Lincoln

¶ Wise with the wisdom of ages,
Shrewd as a man of trade,
Grim as the prophets and sages,
Keen as a damask blade;

¶ Firm as a granite-ribbed mountain,
Tender as woman's song,
Gay as a scintillant fountain—
Yet was he oaken-strong.

¶ Here, the wonder of aeons:
Born unto pain and strife;
Dead, 'mid a thousand paeans,
Deathless, he enters life!

Thomas Curtis Clark

The World's Verdict

One sent out his ships to earth's farthest shores,
And brought to his coffers the Orient's stores;
The wild desert sands
Became gold in his hands;
And the world called him Genius — and wondered.

One sought out the secrets of planet and star;
He reveled in problems of granite and spar;
He hungered to know
All the earth could bestow;
And the world called him Scholar — and praised him.

One looked on a suffering, down-trodden race;
He wept as he gazed upon each troubled face;
He heeded their plea,
And he set their hands free;
And the world called him Brother — and loved him.

Thomas Curtis Clark

Charles
Edito

The Dreamer

He knew the curse of poverty,
But, lighted by his dream,
He heeded not the clouds of night
That covered him. The gleam
Of high ambition led him on
Through cruel years of fate
Until he entered, heaven-led,
The pathway of the great.

He found, amid the sloughs of youth,
A path of blessedness,
And, as he walked the stony road
Of eminent success,
He kept his lofty dream of truth,
Nor left her righteous way
Until the crown of martyrdom
Brought sunset to his day.

O tender ruler of our hearts,
Bequeath to us the grace
That shone from heaven's inmost shrine
Upon thy saintly face.
On selfishness and greed and pride
We rear our mighty State:
Inspire in us again the Dream
That made thy leading great.

Thomas Curtis Clark

The Dreamer

At Gettysburg

The whole world came to hear him speak that day,
And all the ages sent their scribes to see
And hear what word the new land had to say
Of God and man and truth and liberty.
Homer was there and Socrates and Paul,
Shakespeare and Luther, Pitt, Cavour and Bright,
With Washington — stanch friends of freedom all;
Nor did he fail: he lifted there a light
For all the earth to see, from fires of truth
That surged within his breast. Yet that crude throng
Of men knew not that through this man uncouth
God spake as through old prophets, stern and strong.
They turned away, these men, but angels bent
From heaven to hear those flaming words, God-sent.

Thomas Curtis Clark

At Gettysburg

The King Comes

In days when souls were tried by fire
God sent a man to earth;
He came by way of muck and mire
But he had wondrous worth.
Though famed for his humility,
His people said, A King is he,
This man of lowly birth.

The poorest brought to him their woes
And strong men loved his name;
His kindliness dismayed his foes,
And when the crowning came
For this brave knight of tenderness
The nations wept,—but who could guess
The splendor of his fame!

The years are many since he died
Who counseled love for hate;
Alas! how few could stand beside
Our King! The halls of state
Which heard him pleading for the slave
Are empty since the quiet grave
Received him consecrate.

Thomas Curtis Clark

Greatheart

They took small note of him, the great, the wise, the rich,
Who saw him come from Illinois, a wild, crude state—
A country lawyer to decide a Nation's fate!
They held him foolish to accept so high a niche—
What, President! Unkempt, unlearned and unrefined
They called him, and withdrew for private talk.
They joked about his ancestry, and by his walk
They feigned to guess his farmer lineage. How blind
Were they who could not see the fire that burned within
Those glowing eyes, who failed to note the mighty strength
Of those toil-hardened arms! His gaunt limbs sprawling length
Should have proclaimed to them a giant's stride! Their sin
Was not to know the great, enduring heart of him,
Our most beloved, whose fame the ages cannot dim.

Thomas Curtis Clark

Great Heart

They took small note of him, the great, the wise, the rich
Who knew him some from Illinois, a world, crude State—
A country lawyer to decide a Nations fate!
They held him foolish to accept so high a niche—
What, President! Unknown! Unlearned and unrefined
They called him and watched for private talk.
They jested about His ancestry, and by his walk
Were they who could not see the fire that burned within
Of those foul sketches and jests attempt to mock the mighty strength
Who was to know the great enduring heart of him,
Our most beloved, whose eyes caressed dim
Thomas Curtis Clark

The Hand of Lincoln *

This hand grew strong by felling stubborn trees
That barred the way of freedom for our sires;
And here in Illinois it fit the fires
That should destroy those age-long dynasties
Of vested right and selfish power that broke
The spirit of a race. He saw their grief
With deep, sad eyes, and vowed their sure relief—
And then the Voice of God and Freedom spoke!
This hand clinched hard the tyrant's rod of hate
And tore it from his grasp. A people's prayer
Went up to God, who seeing their despair
Had sent to them a friend both good and great.

