faults and diseases,  
Foremost troubler of all the town and its  
champion critic,  
Antipathetic far down in his soul to the prom-  
ise of Lincoln.  
Just one glance fire-barbed the speaker shot  
out at the Doctor,



Then to a silence he choked down his throat  
the rise of his choler,  
Changing his eye and his tone, he seemed to  
look into the future :

“Let me foresay the ominous word awaiting  
fulfillment :

We shall have to turn round and go back to  
the land whence we started,

Back to the sea-locked States which we or our  
parents once quitted,

Well overworking that old world into our new  
one and better.

Yon tented wagon now slowly drowsing away  
in the distance

Will be wheeling about with the years to re-  
turn to Virginia

Making it free, and re-bearing it into the re-  
born Union,

Aye, re-building the old commonwealths once  
settled from Europe,

After the type of the State first seen at the  
birth of our Northwest.

Nor overlooked shall it be too—the birthdom  
of Doctor Palmetto.”

With an ironical twinkle infusing each line  
of his features

Lincoln then turned to the people who wondered at what he was saying,  
 For they could not easily catch up that prospect prophetic,  
 He himself, when not in the glow, could scarcely repeat it.  
 Harder perchance he had hit, if he had not beheld James Rutledge  
 Who was also a native where grows the fan-leaved Palmetto—  
 Of the good citizens first, and he had too a beautiful daughter,  
 Who stood listening there on the top of the knoll with her father.  
 So the wordrich orator also knew how to be silent;  
 Deftly he turned to the theme of the time in a present example:

“Let us recall that lumbering wagon which passed here before us:  
 All of its parts—the wheel and its axle, the horse and the road too—  
 That whole outfit must soon be transformed in its speed and its power.  
 ’Tis too weak, too slow, too costly to meet the endeavor  
 Born of the age and the country which has to construct a new carriage

Whirling our products and us with the wind  
from ocean to ocean.  
That laborious horse must be changed out of  
flesh into iron,  
That he may race all day and all night with-  
out wilting weary,  
Bonding in speed our States to a Union more  
closely than ever,  
Crossing the line of the North and the South  
where it seems to be rifting,  
On a bridge well-jointed of rails made of  
metal the stoutest.  
And that tireless steed would align our town  
with the earth's folk  
Turning extension of Space to the swiftness  
of Time with his gallop."

Thus the orator voiced the deep though vague  
aspiration  
Of his townsmen ambitious—only the Doctor  
dissented:  
If for a moment he heard the far-reaching  
forecast of Lincoln,  
There would befall him a sudden attack of  
mental dyspepsia.

Brightly uprose the next day the sun of the  
Candidate's trial,

When the last ray had expired, the judges  
declared him elected.

But not fully unanimous counted the vote in  
his favor,

One torn ballot with No written over it was  
the exception,

Yet without any name or design inscribed on  
the paper;

Still the town was agreed in spelling the  
name of the voter.

Next a bon-fire was built to the shout of *Lin-*  
*coln elected,*

Store-boxes, tar-barrels, aye, and the plat-  
form's newly-sawn scantling,

With some cordwood were heaped up and  
kindled to flames on the hilltop,

Which shone far down the valley with tidings  
of *Lincoln elected.*

All the men of the township were standing  
around the big bon-fire,

Which flashed ghostly reflections over the  
ships of white cloudland,

Or would dance its whimsical shapes on the  
bluff in the distance,

Merrily weaving their shadowy whorls to the  
music of *Lincoln elected.*

See a new hat sail into the fire—it is Squire  
Ebenezer's,  
Flung in mad fun by Trueblood the farmer,  
whose palm-leaf soon follows,  
Even the dignified beaver of grave James  
Rutledge whirls whizzing  
Into the blazes—the deed of rustic respect-  
less Rube Ruffin;  
Fast ran the jollification, every man was soon  
hatless—  
One excepted alone—and he was Abraham  
Lincoln.  
Somebody clutched at his head, but he dodged  
and slid into darkness,  
Saving his Postoffice hat from the general  
conflagration  
For the sake of its past, but also for sake of  
its future,  
Somehow with it he felt himself bonded in  
soulship forever,  
Duty it had unfulfilled—a letter not yet de-  
livered.

## Book Seventh.

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### *Lincoln and Ann Rutledge.*

Clouded the dawn of the morn which followed  
the day of election ;  
Heaven above had a tear in her eye, unable  
to shed it,  
And the firmament golden had suddenly  
turned to be leaden.  
Light drooped down to the earth in a gloom  
bereft of its sunshine,  
While the treetops of autumn, song-rocked  
in the spring, were now silent.  
Even the Sangamon saucy was threading the  
folds of his valley  
Tuneless—unsounded on shoal and on shore  
were his bantering ripples,  
As he sulkily slunk through the grass to the  
all-purging Ocean.

Lincoln arose and strode through the village,  
throbbing disquiet  
Which interwove in his soul dark strands  
with a bright one of triumph.  
He had been lifted by choice of the folk to  
their temple of service,  
That rejoiced him as earnest prophetic of  
higher fulfilment;  
But underneath the feeling triumphal a throb  
of the heart-break  
Pulsed with its pain to the nethermost depths  
of his being;  
If for a moment on victory's upspring he rose  
to a tiptoe,  
Vengeful melancholy would smite him, bow-  
ing him earthward.  
So he staggered, rising and falling in throes  
of a conflict  
Which kept rolling in surges of storm his soul  
and his body,  
Inner peace had fled e'en if he was outwardly  
victor.

Such was the struggle far deeper than any  
political contest,  
Which now writhed inside him with fury of  
dragons contending.  
Lincoln, the lover unpromised, loves her who  
is promised another,

Duty makes strife with his passion which up-  
heaves him in heart-swells;  
He is bonded in word to search for his rival  
now absent,  
Whom he hopes never to find in spite of the  
quest he is making.  
Writing a pitiful prayer he begs in fair  
phrases an answer,  
Which, if it came to his call, he could cover  
with love's malediction.  
Thus he feels himself double, and double the  
part he is acting,  
Ever unpraying his prayer he brands himself  
a dissembler.  
Conscience bids him renounce, but his heart  
keeps smothering conscience  
Which stabs back in the dark till he bleeds  
with the poignant reproaches.

So it comes that he in response has written  
another epistle—  
That was the unaddressed letter, yet bearing  
the sign of his heart's blood,  
Which though hid in his bosom, refuses to  
be there imprisoned,  
But leaps forth unexpected to light as if seek-  
ing men's eyesight,  
Hinting some message unspoken which must  
in time be delivered.



This is the letter he secretly plans to give  
to Ann Rutledge,  
When the moment is born, instead of that of  
the lover.

Wandering lorn and alone on the highway he  
passes the mansion,  
Home of the high-born dame, the Lady Eula-  
lia Lovelace,  
Whom he knows as the oracle giving her help-  
ful responses—  
Sage reconciler of all the sore troubles of  
heart in the village.  
Harmony's balsam she drops divinely, when-  
ever consulted,  
Healing the wounds of the soul from her wells  
of deepest experience.  
Lincoln there sighed to himself: "Ah! what  
can she do in my crisis!  
Dare I show her myself in this heart-stamped  
letter ensanguined!"  
But he could not enter the house in the clash  
of his feelings,  
So he sped up the road to walk off the edge  
of the battle.

Soon he had strayed to the mulberry tree  
which stood at the roadside,

Which had become as sacred to him as the  
oak of old fable,  
From whose leaves as tongues the high God  
would whisper responses,  
Giving a glimpse of the future to the inquisi-  
tive mortal.  
Lincoln looked up at the foliage searing a lit-  
tle in autumn,  
With a foreboding of fate whereof he knew  
not the reason.

Soon he sat down on the settle entwisted of  
curls of the grapevine,  
Which there seemed to embrace him in many  
a tangle and flexure.  
Then he talks to himself, for he cannot silence  
his conflict:  
“She the loved is betrothed to another, and  
well do I know it!  
That is the thought which knifes me in two,  
that knowledge! O knowledge!  
Primal curse upon man at his start in the  
Garden of Eden!  
My beginning of life it is too, with a love that  
is hopeless—  
Yet keeps hoping anew and haling me back  
to my trial;  
For she disdains me not in her heart, she  
shows me her favor.

Duty is giving her one command, but Love  
quite another;  
Shall she be true to the hest of her heart, or  
true to her conscience?  
For even Truth turns double and pulls her  
fiercely asunder.  
In its full fury and uproar her struggle I mir-  
ror within me,  
For it is mine—I see it as hers but I feel it  
as mine too—  
All my heart to a demon within me is turned  
by her promise;  
Love too, the holiest angel, is scourging me  
down to damnation—  
What I ought is a hammer that seems to be  
beating my brains out.  
So I have written a letter which tells her my  
renunciation,  
But none the less is the Hope still alive that  
time may reward it;  
Love, sweet Love I write down renounced,  
obeying stern Conscience,  
Yet the counterstroke slips from my pen, to  
renounce my renouncement.  
Let me read once more that script of a sybil-  
line leaflet.”

Lincoln took off his hat and gazed at the heart  
on the letter

Which as he held in his hand was trembling  
in tune to his pulse-waves,  
Letter unsigned, unaddressed, undated, per-  
chance too unhappy,  
As it throbbed with a pain that writhed to the  
tip of his fingers,  
And ran wrenching the lines of his face to the  
echoes of sorrow.  
When he had read the letter again and pon-  
dered each sentence,  
Taking the oath anew to fulfill the work of  
renouncement—  
From the mulberry top down fell a lone leaf  
on the letter,  
Twirling until its last curve on the ink-red  
token alighted,  
Which it seemed there to melt with in kisses  
of rapturous silence.

Up he sprang from his seat and hastened  
away from that leafage  
Which in a thousand mirrors was holding be-  
fore him his image  
Borne in an overflow flooding his soul with  
frenzy forebodeful.  
Past the round red schoolhouse he stepped  
with memory tender,  
As he thought of the hours he spent with Ann  
Rutledge in study,

Where their heads as well as their hearts  
grew joined in a marriage,  
Destined to stay unfulfilled to the law, though  
the tie be eternal,  
Which in his mind ran back to that day when  
he glimpsed on the hillside  
First the fair maid as he sped in his flatboat  
over the milldam.

While he went rocking his soul in the cradle  
of sweet reminiscence,  
Just then struck the clear bell with a tremu-  
lous note from its belfry  
Thrilling the air into throbs sympathetic  
with tender emotions,  
As it called the loitering children to school  
in the morning,  
Who in glad groups were fain to prattle and  
play by the wayside.  
But its vanishing thrills seemed to chime  
with his mood of renouncement,  
Giving a toll to the beat of his heart in mem-  
ory tender.

Mentor Graham, the master, was there and  
stood on the doorstep  
Welcoming all with a swing of his ferule, the  
badge of his empire,

To whom Lincoln nodded salute which was  
 hearty and grateful,  
 But not mooded he was to stop at the peda-  
 gogue's challenge  
 To a roistering fable about his triumphant  
 election.

Anxiously onward he steps—he hardly dares  
 dream what is coming—  
 Through the Public Square, along its diagonal  
 cowpath,  
 Stopping to glance at a rifted cloud with its  
 downburst of sunshine,  
 But not failing to fling as he passed a glower-  
 ing eye-shot  
 At the store of Abner the absent which stood  
 on the corner,  
 And appeared to be woefully waiting in watch  
 for the owner.  
 Soon he stood under the sign of the well-  
 known inn of the village,  
 Which was the cheery abode of James Rut-  
 ledge, the dignified father,  
 Ever the pride of citizens, resident first of  
 New Salem.

Lincoln halted a breath, for he heard palpitat-  
 ing the music

Sprung of the shuttle and loom in the dance  
of their rounded recurrence,  
Weaving in cadence the web and the warp of  
a garment together;  
With it was mingled the low sweet note of  
the voice of a maiden  
Which took the beat of its time from the  
measuring stroke of the cross-beam,  
And interwove its melody tender with threads  
of the fabric.  
Well did the listener know the tune and the  
soft intonation,  
Which she had sung him in many a soulful  
strain of a ballad.

Stepping up to the open window he looked  
and he listened,  
While in his bosom was smiting a loom in  
heart-strokes concordant,  
Weaving destiny's vesture alive with the  
beats of the future.  
Wistful he watches the sweep of her arm and  
the swing of her body  
As she forward and backward bends with the  
dip of the heddle,  
And keeps flinging in turn and return the  
sharp-pointed shuttle,  
Which adds line upon line to the garment in  
steady procession;

Fleetly the bobbin is flying bird-like in the  
    sway of the branches,  
From one side to the other is streaming a  
    thread in its mouth-piece,  
As the maid catches its flight in her hand and  
    whips it around thence  
So that it leaves in its trail a filament spun  
    of its body,  
Like Arachne the spider who spins her fine  
    gossamer network  
Out of herself in long lines that cross in her  
    intricate pattern.

Lincoln hearkened the stroke of the loom beat  
    time to her ditty  
Weaving her musical soul along with each  
    thread of the garment;  
Bowing her head to her work she seemed to  
    be saying her prayer.  
Up and down lilt the warp as if tuned to  
    the tread of the dancer  
Going and coming in mazes of texture with  
    harmony woven,  
While in the shuttle is humming the spool cut  
    of hollowed elder.

Sadly was sighing the lay of the maid as if  
    she were singing



Her own tragical love and the desperate  
struggle within her,  
Weaving her life-threads one by one, with  
each cast of the shuttle,  
Making a tissue that seemed to be woven of  
matter and spirit.

Suddenly tapped the schoolhouse bell a toll  
to her measure,  
Causing her hand to miss in its grip the dart  
of the shuttle,  
As she called up the past of her heart on the  
way to the present.

Then a moment she stopped and looked at the  
ring on her finger,  
For it had caught, as she jerked, in the  
strands of the garment,  
Seemingly seeking to stem the dexterous work  
of the weaver,  
Jealous of what the finger and hand were  
busily making,  
As they rapidly hurtled the warp and the  
woof to a fabric.  
Even she tried one tug to pull off the obsti-  
nate token  
Which still clug to its place, refusing to slip  
by the knuckle.

Deeply she sighed as she sundered the thread  
from the ring which had caught it,  
Muttering: "Ah, methinks my shroud this  
day I am weaving!"

Lincoln heard it and uttered a sob as he stood  
at the window,  
While the heart in his bosom hit loud on its  
walls as a drum-beat,  
And there rolled down his cheek in spite of  
himself the hot tear-ball,  
For he seemed to presage the maiden's trag-  
edy coming,  
And to weep at the dream of her fate which  
her lips had forespoken.

But Ann Rutledge had heard in response the  
low sough of his breathing,  
Quickly she whirled round her head to the  
source of that deep suspiration,  
Catching the lines of his face at the throb of  
their tristful emotion;  
Well she knew the sad mood of the man and  
the gloom of his nature,  
Knew how to turn it aside to the fanciful play  
of his humor  
Putting a mask of joy on a soul overborne  
with its sorrow.

Up she sprang from the stool of her loom  
with countenance smile-lit,  
Pouring the balm of her look she tripped to  
the face at the window,  
And with the sunshine born of a word she  
scattered the rain-cloud:  
“Well, you peeper! So you have come to spy  
out my secret!  
Always trying to read just what I keep in  
me unspoken!  
Always trying to hear the unheard of my  
heart in its secret!  
But now tell me, does not my handiwork seem  
to you happy?  
For I was happy in doing it, weaving myself  
to this raiment;  
You too can fabric yourself in a story—give  
me a sample.”

Such was the shift of her sunlit soul from a  
cloud to a rainbow.  
Instantaneous with Love's look from sympathy's well-head  
Over the face of Lincoln a humorous wavelet  
ran trickling:  
“Yes, I must be a weaver, a fable I often  
have woven,  
Out of the Black Hawk War, on the loom of  
my fancy romantic,

And I see that you too have been dipped in  
the spirit of fabling.

But relate to me now your secret—the nub of  
your story.”

Luminous, Ann responded, noting the change  
in his features :

“I shall tell it at once—this garment I weave  
is for you, sir,

Given by father and mother and me in your  
honor’s election,

To be used for a new suit of clothes when you  
leave for Vandalia,

Where will begin your mount on the ladder of  
lofty ambition ;

How will the title resound through the world  
—the Hon’rable Abraham Lincoln !”

Thus she meeded him praises, summoning all  
of her sunshine

That she might gently illumine the clouds  
which had lowered in Lincoln,

For she long had been ware, in the feel of her  
soul, of the night-spell

Which had been laid on his life, perchance in  
the womb of his mother,

And still more, had been wrought in the look  
of the fate-eyed frontiersman,

Ever foreboding the danger which loomed  
from the wreak of the savage.  
Such was the rill of his character trickling  
from fountain ancestral,  
Which the maiden knew how to transform to  
an overflow sunny,  
Making him glow when gloomed, by a dip in  
the sheen of her spirit.

Slowly to his drew nearer her eyes and  
warmed to a sparkle,  
Tender the whisper she lipped, and worded  
in tones confidential:  
“I was thinking of you with every shot of  
the shuttle,  
At each shift of the warp I saw a tall form  
in new raiment,  
Thoughts of mine own would run of them-  
selves into lines of the texture,  
And this loom has woven you too with the  
yarn of the spinner.  
But behold! at the image within me I looked  
through the window,  
When the face of my fancy shot into the face  
here before me  
With a sudden fulfilment of hope which baf-  
fles me dreaming.”  
Then she lit up her look with radiance fresh  
of her soulshine.

Buoyantly swayed on her smiles rose Lincoln  
out of his sorrow  
Layered within him far down in the bottom-  
less sea of his being;  
Yet she too had her sorrow, surging in con-  
flict ferocious,  
Hers was a running fight underneath her  
pleasant exterior  
Waged between her unpromised love and her  
unloved promise;  
Chained to the loveless law is the lawless love  
in each heart-throb,  
Which at the presence of Lincoln smote her  
more fiercely than ever.

But the youth was illumined with new light  
that streamed through his features,  
And he spake forth his radiant mood in an  
eager inquiry:  
“What do you say you are weaving? Tell  
me concerning this garment—  
Suit of fine clothes bran-new you people are  
going to give me!  
Strangely forefelt! it is just what I needed  
and secretly longed for.  
Such a providence takes off the scowl of high  
Heaven down at me.”

To him responded the maid sympathetic in  
voice and in eye-glance :

“All of us thought the new dress you must  
have to bespeak the new calling,

For your career now takes its first stride to  
the goal of the future,

Passing from little New Salem on up to the  
State, to the Nation,

Oft have I seen in my dream your steps to  
the top of the mountain ;

Our whole household has shared in the joy  
of weaving this garment.

’Tis a month since I started, forecasting that  
you would be chosen—

See ! it is done—but two threads more are all  
that are needed,

Those I shall add just now while you look at  
me throwing the shuttle.”

Then she sprang to her seat and played on  
her loom a sweet music,

Only two notes of the strain whose measures  
had built the whole fabric,

While each thread of the texture was woven  
along with a heart-beat.

“Finished !” she cried in a joy, to a bolt she  
wound up her labor,

Talking meanwhile to the wonder-smit coun-  
tenance peeking before her :

“This is what we are going to send to the vil-  
 lage’s tailor,  
 To the crosslegged Sandy, skillfully plying  
 his needle,  
 Shearing and stitching and pressing his flat-  
 iron hot on his lapboard.”

Then she turned and faced intently the youth  
 at the window,  
 Drawing her look to a question which seemed  
 to wish “no” for an answer:  
 “Have you brought me today the letter a long  
 time expected?”  
 Ere he could utter a word, his hat she had  
 daintily lifted—  
 Luckless rent-free Postoffice hat, which she  
 knew as his mail-bag—  
 When down flitted that unaddressed letter of  
 Fate with its token,  
 To the surprise of the maid, as Lincoln spake  
 out the presage:  
 “There it drops out again! The secret can  
 never be hidden!  
 Thrice it has sped to the sight, defying my  
 every precaution,  
 And has revealed the full heart to the eye in  
 symbol of red-ink.  
 By myself I dared not give it, but Heaven  
 now helps me.



Take it, 'tis written to you, but not by your  
absentee Abner."

Ann for a moment was startled, feeling the  
cut of her conflict,

As the youth let fall on her palm the weird-  
working token,

Saying: "You need not answer it till I re-  
turn from Vandalia,

And expect not a line till you see me appear-  
ing in person;

To renounce is my word which I solemnly lip  
in my vow here."

But soon Lincoln unkeyed to his love the  
tense turn of his features,

And with the look of a hope he precluded his  
purpose more gently:

"I shall write once a week to the Lady Eula-  
lia Lovelace

Who is the friend of us both, and also deft  
mender of heart-break;

Till then renounce, and with you so pledged  
I shall have to renounce too.

You were strong when you passed by the mul-  
berry shunning my presence,

Just as strong I am trying to be and fulfill  
your example,

Then the days will bring the reward of our  
double renouncement."

So he spake, and would give up the present  
in hope of the future.

But just look at the blush of the maiden as  
she clings to the letter

With a deep sudden sough of her breath,  
which was pulsed with her heart-beats  
Throwing out on the air the shock of her in-  
nermost conflict!

Then she pressed to her quivering lips that  
symbol of red-ink,

Quite as if she might dare, in the fire of her  
feeling, to kiss it.

Lincoln leaned forward, perchance to bestead  
the sweet lot of that letter,

But he saw on her raised-up hand the red  
wrath of the ruby

Flashing out like a blood-shot eye from the  
ring of betrothal;

At the implacable image of anger he shudder-  
ing shrank back,

Dropping his visage to earth in the glance of  
the flame-eyed demon.

There they stood heart-struck apart, the ring  
was a Hell-fire between them,

Silent they stared as it were on the brink of  
the chasm infernal,

When down dropped on their hideous dream  
the voice of the school-bell,  
Calling them back to themselves for fulfilling  
the work of renouncement.  
Each turned away from the other in spite of  
their mutual longing,  
Hopefully waiting for time to resolve the lorn  
strife of their love-sighs;  
Still they both peeped backward, each looked  
at the other while looking.

## Book Eighth.

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### *Vandalia.*

Now behold on the road to the Capital Abra-  
ham Lincoln,  
Leaving New Salem behind, afoot he is  
threading the country  
Whose expanse is rolling beyond and be-  
yond in the distance,  
Carrying upward and onward his ken into  
dreams of the future,  
Till in the welkin above him he sees the high  
dome of the Nation  
Bending around the horizon which drops sun-  
lit to the prairie,  
And encircles each step with a heaven of far-  
glancing glory,  
Even the threatening cloud-wrack would  
flash into fleeces of gold-wool.

Oft he inspects the new suit of which he is  
wearer triumphant,  
Smoothing it over the nap with his hand  
caressingly gentle,  
Watchfully picking away from its surface  
each gossamer stranded,  
Each wrecked cobweb idly afloat in the sea  
of the sunbeams,  
For his happiest hope was to keep the gar-  
ment still flawless  
Till he returned from his trip in the bloom of  
the Spring to New Salem,  
Love was secretly wound in each thread, love-  
spun and love-woven.  
Loftily in his new vesture he trod a new man  
down the highway,  
Newly aware of himself, beginning anew his  
career too;  
Even a strut now and then he would stride, in  
ambition exalted.

Still he kept turning around for a glance at  
the village receding  
Till it swooned out of view in the arms of the  
wooing horizon,  
When it left him alone to himself in a fare-  
well of silence.  
Hark! it still has a tremulous voice, though  
vanished from vision!

