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Abraham Lincoln



*An Oration
Delivered Before
The Lincoln Union,*

By HENRY WATTERSON,

Auditorium,

Chicago, February 12, 1895.



Henry Watterson

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

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Publishers' Notice.

The publishers meet a constantly increasing demand in issuing this limited edition of Mr. Watterson's "Abraham Lincoln." It was first delivered as an oration before the Lincoln Union, of Chicago, February 12, 1895, the occasion being the Union's annual celebration of the birthday of the martyred President. The great Auditorium of that city was crowded to its utmost capacity—the surviving son of Mr. Lincoln, and his family, occupying one of the boxes—and was received by this concourse with sustained enthusiasm. In response to invitations, which soon became general, Mr. Watterson consented to repeat it as a lecture; and in that character it has been heard by admiring multitudes in every part of the country, but nowhere with livelier demonstrations of approval than in the cities of the Southern States, from Richmond and Charleston to New Orleans and Galveston. The matter is here given as originally spoken by Mr. Watterson; with the single exception of the passage relating to the affair at Hampton Roads. Finding his statement questioned, touching what had actually passed between Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Stephens at the famous Conference, Mr. Watterson, in his subsequent delivery of the lecture, gave the proof of his assertion, at the same time disclaiming any purpose other than an illustration of the wise magnanimity and Christ-like sense of justice of Abraham Lincoln.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

The statesmen in knee-breeches and powdered wigs who signed the Declaration of Independence and framed the Constitution—the soldiers in blue-and-buff, top-boots and epaulets who led the armies of the Revolution—were what we are wont to describe as gentlemen. They were English gentlemen. They were not all, nor even generally, scions of the British aristocracy; but they came, for the most part, of good Anglo-Saxon and Scotch-Irish stock.

The shoe buckle and the ruffled shirt worked a spell peculiarly their own. They carried with them an air of polish and authority. Hamilton, though of obscure birth and small stature, is represented by those who knew him to have been dignity and grace personified; and old Ben Franklin, even in woolen hose, and none too courtier-like, was the delight of the great nobles and fine ladies, in whose company he made himself as much at home as though he had been born a Marquis.

When we revert to that epoch the beauty of the scene which history unfolds is marred by little that is uncouth, by nothing that is grotesque. The long procession passes, and we see in each group, in every figure, something of heroic proportion. John Adams and John Hancock, Samuel Warren and Samuel Adams, the Livingstons

in New York, the Carrolls in Maryland, the Masons, the Randolphs and the Pendletons in Virginia, the Rutledges in South Carolina—what pride of Caste, what elegance of manner, what dignity and dominancy of character! And the soldiers! Israel Putnam and Nathanael Greene, Ethan Allen and John Stark, Mad Anthony Wayne and Light Horse Harry Lee, and Morgan and Marion and Sumter, gathered about the immortal Washington—Puritan and Cavalier so mixed and blended as to be indistinguishable the one from the other—where shall we go to seek a more resplendent galaxy of field marshals? Surely not to Blenheim, drinking beakers to Marlborough after the famous victory; nor yet to the silken marquet of the great Conde on the Rhine, be-dizened with gold lace and radiant with the flower of the nobility of France! Ah, me! there were gentlemen in those days; and they made their influence felt upon life and thought long after the echoes of Bunker Hill and Yorktown had faded away, long after the bell over Independence Hall had ceased to ring.

The first half of the Republic's first half century of existence the public men of America, distinguished for many things, were chiefly and almost universally distinguished for repose of bearing and sobriety of behavior. It was not until the institution of African slavery had got into politics as a vital force that Congress became a bear-garden, and that our law-makers, laying aside their manners with their small-clothes,

fell into the loose-fitting habiliments of modern fashion and the slovenly jargon of partisan controversy. The gentlemen who signed the Declaration and framed the Constitution were succeeded by gentlemen—much like themselves—but these were succeeded by a race of party leaders much less decorous and much more self-confident; rugged, puissant; deeply moved in all that they said and did, and sometimes turbulent; so that finally, when the volcano burst forth flames that reached the heavens, great human boulders appeared amid the glare on every side; none of them much to speak of according to rules regnant at St. James and Versailles; but vigorous, able men, full of their mission and of themselves, and pulling for dear life in opposite directions.

There were Seward and Sumner and Chase, Corwin and Ben Wade, Trumbull and Fessenden, Hale and Collamer and Grimes, and Wendell Phillips, and Horace Greeley, our latter-day Franklin. There were Toombs and Hammond, and Slidell and Wigfall, and the two little giants, Douglas and Stephens, and Yancey and Mason, and Jefferson Davis. With them soft words buttered no parsnips, and they cared little how many pitchers might be broken by rude ones. The issue between them did not require a diagram to explain it. It was so simple a child might understand. It read, human slavery against human freedom, slave labor against free labor, and involved a conflict as inevitable as it was irrepressible.

Long before the guns of Beauregard opened fire upon Fort Sumter, and, fulfilling the programme of extremism, "blood was sprinkled in the faces of the people," the hustings in America had become a battle-ground, and every rood of debatable territory a ring for controversial mills, always tumultuous, and sometimes sanguinary. No sooner had the camp-fires of the Revolution—which warmed so many noble hearts and lighted so many patriotic lamps—no sooner had the camp-fires of the Revolution died out, than there began to burn, at first fitfully, then to blaze alarmingly in every direction, a succession of forest fires, baffling the energies and resources of the good and brave men who sought to put them out. Mr. Webster, at once a learned jurist and a prose poet, might thunder expositions of the written law, to quiet the fears of the slave-owner and to lull the waves of agitation. Mr. Clay, by his resistless eloquence and overmastering personality, might compromise first one and then another of the irreconcilable conditions that obstructed the pathway of conservative statesmanship. To no purpose, except to delay the fatal hour.

There were moving to the foreground moral forces which would down at no man's bidding. The still, small voice of emancipation, stifled for a moment by self-interest playing upon the fears of the timid, recovered its breath and broke into a cry for abolition. The cry for abolition rose in volume to a roar. Slowly, step by step, the forces of freedom advanced to

meet the forces of slavery. Gradually, these mighty, discordant elements approached the predestined line of battle; the gains for a while seeming to be in doubt, but in reality all on one side. There was less and less of middle ground. The middle men who ventured to get in the way were either struck down or absorbed by the one party or the other. The Senate had its Gettysburg; and many and many a Shiloh was fought on the floor of the House. Actual war raged in Kansas. The mysterious descent upon Harper's Ferry, like a fire-bell in the night, might have warned all men of the coming conflagration; might have revealed to all men a prophecy in the lines that, quoted to describe the scene, foretold the event—

“The rock-ribbed ledges drip with a silent horror of blood,
And Echo there, whatever is asked her, answers: ‘Death.’”

