



ABRAHAM LINCOLN

AN ORATION

DELIVERED ON WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY, 1891

BY

WILLIAM G. FROST

Great Captains, with their guns and drums,
Disturb our judgment for an hour,
But at last silence comes;
These are all gone, and, standing like a tower,
Our children shall behold his fame,
The kindly-earnest, brave, foreseeing man,
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,
New birth of our new soil, the first American.

—LOWELL.

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The best teaching is by example. Ideas are most potent when embodied in living men, and thus invested with personality. The surest way to foster any noble sentiment is to select some event which illustrates it, or some hero who personifies it, and to set apart for that event or that hero a commemorative day. Let the artisan lay aside his tools, the matron her household cares, the student his books, and the very children their play. Let the pressure of routine be lifted; let our souls expand, and our best feelings assert themselves, while the great lesson is impressed upon our hearts.

American patriotism is reenforced by four such commemorative days. The sun of July is greeted by earth-shaking cannon and sky-piercing rockets, which assert with boisterous acclaim the independence of a new nation.

The breath of May sweeps over a more quiet gathering. It brings flowers—as though kind nature were a sharer of our grief—flowers for the humble grave of the private soldier; and it reminds us of the million arms that can strike as one for the defence of a righteous cause.

The dull sky of November is a fitting background for the festival of household cheer. Thanksgiving teaches us to love our homes, to revere a pious ancestry, and to worship God.

And there is one other national day. The snows of February remind us of the spotless fame of him who was our first great national representative and leader.

This is a most important anniversary. Aristotle reminds us that praise is an inverted precept. To say, "Do thus and so," is

a precept; to say, "He is noble because he hath done this and so," is praise. It is a worthy task therefore to praise, to eulogise such a man as Washington. What does our country need more than those precepts regarding public service and leadership which come to us from a life like his?

Doubtless we shall make the best use of this occasion if we interpret it broadly and liberally. We need not confine our thoughts to a single name—although that were amply sufficient—but may make of this a kind of "Leader's Day." We cannot set apart a day for each of our great men,—there are too many, thank God, even in our first century—but we may group them all with Washington who was the first.

One year ago we listened to a description of the Father of his Country which I am sure we can never forget. It would be presumptuous for me to touch that theme to-day. I ask your leave, therefore, to present a kindred subject the Preserver of his Country, ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

Our great representative leaders are perhaps our chief national possession. They are not ancient landmarks, but beacon-lights for the future. They have set a standard of public and private excellence. Aeschines, the second orator of Greece, has left us the profound maxim that

"The people become like to the Statesman whom they crown."

Happy is that people which has, in the saints, or martyrs, or heroes whom reveres, noble ideals.

Every nation, too, is judged largely by its great men. We judge Rome by Julius Caesar, and Sweden by Gustavus Adolphus. If men ask what the British Islands can produce they are pointed to Cromwell or to Gladstone. If we inquire for the flowering of their race the Frenchman will perhaps name Lafayette, and the German will say, "Look at Luther."

We could scarcely be a nation without possessing some such champions as these—without being able to contribute one or two names at least to the world's list of great men. How invaluable was the character of Washington in securing our first recognition among foreign peoples! The toast of Benjamin Franklin had a significance which give it a claim to be often repeated. The ambassador of England had eulogised his country as the sun in the heavens, traversing the entire globe, and blessing every land. Then the representative of France arose and likened his country to the moon, treading a pathway as majestic as that of the sun, and shining with a more refined lustre. Franklin stood up in his turn, and the resources of comparison seemed to be exhausted. Will he compare the United States to some star, or to some comet? "Gentlemen," said the American, "I propose to you the name of George Washington, the Joshua at whose bidding the sun and the moon stood still."

What men has America produced since the time of Washington who have caused the sun and the moon to stand still? I believe that there has been at least one.

It is nigh four hundred years since the keel of Columbus grated upon the beach of San Salvador. It would be hard to show that any event in secular history has been more important than that. New worlds are not found every day. The devising of a path of commerce from this planet to the moon could not affect the life of man so much as did the discovery of this new world. It was a discovery without a precedent and without a parallel, and we are preparing to celebrate it. We have been preparing through all these four hundred years. We have a city which sits by the inland sea, like Venice among her marshes. Chicago, with its million inhabitants where so recently the buffalo fed unscared, will make itself into an epitome of America, and send out its card of invitation to all the earth.

And the whole world will come to visit us. The Spaniard will come to see the continent which *he* discovered. The Frenchman will come to look upon the vast empires which he once coveted and then helped to free. The Briton will come to mark the progress of his own race in a newer clime. The German will come claiming also a near relationship. The Russian will come to find out what liberty is like. There will be the Icelander with his fur, the Italian with his music, and the Chinaman with his cue. The motley procession will be filled out by weird costumes from Egypt and Labrador, and all the other highways and hedges of the world. Those who do not come in person will come in thought, and the attention of the world will be focussed upon America.

We shall have much to show them. They will sail up the storied Hudson, stand beside the sublimity of Niagara, visit the far Yosemite, and the Yellowstone, and compare Lake Superior and the Mississippi with the Mediterranean and the Nile. They will compute our forests and our prairies, gauge our wells of oil and of gas, estimate our mines, and appraise all our natural resources. They may have the experience of Sheba's queen when they pass through our Patent Office, inspect our manufactories, traverse our railway systems, and visit our cities—cities which do not stand knee-deep in the dust of ages, but which are struggling up through the intoxication of prosperity toward self-possession.

But while our visitors stand thus astonished at our material glories, and acknowledge that the half was not told them, they will still make some further inquiries. "What are the ideas," they will ask, "which all this wealth represents? What types of manhood does America produce? Who are your national heroes?" And we shall say to them: "If you would come near to the heart of America, and feel the breath of that spirit which has made her truly great, pass by New York with the thunder of its commerce, pass by Washington with the glitter of its display, and spend a

thoughtful hour at Mount Vernon. And when you have done that, pass by Chicago with its roar of traffic, and pause beside the tomb at Springfield.”

The career of Lincoln may reveal, more than that of any other single individual, the genius of American institutions and of the American people. He was *all* American. The heroes of the old world are linked together in one vast dynasty of greatness. The Ptolemies, the Caesars, the Plantagenets, still bear sway among their descendants and “rule us from their urns.” But Columbia begins a new order. The shadow of the Pyramids falls upon every European, but it does not cross the sea. Like the Greek colonists, to be sure, we brought the coals which were to kindle the altar fires of our civilization from the hearth of our mother city. But we have received fresh fire, also. The Promethean torch of our genius has been kindled from God’s lightning above us, and from hard blows upon the flinty rock beneath us. We indeed revere the gracious influences which come to us from the cradle lands, but we have attained our intellectual majority, and we prove it by pointing to men of finest grain and most heroic mould developed among surroundings which savor least of the old world.

So, too, the life of Lincoln is an epitome of America’s history and aspirations. The political, constitutional, and moral struggles of all our annals converge upon the few eventful years of his public life. And so it happens that this man came to possess three kinds of greatness: He was great for the acts which he performed; the liberator of a race deserves to rank above the founders of dynasties, or the discoverers of continents. But many whose lot it has been to perform great deeds have been themselves unworthy, while Lincoln was in his own personality greater than any of his achievements. The one proclamation by which he will be remembered forever did not exhaust his powers. It was in him to write a hundred such proclamations. There is a third kind of greatness which belongs especially to those who serve republics, and which

we may call representative greatness. There was a time when Napoleon had so engrossed the loyalty of his countrymen that he could say, "*I am France.*" It was a far greater triumph, because a moral one, when Pericles enslaved the Athenians to his patriotism and his intellect, so that when he spoke it seemed the voice of the state. Such was the greatness of Lincoln. He came to be the representative and embodiment of the best sentiments, the triumphant sentiments of his nation, so that loyal millions spoke through his lips.

