

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

ABRAHAM
LINCOLN

AN ORATION

BY

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Price Threepence.

LONDON:
R. FORDER, 28 STONECUTTER STREET, E.C.

1893.

LONDON:
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY G. W. FOOTE,
AT 14 CLERKENWELL GREEN, E.C.

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ORATION ON ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

EIGHTY-FOUR years ago to-day, two babes were born—one in the woods of Kentucky, amid the hardships and poverty of pioneers; one in England, surrounded by wealth and culture. One was educated in the University of Nature, the other at Oxford.

One associated his name with the enfranchisement of labor, with the emancipation of millions, with the salvation of the Republic. He is known to us as Abraham Lincoln.

The other broke the chains of superstition and filled the world with intellectual light, and he is known as Charles Darwin.

Because of these two men the nineteenth century is illustrious.

A few men and women make a nation glorious—Shakespeare made England immortal; Voltaire civilised and humanised France; Goethe, Schiller, and Humboldt lifted Germany into the light; Angelo, Raphael, Galileo, and Bruno crowned with fadeless laurel the Italian brow; and now the most precious treasure of the Great Republic is the memory of Abraham Lincoln.

Every generation has its heroes, its iconoclasts, its pioneers, its ideals. The people always have been and still are divided, at least into two classes—the many, who with their backs to the sunrise worship the past; and the few, who keep their faces towards the dawn—the many, who are satisfied with the world as it is; the few, who labor and suffer for the future, for those

to be, and who seek to rescue the oppressed, to destroy the cruel distinctions of caste, and to civilise mankind.

Yet it sometimes happens that the liberator of one age becomes the oppressor of the next. His reputation becomes so great, he is so revered and worshipped, that his followers, in his name, attack the hero who endeavors to take another step in advance.

The heroes of the Revolution, forgetting the justice for which they fought, put chains upon the limbs of others, and in their names the lovers of liberty were denounced as ingrates and traitors.

In our country there were for many years two great political parties, and each of these parties had conservatives and extremists. The extremists of the Democratic party were in the rear and wished to go back; the extremists of the Republican were in the front and wished to go forward. The extreme Democrat was willing to destroy the Union for the sake of slavery, and the extreme Republican was willing to destroy the Union for the sake of liberty.

Neither party could succeed without the votes of its extremists.

This was the political situation in 1860.

The extreme Democrats would not vote for Douglas, but the extreme Republicans did vote for Lincoln. Lincoln occupied the middle ground, and was the compromise candidate of his own party. He had lived for many years in the intellectual territory of compromise—in a part of our country settled by Northern and Southern men—where Northern and Southern ideas met, and the ideas of the two sections were brought together and compared.

The sympathies of Lincoln, his ties of kindred, were with the South. His convictions, his sense of justice, and his ideals, were with the North. He knew the horrors of slavery, and he felt the unspeakable

ecstasies and glories of freedom. He had the kindness, the gentleness, of true greatness, and he could not have been a master; he had the manhood and independence of true greatness, and he could not have been a slave. He was just, and incapable of putting a burden upon others that he himself would not willingly bear.

He was merciful and profound, and it was not necessary for him to read the history of the world to know that liberty and slavery could not live in the same nation, or in the same brain. Lincoln was a statesman. And there is this difference between a politician and a statesman. A politician schemes and works in every way to make the people do something for him. The statesman wishes to do something for the people. With him place and power are means to an end, and the end is the good of his country.

The Republic had reached a crisis.

The conflict between liberty and slavery could no longer be delayed. For three-quarters of a century the forces had been gathering for the battle.

After the Revolution, principle was sacrificed for the sake of gain. The Constitution contradicted the Declaration. Liberty as a principle was held in contempt. Slavery took possession of the Government. Slavery made the laws, corrupted courts, dominated presidents and demoralised the people.

In 1840, when Harrison and Van Buren were candidates for the Presidency, the Whigs of Indiana issued a circular giving reasons for the election of Harrison and the defeat of Van Buren. The people of Indiana were advised to vote against Van Buren because he, when a member of the New York Legislature, had voted to enfranchise colored men who had property to the extent of two hundred and fifty dollars. This was the crime of Van Buren.

The reason why the people should support Harrison was that he had signed eleven petitions to make Indiana a slave State.

Mr. Douglas voiced the feeling of the majority when he declared that he did not care whether slavery was voted up or down.

From the heights of philosophy—standing above the contending hosts, above the prejudices, the sentimentalities of the day—Lincoln was great enough and brave enough and wise enough to utter these prophetic words: "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this Government cannot permanently endure half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved; I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all the one thing or the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it further until it becomes alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South."

This declaration was the standard around which gathered the grandest political party the world has ever seen, and this declaration made Lincoln the leader of that vast host.

In this, the first great crisis, Lincoln uttered the victorious truth that made him the foremost man in the Republic.

The people decided at the polls that a house divided against itself could not stand, and that slavery had cursed soul and soil enough.

It is not a common thing to elect a really great man to fill the highest official position. I do not say that the great presidents have been chosen by accident.

