

ABRAHAM LINCOLN—FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT.

BY REV. JOHN WEISS.

WHOEVER recalls some of the famous dates of history, will have a suspicion either that Providence indulges a taste for coincidences, or that the historian has been mythologizing. It was understood between XERXES and the Carthaginians that, when he passed over into Greece, they should invade Sicily. The battle of Salamis was fought on the 23d of September, 480 B.C., and the great victory at Himera, in Sicily, gained by GETON and THERON over HAMILCAR, occurred on the same day. Such a nice adjustment of events at both ends of the line of invasion happened so long ago that it passes for an improbability. But one is ready to believe it since Gettysburg and Vicksburg were announced to America on the same 4th of July, as if God celebrated; and Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge crowned the first Thanksgiving at which all the States sat on the same day. Does a sublime irony also mingle with these grave touches of Providence? For I remember that the head and cap of the Goddess of Liberty was lifted to its place on the dome of the Capitol at noon on December 2d, four years after another head with a cap upon it was lifted up to draw all people to it. Fused and moulded in their hearts, the bronze crowns the precise moment, as if to give the country God's opinion of an execution.

But April is America's month of resurrection. It is full of Easter-

days. On the 19th, in 1689, the men of Boston put the tyrannical ANDROS into his own castle, built by him to command the town. On the 19th, in 1775, Lexington retorted sharply on Governor HUTCHINSON. And on the 19th, in 1861, Massachusetts went to Baltimore. This month, Fort Sumter challenged, and Richmond surrendered, and Booth finished the lingering treason. We stand in this week of patriotic memories, with the day set apart by Christians for celebrating a resurrection, to remember a genuine one in the passing away of ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S spirit into the proclamation of the Fifteenth Amendment. Surely this month, when our fields begin to resume their green, marks a springtime of emotions and ideas that puts an accent on the page of history.

It is a month when every thing has seemed so often lost just before every thing has been virtually gained. It is the divine vindication of apparent failures; and I do not know that the theory of Providence was ever more precisely stated than by two negroes who had just heard of Mr. LINCOLN'S death: Said one, "Well, I tell you now, human events be one mass of ignorances." Said the other, "Ah! yes; but de Lord puts in his stick, and stirs them up, and makes a heap o' wisdom." So it seems today. If Providence be the gravedigger, the turf finds nutriment. We should grow tired in mentioning the evidence of this which has been ac-

cumulating ever since the rebellion brought in a series of disasters. It was the last resort of a desperation that defeats itself in taking it. Paymaster SMITH, of the Kearsarge, used to relate that the Alabama's flag was shot away four or five different times during the action, while our flag was hit but once. Captain WINSLOW had a battle-flag furled at the mizzen with the stops, ready to let go if victory was ours; and the last shot that was fired by the Alabama carried away the halyards, and threw it open to the breeze. So treason at last tore away the country's hesitation, and set liberty broad open over all the States.

It seems a good thing for American pulpits to recall on Easter-Sunday the character of the man who first proclaimed the emancipation which the nation has just secured and ratified. His own private fortune represented what is possible to the poor and miserable, provided they are reared in a republic; if not a station as exalted as his own, or such an opportunity to become endeared to the hearts of millions, at least freedom like his own, which brought out his natural capacity. He was a conspicuous symbol of the American idea, born among the poor white trash of Kentucky. He was the country reduced to its simplest terms. When a German soldier, who had been promoted for good behavior in the field, grew very grateful, and tried to show the President, with much garrulity, that it was a safe thing to make him an officer because he came of an excellent family in Europe, and was, in fact, the son of a nobleman: "Oh! never mind that," said the witty American no-

ble; "you will not find that to be an obstacle to your advancement." The President meant to say that all the fine qualities of common people eventually get to the front in this country, and all the low qualities of superfine people are eventually ordered to the rear, with the mules and the baggage. How grudgingly we conceded administration to the low qualities of his accidental successor!