Greek was meeting Greek at last; and the field of politics became almost as sulphurous and murky as an actual field of battle.

Amid the noise and confusion, the clashing of intellects like sabers bright, and the booming of the big oratorical guns of the North and the South, now definitely arrayed, there came one day into the Northern camp one of the oddest figures imaginable; the figure of a man who, in spite of an appearance somewhat at outs with Hogarth's line of beauty, wore a serious aspect, if not an air of command, and, pausing to utter a single sentence that might be heard above the din,

passed on and for a moment disappeared. The sentence was pregnant with meaning. The man bore a commission from God on high! He said: "A house divided against itself can not stand. I believe this Government can not endure permanently half free and half slave. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved; I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided." He was Abraham Lincoln.

How shall I describe him to you? Shall I do so as he appeared to me, when I first saw him immediately on his arrival in the national capital, the chosen President of the United States, his appearance quite as strange as the story of his life, which was then but half known and half told, or shall I use the words of another and a more graphic word-painter?

In January, 1861, Col. A. K. McClure, of Pennsylvania, journeyed to Springfield, Illinois, to meet and confer with the man he had done so much to elect, but whom he had never personally known. "I went directly from the depot to Lincoln's house," says Col. McClure, "and rang the bell, which was answered by Lincoln, himself, opening the door. I doubt whether I wholly concealed my disappointment at meeting him. Tall, gaunt, ungainly, ill-clad, with a homeliness of manner that was unique in itself, I confess that my heart sank within me as I remembered that this was the man chosen by a great nation to become its ruler in the gravest period of its history. I remember his dress as if it were but yesterday—

snuff-colored and slouchy pantaloons; open black vest, held by a few brass buttons; straight or evening dress-coat, with tightly fitting sleeves to exaggerate his long, bony arms, all supplemented by an awkwardness that was uncommon among men of intelligence. Such was the picture I met in the person of Abraham Lincoln. We sat down in his plainly furnished parlor and were uninterrupted during the nearly four hours I remained with him, and little by little, as his earnestness, sincerity and candor were developed in conversation, I forgot all the grotesque qualities which so confounded me when I first greeted him. Before half an hour had passed I learned not only to respect, but, indeed, to reverence the man."

A graphic portrait, truly, and not unlike. I recall him, two months later, a little less uncouth, a little better dressed, but in singularity and in angularity much the same. All the world now takes an interest in every detail that concerned him, or that relates to the weird tragedy of his life and death.

And who was this peculiar being, destined in his mother's arms—for cradle he had none—so profoundly to affect the future of human-kind? He has told us, himself, in words so simple and unaffected, so idiomatic and direct, that we can neither misread them, nor improve upon them. Writing, in 1859, to one who had asked him for some biographic particulars, Abraham Lincoln said:

"I was born February 12, 1809, in Hardin county, Kentucky. My parents were both born in Virginia, of undistinguished families—second families, perhaps I should say. My mother, who died in my tenth year, was of a family of the name of Hanks. . . . My paternal grandfather, Abraham Lincoln, emigrated from Rockingham county, Va., to Kentucky about 1781 or 1782, where, a year or two later, he was killed by the Indians, not in battle, but by stealth, when he was laboring to open a farm in the forest. . . .

"My father (Thomas Lincoln) at the death of his father was but six years of age. By the early death of his father, and the very narrow circumstances of his mother, he was, even in childhood, a wandering, laboring boy, and grew up literally without education. He never did more in the way of writing than bunglingly to write his own name. . . . He removed from Kentucky to what is now Spencer county, Indiana, in my eighth year. . . . It was a wild region, with many bears and other animals still in the woods. . . . There were some schools, so-called, but no qualification was ever required of a teacher beyond 'readin', writin', and cipherin' to the rule of three.' If a straggler supposed to understand Latin happened to sojourn in the neighborhood he was looked upon as a wizard. . . . Of course, when I came of age I did not know much. Still, somehow, I could read, write and cipher to the rule of three. But that was all. . . . The little advance I now have upon this store of education I have picked up from time to time under the pressure of necessity.

"I was raised to farm work . . . till I was twenty-two. At twenty-one I came to Illinois, Macon county. Then I got to New Salem, . . . where I remained a year as a sort of clerk in a store. Then came the Black Hawk war; and I was elected captain of a volunteer company, a success that gave me more pleasure than any I have had since. I went the campaign, was elated, ran for the Legislature the same year (1832), and was beaten

—the only time I ever have been beaten by the people. The next, and three succeeding biennial elections, I was elected to the Legislature. I was not a candidate afterward. During the legislative period I had studied law and removed to Springfield to practice it. In 1846 I was elected to the lower house of Congress. Was not a candidate for re-election. From 1849 to 1854, inclusive, practiced law more assiduously than ever before. Always a Whig in politics, and generally on the Whig electoral tickets, making active canvasses. I was losing interest in politics when the repeal of the Missouri Compromise aroused me again.

“If any personal description of me is thought desirable, it may be said that I am in height six feet four inches, nearly; lean in flesh, weighing on an average one hundred and eighty pounds; dark complexion, with coarse black hair and gray eyes. No other marks or brands recollected.”

There is the whole story, told by himself, and brought down to the point where he became a figure of national importance.

His political philosophy was expounded in four elaborate speeches; one delivered at Peoria, Ill., the 16th of October, 1854; one at Springfield, Ill., the 16th of June, 1858; one at Columbus, Ohio, the 16th of September, 1859, and one the 27th of February, 1860, at Cooper Institute, in the city of New York. Of course Mr. Lincoln made many speeches and very good speeches. But these four, progressive in character, contain the sum total of his creed touching the organic character of the Government and at the same time his party view of contemporary issues. They show him to have been an old-line Whig of the school

of Henry Clay, with strong emancipation leanings; a thorough anti-slavery man, but never an extremist or an abolitionist. To the last he hewed to the line thus laid down.

Two or three years ago I referred to Abraham Lincoln—in a casual way—as one “inspired of God.” I was taken to task for this and thrown upon my defense. Knowing less then than I know now of Mr. Lincoln, I confined myself to the superficial aspects of the case; to the career of a man who seemed to have lacked the opportunity to prepare himself for the great estate to which he had come, plucked as it were from obscurity by a caprice of fortune.

