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Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln

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America is large and is growing larger. Once she was a thin strip of partially cleared land, bounded on the East by the vast ocean and on the West by the unexplored wilderness. Gradually she stretched westward till the Pacific Ocean was her boundary toward the going down of the sun. Now she extends westward to Hawaii and the Philippines, and no man dare say in terms of her international influence just where she is bounded Eastward. Those fields in Flanders and in France where her sons lie buried, those lands of the Near East that have been rescued from starvation and anarchy by her generosity, are bound to us by ties stronger than political bands and have given to the United States new areas, if not of territory or political control, at least of moral power and of ethical responsibility. But as America has grown, the fame of her great men has grown with it. The men who incarnated America's ideal when America was thirteen small colonies, still worthily incarnate that ideal when America is forty-eight great states and half a world beside. Abraham Lincoln, who was doubtfully admitted to a place among America's great men while he was living, and the North and the South were striving one against the other, is now the hero not only of North and South, but of an internationalized America. Our nation has expanded, our ideals have grown, our conception of what great men might be has vastly enlarged, but Washington and Lincoln are still adequate.

Out of the fathomless ocean of oblivion which has buried the names and memory of very nearly the entire human race, rises here and there a great and remembered name, that lifts its crest above the silent sea, like a mountain in an ocean archipelago, having on its headland a beacon, that casts its light afar.

We are nearing the time for a correct estimate of the life and character of Abraham Lincoln. Our knowledge of him is not yet quite complete. There still remain people who knew him and whose personal reminiscences as yet are unpublished. But that number is rapidly diminishing; nor is it at all likely that we have anything to learn about Lincoln which will greatly modify our view of him. More has been written about him than about any other man of modern times. Not even Napoleon has a more notable bibliography. The sources of information have been more diligently explored than in the case of any other man in American history. One thing grows more certain as the years go by, and that is that the influence of Abraham Lincoln has not yet reached

its zenith. Great as is the love which America holds for him, it is a growing affection, and is certain to grow yet more, in the South, as in the North.

Nor is the fame of Lincoln limited to America; the great world war has been significant in this as in many other things, that it has brought a world-recognition such as he never had before to America's noblest exponent of America's spirit. The nations that joined with us in fighting to make the world safe for democracy needed a definition of democracy, and they found it in his word at Gettysburg, they needed an exponent, of democracy, and they found it in his personality. Abraham Lincoln is more than America's first American. He is the world's foremost world-citizen.

An Outline of His Life

Abraham Lincoln, sixteenth President of the United States, was born in 1809 and died in 1865, aged 56 years. His life divides itself into five periods:

1. **His Childhood, 1809-1816.** The first period includes the first seven years of his life, from his birth in a one-roomed log cabin near Hodgenville, Ky., on Feb. 12, 1809, till the removal of his father and mother to the backwoods of Indiana in 1816. He attended the local school, doubtless a "blab school," where children were required to study their lessons aloud, and which gave him a habit he retained throughout life of uttering aloud his words as he wrote them. He doubtless attended the meetings of the Baptist Church which were held about three miles distant, Hodgenville having been from its beginning a Baptist settlement, and the monthly meetings being important social as well as religious gatherings. He had one sister, Sarah, sometimes incorrectly called Nancy, who was more than a year older than himself. The parents of these two children, Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln, had been married near Beechland, Washington County, Ky., June 12, 1806.

2. **His Boyhood, 1816-1829.** The second period includes the years of his life from the time of his parents' removal to Spencer County, Ind., in 1816, till the removal of the family from Indiana to Illinois in the spring of 1830, when Abraham was 21 years of age. In the Indiana home his mother died, Oct. 5, 1818; and there, after a little more than a year, Thomas Lincoln brought his second wife, Sarah Bush Lincoln, to whom he was married at his old home, Elizabethtown, Ky., in December, 1819. She was a devout woman, and like his own mother, exercised a gracious influence over Abraham, who remembered her with gratitude all his days. In Indiana he attended school in desultory fashion for a few months, and became noted as the reader of every book which he could borrow, his chief literary material being the Bible, Weems' Life of Washington, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, Aesop's Fables, a history of the United States and the Revised Statutes of Indiana. At the age of 17 he had attained his full height, which was above six feet and three inches, and he was noted as a wrestler, a writer of rude satirical verses, and certain compositions among which we

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remembered one on temperance and another against cruelty to animals. At the age of 19 he made a journey to New Orleans upon a flatboat, and he continued always to be interested in river navigation. Except for this journey, the woods of southern Indiana, with a limited outlook upon Kentucky across the Ohio River, bounded his horizon during the whole of his later boyhood.