The President's mind was plain, with a tendency toward metaphysical speculation so decided that he sometimes told his friends he had missed his vocation. One of his earliest efforts was a rationalistic treatise, which an over-zealous partisan put into the stove, lest it should hurt his political prospects. This quality appeared conspicuously in his early analysis of the sophistries of Senator DOUGLAS, and was always like some cleaner or picker, that frees a staple of its refuse. His common sense kept it in the service of practical questions, and it never interfered with his natural ability to grow up to their level. He did not represent the prophetic thought of a few minds, but the great bulk of thinking, or rather of the popular instinct, which is coming up abreast of the finest intelligence. It was not his mission to proclaim the truths which were necessary to America, before there was an America to accept them. His healthy growth was due to the sagacity which waited for the impulses of the country to gather headway, and which never mistook a good deal of local feeling for a deliberate American conviction. But he had a faith in the ultimate resolution of the people, that kept him

steady all the while. The advanced posts of truth often sighed to hear the trumpet's comfort and assurance from his lips, and lamented the silence. But his roots were in the prairie, where he absorbed both sun and air; and when he went to the grist, he went full of nature. His temper was not enthusiastic; he never fired the popular heart, any more than the corn and wheat do in growing. He never appeared to yearn after the point which at length he gained; but, as if he had the instinct of all the country's staples in him to make the fruit itself put forth its own blossom, his feeling could not be hurried to antedate his growth. When the time came, he said something that struck another hour of liberty's life. For his roots tapped our hearts, and went working all around for every drop, slowly to draw in and change the people's secret hopes into the people's unconcealed America, whose eyes this morning beam with majesty and confidence.

His fancy was homely, and seemed to point his thought on purpose with the commonest illustrations, as if to satirize the flowery politicians. Fifty years of oratory, self-laudation and arrogance, of corrupt expedients ably recommended, of crimes against the people adroitly argued, of latent treason covered by that flaunting rag called patriotism—this bad dream of a restless country was broken by a rude and honest voice; as when he said, "Gold is good in its place; but living, brave, and patriotic men are better than gold." There is no chance for bribery in that. How welcome were his sentences, bare as your hand, but closed firmly on their object, to hold it,

and nothing more; not to play fast and loose with our great ideas, but to win and keep them for the benefit of all. The large, hard-featured hand which tore all our old bunting to the ground, hung out the flag of the common people of America.

Before me as I write there lies a cast of his hand, brought to me from the West, where it was taken. It is closed tight around a willow stick, which he had just been whittling. There is no flesh to spare; the act of grasping brings out deep wrinkles at the base of the thumb, and the veins which run up to feed the long, prehensile fingers. Just as you say it is the most virile hand you ever saw, its symmetry strikes you. From the knotted wrist to the perfectly fashioned nails, it is the hand built by a man in whom balance of thinking, tenderness of feeling, perception for unaffected beauty, gives shape and artistic finish to a power that could throttle without drawing breath. And the homely willow stick makes this symbol of a great president complete.

See this hand in his addresses and state papers. They are filled with something better than rhetorical contrivances. They show a power of divesting the subject-matter of every thing that is merely adventitious, either in ornament or in suggestion.

The President's religion was, like his rhetoric, stripped of every incumbrance; he was content with God for his day's march. He woke with that essential in the morning, and had reason to be grateful for the sustenance in his tired bivouac at night. Whenever he took the name of God upon his lips, it became the

utterance of a heart that was filled with a sense of the divine presence in the history of America. The leaders of the rebellion made a copious use of the name of God. General LEE was accustomed to speak of the blessing of the Lord of hosts which rested on his arms ; and JEFFERSON DAVIS hid the venom of his sting in the sheath of holy phrases. You will see elaborate liturgies in vogue wherever established oppression seeks to prolong its irreligious life. Bishops and ministers used to prove the divine sanction of slavery by being very evangelical about the Bible, thus literally holding up the crucifix to advertise the auction-block and whipping-post.

During the middle ages, a famous instrument of death, called the Maiden, was in use. It was the figure of a beautiful virgin placed in the niche of a prison cell, to represent the adorable Madonna. The prisoner, exhausted by fasting and torture, and turned into this cell, falls in supplication before this image, which is contrived to open its arms, as if to invite his bewildered fancy to a protecting embrace. He rushes into the trap ; the arms close, and a thousand knife-blades kiss his life away. Such is the religion of every kind of oppression. It is fair with all the forms of Christianity, and its mouth is filled with the divine invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor." It is a Jesus uttering those words with sinister intent to keep the wretched in its power ; and a thousand secret miseries spring forth to drink their blood.