Accepting the doctrine of inspiration as a law of the universe, I still stand to this belief; but I must qualify it as far as it conveys the idea that Mr. Lincoln was not as well equipped in actual knowledge of men and affairs as any of his contemporaries. Mr. Webster once said that he had been preparing to make his reply to Hayne for thirty years. Mr. Lincoln had been in unconscious training for the Presidency for thirty years. His maiden address as a candidate for the Legislature, issued at the ripe old age of twenty-three, closes with these words, “But if the good people in their wisdom shall see fit to keep me in the background, I have been too familiar with disappointment to be very much chagrined.” The man who wrote that sentence, thirty years later wrote this sentence: “The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field

and patriot-grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the angels of our better nature." Between those two sentences, joined by a kindred, somber thought, flowed a life-current—

"Strong, without rage, without o'erflowing, full,"

pausing never for an instant; deepening whilst it ran, but nowise changing its course or its tones; always the same; calm; patient; affectionate; like one born to a destiny, and, as in a dream, feeling its resistless force.

It is needful to a complete understanding of Mr. Lincoln's relation to the time and to his place in the political history of the country, that the student peruse closely the four speeches to which I have called attention; they underlie all that passed in the famous debate with Douglas; all that their author said and did after he succeeded to the presidency. They stand to-day as masterpieces of popular oratory. But for our present purpose the debate with Douglas will suffice—the most extraordinary intellectual spectacular the annals of our party warfare afford. Lincoln entered the canvass unknown outside the State of Illinois. He closed it renowned from one end of the land to the other.

Judge Douglas was himself unsurpassed as a stump-speaker and ready debater. But in that campaign, from first to last, Judge Douglas was at

a serious disadvantage. His bark rode upon an ebbing time; Lincoln's bark rode upon a flowing tide. African slavery was the issue now; and the whole trend of modern thought was set against slavery. The Democrats seemed hopelessly divided. The Little Giant had to face a triangular opposition embracing the Republicans, the Administration, or Buchanan Democrats, and a little remnant of the old Whigs, who fancied that their party was still alive and thought to hold some kind of balance of power. Judge Douglas called the combination the "allied army," and declared that he would deal with it "just as the Russians dealt with the allies at Sebastopol—that is, the Russians did not stop to inquire, when they fired a broadside, whether it hit an Englishman, a Frenchman or a Turk." It was something more than a witticism when Mr. Lincoln rejoined, "In that case, I beg he will indulge us whilst we suggest to him that those allies took Sebastopol."

He followed this center-shot with volley after volley of exposition so clear, of reasoning so close, of illustration so pointed, and, at times, of humor so incisive, that, though he lost his election—though the allies did not then take Sebastopol—his defeat counted for more than Douglas' victory, for it made him the logical and successful candidate for President of the United States two years later.

What could be more captivating to an out-door audience than Lincoln's description "of the two

persons who stand before the people of the State as candidates for the Senate," to quote his prefatory words? "Judge Douglas," he said, "is of world-wide renown. All the anxious politicians of his party . . . have been looking upon him as certainly . . . to be President of the United States. They have seen in his round, jolly, fruitful face, post-offices, land-offices, marshalships, and cabinet appointments, chargeships and foreign missions, bursting and spreading out in wonderful exuberance, ready to be laid hold of by their greedy hands. And as they have been gazing upon this attractive picture so long, they can not, in the little distraction that has taken place in the party, bring themselves to give up the charming hope; but with greedier anxiety they rush about him, sustain him and give him marches, triumphal entries and receptions, beyond what in the days of his highest prosperity they could have brought about in his favor. On the contrary, nobody has ever expected me to be President. In my poor, lean, lank face nobody has ever seen that any cabbages were sprouting."

As the debate advanced, these cheery tones deepened into harsher notes; crimination and recrimination followed; the two gladiators were strung to their utmost tension. They became dreadfully in earnest. Personal collision was narrowly avoided. I have recently gone over the entire debate, and with a feeling I can only describe as most contemplative, most melancholy.

I knew Judge Douglas well; I admired, re-

spected, loved him. I shall never forget the day he quitted Washington to go to his home in Illinois to return no more. Tears were in his eyes and his voice trembled like a woman's. He was then a dying man. He had burned the candle at both ends from his boyhood; an eager, ardent, hard-working, pleasure-loving man; and though not yet fifty, the candle was burned out. His infirmities were no greater than those of Mr. Clay; not to be mentioned with those of Mr. Webster. But he lived in more exacting times. The old-style party organ, with its mock heroics and its dull respectability, its beggarly array of empty news columns and cheap advertising, had been succeeded by that unsparring, tell-tale scandal-monger, Modern Journalism, with its myriad of hands and eyes, its vast retinue of detectives, and its quick transit over flashing wires, annihilating time and space. Too fierce a light beat upon the private life of public men, and Douglas suffered from this as Clay and Webster, Silas Wright and Franklin Pierce had not suffered.

The presidential bee was in his bonnet, certainly; but its buzzing there was not noisier than in the bonnets of other great Americans, who have been dazzled by that wretched bauble. His plans and schemes came to naught. He died at the moment when the death of those plans and schemes was made more palpable and impressive by the roar of cannon proclaiming the reality of that irrepressible conflict he had refused to foresee and had struggled to avert. His life-long

rival was at the head of affairs. No one has found occasion to come to the rescue of his fame. No party interest has been identified with his memory. But when the truth of history is written, it will be told that, not less than Webster and Clay, he, too, was a patriotic man, who loved his country and tried to save the Union. He tried to save the Union, even as Webster and Clay had tried to save it, by compromises and expedients. It was too late. The string was played out. Where they had succeeded he failed; but, for the nobility of his intention, the amplitude of his resources, the splendor of his combat, he merits all that any leader of losing cause ever gained in the report of posterity; and posterity will not deny him the title of statesman.

In that great debate it was Titan against Titan; and, perusing it after the lapse of forty years, the philosophic and impartial critic will conclude which got the better of it, Lincoln or Douglas, much according to his sympathy with the one or the other. Douglas, as I have said, had the disadvantage of riding an ebb-tide. But Lincoln encountered a disadvantage in riding a flood-tide, which was flowing too fast for a man so conservative and so honest as he was. Thus there was not a little equivocation on both sides foreign to the nature of the two. Both wanted to be frank. Both thought they were being frank. But each was a little afraid of his own logic; each was a little afraid of his own following; and hence there was considerable hair-splitting,

involving accusations that did not accuse and denials that did not deny. They were politicians, these two, as well as statesmen; they were politicians, and what they did not know about political campaigning was hardly worth knowing. Reverently, I take off my hat to both of them; and I turn down the page; I close the book and lay it on its shelf, with the inward ejaculation, "there were giants in those days."