Lincoln was, first of all, God's man, raised up to meet a great emergency. We in America believe that "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we will."

He might have worn some other name, but without such a leader, it may almost be said, America could not have fulfilled her destiny.

This continent lay fallow for a hundred years after its discovery. The Spaniards laid hold of it, but God said, "I am tired of your cruelty and rapacity," and it began to slip from their grasp. The Frenchmen seemed to do better, but God, said, "The Catholic religion is too gross and formal for this new world," and the Frenchmen fell back. England had her day, but in districts schools, free churches, and town meetings the colonists were made ready for the day of independence! No more foreign dominion! The last sail of the retiring British fleet melts into the horizon. America is free!

Free! But now confronted by the problems of self-government. And first she must make in a day what it took the English people five hundred years to make—a constitution.

Before the constitution came the famous "Ordinance of 1787," which marked out several great lines of policy. This ordinance appropriated public lands for the support of common schools. It

provided that the territories should ultimately be admitted as equal states, thus settling in advance for America all questions of "Home Rule." And thirdly, it decreed that throughout the Northwest Territory,

"There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted."

This third provision introduces us to what the impartial foreign historian Von Holst has called "the pivotal question in American history"—the question of slavery. This was the sphinx which in Abraham Lincoln found its *Œdipus*!

We have now to trace the decline and revival of the spirit of liberty in America. Our national triumph—like most human triumphs perhaps—consists in having cured a great fault. The ordinance of '87 was the voice of the Revolution, expressing the aspirations of ultimate America, but it was nearly four-score years before this ideal was realized, and the language of the ordinance written into the constitution as the thirteenth Amendment.

We must not be swift to blame the slave-holders for not overturning their social system in a day by an act of *immediate* emancipation. It is due, however, to the truth of history to show how, by unprincipled leaders, a portion of our countrymen were induced to resist all plans for *gradual* emancipation, and finally to demand as the dearest of their rights the privilege of *extending* slavery over the entire Union.

When our constitution was formed slavery was universal, but gradual emancipation was favored by all the colonies except Georgia and the Carolinas. Charles Pinckney and General Davie were the men who discovered the value of threats against the Union. By such threats they secured certain concessions to slavery in the Constitution itself—concessions, however, which would never have been made had it not been for the general belief that slavery would die out under existing conditions.

It was not until 1820 that the mistake was discovered, and that discovery, in the words of the aged Jefferson, startled the country "like a fire-bell in the night." It was proposed in Congress to extend the ordinance of 1787, prohibiting slavery and involuntary servitude, to the new state of Missouri, and this proposition was opposed by the Southern members. The country awoke to the fact that the South was ready to contend for *the extension of slavery*.

Evidently there had been a great change since the Revolution. The Northern states had nearly completed the work of gradual emancipation, but in the South the putting together of a few rods and wheels and pinions to form the cotton-gin had made slavery the source of vast wealth. This wealth was shared by the slave-breeders of the border states, the slave drivers of the cotton states, and the manufacturers of the North. And here appeared a marvel—as *slavery grew more profitable it appeared to grow less sinful!* So vast was this change that the religious bodies which in 1800 denounced slavery as "the sum of all villainies" by 1840 were defending it as a scriptural institution! With this change came the spirit of intolerance. It became impossible for any Virginian to follow Washington's example and emancipate his own slaves. All freedom of speech upon this subject was suppressed at the South, and the mere discussion of the question at the North was denounced as a crime.

The Missouri matter was settled by a solemn compromise which became a landmark in our history. The immediate demand of the South was granted, and Missouri admitted as a slave state, but "slavery and involuntary servitude" were prohibited in all other territory north of 36 degrees and 30 minutes.

We cannot trace in detail the aggressions of the slave power. Calhoun was the great advocate of "slavery as a positive good," but he could not silence the abolitionists, nor could he make the Southern states grow in wealth and population as rapidly as those

of the North. "The peculiar institution," as they called it, forbade all manufacture, and repelled all emigration. The slaveholders were fighting against all the laws—moral, social and economic—of God's universe, and they made a gallant fight.

It was a battle of giants. Lincoln had his forerunners and coadjutors in the piercing voice of Garrison, the silver tongue of Wendell Phillips, the fiery eloquence of Giddings, and the scholarly phrase of Charles Sumner, while the verse of Whittier and Lowell crowned a distinct epoch in American literature. And the advocates and apologists of slavery were men who would have graced a better cause. With them we must rank Henry Clay, the great compromiser, Judge Taney, and the restless enthusiasm of Alexander H. Stephens.

But at each national census God held up the scales between the pine and the palmetto, between free labor and the labor of chattels, and it was the Southern arm which smote the beam. It was this fact, silently and sullenly noted by the Southern leaders, which made them eager to annex new territory, and then to force slavery by law into all the states, and, when that failed, to hasten their appeal to the sword. There was logic back of the movement for secession.

They purchase Florida and Louisiana, but that is not enough. They acquire a vast territory from Mexico, and vote down the proposition to exclude slavery therefrom, but that is not enough. Proposing to intrench themselves in constitutional interpretation they invent the doctrine of popular sovereignty. "Congress," they say, "has no power to prohibit slavery in the territories. That power belongs to the people of each territory. The Missouri Compromise is null and void. And more than that, we must have a new, iron-clad fugitive slave law. Unless this is granted we will destroy the Union."

By this time the moral sense of our people had been quickened.

In fact there had never been an hour when the majority did not really regard slavery as an evil and a sin. But it takes a long time for the people to organize a political machine to carry out their will. Both of the existing political parties contained slave-holders. If either party, therefore, should offend the slave power it would lose its southern supporters and meet with disaster. The politicians had an interested motive in desiring to grant the demands of the South. Ostensibly to save the Union, really to save their party, Northern men yield to the pressure. "Let us settle this exciting question by a compromise." Both parties accede to the Southern demand, invoke a thousand maledictions upon any man who shall ever bring up the slavery question again, and call this a "*finality*."

Let it be remembered forever that there is no finality which is not founded upon right. They called the Missouri Compromise a finality in 1820. They called the death of the Wilmot Proviso a finality. They shouted "Finality" in 1850. In 1852 their chorus was "Finality." And in 1854 they fairly shrieked "Finality." The contemporary newspaper-man caught the ludicrous aspect of the case and produced a little ode:

FINALITY

To kill twice dead a rattlesnake,
 And off his scaly skin to take,
 And through his head to drive a stake,
 And every bone within him break,
 And of his flesh mincemeat to make,
 To burn, to sear, to boil, to bake,
 Then in a heap the whole to rake,
 And over it the benison shake,
 And sink it fathoms in the lake—
 Whence after all, quite wide awake,
 Comes back that very same old snake!

The "finality" measures were the very ones which *compelled* agitation. The new law for reclaiming fugitives brought the horrors of slavery before the people with a pathos which no abolition

speaker could equal. To give a crust of bread, or to point out the North Star, was now punishable by law.

“The evil days are come, the poor
 Are made a prey.
 Bar up the hospital door,
 Put out the fire-lights, point no more
 The wanderer’s way,
 For pity now is crime.”

