

IN RESPONSE TO
NUMEROUS REQUESTS
"THE PILGRIMS" HAVE
PRINTED THIS ADDRESS
OF MR. JOHN GRIBBEL
PRESIDENT OF THE
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WHICH WAS
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THE PILGRIMS
UNION LEAGUE
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February 20, 1915

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

We celebrate to-day the 106th anniversary of the birth of the greatest man America has produced. He was not made great by the accident of birth. Education did little for him. Wealth passed him entirely by. The great ones of the earth saw nothing in him that drew them to him, and when he was at his very best, there was no beauty of feature or form that men desired of him. None of the graces of oratory, nor music of voice were given him. He was never clothed by fashion, and art never improved him. He was a lonely man. No man ever entered the innermost chambers of his life.

One woman understood him, loved him, and was loved by him with a love beyond words and understanding; but when Anne Rutledge was called into eternity a chamber of Lincoln's life was sealed and no human being was ever admitted thereto.

The humor that was in him made possible his living until his superhuman task

was finished. Men shared his cheer. Generations to come will make his stories classics, none but God ever entered into the melancholy that crushed him at times. Scripture has furnished men with Job as a pattern of patience and American history has furnished humanity for all ages to come with patience made flesh, for it dwelt among us in Abraham Lincoln. Like Him, who died for all men, Lincoln when reviled, reviled not again.

His memory was marvelous. He forgot no duty and no man, but himself. Born with no natural bent to industry he never knew what ease was. Conscience made him the obedient slave of duty. His one vacation came when God took him. From the morning of life until its sunset, he was a working man and a carrier of burdens. Wisest of men, though he was, yet Statesmen said "whence hath this man wisdom, having never learned?" When asked for his descent he always begged the question yet his patent of nobility was from God Himself. Tennyson described his position in the eternal peerage when he said:

“Howe’er it be, I hold it true
’Tis only noble to be good
Kind hearts are more than coronets
And simple faith than Norman blood.”

Never making any sacrifice for praise of men, he stands forever in the eternal temple of fame as its chief American pillar.

Born in poverty and never knowing what a competence was, he has enriched this Nation beyond the dreams of avarice.

In the crisis of his life and the crisis of his Country’s existence, Commonwealths rose in armed rebellion against his Country’s life. Friends, called wise, said “Let the erring sisters go” and fanatics—consecrated fanatics they were—said “Give us a union without slavery and none other.”

When Statesmen closest to him doubted his plans and policy and ability, he stood almost alone for one thing and one thing only: the preservation of the Union. Hating slavery with a hatred not exceeded by any abolitionist, not even Garrison, nor Wendell Phillips, he saw a greater need than freedom. Moved by

a vision surely given him from a source beyond human ken, in spite of derision, braving charges of apostacy and facing desertion of friends when he needed them with a need beyond description, he calmly said:

“If I can save the Union without slavery, I will save the Union. If I can save the Union with slavery, I will save the Union.”

And there he stood for four long years rooted and immovable. The rebellion was crushed, the Union was preserved and you and I are here to-night citizens of a Country which is the promised land to all the earth with a wealth and freedom unparalleled in history. The States which rebelled are now rejoicing that they are in the Union and under a Flag, from which not a single star is missing.

While the most of the world's area is involved in a war such as history has never known, with civilization in default, the Hague Tribunal a byword, and international law and obligations scorned as scraps of paper, this Union of States preserved by the devotion and sacrifice of Abraham Lincoln—and men who sit

about this table to-night—is the hope of the earth. If the United States had become only a memory in 1865, instead of a perpetual reality, humanity to-day the world over would have little hope of an enduring Republic. If, in the plan of God, out of the shambles of the present war there shall come a hope that in some future day—far distant perhaps but still a hope—a United States of Europe shall solve the centuries old problem of Europe, the history of the last fifty years of the United States will be the prompting of that hope.

Gentlemen, a half century is too small a period in which to see the harvest to be reaped from the planting of Abraham Lincoln. That is but a day in the history of a people and only an hour in the development of a race. We are still in the morning of Liberty and the high noon of the United States is still before us.

Some sitting here put everything upon the altar of sacrifice, offering life itself that a nation should live. Most of us, however, belong to a generation that is reaping where it has not sown.

What of the estate that is our inheritance?

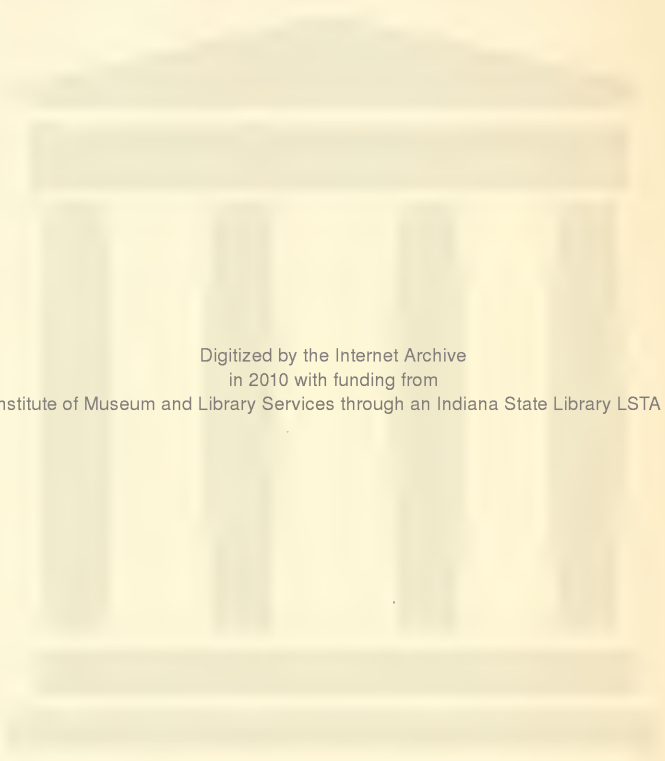
What are we doing to insure its continuance? Shall those who come after us receive it from our hands without wastage, but with an increase of the principal instead? There is no other way possible than that which Lincoln followed. If this Nation's nourishment of you, its children, was warranted, you shall be eyes and ears and hands and feet to her. Her prosperity and well-being shall be a first charge upon your time, means, heart and brain. You shall be a servant in your daily life in some measure as Lincoln was in great measure. You shall forego comfort and leisure and means and, when necessary to secure the estate, you shall be faithful and face any cost.

Look into this photograph of Lincoln's face and see what service meant in him. It was taken five days before his martyrdom, and in the excitement of the time, the negative was never retouched. You see his face literally as it was. None of us can ever enter into such labors or carry such care as you see recorded here. With that face impressed upon our memories we can, however, resolve that

inasmuch as in us lies, and up to the opportunities which the day's work brings, we shall be found faithful. These United States cost in their preservation,

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

In the contemplation of that face, gentlemen, let us say "It is for us to be 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."



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