

Abraham

Lincoln

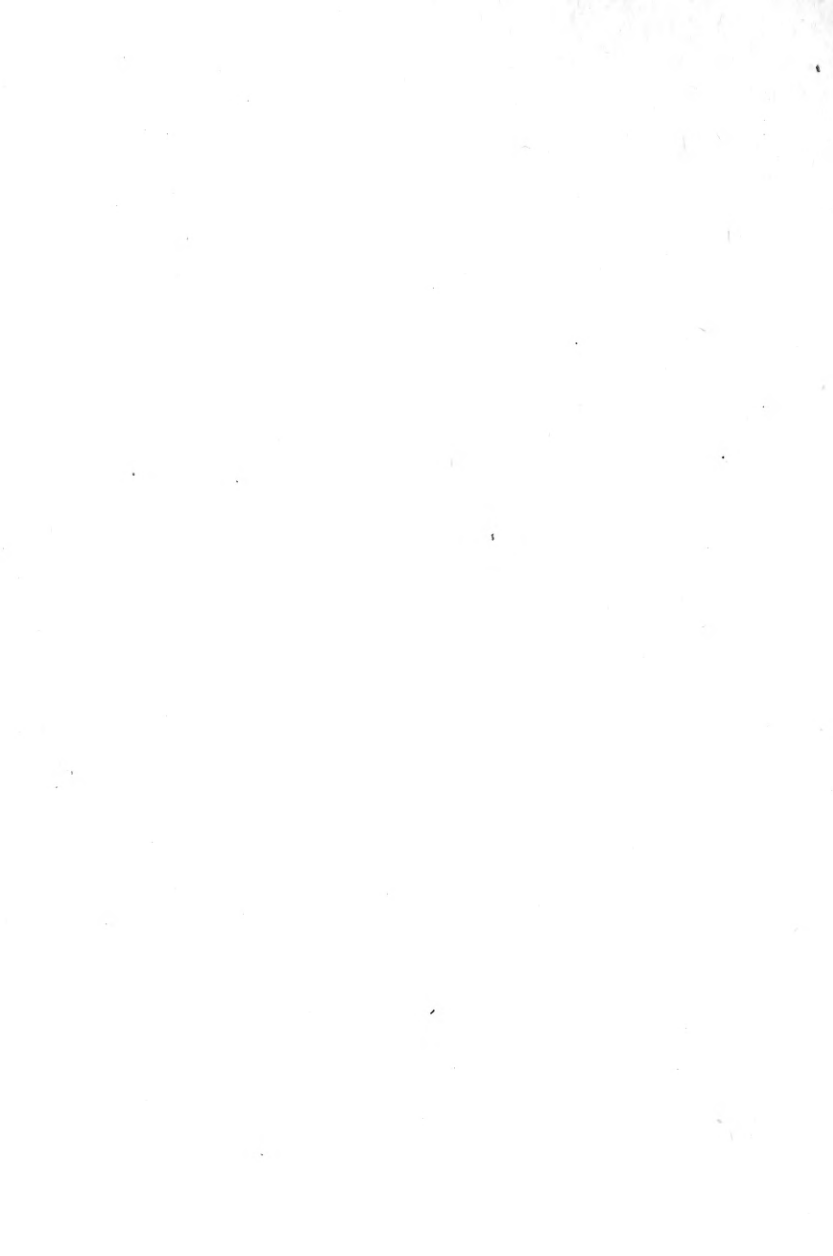




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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

AN HISTORICAL ESSAY
IN TWO PARTS

—BY—

EUGENE C. ALLEN.

ALBION, MICHIGAN.
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Introductory Note.

This Essay is the result of research work done in the Department of American History, Albion College. It does not purport to be a comprehensive account of the events which it covers. Only the most salient of them are touched upon.

The Author's main object has been to show the vital connection Abraham Lincoln had with this phase of our National History; but, to do this, much depends upon a proper presentation of that History since the Compromise of 1850. This has been attempted in Part One, which deals with this Compromise; with the election of 1852; with the rejection of Webster; with the Dred Scott decision; with the Lecompton Controversy; and with affairs in Kansas.

Part Two takes up the discussion of our political life from 1858 to 1863, and is written primarily to show the task which devolved upon Lincoln therein. Especially is it sought to put him forth in his proper light, as the logical Defender of the Union. By a study of his personal traits, of his mental nature, and of his character in general, the reader is led to see something of the philosophy of his selection by the people, and it is hoped that the Essay will not be without interest to those who have occasion to make a study of this most fascinating of all American characters.

It has not been found expedient to employ full marginal notes or references, and it is indicated in the context, or by marks of quotation when the work of others is used. A bibliography of the works and publications consulted in the preparation of this Essay may be found at its close.

Albion College, May 30, 1895.

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Abraham Lincoln; An Historical Essay.

PART I.

Events Succeeding the Compromise of 1850 and Previous to
the Lincoln-Douglas Debates.

The Compromise of 1850 was fondly looked upon by union-loving men of all sections of the country as the best obtainable, and as being one altogether likely to inaugurate a new "era of good feeling." Clay and Webster threw the weight of their influence upon the side of compromise. Congress imagined that the Act laid low the ghost of disunion, and President Fillmore gave it the validity of his signature, not because of its pro-slavery bearing, as some maintained, so much as of his earnest belief in the influence of the bill for peace and the Union.

Of the measures he said in Annual Message to Congress, Dec., 1850:

"It would be strange if they had been received with immediate approbation by people and states prejudiced and heated by the exciting controversies of their representatives. I believe those measures to have been required by the circumstances and condition of the country. * * They were adopted in the spirit of conciliation and for the purpose of conciliation. I believe that a great majority of our fellow citizens sympathize in that spirit and purpose, and in the main approve, and are prepared, in all respects to sustain these enactments."