'Tis the bell of the schoolhouse breathing the  
 lisp of its tinkle  
 In its low breath which throbs on his ear for  
 a moment, then dies there,  
 Quite unable to pulse a beat farther across the  
 mid air-sea,  
 Bearing a message of love which startles his  
 soul's reminiscence,  
 As he dreams that he hears the last sigh of  
 a maid in the whisper  
 Faintly to him syllabled from the invisible  
 belfry,  
 For the dark backstroke of Fate smote in him  
 amid all his joyance,  
 Just from the depths of his love overflowed  
 him the forecast of losing.

Autumn has ripened the round of the seasons  
 to fullness of fruitage,  
 Shimmering into the sun-beshone hours a  
 sense of fulfilment.  
 Still the yellowing year hath a yearning for  
 something beyond it,  
 Even the day in decline doth whisper a long-  
 ing immortal,  
 And the set of one sun is felt as the rise of  
 another.  
 Time itself this moment must die to re-live  
 the next moment.

Lincoln was sauntering slowly along in the  
mood of the autumn  
Which was playing its tints on his soul like  
the vanishing rainbow,  
When he was suddenly met at the crossing by  
one of his voters,  
Best of the neighboring farmers, who then  
started to quiz him:  
“So our lawmaker lofty is off for the halls  
of Vandalia,  
Which lies dreamily muddy along the low  
banks of Kaskaskia,  
Weening itself already the Capital true of  
the Nation.  
But, good Abraham, fetch me at once that  
railroad of iron  
With its horse to skip fleetly across my lob-  
lolly prairie,  
That I may give up my oxcart and quit so  
much walking.  
I would like if it ran just in front of the door  
of my cabin;  
Anyhow keep it away, for my vote, from the  
farm of Jake Jagers.”

Such was the name of a neighbor and rival  
he spitefully spat out.  
Artfully Lincoln switched off to a story in  
giving his answer:

“Let me now tell you what I am thinking  
 about on this journey:  
 That whole Capital I am propounding to  
 scoop at an armful,  
 And to carry it off to the banks of the Sañ-  
 gamon river,  
 Where it rightly belongs if we list to the  
 voice of our county;  
 Yea, my New Salem would never refuse the  
 gift of the State-house.”

On sped the speaker leaving his voter to pon-  
 der the problem.  
 Often he shifted around in his mind his law-  
 giving burden,  
 Thinking how he might knit the whole State  
 in the knot of new union,  
 Tying it through and through with the iron-  
 bound tracks of the railroad,  
 Bringing more closely together its people in  
 commerce and travel.  
 Also he peered in the rift which ran through  
 the heart of the Nation,  
 Which made of one two peoples that started  
 to facing each other,  
 Still united, but quaked with uncanny fore-  
 boding of struggle,  
 Which already was stamped on his soul pre-  
 saging the future.



Aye that pedestrian silently faring ahead on  
the highway,  
Saw around the horizon the far heat-light-  
ning in flashes,  
Which, unvoiced of the thunder, seemed deed-  
less caresses of fancy;  
Or at night the star-shot welkin would fling  
him a fire-ball  
Suddenly over the sky, illuming the firma-  
ment's arches,  
Torching terrestrial ways for a minute, then  
blaze into nothing.

But the strife which moiled in his mind most  
often and deeply,  
Came of the Furies of Love which kept  
wrenching his heart as two wrestlers  
In their desperate combat, dragon-like,  
twisted together.  
Love's deepest truth in his being becomes  
what assails the Law's sanction,  
Yet he the Lawmaker is for others, aye for  
himself too.  
What he owns in every droplet of blood of his  
body  
Cannot be his by the right of the world but  
belongs to another;  
What in nature is one and the whole, stays  
halved and asunder.

Think what may happen while he is away  
in the distant Vandalia!

Winged by Chance the letter expected may  
drop any moment;

Then sad Ann would behold as the signs  
of her innermost combat

Two contending writs, each making the claim  
of possession.

Or the absenter himself might appear and  
take up his promise!

Thus the lone wayfarer tossed on the waves  
of his soul in a tempest,

Seeking to fathom the oracles dark of the  
deeds that are coming.

Now at a farm-house facing the roadside he  
asks for his dinner;

Which the generous owner, guest-loving,  
heartily offers.

Lincoln had soon, from his place on the porch,  
peered in at a window

Whence he had heard the sound of a loom in  
weaving a garment;

Where on a stool sat the daughter busily ply-  
ing her shuttle,

With the same bend of the head, and graceful  
cast of the forearm,

Which he had seen once before when he  
peeped at the beautiful weaver,

While she wove with body and soul the garment he wore now.  
Even the look seemed the same recalling in rapture her image;  
As he stood in a silence steadily eyeing the window,  
He was waked from his dream by a call to partake of the viands,  
Which he did with a relish, oft adding the sauce of a story.

Finished with luck the good dinner, thriftily spoke up the farmer:  
“Acres of corn are now ripe awaiting the cut of the corn-hook,  
Frost has bitten it gently, today we are starting to shock it;  
How all the ears of the stalks have suddenly shifted their color,  
From their suits of fresh velvety green to a butternut fading!  
And the red tassels so silken and soft that waved in the sunshine  
Like a fiery bandanna hung out from its pocket of corn-shucks,  
Are burnt crumbling and crisp to the touch, and sere to the eye-sight;  
Also some ears, the best of the crop, we shall strip for a hoe-cake,

For the roasting-ear's kernel now hardens  
upon the last nubbin."

When he heard of the husking-bee Lincoln  
rejoiced as a victor,

For as lawmaker knew he far less of his craft  
than as husker,

Though another sly motive he had which he  
hid in his bosom.

So he asked of the farmer to take him along  
to the cornfield,

Modestly saying this word of himself: "I  
think I can help you."

All then jollily started away to the trial of  
labor;

Lincoln first shucked off his coat and his vest  
from himself like a corn-ear,

Carefully folding and laying these garments  
bran-new on a fence-rail;

But the new trousers he could not so easily  
save from the ordeal.

Then he took the curved cutter and slashed  
away at a corn-hill—

Four large stalks it contained overarching  
him under their leaf-blades;

Each of the stalks bore two ears of corn and  
perchance a wee nubbin,

But he severed them all at one cut of the  
keen crescent corn-hook,

Gripping their tops and thrusting them into  
the shock by the handful.  
Then he clasped on his long middle finger the  
thong of tough leather  
Which would fasten the husking peg cut of a  
hickory sapling  
Tapering down to a point to pierce the  
rough husk of the corn-ear,  
Till the serried lines of gold grains would  
flash in the sunlight  
Massed in phalanxes close round the cob in  
the shape of a spindle.

So the ears kept flying to heaps from the  
hands of the huskers,  
Till the supper-horn blew its sweet welcoming  
note from the farm-house  
Making a music softly attuned to the glow of  
the sunset,  
Hurrying hungry huskers to frugal fare of  
the farmer,  
Mush and milk as the vanguard, then hominy  
hulled and the bacon,  
Crowned with a fry of young chicken that  
swam in a sea of cream gravy.

Ended the meal well-seasoned with humorous  
bits of the backwoods,

Lincoln addressed the daughter and begged  
     for a tune on her fiddle,  
 Namely the loom with its bow and its strings  
     strung tense to be played on,  
 Tapping the harmonies held in his heart by  
     the mode of its music,  
 Thrilling the halls of memory's temple with  
     images happy  
 Which restore the whole world of New Sa-  
     lem's beautiful weaver  
 Re-enacting the glint of her eyes and the lisp  
     of her lips too.  
 This was the reason why Lincoln had stayed  
     and swinked in the cornfield.  
 Fain would he witness in life once more his  
     heart's fondest drama  
 Played by the daughter before him attuning  
     the loom and the shuttle.

So he re-lived in that farm-house the sweet-  
     est scene of existence  
 For awhile, when a rap was heard and a  
     tread on the doorstep;  
 Bidden by guestship to enter, a stranger  
     walked in out the night-tide,  
 As the good farmer held up the candle but  
     uttered no question,  
 Then the newcomer spoke: "I am trudging  
     my way to Vandalia,

Chosen lawgiver for the whole State from  
Montgomery County,

Dimmed by the dark and weary of footstep I  
ask a night's lodgment."

Hesitating the farmer replied as if forced  
to refusal:

"Here we have but one bed for a guest, and  
that is now taken."

Lincoln then broke in suddenly: "We can  
lie under one cover;

Friend, I too am bound for Vandalia, going  
to-morrow,

Tall representative cornstalk grown in the  
Sangamon Valley.

Possibly we shall agree on some law as we  
talk in our slumber,

And I would like to be winning a vote for my  
railroad beforehand."

"Yes, but mine is a heavier burden than  
that," said the stranger.

Both lay down underneath one bed-quilt, the  
best of the household—

Only last week it was merrily stitched at a  
neighborhood quilting—

Both of the lawgivers soon were in mutual  
harmony snoring,

Worn with the work of the day they enter the  
portal of dreamland

Where is still living their past, oft mingling  
with shapes of the future.

One of the sleepers heard lisped a faint word  
from a voice of his dreamfolk:

“Soon I shall be but a ghost, yet to stay in  
thy presence forever.”

With that voice still haunting his ears rose  
Lincoln at daybreak,

Strolled about on the porch, then looked at  
the loom through the window.

Soon the wife of the farmer, forethoughtful,  
had ready their breakfast,

To whose homely fare was added the fry of  
some hen's eggs,

Nor did she fail to give them a slice of her  
ham from the smoke-house—

Delicate bechnut ham, the best of the flesh  
of the porker.

Both of the guests partook, and paid their re-  
spects to the hostess,

Who well knew how to serve her food with a  
flavor domestic.

Briskly together they started to step off the  
way to Vandalia,

Law-making seat of the State, which hovered  
a day in the distance.



First the companion spoke up to Lincoln who lagged absent-minded:

“Twice already a member, I now am going the third time—

Here in my knapsack are well-thumbed pages of print you should know of:

Jefferson’s manual showing the order which guides our Assembly;

Two Constitutions, of State and of Nation, I always keep by me,

They are the rock on which the true patriot has to stay anchored.”

With a knock of surprise was Lincoln jerked out of his dream-world,

For the man now spoke like a sage of experience and learning,

As he pulled off his coon-skin cap with tails ornamented,

And unbuttoned to freedom of speech his checkered shirt-collar.

Then the philosopher clad in the style of the backwoods, gave answer

Why he had quit the civilized world to dwell on the border:

“I was born in Virginia, near-by stood famed Monticello,

Known as Jefferson’s temple, sacred to all his disciples,

One of whom I was in youth, and today I do  
not deny him.

But a good dozen years have sped since I fled  
from my birthland,

Feeling a doom suspended above it and des-  
tined to light there.

So I began with thousands of others the toil-  
some migration

To this spacious North-West, by Jefferson  
dowered with freedom.

Yet I fear lest we may in this State have  
trouble to keep it.”

Quickly a look sympathetic shot out of the  
eye-balls of Lincoln,

As the man uttered his heart in words that  
fell saddened by forecast.

Meantime they stopped at the cross-roads  
reading a sign-board,

When on one of the centering ways came roll-  
ing a carriage;

In it was seated a gentleman dignified, lofty  
in presence

Like a cavalier cloaked and hatted, and some-  
what ringleted also;

High on the seat in front was perched the  
bred darkey as driver.

Stately the man in the carriage nodded to  
Lincoln's companion

Whom he well knew, for both had been mak-  
ers of law at Vandalia.  
Aristocratic he glanced at the footmen, and  
rather disdainful,  
He too wore a new suit, but cut to the fashion  
of Richmond.

When he had whirled in his vehicle by them,  
began the companion :  
“That is the man who tried and yet tries to  
make us a Slave-State,  
But we thwarted him—still we may have to  
meet him this session—  
Honest I hold him, he never would sell out  
his honor for money,  
Though for what I then did, he shows me a  
grudge in his bearing ;  
Did you not notice it? Yet he too was born in  
Virginia,  
Not many miles from the shrine Monticello,  
the center of Statesmen,  
Also he claims to uphold the true Jeffersonian  
doctrine.  
But I came from the opposite side of the  
same Monticello.”

In a pause of reflection, Lincoln then picked  
up the discourse :

“Also my fathers were born of that State  
and its character twofold:

Oft I have wondered at the two doctrines  
which sprang from her mind-world,  
Opposites quite; and she bore two sets of po-  
litical children—

These new States of the West, all born of  
Mother Virginia,

For example our Illinois here, and yonder  
Kentucky—”

But the philosopher whirling, broke in with  
gesture emphatic:

“Friend, Virginia is halved, deep-cleft with  
a line of division

Down in her soul—her land even seems to me  
now to lie double;

Parent of States half black half white, half  
slave but half free too,

List what is doomful, half union her faith yet  
half separation.

And her great men are dual inside, though  
much do I love them;

That is the birthmark of Fate which they  
show in their doing and thinking.

Not alone on the man is it stamped, but on  
State and Nation.”

The philosopher took up his gait, slow-step-  
ping, reflective:

“Truly methinks I now see my exemplar, my  
Jefferson also  
Is composed of two opposite strains inter-  
woven, colliding,  
Yet the people are such too, and that is our  
destiny’s riddle.”

Peripatetic the sage revealed himself still  
in his life-lines  
As he gave with a sigh the last turn to his  
heart-felt reflection :

“Once we had hoped to break every fetter  
within our Dominion,

But the Compromise passed and we quit the  
old home for new freedom,

As did thousands and thousands, and still  
they are coming by thousands

On all the roads that branch to the prairies  
and woods of the North-West.

Jefferson’s domain I call it, the seat of a new  
liberation—

Yonder already they come”—as he spoke, he  
triumphantly pointed

To a white serpentine train many-jointed of  
round-covered wagons

Winding about through the limitless level of  
grassy prairie.

But see the Capital lying along the sluggish  
Kaskaskia,  
Sunning itself on the mud-made banks in a  
hundred log cabins  
Of the frontiersmen, all of them ready to  
wing away westward,  
Over the roiled Mississippi and over the  
snaggy Missouri,  
And still farther ahead to the threatening  
spurs of the Rockies  
Flying above the others and lighting adown  
on the front line,  
Like the swirl of a covey of blackbirds round-  
ing the grainfield,  
Whirling over the ground in turn upon turn  
as a roller,  
For the last will be first when the first has  
been left as the last one.

Even the Capital seemed to be ready to quit  
its foundation,  
As if eager to rise on the wing and take pass-  
age elsewhere,  
Quite uncertain of stay in the dowerless town  
of Vandalia  
Which now Lincoln beheld, with a tale on his  
tongue as he entered;  
This, however, he told not, finding just then  
not a hearer,

Grave legislators were coming each hour,  
well-shotted with speeches.

Many a member had borne on his shoulder the  
long-barreled rifle

Ready to shoot the fleet deer by the way or the  
crested wild turkey,

Loving the sport of the hunter and furnishing  
meat for his journey.

Others came riding on horseback well-steeded  
and booted and stirruped,

Men of cavalier names and manners gemming  
the backwoods;

One legislator still rattled his buckskin  
breeches with fringes;

Still another would strut in his grandfather's  
old regimentals.

Whose is that round and rubicund face all  
smiling unbristled?

Lincoln looks at it well as if watching the  
time in a mirror,

Which is imaging to him his opposite, outer  
and inner;

That is Douglas, hardly of age, and not long  
in the North-West,

Son of distant Yankeeland, here quite alone  
in his birthdom.

Both of them heirs of the future now casting  
the lots for their inning.

Such are the antitypes twain yet inseparate,  
yoked both together,  
Suns revolving about each other within the  
one system,  
Each repellent of each, yet both held fast by  
attraction  
Stronger than they were or knew of—that  
universal attraction  
Which unites the great cosmos without us  
and also within us—  
Each fulfilling the other when seen in the  
cycle of ages.

Soon the session began and Lincoln listlessly  
listened,  
For his heart he had left behind in a home of  
New Salem,  
Little remained him for making the law in  
Vandalia law-making,  
While on his winter of soul lay chilly the win-  
ter of nature.  
But with the roll of the season the hour ar-  
rived for his speaking,  
Somehow often deferred until the last day of  
the session,  
When he began to run through the State his  
ubiquitous railroad.  
Chiefly his theme was the iron-bound bond of  
the Union now rifting;



Newly remarried, the North and the South  
would stay one forever.

Two were the loves which seemed interwound  
in the turn of each sentence,

For the love of his country would fuse with  
the love of his maiden.

At his highest he painted the North and the  
South in a picture

Kissing, yea hugging each other by means of  
his amorous railroad,

Till he dwelt more on the union of love than  
on love of the union.

All his images glowed with the fire of a pas-  
sionate longing

Lit in two souls now parted but living a  
dream-life together;

All his fancies seemed to burst up from a  
flame underlying,

Even cold facts were heated white-hot in the  
forge of his feelings.

Self-forgetful he was, he soon forgot his dear  
railroad,

Also out of his memory lapsed for a moment  
his country,

Just the one fierce love had seemingly  
swallowed the other,

As he spoke of a scene, forecasting the place  
and the action;

Thus at his argument's topmost pitch in his  
fervor he cried out:

“Here at the mulberry tree now let us be  
plighted forever.”

Lincoln had heard his own words, which  
startled him dumb at their meaning,  
For they had secretly tapped the underworld  
dread of his being,  
So that the hope most hid in his heart had  
bubbled up sunward.

Meanwhile arose with a shout from the mem-  
bers unanimous laughter:

“Where is that tree—we wish to be there at  
the tick of the moment.”

But instead of the speaker who hushed, an-  
other responded:

“Who is the girl?—Now tell us the story, and  
we'll vote for your measure,  
That I am sure will be the best argument yet  
for your railroad.”

Snappishly old Sam Wildfly, sarcastic re-  
torter from Wabash

Rose to a point of order adjusting his spec-  
tacles brass-rimmed:

“Not before this House is the subject brought  
up by the speaker,

From the railroad wandering off to the kiss  
of his sweetheart;

'Tis not debatable under the rules of Jeffer-  
son's Manual.”

Such was the humorous punch which raised  
up the head-drooping Lincoln,  
And which started his tongue word-smit, to  
funning an answer:

“Friends, the gavel I seize and rule myself  
out of order,

For our departure the hour has struck—I ad-  
journ myself to next session—

When I shall finish my speech, and tell you  
the end of my story.”

## Book Ninth.

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### *The Letters.*

Drearier lounge the wintering days on the  
hill of New Salem,  
Older the hours have seemed to be growing  
since Lincoln's departure,  
And the village though young in its years  
turns gray with the season,  
Aged already within while silvered in snow  
of December.  
Hark! the hoarse crows which are dolefully  
cawing around the bleak skyline!  
Almost bare are the boughs of the sycamore  
hung with its plume-balls,  
Which keep swinging in dance to the boisterous  
tune of the storm-wind,  
Till they are whirled from their sport and  
drop to the earth in the springtime.

Icy and shrunk the rivulet crawls through  
Sangamon Valley,  
Listlessly laving old logs that are lodged in  
the slime of its streambed,  
While the sere grass on its banks droops  
over to house the shy rabbit.

People at home would hug the hot hearth in  
moody seclusion,  
Or at the store would cock up their feet on  
the stove in a circle,  
Rating the times for their troubles, not spar-  
ing the lag of the village,  
Often shying a rock at the law and the lax  
legislation.  
Every minute ticked off a complaint and  
blamed every other,  
And all daylight from morning till evening  
seemed only sunset,  
Even old Time lagged weary of scything the  
universe wicked.

But the stream of discussion would lash into  
foam at the highest  
When two speakers would clinch and begin  
a political wrestle,  
Deftly unsheathing their keen-edged tongues  
for a stab or a story.

Best of these fencers were Squire Ebenezer  
and Doctor Palmetto  
When they both waxed wroth on the theme  
of President Jackson  
Till the wordsmen seemed ready to turn on  
the spot into swordsmen.  
Still they did not, for after one sally of hot  
effervescence,  
Evenly Squire Ebenezer would balance the  
scales of his temper,  
Cooling down from his boil to big bubbles  
of good-natured humor.

Lincoln had failed not to send a letter each  
week from Vandalia,  
Where he was passing the winter in exile  
unhappy yet hopeful—  
Letter well-spelt, well-written of hand, well-  
turned in its phrases,  
Over each word of his pen he would linger a  
moment in longing,  
For he well knew who would hear it and  
feel out its meaning most deeply,  
Though it be sent to the name of the Lady  
Eulalia Lovelace  
Who would open it first and peruse all the  
words in it written,  
Words on the surface subdued to the calm  
of an inner renouncement.

Still he would utter the wish of his heart  
to get back to New Salem,  
Giving various reasons, all good, but never  
the best one,  
Which he would cunningly hide between lines  
as they flowed in his missive.  
Often the word had one sense for the Lady  
and one for the maiden;  
But at times broke forth in despite the gen-  
uine outburst;  
“Tell me,” he asks in a letter, “which of  
them is the more binding  
Be it Love’s troth or Love’s truth, or be it  
the form or the essence?”  
Then again he would lip a few sounds of the  
strife of his bosom:  
“Lawmaker sworn of the State I am seem-  
ing my days at Vandalia,  
Lawbreaker down in my heart I oft catch  
me in plans of my action.”

Such were the sayings which he would weave  
in the ink of his pen-lines  
Scarce understood by the reader, the Lady  
Eulalia Lovelace;  
But spring-clear to Ann Rutledge who silent-  
ly saw to their bottom,  
For they told her own to herself, reflecting  
her image,

Thus confessing himself he spoke her deepest confession.

Lastly he utters the man in the words of a balanced decision :

“Though unpledged, I shall ever be faithful  
—not faithless with pledges;

Loyal still, though renouncing loyalty’s fairest fruition.”

Reading this passage one day, the Lady rose asking the question :

“What does it mean? Do you know?” but the maiden held sighless her breath-tip,

Leaving unworded the throbs in her bosom assailing each other,

Till she went home to herself and lulled them in tasks of the household.

Nun-like in look she eases her heart of its struggle by labor,

Even the loom she plies not so much through need of the fabric

As for the sake of its soul-tuning gift of sweet reminiscence

Softly retelling her thoughts as she wove the garment of Lincoln,

And recalling the bliss which arose with the play of the shuttle,

When he appeared at the window just in the midst of her dream-world.



Nor forgot she the flutter of doom in the fall  
of the letter

Which still next to her heart she wore with  
its symbol of crimson.

So in her feeling would rise the combat ever-  
recurrent,

Raging between sweet Love in itself and stern  
Love as a duty.

Often she looked at her image within as a  
person divided—

Self unfeeling has given away the Self that is  
feeling;

What is her fate where her heart and her  
hand are fighting each other?

In the stress of her spirit she draws from her  
bosom its treasure,

And has started to grope for the secret sense  
of the message,

Long she stares in a far-away trance at the  
blood-tinted symbol,

Even she picks up her pen to send a request  
to Vandalia,

When a fresh letter is brought and laid on  
the table before her

Just alongside of the red-hearted missive of  
Lincoln it fell down.

Strangely withheld she her hand from put-  
ting a word on the paper.