Probably it would be better to say that they were the favorites of a happy chance.

The average man is afraid of genius. He feels as an awkward man feels in the presence of a sleight-of-hand performer. He admires and suspects. Genius appears to carry too much sail—lacks prudence, has too much courage. The ballast of dullness inspires confidence.

By a happy chance Lincoln was nominated and elected in spite of his fitness—and the patient, gentle, and just and loving man was called upon to bear as great a burden as man has ever borne.

II.

Then came another crisis—the crisis of Secession, and Civil War.

Again Lincoln spoke the deepest feeling and the highest thought of the Nation. In his first message he said : “ The central idea of secession is the essence of anarchy.”

He also showed conclusively that the North and South, in spite of secession, must remain face to face—that physically they could not separate—that they must have more or less commerce, and that this commerce must be carried on, either between the two sections as friends, or as aliens.

This situation and its consequences he pointed out to absolute perfection in these words : “ Can aliens make treaties easier than friends can make laws? Can treaties be more faithfully enforced between aliens than laws among other friends ?”

After having stated fully and fairly the philosophy of the conflict, after having said enough to satisfy any calm and thoughtful mind, he addressed himself to the hearts of America. Probably there are few finer passages in literature than the close of Lincoln's inaugural address : “ I am loth 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 chords of memory stretching from every battle-field and patriotic grave to every loving heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

These noble, these touching, these pathetic words, were delivered in the presence of rebellion, in the midst of spies and conspirators—surrounded by but few friends, most of whom were unknown, and some of whom were wavering in their fidelity—at a time when secession was arrogant and organised, when patriotism was silent, and when, to quote the expressive words of Lincoln himself, "Sinners were calling the righteous to repentance."

When Lincoln became President, he was held in contempt by the South—underrated by the North and East—not appreciated even by his cabinet—and yet he was not only one of the wisest, but one of the shrewdest of mankind. Knowing that he had the right to enforce the laws of the United States and Territories—knowing, as he did, that the secessionists were in the wrong, he also knew that they had sympathisers not only in the North but in other lands.

Consequently he felt that it was of the utmost importance that the South should fire the first shot, should do some act that would solidify the North and gain for us the justification of the civilised world. He so managed affairs that while he was attempting simply to give food to our soldiers, the South commenced hostilities and fired on Sumter.

This course was pursued by Lincoln in spite of the advice of many friends, and yet a wiser thing was never done.

At that time Lincoln appreciated the scope and consequences of the impending conflict. Above all other thoughts in his mind was this: "This conflict will settle the question, at least for centuries to come, whether man is capable of governing himself, and consequently is of greater importance to the free than to the enslaved."

He knew what depended on the issue and he said: "We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last, best hope of earth."

III.

Then came a crisis in the North.

It became clearer and clearer to Lincoln's mind, day by day, that the rebellion was slavery, and that it was necessary to keep the border States on the side of the Union. For this purpose he proposed a scheme of emancipation and colonisation—a scheme by which the owners of slaves should be paid the full value of what they called their "property." He called attention to the fact that he had adhered to the Act of Congress to confiscate property used for insurrectionary purposes—that the Union must be preserved, and that, therefore, all indispensable means must be employed to that end.

If, in war, a nation has the right to take the property of its citizens—of its friends—certainly it has the right to take the property of those it has the right to kill.

He knew that if the border States agreed to gradual emancipation, and received compensation for their slaves, they would be for ever lost to the Confederacy, whether secession succeeded or not. It was objected at the time, by some, that the scheme was far too expensive; but Lincoln, wiser than his advisers—far wiser than his enemies—demonstrated that from an economical point of view, his course was best.

He proposed that 400 dols. be paid for slaves, including men, women, and children. This was a large price, and yet he showed how much cheaper it was to purchase than to carry on the war.

At that time, at the price mentioned, there were about 750,000 dols. worth of slaves in Delaware. The cost of carrying on the war was at least two millions of dollars a day, and for one-third of one day's expenses all the slaves in Delaware could be purchased. He also showed that all the slaves in Delaware, Kentucky, and Missouri could be bought at the same price for less than the expense of carrying on the war for eighty-seven days.

This was the wisest thing that could have been proposed, and yet such was the madness of the South, such the indignation of the North, that the advice was unheeded.

Again, in July, 1862, he urged on the Representatives of the border States a scheme of gradual compensated emancipation ; but the Representatives were too deaf to hear, too blind to see.

Lincoln always hated slavery, and yet he felt the obligations and duties of his position. In his first message he assured the South that the laws, including the most odious of all—the law for the return of fugitive slaves—would be enforced. The South would not hear. Afterwards he proposed to purchase the slaves of the border States ; but the proposition was hardly discussed, hardly heard. Events came thick and fast ; theories gave way to facts, and everything was left to force.

The extreme Democrat of the North was fearful that slavery might be destroyed, that the Constitution might be broken, and that Lincoln, after all, could not be trusted ; and at the same time the radical Repub-

lican feared that Lincoln loved the Union more than he did liberty.