The moral strength of the North rose against the Fugitive Slave law in awful majesty. Even the superb fame of Webster could not avail, and the Whig party was disintegrated almost in a day. The popular verdict was, “Died from the attempt to swallow the fugitive slave law.” A new party arose in its place. Public interest flamed out in songs, and banners, and torch-light processions, and a million votes were rolled up for “Free Soil, Free Men, Fremont and Victory.”

But the slave power marched on. It set its foot upon “bleeding Kansas,” and proclaimed through the Supreme Court that slaves were property, and as such might be carried without forfeiture to any part of the Union. The Southerner’s threat that he would yet call the roll of his slaves at the foot of Bunker Hill Monument seemed likely to be fulfilled.

The cry went up to God for a leader. Give us a calm, determined man; one who will not join in the denunciations of the ultra abolitionists, nor quail before the bluster of the slave-driver; a man of the people; a man who understands the situation, and can expound it to the masses; a man who can save the country from the South, and the South from herself.

The man appeared. It was reported that Senator Douglas, “the Little Giant” of Illinois, has met his match in debating with an untitled lawyer in his own State. The country was anxious to see this new man, this stump speaker from the West, and the brains of New York city filed into the Cooper Institute to listen to an address from Abraham Lincoln.

He began with a deliberate historical argument, proving to a demonstration that the framers of our Constitution never dreamed that slavery in the Territories was beyond the reach of Congress, and consequently that the recent theory of popular sovereignty and the right to carry slave property to any part of the Union was a sheer invention and innovation.

The threats of destroying the Union, which, as we have seen, had thus far prevailed with Northern men were next swept aside. He answered them in the spirit which was becoming in a freeman.

“You will not abide the election of a Republican President. In that supposed event, you say, you will destroy the Union; and then you say, the great crime of having destroyed it will be upon us. That is cool. A highwayman holds his pistol to my ear and mutters through his teeth, ‘Stand and deliver, or I will kill you, and then you will be a murderer.’ * * * The threat of death to me to extort my money, and the threat of destruction to the Union to extort my vote, can scarcely be distinguished in principle.”

And in conclusion he defined the proper course of action.

‘Even though much provoked, let us do nothing through passion or ill-temper. * * * Let us calmly consider their demands, and yield to them if, in our deliberate view of duty, we possibly can. * * * Thinking slavery right, as they do, they are not to blame for desiring its full recognition as being right, but thinking it wrong, as we do, can we yield to them?’

Wrong as we think slavery is, we can yet afford to let it alone where it is, because that much is due to the necessity arising from its actual presence in the nation, but can we, while our votes will prevent it, allow it to spread into the national territories, and to overrun us here in the free states? If our sense of duty forbids this, then let us stand by our duty, fearlessly and effectively. Let us be diverted by none of those sophistical contrivances wherewith we are so industriously plied and belabored, contrivances such as groping for some middle ground between the right and the wrong, vain as the search for a man who should be neither a living man nor a dead man; such a policy of ‘don’t care’ on a question about which all true men do care; such as union appeals beseeching true union men to yield to disunionists; reversing the Divine rule, and calling not the sinners but the righteous to repentance; such as invocations to Washington, imploring men to unsay what Washington said, and undo what Washington did.

* * * Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it.”

There was a program which met the situation. There was a man who could grasp great principles, and explain them to the humblest voter in the nation. There was a leader whom the workmen of the North and the great Northwest could look up to as their champion.

A few months after the speech in Cooper Institute, the Republicans met in National Convention at Chicago, and without much preparation, by the inevitabilities of the case under Divine Providence, nominated this new leader for the highest office in the nation. The same Providence seemed to prepare the way before him, for his opponents were divided. The Democratic strength was given partly to Douglas and partly to Breckenridge, and thus it came about that, although he failed to receive a majority of the votes cast by half a million, Abraham Lincoln became the sixteenth President of the United States.

And now you will ask me, where did he come from? What rare ancestry gave to him the impress of genius? What kindly stars shone upon his birth? What favored college is enriched by his fame?

My friends, Lincoln was not that kind of a man. He belongs to that higher order of nobility, whose patent is conferred by the Almighty. Humanity always takes a special pride in those great men who came directly from the bosom of the people, and thus demonstrate the possibilities of our common clay. We cannot claim that it is an Anglo-Saxon idea exactly—more truly it is a Christian idea, nobly exemplified among the peoples of our race—that man individual as well as man collective is capable of improvement, and that under a favoring government and proper social conditions the humblest may cherish high desires and aspirations.

How many an English child has been thrilled by the story of the penniless boy, Whittington, lingering on the outskirts of London City, and recalled by its prophetic bells, in whose peals he seemed to hear the words, "Turn again, turn again, Whittington; thou shalt be thrice Lord Mayor of London." It is the glory of our civilization that it makes the fulfillment of such words possible. We all exult in the Laureate's description of

Some divinely gifted man,
Whose life in low estate began,
And on a simple village green:

Who breaks his birth's invidious bar,
 And grasps the skirts of happy chance,
 And breasts the blows of circumstance,
 And grapples with his evil star;

Who makes by force his merits known,
 And lives to clutch the golden keys,
 To mould a mighty State's decrees,
 And shape the whisper of the throne.

And moving up from high to higher,
 Becomes on Fortune's crowning slope
 The pillar of a people's hope,
 The centre of a world's desire.*

That was the career of Lincoln.* No noble spirit was ever "repressed" by a more "chill penury" than that of Lincoln's childhood. Pioneer life is a feature of American experience which has already passed away. Those sparsely settled communities in Kentucky, overshadowed by the dim forests, and beset by savage beasts and savage men, were cut off by almost impassable mountains from even the rude and feeble civilization of the Atlantic States. The people knew that there were such things as learning and culture, and their lives were adorned by many homely virtues, but their strength was absorbed by the bitter struggle with Nature and with the barbarians. In a word, Lincoln was born into a state of society much like that of England in the time of Alfred the Great.

His grandfather was a comrade of that mighty hunter, that intrepid scout of civilization, Daniel Boone; and was shot by the Indians in sight of his own door. From the body of the dead pioneer a little boy seven years of age ran crying to the house. This was Lincoln's father, Thomas Lincoln.

Thomas became a carpenter. He was a good man, a man of some self-respect, but small ambition. In the course of time he married Nancy Hanks. How much the republic owes to that

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simple frontier maiden! We have no likeness of her face; we can never rear up a bust or a statue. She died all unconscious of the significance of her humble duties, but she is "blessed among women." Nancy could read and write, and she taught her husband how to form the letters of his own name.

Years after, eager genealogists traced back the great man's lineage to Virginia farmers and Pennsylvania Quakers, and found one ancestor whose name was written Mordecai Lincoln, *gentleman*. But Lincoln's fame does not depend upon any such remote propping!

We may trace his humble parents from one frontier settlement to another: Elizabethtown, Kentucky; Hodgenville, where Abraham was born in 1809; Knob Creek; and Little Pigeon Creek, Indiana. Here the family lived in an open shed while their cabin was in process of construction, and here, when Abraham was nine years of age, his mother died. Her husband made a rude coffin and some months later little Abraham contrived to have a wandering preacher deliver a sermon over her grave.

The next winter was the most dreary of his life; but before the second autumn his father brought a new wife from Kentucky—the widow Johnston, and her three children. This step-mother took the little boy into her heart at once, and gave him both sympathy and encouragement. It is probable that she brought into the family its first library, consisting—in addition to his own mother's bible—of a dictionary, Pilgrim's Progress, Aesop's Fables, Robinson Crusoe, a history of the United States, and a life of Washington. These books the boy mastered from beginning to end, and then resorted to the town constable to borrow copies of the Indiana statutes. His sums in arithmetic were done on the smooth surface of a board, and erased with a plane. He soon became the letter-writer for the neighborhood.