Well she knew the turn of the script and the  
sort of envelope,  
Knew who had written her name on its back,  
and the penmanship's flourish;  
Oft she had seen it before in times gone by  
though not lately.  
Blow unexpected! though long expected! the  
letter has come now!  
Letter of absentee Abner announcing his  
speedy arrival,  
Wreathing skillfully many excuses for ab-  
sence and silence.  
But he soon will return to make good by mar-  
riage his promise,  
And a festival hold for herself and for all of  
New Salem.

Stronger than ever she felt the daggered  
strife in her bosom  
Cutting both ways till divided she swooned  
in her chair for a moment;  
Then she rallied and rose to her feet in the  
strength of her passion  
While the two letters she seized as if grap-  
pling the source of her conflict;  
With teeth clenched she flung both of them  
down on the table together,  
Where they stood on their edges and leaned  
each to each in a combat,

Till they slowly fell over, the heart-blazoned  
    one on top of the other,  
Hiding quite the address though wreathed in  
    fanciful pen-strokes.  
Ann had tokened with bodeful delight the  
    prognostication,  
Though in triumph she suddenly glowed,  
    she drooped soon defeated,  
And began to wrench in the struggle more  
    deeply than ever  
Which now stood in her eye-glance, while  
    also it raged in her bosom.  
Thus to herself she dialogued there her fu-  
    rious soul-strife:  
“Sacred promise on one side, sacred love  
    on the other,  
I between them am lodged, yea within them,  
    and they too within me  
Where they rend me in twain while ruth-  
    lessly rending each other.  
Not alone do I view, but I am, their desper-  
    ate duel.”

From the table she picked up the letters and  
    held in each hand one:  
In the left she caressingly stroked with her  
    fingers the heart's sign,  
In the right she crumpled her name writ on  
    the envelope

Crushing all of its well-rounded flourishes  
into cross wrinkles and creases  
And at the top of her frenzy she called to  
the fighters inside her:

“Which is it? Shall now perish my heart  
or perish my pledges?

Is Love ruler of Law, or is it the Law which  
is ruler?”

Both of the letters fell down on the table.  
from fingers unnerving,

Then with a sigh she smoothed out the folds  
of the script she had crumpled,

And re-read her own name on the back of  
the furrowed envelope.

Soon the letters she picked up and held both  
together thus saying:

“Oh this strife I cannot endure, nor can I  
resolve it,

On these covers of paper are wrestling the  
very inscriptions,

Red against dark, the heart against words  
of my name writ in order

Outwardly trimmed with many a curled-up  
crinkle and frizzle.

Off again I must haste to the rare reconciler  
of trouble.”

Quickly she reaches the mansion of Lady Eu-  
lalia Lovelace

Who so often had stayed the tossed soul in  
sympathy hopeful,  
On whose palm are laid the two letters with  
problems embattled,  
When she responded what seemed to accord  
with the wish of the asker:  
“Absentee lovers must forfeit the claim  
which they have neglected;  
And the promise, if not fulfilled in its time,  
is unpromised.  
Thou hast waited the limit, renouncing thy  
tenderest selfhood;  
Thy new freedom of choice thou hast won,  
just by thy renouncement.”

So the oracle spake, oracular still her re-  
sponses;  
But the wound lay deeper, far deeper than  
she had suspected.  
For Ann glanced at the ring and appeared to  
shrink back from the outlook,  
Feeling the might of her word once given to  
thrill on her heart-strings.  
Then the Lady Eulalia uttered boldly the  
mandate:  
“Take off that sign of betrothal which now  
encircles thy finger,  
Let me have it to give to the right one whom  
I shall discover,

Or to return to the owner when thine no  
longer it can be.”

Tearfully tense Ann Rutledge replied to the  
words of the Lady,

“That I have often attempted already, but  
never it slips off,

Hand may wrestle with hand, but the one  
cannot conquer the other;

Then if it come off, that is no stop of the  
struggle within me,

Firmer this ring has been put on my soul  
than here on my finger.”

Up from her seat the maiden had sprung in  
the thrust of her sentence,

When old Betsey the negress appeared and  
brought in a letter,

Aye a new letter making the third of that  
company written,

Which had just come by the mail addressed  
to the mansion’s mistress,

In a hand-writing well known to the watch-  
ful eye of Ann Rutledge,

Who had caught at a glance the dip of the  
lines on the missive.

Soon the Lady had broken the seal and read  
the short message,

Which she reported: “Lincoln is now on his  
way to New Salem,

More than a week is gone since the session  
adjourned at Vandalia;  
He is making a roundabout journey to visit  
his parents,  
Chiefly his step-mother; who in his boyhood  
mothered his soul's hope.  
Let me count up the time—he may come  
down the road any minute.”

Ann sank back to her seat at the word medi-  
tatively silent,  
For there began in the depths of her heart  
a new kind of encounter:  
As she thought the two lovers might meet in  
that mansion together.  
Abner was coming, Lincoln was coming, per-  
chance the next minute;  
Both had announced by letter the news of  
their future intention.  
Soon she upgathered herself and nervously  
clutched her two letters,  
One hand took hold of the heart-sign, the  
other was twirling the word-sign  
With the tips of her fingers, as she bemoaned  
her contention:  
“Higher, still higher is rising the struggle  
within and without me!  
Where can I turn now for help, or even a  
hope of allayment—

Not to the world which flings me from all  
to the den of my demons,  
Not to myself, who am but the battle ground  
for my own feelings  
Which to the death have grappled to throt-  
tle each other and me too.”

Lady Eulalia looked at the speaker with  
sympathy hopeless,  
Quite tongue-tied in her doubt as to what  
she could do in the crisis,  
For the case lay beyond all her power of  
sage ministration.

It was the first time she ever had known the  
defeat of her wisdom,  
And she could not help thinking her hour had  
struck for departure  
Back to the home of her earliest love in her  
vaunted Virginia.

Also Ann Rutledge had felt the fresh impo-  
tence of her adviser,  
As she uttered in sighs her word of re-  
newed resignation:

“This is a criss-cross far stronger than I  
am, even than we are;

Mightier is the high hand which is dealing  
this dole to my life’s course.

When I came hither I bore in my soul two  
sides of a combat,



And I bore in my hand two strifes in the  
inkstains of writing;  
Both of the messages warring flew down  
from above on my table,  
For a spell I gazed at their conflict, e'en  
tried to compose it,  
But it had gone already beyond my power  
of self-help—  
That fierce duel between the two scripts of  
Abner and Lincoln.  
So I ran out of the house and hastened my  
pace to your mansion,  
Seeking my peace from the sweet benediction  
which flows from your presence."

Brightlier gleamed in her eyes the Lady Eu-  
lalia Lovelace  
When she glimpsed but a glance of herself  
in solacing sorrow,  
For she would live the beatitude born of the  
peace-maker blessed.  
But the maiden then paled and gave a new  
turn to her problem:  
"Only behold this wheel of my destiny whirl  
a fresh struggle!  
Not the two letters alone engage now in fu-  
rious combat,  
Rising up like contestants before the thick  
throng of my fancy

And then clinching, line around line, for  
     the deadly encounter,  
 But the two writers themselves appear in  
     personal presence;  
 Strangely transmuted to life from the ink  
     of their very hand-writing,  
 Forth they step in array from behind the  
     dark strokes of their pen-points  
 Into the place of their meeting which is my  
     soul as the witness,  
 Yea as the battle itself too, and I am the vic-  
     tor and vanquished:  
 God! perchance in this duel I am the slain  
     and the slayer."

In a surge of foreboding she quitted the  
     house of her helper,  
 Who no longer could help in the deluge of  
     down-pouring trials,  
 Feeling the world to be fated around her  
     and changed to a demon  
 That was dogging her soul with remorse ful-  
     filling a judgment  
 Which had been burnt in her brain by the  
     tongue-flame of Cartright the preacher.  
 Even the sunshine shone doom on the man-  
     sion, the schoolhouse, the village,  
 As she looked back on her path, or forward  
     away in the landscape.

But the letters she kept, for she could not  
part from their presence,  
Just one glance at them both would give  
some relief to her soul's fray,  
As it turned her from Furies inside to the  
symbols outside her.  
Still the one letter she bore in her bosom  
where it lay hidden,  
While the other she twisted in twirls of her  
fugitive fingers;  
So the heart and the hand kept asunder in  
space and in spirit.

Lonely and lorn she wandered about the  
streets of the village  
To herself unknown in what she was dream-  
ily doing,  
Till at last she had come to the mulberry-  
tree and its settle,  
Drawn to memory's shrine by the instinct of  
happier moments.  
But on her joy soon smote the dread back-  
stroke of sorrow remorseful  
Till she dragged from her bosom to view the  
red-symbolled letter,  
Tearing it nearly atwain through the heart  
that reddened upon it,  
When she besaw it a moment as by a shred it  
was hanging;

Then with a seeming relief which bespoke  
it dearer than ever,  
Gently she put it again in its place just  
next to her heart-throbs.

Spring, the young lover, was kissing in  
warmth the hill and the valley,  
Trees had responded with outburst of buds  
and of leaves and of flowers  
While the prairie had flung out in rapture  
its flowing green garment,  
In whose folds it now draped its bare white  
body of winter.

Also the mulberry's branches had answered  
the vernal caresses,

Robed in foliage new which bended down  
over the settle,

To embrace it in love and to hide it from  
prying outsiders,

Waving above it the treetop's coronal stud-  
ded with flowers,

One of which hung close down to the hand  
of Ann Rutledge who plucked it,

As she drew from her bosom the letter and  
gazed at the red-heart,

Which in spite of the rent kept clinging in  
hope still together.

But the other envelope was whisked to the  
earth in her motion,

Whose inscription she saw, when she heard  
its command to be picked up.  
Meantime she thought of the man who had  
woven this intricate settle  
Out of the tortuous twigs of the tree and  
the sinewy grapevines  
For a purpose she knew of indeed, as she  
often had used it—  
Aye, was using it now in the fanciful work  
of her day-dreams.  
Still she foreboded that to it remained some  
higher fulfilment,  
As the trysting-place final of love for him  
and for her too.

Why in her face are the flashes now fitfully  
chasing each other?  
Ah, she is glancing again at the ring ingrown  
on her finger,  
Circling also her soul, the fatal ring of be-  
trothal,  
Which rounds fiercely in one ear the promise  
with hiss of a demon,  
But in the other breathes softly the unprom-  
ised love, like an angel;  
Even by one wrench more she tests it, but  
vain is the effort.

Then she holds up before her and ponders  
that heart of renouncement  
Which sheds comfort anew with a hope of  
some happy deliverance,  
Though it hangs on a shred, by a Fury cleft  
through in the middle.  
Out of her revery lofty she woke at the call  
of the bluebird  
Which on a twig just over her head is swing-  
ing and singing  
Merrily for its winged mate who flies to its  
home in the branches,  
Where are performed to the music of breezes  
the happy espousals  
Which she looks up at in joy, then she beams  
her lit eye-glances earthward.

Down the road in the distance she sees a tall  
figure approaching;  
Well she remembered the words of Lady Eu-  
lalia Lovelace  
While perusing a letter in forecast of some-  
body coming;  
Still that shape appeared to be strolling up  
out of her dream-world  
Limned into life there before her largening  
eyes: who is it?

## Book Tenth.

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### *Back from Capital.*

“Swim, if you dare, in a race with me over  
this turbulent river,  
To yon hill-top of green, the highest above  
the mad surges.”

Lincoln shot out the words at a rounded and  
orotund talker,  
Douglas, whom he would test by a dare to a  
trial of action,  
Who stood merrily babbling, the center of  
home-going members,  
Young, but already well-versed in the art of  
winning men's friendship,  
Skillful to draw the attention, and clever in  
cunning devices.

“Pick up your gauntlet at once I shall, and  
now I am ready.”

Then he began on the spot before all to strip  
for the struggle,  
Seizing the start to tickle the lungs of the  
pioneer hardy,  
Who delighted to cheer on the contest and  
watch the contestants.

Such was the trial of strength, the first one  
of many to follow,  
Testing the Age's advancing protagonists,  
Lincoln and Douglas,  
Who had already selected each other, uncon-  
sciously choosing.  
Each of them faced to the opposite side in  
political measures,  
Counterparts seemed they in stature and  
spirit, yet bound up together.  
Often they met and passed with a nod in the  
course of the session,  
But underneath ever feeling the grapple of  
destinies inner,  
Which now utterance found, ere they part-  
ed, in shape of a challenge,  
Friendly indeed, yet presaging perchance the  
cast of the future.  
Strange, but the eyeshot of each would  
pierce to the soul of the other,



Though not a word in jest or in earnest be  
spoken by either.

Lincoln, when he had come to his fireside,  
thus often reflected:

“Truly, of all of the men I have seen in the  
test of this session,

That young fellow belongs to the future,  
tried by my touch-stone.

So do I also—both of us, twinned to a mutual  
struggle—

Spirit wrestles with spirit in a spectral mul-  
titude’s presence;

I can feel this genius of mine in a coil with  
his genius,

If I but pass him alone on the street, each  
silently stepping.

So I shall test futurity’s wink by this inno-  
cent wager,

Whether perchance the oracle dark may hint  
me a presage.”

Both of them daringly plunged in the surges  
of swollen Kaskaskia,

Far overflowing its banks by the copious  
showers of springtime,

Whirling along in its wrath much soil, some  
trees and a cabin,

Animals wild and tame could be seen in a  
strife with the torrent;

Once a corpse came bobbing along in the roll  
of the wavelets,  
Ghastly warning to youths ambitious of  
swimming the deluge.

Douglas scudded more quickly the scum of  
the boiling Kaskaskia,  
Splashing his strokes in the stream till he  
reached a helpful green islet,  
Where overworn by the task he lay down on  
the bed of its herbage.  
Lincoln more slowly kept whirling long arms  
in circles successive,  
Till he passed the green islet without ever  
stopping to rest there,  
And was nearing the goal when Douglas  
again wooed the waters.  
But too late—the stout swimmer could be  
overtaken no longer,  
Who soon strode up the hill the highest  
above the wild current.

Generous Douglas was first to salute his ri-  
val as victor,  
While the crowd on the shore responded with  
cheers to the triumph;  
And then rapidly homeward scattered to put  
in their corn-crops,

Not to meet till next winter again in law-  
making Vandalia—  
Dozens of Spartan Lycurguses sprung of the  
Western prairie.

Now behold on the road from the Capital,  
Abraham Lincoln  
By a roundabout route returning in hope to  
New Salem,  
Out of the tumult centered from all of  
the State to a whirlpool,  
Out of the conflict of soul which raged with-  
in him by absence.  
Glad he is to be free of the struggle of par-  
ties for power,  
Glad to be rid for a while of the troubles that  
loomed in the Nation.

Still he bears deep strife, the deepest of all  
in his life-time:  
He the maker of Law, doth feel himself too  
its unmaker,  
As he appeals the keen suit of his Love to  
his own Legislature.  
Thus of two Law-giving bodies strangely he  
finds himself member,  
Issuing opposite mandates, both valid, an  
outer and inner.

Lover and lawgiver coupled he is, each fighting the other,  
 Making the law and breaking the law he joins  
 in one person.

So he quits the mad scene, at odds with himself and the place too,  
 Often preluding alone on his path this note of his discord:

“Strifeful State-House, next time I shall carry thee off elsewhither,  
 Even shall bear thee away to my home in the Sangamon Valley.”

So he already had spoken his mind to Vandalia’s dwellers

Whose one creed was antipathy to all Capital-movers—

They who would steal the beautiful bride of Kaskaskia’s kisses,

Making her marry that dwarf of a Sangamon shrunken,

Which was scarcely able to float a respectable flat-boat,

While their own dear nymph of a stream seemed an Amazon mighty.

Still the lore which Lincoln had won was learnt for a life-time,

Every part of the State he had seen in its  
men at Vandalia,  
Leaders selected they were from its South,  
and its North, and its Middle,  
Well representing the flood of its people now  
forward now backward,  
Hinting the interflow subtle of currents of  
western migration,  
As they came rolling along from the old  
Thirteen to the New-State,  
Knitting together and knotting in thousands  
of communal nodules  
At the crossing of roads, or perchance at the  
ferry of rivers,  
Round the new sawmill or gristmill driven by  
fall of the water,  
Round the strong man as center, whose soul  
was the soul of the village.

Heroes big and little were these, heroic  
world-builders,  
Prairial demi-gods, Hercules modernized,  
but yet unstoried,  
Draining the swamps, and slaying wild  
beasts, and subduing wild Nature,  
So they laid everywhere the foundations of  
civilized order.

Such were the men whose choicest by Lin-  
 coln were seen at Vandalia,  
 Now the lawgivers chosen for the whole  
 State by their people.  
 Often he heard them discussing together the  
 overcast problem:  
 Which is first in authority's right: the State  
 or the Nation,  
 Some upholding the one as supreme, but  
 others the other.  
 Often he thought: "Just that is the question  
 which has to be settled  
 In the future—not by the word, but the  
 deed—oh! Heaven!"

Well he recalled the same problem debated  
 by two young Lieutenants  
 In the Black Hawk War, officers both of the  
 National Army,  
 Robert Anderson one of them, Jefferson Da-  
 vis the other;  
 Each stood ready to battle on opposite sides  
 of the conflict.  
 That debate had stayed in his mind with des-  
 tiny's imprint,  
 For the strife had seemed to take place with-  
 in him on both sides,  
 Yet at the end the vision rose up of himself  
 as the healer.

So the political drift underlying the rush of  
the session  
Often transmuted its sound in his soul to a  
music uncanny  
Like the clashing of steel and once like the  
roar of a cannon,  
Dark presentiment's underflow bursting its  
way up to sunlight.

Thus was trudging along the new road the  
lawmaker Lincoln,  
Leisurely tuning his steps to the gait of his  
slow meditations,  
Which came echoing back to him out of Van-  
dalia's winter  
With its manifold conflicts in Memory's bil-  
lows resurging,  
As they rolled quivering through him in  
shapes of his feverish fancy,  
Images loving of Love, and of State, and  
also of Nation,  
While around them would rise unbidden the  
presence of Douglas,  
Now his counterpart fated to march with  
him forth to the future,  
Like a high pair of cosmical suns in hot revo-  
lution,  
Till all ablaze in its death the one drops into  
the other.

Suddenly near the roadside he heard the  
strokes of a chopper  
Who was felling in thirls of his axe the oak  
of the forest.  
Bit by bit he had cut the bole of the tree to  
its center  
On one side, and had wearily started to chip  
at the other,  
When the tall stranger steps up to him beg-  
ging a turn at the axe-helve.  
To the proposal the woodman consented,  
deep-breathing his "Yes, sir."

Lincoln then started his labor, which was  
a flight from his feelings;  
Out of his inner world suddenly seemed he  
to speed to his outer,  
Work had called him away from himself in  
the clash of his conflict,  
Given him happy release by turning his  
thought into action;  
Walking up to the tree, he had walked from  
one life to another.

Deftly he clenched his keen weapon and  
whirled it around in great circles,  
Cutting a mouth in the oak which spat out  
its chips all about him,



Till its heart had been slit, and its head  
many-branched began drooping,  
When it started to crash in its fall through  
the neighboring tree-tops,  
Rending the limbs in its path as it fell to  
the earth like a giant  
Shaking the forest around and afar with a  
grand detonation.

Lincoln then spake to the man who admired  
the swirl of his arm's swing:  
"Now you are breathed, so bring on your  
saw with its set-teeth  
If you wish me to help you cut up this bole  
into saw-logs  
Fit to be sawn into boards or split by the  
wedge into fence-rails."  
Gladly the man brought thither the sharp-  
toothed saw and two-handled,  
Soon it had bitten the bole into logs of the  
length of the fence-rail,  
Which they readily rolled apart by the help  
of the hand-spike,  
When kind Lincoln offered once more the  
good of his service,  
Likewise seeking to drive off the merciless  
gnaw of the glum-glums:

“Yonder I see the maul and the wedge for  
     cleaving this oak-log,  
 Let me put them to work that I splinter it  
     into fine fence-rails.  
 I am come from the Capital where I was law-  
     making member,  
 But at home I now feel, engaged in this pres-  
     ent vocation;  
 Happier far as a rail-splitter than as a law-  
     giver am I.”

Then with a joy on his face he knuckled the  
     hickory handle,  
 And kept whizzing around in great spirals  
     the oak-knotted maul-head,  
 Fetching it down with a thud on the top of  
     the ironwood wedges,  
 Till the tough-grained log he had riven to  
     right-fashioned fence-rails,  
 Not too big nor too little for keeping the  
     swine from the cornfield.

Ended the task with a story, the woodman  
     spake up astonished:  
 “Stranger, how comes it that work you seem  
     to regard as a pastime?”  
 In slow words of reflection the railsplitter  
     mauled him the answer:

“Humble the deed may be, and still of its  
kind can be perfect;  
Excellence would I attain in my life, though  
but a wee sparkle;  
All perfection is Godlike, it need be just a  
scintilla.  
So it results that in making a rail I find  
greater pleasure  
Than in making a law when I know not how  
I can make it.  
Let me the excellent be, though only the ex-  
cellent hogherd.”

Lincoln then nodded a farewell, still his so-  
liloquy voicing:  
“But the railsplitter perfect must rise to the  
lawmaker perfect.  
Over my limit to mount is the excellence all-  
excelling.  
That is the test which awaits me next time at  
law-making Vandalia.”

From the stare of the man the speaker then  
fled through the brushwood,  
Leaving his burden behind as he skipped out  
into the open;  
Light was the heart now of Lincoln as fleetly  
he sped on the roadway;

Mauling the bole with his brawn, he had  
mauled from his brain all his troubles,  
Freed of the inner corrosion which sprang  
from the clash of his conflicts.

Now all at once he beholds in himself the de-  
lights of the spring-time,  
Which is outwardly rollicking over the wold  
and the woodland,  
Tuning the earth and the sky to the mood of  
its laugh universal.  
Oft he would stop and hark to the chorus  
of thousands of blackbirds,  
Who were chanting their ecstasy for the re-  
turn of the season,  
In the shaggy high sycamore hugging and  
shading the brookside,  
Out of whose branches were pouring the  
showers of melody sky-born.

On the root of a tree, where the rivulet  
drowsily rippled,  
Lincoln sat down by the wayside, listing the  
choir of the warblers,  
Who might sing him to sleep in a roundel  
attuned to the waters.

Soon he had dreamed himself stepping the  
road in sight of New Salem;  
There he saw too the mansion of Lady Eu-  
lalia Lovelace,  
Thinking how always his missives to her  
were meant for another,  
For the maiden who treasured the fire-red  
sign of renouncement.  
But he passed onward, dreaming to hie to  
the heart of the village,  
Where he would greet good William the  
wainwright and Squire Ebenezer,  
Then to the crowd assembled about him  
would tell a new story.  
But mid his revery rustled the branches  
above him in whispers,  
So that he trod in his fantasy under the mul-  
berry's blossoms,  
Where he sat down on the settle so cunning-  
ly woven of grapevines,  
Visioning there a shape to be present and  
waiting to meet him.

Suddenly neard he adream the echoing  
strokes of the school-bell  
Which by its bodeful vibration shook him  
out of his ghost-world,  
So that he leaped from his seat and uttered  
a word disappointed:

"No, not yet, not yet, though such be my  
     hope of fulfilment;  
 First I must go to my mother before I can  
     ever be happy.  
 Step-mother though she be, more compell-  
     ing than blood is our kinship.  
 Though she bore not my body at birth, she  
     mothered my genius,  
 Having a seeress's glance which can look in  
     the glass of the future."  
 This he would hear from her lips just after  
     his earliest inning,  
 Spoken in love from the deepest communion  
     of spirits united,  
 For she could draw up a sybilline word from  
     sources eternal.

