OUR PRESIDENT.

"He being dead, yet Speaketh."—Hebrew 11, iv.

BY

MRS. E. W. ALLDERDICE.

"A SEQUEL TO

"OVER THE HILL TO THE WHITE HOUSE."

NEW YORK:
DENISON & COMPANY,
1881
Copyright, 1881,
DENISON & COMPANY,
NEW YORK.
DEDICATED

WITH AFFECTIONATE SYMPATHY

TO THE

HEROIC WIFE

OF

PRESIDENT GARFIELD.
WHEN, amid all the bright surroundings and glorious anticipations of Inauguration Day, I penned my poem "Over the Hill to the White House," I little thought it would ever be possible for me to write so sad a sequel; to transcribe such a history of suffering of the nation's President, who was then in the very fullness of his power, both mentally and physically. Yet the world has seldom witnessed so grand a spectacle of courage, heroism and Christian fortitude as has been exhibited by that bedside, where the sympathies of all Christendom have centered, since the fatal Second day of July. The devotion and bravery of his wife, herself little more than an invalid, the dutiful affection of his children, the patient resignation of his aged mother, and the loyalty of friends and people, teach us all a never-to-be-forgotten lesson. Doubtless, when we have recovered from the fearful shock of his loss, we shall be able to see the finger of God pointing to this sublime example and shall feel that our beloved martyr has not suffered and died in vain.

E. W. A.
OUR PRESIDENT.

Toll mournful bells, prone on their knees,
Let all the people pray!
Pray for the nation from whose midst
The chief has passed away!

Pray not for him! his sufferings ceased
With this frail mortal breath,
He won the first grand prize in life,
And almost conquered death.

Never can history recall,
A fight so bravely fought;
A thousand dangers surged before
The safety port he sought.
Tortured and torn and buffeted,
He struggled on with might,
The goal of his people's welfare
Forever in his sight.

He had battled hard 'gainst wind and tide,
But now his strength was gone.
Yet, 'mid the fever and rack of pain,
His mighty brain worked on.

The crazy zealot's dastard blow,
Had crushed his manhood's power,
But faith in God upheld his will,
And strengthened every hour.

He saw the cruel breakers rise,
About his Ship of State,
And knew his guiding hand must save
The bark from adverse fate.
The oath he swore to guide it well,
Still sounded in his ear,
And 'mid the pulse of his fever's swell
He heard the people cheer.

Cheer with a glad resounding shout,
On that eventful day,
When over fifty million hearts
He held such wondrous sway.

When in his grand, athletic might,
He rose to his feet and bowed,
Despite the speed of his horses fleet,
Which bore him through the crowd.

Bowed to them all with courtly grace,
Swinging his hat on high,
While the pleasure in his kindly face,
Brought joy to every eye.
The man he vanquished owned his might
And loyal homage gave,
He felt our new-born President
Was competent as brave.

Right royally he wore his crown,
With kindly patience heard
Each plea for help; each tale of woe
His heart with pity stirred.

Yet judgment ever held the curb
And tempered love with right,
His country and his country’s good,
Were foremost in his sight.

No future honors tempted him,
Nor flatterers’ siren voice;
His policy was clear and true,
The right was e’er his choice.
Quick to perceive, strong to retain,
Replete with Christian grace,
His judgments no distinction knew.
In color, state, or race.

The hearts of all rejoiced in him,
Through this bright peaceful land,
And none surmised the murderous spite,
Which nerved the maniac's hand.

Alas that God in mercy had
Not stayed the fatal blow.
With fiendish aim the shot sped home,
And laid our chieftain low.

One moment glad, erect and bright,
On peaceful mission bent,
Another, stricken to the earth,
With keenest torture rent.
The air is filled with cries and groans,  
"Our President is dead;"
Scarce could the trembling crowd believe  
The words around them said.

Where is our grand Republic's power,  
When crimes like this can be?  
Crime which has sprung from despot's rule  
'Mid Russian tyranny!

