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Abraham Lincoln

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Abraham Lincoln.

IT is seriously felt on a theme and occasion like this—as Lincoln himself once beautifully and graphically said when asked to speak in eulogy of Washington:—“To add brightness to the sun, or glory to the name of Washington is alike impossible; let none attempt it; in solemn awe pronounce the name and in it’s naked deathless splendor leave it shining on.” So one feels whose tutelage and service were under Lincoln and during Lincoln’s time; whose study of this marvelous character is lost in more and more admiring wonderment, and rests in patriotic and enduring devotion and worship. So, failing to properly portray a character like this, need not humiliate, but rather lend to satisfaction, if not praise.

The unending procession of events and persons that has passed since the founding of our form of government has been so varied by time, custom and teaching that the model statesman has been rare and difficult to choose. Certain ideals which we may well cherish, fortunately arose from the union of the foreign and indigenous population with which our land is filled; one ideal, one model after another has arisen and again as readily disappeared from prominence in the procession; relentless Time moved on; men rose and fell like bubbles after rain; and out of the storm and the rain came the sturdy stalk, the full vine, the giant oak whose broad expanding arms embraced the wintry blast and grew on, and deep rooted, defied assault and destruction; storm-beaten in infancy and again in adolescence, cyclone swept in '61 to '65, it emerged a perennial and eternal forest capable of withstanding avalanche and cataclysm. Rock-rooted, sun-kissed, wind-swept, blizzard-blown and winter-frozen, has grown up this initial government we cherish and the world recognizes exclusively, as **The United States of America.** North of the

Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River, there will be no United States of America; south of the Rio Grande to Popocatepetl can be only a confederacy; and from Tehuantepec to Panama the coalition of communities can never expect to rival or anticipate our title; the International Postals Union has officially recognized only our Union, and denied this name to any other aggregation of States in the World.

On a calm sea it is easy sailing; with the current any bark, even a chip can float; but we have had troublous times in our history; the experiment whether a government "of the people and by the people and for the people" should survive or perish from off the Earth, was not to be made without tribulation.

This republic had to build a basic constitution fitted to its needs and to new environment, without a model and without a guide; how well this was done, the regard in which this instrument is held by present civil courts, and domestic and foreign nations, our defence, cohesion, growth, integrity and stability in national comity and our regard in international adjudication all attest. When in '61 to '65 the Great Test was thrust upon us, when the conflict was transferred from the forum to the battlefield, the World looked on with mingled doubt and suspicion and — we might say of some, with greed and satisfaction,—“whether a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal should survive or not.” God had already prepared the Moses who was to lead us to safety. To make the lesson comparative and impressive we will liken the **Preserver** of the Union, unlike the **Founder** of the Union, unto the Savior of mankind, in this, that the former as well as the latter was of very lowly origin; if some artist-genius should arise inspired to paint in picture the birth-place of Abraham Lincoln it would be far more lowly than the manger of Bethlehem.

Abraham Lincoln was born unsheltered; he lived in the open before all the World and died

in the open—trusting all and fearing none, of a vile assassin's hand in the public arena where awe and splendor had met to do him homage.

The biologic law through developement and succession from lower to higher forms both intellectual and physical is organic: so in human ethics; else progress in civilization would be stopped in the jungle; somewhere in the cosmic past, in some highly developed antecedent protoplasm a molecule must have held the latent germ of genius: Abraham Lincoln's parents were the media for it's transmission. Natural laws are immutable; by a still higher law, arose from Joseph the carpenter and Mary the chosen one, the perfect Man, the Savior of mankind; by the same law arose in the hills of Kentucky, from Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks the savior of our nation; in stature a giant; in humanity and gentleness a woman; in intellect the potential of a god; rough-hewn, it is true, but of such have been made the pillars of modern law and human government; in no instance is this more marked than in the ideal man and statesman that grew out of Abraham Lincoln; this may have been an atavism of a noble generation passed, or it may have been the natural pulsings of a nation's blood to prove the vigor of a new continent. As a statesman he probably appreciated more than many did before and after him, the full purport and meaning of his responsibilities as citizen and officer. Always a student, he early grasped the fundamentals of organic republican government as few had ever done; his conduct was taken from the tablets of Mount Sinai, his english from Shakespere and the Bible, and his great common-sense from the knock-about world into which he was born and with which he battled from earliest childhood, through a rather vigorous adolescence to that maturity where he won the merited plaudits of his fellow-countrymen in national convention by his nomination, and later the gift of an election to the presidency of the United States. This election was the winning of his own force