So the traveler trudges his way with the  
     landscape conversing,  
 Which would silently tell him its tale, reflect-  
     ing his humor  
 In the play of the color spread over the mea-  
     dow and hillside,  
 In the laugh of the buds as they burst to the  
     fullness of flowers,  
 In the joy of the sunshine fleeting with  
     fleeces of cloudland  
 Which run racing in golden processions  
     around the blue welkin.

Once he turned to the field as he heard the  
words of the plowman  
Who would talk to his team in a language  
well known to the horses  
While they turned up the soil for planting  
the crop of the future.  
Lincoln himself would grapple the plow by  
the curve of the handle,  
Cluck his command to the quadrupeds lazily  
lagging,  
Till they had drawn round the field the plow-  
share's quadrangular furrows,  
Which were soon to be combed into shape  
by the currying harrow,  
When would be dropped and covered the  
grains of the corn in the hillock,  
Four of them rightly, according to trans-  
mitted wont of the farmer.

Next on his journey he came to the huts de-  
cayed of the Indian,  
Wreckage of what was once a well-filled abor-  
iginal village,  
Pitiful remnants left of the red race now  
going to pieces,  
Which recalled to his memory scenes in the  
war against Black Hawk.  
Sympathy welled from his heart at the trag-  
edy of a whole people,

Who seemed wilting to death at sight of the  
poisonous White-face—  
People whose skins were fate-dyed into their  
coppery color,  
Able no longer to stem the furious tide of  
migration  
Which already had swept them far over the  
broad Mississippi.

Look! here rolls a fresh rill of the westerly  
current of people,  
Through this Indian village which seems  
but a piece of old driftwood  
Stranded along the river, and soon to van-  
ish forever,  
Sinking beneath the high overflow's flood of  
the emigrant wagons  
Which are now bearing the tenants to dwell  
in the land of the future:  
These, by the traveler met, are moving in  
every direction,  
Plodding along through the mud of the  
prairie with ox-team or draught-horse,  
Or perchance encamped for the night by a  
spring or a runnel,  
Where a fire is lit in the brushwood for  
cooking the supper.  
Deep ran that stream of the folk who were  
'quitting the country where settled,



And instinctively sweeping in shoals to the  
borderland's front-line  
As if they mightily wrought for a continent's  
quick transformation,  
Turning it to the abode of civilized life from  
the savage.

Lincoln had likewise driven his yoke of la-  
borious oxen,  
When with his people he came in his youth  
to the Sangamon country.  
Thus he beheld a part of himself in this  
search for the sunset,  
Still he could feel in his soul the prick of  
the lust of migration;  
Such an experience was his, and that of his  
ancestors also,  
Who had ever vanguarded their race in its  
march to the westward.

Now his journey has led to the door of his  
father's log cabin,  
Primitive home of the frontier, standing  
alone on the prairie,  
Prairie called Little Goose-Neck, by some  
fanciful humor.  
There on the sill stood the mother who had  
sprung up from her spinning—

But the step-mother was she, the merciful,  
 Sally Bush Lincoln—  
 That she might welcome the son of her soul  
 though not of her body.

Lincoln lovingly tarried e'en in his haste to  
 return home,  
 Whither another true love was wooingly  
 winging him onward,  
 And the good mother presaged it, bespeaking  
 her sibylline spirit:  
 "So your career has begun its first stride  
 in its mounting up starward.  
 Well did I know it, forecasting your bent by  
 the deeds of your boyhood,  
 As you lay on the floor in the light of the  
 hickory firewood  
 Conning the print of your book till the hour  
 of midnight was over.  
 This is but the beginning and many a step  
 you will take yet,  
 But along with the steps as you rise smite  
 the backstrokes of sorrow;  
 Son of my spirit, now march to your des-  
 tiny's goal as a victor,  
 But I forefeel it—your life will be full of  
 high triumphs woe-laden."

So she was reading his soul and its stress  
with a sibyl's precision,  
When in her mood she oracled new the grim  
fates of existence:

“Let me confess—on myself I see lettered  
your lot in its outline;

I have known the sweet hap and the mishap  
of love and of marriage.

Mine is in small what yours is in large, oh!  
Fate, in the largest!

I peruse on my own soul what you are to be  
in the future,

Only magnified thousands of times is the  
luminous print there,

When I behold you here standing before me  
within this cribbed cabin;

Still the tragedy greater is yours, my heart's  
son—I see it!”

There aside she had turned to fling down a  
tear on the hearth-stone,

Lincoln was startled, and yet sympathetic  
far down he responded,

For he too had felt out the end in the gloom  
of his being;

But the mother came back with a thought she  
had left still unspoken:

“I can see that you wish to hurry away to  
New Salem;

Well do I know the little live loadstone  
drawing you thither.

Abe, the girl that you love I saw when she  
shone out the best one—

For I marked all of her turns as she gave  
you the sword of her fathers

When you went to the war intending to bat-  
tle with Black Hawk;

Young and beautiful, aye too beautiful ever  
to last long,

And I could trace in each dart of her tremu-  
lous eye the heart's struggle,

Which had begun to look out underneath the  
fair lines of her features.

I shall remember her as a bright soul on her  
way up to Heaven,

Yet her lot is like yours, and mine not unlike  
I can see it,

But foremoulded to yours by love is her des-  
tiny's outcome—

Love that is deeper than mine, and grown of  
a different soul-seed,

Love that passes from Life through Death  
for its fiery trial.

O blest boy, I hear it foredoomed me that I  
shall survive thee!"

Down drooped his head upon hers in re-  
sponse to the might of her presage.

So they parted in mutual love the future  
forefeeling.  
Lincoln went out to the field to visit awhile  
with his father,  
Whom he assisted to hoe to a finish a patch  
of potatoes,  
Giving him also some dollars out of the law-  
giver's stipend.  
Then they bade to each other goodbye, with  
kind wishes of welfare,  
For the son and the father could hold no in-  
ner communion,  
Child of the flesh refusing all kinship with  
child of the spirit,  
Who was mothered by step-mother, but was  
step-fathered by father.

Down the road turned Lincoln, thinking on  
all that had happened,  
Chiefly revolving the prairial seeress's vati-  
cination,  
For it tuned with his own far down in his  
being unconscious.  
Slowly the afternoon sank into night with  
the lowering sunset  
Whither the young man seemed to himself to  
be journeying forthright,  
Inward and outward into the vale of the  
shadow eternal,

Till the pedestrian weary lay down to his  
dreams on a hay-stack.

When he awoke the sunrise was laughing  
straight into his darkness;  
Soon with temper renewed by a cheerful  
meal at a farm house  
Lightly he trod on the road as it wound with  
the leaf-shaded brooklet,  
Now in his mood's attunement he heark-  
ened the soul of the season.

All the earth was a hope outbursting in  
green of the spring-tide;  
Songsters in every bush were choiring their  
festival's music,  
Over the prairie was verdantly spreading the  
velvety ocean  
Through whose level of waves the deer would  
fleet in the distance,  
Oft the wild-fowl would suddenly whirr  
overhead and then drop down  
Into the tangle of brushwood whence would  
spring out the squirrel;  
Even the cloud was clad in its gold-lace and  
fringes of Heaven,  
While with Spring the glad hills were fes-  
tooned for Love's holiday happy.

Inside the high-domed mansion of welkin  
and prairie encircled  
Lincoln was wending his way uphearted with  
happiness lofty,  
Vibrating through and through to the thrill  
of Nature's caresses,  
Feeling the heart of himself responsive to  
beats of the world's heart.

Every step was an image until he had  
reached the headwaters  
Where he heard the first infantile prattle of  
Sangamon's streamlet—  
His dear Sangamon, hurrying onward to  
come to New Salem—  
Like himself in its longing which he could  
feel in each bubble  
Restlessly rushing to kiss the fresh face of  
the village's hillside.  
Lincoln kept pace with the passionate stream  
in light-lifted footsteps,  
Feeling companionship intimate which was  
conversing unworded  
Through all the tortuous twists and whimsi-  
cal whirls of the water.  
He would lie down on the sedge of the brook  
in a well-shaded dingle,  
Where he would list to himself and the rip-  
ples in secret communion.

Hark! a new sound! there is wafted a musical wavelet of tinkles!  
 Faintly they flit on his ear, as light as the fall of a snowflake,  
 Weaving their notes with the mood of the Sangamon's murmurs in concord.  
 There! once more that wafture of tones! oh list! 'tis the school-bell  
 Into whose outermost circle of sound thrilling echoes concentric  
 Lincoln has entered with heart strings tuned to the wavelets sonorous.

See, he comes to a knoll, from whose height he descries a proud mansion  
 Nestling its roof within the umbrageous embrace of the tree-tops,  
 Where is the high-pillared home of the Lady Eulalia Lovelace.  
 There he thought of stopping a moment to greet the high hostess,  
 Who had loyally answered the letters he sent from Vandalia,  
 But he sees some distance ahead the mulberry shade-tree  
 With all its branches outleaved and blooming in flowery splendor.  
 That whole tree seems to titter in love which tingles his bosom,



And he steps more exalted along on the  
boards of the side-walk  
As he approaches the shrine of many a hal-  
lowed meeting.  
Soon he takes a fresh step round the turn of  
a fence by the roadside  
When there dawns on his eye-glance search-  
ing the seat of the grapevines  
Made by himself in a moment presageful  
of hope's sweet fulfilment—  
What can it be? 'Tis something that  
moves—a dress and a bonnet!  
Decking the form of a woman half hid in the  
leaves of the branches!  
Look! she has risen and seems to give a sa-  
lute in the distance,  
First recognizing the stalwart figure and  
then too the garment  
Woven in love on the loom by her hand and  
her heart as her handsel;  
While he comes up, she steps to the front  
from the leafage—who is it?

## Book Eleventh.

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### *Under the Mulberry.*

“When the leaves of this treetop peeped  
fluttering into my eyesight,  
You I held in my heart and hoped for the  
bloom of your presence.”

Lincoln had stepped from the roadway while  
these words he was saying,  
Till he stood underneath the silk-green mul-  
berry's leafage  
Which with the flowers paired was whirling  
in dance to the breezes.

Airily rising and taking her place in front  
of the comer,  
Spake through blushes the maid, as she  
glanced up into his features:

“And I too, when I first came hither today  
and lounged on this settle,  
More than an hour ago, I seemed to grow  
into the earth here  
Dreaming that you would soon be espied on  
the road from Vandalia.”

“And I too was dreaming of you on this set-  
tle reclining  
When my love-born imagery slips into being  
before me;  
Softly there starts to sing me a note far  
sweeter than music.”

“Also my fancy was watching you walk in  
your cloudland of fancy,  
When you stepped right out of the ghost-  
world into my presence,  
As I dreamed you dreaming my dream of  
happiness future.”

“Also my fancy saw yours and the shapes  
which it joyously played with,  
For they were mine and seemed in their love  
to know one another.  
Tell me, are we a phantom, or even a phan-  
tom of phantoms?”

So they had come together again at the shrine  
of their trysting,

After a long separation of space but not of  
the spirit.

Even though here in the body, they could  
not come out of their dreamland

Where they had happily lived, to each other  
in freedom united,

Far from the conflict of life which had  
hounded them both like a Fury.

Lincoln in hope looked out of himself for a  
view of kind nature,

If she would deign him perchance a breath of  
her loving suggestion:

“Watch this mulberry tree with its rollick-  
ing leaflets and flowers!

Oft underneath these branches we twain  
have attuned our best moments,

What does it say to us now foretelling the  
cast of our fortune?”

Fairily lifted the maiden her hand and  
plucked a bright blossom

Pinning it on the lapel of his coat whose  
threads she had woven,

Saying with eyebeams outpoured: “It smiles  
you a bright benediction.”

Lincoln again for relief fled into the joys of  
the season:

“Not alone this mulb̄erry blooms in a vernal  
carousal,

But the fields and the woods have shot up  
    heavenward striving.  
Look! the earth and the welkin sink down in  
    each other's embraces  
All around the horizon which hides them be-  
    hind its blue curtain.  
Birds are singing and mating and making  
    their nests for the future,  
Herds are mad with the season and frolic  
    the day through the meadow,  
Bees are buzzing high-hearted amid the flow-  
    ering tree-tops,  
I can hear them at work now, humming of  
    hives and of honey."

Here the word waited awhile in the lull of his  
    sympathy's silence,  
While the youth and the maiden were sunk  
    in the throb of the spring's spell;  
But soon Lincoln was striking the keynote  
    of Heaven outside him,  
And inside him as well, the outer prelude  
    the inner:  
"Mark too the azure eye that is tenderly  
    rounded above us!  
Now it is hiding its blue with a white woolly  
    flock of a cloudlet,  
Passionate longing it looks, but modestly  
    keeps in the distance."

Then the coy maiden drew closer and daringly whispered the answer:

“See the bold bright face of the sun while he pours out his glances

On the earth all his bride, and tells her the gold of his treasures.”

Both of them drooped down together into the seat of the grapevines,

Wide enough seat for the one, yet narrow for two, still both sat down,

Quite as one person the twain seemed bent to the sides of each other,

While the mulberry’s flowers hung downward and smiled at the lovers

Just like themselves now blooming their hour at height of the season,

Half concealed in their glory behind the tapestry leafy.

Thus they sat in their bower alone and felt their new freedom,

Silent they gazed on each other, but silence was fuller than speeches

Till it burst overflowing to words from the heart of Ann Rutledge:

“Long I have secretly hoped, I confess, for the turn of this moment,

Aye, ever since I beheld the brave youth take his boat through the milldam.”

Lincoln replied: "I saw the fair form that  
stood on the hillside  
Waving her handkerchief thrice and again—  
I could go to the spot now—  
Oft I have gone there and looked at myself  
in the years intervening,  
With a hope in my heart—a hope but not a  
fulfillment—  
Deeply I longed for it, still I never expected  
this moment."

"Then on that day," fell slowly the words  
of the maid to a falter,  
"Then on that day when I girded thee round  
with the sword of my fathers,  
Thee, young Captain, that moment I dreamed  
thee my hero forever."

So in their soul's own spring-time they sat  
with ecstasy thrilling,  
When the maiden uplifted her hand to stroke  
a caress on his forearm,  
Or to pick off a gossamer caught in the nap  
of his garment—  
Of a sudden the face of the youth grew dark  
as the cloud-wrack,  
Even the sigh burst up from the far-down  
source of his being,  
As he rolled round his eye and glanced at the  
ring on her finger

Whose red ruby seemed flashing a curse  
whenever he saw it.

Wincing with memory's pitiless pain he  
worded his sorrow:

“But the counterstroke felled me when I re-  
turned from my absence,

For I found the dear prize had meanwhile  
been won by my rival.”

Ann heaved a sob which rose from her soul  
like the roll of the tide-wave,

E'en a low shriek she voiced with her breath  
in the stress of her struggle,

As she jerked back her finger encircled with  
pledge of betrothal.

Then she grappled that ring of her fate and  
she wrenched it:

“Off, off, and out of my sight! I ban thee not  
to be mine more!”

So she reproached it: “Thou sign of de-  
spair at my happiest moment!”

But it fought her and stayed, though she  
bloodied the knob of her knuckle

In her fierce writhing to loose from its clench  
that symbol of promise.

Soon she stopped and wilted in look to sad  
resignation

Quite unable to put from her hand or her  
heaven the token:

“Fain I would now be quit of it, but it never  
will leave me.”



Sorrowful, Lincoln was soothing the rage of  
the maidenly battle,  
When she fell on his bosom and coupled her  
own to his heart-beat,  
Till they both were transfused to one soul  
that could never be parted.  
Thus they lay in the lull of their Paradise,  
when the youth whispered:  
“He, the absentee, Abner, will never come  
back by my presage;  
You have not yet received the reply I un-  
willingly wrote for?”  
With a short jet of a scream upwhirling from  
life’s last fountain,  
Forth she drew from her pocket the writ  
which she crushed in a crackle  
Till her well-flourished name on the paper  
was furrowed to creases:  
“Yes, here it is,” and she broke, as if march-  
ing to death, the envelope:  
“He is soon to return—perchance he is now  
in New Salem.”

Terror shook the brave man when he saw all  
his world fall in ruins;  
Hope, the newborn star of his life, dropped  
dead like a cinder;  
Agony wrung every limb in his frame with  
the rage of a demon;

But suppress it he must, so he spoke out  
calmly resigning:

“Heaven be witness! eternal must be our  
renunciation!”

So he appeals as if facing just there all the  
fates of existence.

But at the shock of the word Ann seizes the  
doom-bringing letter,

And she tears it to pieces again and again in  
her frenzy,

Flinging the ominous fragments away from  
herself by the handful,

Seeming to spurn in disdain each inked little  
shred of the missive.

But just see! the papery flock flung out on the  
breezes!

One wee whirl of the eddying wind is whisk-  
ing the fragments

Back to the seat and e'en to the hand of the  
maid which had whirled them,

And they besprinkle with speckles the gar-  
ment of Abraham Lincoln

Which for him she had woven before he went  
down to Vandalia.

Aye, they even dared fly in his face with the  
twirl of the whirlwind,

One of them lights in his eye, to blind him  
the way of the future.

Up he springs and shakes off the bits of im-  
pertinent paper  
Which had defiantly come in the way of his  
highest fulfillment,  
While through his face are fixed tense lines  
of his determination,  
Though around them the tenderest looks of  
his love throb trembling.  
Dares he meet the new crisis? Let destiny  
vengefully smite him—  
Taking his seat he clasps the maid to his  
bosom in transport;  
Boldly he spares not the kiss, the kiss of  
eternal betrothal,  
Which she gives back to him twice and thrice  
in fiery rapture,  
While she whispers a word from her heart  
for acceptance of Heaven,  
Mid her tear-drops falling and sighs up-  
storming she prays there:  
“Thou Almighty, oh! tell me, can this be my  
second betrothal?”

Then she fell, as if severed within by her  
promises double.  
Lincoln calmed himself for the sake of calm-  
ing the maiden,  
Bade her look up to partake of the joy of the  
mulberry blossoms

Which all day were blooming their love to  
the world and its lovers,  
Every branch was waving above them the  
leaves of a garland,  
Backward and forward attuned to the harp  
of the low-piping breezes,  
With which whistled the robin his note now  
and then from the tree-top,  
While the sparrows would twitter their  
speeches and beak one another,  
Also debating of Love as they sat in their  
parliament feathered.  
Mid such music he breathed in the ear of the  
maiden a whisper:  
“Now Love’s truth and Love’s troth are  
joined in a union forever,  
While the hope of the heart grows one with  
the tongue and its promise,  
And the holiest wish to the word runs coun-  
ter no longer.”

Scarcely had sounded the tones of Lincoln’s  
happy concordance,  
When she lifted her palm to place it in his  
for the blessing—  
What is this sudden convulsion! witness the  
act of Ann Rutledge,  
As she holds up one hand to his gaze and the  
finger ring on it

Whose dumb look he well understands in its  
    sinister meaning,  
Which now quakes each joint of his body in  
    shudders repeated.  
Then the maiden begins to wrench off that  
    sign of her promise  
More ferocious than ever before against its  
    refusal;  
But it clings fast with mortal embrace in her  
    flesh, in her soul too,  
Dumbly affirming its place by the right of  
    the primal betrothal.  
But at a twist the red-teared ruby leaps out  
    of its socket  
Sailing unseen far off in the grass or per-  
    chance in the bushes.  
“Let it go,” she spake with decision, “no  
    longer I wish it,  
All that heart has shot out my ring and out  
    of myself too,  
Let this sign on my finger now stay as it is  
    —heartless.”

List! to the shock of her word comes tolling  
    the sound of the school-bell,  
Bringing to both of the lovers the eventide’s  
    message unwelcome,  
For the afternoon hours already had slid off  
    unheeded.

Lincoln sprang up in a shiver hearing the  
bodeful vibrations,  
Saying: "Now I must part, there is tonight  
a discussion—  
That's the first call of the bell—I hurried to-  
day to be present."

Still he lingered and sat down again with the  
maid on the settle,  
Who recalled the memories sweet of the lit-  
tle red schoolhouse,  
When their heads and their hearts first en-  
twined in the rapture of study.  
But once more interrupted their talk that  
echoing belfry  
As they lurked half-hid in the gauze of the  
leaves of their bower,  
Bidding them part and follow away in the  
wake of the sound-waves.  
"Well-aday! now I am off," leaped Lincoln  
from under the leafage,  
Tenderly breathing a sigh, ere he sped, on  
the lips of Ann Rutledge,  
Though he marked the agony tearing her face  
as he left her.

Then alone, as was best, he turned down the  
road to the village,

Soon he had dodged out of sight, though  
glancing furtively backward,  
Darting afar a sunburst of love, which again  
made her happy.

Now by herself the maiden slipped off to the  
home of her parents,  
Lightly uplifted in tread at the start and ex-  
ultant of spirit.

But on her way she saw the white storehouse  
of Abner the absent,

Read his name on the sign-board lettered in  
front of the building,

Then came the back-stroke again with the  
pitiless might of her conflict,

Whelming her more than ever down into the  
den of the Furies

As she reflected: "My doom is fallen, I feel  
it redoubled,

Mark it rise upward! two letters, two lovers,  
and now two betrothals!

How the scythe of old Time keeps halving me  
deeper and deeper!"

Soon she had crossed the doorsill, and silent-  
ly entered her chamber,

Throwing herself on her bed, she drew forth  
the red-hearted letter,

And at its glance rose murmuring words  
from her nethermost fountain

As she prayerful seemed to address an invisible presence:

“Soon I shall take thy letter along to my bridal hereafter

When I shall come before God on His throne  
with my love everlasting,

And beseech Him in mercy divinely to seal  
my espousals.

Though of earth be the law of my word, I  
shall not disobey it,

Rather now let me be crushed by the weight  
of its honest fulfillment,

Only beyond I go free of the chain of my  
primal betrothal.

I shall hold up this letter of thine in the  
presence of Heaven,

Hold it up with the hand here gyved by this  
ring on my finger,

I shall show it as pledge of fidelity's oath to  
my conscience,

Yet too as sign of my love triumphant for  
thee in all struggle.

There on high a new ring will be given me,  
ring of betrothal

Which I shall wear at the Judgment of Man,  
as the sign of salvation.”

So the maiden lay glooming her forecast in  
dim premonition,



When half adream she seemed to be hearing  
the voice of the preacher  
Weirdly attuning the air to the words of a  
musical whisper:  
“God is deathless Love, whose fulfillment is  
only in Heaven.”

Soothingly Ann's whole soul had slid out  
of time to a vision,  
Which repeated that sentence again and  
again with her heart-throbs  
Till in her flight she suddenly winged to the  
Presence Eternal,  
Who as Last Judge had called her before his  
final tribunal.  
There he gazed at her soul with its love in  
infinite pity,  
Crowning her true as a bride with the lumi-  
nous garland of Heaven,  
He as High-Priest supreme of the Universe  
gave her in marriage  
Stamping the love of God Himself on the  
love of the maiden;  
Thus transfigured to truth immortal was  
truth of the mortal.