I am not undertaking to deliver an oral biography of Abraham Lincoln, and shall pass over the events which quickly led up to his nomination and election to the presidency in 1860.

I met the newly elected President the afternoon of the day in the early morning of which he had arrived in Washington. It was a Saturday, I think. He came to the Capitol under Mr. Seward's escort, and, among the rest, I was presented to him. His appearance did not impress me as fantastically as it had impressed Colonel McClure. I was more familiar with the Western type than Colonel McClure, and, whilst Mr. Lincoln was certainly not an Adonis, even after prairie ideals, there was about him a dignity that commanded respect.

I met him again the forenoon of the 4th of March in his apartment at Willard's Hotel as he was preparing to start to his inauguration, and was touched by his unaffected kindness; for I came with a matter requiring his immediate attention. He was entirely self-possessed; no trace of nervousness; and very obliging. I accompanied the

cortege that passed from the Senate chamber to the east portico of the capitol, and, as Mr. Lincoln removed his hat to face the vast multitude in front and below, I extended my hand to receive it, but Judge Douglas, just beside me, reached over my outstretched arm and took the hat, holding it throughout the delivery of the inaugural address. I stood near enough to the speaker's elbow not to obstruct any gestures he might make, though he made but few; and then it was that I began to comprehend something of the power of the man.

He delivered that inaugural address as if he had been delivering inaugural addresses all his life. Firm, resonant, earnest, it announced the coming of a man; of a leader of men; and in its ringing tones and elevated style, the gentlemen he had invited to become members of his political family—each of whom thought himself a bigger man than his master—might have heard the voice and seen the hand of a man born to command. Whether they did or not, they very soon ascertained the fact. From the hour Abraham Lincoln crossed the threshold of the White House to the hour he went thence to his death, there was not a moment when he did not dominate the political and military situation and all his official subordinates.

Mr. Seward was the first to fall a victim to his own temerity. One of the most extraordinary incidents that ever passed between a chief and his lieutenant came about before the first month

of the new administration had closed. The 1st of April Mr. Seward submitted to Mr. Lincoln a memorandum, entitled "Some Thoughts for the President's Consideration." He began this by saying: "We are at the end of a month's administration, and yet without a policy, either foreign or domestic." Then follows a series of suggestions hardly less remarkable for their character than for their emanation. There are quite a baker's dozen of them, for the most part flimsy and irrelevant; but two of them are so conspicuous for a lack of sagacity and comprehension that I shall quote them as a sample of the whole:

"We must change the question before the public," says Mr. Seward, "from one upon slavery, or about slavery, to one upon Union or disunion,"—as if it had not been thus changed already,—and "I would demand explanations from Spain and France, energetically, at once, . . . and if satisfactory explanations are not received from Spain and France, I would convene Congress and declare war against them. . . . I would seek explanations from Great Britain and Russia, and send agents into Canada, Mexico and Central America to arouse a vigorous spirit of Continental independence on this continent against European intervention."

Think of it! At the moment this advice was seriously given the head of the Government by the head of the Cabinet—supposed to be the most accomplished statesman and astute diplomatist of his time—a Southern Confederacy had

been actually established, and Europe was only too eager for some pretext to put in its oar, and effectually, finally, to compel a dissolution of the Union and to compass the defeat of the Republican experiment in America. The Government of the United States had but to make a grimace at France and Spain; to bat its eye at England and Russia, to raise up a quadruple alliance, Monarchy against Democracy, bringing down upon itself the navies of the world, and double assuring, double confirming the Government of Jefferson Davis.

In concluding these astounding counsels, Mr. Seward says:

“But whatever policy we adopt, there must be an energetic prosecution of it.

“For this purpose it must be somebody’s business to pursue and direct it incessantly.

“Either the President must do it himself and be all the while active in it, or devolve it on some member of his Cabinet.

“Once adopted, all debates on it must end and all agree and abide.

“It is not in my especial province; but I neither seek to evade nor assume responsibility.”

Before hearing Mr. Lincoln’s answer to all this, consider what it really implied. If Mr. Seward had simply said: “Mr. Lincoln, you are a failure as President, but turn over the direction of affairs exclusively to me, and all shall be well and all be forgiven,” he could not have spoken more explicitly and hardly more offensively.

Now mark how a great man carries himself at a critical moment under extreme provocation. Here is the answer Mr. Lincoln sent Mr. Seward that very night:

“EXECUTIVE MANSION, April 1, 1861.—Hon. W. H. Seward—My Dear Sir: Since parting with you I have been considering your paper dated this day and entitled ‘some thoughts for the President’s consideration.’ The first proposition in it is, ‘we are at the end of a month’s administration and yet without a policy, either domestic or foreign.’

“At the beginning of that month in the inaugural I said: ‘The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy and possess the property and places belonging to the Government, and to collect the duties and imports.’ This had your distinct approval at the time; and taken in connection with the order I immediately gave General Scott, directing him to employ every means in his power to strengthen and hold the forts, comprises the exact domestic policy you urge, with the single exception that it does not propose to abandon Fort Sumter.

“The news received yesterday in regard to Santo Domingo certainly brings a new item within the range of our foreign policy, but up to that time we have been preparing circulars and instructions to ministers and the like, all in perfect harmony, without even a suggestion that we had no foreign policy.

“Upon your closing proposition—that ‘Whatever policy we adopt, there must be an energetic prosecution of it.

“ ‘For this purpose it must be somebody’s business to pursue and direct it incessantly.

“ ‘Either the President must do it himself, and be all the while active in it, or devolve it upon some member of his Cabinet.