The fact is that he tried to discharge the obligations of his great office, knowing from the first that slavery must perish. The course pursued by Lincoln was so gentle, so kind and persistent, so wise and logical, that millions of Northern Democrats sprang to the defence, not only of the Union, but of his administration. Lincoln refused to be led or hurried by Fremont or Hunter, by Greeley or Sumner. From first to last he was the real leader, and he kept step with events.

IV.

On July 22, 1862, Lincoln called together his cabinet for the purpose of showing the draft of a Proclamation of Emancipation, stating to them that he did not wish their advice, as he had made up his mind.

After the Proclamation was signed Lincoln held it, waiting for some great victory before giving it to the world, so that it might appear to be the child of strength.

This was on July 22, 1862. On August 22 of the same year Lincoln wrote his celebrated letter to Horace Greeley, in which he stated that his object was to save the Union; *that he would save it with slavery if he could*; that if it was necessary to destroy slavery in order to save the Union, he would; in other words, he would do what was necessary to save the Union.

This letter disheartened, to a great degree, thousands and millions of the friends of freedom. They felt that Mr. Lincoln had not attained the moral height upon which they supposed he stood. And yet, when this letter was written, the Emancipation Proclamation was in his hands, and had been for thirty days, waiting only an opportunity to give it to the world.

Some two weeks after the letter to Greeley, Lincoln was waited on by a committee of clergymen, and was

by them informed that it was God's will that he should issue a Proclamation of Emancipation. He replied to them, in substance, that the day of miracles had passed. He also mildly and kindly suggested that if it were God's will this Proclamation should be issued, certainly God would have made known that will to him—to the person whose duty it was to issue it.

On September 22, 1862, the most glorious date in the history of the Republic, the Proclamation of Emancipation was issued.

Lincoln had reached the generalisation of all arguments upon the question of slavery and freedom—a generalisation that never has been, and probably never will be, excelled : In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free.

This is absolutely true. Liberty can be retained, can be enjoyed, only by giving it to others. The spendthrift saves, the miser is prodigal. In the realm of Freedom, waste is husbandry. He who puts chains upon the body of another shackles his own soul. The moment the Proclamation was issued, the cause of the Republic became sacred. From that moment the North fought for the human race. From that moment the North stood under the blue and stars, the flag of Nature—sublime and free.

In 1831 Lincoln saw in New Orleans a colored girl sold at auction. The scene filled his soul with indignation and horror.

Turning to his companion, he said, " Boys, if I ever get a chance to hit slavery, by God I'll hit it hard ! "

The helpless girl, unconsciously, had planted in a great heart the seeds of the Proclamation.

Thirty-one years afterwards the chance came, the oath was kept, and to four millions of slaves, of men, women, and children, was restored liberty, the jewel of the soul.

In the history, in the fiction of the world, there is nothing more intensely dramatic than this.

Lincoln held within his brain the grandest truths, and he held them as unconsciously, as easily, as naturally as a waveless pool holds within its stainless breast a thousand stars.

Let us think for one moment of the distance travelled from the first ordinance of secession to the Proclamation of Emancipation.

In 1861 a thirteenth amendment to the Constitution was offered to the South. By this proposed amendment slavery was to be made perpetual. This compromise was refused, and in its stead came the Proclamation. Let us take another step.

In 1865 the thirteenth amendment was adopted. The one proposed made slavery perpetual. The one adopted in 1865 abolished slavery and made the great Republic free forever.

The first state to ratify this amendment was Illinois.

V.

We were surrounded by enemies. Many of the so-called great in Europe and England were against us. They hated the Republic, despised our institutions, and sought in many ways to aid the South.

Mr. Gladstone announced that Jefferson Davis had made a nation and he did not believe the restoration of the American Union by force attainable.

From the Vatican came words of encouragement for the South.

It was declared that the North was fighting for empire and the South for independence.

The Marquis of Salisbury said : " The people of the South are the natural allies of England. The North keeps an opposition shop in the same department of trade as ourselves."

Some of their statesmen declared that the subjugation of the South by the North would be a calamity to the world.

Louis Napoleon was another enemy, and he endeavored to establish a monarchy in Mexico to the end that the great North might be destroyed. But the patience, the uncommon common sense, the statesmanship of Lincoln—in spite of foreign hate and Northern division—triumphed over all. And now we forgive all foes. Victory makes forgiveness easy.

Lincoln was, by nature, a diplomat. He knew the art of sailing against the wind. He had as much shrewdness as is consistent with honesty. He understood, not only the rights of individuals, but of nations. In all his correspondence with other governments he neither wrote nor sanctioned a line which afterwards was used to tie his hands. In the use of perfect English he easily rose above his advisers and all his fellows.

No one claims that Lincoln did all. He could have done nothing without the great and splendid generals in the field; and the generals could have done nothing without their armies. The praise is due to all—to the private as much as to the officer; to the lowest who did his duty, as much as to the highest.

My heart goes out to the brave private as much as to the leader of the host.