In her old age Mrs. Lincoln was able to say, "Abe never gave

me a cross word or look, and never refused in fact or appearance to do anything I asked him. His mind and mine—what little I had—seemed to run together. I had a son John, who was raised with Abe. Both were good boys, but I must say, both now being dead, that Abe was the best boy I ever saw or expect to see.”

Young Lincoln’s time, however, was not all spent at the fire-side. His athletic frame was developed by hard work, and he celebrated his arrival at the age of twenty-one by breaking fifteen acres of new land for his father in Illinois, and splitting walnut rails to fence the same.

Emerging from this home life, we find the future President making voyages upon the flat-boats of the Mississippi river, acting as clerk—though giving most of his time to reading,—mastering the art of surveying, and at last elected to the state legislature and admitted to the bar.

The secret of this marvelous life is forever hidden. Why did he choose to study while others were content to hunt or to loaf? We professional educators may take notice that the schools cannot monopolize the making of men. All that can be gained by residence at Oxford or Cambridge is a little knowledge, the habit of truthfulness which we call accuracy, and power of thought and of expression. These Lincoln acquired in his humble office by the most severe self-discipline. Defects of teacher or text-book were counter-balanced by the fidelity of the student. It matters little that his education began comparatively late in life; the important thing is that it was *continued* with unwearied devotion to the day of his death. After he had already served in Congress he applied himself to the science of Logic, and spent several weeks in acquiring a more complete mastery of Euclid’s Geometry.

The principal of “rotation in office” is a vicious one, but its application in the case of Lincoln was overruled for good. He left Congress after a single term in order to give other aspirants a

chance, and meanwhile unconsciously prepared himself for his great mission. He had always been a royal good fellow among his comrades. Without "tarrying long at the wine," or touching the seductive cigar, he was "the center and idol of every social group." His very presence was genial, and it was with hearty affection that his friends recognized his sturdy and delicate integrity and bestowed upon him the sobriquet of "Honest Abe." But during the time between his retirement from Congress and the debates with Douglas it was noticed that he seemed "always in haste to leave the bright circle which he was entertaining." Narrowly escaping appointments as Land Commissioner, and as Governor of Oregon Territory, he gave these precious years to the practice of his profession, and to reflection and study.

His political career previous to his election had shown two things; his rare practical sagacity, and his readiness to sacrifice his personal interests to the interests of his friends or to the interests of the cause to which he was devoted. He had joined the Whigs when they were in a minority in Illinois, and had done much toward bringing that party into power in the state. He had taken the unpopular side upon the slavery question in the state legislature and in Congress. He had beaten Douglas, the ablest Democratic leader of his day, in his own state.

And this victory was significant. Douglas was trying to perform the regular political feat of riding two horses. He was attempting to lead the slave-holding Democracy of the South, and at the same time to be elected to the Senate by the liberty-loving Democrats of Illinois. Lincoln forced him to cut loose from the South in order to hold his own at home. "Honest Abe" thus lost his own chance of election to the Senate, but he disrupted the Democratic party!

Lincoln entered upon his great office at one of the darkest hours in all our history. With thirty-three states instead of thir-

teen the imperilled interests were far greater, while the saving forces to be relied upon were uncertain. The troubles of seventy years had come to a head. The opponents of the government were united and ready, while its friends were taken by surprise, irresolute. The prestige of both state-craft and war was with the new Confederacy already organized at Montgomery, Alabama. He had been elected by far less than a majority of the whole people, and he looked out upon a united South and a divided North. Under his predecessor treason had been suffered to mature its plots in the very capital, and high officials had used their power in preparing to subvert the government they had sworn to defend. The new president knew not on whom he could depend. Even Republican leaders like Greeley counseled that the North should say to the seceding states "Erring sisters, depart in peace." His way was hedged by assassins, so that he was forced to make a secret night journey from Harrisburg to the Capital. It seemed as though the government committed to him was already a wreck.

History confirms his own judgment that he had before him a task greater than that of Washington. This thought was expressed in his address to his neighbors on leaving Springfield, as they stood with their heads bared to the falling snow-flakes.

"My friends, no one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place and to the kindness of these people, I owe everything. Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born, and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that of Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him who can go with me, and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To his care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell"

And with this speech his task was already begun. We are now to mark the career of the rail-splitter as statesman, warrior, and diplomatist. His remarks at the various stopping places on the route, together with his inaugural, constitute a single oratorical effect which I shall venture to say is unmatched in history. It

was one long speech, delivered to the American people a paragraph at a time, and perused in telegram and newspaper with anxious attention. If the office of oratory is to persuade, this oratory was successful. The ultra secessionists no appeal could reach, but they were treated so fairly that none of their adherents were provoked to fresh zeal. But the people who were undecided—slow-thinking people, whose prerogative it is to come in at the end and settle a matter—these were instructed and convinced. Many such men had voted against Lincoln through attachment to old parties, or the fear that he would introduce revolutionary measures. They were now led to see that revolutionary measures came from the other side. The simple speech at Springfield showed that the President-elect was not a hot-headed radical, not a trifler, and not a coward. Men were reminded that he was the constitutionally elected ruler, who might be replaced by another in four years, but whose forcible overthrow would open the flood-gate for they knew not what of anarchy. They were convinced that he meditated no invasion of the rights of the States, but proposed simply to defend government property and the Constitution. The old feelings of reverence for the Union, planted in their hearts by the fathers of the Revolution, and watered by the eloquence of Daniel Webster were enlisted against the Southern Confederacy.

Thirty years ago, on Washington's birthday, Lincoln was speaking in Independence Hall at this very hour. The genius of the place rose within him, the spirit of the Lord came upon him, and his words were inspired and prophetic:

"All the political views I entertain have been drawn, so far as I have been able to draw them, from the sentiments which originated in and were given to the world from this Hall.

* * I have often inquired of myself what great principle or idea it was that sustained these colonies. It was not the mere matter of separation from the mother-land, but that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which not only gave liberty to the people of this country, but hope to all the world, for all future time. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weight would be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that all should have an equal chance. Now, my friends, can this country be saved on that basis? * * If this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle, I was about to say I had rather be assassinated on this spot than surrender it."

In all these addresses Lincoln uttered not one foolish or improper word. He closed his inaugural by saying:

“In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the government; while I have a most solemn one to preserve, protect and defend it.

I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic cords 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 better angels of our nature.”

By the time these words reached the country probably more than half a million men who had not voted for Mr. Lincoln had resolved to sustain him in his office.

The same moderation characterized his conduct toward the members of his own party. He called his greatest rivals into the Cabinet, and none of them could feel jealous of a man who was so evidently devoid of personal ambition, and who really felt that he was but the humble instrument in the hand of Providence. It was his good fortune to be assisted by able ministers. Seward, Chase, Stanton, Cameron, would have given dignity to any administration, but the back-woodsman out-topped them all. He surpassed them all in his grasp of fundamental principles, and in the ability both to read and to lead public opinion.

The simple administration of the government has crushed more than one President. Lincoln attended to all this at a time when a million soldiers were supported in the field, and the expenditure for war alone reached the sum of \$516,000,000 a year, and in addition met the higher question of State-craft, strategy, and diplomacy which were presented by a stupendous crisis.

The same manly policy which secured the support of Douglas and the war Democrats saved the border states from drifting into the Rebellion. It was a signal triumph to bring the slave states of Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri into line for the

Union, and to see West Virginia seceding from secession and ranging herself with the loyal North. The line of cleavage fell south of Mason and Dixon's line, and the battle fields of the civil war, save one, were on slave territory.