“ ‘Once adopted, debates must end, and all agree and

abide.' I remark that if this be done, I must do it. When a general line of policy is adopted, I apprehend there is no danger of its being changed without good reason, or continuing to be a subject of unnecessary debate; still, upon points arising in its progress, I wish, and suppose I am entitled to have, the advice of all the Cabinet. Your obedient servant,

A. LINCOLN."

I agree with Lincoln's biographers that in this letter not a word was omitted that was necessary, and not a hint or allusion is contained that could be dispensed with. It was conclusive. It ended the argument. Mr. Seward dropped into his place. Mr. Lincoln never referred to it. From that time forward the understanding between them was mutual and perfect. So much so that when, the 21st of the following May, Mr. Seward submitted to the President the draft of a letter of instruction to Charles Francis Adams, then Minister to England, Mr. Lincoln did not hesitate to change much of its character and purpose by his alterations of its text. The original copy of this dispatch, in Mr. Seward's handwriting, with Mr. Lincoln's interlineations, is still to be seen on file in the Department of State. It is safe to say that, if that letter had gone as Mr. Seward wrote it, a war with England would have been inevitable. Mr. Lincoln's additions, hardly less than his suppressions, present a curious contrast between the seer in affairs and the scholar in affairs. Even in the substitution of one word for another, Mr. Lincoln shows a comprehension both of the situation and the language which seems to have

been wholly wanting in Mr. Seward, with all his experience and learning. It is said that, pondering over this document, weighing in his mind its meaning and import, his head bowed and pencil in hand, Mr. Lincoln was overheard murmuring to himself: "One war at a time—one war at a time."

Whilst I am on this matter of who was really President whilst Abraham Lincoln occupied the office, I may as well settle it. We all remember that, in setting up for a bigger man than his chief, Mr. Chase fared no better than Mr. Seward. But it is sometimes said that Mr. Stanton was more successful in this line. Many amusing stories are told of how Stanton lorded it over Lincoln. On a certain occasion it is related that the President was informed by an irate friend that the Secretary of War had not only refused to execute an order of his, but had called him a fool into the bargain. "Did Stanton say I was a fool?" said Lincoln. "Yes," replied his friend, "he said you were a blank, blank fool!" Lincoln looked first good-humoredly at his friend and then furtively out of the window in the direction of the War Department, and carelessly observed: "If Stanton said that I was a blank fool, it must be true, for he is nearly always right and generally says what he means. I will just step over and see Stanton."

On another occasion Mr. Lincoln is quoted as saying: "I have very little influence with this Administration, but I hope to have more with the next."

Complacent humor such as this simply denotes

assured position. It is merely the graciousness of conscious power. But there happens to be on record a story of a different kind. This is related by Gen. James B. Fry, Provost Marshal General of the United States, on duty in the War Department.

As General Fry tells it, Mr. Stanton seems to have had the right of it. The President had given an order which the Secretary of War had refused to issue. The President thereupon came into the War Department and this is what happened. In answer to Mr. Lincoln's inquiry as to the cause of the trouble, Mr. Stanton went over the record and the grounds for his action, and concluded with: "Now, Mr. President, these are the facts, and you must see that your order can not be executed."

Lincoln sat upon a sofa with his legs crossed—I am quoting General Fry—and did not say a word until the Secretary's last remark. Then he said in a somewhat positive tone: "Mr. Secretary, I reckon you'll have to execute the order."

Stanton replied with asperity—"Mr. President, I can not do it. The order is an improper one and I can not execute it."

Lincoln fixed his eye upon Stanton, and in a firm voice, and with an accent that clearly showed his determination, he said:

"Mr. Secretary, it will have to be done."

"Stanton then realized"—I am still quoting General Fry—"that he was overmatched. He had made a square issue with the President and

been defeated, notwithstanding the fact that he was in the right. Upon an intimation from him I withdrew and did not witness his surrender. A few minutes after I reached my office I received instructions from the Secretary to carry out the President's order. Stanton never mentioned the subject to me afterward, nor did I ever ascertain the special, and no doubt sufficient reason, which the President had for his action in the case."

Once General Halleck got on a high horse, and demanded that, if Mr. Lincoln approved some ill-natured remarks alleged to have been made of certain military men about Washington, by Montgomery Blair, the Postmaster-General, he should dismiss the officers from the service, but, if he did not approve, he should dismiss the Postmaster-General from the Cabinet. Mr. Lincoln's reply is very characteristic. He declined to do either of the things demanded. He said :

"Whether the remarks were really made I do not know, nor do I suppose such knowledge necessary to a correct response. If they were made, I do not approve them; and yet, under the circumstances, I would not dismiss a member of the Cabinet therefor. I do not consider what may have been hastily said in a moment of vexation . . . sufficient ground for so grave a step. Besides this, truth is generally the best vindication against slander. I propose continuing to be myself the judge as to when a member of the Cabinet shall be dismissed."

Next day, however, he issued a warning to the members of his political family, which, in the form

of a memorandum, he read to them. There is nothing equivocal about this. In language and in tone it is the utterance of a master. I will read it to you, as it is very brief and to the purpose. The President said:

“I must myself be the judge how long to retain and when to remove any of you from his position. It would greatly pain me to discover any of you endeavoring to procure another’s removal, or in any way to prejudice him before the public. Such endeavor would be a wrong to me, and much worse, a wrong to the country. My wish is, that on this subject no remark be made, nor any question be asked by any of you, here or elsewhere, now or hereafter.”

Always courteous, always tolerant, always making allowance, yet always explicit, his was the master-spirit, his the guiding hand; committing to each of the members of his Cabinet the details of the work of his own department; caring nothing for petty sovereignty; but reserving to himself all that related to great policies, the starting of moral forces and the moving of organized ideas.

I want to say just here a few words about Mr. Lincoln’s relation to the South and the people of the South.

He was, himself, a Southern man. He and all his tribe were Southerners. Although he left Kentucky when but a child, he was an old child; he never was very young; and he grew to manhood in a Kentucky colony; for what was Illinois in those days but a Kentucky colony, grown since

somewhat out of proportion? He was in no sense what we in the South used to call "a poor white." Awkward, perhaps; ungainly, perhaps, but aspiring; the spirit of a hero beneath that rugged exterior; the soul of a prose-poet behind those heavy brows; the courage of a lion back of those patient, kindly aspects; and, long before he was of legal age, a leader. His first love was a Rutledge; his wife was a Todd.

Let the romancist tell the story of his romance. I dare not. No sadder idyl can be found in all the short and simple annals of the poor.

We know that he was a prose-poet; for have we not that immortal prose-poem recited at Gettysburg? We know that he was a statesman; for has not time vindicated his conclusions? But the South does not know, except as a kind of hearsay, that he was a friend; the one friend who had the power and the will to save it from itself. He was the one man in public life who could have come to the head of affairs in 1861 bringing with him none of the embittered resentments growing out of the anti-slavery battle. Whilst Seward, Chase, Sumner and the rest had been engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the Southern leaders at Washington, Lincoln, a philosopher and a statesman, had been observing the course of events from afar, and like a philosopher and a statesman. The direst blow that could have been laid upon the prostrate South was delivered by the assassin's bullet that struck him down.

