

**LINCOLN,  
THE MAN OF THE PEOPLE**

**by**

**Edwin Markham (1852-1940)**

**(1901)**

CMG Archives

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**Extract**

And when they fell before the thunder,  
it was as when the lordly redwood,  
green with boughs,  
goes down with a great shout upon the hills,  
and leaves a lonesome place against the sky.

From *Lincoln, the Man of the People*, written in 1901, by Edwin Markham (1852-1940)

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**Full Text**

**Lincoln, Man of the People**

**by**

**Edwin Markham (1852-1940)**

**(1901)**

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When the Norn Mother saw the Whirlwind Hour  
Greatening and darkening as it hurried on,  
She left the Heaven of Heroes and came down  
To make a man to meet the mortal need.  
She took the tried clay of the common road--  
Clay warm yet with the genial heat of Earth,  
Dashed through it all a strain of prophecy;  
Tempered the heap with thrill of human tears;  
Then mixed a laughter with the serious stuff.  
Into the shape she breathed a flame to light  
That tender, tragic, ever-changing face.  
Here was a man to hold against the world,  
A man to match the mountains and the sea.

The colour of the ground was in him, the red earth;  
The smack and tang of elemental things;  
The rectitude and patience of the cliff;  
The good-will of the rain that loves all leaves;  
The friendly welcome of the wayside well;  
The courage of the bird that dares the sea;  
The gladness of the wind that shakes the corn;  
The pity of the snow that hides all scars;  
The secrecy of streams that make their way  
Beneath the mountain to the rifted rock;  
The tolerance and equity of light  
That gives as freely to the shrinking flower  
As to the great oak flaring to the wind--  
To the grave's low hill as to the Matterhorn  
That shoulders out the sky. Sprung from the West,  
He drank the valorous youth of a new world.  
The strength of virgin forests braced his mind,  
The hush of spacious prairies stilled his soul.  
His words were oaks in acorns; and his thoughts  
Were roots that firmly gripped the granite truth.

Up from log cabin to the Capitol,  
One fire was on his spirit, one resolve--  
To send the keen axe to the root of wrong,  
Clearing a free way for the feet of God,  
The eyes of conscience testing every stroke,  
To make his deed the measure of a man.  
He built the rail-pile as he built the State,  
Pouring his splendid strength through every blow:  
The grip that swung the axe in Illinois  
Was on the pen that set a people free.

So came the Captain with the mighty heart;  
And when the judgment thunders split the house,  
Wrenching the rafters from their ancient rest,  
He held the ridgepole up, and spiked again  
The rafters of the Home. He held his place--  
Held the long purpose like a growing tree--  
Held on through blame and faltered not at praise.  
And when he fell in whirlwind, he went down  
As when a lordly cedar, green with boughs,  
Goes down with a great shout upon the hills,  
And leaves a lonesome place against the sky.

End

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