We have next to view the self-taught man as a diplomatist. The French occupation of Mexico would seem to be a sufficient cause of anxiety for one administration, but all our foreign relations were greatly strained by the civil war. It is now admitted that France and England, arguing, no doubt, from the feeble policy of Buchanan, were too hasty in recognizing the Confederate States as a belligerent power. On learning of their action Mr. Seward wrote a dispatch to our minister at the Court of St. James which asserted our rights in blunt and unambiguous terms. Seward was a more experienced statesman than Lincoln, but not so incapable of hasty action. The President took that dispatch and drew his pen through the harsher lines, inserted qualifying clauses, modified the instructions, and thus averted a serious foreign complication.

So, too, when the enterprising Captain Wilkes, of our navy, overhauled a British steamer and dragged from her deck Mason and Slidell, rebel commissioners to England. though the whole country was ringing, with exultation, the President quietly remarked, "I fear the traitors will prove to be 'white elephants.' We fought Great Britain in 1812 for doing precisely what Captain Wilkes has done. If Great Britain shall now protest against the act, we must give them up, apologize for the act as a violation of our doctrines, and thus forever bind her over to keep the peace in relation to neutrals." This was the policy actually pursued, unpopular at the time, but averting immediate calamity, and establishing an important principle of international law.

Nor must we omit to mention the exploits of this descendant of the Quakers as commander of the army and navy. He had a good Cabinet, but he had, at the beginning, a most wretched set

of generals. Scott was superannuated, and McClellan was afraid of wooden guns, and among all the rest the President could not find a man who possessed the qualities of a great commander. The first substantial Union victory was the capture of Forts Henry and Donleson by a soldier who was introduced to the country as "Unconditional Surrender Grant."

Mr. Lincoln changed generals often, but always with extreme consideration for the soldiers who were displaced, and he rarely lost the service of an able man. He discussed all campaigns with his generals, and often directed their plans and movements. It is the opinion of competent judges that at the close of the war he was as well qualified to plan a campaign as any man in America.

The crowning act of his great career was not merely something which a happy chance gave him the opportunity of performing. It was something for which he had prepared the way, and which came, through his sagacity, in precisely the best manner.

He failed in his attempts to induce the border states to abolish slavery and receive compensation from the government, but he succeeded in convincing the country that slavery was the cause of the war, and thus turning against it the hatred which existed against secession. He had rallied the people in defence of the Union, and he now showed them that the way to save the Union was to abolish slavery. With loyal armies in the field, and a triumphant party behind him, he had the power to abolish slavery in any way he pleased; but he showed his conscientious regard for the Constitution, as well as for a just expediency, by basing the measure wholly upon the necessities of war, and confining emancipation to territory in actual rebellion. This wise course reduced the objections and opposition to a minimum.

And he gave the Negro an opportunity to help himself. Treated at first as property which was contraband of war, "Sambo" soon made himself popular with the soldiers, and after the procla-

mation he became a soldier himself. This was the bold and finally effective stroke of Mr. Lincoln. It strengthened the army, and convinced the last doubters at home. "Men who are good enough to be soldiers," they said, "are too good to be slaves."

Our leader lived to see the beginnings of a triumph proportioned to all the costs and burdens of the war. Emancipation did break the back-bone of the rebellion; and the death of the rebellion, through emancipation, meant a victory for all mankind.

This was Mr. Lincoln's view of the contest from the beginning. The very fact that he was intensely American made him sympathetic with all the world. The true American needs no foreign travel to liberalize his mind. We call Webster the great expounder of the Constitution. But Lincoln expounded the Constitution, and the American idea, more profoundly, and in words which live in the hearts of the common people, as he stood among the graves at Gettysburg.

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon 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 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, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

He lived to see the success of this great world-experiment. From the day of emancipation rebellion wanted. Gettysburg was consecrated by a great victory, and with the fall of Vicksburg the Mississippi "ran unvexed to the sea." Sheridan was in the saddle; Hooker despoiled the eagle's nest at Chattanooga; Sherman cut a swath sixty miles wide through Georgia, and "captured Charleston by turning his back upon it." He called for helpers, and again and again he was greeted by the chorus

"We're coming, Father Abraham, three hundred thousand strong."

His administration was vindicated by a triumphant réélection

in which he carried every loyal state save little Delaware and New Jersey, and Kentucky.

The Confederacy, which had started out with every advantage and with abundant bluster, slowly collapsed. The blockade became absolute, and the hope of foreign intervention failed. Confederate money became worthless; flour in Richmond was of poor quality, and the price was \$1,000 a barrel! The rank and file who had been dragged into the rebellion by tyrannical leaders began to desert. The end is near, for the rebels themselves are overcoming their prejudices and propose to arm the slaves in defence of the Confederacy!

Sunday morning, April 2d, 1865, Jefferson Davis is sitting in his pew at church. Richmond is quiet, and few people are aware that Mrs. Davis has sent her furniture to auction, and started for the far South. An officer walks up the aisle and hands Davis a telegram. Davis reads it, and then staggers out of church. Lee is in the "last ditch." "My lines are broken in three places," he says, "and Richmond must be evacuated this evening."

Gradually the streets in which traffic has long been dead or stagnant become once more as animated as in the palmy days of Southern prosperity. There is a treading of feet, a murmur of voices, and at last a wild roar and rush of vehicles to the railway stations. The archives of the Confederacy are placed in boxes. The governor and legislature of Virginia depart in a canal boat, Davis and his cabinet in a freight car.

It is still a slave city. One Lumpkin, the old and reliable keeper of the slave-traders' jail, a structure which had witnessed as much sorrow as the Bastille, is looking after his property. He hustles out some fifty men, women and children—a frightened, weeping throng—and chaining them two and two, cracks his whip over the last slave-coffe which will ever tread the soil of America.

But he is too late. The trains have no room for such freight. Slavery is in the last gasp. It cannot take another step!

One after another the gun-boats in the river are blown up, and then the flames appear in the immense warehouses. (Such scenes as this are not common in America.) As authority relaxes lawlessness and hunger walk the streets. The stores are plundered, and no effort is made to arrest the flames.

And now return, ye spirits of Pinckney and Calhoun, to witness this scene! Think of it, ye Northern Democrats who eight months ago resolved in your convention that the war was a failure! Note, it ye Southern sympathizers across the sea, ye holders of Confederate bonds! Look back upon it, ye fugitive chiefs of a "lost cause!" Here come the Federal troops to take possession, to restore order, to arrest the flames. Their sabres are flashing in the morning sun; their banners fly as gaily as though they had never lost acquaintances with the Southern breezes; their bugles sound the national airs again; and (there is poetic justice and every other kind of justice in it)—they are *black* men who come riding into Richmond!

The tramp of armies is followed by the march of law. Congress has already submitted a new amendment, and before this year, 1865, has died it will be a part of the Constitution. Read it:

"Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."

"How they pale,—
Ancient myth, and song, and tale,—
To this wonder of our days,
When the cruel rod of war
Blossoms white with righteous law,
And the wrath of man is praise."

And this success was graced with a great clemency. Lee asks what terms of surrender may be hoped for. He is talking with "Unconditional Surrender Grant," but he is unconditional sur-

render Grant no longer. The North has not been pursuing slaveholders—it has been pursuing slavery and rebellion, and now that these are dead General Grant is ready to feed Lee's starving troops, to allow every officer to retain his side-arms, to parole the men who have striven for four years to destroy the government, and even to give them their horses that they may the sooner reach their homes, and be better furnished for resuming the pursuits of peace.