3. **Young Manhood, 1830-1837.** After his removal with his father and stepmother to the vicinity of Decatur, Ill., in March, 1830, he made a second flatboat voyage to New Orleans, after which he established himself in the village of New Salem, on the Sangamon River, his residence there covering practically the entire history of that microscopic and short-lived town. He first saw New Salem when his flatboat stuck there on the dam of Rutledge's mill, April 19, 1831, and he left it on a borrowed horse, with all his worldly goods in a pair of saddle bags, March 15, 1837, to take up his residence in Springfield. New Salem was his Alma Mater. There he studied Kirkham's Grammar, and learned the science of surveying. He served as postmaster, was captain of a volunteer company in the Black Hawk war, was elected in 1834, and re-elected in 1836, 1838 and 1840, a member of the Legislature, serving until 1842, and doing much to secure the removal of the State Capitol from Vandalia to Springfield. He endeavored to conduct a general store, but was unsuccessful in business, and left New Salem with debts which kept him heavily cumbered until his election to Congress in 1848. In New Salem he read law, and engaged in political discussions, and became more than locally famous as a politician. The law was not then a jealous mistress, and Lincoln was a politician first and incidentally a lawyer.

4. **His Career as a Lawyer and Politician, 1837-1861.** Lincoln's life in Springfield began March 15, 1837, and there he lived until his removal to take the oath of office as President of the United States, his journey beginning on Feb. 11, 1861, the day preceding his fifty-second birthday. His life in Springfield, begun in deep poverty, won him increasing recognition as a lawyer of ability and a politician of widening influence. He was elected to Congress in 1846, over his Democratic opponent, the redoubtable Rev. Peter Cartwright, a distinguished Methodist preacher, and was the only Whig member elected from Illinois in 1846. In 1837 he, with one associate, Dan Stone, had introduced into the Legislature of Illinois a protest against the extension of slavery, and while in Congress he prepared a bill for gradual emancipation, with compensation to the slave owner. Never technically an Abolitionist, he became more deeply involved in the discussion of the slavery issue as a result of the Kansas-Nebraska bill and the repeal of the Missouri Compromise in 1854, and in 1856 he joined the Republican party, organized at Bloomington, with its fundamental tenet the opposition to further extension of slavery. On that occasion, at Bloomington, he made his famous "Lost Speech." On June 16, 1858, he made what was the most rash and most fortunate address of his life in his

declaration that the Union could not permanently remain half slave and half free, and that "a house divided against itself cannot stand." After the Dred Scott decision, he engaged in joint debate with Stephen A. Douglas, which was followed by his defeat by Douglas for the United States Senate, and his subsequent election as President of the United States.

While in New Salem he had loved Ann Rutledge, and afterward had proposed to Mary Owens, who rejected him. On Nov. 4, 1842, he married in Springfield Mary Todd, a brilliant young woman from Lexington, Ky., who bore him four sons, only one of whom is now living, and who, being now an aged man and childless, will leave the Lincoln line extinct.

5. **His Presidency, 1861-1865.** Abraham Lincoln was nominated for the Presidency at the Republican National Convention, held at a great wigwam, erected at the corner of Lake and Market Streets, Chicago, May 18, 1860, and was elected in November of that year. He was inaugurated March 4, 1861. Four years after his first election, he was re-elected, his second inaugural address being the noblest of all his utterances. His first election was followed by the secession of eleven Southern states, and by four years of civil war. He bore the unprecedented burdens of his office with a heroism the greater because his heart was breaking under the strain of it; he performed the stern duties of his administration with a fortitude the more commendable because it was done "With malice toward none, with charity for all." On Sept. 22, 1862, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, that struck the shackles from four millions of human beings. He lived to see the successful termination of the war, and on April 9, 1865, the surrender of the armies of Gen. Robert E. Lee, but on the following Friday night, April 14, he was shot by an assassin, and died the next morning. Since then, in the language of his Secretary of War, he has belonged to the ages.