In the night Ann Rutledge was waked from  
her sleep by the moon's touch,  
Whose fine fingers of radiance reached forth  
lifting her eyelids,  
Gently leading her back once more to her life  
on this earth-ball;  
But she was ill, and she woke up weak from  
her dream-world,  
For a fever had wrapped in its blaze her face  
and her body  
And was burning her strength when to rise  
from her bed she attempted.  
Dropping back on her pillow, she called for  
help from her mother,  
Who soon came with the father and stood on  
watch at the bed-side.

## Book Twelfth.

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### *The Double Debate.*

Twilight of eve is flinging her veil transparent,  
triumphant,  
Over the face of the Earth in pursuit of her  
lover, the Sungod;  
Swift on his tracks she is happily smiling in  
hope to o'ertake him  
Ere he drop underneath the last rim of the  
rounded horizon,  
Though to keep her afar he out-thrusts the  
long arms of his sunbeams.  
Now he has leaped in the Ocean, she following  
rapidly after,  
While the Ethiop Night has slunk down the  
Sangamon Valley  
And is sneaking up slowly to darken the hill  
of New Salem—

Hark! there is heard in the sky overhead a  
    loud detonation  
All of a sudden, the Heavens flash full of the  
    spatter of sparkles,  
Till the whole dome of the stars seem thun-  
    dering out of their orbits  
Into some cosmical battle which fires just now  
    its first cannon  
Over the village, whose people are quaking in  
    terrible wonder,  
Palely upturning their faces and asking:  
    “What is it the sign of?”

So they began to delve in themselves for an  
    interpretation.  
Every person first thought of some ill to  
    himself now foreshadowed,  
Then he sought to review all the deeds he had  
    done in his vengeance,  
And he could find them swarming on each  
    little speck of existence,  
Till he fled from the prospect of dream-  
    wrought damnation in terror.  
Then he would think of his family, town, of  
    his State and the Nation,  
Soon selecting for doom what he deemed  
    their deed most infernal,  
Thus in himself his own soul was turned to  
    a scene of Last Judgment.

Even the world was felt underneath to be  
shaky by many,  
Who remembered the wrath of the Lord as  
pictured by Cartright,  
Furious preacher predicting the end in a  
grand conflagration,  
Whereof the harbinger hot has been flared in  
the Heavens as warning.  
All New Salem turned prophet inspired by  
that fire-ball celestial,  
Dumbly forefeeling its fate, the hours it went  
about ghost-like,  
Hanging between two dreamworlds, living as  
though in a fable.

Even calm Lincoln gave rein to his prognos-  
tication,  
Though he had read in a book about meteors  
madly exploding  
When they tore our outermost air in their  
swift revolutions.  
So he believed with cold science, still in spite  
of his reason  
Rose all the might of his underworld into his  
sad premonition ;  
What the ages ancestral had laid in his soul,  
was the stronger,  
For it was tuned to the time which seemed  
presaging destruction,

Tuned to the mood of the village forefeeling  
its own evanescence,  
Tuned to the pang of his love with its woe of  
remediless conflict,  
Which had pierced with its perilous point to  
the life of the dearest.  
Even the bell of the school-house was seem-  
ing to gasp from its belfry,  
Slowly transmuting its strain to a dirge with  
a resonance dying  
Far on the throbs of the air enringing the  
village's hilltop;  
Tolling together the folk, it seemed for itself  
to be tolling,  
As it sighed out its low tintinnabular hum in  
the distance.

Slowly the people uneasy began to assemble  
together,  
Not a joke would prosper, though several  
hopefully tried it,  
Something hung heavily over the world both  
outer and inner,  
Silent and spectral each stalked on his path  
to the school-house,  
Which had a vanishing look as it sank in the  
dusk of the night-tide.  
But now it gleams with small flares lit within  
from candles of tallow,

Long-fingered candles melted and cooled on  
wicks in the tin-molds,  
Shedding a flickering flame on New Salem  
instead of the sunshine.

Mentor Graham was there preparing his desk  
for the Chairman,  
Also adjusting the seats in opposite rows for  
contestants,  
Who would come to debate this evening's  
question appointed,  
Which of the two, the red man or black, has  
been injured more deeply;  
Or as the race-hating borderer in his harsh  
lingo would put it:  
Which of the curses is bigger for us, the In-  
jun or Nigger?

So the sage schoolmaster parted the places  
of both the debaters,  
Lest from near-by the quick blow might pur-  
sue the sharp word of the speaker.  
All predicted a white-hot time in discussing  
the question  
Which reached down to the core of the heart-  
iest hates of the people,  
Yea to the strifes far back unrecorded of  
origin human,

Giving its ultimate task of atonement to civilization—

To associate in love the venomous blood of the races.

Troubled in foresight the master has hidden the long iron poker,

Also the slates and the inkstands of lead were unseen in their places,

Lest as weapons to clinch some argument they might be seized on.

But the ferule he kept in his hand, the badge of his calling,

While he left overhead the small switch of flexible willow,

Which would tickle the palm of the bad little boy caught in mischief.

All the shreds of paper and whittlings which littered the deal-floor

He had swept together with care and thrown in the wood-box,

Which had been used for various contents—quids of tobacco,

Broken old pipestems, corn-cobs, emptied bottles of whiskey—

Implements social of all frontiersmen wherever assembled.



Into that wood-box also was flung the live  
    snuff of the candles,  
Which the farmer would crop with his finger  
    and thumb, without snuffers,  
Suddenly slapping his hand on his thigh, the  
    burn to get rid of.  
Wisely the schoolmaster read in advance the  
    mind of his people,  
Read it in light of himself, for he felt in his  
    heart the same conflict,  
Well did he know that he too could be stormed  
    in this struggle of races.  
Now foreboding the strife of debate, himself  
    he foreboded,  
If some witling should twit him and make him  
    boil over with passion,  
While he was speaking the part assigned him  
    on side of the negro  
For an old memory left him a sizzling vol-  
    cano down under.

Meanwhile knots of the folk were standing  
    around the lit schoolhouse,  
Talking of matters of neighborhood gossip,  
    of crops and of business;  
But each whispered that portent of Heaven,  
    the meteor blazing;  
Featured in awe was his face, while he spake  
    in an undertone solemn,

Darkly forefeeling a fate to lurk in the pres-  
age uncanny,  
Worse for his knowing not what, but certain-  
ly something prodigious.

Still one group cared not for the ominous  
sign of the fire-ball,  
That was Doctor Palmetto, a group of him-  
self, ever grumbling,  
Bitter denier of all, denying at last his de-  
nial,  
Who said No to the sign and to everything  
else but his No Sir,  
Even to that in the end, if you gave him the  
time to get round to't—  
Loudly proclaiming his freedom through sci-  
ence from all superstition,  
He had already begun the wrangle outside on  
the darkey,  
But he secretly aimed his poisonous squibs  
at his rival,  
Lincoln, who had not yet appeared, though  
expected as speaker.  
All for his advent were waiting as for the  
soul in their body:  
“Where is our Abraham, usually prompt  
with his pouch full of stories?”

So they kept looking around with an eye-shot  
at every newcomer:

“Where is our lawmaker Lincoln to right-  
fully lead the discussion?

Surely the bottom will fall out unless he be  
present as spokesman.”

So they hummed through the groups, one  
hummer alone was discordant,

Humming his Nay to it all until himself he  
benayed too.

Well-a-way! up from the store is walking a  
man unexpected,

Long since known in the town, but this morn-  
ing returned from his absence—

Store-keeper Abner, O Fate! for years the  
betrothed of Ann Rutledge!

Round him was raging her destiny's battle  
with love and with promise,

Woe-darting center of conflict for her and  
also for Lincoln.

All saluted him, but with reserve, which he  
could not help noting,

So he appeared not hearty in answer as once  
his frank wont was,

Well he knew that the people all minded his  
unexplained conduct,

Taking the part of the maid, the favorite  
fair of the village.

Not a word he vouchsafed in excuse, and no-  
 body asked him;  
 Only one wag dared break a sly jest on his  
 sudden appearance:  
 “Ab, was it you that popped down on our  
 earth from the crack of that comet?  
 Well, no wonder it burst into thunder with  
 you in its belly.”  
 Still not a word he replied, but twisted a lip-  
 grin sardonic,  
 Shunning and shunned he felt the discomfort  
 before the whole people;  
 Possibly too he avoided all part in the praises  
 of Lincoln.  
 Abe and Ab with their names fore-shortened  
 were busily buzzing  
 From the tongues of an hundred putting a  
 sting in their contrast;  
 So it came that the new-comer soon slipped  
 away from the meeting.

Meanwhile responded to Doctor Palmetto  
 pugnacious Jack Armstrong,  
 Who had fought in the Black Hawk War as  
 Orderly Sargent,  
 Hating the Indian and not altogether in love  
 with the Negro,  
 Yet disliking black slavery, wishing it off in  
 the distance,

Out of the State where he lived, but it troubled him not in Kentucky—  
Strongly affected to Lincoln, who once in a  
wrestle upset him.  
Words were getting too choleric, both were  
shouting together  
When the schoolmaster rapped with his ferule the sash of the window,  
Then flung open the door of the schoolhouse  
and bade people enter;  
All rushed in like a flock when the sheep  
spring into the sheepfold  
After the bell-wether, whose little tinkle they  
hear and then follow.

“Let this meeting be opened—the moment  
has come and has gone too”—  
It was Mentor, the master, who picked up  
the word that awaited:  
“But I nowhere can see the orator choice of  
the evening,  
Though I heard Uncle Jimmy declare he was  
seen in the distance  
For a single short glimpse, and then vanished  
away in the brushwood,  
Fleet as the timorous deer, when it feels it-  
self hit by man’s eye-shot.  
He may come yet—but debate must begin—  
has already begun here.”

Meantime the people had noisily entered and  
taken their places,  
Once again the wise Mentor addressed the  
now seated assembly:  
“Still one warning: cool be the argument,  
good be the order,  
This is the temple of light, O burn it not up  
in your passion!  
You can destroy it by wrath, though you may  
not fire it with tinder;  
Be it the shrine of sweet peace consecrated  
now by your example.”

So exhorted the schoolmaster uttering saws  
of sage counsel  
Which he deeply forefelt the chief need of  
the present occasion,  
For in his heart he read to himself quite the  
same sort of warning,  
His own soul he knew as the scene of a similar  
danger,  
What he saw writ in his bosom he spoke as  
the truth to his people,  
Well aware that the Furies and Fates in the  
world were his own too,  
That underneath all strife with its death lay  
the soul's resurrection.

There sit the folk in their ranks divided al-  
most in the middle,  
Two are the sides, each taking their seats on  
the opposite benches,  
Facing each other with places assigned for  
the leaders contestant.

Where is Lincoln? Hardly he knows just  
where he himself is,  
Wandering lone through by-paths he turns  
from the way to the schoolhouse,  
Dodging now into the moon-shade to keep  
himself hidden from eye-sight.  
To the debate had stormed up within him  
the fiercest repugnance,  
Far too dread was the inside debate to hold  
the one outside;  
Nor could he summon the mood for telling  
the people a story,  
Who were expecting an hour arabesqued with  
his fancy and humor,  
As he wont when he trod in the village's  
treadmill of humdrum.  
But he was living a story far deeper than  
what he could fable,  
For he had heard from the maid that Abner  
might soon be expected,  
Yea might stroll to the schoolhouse into his  
presence this evening,

While perchance he was spinning for fun a  
fiction fantastic,  
Whereat he knew that every fine thread of  
his story would snap off.  
Even the dream of seeing the rival had start-  
ed a thrill of convulsion,  
To whose fit he was chained by fate in a  
struggle demonic,  
Which he could never escape, and of which  
he could not be victor,  
Throbbing his day and his night in the throes  
of a torture infernal.  
So he saunters about, lashed forward by  
love's sweetest longing,  
Yet at the same time harried with hate's un-  
earthly damnation;  
Love of the one is fiendishly coupled with  
hate of the other,  
Each of them scourging the victim in turn  
with rivalry jealous,  
Till of a sudden he stands on the banks where  
he harkens the prattle  
Lipped by the Sangamon's tremulous ripples  
along its low stream-bed,  
Where he can watch the luminous dance of  
the silvery minnows  
Leaping up sidelings over the pebbles to kiss  
the young moonbeam  
Which is swooning in tender caresses upon  
the lit lap of the landscape.



Still that scene can but call him away from  
    himself for a moment,  
Looking around he beholds high-perched on  
    its hill-top the school-house,  
Now illumed through the windows it shines  
    to beckon him thither,  
But he can not respond, still choosing the  
    talk of the waters,  
Though it be wordless, to the mad clash of de-  
    bate with its uproar,  
Rambling until he stops on the slope and  
    looks down at the mill-weir,  
Where he again sees himself directing the  
    flight of his flat-boat,  
Years ago when once it had lodged on the  
    dam in the river—  
Where too he sees a fair phantom that stood  
    on the spot where he now stands,  
Who throbbd sympathy down to him just at  
    the top of his labor,  
Then a handkerchief waved as in triumph  
    the feat was accomplished.  
That was the first time he saw her, never  
    again of him unseen  
During her life and even when life has with  
    her evanished.

Thus he reviews his happiest moment in  
    tender remembrance

Wafted from sorrow to joy, from joy  
     whelmed back into sorrow,  
 Sighing his heart out as he went creeping  
     foot-sore, fate-weary,  
 Through the moon-shaded nooks fay-haunted  
     of valley and village;  
 All New Salem had turned to the flit of a  
     shadowy specter,  
 As he glanced up and saw the faint flicker  
     of light from the school-house,  
 Whence he thought he could hear the shrill  
     voice of some passionate speaker.

Suddenly feeling turned speech when he  
     spoke to himself as his other:  
 "What an oppressive presence! a fume flows  
     the Sangamon sultry,  
 Where all seemed on a time upspringing in  
     buoyancy youthful!  
 What a sweltering world weighs on me and  
     crushes me inward!"  
 So he sat down on a stone and gazed at the  
     Sangamon star-gemmed,  
 Which then appeared to run through his soul  
     as it flashed on his eye-sight,  
 Like a thread which threaded his life with  
     memories tender  
 Since the time he first floated its current  
     along to the river,

Which thence plunged him down into the  
frown of the mad Mississippi.  
Thus the Sangamon small grew great through  
Lincoln who henceforth  
Dwelt not far from its banks as it wound  
through his days till his sunset,  
Laving the land not far from his tomb still  
today we may see it.

But just now sad Lincoln broke down at the  
view of the waters.  
“I must leave here else I shall fling me out  
into yon mill-dam,  
Memory dear in the past has become my de-  
spair in the present.”  
So he gave a quick turn and shot through  
an alley of leafage  
From the sight of the river which coiled  
through his soul like a serpent,  
As if to bear it away from his body off into  
dark Hades.

But as he townward was musing he saw a  
lone light in the window  
At the home of the Rutledges fitfully flicker  
in pulses;  
Lincoln stopped in his tracks and gazed,  
foreboding some illness:

“Shall I go to inquire and offer my service  
if needed?”

So he balanced both sides of himself sus-  
pending the balance;

Then again he looked up and marked the  
weird light of the school-house,

Which like a Will-of-the-Wisp kept quiver-  
ing over the hill-top.

There he stood swaying between the two  
flickers, both of them bodeful,

Till of a sudden he heard from the school-  
house booming an uproar,

With a tap of the bell, one tremulous tap  
on the night air—

What can it mean? So we turn back our  
tale to probe for the secret.

Let us now enter the little red round-house  
laughing in moonshine,

Where the people are seated with lungs full  
of cheers for the speakers,

Somewhat boisterous yet good natured, with  
jokes of the backwoods

Banded about from one mouth to the other  
in many a guffaw;

Each of the sides has taken its seats, quite  
equal in numbers,

As the sage schoolmaster marshals them  
in to the stroke of his ferule;

Swelling his bosom up to a vociferous pitch  
he commands them,  
So that above all the noise his voice can be  
heard bidding silence:

“Fellow-citizens, hear me and halt for a  
moment your tongue-spreed,

Squire Ebenezer I move we make chairman  
controlling this meeting,

Balancer fair of Justice whenever she tilts  
on the pivot,

With authority’s mien he will render the  
rightful decision.

There he is! look for yourselves how gravity  
sits in his visage,

Also sits in his belly well freighted with  
many good dinners.”

Coarse was that humorous punch at the  
Squire’s most prominent organ,

But the Schoolmaster even, the cultured,  
classical Mentor

Never could quite get rid of the straightfor-  
ward brogue of the border.

All of the audience roared at the eloquent  
burst of the speaker,

Voting a thunderous Aye with clapping of  
hands and with stamping.

But there was one who refrained from the  
 plaudits and even from voting,  
 Doctor Palmetto, the cutting objector-in-  
 chief of the village;  
 Still his No he out-spoke not, but let it be  
 told in his action.

Next the schoolmaster gleefully grappled the  
 Squire by the forearm,  
 Leading him up with a laugh to the platform  
 of honor, thus saying:  
 "Here, take my badge, this ferule, which to  
 you I resign now;  
 Yonder suspended the gad is, which you may  
 have to make use of,  
 Trouncing these grown-up children to order,  
 as I do their young ones;  
 Nor shall I seek myself to exempt from what  
 I've inflicted,  
 You may be forced to schoolmaster here the  
 schoolmaster also,  
 Give then in turn his own medicine to him  
 by right of your office,  
 Show him new proof of his faith in the law  
 of the Fates and the Furies."

Merriment ran in a titter around the full  
 room, while the Squire shook

With a huge laugh that bounced up and down  
on his prominent organ;

Still he beat on the desk with his ferule,  
calling for order,

In the lull he then cried out: "What is the  
will of this meeting?"

Note again the sage schoolmaster, rising he  
reads off the question:

"Which one has suffered more wrong from  
the whites, the red or the black man?"

This from a paper he holds in his hand, and  
then he announces:

"As the first of our speakers tonight we  
had chosen James Rutledge,

He with his dignified calm would have set  
us the worthy example;

But he has to be absent, detained by the mal-  
ady sudden

Which has seized on his daughter; may God  
save her life for our blessing!"

All bowed their heads and silently prayed  
in response the same prayer.

Then upsprang for a speech New Salem's  
old fiery fifer,

Commonly called Tom Cunes, who had fought  
in all wars with the Indian,

Whom he hated with all of the borderer's  
hate of the red skin;

As a boy he had fided for Mad Anthony  
Wayne in a battle,  
Then as a man he was fifer at Tippecanoe,  
but he shot too;  
Fighting he fided in the furious fight at the  
death of Tecumseh,  
Which every day with his tongue he fought  
over again in New Salem.  
Lastly through his gray mustache for Lin-  
coln he fided against Black Hawk.  
Numerous wars of his own he had waged  
by himself on the border  
With the red devils—so he would grace them  
—giving and taking;  
Scars he abounded in—one of a tomahawk  
over his cheek-bone,  
While on his scalp he would show the grim  
gash of an Indian's knife-blade.

All these exploits he now ran on recounting,  
with more still to draw from,  
Telling of Daniel Boone whom he met once  
up in Missouri,  
Telling of how he outwitted the red-skins  
when taken their captive,  
How he escaped from the stake with the  
faggots lighted around him:



Down fell the ferule on time in the hands  
of the strict Ebenezer,  
Who had tallied the minutes upon the Dutch  
clock in the corner,  
When old Tom cried out: "I hav'nt yet told  
of Notoka,  
Sweet Indian girl who loved me, the white  
boy, and kissed me."

But said the chairman: "Hundreds of times  
we have heard that already,  
On the streets you have told the story for  
years in New Salem:  
Tom, that girl was the only red face you ever  
bowed down to,  
Well you know that white Barbara who is  
the wife of your bosom  
Always has vetoed your telling that tale of  
red love in her presence,  
Hating the Indian girl as much as you hated  
the parent.  
Barbara here we shall follow, so we now call  
for the next one,  
Abraham Lincoln—not yet arrived—what is  
it that keeps him—  
Who was to shine the bright oratorical star  
of the evening  
And to spin us his yarn of the deeds in the  
halls of Vandalia?"

Then the tongue-quick Mentor at once by  
 the people was chosen  
 As the next spokesman, to tell of the wrongs  
 by us done to the negro;  
 Not unfit was the choice, though regarded by  
 some with suspicion,  
 For he was thought to favor at heart aboli-  
 tion of slavery.

Off he started his speech with the start of  
 that African cargo  
 Which first landed the blacks long ago on  
 the shores of Virginia,  
 Tracing the history up to the Compromise  
 named from Missouri,  
 Which he declared the Devil's infliction of  
 Hell on our country.  
 But behold the division halving the little  
 round school-house!  
 Hark the one half applauding, the other dis-  
 senting in murmurs!  
 Still the chairman kept rapping with strokes  
 of his ferule for order,  
 While he turned to the schoolmaster monish-  
 ing looks to be careful;  
 Thus the deep split of the time was revealed  
 in the town of New Salem,  
 Which gave presage of what was to come in  
 the State and the Nation.

All were agreed on expelling the Indian, the  
savage ungodly,  
But the African stirred up a far deeper strife  
with his problem.  
Only one man in a whisper spoke sympathy  
with the wild red-skin,  
Blaming the theft of his lands and lamenting  
his race's destruction;  
But the low speaker was drowned in the  
hubbub over the darkey,  
Who was not owner of land, not owner he  
was of himself even.  
But the tempest grew calm at last to the  
voice of the chairman,  
Who with a vigorous smile turned his look  
on the speaker, thus saying:  
"Mentor, beware—the schoolmaster present  
am I—so remember;  
See yon gad on the wall—and mark too the  
play of this ferule—  
On your own skin may be written the judg-  
ment of Fates and of Furies."

Coolly the orator started, but quickly waxed  
hot in his fervor  
As he uttered his prophecy glimpsing that  
day in the future  
When the black slave would forever be freed  
by some great liberation.

Then the hurrahs broke from this side, and  
hooting and howling from yonder,  
While the fused schoolmaster rose more fer-  
vid and daring than ever,  
Standing his ground till he faced down the  
tumult with help of the chairman.  
Then he reared up on tiptoe and screamed  
at the top of his windpipe:  
“You, New Salem, forget not how you the  
lecturer hounded,  
How you once smothered free speech—you  
now are trying to stab it—  
You must pay for that deed yet, its guilt  
you will have to atone for—  
You set fire to free print in those pamphlets,  
you too will be burning.”

Fiercer than ever broke loose the storm at  
such doom of the village,  
Even the chairman smote down on the desk  
with his ferule reproving  
Mutinous words of the schoolmaster naughty  
whose seat he was filling.  
Each of the sides sprang up on the small  
amphitheater's benches,  
Facing each other, some shaking their fists  
and shouting reproaches;  
Keenly the nerve of the time had been  
pricked with the tip of the needle—

That sharp tip of the schoolmaster's tongue  
with its poisonous word-sting  
Which had hit to the heart with the threat  
of retributive Furies.

Forward into the center sprang Doctor Pal-  
metto the wrathful,  
Who had led the mad mob which once burnt  
up the lecturer's pamphlets,  
Shouting white-hot at the speaker: "You are  
the worst mollycoddle!"  
Nobody knew just what the word meant, it  
was new in New Salem,  
But all thought it must mean something ter-  
rible, sounding so fiercely;  
One man thundered: "That is some more  
of your devilish Latin,  
But you shall not scare us any longer talk-  
ing your ghost-talk."  
So Jack Armstrong, the athletic twister of  
men for that township,  
Friend of Schoolmaster Graham and also of  
Lawmaker Lincoln,  
Sprang forth into the buzzing arena, coat  
off for the battle,  
For the Armstrong name he would justify  
always by muscle;  
Much he disliked the Doctor's big words,  
though he knew not their meaning,

So he flung out the epithet which would open  
the sluices:

“You are a liar!” he cried at the top of the  
boisterous tumult.