The President never traded in the name of Jesus. From the testimony which has been lately brought for-

ward by Mr. HERNDON, his law-partner, who was the intimate of his opinions, we learn, as we might expect, that his religion was primitive and simple, as he was ; it consisted in a profound sense of the Infinite, in childlike trust, in absolute devotion to the orders of the day. It will surprise some men that he did his work without a mediator. When JOHN ALDEN wanted MILES STANDISH to do a bit of courting for him, the old soldier's advice was, "If you want any thing well done, go and do it yourself, John." The President addressed himself directly to the source of all beauty and goodness. He never wasted time in speaking well of Jesus, still less in struggling to imagine that his way to the present God lay through this departed person. His sincerity needed miracles as little as THEODORE PARKER's did. They were both alike in freeing their manliness from the fetters of the supernatural ; that ball and chain clanked at the ankles of neither. Of what account to him, in the multifarious tasks of strength and tenderness which he accomplished, would have been a belief in feeding the five thousand or in the raising of Lazarus ? He witnessed a truer resurrection with his own eyes ; a country bandaged from head to foot starting from its noisome tomb at the voice of a great people. He cast out demons with little honest sentences, which they bit and raged at in vain. All the lameness in the country gained sound muscles in his frame, paralyzed liberty leaped up, threw away its crutches as he passed by, and grasped a million muskets. And when, at their approach, he saw the rebellion, reduced to its own shape, rush violently down a steep

place and disappear, the mythological swine must have seemed less impressive. Let us commend to the churches the problem of this religious man, who got along so well on simple integrity, and never met a moment so critical as to claim the aid of a supernatural mediator. Strange to say, God himself sufficed from the first gun at Sumter to the proclamation of the Fifteenth Amendment.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN never played the diplomatist with God's name; he never used the airy phrases of religion to feather public documents, or conciliate the respectability of our theologies. For God was in the camp of his armies, and claimed a seat at his council-board, and thundered in the great majority which bade him occupy till death.

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Now the people must bring all these homely qualities of the great President to the work of the Fifteenth Amendment; the same patience and tenacity; the same good sense; the same placability; elements that wait for results before they put on lustre. They are like the rough gems which catch the light in noble flashes when long grinding proves their temper. The amendment will drain our manliest qualities before it becomes a fact as well as a law.

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We must see that the personal religion of ABRAHAM LINCOLN is furnished to these men, instead of the forms of sectarianism. We must insist that the missionary shall have his theology reduced to marching rations as he goes among those children in religion to distribute to them the plain truths of morals, of health

and order, of a practical knowledge of God, of hopes less fantastical than their crude feelings now claim.

But first, some missionary must visit us. What Northern sect can invite them into its meeting-houses with the text, "The rich and poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all"? Only those can meet together who are able to offer premiums for the best seats. It will be long before a black man with money in his pocket can compete at this new auction-block, where religion is knocked down to and by the highest bidder. May it be long, indeed! What sect can venture to proclaim to the negro that Christianity means brotherhood, when it *does not* mean that in horse-cars, hotels, railroads, theatres, and concert-rooms, and only means it to the extent of about four of the worst pews in a meeting-house. It does not mean that in the very places where our chances for contact are the best. It is a glittering generality that keeps its own coupé; the seat for the other person is not yet put in. Will the Chinaman, whose Buddhism received its first inspiration from the heart's natural recoil at caste, be much impressed with the equality that has forgotten the first lesson in optics, that yellow is a constituent of white? The day will come when white itself in this country will depend upon a harmonic gradation of all the cheeks that the sun kisses. The sun has no sallies of contempt, of which these are the hues. It loves to divide its unity. Whatever form this naturalization may assume, the missionary must be its first preacher, and if he will insist upon it that *one* is our *Lord and Master*, let him at least sweeten

the assumption by confessing that all of us are brethren. In this respect the Catholic starts with an advantage over the Protestant of a thousand years of ministry among all races and colors. Rome has no squeamishness that turns on nationality. It knows how to put a black bishop over a black diocese ; and in course of time the country will discover that the whole diocese will vote to please the bishop. The pope does not go into a cathedral and put up seats at high mass to be contended for by prosperous dry-goods merchants ; he prefers to collect his Peter's pence by making the whole building the home and solace of the miserable. The more meagre and bloodless the fly is, the more sumptuous is the invitation to walk into the pope's parlor. You may claim that he is fallible, but you can not deny that such diplomacy will have infallible results. It will bring all the pariahs of America to their knees before Rome's confessionals.