There remained one thing more which the Preserver of his country could do in her behalf. We expected a great deal of him, but we did not expect that. He had accomplished the task greater than that of Washington; he had restored the nation, and for the first time carried out the full intention of the fathers; he had trodden that long and toilsome way from the log hut at Hodgenville where his life began (a village which can not be found on any map) to the head of a grateful nation triumphing in a great world-contest through his leadership; and finally as the high priest of the people he had confessed the sins of the North and of the South in the sublime words of his second inaugural, and summoned all patriots to join in binding up the wounds of the nation;—having done all this, Providence assigned him one thing more to do for his country—to die for her.

On the very day when we began to celebrate our triumph, the day on which the Stars and Stripes were raised again above the dismantled wall of Fort Sumter, Lincoln was shot. The nation was weeping tears of joy, and they were turned to tears of anguish in a night. We do not need to interpret such providences as that. We say that they are a part of an all-wise plan, and there we stop. We know, however, that God produces rare and wonderful effects upon human hearts by such dispensations. They stand quite apart from ordinary deaths, occurring as we say “in the course of nature.” We are somewhat prepared for the death of the aged, or those who are long ill. Before they go we have propped our lives with other supports. We look upon them as ripe for the grand tran-

sition. But when those who are in the midst of life's duties are snatched away we feel as though they had been translated, while our souls, from the wounds of separation, must bleed to death. And such a separation, above all others, leaves the image of the lost one ineffaceable upon our hearts. Such was the death of Henry of Navarre in France. Such was the death of William of Orange in the Netherlands.

So we must believe that the moral effects of Lincoln's death were precious in God's sight. It certainly prevented any unseemly exultation over the victory of the North. It made treason more odious than a thousand executions could have done. The assassin found rebels who would conceal him, but none who would commend his act. And it has left to the world the picture of the great Liberator as he was at the moment of his prime and of his triumph.

Secretary Stanton broke the silence which fell in the death chamber when the wounded man ceased to breathe, by saying, "Now he belongs to the ages."

He had been so self-effacing, he had so maintained the position of a humble instrument of a great cause, that in our eagerness to follow that cause to its triumph we had scarcely paused to notice what a leader we possessed, or to realize how we loved him. But now, with the wreath of an unmatched earthly victory, and the halo of a heavenly triumph upon it, his fame rose colossal before the world. The tongue of detraction was silenced forever. It is hard to believe that this gentle, forbearing, devoted man had been dogged with vilifying epithets and scurrilous caricature. But he was beyond it now. The London *Punch* had been foremost in this work of slander, and here is its manly recantation:

"Beside this corpse that bears for winding sheet
The stars and stripes he lived to rear anew,
Between the mourners at the head and feet,
Say, scurril jester, is there room for you?
Yes, he had lived to shame me from my sneer,
To lame my pencil, and confute my pen,
To make me own this kind of princes peer,
This rail-splitter a true-born king of men."

Foreign nations were now prompt to recognize his merits. But more significant than official acts were the spontaneous tributes of individuals and of the common people. Queen Victoria wrote to Mrs. Lincoln "as a widow to a widow," The students of Paris raised a two-cent subscription for a gold medal. It was struck in Switzerland, for there was a despotism in Paris. Their message was, "Tell her the heart of France is in that little box." An Austrian deputy wrote, "Among my people his memory has already assumed superhuman proportions; he has become a myth, a type of ideal democracy."

The South soon recognized him as her friend, too. General Longstreet hails him as "the greatest man of Rebellion times, the one matchless among fifty millions."

If the blessings of the poor can soothe one's last slumber, his rest is sweet. Four million freedmen mourned as a father him who had been the Moses of their race, and who, like Moses, was forbidden to enter with his people into the promised land of peace.

It requires no prophet to forecast his fame. It rests upon great acts, great works, a representative position, and a great character.

His great acts are recorded in the Constitution, and in the map of his country, and in the changed status of two races. They are as wide-reaching in their effects as any act of man. He spoke the universal language of genius—the speech in which God's mightiest speak to each other and to the world across the centuries. He may never have heard of Pittacus, but he paraphrased that wise man's saying, "Victory should not be stained with blood." He was not privileged to read the boast of Pericles, but he made the same when he said, "I have planted a thorn in no man's bosom."

His character—that rare blending of Christian modesty, earnestness, and liberality, is reflected in his own matchless motto: "WITH MALICE TOWARD NONE, WITH CHARITY FOR ALL, WITH FIRMNESS IN THE RIGHT, AS GOD GIVES US TO SEE THE RIGHT."

He fulfills better than any other man whom we know so well the Athenian definition of a statesman: "The man who understands the situation, who can explain it to others, and who is above all personal considerations."

He was the exponent of the best spirit of his country and of his age. But more than that, he is a representative of humanity. We cannot monopolize him. "He belongs to the ages"—not to America, not to the nineteenth century, but to the ages. He has all the marks of greatness upon him. He is canonized alike by the scholar and by the clown, by the select few and by the omnipotent many. And it is no fickle choice, no misplaced idolatry. No man will ever pause to revere the memory of Lincoln without being made better.

**WILLIAM WITHERS' ACCOUNT
OF THE TRAGEDY**

DEATH OF A WITNESS OF THE TRAGEDY

(From the New York SUN, December 6, 1916)

COL. WILLIAM WITHERS, who was leader of the orchestra in Ford's Theatre in Washington the night Lincoln was shot there, died yesterday afternoon in the Home for Incurables, 182d street and Third avenue. He was 80 years old, and fifty years ago was a composer and musical director of recognized ability. He is survived by a sister, Mrs. Louise Best, of Rye, N. Y.

Col. Withers was stabbed by Booth when he got in the assassin's path after the shooting, and it was he who gave the first accurate and coherent information to the police after the tragedy, and led them to set out immediately after Booth. Booth bought Col. Withers a drink just before the show began that night, and several times he saw Booth rambling about the theatre.

A song called "Honor to Our Soldiers," written by Col. Withers was to have been sung that night in honor of President Lincoln's presence. There was some delay in staging the song, which was scheduled to be sung between the acts, and after the second act Col. Withers went back of the stage to find out about the delay. This is how he told the story of the shooting as he recalled it a few years ago:

"When I reached the stage floor I saw several members of the company gathered in the wings at the stage manager's entrance, among them Stage Manager Wright. In my way was Edward Spangler, a scene shifter, a hanger-on of the house. He stood by the box that contained the gas governor controlling the entire lighting of the house. The lid of the box was open. I did not think anything of the incident at the time, but it was Spangler's part in the conspiracy to shut off the gas and throw the house into darkness the instant he heard Booth's shot.

I told Spangler to step aside and took his place beside the governor. I closed the lid of the box and rested my arm on it while I began talking to the stage manager about my song. He blew the whistle for the scene to change and Spangler was obliged to rush off to his position, and all the persons standing in the entrance had to leave. I turned to go back to my place, and had just taken the first step down the stairs leading underneath the stage when I heard a pistol shot.

I heard the sound of something falling out on the stage, followed by sounds of jumps crossing the floor. There suddenly appeared through the entrance a wild man with a dagger in his hand. It was Booth. His hair appeared to be standing on end. His face had a look of ferocity. His eyes were protruding from their sockets. He turned and saw me.

'Let me pass! Let me pass!' he exclaimed. He made a rush at me and his waving dagger cut a gash through the left side of my coat, but did not touch my skin. He kept pushing on in such a hysterical manner that I could not get out of his way. Again the dagger cut into my clothes, this time on my shoulder, inflicting a slight flesh wound.

