

The Last Receptions of the Great President.

BY GRACE GREENWOOD.

In the spring of 1864, I attended the last morning reception of the season, at the White House; taking with me my little daughter, who had an intense desire to see the good President who had set the poor slaves free.

I had not seen Mr. Lincoln for more than a year, and, as I drew near to where he stood, going patiently through his weary, monotonous task of hand-shaking, I wondered if he would remember my face among the countless faces that had beset and be-seigned him, or passed in mute review before him, since the pleasant evening on which I had conversed most freely with him, and heard most of his easy, charming, cordial talk.

But, before I could be presented, he gave me a shock of pleasant surprise by stretching his hand over the shoulder of a gentleman with whom he was conversing, and greeting me by name, with the smile and tone of an old friend.

When he perceived little A—, the pleasant look of a true child-lover came into his eyes. "Is this your little daughter?" he said. "How do you do, dear?" As he took her hand, the child raised to his face large, brown eyes, full of tender reverence. The look seemed to touch him; he smiled a smile that was a benediction, then bent, and kissed her.

She blushed, but said nothing till we had passed on a step or two, when she exclaimed, "Why, he is only a man, after all!" Something in the tone struck the President, and he asked what she had said.

When I repeated the naive remark, his face was again lit by that sudden smile of quaint, kindly humor so peculiar to him—that flash of soul sunshine that, once seen, could never be forgotten.

I had not the opportunity to tell Mr. Lincoln of a scene in the past which this little incident brought to my mind. In a noble old New England town, years ago, there was once a great gathering of people, to see no less a personage than the first great President of the Republic, who was to be received and entertained by the noble governor of the State—the "Brother Jonathan" of the Revolution.

At last he came—the beloved, the hero without stain, the patriot without flaw, the matchless gentleman, slowly riding beside the good governor, between ranks of soldiers and crowds of citizens, bowing graciously, though somewhat coldly, to the right and left of him.

"Oh, father," cried a little dark-eyed boy to a gentleman who held him by the hand, "I can't see him! Please lift me up, so that I can look over the people's heads." The kind gentleman lifted him high in his arms and the child looked full in the face of Washington.

As he did so, his own eager countenance fell, and he exclaimed, "Why, father, he is nothing but a man, after all!" Washington heard, paused a moment, and, with an amused smile, replied to the child, "Yes, my little lad, nothing but a man."

It seemed to me an odd coincidence that, at sight of our Second Washington, my little daughter had repeated the simple thought and almost the words of her grandfather.

It was somewhat more than a year from this time before we again looked on the face of the great President. But now no smile, no cordial word greeted the friend; no kiss welcomed the child. It was at one of those last, silent, solemn receptions which he gave to the people, as he journeyed homeward, leaving the wide land in a great shadow of mourning.

We saw him in that most fitting resting place of all on that long, sad journey, Independence Hall. It so happened that a general officer in command of the military escort was a good friend of ours, and by him we were introduced into the hall by a private entrance, thus avoiding the terrible crush of the vast crowd admitted from the street.

We remained as long as we desired to in the chamber, and were able to contemplate the face of the President from almost every point of view. A fine gray dust was continually settling upon it, and at first that strange, cold, ashen look chilled and disappointed me; but gradually, much of the old expression came back to that marked head, to those features, so individual, so powerful, and so manly.

secreted to freedom by one of the grandest events in our national history, I felt that the scene had other witnesses than we—than those armed watchers—than that passing multitude—the immortal shades of heroes and patriots—the great, tried souls of the young Republic, in whose ways he had fearlessly walked, into whose fellowship he had been received.

Out of our city, in the gray morning, they bore the great President to other cities, to receive, in his still benignity, with folded hands and silent lips, and sealed eyes, either weeping thousands; and everywhere they bore him he called forth the tenderest sympathies and grandest passions of men—pity, sorrow, penitence, reverence, patriotism, devotion, a holy love of freedom, justice, and humanity.

Those folded hands told of the mightiest work of centuries accomplished. Those silent lips preached as never living lips preached to the heart of the people; so that, wherever he passed, he left men better than he found them.

The flowery wreaths and crosses that lit the funeral shadows about him were all emblems of a martyrdom august and momentous. The hearse that bore him through crowded streets had an awful sacredness and dearness, like the ark of the Lord. He was palled in soubsef glory. Love, and Honor, and tender Sorrow bore him constant company.

Yet he was not dead over whom we wept with bitter grief and passionate resolves: the memory of his faithfulness, endurance, courage, and sublime honesty; the vitality of his strong simple character, made a great life about him still; strength and virtue went forth from his broken body, the light of Heaven's acceptance rayed from the still face, and "death was swallowed up in victory."

That was not a funeral procession. It was a liberator's sublime ovation; it was a royal progress of freedom, through the valley of the shadow of death, but august and triumphant.

Yet of late we have seen a real funeral procession, starting from the Capital of the Republic, and passing over the track sanctified by the last march of our martyred leader. Through the cities of the North and West a real dead President has passed.

Poe tells a ghastly story of a man powerfully mesmerized when in articulo mortis, who remained seemingly alive, and even responded to questions, long after the principle of life had fled and the work of decomposition had commenced.

Thus, though he whom crowds hailed as President had a marvelous appearance of vitality, and responded to every appeal, yet was he dead and touched with corruption.

Everywhere that he passed, this ghastly semblance of a true live man, he called forth the meanest prejudices and cruellest passions of the people who sought to do him honor, with false, violent words he nurtured hate, injustice, selfish greed, low rivalry, and impiety; and, as far as the evil power was given him to reach the hearts of men, he left them worse than he found them.

He was canopied with dishonor; anger, falsehood, and treason bore him constant company. Disaster and mortal agony waited on his triumphal car, and innocent blood marked his track. And so he passed on, daily stretching forth his traitorous hand to sow the wild wind—the whirlwind-harvest of which ripens apace.

Everywhere on this festive funeral progress there went with this mesmerized dead President, echoing his hollow utterances and joining in his "Dance of Death," the pale, gray semblance of a great statesman, whose lips once uttered grand oracles and imperishable watchwords of freedom.

Only the semblance, the unsubstantial, watery wreath of him we so loved and honored; the man himself is dead, past all possible resurrection—sunk in the Dead Sea of faithlessness and apostasy.

"A thousand fathoms down." Woefully out of place, "down among the dead men," were our live heroes, the great soldier and the great sailor. In their places should have been the martial shade of the hero of the Chickasaw—armed at point, exactly cap-a-pie—and the phantom pirate of the "Alabama."

To give solemnity and respectability to that disastrous March, there should have been priestly presence and ghostly consolation. Here surely was fit place and illustrious company for the venerable shade of the great, brave preacher of righteousness and freedom, who, in his latter-day madness, surpassed the madness of the Prophet Balaam, inasmuch as his our prophet cursed the Israel he was sent to bless, and so died; but who ("alas, poor ghost!"), all unconscious of the inopportune change, still walks abroad in his spectral "double," and "being dead, yet speaketh."

Speaking for the President. In an editorial article on Jeff. Davis in the Richmond Times of a late date, that notoriously disloyal sheet thus speaks of President Johnson:

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