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Cornelia Fed the Swans

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CORNELIA FED THE SWANS

Beloved of bird
if not of man,
Cornelia fed
the downy swans

on Medley Pond
until they grew
both plump and fond
of Cornelia, who

forewent the snacks
that served so well
to sooth and lax
the little hell

her office was.
Though she grew thin,
she loved the state the swans
were in,

and each noon plied
their appetites
with boiled or fried
or frozen bites

until one day
when she fell ill
the swans' dismay
was loud and shrill;

but she came not
to calm their hunger.
Whereupon
in choicest anger

they flayed their keeper
with their feathers
good and proper,
demanding whether

the Lovely Lady
of the Crumbs
was gone for good; he
said she'd come.

And sure enough,
she did. However,
meantime his huge rough
hands had severed

head from body
one by one
and dressed himself
as a noble swan;

and when he took her,
white as snow,
Cornelia never
let him know.

—EDSEL FORD