His Continuous Education

Frequent comment is made upon Lincoln's early struggles to obtain an education. Let us remind ourselves of the manner in which he continued to educate himself. Let us recall one incident that will illustrate at once his progress in pursuit of knowledge and his magnanimity of spirit.

In 1859 he was engaged in what was probably his most important law-suit, as it then appeared, for it took him to another state than that in which he had already won prestige, and gave him association with eminent counsel both on his own and the opposing side, and an opportunity, as he hoped, to distinguish himself. It was the McCormick Reaper case, which was tried in Cincinnati, and he was associated as counsel with Edward M. Stanton. Stanton doubted Lincoln's ability to handle a case of such importance, and saw to it that Lincoln was not permitted to plead. Lincoln was bitterly disappointed, and declared that he had never been treated so brutally as by Stanton. But Lincoln sat back and observed how

lawyers who had been trained as he had not, prepared and presented their arguments. Ralph Emerson, who was with him there, has told the story:

"When the hearing was through, Mr. Lincoln called me to him as we left the courtroom, and wanted to walk and talk. For block after block he walked forward, silent and deeply dejected. At last, turning to me, he exclaimed, 'Emerson, I'm going home.' A pause. 'I am going home to study law.'

"'Why,' I exclaimed, 'Mr. Lincoln, you stand at the head of the bar in Illinois now. What are you talking about?'"

"'Yes, yes,' he said, 'I do occupy a good position there, and I think I can get along with the way things are going there now. But these college trained men who have devoted their whole lives to study are coming west, don't you see? They study on a single case perhaps for months, as we never do. We are apt to catch up the thing as it goes before a jury and trust to the inspiration of the moment. They have got as far as Ohio now. They will soon be in Illinois.'

"Another long pause. Then stopping and turning toward me, his countenance suddenly assumed that strong look of determination which we who knew him best sometimes saw on his face, and he exclaimed:

"'I'm going home to study law! I'm as good as any of them, and when they get out to Illinois, I will be ready for them!'"

"He finished and at once became very cheerful, as though he now saw a clear path before him."

This is an important incident, and it illustrates some traits of Lincoln's character which we cannot afford to pass over lightly.

Precisely what studies engaged the attention of Lincoln after this encounter with Stanton in 1859, we do not know; but we are able to understand something of the degree of self-discipline which his resolution involved, and what estimate on his own part of the seriousness of the undertaking, when we recall a course of study which he had recently undertaken and mastered. After his return to Springfield, following his single session in Congress, he "practiced law more assiduously than ever before," and "was losing interest in politics, when the repeal of the Missouri Compromise aroused me again," as he recorded in his notes to Jesse Fell.

"It was at this time," say his biographers, Nicolay and Hay, "that he gave notable proof of his unusual powers of mental discipline. His wider knowledge of men and things, acquired by contact with the great world, had shown him a certain lack in himself of close and sustained reasoning. To remedy this defect, he applied himself, after his return from Congress, to such works on logic and mathematics as he fancied would be serviceable. Devoting himself with dogged energy to the task in hand, he soon learned by heart six books of the propositions of Euclid, and he retained through life a thorough knowledge of the principles they contain." (Nicolay and Hay, i:298-299.)

Now this is the more notable because Lincoln already was a man of mature years and had won distinguished success. He had an excellent opportunity to sulk and complain of having been treated badly, and of determining to go back to Illinois and enjoy the prestige which he had already won. But on his return from Congress he studied Euclid, and learned the kind of proof which

is known as demonstration; and after his humiliation at Cincinnati, he came back determined to begin to study law,—he who was already the leader of the Illinois bar.

Not only did he display his power of rigid self-discipline, which many men lack in proportion as they appear to have gained success, but he showed his magnanimity. Smarting, as he certainly smarted under the treatment of Stanton, when he needed a Secretary of War, he called the very man who had most deeply hurt him, for Lincoln believed that that man, however personally uncomfortable to himself, was capable of doing a great and necessary piece of work for the nation. Not always have Presidents been so magnanimous in the matter of their cabinet.

