

The
LINCOLN-DOUGLAS
DEBATE

An Address

by


WILLIAM MCKINLEY

George B. Cothran
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AN ADDRESS
by
The President of the United States
WILLIAM MCKINLEY
October 7, 1899
ON
THE OCCASION OF THE
Forty-first Anniversary
OF THE
LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE
at
Galesburgh Illinois

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T. J. MCKNIGHT, ESQ.,
WILLIAM C. BROWN, ESQ.,
JOHN H. FINLEY, ESQ.

Mr. Chairman, and My Fellow Citizens:



The time and place make this meeting memorable. Forty-one years ago on this spot two mighty leaders, representing opposing ideas, contended for

(1)

On the 41st Anniversary of the

mastery before the tribune of the people. It was a contest which history will not fail to record; and some are yet living to tell its interesting and thrilling story. It has been recited around the family fireside, until to the people of Illinois it has become a household tale, inspiring love of liberty and devotion to free institutions. Here therefore are sacred memories which will be cherished by this community for all time, and are permanently incorporated in the life of the Nation.

Lincoln and Douglas are inseparably connected in the public mind. Their association

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began in conflict and ended in cooperation. They were in antagonism for more than a generation over the interpretation of the constitution, and were united at last when the constitution itself was assailed. They might differ, as they did, over the meaning of some of its provisions, but when the crisis came they stood together for its inviolability and for the inseverability of the union it established. The one asserted the right of slavery under certain conditions to enter the Territories—the other disputed that right under any conditions ; but both agreed that the slave power should not divide the Union.

On the 41st Anniversary of

The debate was national and historical. It commanded profound attention. It interested all sections. It was watched with the deepest anxiety by the followers of both. It was read and studied as no other public discussion before or since. It presented the best of the two conflicting schools of thought. It was epoch-making, and marked an epoch in our history. It touched the public conscience. It influenced public thought and purpose. It made the issue impossible of escape ; it could be no longer avoided or evaded. It united the friends of liberty, as well as those of slavery. It hastened the

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“irrepressible conflict.” It was not the beginning of the agitation, but it carried it into the lives and homes of the Republic, and no issue is ever rightly settled until it is settled there. It is no little source of satisfaction that upon the great question presented in these debates, while Douglas carried the Legislature Lincoln had a majority of the people.

The torch of liberty was not lighted here, but it flamed forth with a broader, brighter, bolder light as it was lifted up by the strong arm of Abraham Lincoln.

Three years — *only* three years — inter-

On the 41st Anniversary of the

vened, and the debate was removed from the arena of peaceful discussion to that of war and carnage. And then Lincoln and Douglas stood no longer divided. Sumter was fired on April 12th, 1861. On the 15th of that month Lincoln issued his call for seventy-five thousand troops. The position of Douglas at this critical juncture was that of a patriot. Without halting or hesitation he aligned himself upon the side of the National Government and threw the force of his great personality in support of the Executive. Upon the occasion of his memorable visit to Lincoln immediately after the first call for

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volunteers, he dictated to the representative of the Associated Press a dispatch in these words:

“April 18th, 1861.

“Senator Douglas called on the President and had an interesting conversation on the present condition of the country. The substance of it was, on the part of Mr. Douglas, that while he was unalterably opposed to the Administration in all its political issues, he was prepared to fully sustain the President in the exercise of all his constitutional functions to preserve the Union, maintain the government and defend the Federal Capitol.

On the 41st Anniversary of

A firm policy and prompt action was necessary. The Capitol was in danger and must be defended at all hazards and at any expense of men and money. He spoke of the present and the future without any reference to the past."

He no longer considered party. His sole concern was for his country. He had no sympathy with our enemies in the North who openly or secretly counseled the dissolution of the Union. He was for the flag and for its cause, and the brave men who carried it had his blessing and prayers. His patriotic course was a mighty factor in

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molding Union sentiment and in uniting the patriotism of the country, and should serve as an example of good citizenship and an inspiration to duty.

Though Douglas espoused a cause doomed to defeat, yet his name will be cherished by patriots everywhere because when the test came he was found supporting the Government and marshaling his followers to uphold the constituted authorities. It is the cause which lives, and it is the cause which makes the men identified with it immortal in history. Lincoln was the leader of the triumphant cause. Douglas, though opposed

to him for a lifetime, supported and strengthened his arm. Both will be remembered longest, not for the debate, but for their part in the mighty events which ensued. They will live because the Union which was saved and the liberty which was established will endure to perpetuate their names.

To Lincoln, who in 1858 was struggling here against encroachment of slavery, not for its destruction where it existed but against its further extension, was finally given by the people under the providence of God the opportunity and the power to enthrone liberty in every part of the Republic.

*CONCERNING THE CELEBRATIONS OF THE
LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE*

he fifth of the famous debates
between Abraham Lincoln and
Stephen A. Douglas was held in
Galesburgh, Illinois, October 7, 1858. A

Concerning the Celebrations of the

temporary platform was erected at the east side of the old college building on the Knox Campus so that the speakers should be protected from the chill northwest wind. The Hon. James Knox presided. Many thousands were present.

On October 7, 1896, the 38th anniversary of the debate was celebrated, on which occasion the following exercises were held, the President of Knox College, John H. Finley, presiding:

Music, - Knox College Cadet Band.
Invocation, - Hon. Newton Bateman.

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Address of Welcome, Hon. Clark E. Carr.

Greeting from the Schools, Dr. C. E. Nash.

Music, - Knox College Students.

Anniversary Oration,

Hon. Chauncey M. Depew.

Address, - Hon. Robt. T. Lincoln.

Address, - - S. S. Mc Clure, Esq.

Address, - - Frank Hamlin, Esq.

Unveiling of the Memorial Tablet,

Ellen Boyden Finley.

Unveiling Address, Hon. John M. Palmer.

A tablet with the following inscriptions
was set in the wall of the old college building:

Concerning the Celebrations of the

This Memorial Tablet is placed here to recall the joint debate between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, whose words these walls echoed October 7, 1858.

“Equality among the different States is a cardinal principle upon which all our institutions rest.” *Douglas.*

“He is blowing out the moral lights around us who contends that whoever wants slaves has a right to hold them.” *Lincoln.*

In 1899 the anniversary was again celebrated, the President of the United States and his Cabinet being the guests of honor.

Lincoln - Douglas Debate.

The exercises on this occasion were as follows :

Address by the Chairman,

Hon. Clark E. Carr.

Addresses of Welcome,

Hon. Fletcher Carney, Hon. Geo. W.

Prince and Hon. Shelby M. Cullom.

Address, The President of the United States.

Address, - - Hon. John Hay.

Oration, - Hon. Charles Emory Smith.

Presentation of other Members of the Cabinet.

The End.



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