Meanwhile also the Squire had hurried down  
into the middle,

Loudly commanding peace in the name of  
the law and his office,

Standing between the two combatants who  
had stopped at his order,

When a sharp knock is heard at the door—  
behold James Rutledge,

Who in a pallor beseeches the doctor to go  
to his dwelling

With all haste, for his daughter has suddenly  
sunk in a fever.

“Speed to your duty!” the Squire thus bade  
the belligerent Doctor,

Leading him through to the doorstep whence  
with the anxious father

He shot off in the dark, still menacing:  
“This is not ended.”

Mark now the schoolmaster, how he has  
weaponed himself for the warfare,  
That long poker he grasps in one hand with  
a look of defiance,

In the other he clutches the inkstand of lead  
as a bullet,

Both he had hid out of sight to keep them  
from passionate fighters;

But the Squire pushed up and quickly dis-  
armed him, repeating,

“Now I am forced to schoolmaster here the  
schoolmaster also

On his own self to example his faith in the  
Fates and the Furies.”

Even the gad he took down from the wall  
and shook it at Mentor,

Whereat his rounded abdomen fell into a  
stormy convulsion

In response to his features brimimng all over  
with laughter.

Soon the people too caught it, at first in  
circuits of giggles,

Till the whole mass breaks forth, both sides  
exploding together

Into a common outburst of merriment at the  
two actors;

So in a laugh the strife of the time is solved  
at New Salem,

But not forever, perchance; still hearken,  
ye laughers, a moment:

“Now I adjourn this meeting just at its hap-  
piest temper,”

Said the chairman in glee and faced his audi-  
ence homewards;

But as the crowd was leaving the house he  
snuffed out the candles,  
Using his fingers as snuffers and throwing  
the snuff in the wood-box.  
Then as he groped in the dark, he by acci-  
dent clutched on the bell-rope,  
Giving a whirl to the bell which sounded  
one toll o'er the village  
With a shiver of echoes knelling afar in the  
night-spell.  
All the people heard it and turned their  
laugh to a tremor,  
As they remembered the mystery shot in  
the skies at their village;  
And the schoolmaster heard it, trudging  
along to his quarters,  
Quivering still with the throes of the words  
he dared speak in the meeting,  
Words of bold prophecy uttering penalty on  
the wrong-doer,  
But his chief marvel was over the ominous  
absence of Lincoln.

Where is Lincoln? Hardly he knows just  
where he himself is,  
Still in a stray, as if seeking his own lost  
soul to recover;  
In his reverie slowly he strides through a field  
to the roadway,



Which again leads by the mansion of Lady  
Eulalia Lovelace,  
Of whose courteous friendship rise reminis-  
cences gentle.

But he noticed the hedge was uncropped and  
the yard was uncared for,  
Even the well-known gate stood unhinged  
and was hanging half open.

What could it mean—such neglect—and in  
her—the pink of all neatness?

Every fence-corner showed a new revel of  
weeds in their freedom.

Had the soul of that beautiful woman quit  
also its mansion?

Musing that only his mood may mirror the  
night's melancholy,

Glides he along in the dark underneath the  
still mulberry's branches,

Where he recalls the sweet scenes of the one  
afternoon of love's life-work,

Just a few hours old, still mightily storming  
in heart-throbs.

But of a sudden he thinks with a clash of his  
breath the new meaning

Which now thrills in his brain from the last  
tearful gleam of Ann Rutledge,

As at her parting she looked up, and sobbed  
out the pain of her soul's wound,

Fervently asking of Heaven if this be her  
second betrothal,  
And in a prayer appealing to God to come to  
her rescue.

Then as she spoke she revealed her agony  
tearing her features,

For she thought of her promise of love as  
now double in conflict,

Which gave a stab to her soul and cut it in  
twain to the bottom;

Still each half of herself seemed smiting in  
frenzy the other.

Now he remembered how she had dropped  
to her seat in a pallor,

Though she valiantly rallied and set out  
alone for her dwelling.

Lincoln repeated her agony all of a sudden  
within him,

When it fully came over him what she had  
felt in her anguish,

For the same struggle had made him her  
counterpart throbbing its torment.

So he arose in a pang to follow her path to  
her homestead,

Till he came to the spot where flashed the  
two flickering light-points

Into his auguring eye through the night  
from two opposite quarters,

Yet to his mood both spoke in a similar language of portent.

Listen! what is that sound which he hears from the little red school-house?

Voices commingled and pitched in a scream too loud for one speaker!

Bodes he: "Well do I know a fought combat might lurk in that question;

Can it be that some hothead has flung in the meeting his fire-brand?

Has the irascible Doctor perchance been starting a tumult?

Heavens! I may be needed! How can I drive myself thither!"

But of a sudden the light goes out, and dark are the windows.

Lincoln, hid in the moon-shade cast by the boughs of kind beeches,

Silently watches the people stream homeward away from the school-house,

Till suave silence is lord of the night, and abed is the village.

Slowly he strides to the Public Square painfully brooding

On the twin agonies, that of himself and that of the maiden,

Each of which doubles anew with a cut both inward and outward,—

Look at it there! a brief flicker darts out of  
 the school-house's window,  
 Then it ceases and leaves the whole hill-top  
 in slumberous darkness:  
 "Only my fantasy gleams thus, illuming the  
 phantoms of night's swoon—  
 Still I behold the faint light but steady from  
 Rutledge's window."

So his two selves keep quizzing each other,  
 affirming, denying.  
 Mooded in gloom's premonition of fate he  
 paces his pathway,  
 When he looks up once more to contemplate  
 the heaven-tipped belfry.  
 See again the fleet flashes mysterious over  
 the windows,  
 Tongues of flame that seem hissed from the  
 mouth of a fire-breathing dragon,  
 Then with a flare they lap back to the dark-  
 ness inwalled of the school-house.  
 "Not my own eye," he reflected, "has feigned  
 that luminous phantom."  
 So he resolves to slip up the hillside and  
 probe for the secret  
 Which had touched far down to a chord un-  
 der-grown in his nature,  
 Weirdly connecting his life with some doom  
 of destiny coming.

But just when he would take the first step, the  
    creak of a door-hinge  
Over the Public Square with a music uncanny,  
    fell grating!

Thence he beheld two men stride forward and  
    stand on the pavement

Talking earnestly, face to face, a few mo-  
    ments together,

One with his hat on bowed to the other whose  
    head was uncovered,

Speaking his farewell words so loud that Lin-  
    coln could hear them:

“Friend, tomorrow again I shall come at the  
    turn of her illness.”

That was the Doctor addressing Ann Rut-  
    ledge’s sore-troubled father,

Who hurried back to the house, while the Doc-  
    tor trudged drearily onward.

Now the big ball of the moon has rolled down  
    the dome of high heaven,

Sliding beneath the horizon and turning to  
    night the lit landscape,

Whose dark folds from one bluff to the other  
    have filled up the valley,

Under whose cover the Sangamon grumbles  
    invisible murmurs.

When he heard the dire words of the Doctor,  
     Lincoln fell shot through  
 With a thunderbolt barbed of anguish, and  
     lay in the star-shade  
 Cast by a maple upon whose tortuous roots  
     he coiled up in convulsion.  
 There he lapsed to a somnolent swoon, half  
     awake, half dreaming,  
 When he visioned an endless procession of  
     years winding onward,  
 Bearing their hero they mournfully trod in  
     a line down to doomsday;  
 Oft he essayed to snatch a sly peep at the  
     face of their God-born,  
 Whom the years, though mortal themselves,  
     keep ever immortal,  
 Till that youth caught a glimpse of an old  
     wrinkled cheek in the coffin,  
 Then he recognized fully the lines in those  
     deep-furrowed features,  
 Talking aloud in his dream: "I know ye--  
     I am myself this."

*Fire! Fire!* pierced a shrill shout with its ter-  
     ror the sleep of the village.  
 Lincoln awoke and sprang to his feet in the  
     might of his startle,  
 Suddenly saw he a blaze leap out of the roof  
     of the school-house

And illumine the hill-top with flashes on trees  
and on houses.

*Fire! Fire!* thrilled the shout of the people  
producing a shiver,

As each bore on a run to the scene the house-  
hold's big bucket,

And a woman came rushing half-dressed with  
her kitchen's clothes-boiler;

Soon one ladder was brought which reached  
to the eaves of the building,

Up whose rungs were soon handed the slop-  
ping pailfuls of water.

*Fire! Fire!* But hark! the bell begins clanging  
—the swift-clapping fire-bell!

Deed of the schoolmaster bursting the door in  
and clutching the bell-rope

For his last ring which tolls now the funeral  
pyre of the school-house.

See too the belfry in flames which lap up a  
cone of fleet fire-tongues!

Down rolls the bell on the roof and fitfully  
rings its own death-knell,

Till it smites on the ground and breaks into  
pieces still chiming

As they fall, at the feet of the villagers listen-  
ing sadly.

Lincoln now hastened to help with the rest,  
 but all to no purpose;  
 Still as he passes the store, he sees Abner  
 saving his own first,  
 Who on his roof with bucket and broom runs  
 fighting the sparkles.  
 So the village's center of light has illumed  
 its last lesson,  
 Now it spells but a heap of hot cinders droop-  
 ing to ashes.

Lincoln surprises them all as he slips to a  
 group of his friends there,  
 Darkly discussing the problem: What could  
 have started the blazes?  
 Accident be it—or purpose? Whom can we  
 blame for disaster?"

"Strange," says Lincoln, "Twice there fell  
 in mine eye from a distance  
 Fiery flashes lolling their tongues in wrath  
 for a moment  
 Out of this schoolhouse when the night's noon  
 already was nearing;  
 I had started to search, but the flickers would  
 die out in darkness,  
 So I dismissed them as only the foolery  
 flashed by my fancy,  
 Or as the shimmering glint of the moonshine  
 glanced from the windows.



Probably mine was the sole eye awake in this town—but I went not.”

Then interrupting him sighfully spake the schoolmaster Mentor:

“When the door I broke open I noticed just where the tinder had started,

Still was blazing the wood-box where we would throw the old paper.

But I cannot conceive for me how or why it should kindle.”

Here of a sudden the schoolmaster’s speech and his sobs too have halted,

For there rose on his soul his faith in the Fates and the Furies—

Furies retributive, ever returning the deed unto mankind.

And he recalled the swift words of his prophecy lurid that evening,

Judging the Powers would balance the burning of print with a burning.

Doctor Palmetto was present and gazed at the wrath of the blazes,

Gratified grimly to see the fulfillment of what he predicted,

While on the spot he delighted to utter his dark diagnosis:

“This is also a symptom, I hold, of the time  
so deeply diseaséd;  
Everywhere I discover this fever in man and  
the world too,  
For it is racking not merely this town, but  
this State and this Nation.  
Now like a plague it is seizing the innocent  
maid in her flower,  
Bringing the malady speedy to whelm her  
down under her grave-stone.”  
Further he spake not, but all thought of his  
beautiful patient,  
As they breathed a still prayer, heart-heaved  
for her quick restoration.  
Lincoln slid into a shadow to throw down a  
tear in his sorrow.

Note too a man who now slips from the group  
and plods his path homeward,  
Not a word of parting he speaks, not a word  
on the fire he utters,  
For he reproaches himself as the cause of this  
flaming destruction,  
Simply recalling in dole his last deed of snuff-  
ing the candle—  
That was Squire Ebenezer who had once  
buidled the structure,  
Chosen its circular shape and selected its site  
on the hill-top,

Far overlooking the land round about as a  
presence inspiring.  
Chance had made him destroyer of what of  
his own he held dearest,  
In his silence he seemed to be hearing the  
voice of a judgment.  
Slowly pacing his way he would ponder:  
“Here I cannot rebuild it—  
Done is its work—so is mine, perchance, too—  
No, I swear never!  
This dead school-house I yet shall restore to  
a young resurrection.”

Mournfully all the citizens glanced at the  
smouldering ash-heap,  
Now but the emptied skull where housed once  
the mind of the village;  
Soon they turned from the sight of their sor-  
row and sped to their door-sills,  
Each man trying in vain to peer through the  
mystery's darkness,  
Yet weighed down with a feeling forebodeful  
of doom in his spirit,  
Whispering: “This is the judgment which  
sent as its signal the fire-ball.”

Last of the people to leave are two persons,  
diverse yet concordant:

William the wainwright and Mentor the pedagogue  
 stray off together;  
 In a meandering silence they flit through the  
 star-gloom like specters,  
 Till the sorrowful schoolmaster dooming  
 breaks out in a heart-burst:  
 "Deepest of all is my loss—my vocation lies  
 dead in those ruins—  
 O my life! it seems gone! I feel it has ended  
 in nothing—  
 Rounded itself to a zero with many a flourish  
 and flounder."

"Nay," says William the wainwright, who  
 speaks from the center of cosmos:  
 "Spark of the Master eternal, the light on  
 this hill-top you kindled  
 Shall not go out while the world in its whirl  
 keeps circling its orbit;  
 More immortal it is than the Sun which also  
 shall burn out.  
 I and each of your pupils must die in our time  
 like this school-house,  
 Still what you have helped make us endureth  
 through all generations,  
 And if not here, then elsewhere you will up-  
 build the new school-house.

Friend, remember that word on the bell which  
hung in the belfry—  
Motto of Hope undying you wrote there—  
Now live it—*Resurgam.*”

## Book Thirteenth.

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### *The Passing of Ann Rutledge.*

“Doubtful the case is—not bodily ailment so  
much as mental;  
Medicine goes not home to the point of the  
malady’s fury,  
But is rejected with Nature’s disdain of a  
meddling intruder.”

So said the Doctor turning away from the  
bed of his patient,  
And addressing a word in low tones to her  
father James Rutledge,  
Whose eye sphering a tear gave sign of his  
strong self-suppression.  
“Only the Doctor in Heaven can help her,  
my art is now useless.”

And as he spoke the physician made ready,  
to pass from the sick-room,  
But at the door he laid on the hand of the  
father a notelet,  
Then he started away to visit some easier ill-  
ness.

Still once more he turned round and spoke  
the parting injunction:

“Let her mind have its way now, there is no  
good in refusal.

I shall come no more, I think she is better  
without me.”

For the Doctor observed how his patient  
averted her eye-balls

When beside her he sat and felt of her wrist  
at the blood-pulse.

As he stepped forth from the door of the  
house, he saw in the distance

Pensively pacing his path the tall figure of  
Abraham Lincoln,

Who oft glanced at the dwelling where lay  
the suffering maiden;

But the two men turned aside as if shying  
from each other's presence.

So Ann Rutledge was slowly approaching the  
goal of her conflict,

Which was cleaving her soul and had made  
her life a long battle;  
Every breath she could draw was renewing  
the fateful encounter.  
As she lay in her bed, she would look at the  
ring of betrothal,  
Throbs of deep anguish would flush on her  
face her innermost struggle,  
While she would tug at the stubborn red  
pledge to free herself of it;  
But let her wrench and twist as she might,  
she could not remove it,  
And the wrestle without but echoed the  
wrestle within her.

Over the father who watched her with sym-  
pathy ran the same surges,  
Till he felt the tense throes of her sorrow  
inside his own bosom,  
And he cried out anguished in heart yet gen-  
tle in accent:

“Let me file from your finger that ring which  
so worries your illness—

Somehow it seems the one center of all of  
your suffering, daughter.”

“No, no!” pitching her voice to a scream she  
would speak in her struggle:

“That I well might have done for myself  
long since, but I could not.



It must remain where once it was put till it  
roll off in freedom,

Or perchance till it let me remove it just by  
my own power."

Then her voice would tone down her speech  
to a happier cadence:

"Let me die here on this earth still true to  
its law and my promise,

But obeying my love I must go to the Pres-  
ence supernal!

Ah! two duties I feel in my soul, fiercely war-  
ring each other,

Duty terrestrial, duty celestial belong not to-  
gether,

Yet they both are nestled within me, clinching  
my heart-strings.

Here below is nothing but strife for my days,  
myself am asunder,

Mortal I feel in this frame, but my Love, I  
know, is immortal.

May I perish of Love for the one, which was  
promised another:

Let me be whole in my God Who is Love,  
Creator of all things!"

So she spake in the might of her faith as she  
rose on her elbow,

But she soon fell back on her pillow and  
seemed to be thinking:

“Two commands I can hear—two laws—yet  
 throttling each other—  
 I can feel their tumultuous wrestle in every  
 blood-drop.

Go I must now to where they are one, in One  
 Being eternal.”

For a moment she calmed, then wrenched in  
 a fiercer convulsion :

“Two betrothals are mine, and slaying each  
 other they slay me,

Driving my love off the earth to win its eter-  
 nal fulfillment ;

Here below is the judgment, above is the song  
 of salvation,

Here Love grapples with Death. but there it  
 rises transfigured.”

Then she sank into silence as if too deeply  
 reflecting

For the power of words to utter the stretch  
 of her spirit.

Slower drooped to a dreamful relapse her  
 quivering eyelids,

That she might widen her inward vision to  
 regions beyond her ;

Still she bespoke her burden of heart while  
 keeping her glance shut :

“I cannot live where Conscience and Love divide me in conflict,  
What I ought not I must—and yet what I ought I must not;  
Conscience is stabbing my heart, yet my heart is sapping my Conscience;  
Placate my love of the law and the law of my love I cannot.  
Love the one here I dare not, but I dare love him in Heaven.  
God of my Hope that is deathless, take me up into Thy bosom!”

Thus in her temple of prayer she seemed to be holding her service  
Over herself that her soul might be ready to speed its last journey,  
When her father addressed her, seeking to bring her some comfort:  
“Here is a message in writing put into my hand by the Doctor:  
From your betrothed it was sent—he is coming to pay you a visit.”  
Then Ann Rutledge opened her eyes once more and sat up,  
Voicing her wishes in words new-born of her heart’s aspiration:

“Will he restore me my promise whose bond  
has made me so hapless?

Will he release me from law that before God  
I be guiltless?

He must say I am free and take back this  
ring of betrothal—

That I be one in myself here, and one up in  
Heaven above me.”

Even she raises her arm as she stresses her  
words with a gesture:

“Live I cannot, fulfilling a life of a limp love-  
less duty,

Others may do so—both the man and the  
woman—I shall not;

Rather, O let me die with the hope of my love  
in the future.”

Then she held out her ring-finger hand as if  
making confession

To an invisible Power which touched her with  
sudden renewal,

For she straightened her body once more in  
the stretch of her vigor.

But her father could only reply in sympathy’s  
sorrow:

“He will be coming today to claim thee as  
bride by thy promise.”

Slowly she wilted to weakness again and sank  
on her pillow,  
As she spake to her father intoning despair  
in the echo:

“Send for Lincoln at once to soothe me amid  
my last soul-pain;  
I would look on his love here again before  
I am lookless,  
Vowing anew my single betrothal to him—  
him only.”

Over the Public Square across from the home  
of Ann Rutledge,  
Lincoln sadly had sauntered and stood there  
wistfully gazing,  
Drawn by that consonant chord which brings  
two people together,  
Who, though remote in space, quaff the same  
deep fountain of spirit,  
Whose tuned feelings of oneness appear to  
throw throbs through the distance,  
Quite unconscious to both, who impart to  
each other their presence,  
That not only they feel but obey their mutual  
devotion,  
Till they utter the passionate word in love’s  
consecration.

When the father had beckoned him thither-  
ward, Lincoln was ready;  
Stepping quickly along, he but followed the  
pull of his being,  
Till he had passed through the door and  
softly had slipped to the sick-room  
Which heretofore was forbidden his presence  
by word of the Doctor,  
Under the medical plea of the patient's dan-  
gerous illness.

But now the lovers were left all alone for the  
interview final;  
Even the father withdrew in right of a bond  
that was deeper  
Than a parent's affection, and Lincoln sat  
down by the bedside.  
Sainted in look already, Ann Rutledge  
reached to her bosom,  
Thence she drew forth the torn letter of Lin-  
coln's former renouncement,  
Torn in twain to the edge through the ink-  
red heart on the cover,  
Sacredly kept the while by the maiden and  
secretly looked at,  
For it would speak to her all the mystery  
masked of her being,  
And it seemed to foresay the doom of her  
life in its conflict.

Calmly she then put it back to its place, be-  
speaking her action:

“I shall keep it and die with it, holding it  
here in my bosom,

That rent heart of your letter shall lie to  
mine own the nearest;

Buried with me it shall be, when I am laid in  
my coffin,

I shall bear it up with me to show at the  
high throne of Heaven,

As a witness of love before God at my coming  
espousals.”

For a moment she halted and gleamed in the  
rapture of vision,

Then she turned to Lincoln and spake him  
her soul's consecration:

“No, I dare not destroy it, nor leave it on  
earth here behind me,

Thou hast sealed in this token thy love with  
mine everlasting,

Which will remain with thee here to be lived  
to its fullest fruition.

Hence I must go, but I now can forefeel that  
I never shall quit thee,

I shall drop down in thy life when the crisis  
is pushing thee hardest,

Shall ward off with my Love the heaviest  
blows of misfortune,

Which will be thine, for the greater the soul  
the greater the trial.”

Sobbing the youth upraised his hands to his  
face for a moment,

Torn by the strongest human emotion he in  
agony cried out:

“Go not, leave me not here—my life will be  
death if without thee;

I shall follow thee, follow at once—let the  
grave be our nuptials—

Why should I wait? Every day will be hence  
for me only a dying.”

Thus was the flood of his sorrow bursting the  
limit of reason,

When the maiden gave answer, calling him  
back to his world-task:

“Thy renouncement must live and be  
wrought out by thee to fulfillment,

To thy time thou must show it transforming  
thy life in sore trials.

Love thee below I dare not—but I may out  
of Heaven.

Thou canst requite me from here in thy deed  
with memory deathless.

My betrothal to thee is that—my only be-  
trothal.”



For a moment she rested, then worded her  
gasp with her last voice:

“Over thee still I shall hover, of Love the  
pure bodiless image,

And shall attend thee appearing just when  
thou needest my presence;

Hear me, henceforth thy love is not merely in  
me to be bounded,

But to the Love of all people will rise up thy  
love of Ann Rutledge.”

Back she fell on her bed, but gently with pil-  
lows he propped her:

“Go not, my All, or let me go with thee,” still  
sobbed he his heart-strokes.

But she was passing, though for a look she  
held open her eyelids,

Whence was gleaming enskyed of Love the  
bright benediction,

With the promise of Hope, which encircled  
her brow like a sun-wreath.

Lincoln felt in himself, as he gazed, her trans-  
figuration

Pressing its form on his soul to stay there  
imaged forever;

Ghost-like to her he whispered: “This is my  
marriage eternal.”

At the high vow her eye throbb'd with a  
 look of blest recognition,  
 When to her Lincoln repeated: "This is my  
 marriage eternal!  
 Though thou in life art not mine, thy love  
 I shall love now forever,  
 Now I am wedded to Love itself, through thee  
 brought down from Heaven,  
 Thee I shall feel and re-live in all of the deeds  
 of my future,  
 Not for one person alone, for the Person him-  
 self is my passion;  
 Over thy form now leaving I pledge my faith  
 on God's altar:  
 Unto Love eternal this is my marriage eter-  
 nal."