Thomas Curtis Clark

* Written after viewing a cast of Lincoln's right hand

The Glory of Lincoln

Who builds of stone a shrine to bear his name
Shall be forgot when months and years have flown;
Who writes his name upon the scroll of fame
The centuries shall find to men unknown;
But who for fellow men endured the shame
Shall have eternal glory for his own.

Thomas Curtis Clark

The Glory of Heroes

Who builds of stone, a shrine to bear his name
Shall be forgot within months and years these flow;
Who carves his name upon the scroll of fame
The centuries shall find to pass unknown;
But who for it's sake has endured the shame
Shall have eternal glory for his own.

Thomas Curtis Clark

The Masterpiece

God took a piece of common human clay;
Planted therein ambition's vital seed;
Placed him, a youth, beside the common way,
That he might learn the common human need.

Made strong by strife, he faced the storm of wrath;
Love made him wise, a Nation's cause to plead;
He walked with God, though in a yeoman's path,
And seized on fame by an immortal deed.

Thomas Curtis Clark

The Revelation

He walked among us and we passed him by
And thought him but a country lawyer, crude
As our red prairies are, and more than rude,
Who reveled in his jokes and deviltry.
We could not know the heart within that breast
Until the blood flowed freely from the wound
A mad man made; then was it that we found
That God had loaned us for a time His Best.
And now the nations, since their Kings are gone,
Have taken him across the wide-flung sea
To rule their hearts as well as ours; to be
The goal of their desires, with breaking dawn.

Thomas Curtis Clark

The Revelation

The world swung on and we passed him by
And thought him but a country lawyer, crude
As our red pioneers are, and more than rude.
Who revealed in his looks an dignity
We could not know the heart within that breast
Until the blood flowed freely from the wound
And even then we saw; then was it that we found
That God had loaned us for a time this Best.
And now the stations, since their kings are gone,
Have taken him across the wide, blue sea
To rule their hearts as well as ours, to be
The poet of their desires, with it brooking dawn.

Thomas Curtis Clark

The Democrat

Upon him fell a heritage of hate,
And he, who loved the fields of rustling corn,
Took up the load; and then a Thought was born—
A Thought that soon should shake the walls of state.
The dream was his, that government should be
Unselfish, open as the morning sun;
Unwearying, alert, lest wrong be done
To any man or child. No vanity
Of pomp or power could move him from his will
To champion the cause of truth in public life.
He bent him to his task; but in the strife
That noble form was felled. His foes could kill
The mortal man, they could not stay his dream,
Which now, on darkened earth, casts far its gleam.

Thomas Curtis Clark

The Christian

His foes declared him blasphemous, perverse,
Ignoring God and heedless of His Word.
They said he lacked in fineness, who preferred
To market jokes, rude stories to rehearse.
He was no white-robed saint: a strong man he
Who dared to wrestle with the devil's brood
That lurked behind the fashions of the good.
He scorned all shams, and for hypocrisy
He held a hatred such as Christ alone,
The scourge of haughty Pharisees, could know.
Those painted masks of Christians felt his blow,
And at his blameless name each cast a stone.
Not by their words, but by their fruits, said He,
Who also knew the sting of calumny.

Thomas Curtis Clark

The Miracle

The wild Kentucky hills were touched of God,
And lo! a child was born; his sires, unknown,
Dreamed not that God would for their tears atone
By raising from their midst a King. The sod
On which they walked was cursed to them,
Begrudging them their bread, for all their toil;
But it was holy ground; for from that soil
Should come a chosen one; the diadem
Upon his brow should be no piece of gold,
But, like his lowly Lord's, a thorny crown.
Upon his cross he died; they took him down,
And lo! they found, before the day was old,
That they had crucified their one true friend:
Despite their hate, he loved them to the end.