But Lincoln stood at the centre and with infinite patience, with consummate skill, with the genius of goodness directed, cheered, consoled, and conquered.

VI.

Slavery was the cause of the war, and slavery was the perpetual stumbling-block. As the war went on question after question arose—questions that could not be answered by theories. Should we hand back the

slave to his master, when the master was using his slave to destroy the Union? If the South was right slaves were property, and by the laws of war anything that might be used to the advantage of the enemy might be confiscated by us. Events did not wait for discussion. General Butler denominated the negro as a "contraband." Congress provided that the property of the rebels might be confiscated.

Lincoln moved along this line.

Each step was delayed by Northern division, but every step was taken in the same direction.

First, Lincoln offered to execute every law, including the most infamous of all ; second, to buy the slaves of the border states ; third, to confiscate the property of rebels ; fourth, to treat slaves as contraband of war ; fifth, to use slaves for the purpose of putting down the rebellion ; sixth, to arm these slaves and clothe them in the uniform of the Republic ; seventh, to make them citizens, and allow them to stand on an equality with their white brethren under the flag of the Republic.

During all these years, Lincoln moved with the people—with the masses, and every step he took has been justified by the considerate judgment of mankind.

VII.

Lincoln not only watched the war, but kept his hand on the political pulse. In 1863 a tide set in against the administration. A Republican meeting was to be held in Springfield, Illinois, and Lincoln wrote a letter to be read at this convention. It was in his happiest vein. It was a perfect defence of his administration, including the Proclamation of Emancipation. Among other things he said : " But the proclamation, as law, either is valid or it is not valid. If it is not valid it needs no retraction, but if it is valid it cannot be retracted, any more than the dead can be brought to life."

To the Northern Democrats who said they would not fight for negroes, Lincoln replied: "Some of them seem willing to fight for you—but no matter."

Of negro soldiers: "But negroes, like other people, act upon motives. Why should they do anything for us if we will do nothing for them? If they stake their lives for us they must be prompted by the strongest motive—even by the promise of freedom. And the promise, being made, must be kept."

There is one line in this letter that will give it immortality: "The Father of waters again goes unvexed to the sea." This line is worthy of Shakespeare.

Another: "Among freemen there can be no successful appeal from the ballot to the bullet."

He draws a comparison between the white men against us and the black men for us: "And then there will be some black men who can remember that with silent tongue and clenched teeth and steady eye and well-poised bayonet they have helped mankind on to this great consummation; while I fear there will be some white ones unable to forget that with malignant heart and deceitful speech they strove to hinder it."

Under the influence of this letter, the love of country, of the Union, and above all the love of liberty, took possession of the heroic North.

The Republican party became the noblest organisation the world has ever seen.

There was the greatest moral exaltation ever known.

The spirit of liberty took possession of the people. The masses became sublime.

To fight for yourself is good.

To fight for others is grand.

To fight for your country is noble.

To fight for the human race, for the liberty of land and brain, is nobler still.

As a matter of fact, the defenders of slavery had sown the seeds of their own defeat. They dug the pit in which they fell. Clay and Webster and thousands of others had by their eloquence made the Union almost sacred. The Union was the very tree of life, the source and stream and sea of liberty and law.

For the sake of slavery millions stood by the Union, for the sake of liberty millions knelt at the altar of the Union ; and this love of the Union is what, at last, overwhelmed the Confederate hosts.

It does not seem possible that only a few years ago our Constitution, our laws, our Courts, the Pulpit and the Press defended and upheld the institution of slavery—that it was a crime to feed the hungry, to give water to the lips of thirst, shelter to a woman flying from the whip and chain !

The old flag still flies, the stars are there—the stains have gone.

VIII.

Lincoln always saw the end. He was unmoved by the storms and currents of the times. He advanced too rapidly for the conservative politicians, too slowly for the radical enthusiasts. He occupied the line of safety, and held by his personality—by the force of his great character, by his charming candor—the masses on his side.

The soldiers thought of him as a father.

All who had lost their sons in battle felt that they had his sympathy—felt that his face was as sad as theirs. They knew that Lincoln was actuated by one motive, and that his energies were bent to the attainment of one end—the salvation of the Republic.

Success produces envy, and envy often ends in conspiracy.

In 1864 many politicians united against him. It is not for me to criticise their motive or their actions.

It is enough to say that the magnanimity of Lincoln towards those who had deserted and endeavored to destroy him, is without parallel in the political history of the world. This magnanimity made his success not only possible, but certain.

During all the years of war Lincoln stood, the embodiment of mercy, between discipline and death. He pitied the imprisoned and condemned. He took the unfortunate in his arms, and was the friend even of the convict. He knew temptation's strength—the weakness of the will—and how in fury's sudden flame the judgment drops the scales, and passion—blind and deaf—usurps the throne.

Through all the years Lincoln will be known as Lincoln the Loving, Lincoln the Merciful.

Lincoln had the keenest sense of humor, and always saw the laughable side even of disaster. In his humor there was logic and the best of sense. No matter how complicated the question, or how embarrassing the situation, his humor furnished an answer, and a door of escape.