ful ideas based on the assertion of a paraphrase of scripture that "a house divided against itself could not stand," that a country could not exist half free and half slave; an idea that his colleagues in politics urged him to relinquish as it would lead to his sure defeat; but he never wavered in his conviction because he knew it was an organic one: that human slavery was wrong contrary to the laws of human rights and human progress; it was invasive of the dominant thought of that day and time, but it was right to him if not politic; his wonderful and unerring foresight told him he was right and he led grandly and alone and won, and still awaits the rightful recognition his attitude then and now deserves; he kept before him the beacon of the constitution of his government, and the ever-appealing and persuading pleading against human slavery; the one he well knew must be his bulwark of safety in conduct of national affairs as well as of inter-national; the other he knew would be irresistible pleading at the great bar of common humanity in all the civilized world; further than this he believed in the aggregate wisdom as well as in the sympathy of these common people; he put this so graphically that it has become axiomatic, that "you can fool some of the people some of the time but you cannot fool all the people all the time;" also in another expression attributed to him that "the Lord must have loved the common people, else, why did he make so many of them?."

Profoundly and reverently he recognized the ever presence and dominance of a Supreme Divine leader in all the affairs of men and state, that he never forgot his fealty thereto; so without precedent or suggestion, in his brief letter to the committee, of acknowledgment and acceptance of the nomination for President by the Republican party, he begins his letter by sincerely imploring Divine assistance, and repeats the pleading to his neighbors at Springfield when about to take his leave for his great duties as President of a distracted, convulsed,

and almost already disrupted-country; when he earnestly asked his assembled fellow-citizens to pray for him, declaring that with their prayers he could accomplish wonders but without them he must ignobly fail; by this he additionally gave evidence of his profound belief in a Supreme Ruler.

At his first inaugural, never a President more reverently took his oath of office and kissed his Bible sincerely than Abraham Lincoln did; in his inaugural address he repeats his fealty to the faith of his fathers and again appeals for Divine guidance. These contemplations of character alone, bespeak for him a much larger estimate than is usually accorded him by the superficial observer; he knew that God's creatures were led by their Creator; so with one hand twined about the common people and the other in the great palm of his Creator he was led and sustained through the time that tried men's souls as they had never been tried before or since in the history of this country. So firm was his faith in individual right that in one of his ethical addresses speaking of conduct he said "if the end brings me out wrong ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference." With these basic and exalting standards of his obligations to Right and Country, he assumed the duties of his high office. With government on such a plane, in such hands, need any citizen of this or any other country or of any time, fear for its safety?

His itinerary to Washington was filled with menace and danger instead of ovation; he had to reach his destination through strategy to avoid conflict and probable death. At the Capitol he was confronted with coldness, indifference, and over all a black pall of treason; unprepossessing at "first impressions," and with a limited acquaintance of the social as well as the diplomatic usages in his official circles, he entered upon his executive duties tired, worried yet "grand, gloomy and peculiar, a sceptered hermit, wrapped in the solitude of his own

originality"; he knew "that as his heart was right he had the strength of ten men," and his cause must win.

To Abraham Lincoln there was no North, no South; no white no black; no bond, but all free; no West, no East; only one country and one flag, the everlasting emblem of liberty in One Union. Employing the awe-inspiring words of James A. Garfield quoted from scripture to quell the mob in New York after the assassination of Lincoln, which could well be applied at the beginning of his administration: "Clouds and darkness are around about him. His pavillion is dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. Justice and judgement are the establishment of His throne. Mercy and truth shall go before his face; fellow-citizens, God reigns and the government at Washington still lives." To Lincoln it must live; in no arc of the clouded horizon was there light. The army and supplies had been dissipated by a designing Secretary of War; the navy sent to distant waters or to the bottom; the treasury looted; the supreme court tainted with blackest treason; messenger boys and telegraph keymen bought or polluted by the emissaries of those plotting disunion; assassination hung over him and treason lured him to its lair; pitfalls were prepared for him everywhere by the so-called "commissioners," "committees," and "emissaries;" these were presented to him in every conceivable guise, in ones and twos and threes and in throngs; they came from everywhere they came with many missions; from already seceded states, and others plotting treason; from timid cities and from wavering clergy; their plans, pleas and intrigues were as varied as their egos; poor Lincoln had to penetrate their various guises, seek their ulterior, lest he be tripped up and be found giving encouragement to the enemy. New pages of history were being rapidly blackened and blotted by treason's intrigues, while Lincoln's name was growing more luminous at the top.