His Love of Humor

Let us remember the quality and the value of Lincoln's love of humor.

Lincoln's humor was the positive pole of his melancholy. Those who knew him best, testify that he was seldom perfectly happy. His was the smile that floated over a current of tears, like the play of sunlight on deep water. Have you never noticed how, after a hearty laugh, a company relapses into a moment of unwonted sobriety? There is something profoundly solemn in mirth.

Lincoln laughed so heartily because he was so near to weeping. His joy was the exuberance of a deep, rich, sympathetic nature. It gave him surcease from the load that weighed him down, the load of his country's sorrow, the load of his responsibility for men facing death, the load that night and day never lifted, save for a moment when he forgot care in the enjoyment of a laugh. And this was why men so little understood him, and counted his mirth for reckless and unthinking buffoonery.

Moreover, Lincoln's humor was the crystallization of sound good sense. Each of his stories had as its kernel a homely truth, set forth as succinctly as in one of the quaint proverbs of Benjamin Franklin. Separate the authentic stories from the mass of plainly invented ones, and from the improbable and unworthy ones, and you will find in every case the story is the wire on which he conveys the current of good sense, and the joke is the electric flash of homely wisdom.

Still further, Lincoln's humor was humor, not wit. I do not care to split hairs as to the difference between them, but in common acceptance there is in wit some bit of sarcasm, some sting of vindictiveness. In Lincoln's humor was only kindness, for kindness only was in his heart.

His Kindness

It was his kindness that made him great. He was "clothed with almost absolute power, and never abused it save on the side of mercy." His was the nature that could love his enemies. Men sometimes say that the standard of Christ is impossible, "Love

your enemies, and pray for those that despitefully use you." Neither Lincoln nor Grant hated the men they fought, or ever had pleasure in giving pain. The most foolish criticism ever made on prayer is that of shallow men who say, "Lincoln prayed, and so did Lee, and one as sincerely as the other, and to the same God: behold then how their prayers neutralized each other." That is the word of the idle critic, and the foolish man. It is because Lincoln and Lee prayed to the same God, it is because men on both sides fought, each for what he believed right, and with love, not hatred in his heart, that we are one nation again. The prayers of the brave are answered in our present national unity and kindliness of heart.

And that is why Abraham Lincoln is a national, not a sectional hero. He wept, he laughed, sometimes in alternation and sometimes simultaneously; but his laugh had nothing in it of scorn, and his tears were tears of sympathy for North and South alike; and the whole country, yea, and the whole world, honors him; for his smile had in it that touch of nature that makes the whole world kin.

His Life a Demonstration of the Value of Democracy

We can never despair of democracy so long as the story of Abraham Lincoln reads true to American life. A child of the humblest parentage, born in a log cabin, nurtured in the wilderness, gaining his scanty education against every natural disadvantage, he rose by right to his sheer manhood and nobility of character to be President of the United States, and in that position abundantly justified the confidence of his fellow citizens. That story in itself is typical of the very best there is in American life. In the light of the career of such a man, no child of America need ever despair of the best; nor can our hopes of democracy utterly fail when out of the obscure and belated elements in our national life can come such a character as Lincoln.

The Evolution of His Moral Convictions

You will remember that Lincoln having been three times a member of the Illinois Legislature was elected to Congress in 1846, and after serving there and seeing no immediate political future settled down to the task of making himself a better and more influential lawyer. There came a time when he thought his political career was at an end. In his own mind he rather definitely withdrew from public life. He formed partnerships in several counties with younger lawyers and secured larger and more remunerative cases. His fees grew larger and he had money in the bank. When Lincoln came back again into public life he came under the compulsion of a stronger moral conviction than had been manifested in his earlier career. Beginning with his Peoria address in October, 1854, it grew ever clearer down to the time of his second inaugural. In Peoria he made his fundamental declaration concerning slavery that "No man is good enough to govern another man without that other man's consent." In 1858, against the advice of his political friends, he uttered the bold prophecy of the "house

divided against itself." He entered upon his duties as President almost overwhelmed by the task which rested upon him of keeping the Union whole. But it gradually became clear to him that in the purpose of God it was his duty not merely to keep it whole, but to make it free. That was a most impressive meeting with the Cabinet when he brought before them the Emancipation Proclamation, saying that while he wished their advice concerning any of its minor or incidental features, he did not ask advice concerning the main issue. For this he determined in his own heart and made his promise to God.