Where is our vaunted safety here,  
Our cherished pride of birth,  
In this great land of liberty,  
God's favored spot of earth.

"Go, tear the dastard limb from limb!  
He shall not live an hour!"
Murmured the dying President:  
"Respect the law's sure power."
Even amid the shades of death
   His country claimed his thought;
No blot should stain the honored land
   For which he nobly fought.

That word sufficed, the people fall
   Back from the assassin's path,
And he within a prison's cell,
   Escapes their righteous wrath.

Low spake the tortured President,
   To those about his bed:
"Is there a chance?" "A single one."
"We'll take that chance," he said.

"God help my wife, when called upon
   This fearful stroke to meet!
Go, bring her quickly to my side.—
   Go break the news to Crete."
His boyhood's love, his manhood's stay,
    The sharer of each care,—
Potent to soothe in grief and pain,
    Alas! she is not there!

She seeks afar much-needed health,
    But he! her love and pride!—
Self was forgot—her only prayer:
    "Quick, take me to his side!"

The meeting between those two hearts,
    None but the angels saw:
For statesmen, surgeons, nurses, all,
    Drew back in silent awe.

But Christ's own grace sustained them
    They bowed beneath the rod,
And humbly and submissively
    Left the decree with God.
Long months of untold agony
    The weary sufferer bore,
And often angel voices called
    Far from the shining shore:

"Give up the toil, the rack, the pain;
    Leave all that weight of woe;
Come, join us in eternal rest,
    And let your burden go."

But steadfast to his trust he stood:
    "My people need me still!"
And 'gainst the grim old ferryman
    He threw his giant will.

But then there came one fearful day,
    When science stood aghast,
And owned that for the President
    This day must be the last.
Tearful and pale they sought his wife;
   Gently the words they said,
That ere another sun had set,
   Her husband would be dead.

Ring out the bells, for a woman's fame!
   Let them ring far and wide!
But for a woman's steadfast faith,
   Our Chieftain then had died!

Proudly she stood up in their midst,
   Calmly she looked around;
Of cry, or shriek, or woman's moan,
   She uttered not a sound.

"Back to your posts! ye doubting hearts!
   My husband will not die!
Till death has fully placed his seal,
   Your deftest measures try.
"Go back, and work with heart and hope. Watch till his latest breath; He has won so many earthly fights,— Go, help him conquer death!

"To-morrow's sun will rise upon God's own especial day: How can a life be lost, for which Full fifty millions pray?"

The doctors turn; a woman's faith Has nerved them once again; And, with a silent prayer for help, They seek the bed of pain.

Oh, miracle of miracles! Oh, potent power of prayer! They look into the sick man's face, And find fresh courage there.
The mist of death has left his eye,
   His mind is strong and clear;
And words of patient, cheerful trust
   Fall on each listening ear.

"Another station gained and passed!
   How many more to come?
Can we expect, in such a race,
   Not to be stopped at some?

"Oh, for a glimpse of our quiet home,
   A breath of Mentor air!
Surely I shall get well again,
   If you can take me there!

"Dear wife, your cheek is growing pale.
   And Mother's heart will break,
If I die so far away from home;
   I'll live for her dear sake.
"And our children, Heaven bless them,
Sigh for the good old farm;
They will think the White-House splen-
Has only brought us harm.

"Please God, we'll meet together
'Neath the home roof once again:
And with all my dear ones round me,
I shall soon forget this pain."

Far off, in that Ohio home,
His aged mother dwells,
And every day, to friendly ears,
Her simple story tells.

Proudly recalls his boyhood's toil,
His lessons learned with care,
His college prize, his fervent speech
Within the house of prayer.
His early fame, his statesmanship,
   His soldierly career,—
And the crowning glory of his life,
   Which made him ruler here.

But most she loves to dwell upon
   That moment of her bliss,
When on her lips, amid his pomp,
   She felt his loving kiss;

Heard the low-whispered words he spake,
   A blessing and a prayer,—
While from his eye a grateful tear
   Fell on her silver hair.