Vallandigham was a friend of the South, and did what he could to sow the seeds of failure. In his opinion everything, except rebellion, was unconstitutional.

He was arrested, convicted by a court martial, and sentenced to imprisonment in Fort Warren.

There was doubt about the legality of the trial, and thousands in the North denounced the whole proceedings as tyrannical and infamous. At the same time millions demanded that Vallandigham should be punished.

Lincoln's humor came to the rescue. He disapproved of the findings of the court, changed the punishment, and ordered that Mr. Vallandigham should be sent to his friends in the South.

Those who regarded the act as unconstitutional almost forgave it for the sake of its humor.

Horace Greeley always had the idea that he was greatly superior to Lincoln, and for a long time he insisted that the people of the North and the people of the South desired peace. He took it upon himself to lecture Lincoln, and felt that he in some way was responsible for the conduct of the war. Lincoln, with that wonderful sense of humor, united with shrewdness and profound wisdom, told Greeley that, if the South really wanted peace, he (Lincoln) desired the same thing, and was doing all he could to bring it about. Greeley insisted that a commissioner should be appointed, with authority to negotiate with the representatives of the Confederacy. This was Lincoln's opportunity. He authorized Greeley to act as such commissioner. The great editor felt that he was caught. For a time he hesitated, but finally went, and found that the Southern commissioners were willing to take into consideration any offers of peace that Lincoln might make. The failure of Greeley was humiliating, and the position in which he was left absurd.

Again the humor of Lincoln had triumphed.

Lincoln always tried to do things in the easiest way. He did not waste his strength. He was not particular about moving along straight lines. He did not tunnel the mountains. He was willing to go around, and he reached the end desired as a river reaches the sea.

IX.

One of the most wonderful things ever done by Lincoln was the promotion of General Hooker. After the battle of Fredericksburg, General Burnside found great fault with Hooker, and wished to have him removed from the Army of the Potomac. Lincoln disapproved of Burnside's order, and gave Hooker the

command of the Army of the Potomac. He then wrote Hooker this memorable letter : " I have placed you at the head of the Army of the Potomac. Of course I have done this upon what appears to me to be sufficient reasons, and yet I think it best for you to know that there are some things in regard to which I am not quite satisfied with you. I believe you to be a brave and skilful soldier—which, of course, I like. I also believe you do not mix politics with your profession—in which you are right. You have confidence—which is a valuable, if not an indispensable, quality. You are ambitious, which, within reasonable bounds, does good rather than harm ; but I think that during General Burnside's command of the army you have taken counsel of your ambition to thwart him as much as you could—in which you did a great wrong to the country and to a most meritorious and honorable brother officer. I have heard, in such a way as to believe it, of your recently saying that both the army and the Government needed a dictator. Of course it was not for this, but in spite of it, that I have given you command. Only those generals who gain successes can set up dictators. What I now ask of you is military successes, and I will risk the dictatorship. The Government will support you to the best of its ability, which is neither more nor less than it has done and will do for all commanders. I much fear that the spirit which you have aided to infuse into the army, of criticising their commander and withholding confidence in him, will now turn upon you. I shall assist you, so far as I can, to put it down. Neither you, nor Napoleon, if he were alive, can get any good out of an army while such a spirit prevails in it. And now beware of rashness. Beware of rashness, but with energy and sleepless vigilance go forward and give us victories."

This letter has—in my judgment, no parallel. The mistaken magnanimity is almost equal to the prophecy: “I much fear that the spirit which you have aided to infuse into the army of criticising their commander and withholding confidence in him, will now turn upon you.”

Chancellorsville was the fulfilment.

Mr. Lincoln was a statesman.

The great stumbling-block—the great obstruction—in Lincoln’s way, and in the way of thousands, was the old doctrine of States Rights.

This doctrine was first established to protect slavery. It was clung to to protect the iner-State slave trade. It became sacred in connection with the Fugitive Slave Law, and it was finally used as the corner-stone of Secession.

This doctrine was never appealed to in defence of the right—always in support of the wrong. For many years politicians upon both sides of these questions endeavored to express the exact relations existing between the Federal Government and the States, and I know of no one who succeeded, except Lincoln. In his message of 1861, delivered on July 4, the definition is given, and it is perfect: “Whatever concerns the whole should be confined to the whole—to the General Government. Whatever concerns only the State should be left exclusively to the State.”

When that definition is realised in practice, this country becomes a Nation. Then we shall know that the first allegiance of the citizen is not to his State, but to the Republic, and that the first duty of the Republic is to protect the citizen, not only when in other lands, but at home, and that this duty cannot be discharged by delegating it to the States.

Lincoln believed in the sovereignty of the people—in the supremacy of the nation—in the territorial integrity of the Republic.

XI.

A great actor can be known only when he has assumed the principal character in a great drama. Possibly the greatest actors have never appeared, and it may be that the greatest soldiers have lived the lives of perfect peace. Lincoln assumed the leading part in the greatest drama ever acted upon the stage of a continent.