One cannot read with any degree of care his messages and letters in the days that followed without seeing how that reliance upon the Divine leadership grew in Mr. Lincoln's mind; nor how nobly it lifted him to the level of his high responsibility.

You will remember what happened after his second nomination for the Presidency in May of 1864, and before the election in November of the same year. There was the slaughter and uncertainty of the Wilderness campaign; there was the failure to capture Richmond; there was the awful tragedy of Petersburg; there was Early's raid and the revelation of the practically defenseless condition of Washington; there was the tremendous growth of opposition to the draft and the practical certainty as it seemed in mid-summer that Lincoln would not be re-elected. You will remember how on Aug. 23, 1864, Lincoln wrote down his solemn resolution declaring to God and his own soul what he intended to do after his defeat.

"This morning, as for some days past, it seems exceedingly probable that this administration will not be re-elected. Then it will be my duty to so co-operate with the president-elect as to save the Union between the election and the inauguration, as he will have secured his election on such ground that he cannot possibly save it afterward."

That, I believe, is one of the noblest of all the declarations of Abraham Lincoln, and one that shows him in the largeness of his nature, the greatness and heroism of his consecrated purpose.

But Lincoln was re-elected and he stood again to take the oath as President of the United States. It was in his second inaugural that he faced most fully the moral issues of his time. He measured his own providential call and righteous purpose at high water mark. He even ventured into theology and raised the question, difficult then as now, how two opposing armies could rely upon the same Bible and pray to the same God, and whether God could answer the prayers of either, or both. To us at the North he says, it would seem very strange that "any man should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces." But here he quotes the word of Christ and says, "Let us judge not that we be not judged." The prayers of neither section, he says, could be fully answered, for slavery has been a national sin. The Almighty, he declares, has His own purpose. Offenses must needs come, and woe unto him

by whom the offense cometh. "Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn from the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'

"With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations."

That, I say, measures Abraham Lincoln at high water mark. That utterance shows the heart and purpose of the men who have come fully to realize the righteous purpose of God wrought out through a fearful national struggle. Such men, like Noah in the olden time, save the hope of humanity in its time of deluge.

His Faith in the People

Lincoln believed in the people. He believed that government by the people was the most stable and righteous of all government. Was he right? We have answered that question so far as the sword can answer it, but it is only half answered. Kipling has answered it with prophecies of a Reign of Terror, and in lines of frightful omen:

Whether the People be led by the Lord,
Or lured by the loudest throat;
If it be quicker to die by the sword
Or cheaper to die by vote—
These are the things we have dealt with once,
(And they will not rise from their grave)
For Holy People, however it runs,
Endeth in wholly slave.

"Whatsoever for any cause,
Seeketh to take or give
Power above or beyond the laws,
Suffer it not to live!
Holy State or Holy King
Or Holy People's Will—
Have no truck with the senseless thing!
Order the guns, and kill!

Once there was The People—Terror gave it birth;
Once there was The People and it made a Hell of Earth;
Earth arose and crushed it. Listen, O ye slain!
Once there was The People—it shall never be again!"

But it makes a difference whether the people are led by the Lord, or lured by the loudest throat. And if the guns to kill are ordered, it is the People who will ultimately fire them. One of the People can shoot as far and as straight as any one represent-

ing Holy State or Holy King. Sooner or later we must come back to the People. We cannot have a stable government upheld by bayonets. Lincoln knew that. And we who went across the sea to make men free from despotism must not forget it, or we shall be reminded of our inadvertence.

Truly as when Lincoln stood at Gettysburg we have been fighting a war to determine whether government of the people and by the people can long endure. If despotism is to be followed by anarchy in any of its forms, the war is not yet over.