But I digress. Throughout the contention

that preceded the war, amid the passions that attended the war itself, not one bitter, proscriptive word escaped the lips of Abraham Lincoln, whilst there was hardly a day that he was not projecting his great personality between some Southern man or woman and danger.

Under date of February 2, 1848, and from the hall of the House of Representatives at Washington, whilst he was serving as a member of Congress, I find this short note to his law partner at Springfield:

“DEAR WILLIAM: I take up my pen to tell you that Mr. Stephens, of Georgia, a little, slim, pale-faced, consumptive man, with a voice like Logan’s” (that was Stephen T., not John A.), “has just concluded the very best speech of an hour’s length I ever heard. My old, withered, dry eyes” (he was then not quite thirty-seven years of age) “are full of tears yet.”

From that time forward he never ceased to love Stephens, of Georgia.

After that famous Hampton Roads conference, when the Confederate Commissioners, Stephens, Campbell and Hunter, had traversed the field of official routine with Mr. Lincoln, the President, and Mr. Seward, the Secretary of State, Lincoln, the friend, still the old Whig colleague, though one was now President of the United States and the other Vice-President of the Southern Confederacy, took the “slim, pale-faced, consumptive man” aside, and, pointing to a sheet of paper he held in his hand, said: “Stephens, let me write ‘Union’ at the top of that page, and

you may write below it whatever else you please."

In the preceding conversation Mr. Lincoln had intimated that payment for the slaves was not outside a possible agreement for reunion and peace. He based that statement upon a plan he already had in hand, to appropriate four hundred millions of dollars to this purpose.

There are those who have put themselves to the pains of challenging this statement of mine. It admits of no possible equivocation. Mr. Lincoln carried with him to Fortress Monroe two documents that still stand in his own handwriting; one of them a joint resolution to be passed by the two Houses of Congress appropriating the four hundred millions, the other a proclamation to be issued by himself, as President, when the joint resolution had been passed. These formed no part of the discussion at Hampton Roads, because Mr. Stephens told Mr. Lincoln they were limited to treating upon the basis of the recognition of the Confederacy, and to all intents and purposes the conference died before it was actually born. But Mr. Lincoln was so filled with the idea that next day, when he had returned to Washington, he submitted the two documents to the members of his Cabinet. Excepting Mr. Seward, they were all against him. He said: "Why, gentlemen, how long is the war going to last? It is not going to end this side of a hundred days, is it? It is costing us four millions a day. There are the four hundred millions, not counting

the loss of life and property in the meantime. But you are all against me, and I will not press the matter upon you." I have not cited this fact of history to attack, or even to criticise, the policy of the Confederate Government, but simply to illustrate the wise magnanimity and justice of the character of Abraham Lincoln. For my part I rejoice that the war did not end at Fortress Monroe—or any other conference—but that it was fought out to its bitter and logical conclusion at Appomattox.

It was the will of God that there should be, as God's own prophet had promised, "a new birth of freedom," and this could only be reached by the obliteration of the very idea of slavery. God struck Lincoln down in the moment of his triumph, to attain it; He blighted the South to attain it. But He did attain it. And here we are this night to attest it. God's will be done on earth as it is done in Heaven. But let no Southern man point finger at me because I canonize Abraham Lincoln, for he was the one friend we had at Court when friends were most in need; he was the one man in power who wanted to preserve us intact, to save us from the wolves of passion and plunder that stood at our door; and as that God, of whom it has been said that "whom He loveth He chasteneth," meant that the South should be chastened, Lincoln was put out of the way by the bullet of an assassin, having neither lot nor parcel, North or South, but a winged emissary of fate, flown from the shadows

of the mystic world, which *Æschylus* and *Shakespeare* created and consecrated to tragedy!

I sometimes wonder shall we ever attain a journalism sufficiently upright in its treatment of current events to publish fully and fairly the utterances of our public men, and, except in cases of provable dishonor, to leave their motives and their personalities alone?

Reading just what *Abraham Lincoln* did say and did do, it is inconceivable how such a man could have aroused antagonism so bitter and abuse so savage, to fall at last by the hand of an assassin.

We boast our superior civilization and our enlightened freedom of speech; and yet, how few of us—when a strange voice begins to utter unfamiliar or unpalatable things—how few of us stop and ask ourselves, may not this man be speaking the truth after all? It is so easy to call names. It is so easy to impugn motives. It is so easy to misrepresent opinions we can not answer. From the least to the greatest what creatures we are of party spirit, and yet, for the most part, how small its aims, how imperfect its instruments, how disappointing its conclusions!

One thinks now that the world in which *Abraham Lincoln* lived might have dealt more gently by such a man. He was himself so gentle—so upright in nature and so broad of mind—so sunny and so tolerant in temper—so simple and so unaffected in bearing—a rude exterior covering an undaunted spirit, proving by his every act and word that—

“The bravest are the tenderest,
The loving are the daring.”

Though he was a party leader, he was a typical and patriotic American, in whom even his enemies might have found something to respect and admire. But it could not be so. He committed one grievous offense; he dared to think and he was not afraid to speak; he was far in advance of his party and his time; and men are slow to forgive what they do not readily understand.

Yet, all the while that the waves of passion were dashing over his sturdy figure, reared above the dead-level, as a lone oak upon a sandy beach, not one harsh word rankled in his heart to sour the milk of human kindness that, like a perennial spring from the gnarled roots of some majestic tree, flowed within him. He would smooth over a rough place in his official intercourse with a funny story fitting the case in point, and they called him a trifler. He would round off a logical argument with a familiar example, hitting the nail squarely on the head and driving it home, and they called him a buffoon. Big wigs and little wigs were agreed that he lowered the dignity of debate; as if debates were intended to mystify, and not to clarify truth. Yet he went on and on, and never backward, until his time was come, when his genius, fully developed, rose to the great exigencies intrusted to his hands. Where did he get his style? Ask Shakespeare and Burns where they got their style. Where did he get

his grasp upon affairs and his knowledge of men? Ask the Lord God who created miracles in Luther and Bonaparte!

Here, under date of November 21, 1864, amid the excitement attendant upon his re-election to the Presidency, Mr. Lincoln found time to write the following letter to Mrs. Bixby, of Boston, a poor widow who had lost five sons killed in battle.