His criticism of military movements, his correspondence with his generals and others on the conduct of the war, show that he was at all times master of the situation—that he was a natural strategist, that he appreciated the difficulties and advantages of every kind, and that in “the still and mental” field of war he stood the peer of any man beneath the flag.

Had McClellan followed his advice, he would have taken Richmond.

Had Hooker acted in accordance with his suggestions, Chancellorsville would have been a victory for the Nation.

Lincoln's political prophecies were all fulfilled.

We know now that he not only stood at the top, but that he occupied the centre, from the first to the last, and that he did this by reason of his intelligence, his humor, his philosophy, his courage, and his patriotism.

In passion's storm he stood unmoved, patient, just and candid. In his brain there was no cloud, and in his heart no hate. He longed to save the South as well as the North, to see the Nation one and free.

He lived until the end was known.

He lived until the Confederacy was dead—until Lee surrendered, until Davis fled, until the doors of Libby Prison were opened, until the Republic was supreme.

He lived until Lincoln and Liberty were united for ever.

He lived to cross the desert—to reach the palms of victory—to hear the murmured music of the welcome waves.

He lived until all loyal hearts were his—until the history of his deeds made music in the soul of men—until he knew that on Columbia's Calendar of worth and fame his name stood first.

He lived until there remained nothing for him to do as great as he had done.

What he did was worth living for, worth dying for.

He lived until he stood in the midst of universal Joy, beneath the outstretched wings of Peace—the foremost man in all the world.

And then the horror came. Night fell on noon. The Savior of the Republic, the breaker of chains, the liberator of millions, he who had “assured freedom to the free,” was dead.

Upon his brow Fame placed the immortal wreath.

For the first time in the history of the world a Nation bowed and wept.

The memory of Lincoln is the strongest, tenderest tie that binds all hearts together now, and holds all States beneath a Nation's flag.

XII.

Strange mingling of mirth and tears, of the tragic and grotesque, of cap and crown, of Socrates and Democritus, of Æsop and Marcus Aurelius, of all that is gentle and just, humorous and honest, merciful,

wise, laughable, lovable and divine, and all consecrated to the use of man ; while through all, and over all, were an overwhelming sense of obligation, of chivalric loyalty to truth, and upon all, the shadow of the tragic end.

Nearly all the great historic characters are impossible monsters, disproportioned by flattery, or by calumny deformed. We know nothing of their peculiarities, or nothing but their peculiarities. About these oaks there clings none of the earth of humanity.

Washington is now only a steel engraving. About the real man who lived and loved and hated and schemed, we know but little. The glass through which we look at him is of such high magnifying power that the features are exceedingly indistinct.

Hundreds of people are now engaged in smoothing out the lines of Lincoln's face—forcing all features to the common mould—so that he may be known, not as he really was, but, according to their poor standard, as he should have been.

Lincoln was not a type. He stands alone—no ancestors, no fellows, and no successors.

He had the advantage of living in a new country, of social equality, of personal freedom, of seeing in the horizon of his future the perpetual star of hope. He preserved his individuality and his self-respect. He knew and mingled with men of every kind ; and, after all, men are the best books. He became acquainted with the ambitions and hopes of the heart, the means used to accomplish ends, the springs of action and the seeds of thought. He was familiar with nature, with actual things, with common facts. He loved and appreciated the poem of the year, the drama of the seasons.

In a new country a man must possess at least three virtues—honesty, courage, and generosity. In culti-

vated society, cultivation is often more important than soil. A well-executed counterfeit passes more readily than a blurred genuine. It is necessary only to observe the unwritten laws of society—to be honest enough to keep out of prison, and generous enough to subscribe in public—where the subscription can be defended as an investment.

In a new country, character is essential: in the old, reputation is sufficient. In the new they find what a man really is; in the old, he generally passes for what he resembles. People separated only by distance are much nearer together than those divided by the walls of caste.

It is no advantage to live in a great city, where poverty degrades and failure brings despair. The fields are lovelier than paved streets, and the great forests than walls of brick. Oaks and elms are more poetic than steeples and chimneys.

In the country is the idea of home. There you see the rising and setting sun; you become acquainted with the stars and clouds. The constellations are your friends. You hear the rain on the roof and listen to the rhythmic sighing of the winds. You are thrilled by the resurrection called Spring, touched and saddened by Autumn—the grace and poetry of death. Every field is a picture, a landscape; every landscape a poem; every flower a tender thought, and every forest a fairyland. In the country you preserve your identity—your personality. There you are an aggregation of atoms; but in the city you are only an atom of an aggregation.

In the country you keep your cheek close to the breast of Nature. You are calmed and ennobled by the space, the amplitude and scope of earth and sky—by the constancy of the stars.

Lincoln never finished his education. To the night of his death he was a pupil, a learner, an inquirer, a seeker after knowledge. You have no idea how many men are spoiled by what is called education. For the most part, colleges are places where pebbles are polished and diamonds are dimmed. If Shakespeare had graduated at Oxford, he might have been a quibbling attorney, or a hypocritical parson.