Of all the incidents in the New Testament, the baptizing of the Ethiopian has been most dear to the city that loves to propagate the dramatic faith of eighteen centuries. The South has already been selected for a special field. Politics and religion powerfully combine to guide the operations of the priest among this people of ardent feeling, pictorial fancy, flashing emotions. Music and symbols may attract them into a fetichism, or idol-worship, no more emancipating than what their ancestors in Guinea practiced ; and perhaps some day all these dusky millions at the elevation of the host will bow down to a policy that is at war with republics, that watches to

throw our Bible out and bring our money in, to found sectarian schools and a feudal system on the soil which free blood has so often ransomed. Crucifix in hand, the priest will point to the symbol of sorrow as he walks among the despised and rejected ; they will recollect their stripes and perceive our prejudice, and throng into the gate which the man who was acquainted with grief will seem to throw open to them ; and the cross will again become a club to dash out the brains of revering humanity. Protestantism has no chance short of instantaneous and absolute equality, North and South, practical fraternity that makes exclusion a crime, and opportunity a claim to the country's gratitude in every man who offers it. Then your Fifteenth Amendment will be ratified, not by mere bluster of cannon, but by the sincere welcome of thirty million lips.

After the battle of Gettysburg, the grateful heart of ABRAHAM LINCOLN compromised itself to all our hopes in these sentences : " Thanks to all, peace does not appear so distant as it did. I hope it will come soon, and come to stay, and so come as to be worth the keeping in all future time. It will then have been proved that among freemen there can be no successful appeal from the ballot to the bullet, and that they who take such appeal are sure to lose their case and pay the cost. And then there will be some black men who can remember that with silent tongue, and clinched teeth, and steady eye, and well-poised bayonet, they have helped mankind on to this great consummation. Let us be quite sober. Let us diligently apply the means, never doubting that a just God in his own good time will give us the rightful result."

It seems to be a message from him on an Easter morning, " Let us be quite sober. Let us diligently apply the means."

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THE NEW POWERS OF CONGRESS.

THE pretense of State sovereignty vanished at Appomatox. It disappeared when LEE sheathed his perjured sword. The Tenth Section of Article First of the Constitution forbade the States to exercise the usual powers of sovereigns: those touching treaties, the raising of armies, the coinage of money, the laying of taxes on imports, etc. The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments still further cut down the powers of the States. Following in the line of that Tenth Section, and carrying out its policy still further, these amendments define who shall constitute the citizens of a State, and prohibit the State's interference, in certain respects, with the civil and political rights of its citizens. Still further, these amendments intrust Congress with the duty of providing for the enforcement of their provisions. As to the matters specified in these amendments, therefore, Congress is empowered to exercise legislation in the amplest manner.

We do not rely, in the last resort, on any legislation for the protection of the black race. Every voting class, in the long run, protects itself. The negro has the ballot. If he has

the force, intelligence, and capacity for organization to use that power efficiently, he can command any thing and every thing that rightfully belongs to him. That, therefore, is our primary reliance. If the negro neglects to avail himself of this means of self-defense, it is his own fault. If he proves incapable of using it efficiently, that will be his misfortune. But whether such a result comes from his weakness or his neglect, it is the same peril to us; and we can not afford to let this ready weapon of the nation's defense drop from our hands. Whether weak or neglectful, we must, for our own sakes, for the nation's sake, protect this ally to the fullest extent that the circumstances allow. In the present transition state, for several years to come, the new citizen must have the special intervention of Congress. The most explicit laws, such as can not be evaded or transgressed with impunity, are the debt the nation owes to the new voter.

It is not for us to suggest the details of such laws. One or two principles we may presume to point out—principles which should underlie all legislation on these points. All will admit that the difficulties in this class of laws are—first, to initiate proceedings; secondly, to secure