Before the eyes of the watching world, in the

eyes of his trusting country men he was holding the trembling pillars of a new nation's destiny.

No man ever had such responsibilities laid on head and heart and hand; he had fought the ambushed indian on the frontier and knew some of the cunning and treachery of savages; now he had educated traitors conniving against him; here was the plotting of former United States senators and representatives; defeated politicians of his own party, the intrigue of traitors schooled in politique, dyed in treason and determined on secession and plotting the destruction of The Union. The South had arrogated to itself the entire national domain in which to institute slavery. Lincoln had sacredly sworn to preserve the Union, with slavery if so possible, without it, if it must so be.

During the campaign and election the so-called abolition party used Lincoln's statement that a nation could not survive half slave and half free, and thus appealed to the higher promptings of humanity for support; it was not Lincoln's intention as president to ever employ either his long cherished sentiments, or his new authority to free slaves in the South; as he so earnestly wrote to the obstreporous and afterward repentant Horace Greely, "my paramount object is to save the Union and not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would also do that," making it very clear even by reiteration that all his soul's desire was to save the Union. As for Lincoln, then slavery as an institution of the South might have continued to exist until the slower but as sure compulsions of a higher humanity than the South was then capable of conceiving, would have wiped it off the face of this country. Lincoln's supreme object was to save the Union; the single selfish motive of the South was to destroy the Union. It is the hatred of small minds ignorant of the world's great truths that hinder its progress.

Abraham Lincoln had the seeming, we will

say Divine, perspicacity to know and realize this; fore sight is one of the greatest evidences of racial supremacy.

When Abraham Lincoln in his first inaugural said, addressing himself to the South, "in your hands my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen and not in mine is the momentous issue of the civil war; the government will not assail you; you have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the Union, while I have a most solemn one to preserve, protect and defend it." He thus clearly interpreted to the South his attitude to duty and theirs to the enormous one of righteous citizenship and the responsibility of civil war that was alone with them. That inaugural address is in itself a magna charta without an equal in english literature; if success had not crowned Lincoln's pleadings and efforts in other courts, that address would have exalted him before the tribunal of justice, scholars, statesmen and nations, and crowned him premier of all the great in history. Still, sixty armed men in citizen's clothes, "plain clothes men" had to stand around him during that address to shield him from bodily harm from that alleged southern chivalry he was so earnestly admonishing to peace and civic righteousness. From the arena of such an inauguration he was hastened along a long line of thoroughly equipped military with loaded guns, ostensibly for the pomp of parade, but more exactly for the serious protection of the President from the assassin then already incubating in that throng; thus he was ingloriously guided to the gloomy executive chamber to assume the responsibilities of the government of a country distracted by internal dissensions on the great question then agitating not only this country but humanity, the question of human slavery, the question whether a Nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that "all men are created equal" should survive or perish from off the face of the earth.

In the entire history of the world pagan and

and christian, ancient and modern, the deeds and character of Abraham Lincoln stand out so eminently exalted so conspicuous by his conscientious consecration to duty to humanity, that there is no example, no parallel by which to compare him.

If prescience and perspicacity were ever exemplified at the portals of an impending and tragic epoch, Abraham Lincoln believed and lived the things before and during the great Civil contest that worked out a glorious culmination either through a Divine directory or the superlative judgement of a great mind; a mind that amid its primitive environment in childhood, adolescence and maturity displayed a supreme quality that compelled recognition, then and since, and amply merits all the admiration we feebly bestow on these occasions.

Abraham Lincoln in his humble birth and early self-acquired education and later successful achievements embodies much of the quality we admire as **American**; he is not only our American *ideal* but through his awful trials and his glorious triumphs and his final martyrdom he has become our American *idol*.