The Religion of Lincoln

An address of this kind should contain something about the religion of Abraham Lincoln. That is a subject to which it were easier to devote a volume than a paragraph. A great deal that has been written on this subject, part of by truthful and honest people, I do not accept as true, and I have no time to waste in telling what I do not believe. Nor have I time to give at length or in detail the reasons for what I do believe concerning him. I believe that he was a Christian, although never a member of a Christian church. I believe that his spiritual life was an evolution and that we can trace with some degree of accuracy its processes and successive stages.

The background of Lincoln's early religious life was that of the old-fashioned, pioneer, close-communion, Calvinistic Baptist. This made him a fatalist to the end of his life; and in his later approaches to some of the tenets of Universalism, he was still the uncompromising Calvinist, reasoning to a different conclusion but from the same premises as those held by the Baptist preachers whom he had known. With this there mingled a strong tendency to rationalism, gained by him while reading as a young man the works of Volney and Paine, which tendency was accentuated by an inborn and almost morbid caution. To this was added in 1850 a new argument for the evidences of Christianity, such as never had come to him before and which now for the first time seemed to him to have a basis in formal logic. When all deductions have been made it is impossible to escape the conviction that his mind underwent a certain change toward religion early in 1850 after the death of his little son, Edward, and of his reading of a book, "The Christian's Defense," which no biographer of Lincoln ever has read or owned, but which Lincoln pronounced "unanswerable." A still further and to some extent contemporary development was in his reading of "The Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation," the only book on evolution which he ever read and which gave him a rational basis of his belief in the working of God through natural forces and for what he called the operation of "miracles under law."

Beside all this there was in Lincoln and in his wife a marked strain of superstition such as is common to frontier life and which always had a strong hold, if not upon his intelligence, at least upon his sub-consciousness.

It need not surprise us when we analyze his religion into its component parts to find it made up of more or less inconsistent and even contrary elements. If any of his ideas were inconsistent with each other, they were all consistent with the mind and character of the man.

He believed in God; he believed in duty; he believed in immortality; he believed in prayer. He had a solemn covenant registered in heaven to perform his duty faithfully, and when he issued the Emancipation Proclamation he told his cabinet in quiet word that hushed all opposition that he had promised his God to do that thing.

Lincoln's religion underwent something of the same evolution which accompanied the development of his literary style, and exhibited some similarities of contrast and contradiction. Lincoln was a great story-teller; yet you may read his speeches from end to end and hardly find a story. His favorite poet was Robert Burns, and you may read his speeches from end to end and not find a single quotation from the Scottish poet. His early style was highly rhetorical, almost ridiculously so, full of pretentious, high-sounding phrases. He then developed the controversial style of the stump-speaker, sometimes with rude jokes and boisterous gestures and platform performances. His style became one of calm dignity and his English was a pure well of Anglo-Saxon undefiled. His moral and spiritual evolution went hand in hand with this development of his literary method. He made his religious system out of such material as he found at hand, and he wrought it into shape by the slow processes of a mind that never worked rapidly but that worked accurately and surely. Into it also he wrought his stern demand for a reasonable faith, his conception of what constituted the essentials of divine justice, and the affirmations of a nature which was inherently and profoundly religious. The mighty responsibilities of the war developed his spiritual nature. The solemn duties which daily he had to face kept him humble before God and profoundly awake to the will of the people. The larger implications of the slavery issue grew in his mind into a conviction that he was an instrument of Providence. In 1854 he believed that a house divided against itself could not stand. By the end of 1862 he was able to express his view of emancipation in these immortal words, perhaps the noblest which Lincoln ever uttered:

"In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the

free—honorable alike in what we give and what we preserve. We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last and best hope of earth.”

He believed that his own personal responsibility to God was such that he could not permit America to lose the world's last and best hope. He freed the slave because in doing so he fulfilled a promise which he had made to his God.

The Value of Great Men

It is our solemn duty, as it is our inspiring privilege, to contemplate the characters of great and good men, that by their lives our own may be encouraged. It is due them that we should honor good men for their works' sake, as well as for our own instruction and the blessing and inspiration of our children.