List! a rap was heard at the door, which  
 pulled them back earthward  
 From beyond, then gravely the father en-  
 tered announcing:  
 "Thy betrothed is here at the threshold and  
 wishes to greet thee."

In steps Abner, the hitherto absent, but now  
 again present,  
 Somewhat surprised to see lone Lincoln who  
 speedily darts out.

Ann looked up at him steadily once with eye  
unreproachful,  
Then she drew down slowly the curtain of  
vision forever,  
Shutting him out from that world which she  
already had entered,  
Leaving his law to the man, but bearing her  
love in her bosom  
As her soul's witness to Heaven when sum-  
moned to stand before Judgment.  
Only her hand she can lift up a little—no  
word she can utter—  
Just the last act of her life—but mark the  
ring of betrothal!  
How of itself it slips off from her finger now  
shrunken by illness,  
Drops on the floor with a bound and rapidly  
rolls toward the doorway  
Where sad Lincoln is passing out of the house  
with the image  
Which he will wear on his heart till he too  
shall be summoned to Judgment.

Hastily Abner picked up the ring and sought  
to replace it,  
Though he noticed the hollew-eyed socket,  
where flashed once the ruby;  
Still by force he attempted to put it again  
on its finger

Which lay flexless and lifeless, though  
    clenched in rigidity mortal  
And refusing to take back what it had shed  
    with the death-stroke.  
That was the fateful pledge of the law which  
    whelmed her in conflict;  
But with the price of her life she paid off  
    the debt of her promise.  
Abner soon gave up the effort, and then with  
    a look of foiled purpose,  
Into his pocket he thrust the woe-laden ring  
    of betrothal,  
Which he once gave to her when it was set  
    with the laugh of the ruby,  
And appeared to foretoken the hour of happy  
    espousals;  
But it turned to an eye of evil, blood-shot.  
    in its glances,  
Looking a demonic curse ever-present into  
    the heart of the maiden.  
Soon he with token returned has hastened  
    away to his business.

So she passes, renouncing the love of her life  
    for her love's sake,  
Gone from the world though transfigured  
    into a presence forever,  
For she, eternally loving, will be the eternally  
    living.

Lincoln beholding the deed of Ann Rutledge  
is with her uprisen;  
Into the Love re-born which is all Love he  
wins the new baptism.  
Still that wound will bleed all his days at  
memory's time-beat,  
For the rift is so deep that the Healer alone,  
the one Healer,  
Curer of all the scission within us and also  
without us,  
Can the sorrowless medicine send to heal him  
to wholeness.

Soul-bowed Lincoln again has wandered  
alone to the shade-tree,  
Bell-topped mulberry hallowed now as a  
shrine for his worship,  
Which has beheld the holiest history lived by  
the lovers,  
Where he feels himself praying with her the  
unspeakable prayer,  
Who had left him all Love as her portion, not  
merely her own love.

Crisp are the leaves which on him drop down  
in tender succession,  
As they return to the earth for repose in the  
graveyard of Nature

Till they arise in the spring new-born to a  
fresh foliation.

There he sits down underneath the low sighs  
of the breeze-blown branches,  
Which in tune with his heart-beat are breath-  
ing him strains of condolence.

Soon he looks outward—he sees only vacancy  
where stood the school-house,  
Up he springs with a shock which shivers a  
moment his being,

For the whole world seems quaking and fall-  
ing to ruins about him.

But he recovers himself at the throb of his  
new consecration,

While once more he rehearses his vow as the  
creed of a life-time:

“Unto Love eternal, this is my marriage eter-  
nal.”

## Book Fourteenth.

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### *The New Life.*

Days of the autumn, one after the other,  
tread onward to winter,

In a procession long-lined through time like  
a funeral cortege,

Leaves twirl silently down in a dance with  
the round of each moment,

Rendering back to the mother, the Earth, the  
substance once taken,

Who digs yearly their tomb for their burial  
over her bosom.

All the heart of the maple had burst and was  
dripping its crimson,

Ragged and broken, and sere had turned the  
green coat of the scrub-oak,

While the hickory grove was mortally yellow  
in foliage,

And its freed nuts fell crashing through twigs  
to the roots of the parent,  
Seeking to find a new home in the soil for  
re-bearing their forbears.  
Fruits, too, of orchard and forest were ripe  
for a new generation,  
Seeming in sorrow to kiss good-bye to the  
love of the summer  
As they started afresh in the world to fulfill  
their own life-round.  
Even the voice of the Sangamon sulky had  
shrunk to a whisper,  
Though in its ripple still gleamed the silvery  
shine of the minnows,  
Flashing their light-points of life in the eye  
of the stranded beholder.

Lincoln had seen the beloved one dying be-  
fore him, yet staying;  
Sealed is that deed on his soul with its im-  
age enshrined there forever,  
Love universal now he has witnessed and  
made his redemption,  
Felt it within him as time-defying and death-  
overcoming,  
Through the maiden who chooses for love to  
renounce her earthly existence,  
And to await her bridal beyond in the pres-  
ence of Heaven—



She above and he below—though by life they  
be sundered.  
Ever present she lives in his toil as a guar-  
dian spirit,  
Who will prompt him anew at each node of  
the fate sent upon him:  
Oft renewing the look and the lisp of the  
words she last left him,  
As Love's presence vanishing once then abid-  
ing forever.  
Staying with her in life, he hopes to stay with  
her hereafter,  
Love, at first mortal in birth, is his to be re-  
born immortal.

But along with her Love he will bear in his  
bosom her conflict,  
Which will endure to the end of his days—  
the double soul's struggle—  
One side is Duty below, while the other is  
Love up above him,  
This will anchor his heart in its trial and  
light his way onward;  
He must always re-live Ann Rutledge's lot in  
his labor,  
Every day he has to enact her life and her  
death too,  
Harmonizing the scission of soul whereof she  
has perished,

Suffering fully her fate in his own for a  
higher fulfillment,  
Living her tragedy over and feeling its throes  
in each heart-throb  
That he may rise above it the victor by loyal  
endurance;  
So he conquers the world of harrying strife  
which she could not,  
Death-transcending through death lives the  
love now of Abraham Lincoln.

Such is his mood welling up from the nether-  
most fount of his being,  
As he sits on the settle beneath the lone mul-  
berry's branches,  
Praying again to the soul of his soul the un-  
speakable prayer,  
Mid the slow rain of the leaflets of autumn  
down-falling to silence,  
Mid the memories golden which drop from  
the past like a sun-shower,  
Till the moment supreme when the two loving  
hearts were first plighted  
Here, just here, underneath these sadly-  
draped leaves now inurning.  
Then he exclaims in a heart-burst: "Here be  
that moment's renewal,  
Here be re-vowed before this witnessing tree  
my new troth plight—

Unto Love all-embracing I give my self's  
service forever."

Scarcely had fallen the word when suddenly  
there in his presence  
Stood a shape which at first he took for a  
phantom supernal;  
But he soon had discovered the look of good  
William the wainwright,  
Who began talking in fatherly tones that  
quivered with pity:

"Lincoln, you I have seen as you wandered  
around in your sorrow,  
I have come now to say you a word of mine  
own deep experience,  
Thinking it might be a comfort to help you  
hold up your burden.  
You like me must walk in the shadow through  
life lent of Nature,  
Till there dawns in the soul the morn of a  
new resurrection,  
Till you transform the sorrow of death to the  
death of all sorrow.  
Her evanishment is but her real palingenesy  
lasting,  
If you will make her such—ever re-born of  
the love in your spirit.

I have traveled already the road and well do  
 I know it,  
 Faith you must get in Death as the God of  
 man's purification,  
 Hard is the ransoming road—you can make  
 it a curse or a blessing,  
 Hard is the test and many fall in it—but you,  
 I vow, shall not."

Strong fell the words yet soothing the soul  
 of the sorrowful Lincoln,  
 Who not in speech but in look was beseeching  
 a further disclosure;  
 Turning his eyes to the distance began sage  
 William the wainwright:  
 "I have seen you haunting it yonder, the  
 green little churchyard,  
 Where is the fresh-turned sod which covers  
 the mortal Ann Rutledge,  
 Scarce could I hold back the waters of salt  
 from sympathy's well-head,  
 For my own Mariana lies there, not far from  
 the maiden;  
 Thus the cry of compassion was double, for  
 you and myself too;  
 Years it took me to wean my heart of that  
 spot of round greensward,  
 Where she rests outwardly buried—and still  
 I plant it with flowers—

But in my soul she never has died—she lives  
and is active—  
Aye she never is absent, but takes her abode  
in my being;  
As a God-like presence she comes to preside  
in my workshop  
Where as a token of worship she gives me the  
guidance above me,  
Which with the years of my toil becomes  
more transparent in meaning.”

In a revery far away Lincoln seems to be  
gazing,  
When he is waked by a press of the hand from  
William the wainwright:  
“You remember the love of the wheel which  
you felt in my hand-strokes  
And the prayer you heard which silently rose  
from my labor;  
All of it throbbed from the depths of love’s  
loss which once overwhelmed me,  
That is the trial through which you too are  
now passing, to prove you,  
Death you are to transmute into life of benefi-  
cent action—  
Small is my work—a wheel—but yours will  
be large, aye the largest.”

Quickly the wainwright has vanished, leaving  
 mute Lincoln in study  
 Over the words which seemingly tapped the  
 hid fount of all doing,  
 Fate itself he has to constrain, the recom-  
 pense getting.

But that image he carries along in his daily  
 allotment,  
 As his spirit's most precious treasure for life  
 consecrated,  
 Strangely transfigured to love, yea, the love  
 of all Love such as God is.  
 And he will call up before him that shape in  
 the pinch of his trials  
 With it communing like a Madonna by word-  
 less petition,  
 Or he will tremblingly tell of it when in the  
 mood sympathetic,  
 Oft-times citing the verses whose musical  
 measures attune him  
 To restore the fair fleeting form of his love's  
 early sorrow.

By it then healed he becomes again whole in  
 the time's fierce disruption.  
 Such is the medicine which he prescribes to  
 his soul in his scission.

That he may remedy by it the rent of himself  
and his people,  
Aye, the rent of the universe, ever renewing  
its wholeness.

## Book Fifteenth.

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### *The New Migration.*

“What an outrage! Nothing this winter they  
did, just nothing!

Lawmakers they may be called—to the State  
they are but a scandal,

Sitting with feet cocked up and drawing their  
pay at Vandalia!

Spending the time they are paid for by us in  
telling vile stories!”

Thus roared Doctor Palmetto. ever the vil-  
lage’s censor,

Secretly giving a cut with his razorous  
tongue at his rival:

“No canal, no railroad, no appropriation, no  
nothing!”



So his Noes he kept piling up skyward till  
God seemed a nothing  
To whose glory he builded a pyramid lofty  
of zeros,  
Empty, hollow-eyed zeros which kept roll-  
ing asunder  
Just of themselves, like a pile of dry skulls  
in the Doctor's own workshop—  
Damning all he bedamned too himself in his  
sweep of damnation.

He was talking to Squire Ebenezer who  
strangely held silence,  
Who oft looked at the hill-top where was  
once standing the school-house,  
Which he had reared as the center of brain  
for the whole of New Salem;  
Now it lay in its ashes, and broken the bell  
of the belfry,  
In whose harmonious tones his life flowed  
attuned to a music.  
Though he perceived the point of the thrust  
in the words of the Doctor  
To be turned toward Lincoln, the lawgiver  
loved of the village,  
'Also the friend of himself, not a word in  
defence did he utter,  
Nor in argument would he now balance the  
sides as his wont was.

See the Doctor again give a spank with his  
     palm on the pine-box  
 Where the two were sitting in front of the  
     store of the village—  
 Store of Abner who now has returned and  
     taken possession;  
 There he stands in his door and hearkens the  
     speakers in silence,  
 For he too with himself was holding a dili-  
     gent query  
 Just concerning that future which all the vil-  
     lage now peers at,  
 Tipped on its pivot of destiny toppling first  
     forward then backward;  
 But the store-keeper silent shows not a trace  
     of a feeling  
 For the vanishing town, for himself, or for  
     love which has vanished.

So the keen Doctor's momentum of tongue  
     speeds on unopposed:  
 "What a crotchety fate hangs over this work  
     of town-making  
 As it bubbles up here in the West along every  
     road-side!  
 Look at Chicago, rapidly rising to be the  
     great city,  
 Look at New Salem, rapidly sinking to be  
     but a cipher—

And the cipher itself is doomed before long  
to be rubbed out!  
Up and down the old rickety ladder of luck  
we go wabbling,  
Till we drop in the pit or wing upward a day  
in the sunshine!  
But with the death of our school-house we  
whisper in sober reflection:  
Next we shall bury our town and depart from  
the graveyard forever.”  
Up sprang the Doctor now hushed, he too  
had a twinge of compassion,  
As he turned away from the store to attend  
to his sick folk,  
So let him vanish, prescribing for illness in  
ailing New Salem.

But Ebenezer the Squire paced slowly his  
pain-laden footsteps,  
In his heart there suddenly surged a com-  
munal sorrow  
For the child of his mind whose growth he  
had lovingly tended.  
Soon he turned down the path to the shop  
of William the wainwright,  
Looking across the Sangamon Valley into  
the sunset,  
While crept over the hills the lessening sheen  
of the evening

Turning to gloam of the twilight at first,  
then slyly to darkness,  
Like a huge dragon that laps in its far fate-  
ful coil the whole earth-ball.  
But not a sound was now heard of the chisel  
or wimble or hammer  
Fitting the spoke in the hub of the wheel and  
arching the felloes;  
And in the shop of Peter the blacksmith were  
puffing no bellows,  
Silenced was song of the sledge and the anvil  
with ring of the iron,  
Nor in their chorus would ever be echoed  
again the sweet bell-chimes  
Rolling adown from the hill-top where  
perched the little red school-house.

Mark! in the yard stand covered with muslin  
the wagons for moving,  
Whose stout wheels are the last here round-  
ed by William the wainwright;  
Piled up with household goods are the  
wagons and ready for hitching;  
What can it mean? And who is starting an-  
other migration?  
Slowly out of his shop to the path steps Wil-  
liam forebodeful;  
Often he wries his neck to gaze at his ten-  
antless quarters,

Where he had happily wrought to a finish a  
piece of his life-work.

Now he was taking a look star-lit at what  
he was leaving,

When the Squire he met whose question he  
thoughtfully answered:

“Well I must quit New Salem moving my  
destiny onward

Over the Sangamon narrow and over the  
broad Mississippi;

Somewhere on the frontier I shall help to re-  
make a new center

Aye a new wheel of a town with its hub and  
its spokes and its felloes

Raying out over the land a network which  
draws men together,

For in that practice alone can I give my best  
help to my brother.”

With a deep smile from his soul the Squire  
responded approval,

But the wainwright stopped not the thrust  
of his words in his ardor:

“Full five years have I stayed here putting  
on wheels the new country,

Till it will run of itself for the future with  
help of my pupils,

Two of them whom I have trained in my  
 workshop of soul and of body;  
 Thus the whole people may rally as one in  
 their communal spirit  
 Then may return each man to himself in his  
 own isolation—  
 For we must all go back to ourselves that we  
 live too in common.”

Here gray William down drooped to the look  
 of a long reminiscence,  
 Which mutely mooded the Squire when slow-  
 ly again spoke the wainwright:  
 “Thrice before I have migrated starting  
 from Penn’s Philadelphia,  
 Wheeling three towns of the backwoods that  
 they may better associate;  
 Old I am getting, only once more I fain would  
 be wheelwright  
 To the youngest community now being born  
 on the border.”

Of a sudden to William’s surprise flashed  
 Squire Ebenezer:  
 “Oh that feeling how well do I know it! with-  
 in me has prodded  
 Just the same impulse which will never al-  
 low us to sit still

In one place for a life-time but pushes us  
    onward and onward  
To be town-makers irresistibly up to the sun-  
    set,  
Sowing the land with communal seed, as the  
    farmer his wheatfield—  
Builders of institutions—just that is our  
    highest vocation—  
Architects all of the town, the county, the  
    State and the Nation;  
And still further perchance the ages shall  
    beckon us forward  
To our great destiny glimpsed in a new po-  
    litical order.”

Here the words of the Squire had quit him,  
    no longer rhapsodic,  
But he pensively whipped round from future  
    to past recollecting:  
“More than once I have moved since I start-  
    ed a youth in Kentucky,  
Crossing the river Ohio to seek the domain  
    of a Free-State,  
For I liked not the name of a slave in our  
    country of freedom;  
Then to wild Indiana I came with a com-  
    munal bee-hive,  
Swarming out of the old to the new on the  
    barbarous border;

Lastly I hived me just here in New Salem  
with Rutledge, its founder;  
Somehow I always was chosen to hold up  
the balance of justice,  
Which bids stability both in the law and the  
temper judicial.”

Quite unaware to himself the Squire had  
lapsed to confession,  
As his head he bent over and whispered in  
tone confidential:  
“Let me entrust to you what in my heart I  
now am, my good William,  
That unsettling desire has uprooted me too,  
I must leave here;  
On your journey look back, you will see me  
crossing the river,  
That is the Father of Waters who roars in  
a rage at our passage  
Over his torrent to where we shall plant the  
new communal structure,  
Such as we bear in our brain to re-model the  
work of our fathers,  
Long transmitted by time but unfolded by us  
to the New-World,  
Which is now starting to live its own life  
out here in the North-West.  
Yea, a new school-house and better shall rise  
up in rejuvenation,



And the new school-bell shall chime me again,  
fulfilling its motto."

"That is the best news we ever have heard,"  
said William the wainwright,

"In our young enterprise you were the one  
most needed, most wished-for,

You shall be squire again in our town to arise  
on the border

Weighing out justice impartial to all in the  
scales of your brain-pan.

Others are going, farmers, mechanics, young  
folk of our village,

Which already appears to me old, perchance  
in its dotage.

Uncle George Trueblood now wavers, despite  
his conservative habit;

Sagging hither and yon, he may drop down  
on us to-morrow."

Silently thoughtful the Squire still listened  
the wainwright forecasting:

"Well do you know that the ruffian, the  
drunkard, the criminal fail not

On the frontier, till the reign of the law with  
its arm overtake them;

You have been given that arm and still wield  
it right here in New Salem—

Bring to our new town yourself, O Squire, O,  
bring to us Justice."

Then the wainwright lowered his voice, as imparting a secret:

“Think of it! all of us—aye myself too—are limit-surpassers,

Mark! we may sometimes turn in our zeal to be limit-transgressors;

Hear me! the bound-breaker easily runs to be law-breaker also;

You are to balance us into the new world out of the old one,

Lest to chaos we fall while striving up higher to cosmos,

Ever uniting the order transmitted with order arising,

Ever transforming the old institution through freedom upstorming.”

Meditatively Squire Ebenezer to William responded:

“Let me grant it—once more I would have me a little land-clearing,

That I may see our young West fast sloughing its skin of wild Nature;

But far deeper I long for the days of my happy town-making,

Raising once more the communal giant informed of my spirit

That he put on his body a garment of dwellings and workshops,

Building himself the germinal home of the  
new institution.

Gladly would I have Lincoln along in the  
young habitation,

His is a soul that is filled with the soul of the  
age's right order,

But he may cling to the spot which entombs  
his memories tender."

Both the men lapsed to the silence of thought,  
for they too remembered—

Till Ebenezer again in his words repeated  
his heart-beats:

"May I uprear once more the round school-  
house voiced with the school-bell,

Which in my dying hour I hope to hear ting-  
ling its message

That I too shall arise from my death to my  
heirship immortal."

Then the wainwright lit up his reply with the  
light of his visage:

"Friend, delay not, for this is the highest of  
human attainment:

Every minute to live in our work the life ever-  
lasting;

Thus, only thus, do we win it from time and  
keep it forever,  
Even New Salem shall still be re-lived in a  
new resurrection.”

## Book Sixteenth.

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### *Resurgam.*

Solitude now is the soul of sad Lincoln fleeing  
all friendship,  
For the first time in his life he shuns where  
the people assemble,  
He no more is heard telling a story or anecdote  
mirthful;  
Inward he turns and passes his days shut up  
in his self's world,  
Even the sound of a laugh can stir him to  
tears of fresh sorrow.  
All that he in the past has been is melting  
within him,  
Character, purpose in life, his faith, his veriest  
self hood,  
All have been flung in the fiery furnace of  
Death to be tested;

Sometimes his reason would sink out of  
 sight in the flood of affliction,  
 Dipped for a moment into the depths of man's  
 deepest experience.

Oft he would steal unseen to a new-made  
 grave for his solace,  
 In the mortal to rise to communion with what  
 is immortal,  
 Sorrow renewing his love, but his love too re-  
 newing his sorrow,  
 Giving the discipline needful to mount from  
 all bonds of misfortune,  
 Till the loved one no longer is past but eter-  
 nally present.

Thus the mourner has stamped on his heart  
 the deed of Ann Rutledge,  
 Imagining her in her love he can rise into love  
 universal.

She will spring out of air to him when he is  
 harried by trouble,  
 Or when hit by men's hate he is tempted in  
 vengeance to hit back;  
 She will haunt him ghost-like in his night till  
 again he shall love her,  
 If in the trials of time he forget her deed's  
 benediction.

Days wore away, more sure of himself he began to be growing,  
When he resolved to visit the Lady Eulalia Lovelace,  
Known as the comforter gentle of grief-laden souls in New Salem;  
But at the door of the mansion he met another possessor,  
Who to a question replied that the Lady had moved to Virginia,  
To the gray manse of her father and forefathers, for her two boys' sake.  
They must be gentlemen bred on the good old colonial pattern  
Henceforth eschewing the mode of the life of the pioneer western,  
Lapsing far back to the past from the work of the State-building future.

“Still another fresh stroke! How the world seems going to pieces!  
That is not all—she appears to me fated! so are her children!”  
Thus he sighed for the loss of the Lady Eulalia Lovelace  
Who to the town had given the grace of her courteous presence,  
Lending her lordly home to works of the worthiest living,

Which enkindled a civilized gleam on the barbarous border.  
Still she could not help showing the longing look of an exile  
For the seats of the old cavaliers who centered at Richmond,  
Though upon them a Fury already was writing destruction,  
Which in his mood the torn Lincoln could feel through the time and the distance.

Then as he slowly returned to the highway,  
painfully pensive,  
He was met by a line of new wagons just starting, not backward,  
But still forward away to the West in strong aspiration;  
Merely he said: "Again are coming the movers, as usual—  
Wave of that sea of migration which keeps rolling on Westward."

But at the second keen glance he noted a visage familiar,  
Whence trilled the tone of a voice he often had heard in New Salem.  
"Friend of my heart, my good Lincoln, I now am going to leave you,



I have not seen you for days, else surely I  
 would have informed you;  
 Off I must march once more, over-stepping  
 the wide Mississippi,  
 Helping to found a new town and start it to  
 running;  
 Come along now—next year from our State  
 we shall send you to Congress.”

Lincoln shook No with his head and saddened  
 more deeply in feature,  
 But the voice spoke on, though touched with  
 a tone sympathetic:  
 “Twice already I did thus, but this I feel is  
 my last time;  
 Mine is to build, but not houses so much as the  
 village’s order,  
 And discreetly by law to direct the communal  
 welfare.”