'Damn you!' he cried, and gave me a tremendous shove, knocking me sprawling to the floor, at the same time making a lunge at me with the dagger. By this time people were yelling and rushing toward us. There were cries of 'Kill him! Lynch him! The death blow he intended for me was never delivered. He jerked the stage door open and closed it after him, but before he closed it I saw the head of a horse and "Peanut John" holding the bridle.

An officer led me on the stage and pointed to the President's box. Mr. Lincoln's body had slid down in the chair.'

**BEFORE LINCOLN WAS A
GREAT MAN**

BEFORE LINCOLN WAS A GREAT MAN

THE turbulent, perplexing times just before the Civil War, the days of slavery agitation, of the "under-ground railway," and secession talk, the formation of the great Republican party, peculiarly interesting because of the sharp reverses which that party has recently suffered, and the terrifying years of the War of Secession, itself—these are all tending rapidly to lose vividness in the memory of a generation that finds itself facing problems more numerous and no less puzzling. People called upon to make up their minds about Trusts, graft in and out of public life, Government control of public utilities, the tango, votes for women, the usefulness of the church, scientific marriage according to law, and independent alliance according to inclination, immigration, social injustice and waste, the high cost of things in general, whether the theatre shall be too alluring to be uplifting or too uplifting to be alluring, and the Progressive party, find themselves somewhat busy for pondering incidents of half a century ago. The emotions of those days have passed with the conditions that produced them; only a few people live who know what they were like. The events themselves have attained the neglected importance of history. It is pleasant, consequently, to find occasionally one who can give force again to their lesson of simple living and intense devotion to a cause, through the memory of personalities, always of interest even after the affairs in which they moved here have yielded their place in the public mind.

Life on an old-time court circuit, the lively political campaigns which sounded the death knell of the Whig party and produced the Republican party from the opposition of the Democrats, the striving of factions in the South, and many other observations of the personal aspect of the affairs of the '50's and early '60's are given in a volume of recollections by Jane Martin Johns, writing of that period in Illinois, in a book of memoirs published by the Decatur

Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Through many pages of the book is felt the personality of Abraham Lincoln in those less well-known years of his life when he was, in quiet, almost unconscious power, dominating the political and legal circles in which he found himself and moving surely toward the day when he would be named as "The railsplitter candidate" for President in 1860. Many an incident of his years as a lawyer, just rising from obscurity, casting light upon the character of the man who was to be misunderstood, hated, and revered as the great individual of his time, are given in the book in the course of its comment. The period, as Mrs. Johns pictures it, may be said to find its unity in Lincoln's life.

It is a fascinating description of him which she gives in her first chapter on her personal recollections of him. "It is sixty-two years," she writes, "since I first met Mr. Lincoln, at that time a semi-obscure lawyer and politician, nowhere towering above his fellows except in stature. He had the local status of an honest, genial man, too honest, too kind, too genial ever to become a success in the world, His personal appearance and dress were not sufficiently marked to be remembered, yet I think no man ever knew him and forgot him." The story of Lincoln's first political speech, given in Decatur in reply to a Democratic stump speaker who had attacked the Old Line Whigs, with whom Lincoln was then allied, is a significant forecast of his later character in public life. Lincoln had come in from his plowing to hear the speaking, and is described as follows: "Very tall and thin; wore a 'hickory' shirt with collar of same, turned back at his throat; a broad-brimmed straw hat with a piece fringed out at one side, and a black string tied around the crown to make it fit the head, and very tight towlinen pants, much above his bare feet and ankles." When the speaker finished, Lincoln was so stirred by the attack on his party that he jumped up on the splintery stump of a tree which had been blown down, and won the cheers of the crowd with his refutation

of the charges. The only sign that he gave of his discomfort was in constantly shifting his position to ease his bare feet. It is of interest that the square in Decatur where this first speech was given now bears his name.

LINCOLN AS A CIRCUIT LAWYER

“When I first knew Mr. Lincoln,” writes Mrs. Johns, “he was forty years old, had been a member of the State Legislature and of Congress, had travelled the circuit with men of culture and refinement, had met great statesmen and elegant gentlemen; and the ungainliness of the pioneer, if he ever had it, had worn off and his manner was that of a gentleman of the old school, unaffected, unostentatious. His dress, like his manner, was suited to the occasion, but was evidently a subject to which he gave little thought. It was certainly unmarked by any notable peculiarity. It was the fashion of the day for men to wear large shawls, and Mr. Lincoln’s shawl, very large, very soft, and very fine, is the only article of his dress that has left the faintest impression on my memory.” This is a picture of the Lincoln of the court circuit which effectively destroys that of an uncouth and rude-mannered giant that has been only too common. Mrs. Johns tells how her piano arrived in Decatur in court week; how it was Mr. Lincoln who led in the work of unloading it from the wagon, amid the jeering advice of the circle of judges and lawyers, and how she gave a concert in the evening as a reward for his services. “As a finale,” she says, “I sang ‘He doeth all things well,’ after which Mr. Lincoln, in a very grave manner, thanked me for the evening’s entertainment and said: ‘Don’t let us spoil that song for any other music to-night.’ Many times afterwards I sang that song for Mr. Lincoln and for Governor Oglesby, with whom it was also a favorite.”

How Lincoln felt about slavery in the years long before the Emancipation Proclamation is interestingly shown in stories of his work in the campaign of 1854 in Illinois, when the repeal of the

Missouri Compromise and the admission of Kansas and Nebraska to the Union, under Douglas's doctrine of squatter sovereignty, were arousing widespread feeling. Lincoln was a candidate for the United States Senate, having entered the arena after eight years, only because he believed a great principle was at stake. His conviction was that "the question at issue is the nation; not slavery, but the establishment of a slave-holding empire in the South, which should embrace the entire Northwest, Our fight from this time is not against slavery, but for the preservation of the Union, not to free the black man, but to hold free territory for white men," His feeling toward slavery was one of extreme repulsion; but he said, "I am not an abolitionist. God in his own good time will find a way to rid the nation of its curse, but emancipation is a grave question which Divine wisdom only can solve."

THE KEENEST OF POLITICIANS

Lincoln's thorough knowledge of men and wonderful memory of the peculiarities of the individual were most impressive qualities, writes Mrs. Johns. "He had travelled the circuit for so many years, when court week was every man's holiday, that he knew the people collectively and individually, and was prepared to diagnose the politics and prejudice of every man of influence in every precinct, and to describe the special treatment for his case. Mr. Lincoln wrote many letters of advice and instruction regarding the conduct of that legislative campaign, in which he showed remarkable insight into the impulses as well as the motives that may be used in influencing men. These letters were so intimate and so personal that he advised their destruction as soon as read. If they could have been preserved they might have been used as a valuable lesson in honest political tactics."

How Lincoln, after having fought to get a legislature of the right elements, gave up his personal chance for the Senatorship in order that the cause he believed in might succeed, is given as a bit

of unwritten history. It was Mrs. Johns who overheard in her hotel-room a plot of the regular Democrats to get support for their candidate, Gov. Mattison, in return for political favors, and who carried the news to Lincoln and his colleagues. Five irregular or "anti-Douglas" Democrats were pledged to vote for Lyman Trumbull; and Lincoln's immediate decision was to throw the support of his followers, who, till then, had been casting the largest vote in the convention, to Trumbull. The result was that Trumbull was elected by just the needed number of votes. Lincoln's second campaign for a Senatorship two years later as the Republican candidate against Douglas is also described. Although defeated as a result of his frank expression of opinion in the great series of debates against Douglas, Lincoln forced his opponent to side with the slaveholding interests of the South to such an extent that his defeat later as a candidate for President was certain.