MY DEAR MADAM: I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant-General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from a loss so overwhelming. But I can not refrain from tendering you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours very sincerely and respectfully,

A. LINCOLN.

Contrast this exquisite prose-poem with the answer he made to General Grant, who asked him whether he should make an effort to capture Jefferson Davis. "I told Grant," said Lincoln, relating the incident, "the story of an Irishman who had taken Father Matthew's pledge. Soon thereafter, becoming very thirsty, he slipped into a saloon and applied for a lemonade, and whilst it was being mixed he whispered to the bar-

tender: 'Av ye could drap a bit o' brandy in it, all unbeknown to myself, I'd make no fuss about it.' My notion was that if Grant could let Jeff Davis escape all unbeknown to himself, he was to let him go. I didn't want him."

When we recall all that did happen when Jefferson Davis was captured, and what a white elephant he became in the hands of the Government, it will be seen that there was sagacity as well as humor in Lincoln's illustration.

A goodly volume, embracing passages from the various speeches and writings of Abraham Lincoln, might be compiled to show that he was a master of English prose. The Gettysburg address has innumerable counterparts, as far as mere style goes. But there needs to be no further proof that the man who could scribble such a composition as that with a lead-pencil on a pad in a railway carriage was the equal of any man who ever wrote his mother tongue. As a conclusive example—as short as it is sublime—let me read it to you. Like a chapter of Holy Writ, it can never grow old or stale:

"Four-score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new Nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

"Now we are engaged in a great Civil War, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live.

It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

“ But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far beyond our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here; but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

I have said that Abraham Lincoln was an old-line Whig of the school of Henry Clay, with strong free-soil opinions, but never an extremist or an abolitionist. He was what they used to call in those old days “a Conscience Whig.” He stood in actual awe of the Constitution and his oath of office. Hating slavery, he recognized its constitutional existence and rights. He wanted gradually to extinguish it, not to despoil those who held it as a property interest. He was so faithful to these principles that he approached emancipation, not only with great deliberation, but with many misgivings. He issued his final proclamation as a military necessity; as a war measure; and even then, so just

was his nature that he was meditating some kind of just restitution.

I gather that he was not a Civil Service Reformer of the School of Grover Cleveland, because I find among his papers a short, peremptory note to Stanton, in which he says: "I personally wish Jacob Freese, of New Jersey, appointed colonel of a colored regiment, and this regardless of whether he can tell the exact color of Julius Cæsar's hair."

His unconventionalism was only equaled by his humanity. No custodian of absolute power ever exercised it so benignly. His interposition in behalf of men sentenced to death by courts-martial became so demoralizing that his generals in the field united in a round-robin protest. Both Grant and Sherman cut the wires between their headquarters and Washington to escape his interference with the iron rule of military discipline.

A characteristic story is told by John B. Ally, of Boston, who, going to the White House three days in succession, found each day in the outer halls a gray-haired old man, silently weeping. The third day, touched by this not uncommon spectacle, he went up to the old man and ascertained that he had a son under sentence of death and was trying to reach the President.

"Come along," said Ally, "I'll take you to the President."

Mr. Lincoln listened to the old man's pitiful story, and sadly replied that he had just received a telegram from the general in command, implor-

ing him not to interfere. The old man cast one last heart-broken look at the President, and started shuffling toward the door. Before he reached it Mr. Lincoln called him back. "Come back, old man," he said, "come back! the generals may telegraph and telegraph, but I am going to pardon that young man."

Thereupon he sent a dispatch directing sentence to be suspended until execution should be ordered by himself. Then the old man burst out crying again, exclaiming: "Mr. President, that is not a pardon, you only hold up the sentence of my boy until you can order him to be shot!"

Lincoln turned quickly and, half smiles, half tears, said: "Go along, old man, go along in peace; if your son lives until I order him to be shot, he'll grow to be as old as Methuselah!"

I could keep you here all night relating such incidents. They were common occurrences at the White House. There was not a day of Lincoln's life that he was not doing some act of charity; not like a sentimentalist, overcome by his emotions, but like a brave, sensible man, who knew where to draw the line and who made few, if any, mistakes.

I find no better examples of the peculiar cast of his mind than are interspersed throughout the record of his intercourse with his own relations. His domestic correspondence is full of canny wisdom and unconscious humor. In particular, he had a ne'er-do-well step-brother, by the name of Johnston, a son of his father's

second wife, of whom he was very fond. There are many letters to this Johnston. One of these I am going to read you, because it will require neither apology nor explanation. It is illustrative of both the canny wisdom and unconscious humor. Thus:

“SPRINGFIELD, Jan. 2, 1851.—*Dear Brother:* Your request for eighty dollars I do not think it best to comply with now. At the various times I have helped you a little you have said: ‘We can get along very well now,’ but in a short time I find you in the same difficulty again. Now this can only happen through some defect in you. What that defect is I think I know. You are not lazy, and still you are an idler. I doubt whether since I saw you you have done a good, whole day’s work in any one day. You do not very much dislike to work, and still you do not work much, merely because it does not seem to you you get enough for it. This habit of uselessly wasting time is the whole difficulty. It is vastly important to you, and still more to your children, that you break the habit. . . .

“You are now in need of some money, and what I propose is that you shall go to work, ‘tooth and nail,’ for somebody who will give you money for it. Let father and your boys take charge of your things at home, prepare for a crop and make the crop, and you go to work for the best money wages you can get, or in discharge of any debt you owe, and, to secure you a fair reward for your labor, I promise you that for every dollar you will get for your labor between this and the 1st of May, either in money, or in your indebtedness, I will then give you one other dollar. By this, if you hire yourself for ten dollars a month, from me you will get ten dollars more, making twenty dollars. . . .

“In this I do not mean that you shall go off to St. Louis or the lead mines in Missouri, or the gold mines in California, but I mean for you to go at it for the best

wages you can get close to home in Coles county. If you will do this you will soon be out of debt, and, what is better, you will have acquired a habit which will keep you from getting in debt again. But if I should now clear you out of debt, next year you would be just as deep in debt as ever.

"You say you would almost give your place in Heaven for seventy or eighty dollars? Then you value your place in Heaven very cheap, for I am sure you can, with the offer I make, get the seventy or eighty dollars for four or five months' work.

"You say if I will lend you the money, you will deed me the land, and, if you don't pay the money back, you will deliver possession. Nonsense! If you can not now live with the land, how will you then live without it?