That was Squire Ebenezer who spoke, the  
 fountain of Justice,  
 Which he established wherever he founded a  
 town on the border;  
 This when done he persuaded the people to  
 build a good school-house  
 With its resonant bell as its voice to the  
 young and the older,

Calling together the brain of the place for  
 lesson and lecture;  
 Thus a small university communal rose at the  
 cente  
 Faintly forecasting the culminant height of  
 the new education.  
 Deeper than anything else this lurks in the  
 Squire Ebenezer:  
 That the fate of the school-house presages  
 the fate of the village;  
 Yea he would carry his foreglimpse up to the  
 State and the Nation.

Lincoln stood dazed for a moment, then  
 mused to his friend in a study:  
 "I have heard you say that before, still I  
 thought that you would not—  
 But methinks that the soul of this town is  
 now leaving its body,  
 That which built it and kept it alive is leav-  
 ing its members,  
 Aye the whole world is to me but a corpse  
 with spirit departed."

Heartfull he turned from his friend, yet look-  
 ing a farewell unworded,  
 Scarce ten steps had he trod—who is this  
 whom he suddenly faces?

William the wainwright is migrating also  
with Peter the blacksmith;  
Peter the chatterer, now well-washed starts  
playing his banter:  
“Abraham Lincoln, you are the cause of my  
leaving New Salem,  
It is you who will fetch here new wheels, not  
ironed, but iron,  
When law-making next winter you go down  
again to Vandalia.”

So chaffed the blacksmith a humorous turn  
to divert Lincoln's sadness,  
When the wainwright added with eyes of  
melting condolence:  
“With the solace of time you may follow us  
when we have settled.”

Then at once burst up a geyser of sobs from  
an underworld molten,  
As the heart-hit mourner gave vent to the  
seething within him:  
“No, I shall hover around this fragment of  
earth for a life-time,  
Here is the shrine of my soul whose love I  
shall never abandon,  
Till with its image seared on my life I shall  
stand up for Judgment.”

Off he then turned to catch for his sighs a  
full breath of freedom,  
While the train of the wagons went wavering  
over the landscape  
In a rise and a fall as they wound through  
prairie and woodland  
Joyously onward into the roar of the roiled  
Mississippi,  
Bearing along in their bosom the communal  
soul of New Salem,  
Which will arise when over the River and  
take a new body,  
Yea in thousands and thousands of bodies  
afresh resurrected,  
Symbolled of old in the sacred brand borne  
to the young town-hall.

When the last white wisp of a wagon had  
swooned in the distance,  
Lincoln had strolled to the knoll where stood  
once the centering school-house,  
Now but a round ashen heap in whose midst  
lay the wreck of the belfry,  
There as he dreamily stepped, he stumbled  
his foot on a fragment,  
Chip of the bell which tingled a resonance to  
him though broken,  
As if it still would remind him of days when  
it called him to study,

When he could hear the maidenly tones of  
Ann Rutledge reciting,  
Whom he weened to be speaking just now as  
the voice of the ruins—  
Bodiless voice, yet strangely concordant with  
hers, from the ashes;  
Then he bent over and read the weird word  
of the school-bell's inscription,  
Which in each letter came tongued on  
breaths of the air by some presence—  
But behold! there falls on his ear a new voice  
now incarnate.  
Still mid ruins it speaks, in accent familiar  
yet trembling,  
What! 'tis Mentor Graham grown old, the  
school-master faithful  
Haunting in anguish of soul the dolorous  
scene of his life-work,  
Yet with gushes of heavenward hope in the  
downpour of sorrows;  
Like a specter he spoke to the seeming spec-  
ter of Lincoln:

“Though I descend to the sunset of life, new-  
ly aged in a night-time,  
I must go with the rest and elsewhere follow  
my calling;  
Mine is to teach the rude border, I have to  
move on with migration—

But, O, Lincoln, thou shalt remain my remem-  
 brance eternal,  
 Waiting for birth the future lies nestled with-  
 in thee already,  
 Pupil of all my pupils, through thee I shall  
 live everlasting,  
 Always reborn in thy life with the work which  
 is mine stamped upon thee!  
 And this town though it die will not fade  
 from the soul of the people,  
 Sacred it shall be in memory, dare I pres-  
 sage, by thy presence,  
 These rich days of thy youth here passed  
 make it youthful forever,  
 Though from the map it be blotted by fate, no  
 sign of it peeping,  
 Still it will last as a spirit and even be sung  
 of with Lincoln."

Strange, but the schoolmaster, fluid before,  
 turns suddenly solid,  
 And his features so molten shoot into the  
 crystals of sternness,  
 As he starts to deliver the word of a judg-  
 ment supernal:  
 "Not without reason divine this lot has be-  
 fallen New Salem,  
 Frequently have I been threatened with ill on  
 account of my doctrines;

For its act of suppressing free speech, itself  
 is suppressed now,  
 When it threw the lecturer into the river, it  
 followed,  
 When it burnt up his pages of print, it set  
 fire to my school-house,  
 Written all over these ashes of death I read  
 retribution,  
 Flamed down on it from Heaven for damn-  
 able deeds like Gomorraĥ."

So the good Mentor burst forth in one of his  
 rages prophetic,  
 With a tone of the voice of the preacher, the  
 thunderous Cartright;  
 First he would flare himself out at the world,  
 then wheel about inward,  
 Not at all sparing himself in his faults as he  
 sighed his confession:  
 "And I too must come under the doom of  
 the dying New Salem,  
 Forth I must go and begin the new school of  
 the backwoods,  
 With it the house and the bell in the belfry  
 shall be resurrected,  
 I shall drop in my time but my work must  
 be made self-renewing  
 Through those pupilled by me with my im-  
 press—such I deem thou art."

Mentor then stooped and took up a handful  
of dust, still reflecting:

“This old body belongs to these ashes, but  
I do not surely,  
I am to make Death die, am to turn on him-  
self the Destroyer,  
Always rebearing my life in a higher regen-  
eration.”

With an eye of refulgence the speaker then  
gleamed upon Lincoln:

“Death is a schoolmaster, stern and impar-  
tial, far sterner than I am,  
I too have gone to his school and have tasted  
his discipline mortal,  
Greatest of schoolmasters is he with weight-  
iest lore, if you learn it;  
That is your task now, O Lincoln, Death is  
teaching your lesson  
Out of the sorrow of love lost to rise into love  
that is deathless,  
Self-undone is the teacher when his high work  
is perfected;  
If thou wouldst live, thou art dead—if thou  
wouldst die, thou art living.”

As they walked and talked mid the ruins in  
sombre reflection,



They had come to the fragment of bell with  
its Latin inscription  
Readable still, yea perfect, without one break  
in a letter.  
Fire had purified every line of the word to  
new splendor,  
As it lay in its refuse upturned still gleaming  
its message.

Then spoke the schoolmaster tremulous still  
with the quake of his judgment:  
“That inscription foresays that this bell  
shall arise and this schoolhouse,  
Yea, this village, now dead on the march of  
civilisation;  
I, too, this schoolmaster, I shall arise new-  
born in vocation.  
Look again at the word! spell the gleam of its  
mystical letters:  
Once I found it upon a mossed tombstone, and  
made it my prayer,  
Then on the school bell I stamped it to ring  
out over the country,  
Word of my deepest faith, true voice of the  
universe also.  
Sol may burn like this schoolhouse, yet will  
arise with the aeons,  
Cosmos, though ever dying, is ever afresh  
resurrected.”

Then the schoolmaster centered his eye-shot  
right into Lincoln's:

“And the loved one who passed will arise  
in a new resurrection,  
You will arise from grief of the mortal to  
love the immortal,  
That is, my Lincoln, thy schoolmaster's les-  
son, the last one,  
Make it thine own to guide all thy coming  
career—thou wilt need it.”

So they parted, uplifted each man with a ful-  
ness of vision.

Dimly already the Dawn had stretched out  
her daintiest finger,  
Laying it on a white cloud as if she were  
touching the bed-clothes,  
Ready to spring from her couch in the East  
with a kiss for New Salem,  
Leaving her human Tithonus behind as the  
ghost of a husband,  
While she a Goddess undying embraces in  
love the whole earth-ball.  
Lincoln had wandered away in the night to  
the mulberry's shadow,  
Shrouding himself in the mantle redoubled of  
Nature's own gloaming,  
Twofold that mantle of darkness, without him  
and also within him,

Till he is silently touched by the tenderest  
glance of the twilight,  
Which is the herald of day, new-born for the  
world and for man too.  
Up he leaps from his seat as if hearing the  
soul of Aurora,  
Hastes with a hope in his heart to the ashes  
which tell of the schoolhouse,  
There to search for the word of the promise  
which heartened him bravely.  
Soon he has found the fragment of bell that  
holds the inscription,  
This he takes in his hand and reads by the  
light which is dawning,  
Tenderly bears it away from the dust to a  
destiny higher.

Now at the head of the fresh-sodded mound  
which covers Ann Rutledge  
Love has enthroned the talisman hinting the  
turn of the ages,  
Whispering hope unto man and the sun and  
the stars—RESURGAM.

## Historic Intimations.

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BOOK I. The village of New Salem lay on the Sangamon River, about twenty miles north-west of Springfield, capital of Illinois. It was founded in 1829 (the date 1828 is the one given by Herndon). It lasted some ten or twelve years, suddenly springing up into bustling activity, and then rapidly declining. At present "a few crumbling stones are all that attest its former existence." It was situated "on a bluff a hundred feet above the surrounding country." At the foot of this bluff rolled the Sangamon, where stood the mill on whose dam Lincoln's boat was stranded (April, 1831)—an incident witnessed by the people of the village standing on the hillside. This was Lincoln's introduction to New Salem, where he lived about five years, in various employments.

Across the river from the village the valley of the river is about half a mile in width, reaching back to the hills. "The town never contained more than fifteen houses, all of them built of logs; but it had an energetic population of perhaps one hundred persons"

(Miss Tarbell, *Life of Lincoln*). "By 1840, Petersburg, two miles down the River, had absorbed its business and population." (Ditto.)

Book II. In the spring of 1832 the little steamboat whose name was *Talisman*, came puffing up the Sangamon from Bardstown past New Salem to the landing-place near Springfield. Lincoln was the pilot, as he well knew the little stream, and along the banks the people gathered hailing the advent of the first steamboat. Cannons and shotguns added to the noise: men and boys afoot and on horseback followed the vessel. On the bluff at New Salem stood a large expectant crowd, having a tumultuous jollification over the outlook upon a dazzling future—all of which rested upon the dream of a navigable Sangamon. The steamboat had actually come all the way from Cincinnati and thus seemed to suggest the connection of the Sangamon country with the rest of the world by navigation.

Says Herndon: "I remember the occasion well for two reasons: it was my first sight of a steamboat, and the first time I ever saw Mr. Lincoln, though I never became acquainted with him till his second race for the Legislature, in 1834. After passing New Salem I and the other boys, on horseback,

followed the boat, riding along the banks." Even the poet was not absent, but sang the exploit in a little epic of which the following is a verse:

"Illinois suckers, young and raw,  
Were strung along the Sangamaw  
To see a boat come up by steam;  
They surely thought it was a dream."

BOOK III. Lincoln's first candidacy for the Legislature (in 1832) was unsuccessful. Still he always looked back to his race with pride, saying in a brief autobiography written long afterwards that his own precinct gave 277 votes for him, and only 7 against him—which certainly indicated his local popularity. But in the rest of the county he was not well known. Before going to the Black Hawk War in 1832, he had announced his candidacy and had issued an address to the voters, which is still preserved (See Lincoln's Works, by Nicolay and Hay). In 1834 he was elected representative to the State Legislature, which then held its sessions at Vandalia, the capital. In this second race he seems to have largely recovered from his delusion—which he shared with the people—that the Sangamon was navigable.

BOOK IV. Already in 1834 the agitation for the new means of intercommunication—

the canal and railroad—had begun. Later it rose to the proportions of a great bubble which exploded and left the State deeply in debt and facing a financial crises. Lincoln was an ardent supporter of these “internal improvements.”

On all sides were signs of the great migration to the North-West. The population of Illinois (set down as 269,974 souls in 1835), had almost doubled in half a dozen years. Chicago had begun to develop in the north-eastern part of the State.

Lincoln was commissioned Postmaster at New Salem May 7, 1833, under the federal administration of Andrew Jackson. The mail arrived once a week, not in great quantity, so that the saying soon became current that he carried the post-office in his hat. It has also been handed down that he read the newspapers which came in the mail, with consent of their owners, and then delivered them. Says Herndon: “Mr. Lincoln used to tell me when he had a call to go to the country, he placed inside his hat all the letters belonging to the people of the neighborhood and distributed them along the way.”

BOOK V. Ann Rutledge was the daughter of the first citizen of New Salem, who was also one of its founders—James Rutledge, born in South Carolina and related to

the distinguished family of that name. Says Herndon, who knew her: "She was a beautiful girl—the most popular young lady in the village. One of her strong points was her dexterity in the use of the needle. At every quilting Ann was a necessary adjunct, and her nimble fingers drove the needle swifter than anyone's else. Lincoln used to escort her to and from these quilting bees, and on one occasion even went into the house."

But she was already engaged to a successful young merchant of New Salem, who went under the name of McNeall, but whose real name was McNamar. He had left town in the spring of 1834, with the design of returning soon; but he delayed, and soon stopped writing to his betrothed. Nobody knew what had become of him, or what were his purposes. Ann especially was in doubt: had he deserted her? Anyhow at this juncture Lincoln gradually became her suitor.

BOOK VI. Peter Cartright represents the preacher of the frontier better than any other known individual. He has left an autobiography which gives a simple account of his remarkable career. Above all men of his class he knew how to stir up the religious susceptibility of the borderer. He had come at an early day with Southern immigrants (from Tennessee and Kentucky) and had set-



tled in the Sangamon Valley, not far from Springfield. He was probably the greatest of all circuit-riders, his circuit at first "extending from Kaskaskia to Galena." He was a Methodist and the very king of revivals and camp-meetings. The South he had quit on account of his dislike of slavery; still he was a strong Democrat of the fervid Jacksonian type. He did not hesitate to mix politics with his religion, being elected a member of the Illinois Legislature in 1828 and in 1832; in the latter year Lincoln was a candidate, but was beaten. Cartright was a candidate for Congress against Lincoln in 1846, but was badly defeated. The two men were of a different order of mind; they clashed repeatedly, both in the political and religious domains, though both were anti-slavery and born Southerners.

Jack Kelso, the poetical vagabond of New Salem, reciter of Shakespeare and Burns, has a place in all of Lincoln's Biographies.

BOOK VII. "As Lincoln pleaded and pressed his cause, the Rutledges and all New Salem encouraged his suit. McNamar's unexplained absence, and his apparent neglect furnished outsiders with all the arguments needed to encourage Lincoln and convince Ann. Although the attachment was growing and daily becoming an intense and mutual

passion, the young lady remained firm and almost inflexible. She was passing through another fire. A long struggle with her feelings followed. (Herndon and Weik's *Lincoln*, Vol. 1, p. 128.)

"All would have gone well if the young girl could have dismissed the haunting memory of her old lover. The possibility that she had wronged him, that he loved her still, though she now loved another, that she had perhaps done wrong, produced a torturing conflict." (Miss Tarbell's *Lincoln*, Vol. 1, p. 119.)

It should be noted that Ann Rutledge had a strongly religious element in her nature. It is this element which on the one hand intensified her conflict and on the other imparted to her a great consolation.

Book VIII. Vandalia, the capital of the State from 1820, was a town of less than a thousand inhabitants when Lincoln arrived there for the opening of the Assembly, December 1, 1834. This was composed of 26 senators and 55 representatives, nearly all of Southern origin, mainly from Kentucky and Virginia. The bulk of the great migration came from the same source. "There were but few Eastern men, for there was still a strong prejudice in the State against Yankees."

“There was a preponderance of jean suits, like Lincoln’s, in the Assembly, and there were occasional coon-skin caps and buckskin pantaloons. Nevertheless, more than one member showed a studied garb and a courtly manner. Some of the best blood of the South went into the making of Illinois, and it showed itself from the first in the Assembly.” (Much more is to be found in the accounts of early Illinois histories and in the Lincoln biographies—see Miss Tarbell’s *Lincoln*, Chapter VIII.)

“At this session of the Legislature (1834-5), Lincoln was anything but conspicuous. His name appears so seldom that we are prone to think that he contented himself with listening to border oratory and with absorbing his due proportion of parliamentary law” (Herndon). Other reasons can be given.

“Schemes of vast internal improvements attracted a retinue of log-rollers—members of the ‘third body’ among whom at this session was Stephen A. Douglas, who had come from Vermont only the year before,” but was already in pursuit of an office, that of State’s Attorney. (Herndon.)

“What opinion each formed of the other, or what the extent of their acquaintance, we do not know,” adds Herndon. Possibly something is hinted in the tradition that Lin-

coln said of him after their first meeting: "He is the least man I have ever seen."

Book IX. Says Herndon, who carefully investigated this affair: "McNamar, true to his promise, drove into New Salem in the fall of 1835, with his mother and brothers and sisters. They had come through from New York, with all their portable goods in a wagon." Their arrival took place a short time after the passing of Ann Rutledge. Within a year McNamar married another woman—which fact may be taken as furnishing the key to his conduct.

Book X. Since the Black Hawk War, the northern part of the State had been rapidly filling up with settlers. There had been a good deal of agitation for the removal of the Capital to a more central locality. This was accomplished at the session of 1836-7, by the nine legislators from Sangamon County, called the Long Nine, on account of their stature, "all of them measuring over six feet in height and over two hundred pounds in weight," combined with intellectual ability above the average. Says Herndon: "The friends of other cities fought Springfield bitterly, but under Lincoln's leadership, the Long Nine contested with them every inch of the way," and finally won. In the preceding session (1834-5) there had been only talk

of the removal, not agreeable to the people of Vandalia.

Also during these years the agitation against slavery began to make its appearance in the West. Taunts, jeers, persecution, assassination even, greeted the early apostles of reform. The attitude of Lincoln was anti-slavery, but he disclaimed the name of abolitionist. (See his famous protest in the Legislature, dated 1837.)

BOOK XI. After Lincoln's return from his first session at Vandalia, he became engaged to Ann Rutledge. "Still the ghost of another love would often rise unbidden before her," says Herndon. "Within her bosom raged the conflict which finally undermined her health. Late in the summer she took to her bed. A fever was burning in her head. During the latter days of her illness, her physician had forbidden visitors to enter her room, prescribing absolute quiet. But her brother relates that she kept inquiring for Lincoln so continuously, at times demanding to see him, that the family at last sent for him. On his arrival at her bedside, the door was closed and he was left alone with her. What was said was known only to him and to the dying girl." Her death took place August 25th, 1835. (Herndon and Weik's *Lincoln*, Vol. I, p. 129.)

BOOK XII. Mentor Graham, the village schoolmaster, was intellectually the most important man in New Salem for Lincoln. The name seems a curious reminiscence of the Ithacan Mentor, the voice of the Goddess of Wisdom to the young Telemachus (See First Book of the Odyssey). It was Graham who told Lincoln that if he wished to be a public man, and to make speeches, he must study grammar. But where could he get a text-book? New Salem did not possess a copy. The schoolmaster knew of one six miles away in the country. Lincoln at once walked to the place and borrowed it, and must have finally owned it, for he gave it to Ann Rutledge. Still the inscription can be read upon it in Lincoln's handwriting: "Ann M. Rutledge is now studying Grammar." (A facsimile of its title page can be found in Miss Tarbell's *Lincoln*, I, p. 65, with Lincoln's inscription). Graham also helped Lincoln in the study of surveying, when the latter had received the appointment of assistant surveyor of Sangamon County.

The pioneer schoolmaster followed the frontier settlements and never failed on the march of migration. He was found on the border in Kentucky, in Indiana and Illinois, during Lincoln's youth.

BOOK XIII. Says Herndon, friend, law-

partner and biographer of Lincoln: "From my own knowledge and the information thus obtained (from the score or more of witnesses whom I at one time or another interviewed on this delicate subject) I repeat that the memory of Ann Rutledge was the saddest chapter in Mr. Lincoln's life" (I, p. 119). According to Herndon, it was "Dr. Jason Duncan who placed in Lincoln's hands a poem called *Immortality*. The piece starts out with the line: "Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud." He committed these lines to memory and any reference to or mention of Miss Rutledge would suggest them." As late as March, 1864, not many days before his death, he repeated the lines with a strange premonitory pathos. The poem was for him "an ever-singing dirge of the soul over the vanished loved one with the melancholy note of which his deepest emotions become concordant to the end of his days. Thus Lincoln reveals an immortal love, which will attune all the other throbbings of his heart, however profound and intense." (*Abraham Lincoln*, p. 172.)

BOOK XIV. The first effect of the blow upon Lincoln was to bring him into a condition verging toward insanity. Says Herndon: "He had fits of great mental depression and wandered up and down the river and into the

woods woefully abstracted—at times in the deepest distress. His condition finally became so alarming that his friends consulted together and sent him to the house of a kind friend who lived in a secluded spot hidden by the hills a mile south of the town, and who after some weeks brought him back to reason, or at least a realization of his true condition.” (Herndon and Weik’s *Lincoln*, I, p. 130-1.)

Doubtless at this time Lincoln made the greatest spiritual transition of his life, under the most severe mental and emotional strain.

BOOK XV. As already stated, New Salem barely lived a dozen years, if quite so long. The rapid rise and often the equally rapid decline of these border towns could be often witnessed in the early settlement of the West. And the spirit of migration was never wanting to the frontiersman. The new thing about this Western town-building was that its source was from below and not from above—from the people and not from those in authority. All felt the power in themselves to re-make their village elsewhere.

BOOK XVI. “Lincoln endures the awful strain and comes forth a purified soul from the discipline of Love, but he carries the mark with him all his life. What did it do for him?” That is a question pivotal for his



whole future; but different persons will answer it differently, according to their habits of thought and inner experience.

“The individual Ann Rutledge is gone, indeed, forever, but the love remains and will not depart. What is to be done with it? Eradicated it cannot be unless by tearing out the heart itself by the roots. But it can be transformed, or rather transfigured, and thus in a manner be preserved ever active and beneficent. From the individual it can be elevated into universality, and thereby not only save the man, but give him a new birth, a spiritual palingenesis. The problem with Abraham Lincoln now is: Can I transfigure the love of this individual Ann Rutledge, forever vanished as individual, into an universal love for humanity, ever-present and undying? Can I rise even through emotion from the one to the all? Verily he can and does; indeed the terrible ordeal has just this providential purpose: he must come to feel and perchance to see that the painful Discipline of Love is not to destroy it, but to eternize it by transfiguring it into the very personality of the sufferer, and thus making it the inner luminary which shines through character and deeds.” (From *Abraham Lincoln*, an interpretation in Biography, p. 185.)

“Here we may behold, if not the original

germ, at least the grand flowering of that deepest and all-pervasive trait of Lincoln which we may exalt as his universal Love," which "has become at present the chief theme of anecdote, reminiscence, story, novel, and other literary utterance pertaining to him directly and indirectly." (Ditto, p. 185-6.)


"Though called upon to administer a national discipline as severe as his own personal discipline ever was, he did it not in hate and revenge, as everybody now recognizes" (Ditto). Finally may be added his tender confession made to a friend long afterwards concerning Ann Rutledge: "I think often, *often* of her now."







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