Decatur, according to Mrs. Johns, was the real birthplace of the Republican party, after the election of Trumbull had proved a deathblow to the Whig party in Illinois. The fight for admitting Kansas as a slave State had unified the anti-slavery sentiment, but there was as yet no distinct organization or party name. The editors of Illinois had arranged a meeting at Decatur to organize the anti-Nebraska forces, when a fight on similar lines came up, the meeting receiving the endorsement of twenty-five papers, many of which had formerly been Democratic. The convention met and adopted a series of resolutions for the forming of a new party "to be named the Republican party," and appointed a central committee with power to call a State Convention. A banquet was given in the evening for the christening of the political infant, and Lincoln as an invited guest made the speech of the affair. The Pittsburgh convention, says Mrs. Johns, effected a national organization on the same day; but the name was a Decatur product, and Abraham Lincoln was its sponsor. It was this party which was eventually to raise him to the office of President.

LAUNCHING THE "RAIL-SPLITTER" BOOM

To Richard J. Oglesby, of Decatur, asserts Mrs. Johns, must be conceded the honor of creating the candidacy of Abraham Lincoln for the Presidency of the United States in the Illinois State Convention of 1860, and for launching his boom as "the rail-splitter candidate," the title which carried the enthusiasm of his own party like a whirlwind and which was fraught with such tremendous power of arousing prejudice and antagonism in the South. Oglesby had known and honored Lincoln, and was convinced of his fitness for the highest office in the land. He got the idea of presenting Lincoln as the representative candidate of free labor, a personal example of the possibilities for a poor man in a free state. It must be remembered that Lincoln had a reputation for poor success as a worker; but Oglesby set out to find some one thing that would be emblematic of his rise from obscurity and would catch the sympathy of the working people. Finally he met an old man, John Hanks, with whom he knew Lincoln had worked on a farm; and he asked Hanks what kind of work "Abe" used to be good at.

"Well, not much of any kind but dreaming," replied Hanks, "but he did help me split a lot of rails when we made the clearing twelve miles west of here."

This was enough for Oglesby. He started out with Hanks to find some of the original rails that Lincoln had made; and he took two of them home and hid them in his barn till the day of the convention. It was arranged that Hanks should carry the rails into the convention, with a banner nailed across them, reading:

"Abraham Lincoln, The Railsplitter Candidate for President in 1860. Two rails from a lot of 3,000 made in 1830 by John Hanks and Abe Lincoln."

Those two fence rails smashed the Seward boom. The convention passed a resolution endorsing Lincoln as the party's choice

for President and instructing the delegates to work for him in the National Convention. The enthusiasm with which the rail-framed banner was greeted is said to be almost without parallel in political history, not excepting the demonstration for the bandanna candidate in Chicago in 1912. The roof was literally cheered off—at least, the excitement kept up until part of the awning over the platform fell on the heads of the shouting, hat-tossing men below. The rails were ever present in the campaign from that time forward. It is interesting that the whole affair was an entire surprise to Lincoln, who had to be dragged out from a quiet nap in the back room of his friend Peake's jewelry store, where he had retired for a few minutes' rest. His first remark upon being rushed on the platform of the convention and confronted with the rails was: "Gentlemen, John and I did split some rails down there, and if these are not the identical rails, we certainly made some quite as good."

HOW THE SOUTH IMAGINED LINCOLN

The North took up Oglesby's idea at once; but the slaveholders of the South refused scornfully to endorse a man who did work that a "nigger" could do as well. Lincoln's personal reputation was thus put before political questions, and through ridicule and misrepresentation his name was made an offence to polite society. Mrs. Johns tells of a trip through the South, and of some of the opinions of Lincoln which she encountered. The States were seceding, the Southerners, said, because they would not be ruled by "poor white trash," a railsplitter, a country bumpkin, and worst of all, an Abolitionist. Mrs. Johns asked one man if he had read any of Lincoln's speeches; and his reply was: "No, I wouldn't touch them with the tongs." When she declared Lincoln fit for any society in the land, another lady said in an aside: "Yes, in any barroom." When she quoted Lincoln's speeches to prove him not an Abolitionist, they called him a hypocrite; and when she said that he was not an unusually homely man and dressed as well as the average man on the boat on which she was then travelling, she was

asked, "Do you mean the average deck-hand?" Her assertion that Lincoln was one of the most interesting men he had ever met and one of the best talkers was met with a formal bow from one of the men and the remark, "I should not have supposed that you were interested in ribald stories."

The excitement and uncertainty in the South in this period are vividly described in stories of how the storekeepers were selling out all goods not staple for almost any price that a customer would offer in gold, and how every one was preparing for war. Men of intelligence and good standing would ask Mrs. Johns such questions as if Lincoln could read, whether he always went barefooted, if he had a negro wife, if he did look like a baboon. One middle-aged merchant said: "Louisiana would not have seceded if the North had elected a gentleman for President; but we can't stand Lincoln, a mere laborer, who don't know his letters." Only one man, in private, told Mrs. Johns of how he had met Lincoln, and of the impression that the real man made.

"I went," he said, "determined to know the truth about the man and his purposes, and would to God I could make these people see him as I saw him. I am convinced that under no circumstances will Lincoln make any aggressive movement towards the South. He is fair and honest, and, while he intends to preserve the Union, he will never countenance interference with the constitutional rights of any State. Mr. Lincoln's parting words to me were: 'You may assure your people that, unless the South herself strikes a blow at the Union, all her institutions will be as safe under my Administration as under Mr. Buchanan's.' I dared, after I came home, to say aloud that Mr. Lincoln is a gentleman and a patriot, and in consequence my life is in danger every hour, and I have been obliged to hire a guard to watch my store night and day to keep my own clerks from setting it afire."

The hard years of the war, when the continued persecution

and vilification of Lincoln's rabid Southern antagonists turned the pleasure of his success at the polls into bitterness; how he bore even the doubt and mistrust of his friends, finally to win his satisfaction in the success of the cause of the Union, after the four rack-ing years of bloodshed, is told in the closing pages of the chapters on Lincoln. His reward came in the approval of what he had stood for and done. Before assassination brought his final sacrifice to patriotism, he had seen the chains struck from the limbs of three million slaves, and the end of the struggle which his wisdom, patience, and steady devotion had brought to successful issue. His death found him recognized as the man in whom were most nobly expressed the highest ideals of his time.

LINCOLN AT GETTYSBURG

LINCOLN AT GETTYSBURG

AFTER the eyes that looked, the lips that spake
Here, from the shadows of impending death,
Those words of solemn breath,
What voice may fitly break
The silence doubly hallowed, left by him?
We can but bow the head, with eyes grown dim,
And, as a nation's litany repeat
The phrase his martyrdom hath made complete,
Noble as then, but now more sadly sweet;
"Let us, the Living, rather dedicate
Ourselves to this unfinished work, which they
Thus far advanced so nobly on it way,
And save the perilled State!
Let us, upon this field where they, the brave,
Their last full measure of devotion gave,
Highly resolve they have not died in vain!
That, under God, the Nation's later birth
Of freedom and the Nation's gain
Of their own Sovereignty, shall never wane
And perish from the circle of the earth!"
From such a perfect text, shall Song aspire
To light her faded fire,
And into wandering music turn
Its virtue, simple, sorrowful, and stern?
His voice all elegies anticipated;
For whatso'er the strain,
We hear that one refrain;
"We consecrate ourselves to them, the Consecrated!"

—BAYARD TAYLOR.