A shadow steals across her heart,
   A sadness dims her eye,
She trembles e'en amid her joy,
   There's danger lurking nigh.
The deep strong chord of mother-love,
   Vibrates with sudden fear,
"Something has happened to my boy!
   You will not let me hear.

"He may be statesman, soldier, chief,
   He's still a boy to me,
The baby that in childhood's hour,
   I cradled on my knee.

"You've heard bad news, I know it;
   You look so scared and white;
Why is it that the papers
   Are all kept out of sight?

"I've felt more trouble coming,
   Since the day your uncle died,
And fear for James. I'm sorry now,
   I ever left his side.
"I don't think folks would harm him. With his gray-haired mother near; And I begged him to be careful, But James always laughed at fear.

"Somebody tried to kill him? Why, he never did them wrong! My blessed boy, my baby— Though he's grown so tall and strong.

"It cannot be. No mortal man Could act so foul a part! The shot not only pierced my boy, It struck the nation's heart.

"Where was the Father's watchful eye, That ever since his birth Has sheltered him, and placed him 'mid The favored ones of earth?"
"Let me go nurse him. Don't you know, I've nursed him all his life? Yes, true I have grown old of late; Thank God he has his wife.

"Almost four score! I little thought, That I should see him die! But if he goes, we'll meet again In that sweet bye-and-bye.

"It seems so dreadful, after all The battles he has fought; The blow is hard, God give me strength To bear it as I ought.

"Let me recall my husband's words,— His father long since dead, Who, amid all his suffering, So often calmly said,
"God knoweth best, my darling wife,
Though chastening seemeth sore,
'Twill prove in some sweet after-time,
Only one blessing more.

"Be hopeful and be patient still,
And trust Him to the end,
For every grief and loss in life,
He'll compensation send.'

"May be He will; I'll trust Him yet.
There, put my work away;
While James is sick, I cannot sew,
I'll only wait and pray."

So, patient through long summer days,
The trusting heart waits on,
Standing upon the threshold oft,
For tidings of her son.
While slowly through the murky heat
   His life-blood ebbs and flows,
And the heroic sufferer,
   No hour of respite knows.

In other lands beyond the sea,
   The fearful story spread,
And sympathy from prince and peer,
   Flew to the sick man's bed.

There's scarce a hamlet in the world,
   But sent some word of cheer,
And messages of earnest hope
   Were carried far and near.

No longer thoughts of party lines,
   Or petty party strife,
Divide the land where one and all
   Mourn for this precious life.
Supreme within the nation's heart,
    Our martyred Chieftain stands;
God grant the people may sustain
    His just and wise commands.

May peace o'er the dear Mentor home
    Once more its mantle spread,
Hallowed by sacred memories,
    Of the beloved dead.

This cruel dispensation seemed
    So needless to be sent;—
A crime the loving Father
    Could so easily prevent,

Has tortured many Christian hearts,
    And filled the land with gloom,
While, deep within a prison cell,
    The murderer waits his doom.
Surely a man so much beloved
   Might have been spared the rod;
But those who suffer most on earth
   Are best beloved of God.

Did ever sinner in the past
   Secure a martyr's crown?
While daily to a martyr's grave
   The saints in Christ went down.

Closed to our earthly, finite sense,
   Is God's mysterious grace;
But when, upon that farther shore,
   We meet Him face to face,

We shall His wisdom comprehend,
   His loving-kindness know;
And all things will be clear and bright
   Which seemed so dark below.
The thought sustains our breaking hearts,
   Beneath this chastening rod,
Our martyr wears a radiant crown,
   Within the courts of God.

Weep not for him! from earthly fame,
   In Christ-like stature grown,
He mounts, while angels welcome him,
   Up to the great White Throne.

September, 20, 1881.
S. L. NORTON

Art Goods, Artists Materials

Pencils

Pictures, Frames and Fast Goods

254 Chapel Street.

New Haven, Conn.