Washington and Lincoln, each in his day, stood as the foremost representative of the ideal of America. But it was a greatly enlarged ideal. George Washington was an American, but he was also an Englishman. He bought his “hatts” and Martha's bonnets in London, and ordered the styles then current in that metropolis. Nancy Hanks did not buy her sun-bonnets in London, neither were her linsey-woolsey skirts woven after patterns obtained from there. When the American crossed the crest of the Alleghenies, a new type of American began. He was an American who was not able to import much of anything from England, and would not have cared to do it if he could. Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay were born on the eastward side of the dividing hills, but they had their training on the westward slope. With them and their companions began a new epoch in American history and the development of a new type of American. Of that new type Abraham Lincoln was the foremost exponent. He was born with the mountains between him and the sea, and the land he knew was America, stretching to both horizons.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote a notable verse:

“And their prince shall be of themselves, and their ruler shall proceed from the midst of them.” (Jeremiah 30:21.)

This is the prophetic promise concerning the rulers on earth of the people of the Bible. They were not to be governed by kings imposed upon them by arbitrary authority, but by men raised up from among the people, representing the people, and ruling for the welfare of the people. This is not an isolated or unimportant promise. The oldest of Messianic predictions is filled with the same lofty idea:

"Moses indeed said, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren." (Acts 3:28; Deut. 18:15.) Even the prophecies concerning the coming of the Christ are fundamentally democratic.

Jeremiah wrote at the time of the Exile, when Israel was ruled by Babylon. He looked forward to the time when foreign despots should no longer tyrannize over the people to whom he ministered. Government was to proceed from the people, and to be for the benefit of the people.

Of all rulers in modern history, none more fully exemplified this principle than Abraham Lincoln. He, of all leaders of great nations, came from the people. He, of all who have defined in word and character the principles of popular rule, set forth the essential quality of a republic as one in which government is of the people, and for the people and by the people.

America's Need of Americans

There is a stirring line in one of the poems of Sam Walter Foss:

"Give me men to match my mountains."

It is the cry of America to the people of America; it is the demand that America shall be measured not by her territory but by the character of her people; not by her machinery but by her manhood. We have inherited great names from older nations. Shakespeare and Cromwell and John Bunyan were not born in the United States. We claim them as our own by kinship with their spirits; but America is not shut up to the necessity of receiving from other nations the inspiration of great names and having none of her own to bequeath. She has inherited from other lands great names that incarnate great ideals; and she has given great names and true ideals to other lands. She has conceived an ideal of high-minded patriotism, combined with military and political leadership and crowned with the glory of heroism, integrity and devotion to the public weal and with it has proclaimed the name of Washington. Then she has defined democracy in terms of authority as residing in the people and righteousness as expressed in the will of the people, and of kindness and of humanity and conscience as expressed in a heroic life that sprang from among the people, and has called it by the immortal name of Abraham Lincoln.

Democracy Tested by Its Leaders

The first test of a democracy is that it shall promote the well-being of the whole body of the people, and nurture them in

independence, in prosperity, in intelligence, and in righteousness. Its benefits must be widespread, and must accrue to the people as a whole rather than to special and privileged classes. Not only governmental authority but public benefit and private reward must be widely disseminated; they must be of the people and by the people and for the people.

But it is easy to imagine a republic in which all this was true and yet which would be a very uninviting place to live. We can think of a government and society in which all life and intelligence and virtue had been leveled up or down to the grade of mediocrity. One can think of this as smothering ambition, toning down all excellence, and leaving life flat, stale and unprofitable. The second test of a democracy, then, is this, that in addition to widespread popular welfare, it shall exhibit its product in the great men whom it produces. It is not enough that a government of the people and for the people shall produce a higher average of prosperity and intelligence than a monarchy; it must show that within it is the possibility of rising far above the low level of ordinary living. It must display the possibility of individual excellence.

Nor is it enough that a democracy shall have produced great men in the past: it must continue to produce them. Democracy can never be safe without great leaders, men of the people, yet men who stand like Saul, head and shoulders above the people from the midst of whom they have sprung.

The Permanent Glory of Lincoln

The heroes come and go with the years. Some men accounted great in their own day pass from public view and are remembered no more. It is not that their lives were failures. They served their generation well, and the honor accorded them in their lifetime may not have been greater than they deserved, but here and there a name stands out with more of distinctness as the years bring his memory into sharper relief. One such name is that of Abraham Lincoln.