What strange mentor lead him to books, where scholarship was unknown, colleges mere phantoms and the public school unborn? What spirit-pilot directed his journey down the Ohio, "the River of Peace," down the Mississippi to New Orleans where he saw slaves, humans hewn in ebony, sold to the highest bidder; saw the sacred ties of family sundered by sneers and jests and cruel bargainings, saw sisters sold to the "rice swamps dark and lone," and defiant brothers beaten to submission by the over-seer's lash? Though only eighteen years old at the time it awakened in him the threat (may we say prophecy?) that, "if I ever get a chance at that accursed thing", (in southern blasphemy), "he said by gad I'll hit it hard," and he did; with the bludgeon of the Proclamation of Emancipation he hit it the fatal blow, and four million slaves were free and the Union saved.

What school of ethics in that wild frontier directed his conduct to the merited title accorded him by friend and foe of "Honest old Abe?"

Roosevelt's "square deal" of today, is only the far echo of Lincoln's "fair play" of half a century ago.

To lessen the sufferings that war begets Lincoln led the world. The atrocities that prevailed in the war between France and Austria in 1859 were brought to light after the battle of Solferino by a Swiss doctor Dunant; this doctor was endeavoring to awaken interest in Europe that would ameliorate conditions of war and was the initial author of the now famous Red Cross movement; the Red Cross Association was founded in Geneva Switzerland in 1864. Lincoln visited Petersburg after that unfortunate battle; walking over the bloody field he came upon the doctors in their improvised hospital tents; he stopped a moment to view their bloody work; he saw arms and legs in grewsome piles; he heard the cries and groans of the wounded and saw the palor of the dying; his great heart was moved, and he exclaimed "and this is war, the trade of barbarians;" then turning to his staff surrounding him, he said "gentlemen is there no way this awful thing can be stopped?"

He had more just and generous pardons in his great heart than any other great ruler ever known and he gave them out discreetly.

The suffering he saw prompted him to have a code of conduct framed to ameliorate harsh conditions of war—for which he is not sufficiently appreciated and for which he has not heretofore received the recognition he deserves; it was the promulgation of "Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field," drafted at Lincoln's suggestion and dictation, by Francis Lieber of Columbia college, and sent out by the president as "General orders" for the guidance of officers and men in and after battle,

in victory or defeat, for the amelioration of suffering.

These orders have exercised a powerful influence upon the entire world; they were later the basis of the work of the Conference of Brussels in 1874, and through this conference became the **fundamental** text of the conventions concerning the laws of war adopted by the Hague Conference of 1899 and that were perfected and adopted in 1907. This code of Abraham Lincoln's antedated the creation of the Red Cross organization of the world, as one of the great humanities, and proves again and anew his remarkable perspicacity, and his unerring and early mercy in all threatening or present affliction; he desired to be not only the emancipator but the savior of his fellowmen. The many little stories told of his tenderheartedness to birds and animals, his affection for children, all bespeak for him the great "charity" for which he is so universally beloved.

But another example of Lincoln's reliance and foresight rarely recognized or spoken of or for which he hardly receives the credit it deserves and which still affects the educators and the education of our youth, is, for the form of education first called "agricultural;" the schools first so promulgated as "state schools" but which have since become the State Universities were only made possible as early as they were by Lincoln's courageous and erudite interpretation of the constitution and his signing the law that had been passed under the administrations of presidents Taylor and Buchanan, but which neither of these preceding presidents had the understanding, the faith or the courage to interpret so they could or would sign the law. That law gave the vast areas of land whose accumulated wealth have made the state Universities of the Great West the proud institutions of their respective communities, and rivals of the older Eastern institutions of learning, and proud monuments of these states; equally they should be loud proclaimers of Abraham Lincoln's intuition and his innate love of learn-

ing—the thing that was denied him, but that he made possible by his untiring study in behalf of others, the students and teachers of the West.

A greater fundamental study of constitutional as well as of international law in which subsequent history affirms again his force and accuracy, was in the so-called “Trent affair;” the stopping of the English cruiser Trent and the removal therefrom of the persons of the two confederate commissioners, Mason and Slidell, and their return to this country against their protests and the remonstrances of the English government was a critical period in the history of the Civil war; England made vehement and even serious protest against the act, going so far as to send an armed fleet to the harbor of New York; to avoid a conflict just at that critical period, the commissioners were released but the “Right of Seizure” was maintained by Lincoln and our right and protest was so filed and remained a subject of international dispute until two years ago, when, through an enactment by a maritime tribunal in which ten of the leading maritime powers of the world participated, the contention of the United States delegates was sustained; Lincoln’s long suspended and much discussed claim to the “right of seizure” prevailed, and Lincoln the rail-splitter, Lincoln the “Illinois giant” had again confounded the “wise men of the East” and proved an innate perspicacity far above his contemporaries.