Lincoln was a great lawyer. There is nothing shrewder in the world than intelligent honesty. Perfect candor is sword and shield.

He understood the nature of man. As a lawyer he endeavored to get at the truth, at the very heart of a case. He was not willing even to deceive himself. No matter what his interest said, what his passion demanded, he was great enough to find the truth and strong enough to pronounce judgment against his own desires.

Lincoln was a many-sided man, acquainted with smiles and tears, complex in brain, single in heart, direct as light; and his words, candid as mirrors, gave the perfect image of his thought. He was never afraid to ask—never too dignified to admit that he did not know. No man had keener wit, or kinder humor.

It may be that humor is the pilot of reason. People without humor drift unconsciously into absurdity. Humor sees the other side—stands in the mind like a spectator, a good-natured critic, and gives its opinion before judgment is reached. Humor goes with good nature, and good nature is the climate of reason. In anger, reason abdicates and malice extinguishes the torch. Such was the humor of Lincoln that he could tell even unpleasant truths as charmingly as most men can tell the things we wish to hear.

He was not solemn. Solemnity is a mask worn by

ignorance and hypocrisy—is is the preface, prologue, and index to the cunning or the stupid.

He was natural in his life and thought—master of the story-teller's art, in illustration apt, in application perfect, liberal in speech, shocking Pharisees and prudes, using any word that wit could disinfect.

He was a logician. His logic shed light. In its presence the obscure became luminous, and the most complex and intricate political and metaphysical knots seemed to untie themselves. Logic is the necessary product of intelligence and sincerity. It cannot be learned. It is the child of a clear head and a good heart.

Lincoln was candid, and with candor often deceived the deceitful. He had intellect without arrogance, genius without pride, and religion without cant—that is to say, without bigotry and without deceit.

He was an orator—clear, sincere, natural. He did not pretend. He did not say what he thought others thought, but what he thought.

If you wish to be sublime you must be natural—you must keep close to the grass. You must sit by the fireside of the heart : above the clouds it is too cold. You must be simple in your speech : too much polish suggests insincerity.

The great orator idealises the real, transfigures the common, makes even the inanimate throb and thrill, fills the gallery of the imagination with statues and pictures perfect in form and color, brings to light the gold hoarded by memory the miser, shows the glittering coin to the spendthrift hope, enriches the brain, ennobles the heart, and quickens the conscience. Between his lips words bud and blossom.

If you wish to know the difference between an orator and an elocutionist—between what is felt and what is said—between what the heart and brain can

do together and what the brain can do alone—read Lincoln's wondrous speech at Gettysburg, and then the speech of Edward Everett.

The oration of Lincoln will never be forgotten. It will live until languages are dead and lips are dust. The speech of Everett will never be read.

The elocutionists believe in the virtue of voice, the sublimity of syntax, the majesty of long sentences, and the genius of gesture.

The orator loves the real, the simple, the natural. He places the thought above all. He knows that the greatest ideas should be expressed in shortest words—that the greatest statues need the least drapery.

Lincoln was an immense personality—firm but not obstinate. Obstinacy is egotism—firmness, heroism. He influenced others without effort, unconsciously; and they submitted to him as men submit to nature—unconsciously. He was severe with himself, and for that reason lenient with others.

He appeared to apologise for being kinder than his fellows.

He did merciful things as stealthily as others committed crimes.

Almost ashamed of tenderness, he said and did the noblest words and deeds with that charming confusion, that awkwardness, that is the perfect grace of modesty.

As a noble man wishing to pay a small debt to a poor neighbor, reluctantly offers a hundred dollar bill and asks for change, fearing that he may be suspected either of making a display of wealth or a pretence of payment, so Lincoln hesitated to show his wealth of goodness, even to the best he knew.

A great man stooping, not wishing to make his fellows feel that they were small or mean.

By his candor, by his kindness, by his perfect freedom from restraint, by saying what he thought, and saying it absolutely in his own way, he made it not only possible, but popular, to be natural. He was the enemy of mock solemnity, of the stupidly respectable, of the cold and formal.

He wore no official robes either on his body or his soul. He never pretended to be more or less, or other, or different, from what he really was.

He had the unconscious naturalness of Nature's self.

He built upon the rock. The foundation was secure and broad. The structure was a pyramid, narrowing as it rose. Through days and nights of sorrow, through years of grief and pain, with unswerving purpose, 'with malice towards none, with charity for all,' with infinite patience, with unclouded vision, he hoped and toiled. Stone after stone was laid, until at last the Proclamation found its place. On that the goddess stands.

He knew others, because perfectly acquainted with himself. He cared nothing for place, but everything for principle ; nothing for money, but everything for independence. Where no principle was involved, easily swayed ; willing to go slowly, if in the right direction ; sometimes willing to stop ; but he would not go back, and he would not go wrong.

He was willing to wait ; he knew that the event was not waiting, and that fate was not the fool of chance. He knew that slavery had defenders, but no defence, and that they who attack the right must wound themselves.

He was neither tyrant nor slave ; he neither knelt nor scorned.