It is more than fifty years since Lincoln died. The number of people who knew him personally is still not small, but it diminishes rapidly. Each year a few incidents appear in print for the first time relating to his life or personality. No one who knew him, or even met him, now counts any incident too trivial to relate concerning him. Anecdotes that seemed too unimportant to relate at the time come now before the public in the effort to gather and record every possible scrap concerning him. Unquestionably time has glorified many of these incidents and not a few of them have only the value of probable invention, yet some genuinely good historical material continues to come to the front. It is interesting and valuable to note that the new material, such as it is, does not greatly modify the impression which the American people, and the world, have come to cherish as their thought and estimate of Lincoln. One by one the biographies of his cabinet

members have appeared, and in some cases their diaries have been published. It is evident that those who were nearest to Lincoln while he lived were in less favorable position for judging of his abiding influence upon the world than people of today. They saw in him an overburdened man, harassed by countless petty cares, endeavoring with honest futility to measure up to a task too great for him. The world sees in Lincoln a man whose very failings lean to virtue's side. His great heart, too kind always to be judicial; his patience often sorely tried, but never quite failing; his faith in God that had in it as component elements the logician's question and the frontiersman's close approach to superstition; his loneliness intensified by his companionableness; his profound sadness, ever on the point of reacting into quaint humor—these were among the elements that made up the character of Lincoln. Of him the world might say as Hamlet said of his father:

“He was a man, take him all in all;
I shall not look upon his like again.”
Of him might Shakespeare have written in another play:
“His life was gentle; and the elements
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up,
And say to all the world, ‘This was a man!’”

Born in a log cabin; nurtured in the wilderness; rising out of deepest obscurity till he reached the White House; fighting a great war, though always loving peace; doing his tragic duty, though it broke his sympathetic heart, and crowning his work at length with the sacrifice of his own life, the story of Abraham Lincoln contains every element that can appeal to the admiration of men who love their country, and the faith of those who believe in the fundamental righteousness of democracy.

He came to the White House at a time which seemed least likely to utilize his strong qualities and certain to reveal all his weaknesses. Some of his best and closest friends distrusted his ability to cope with the tremendous odds. His duties were unprecedented; the obstacles before him were beyond the ability of any man to measure. He was distrusted and misunderstood, belittled and caricatured, but he faced the gigantic problems of his administration with patience, fortitude, heroic determination and faith in Almighty God.

He fought a cruel war without cruelty or hatred. He met malice in a spirit which displayed malice toward none and charity for all. He did a great man's work greatly, and he crowned it with the sacrifice of his own life. Let America honor forever the name of Abraham Lincoln.

The Creed of Abraham Lincoln in His Own Words

I believe in God, the Almighty Ruler of Nations, our great and good and merciful Maker, our Father in Heaven, who notes the fall of a sparrow, and numbers the hairs of our heads.

I believe in His eternal truth and justice.

I recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history that those nations only are blest whose God is the Lord.

I believe that it is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, and to invoke the influence of His Holy Spirit; to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon.

I believe that it is meet and right to recognize and confess the presence of the Almighty Father equally in our triumphs and in those sorrows which we may justly fear are a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins to the needful end of our reformation.

I believe that the Bible is the best gift which God has ever given to men. All the good from the Saviour of the world is communicated to us through this book.

I believe the will of God prevails. Without Him all human reliance is vain. Without the assistance of that Divine Being I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail.

Being a humble instrument in the hands of our Heavenly Father, I desire that all my works and acts may be according to His will; and that it may be so, I give thanks to the Almighty, and seek His aid.

I have a solemn oath registered in heaven to finish the work I am in, in full view of my responsibility to my God, with malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right as God gives me to see the right. Commending those who love me to His care, as I hope in their prayers they will commend me, I look through the help of God to a joyous meeting with many loved ones gone before.

(This Creed of Abraham Lincoln is an extract from "The Soul of Abraham Lincoln" (Doran), by the Reverend William E. Barton, D. D. No liberties have been taken with Lincoln's sentences, all publicly uttered, except to change the past tense to the present, or the plural to the singular, and to add connectives and preface the words, "I believe.")

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The Soul of Abraham Lincoln

By WILLIAM E. BARTON

A notable contribution to the literature of the subject, and a book of permanent worth

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