"You have always been kind to me, and I do not mean to be unkind to you. On the contrary, if you will but follow my advice, you will find it worth eighty times eighty dollars to you.

"Affectionately your brother,

A. LINCOLN."

Could anything be wiser, sweeter, or delivered in terms more specific yet more fraternal? And that was Abraham Lincoln from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet.

I am going to spare you and myself, and the dear ones of his own blood who are here to-night, the story of the awful tragedy that closed the life of this great man, this good man, this typical American.

Beside that tragedy, most other tragedies, epic and real, become insignificant. "Within the narrow compass of that stage-box that night were five human beings; the most illustrious of modern heroes, crowned with the most stupendous vic-

tory of modern times; his beloved wife, proud and happy; two betrothed lovers with all the promise of felicity that youth, social position and wealth could give them; and a young actor, handsome as Endymion upon Latmus, the idol of his little world. The glitter of fame, happiness and ease was upon the entire group; but in an instant everything was to be changed with the blinding swiftness of enchantment. Quick death was to come on the central figure of that company. . . . Over all the rest the blackest fates hovered menacingly; fates from which a mother might pray that kindly death would save her children in their infancy. One was to wander with the stain of murder on his soul, with the curses of a world upon his name, with a price set upon his head, in frightful physical pain, till he died a dog's death in a burning barn. The stricken wife was to pass the rest of her days in melancholy and madness; of those two young lovers, one was to slay the other, and then end his life a raving maniac!"* No book of tragedy contains a single chapter quite so dark as that.

What was the mysterious power of this mysterious man, and whence?

His was the genius of common sense: of common sense in action; of common sense in thought; of common sense enriched by experience and unhindered by fear. "He was a common man," says his friend Joshua Speed, "expanded into giant proportions: well acquainted with the

* Hay and Nicolay's Life.

people, he placed his hand on the beating pulse of the nation, judged of its disease, and was ready with a remedy." Inspired he was truly, as Shakespeare was inspired; as Mozart was inspired; as Burns was inspired; each, like him, sprung directly from the people.

I look into the crystal globe that, slowly turning, tells the story of his life, and I see a little heart-broken boy, weeping by the outstretched form of a dead mother, then bravely, nobly trudging a hundred miles to obtain her Christian burial. I see this motherless lad growing to manhood amid scenes that seem to lead to nothing but abasement; no teachers; no books; no chart, except his own untutored mind; no compass, except his own undisciplined will; no light, save light from Heaven; yet, like the caravel of Columbus, struggling on and on through the trough of the sea, always toward the destined land. I see the full-grown man, stalwart and brave, an athlete in activity of movement and strength of limb, yet vexed by weird dreams and visions; of life, of love, of religion, sometimes verging on despair. I see the mind, grown as robust as the body, throw off these phantoms of the imagination and give itself wholly to the work-a-day uses of the world; the rearing of children; the earning of bread; the multiplied duties of life. I see the party leader, self-confident in conscious rectitude; original, because it was not his nature to follow; potent, because he was fearless, pursuing his convictions with earnest

zeal, and urging them upon his fellows with the resources of an oratory which was hardly more impressive than it was many-sided. I see him, the preferred among his fellows, ascend the eminence reserved for him, and him alone of all the statesmen of the time, amid the derision of opponents and the distrust of supporters, yet unawed and unmoved, because thoroughly equipped to meet the emergency. The same being, from first to last; the poor child weeping over a dead mother; the great chief sobbing amid the cruel horrors of war; flinching not from duty, nor changing his life-long ways of dealing with the stern realities which pressed upon him and hurried him onward. And, last scene of all, that ends this strange, eventful history, I see him lying dead there in the capitol of the nation, to which he had rendered "the last, full measure of his devotion," the flag of his country around him, the world in mourning, and, asking myself how could any man have hated that man, I ask you, how can any man refuse his homage to his memory? Surely, he was one of God's elect; not in any sense a creature of circumstance, or accident. Recurring to the doctrine of inspiration, I say again and again, he was inspired of God, and I can not see how any one who believes in that doctrine can regard him as anything else.

From Cæsar to Bismarck and Gladstone the world has had its statesmen and its soldiers—men who rose to eminence and power step by step, through a series of geometric progression as it

were, each advancement following in regular order one after the other, the whole obedient to well-established and well-understood laws of cause and effect. They were not what we call "men of destiny." They were "men of the time." They were men whose careers had a beginning, a middle and an end, rounding off lives with histories, full it may be of interesting and exciting event, but comprehensive and comprehensible; simple, clear, complete.

The inspired ones are fewer. Whence their emanation, where and how they got their power, by what rule they lived, moved and had their being, we know not. There is no explication to their lives. They rose from shadow and they went in mist. We see them, feel them, but we know them not. They came, God's word upon their lips; they did their office, God's mantle about them; and they vanished, God's holy light between the world and them, leaving behind a memory, half mortal and half myth. From first to last they were the creations of some special Providence, baffling the wit of man to fathom, defeating the machinations of the world, the flesh and the devil, until their work was done, then passing from the scene as mysteriously as they had come upon it.

Tried by this standard, where shall we find an example so impressive as Abraham Lincoln, whose career might be chanted by a Greek chorus as at once the prelude and the epilogue of the most imperial theme of modern times?

Born as lowly as the Son of God, in a hovel; reared in penury, squalor, with no gleam of light or fair surrounding; without graces, actual or acquired; without name or fame or official training; it was reserved for this strange being, late in life, to be snatched from obscurity, raised to supreme command at a supreme moment, and intrusted with the destiny of a nation.

The great leaders of his party, the most experienced and accomplished public men of the day, were made to stand aside; were sent to the rear, whilst this fantastic figure was led by unseen hands to the front and given the reins of power. It is immaterial whether we were for him, or against him; wholly immaterial. That, during four years, carrying with them such a weight of responsibility as the world never witnessed before, he filled the vast space allotted him in the eyes and actions of mankind, is to say that he was inspired of God, for nowhere else could he have acquired the wisdom and the virtue.

Where did Shakespeare get his genius? Where did Mozart get his music? Whose hand smote the lyre of the Scottish plowman, and stayed the life of the German priest? God, God, and God alone; and as surely as these were raised up by God, inspired by God, was Abraham Lincoln; and a thousand years hence, no drama, no tragedy, no epic poem will be filled with greater wonder, or be followed by mankind with deeper feeling than that which tells the story of his life and death.





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