Thomas Curtis Clark

The Tragedy

The wisdom of old Plato was in him;
Isaiah's vision lit his way of life;
A strength like mighty Samson's met the strife
His day decreed: and still he was not grim,
For in his face the love of Jesus shone,
And in his hand was grace and tenderness;
He had no thought except to give and bless,
His human smile could melt a heart of stone.
And yet, alas! he walked a path of woe;
Despised, accursed, he wore a thorny crown;
When all the world proclaimed his high renown,
A madman's bullet hissed and laid him low.
One other crime was dastardly as this—
When Judas damned his Savior with a kiss!

Thomas Curtis Clark

The Tragedy

The wisdom of old Plato was in him;
Isaiah's vision lit his way of life;
A strength like mighty Samson's met the strife
His day decreed; and still he was not grim,
For in his face the love of Jesus shone,
And in his hand was grace and tenderness;
He had no thought except to give and bless;
His human smile could melt a heart of stone.
And yet, alas! he walked a path of woe;
Despised, accursed, he wore a thorny crown;
When all the world proclaimed his high renown,
A madman's bullet hissed and laid him low.
One other crime was dastardly as this—
When Judas damned his Savior with a kiss!

Thomas Curtis Clark

At Gentryoille

From these dark streets flamed forth a brilliant light,
This miry clay produced a mighty tree,
From this rude town emerged the bravest knight
That ever fought for human liberty.
Can it have been he found his splendid dream
Amid these shacks, where giant rats run wild?
Perhaps from heaven a high, prophetic gleam
Ensnared his heart, the while he thought and smiled.
This very spot was where he laughed and talked;
They say he whittled, whiling hours away.
His naked feet these slimy alleys walked,
And in this hut, perhaps, he learned to pray.
This is the tale of tales since time began—
How squalor travailed and brought forth a man!

Thomas Curtis Clark

At Centropolis

Upon these dark streets flowed forth a brilliant light.
This merry relay produced a mighty tree,
From this noble form emerged the bravest knight
That ever fought for human liberty.
Can it have been he found his splendid dream
Amid these shacks, where giant rats run wild?
Perhaps from heaven a ship, prophetic gleam
Conveyed his heart. The words he thought and smiled.
This very spot were where he toyed and talked;
Here only he watched weeping hours away.
This marked feat—these skinny walls watched
And in this hut, perhaps, he learned to pray?
This is the tale of tales since time began—
How spoiler thwarted and brought forth a man!

Thomas Curtis Clark

The New Calvary

What eril genius seized the reins of power
In this our earth that men arose to slay
The savior of their souls! The cruel day
Was destined by what star! The brutal hour
That took the well-beloved from our hearts
Was glimpsed by Satan as he dropped to hell,
By God and seraphs spurned. He knew full well
That Heaven in time would try the subtle arts
Of selfless love, to win the hearts of men:
And thus he vowed, when that high hour should come,
To strike both men and angels dumb
By fiendish murder, so that ne'er again
Might love be known. But Satan warred with fate;
For, dying, Lincoln turned our hearts from hate.

Thomas Curtis Clark

The Master

We need him now—his rugged faith that held
Fast to the rock of Truth through all the days
Of moil and strife, the sleepless nights; upheld
By very God was he—that God who stays
All hero-souls who will but trust in Him,
And, trusting, labor as if God were not.
His eyes beheld the stars, clouds could not dim
Their glory; but his task was not forgot:
To keep his people one; to hold them true
To that fair dream their fathers willed to them—
Freedom for all; to spur them; to renew
Their hopes in bitter days; strife to condemn.
Such was his task, and well his work was done—
Who willed us greater tasks, when set his sun.

Thomas Curtis Clark

The Son of Democracy

O great, meek man, you walked among
Your blinded peers, unpraised, unsung;
But now the world takes up your name
To herald freedom's waxing fame.

Your spirit, sprung from common clay,
Was taken from the quiet way
And set where every land might see
A son of true democracy.

A people's man, and yet no slave
Of brutish mobs! Your conscience gave
The word that set a million free
And won a realm for liberty.

From Sangamon you went, alone,
Your country's error to atone;
Now Sangamon, and all the earth,
Proclaim the wonder of your worth.

Thomas Curtis Clark