Thus, **four** great epoch-making questions were met and adjusted then or since to the World’s and Time’s approval—in all of which Lincoln nobly led: the Emancipation proclamation, liberty’s weapon; the codification of “Instructions or Rules for the humane government of armies in the Field,” sanctioned by and adopted for the world’s usage by the Hague conference; the signing of the law that made possible the great Educational movement of the Western States, and Lincoln’s persistence in the right of seizure of Mason and Slidell as

nterband of war—all stupenduous world's history epoch—making questions, anyone of which singly would amply crown an ordinary individual's lifetime and be a proud legacy to leave family or national posterity.

It is deplored that writers and speakers have so complacently permitted the ugly impress of the early vicious cartoonist as to Lincoln's face and form to prevail without persistent protest; his political enemies remained passive, while his secession foes exaggerated form and feature to their own base soul's delight; horns and cloven hoofs were given him in the South and their preponderating illiterates and impressionable "poor trash" believed it; their ribald artists and not nature gave him the "shaggy brow" and "bearded base," the "corded hands" and "gnarled face." London's jesting journal "Puck" maligned and lampooned poor Lincoln with ecstatic envy, but later craved for it, as craven as words could, the pardon of the world.

It was my privilege to have seen Lincoln, but only in the repose of death, when Life's fitful fever was over; it was after he had crossed the valleys and mountains, and the roll of muffled drum and toll of bell had come to the lakes and the great bosom of the West; it was at Cleveland Ohio where his body lay in regal state, in that fair city's central square; sombre clouds in sadness veiled the sky; from morn till night mist filled the air and deeper mist in myriad eyes that passed four abreast two on each side of the bier all the day long; stern guards allowed no lingering over the placid face and massive form. It was said Old Glory wrapped the casket and that roses and laurel wreathed the head and that lilies lay in abundance at his feet; but I saw only the classic mould of brow and face, and cherish only this. It accords so well with that which sculptor Leonard Volk preserved in the death-mask, that is recognized by artists and sculptors as a model face, and is the copy used by all. That this image lingers with me is a pleasure

still; it is beautiful impressive and inspiring; it lends itself to the character that shone and triumphed through it, and will live in enduring bronze and marble when the cartoonist's vile copy with it's maker will have passed to merited oblivion.

The unimpeachable camera has preserved his features, and portrays him as well favored as men of his age, in any calling, without accessories of regalia and environment; the photograph at the age of 35 or 40 owned by his son Robert T. Lincoln, and that was recently used by McClures magazine, certainly is without defect in form or line; another photograph owned by C. F. Gunther of Chicago is described by no other words, **than beautiful**, and any man not a dilletante would be proud to wear it. Either makes him a "peasant Prince, a master piece of God."

The statue of Abraham Lincoln by Saint Gaudens in Lincoln park gives him a shapely head and form; that by Weinman in Boston, Mass., and it's replica in Madison, Wisconsin, are things of beauty and grandeur to cherish forever; in these statues it must seem as though the serious and perplexed sculptors had laid aside their molding tools, their rules and calipers, and let their chisels be guided by the gods, while they solved a figure of majestic loveliness, standing beneath Heaven's eternal sun and on Liberty's eternal pedestal—memorials of both, and worthy tribute to the subject.

The mold of Lincoln's hand, forms a plaster cast holding a humble broom-stick instead of a classic cestus, and is regarded by anatomists and artists as a model hand of a man or Marathon, a classic in every curve and angle; it's replica is in nearly every artist's studio for copy and it is not "knotty gaunt or gnarled."

Let us forget Lincoln cartooned by southern enemies and lampooned by envious England; he was and to us is beautiful; "Honest old Abe" to us and our successors is our physical, intellectual and ethical idol; a man without a

model and without a self; as stern Edwin Stanton said when he saw the last quiver leave his wounded body, "Now he belongs to the Ages!"

But first he belongs to **us** because
he was our "Commander in Chief" and
next because he was OUR "Father Abra-
ham" and we were and are his "Boys in Blue;"
we came at his call, five times three-hundred-
thousand strong, and with him saved the
Union; he belongs to us, the Grand Army of the
Republic, and after us, then "HE BELONGS
TO THE AGES."

