

**Herman Melville, from *Battle-Pieces and Aspects
of the War* (1866)**

***The Martyr* [Lincoln]**

Indicative of the passion of the people on the 15th of
April, 1865.

Good Friday was the day
Of the prodigy and crime,
When they killed him in his pity,
When they killed him in his prime
Of clemency and calm --
When with yearning he was filled
To redeem the evil-willed,
And, though conqueror, be kind;
But they killed him in his kindness,
In their madness and their blindness,
And they killed him from behind.

There is sobbing of the strong,
And a pall upon the land;
But the People in their weeping
Bare the iron hand:
Beware the People weeping
When they bare the iron hand.

He lieth in his blood --
The father in his face;
They have killed him, the Forgiver --
The Avenger takes his place,
The Avenger wisely stern,
Who in righteousness shall do
What the heavens call him to,
And the parricides remand;
For they killed him in his kindness,
In their madness and their blindness,
And his blood is on their hand.

There is sobbing of the strong,
And a pall upon the land;
But the People in their weeping
Bare the iron hand:
Beware the People weeping
When they bare the iron hand.

Shiloh: A Requiem.
(April 1862.)

Skimming lightly, wheeling still,
The swallows fly low
Over the field in clouded days,
The forest-field of Shiloh --
Over the field where April rain

Solaced the parched one stretched in pain
Through the pause of night
That followed the Sunday fight
Around the church of Shiloh --
The church so lone, the log-built one,
That echoed to many a parting groan
And natural prayer
Of dying foemen mingled there --
Foemen at morn, but friends at eve --
Fame or country least their care:
(What like a bullet can undeceive!)
But now they lie low,
While over them the swallows skim
And all is hushed at Shiloh.

The College Colonel

He rides at their head;
A crutch by his saddle just slants in view,
One slung arm is in splints, you see,
Yet he guides his strong steed--how coldly too.

He brings his regiment home--
Not as they filed two years before,
But a remnant half-tattered, and battered, and worn,
Like castaway sailors, who--stunned
By the surf's loud roar,
Their mates dragged back and seen no more--
Again and again breast the surge,
And at last crawl, spent, to shore.

A still rigidity and pale--
An Indian aloofness lones his brow;
He has lived a thousand years
Compressed in battle's pains and prayers,
Marches and watches slow.

There are welcoming shouts, and flags;
Old men off hat to the Boy,
Wreaths from gay balconies fall at his feet,
But to him--there comes alloy.

It is not that a leg is lost,
It is not that an arm is maimed,
It is not that the fever has racked--
Self he has long disclaimed.

But all through the Seven Days' Fight,
And deep in the Wilderness grim,
And in the field-hospital tent,
And Petersburg crater, and dim
Lean brooding in Libby, there came--
Ah heaven!--what truth to him.