With him, men were neither great nor small—they were right or wrong.

Through manners, clothes, titles, rags and race he saw the real—that which is. Beyond accident, policy, compromise and war he saw the end.

He was patient as Destiny, whose undecipherable hieroglyphs were so deeply graven on his sad and tragic fate.

Nothing discloses real character like the use of power. It is easy for the weak to be gentle. Most people can bear adversity. But if you wish to know what a man really is, give him power. This is the supreme test. It is the glory of Lincoln that, having almost absolute power, he never abused it, except on the side of mercy.

Wealth could not purchase, power could not awe this divine, this loving man.

He knew no fear except the fear of doing wrong. Hating slavery, pitying the master—seeking to conquer, not persons, but prejudices—he was the embodiment of the self-denial, the courage, the hope, and the nobility of a Nation.

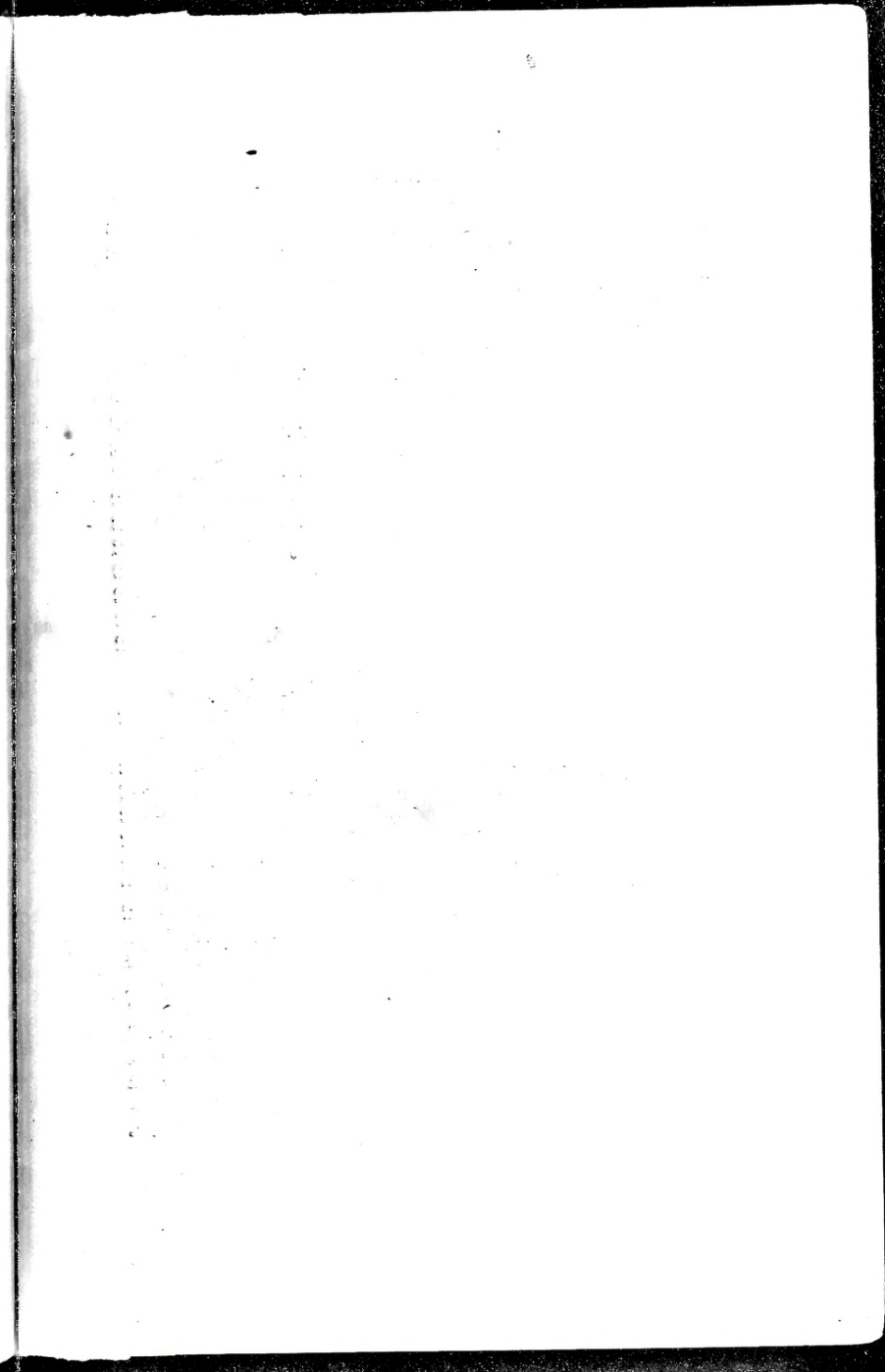
He spoke not to inflame, not to upbraid, but to convince.

He raised his hands, not to strike, but in benediction.

He longed to pardon.

He loved to see the pearls of joy on the cheeks of a wife whose husband he had rescued from death.

Lincoln was the grandest figure of the fiercest civil war. He is the gentlest memory of our world.



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