It may fairly be presumed that President Fillmore accurately voiced the great preponderance of sentiment then existing throughout the Union. Whatever condemnation of his course fell upon him came with redoubled

energy since he was from the North. But the Compromise bill of 1850 was declared entirely constitutional by both Webster and Crittenden, and Fillmore could have done little else consistently than sign it.

It harbored one element of discord. The Fugitive-Slave Law was unnecessarily harsh. It was enacted at the behest of the most ultra Southerners, who desired that there should be no misunderstanding concerning their hostility to the anti-slavery agitation universal at the extreme North and throughout the Northwest. But its passage betrayed a curious condition of affairs. The border states were the ones which had suffered most from the violation of the Fugitive-Slave Law of 1793, yet representatives from these states would have been satisfied with a milder provision. Clearly such a stringent enactment showed a spirit not altogether born of the apprehension that slavery was in danger, and the passage of the Act was fore-ordained to cause restlessness amongst the liberty-loving citizens of the free-states. Moreover, it partook of the nature of arrogance, since the slaveholders were constitutionally entitled to a sensible fugitive-slave law, and one less severe would have secured the active co-operation of many at the North, who, as it was, would manifest little genuine interest in the enforcement of the law which obtained. If the South meant it as an insult to the Abolitionists she succeeded, but paid dearly for her success.

Notwithstanding the unpopularity of the Fugitive-Slave clause, it is interesting to note the sentiment of the various sections at the North concerning the Act. In New England the Compromise measures were especially welcome. The industries of this section had suffered from lack of Congressional attention; largely because of slavery agitation, and New England merchants looked forward with deep satisfaction to an improved and unembarrassed prosecution of trade. The people of Boston were noticeably overheated in their rejoicings; but such men as Parker, Phillips, and Josiah Quincy attacked the measures upon constitutional as well as humanitarian grounds. In New York and Pennsylvania public gatherings gave vent to the satisfaction of the people, and merchants who were not willing to sign their names to calls for these gatherings

were heralded as Abolition tradesmen. A public spirit of petty persecution seemed to be the lot of all who would not concur in the general sentiment of congratulation. As was done elsewhere, so the people of Ohio and of the Northwest joined in the spirit of rejoicing, though here an ominous faction opposed the adjustment from an ethical point of view. Public men—politicians—of the North who were anti-slavery in sentiment regretted the vindictive character of the Fugitive-Slave Act, but counseled obedience to law. Their words were not without effect. For the most part the law was successful in its operation, though a few instances like that of Shadrach and Thomas Sims were enough to show that the spirit of the statute was utterly repudiated by numbers of citizens of unblemished character. Men like Phillips, and Garrison, and Higginson, who had no political records to be marred or broken, bore the issue and forced it upon unsympathetic leaders in public life. Still the general sentiment at the North was law abiding, and did not uphold mobbish resistance. But, at the same time, it was generally conceded that the Fugitive-Slave Law laid too greatly athwart the public conscience.

Notwithstanding the trouble which arose from this feature of the Compromise, the general effect of the measures was good. Men imagined the anti-slavery controversy settled, and both North and South thought less of the threats of secession so freely offered during the parliamentary struggle. The effect upon the South was especially conserving. South Carolina and Mississippi alone were unsatisfied and a convention of the Southern Rights Association held at Charleston, resolved upon secession. But this sentiment was defeated by an overwhelming majority at the polls. In Mississippi a similar contest was inaugurated by the competition between Jefferson Davis and Senator Foote who respectively took the stump upon the issue of State rights and the antithetical alternative of upholding the Compromise of 1850. Although Davis was extremely popular, he was defeated after a thorough canvass. Plainly the people of the South were for the Union; and well they might have been! Legislative experience had taught them that through its preservation everything was to be gained, and little to be lost. As yet, the anti-

slavery sentiment at the North had not mustered power enough to defeat them in any vital need, and were not the politicians from this section boldly advocating Union at all hazards? Had not Webster dared public opinion in his Seventh-of-March Speech, and had not Clay won peace through compromises always favorable to the men of the South?

So stood affairs at the opening of the Thirty-second Congress, which met Dec. 1, 1851. The Democrats had made gains in the canvass of this year, yet anti-slavery sentiment was reinforced by some of its most efficient champions; Chase and Hale, Sumner and Wade. To this forward movement there was one notable exception. After thirty years of distinguished service, Thomas H. Benton was relegated to the rear, because he would not cringe before the threats of his pro-slavery constituents. In the House there were 142 Democrats; 91 Whigs. The Whigs who had upheld the Compromise suffered more than did the Democrats, but this was due to the fact that members of the Whig party had represented the ultra anti-slavery districts at the North.

President Fillmore, in his Annual Message, again reflected the tendency of public opinion when he declared that "the agitation which for a time threatened to disturb the fraternal relations which make us one people is fast subsiding." At various times during this session, however, Congress sought to open debate upon the question of acquiescence in the legislation of 1850, but it was not until the 5th of April, 1852, that a vote was secured. It stood 103 to 74 in favor of the declaration that the Compromise should be regarded a permanent settlement. Of course the heft of the opposition came from the North.

As the campaign of 1852 approached it became evident that the Democratic party would once more present a united front. On the other hand, though the Free-Soil party termed itself the Free-Soil Democracy, it could hope for more Whig than Democratic votes in the states of Ohio and New York. The good reputation of the Compromise redounded to the welfare of the Democratic party. It was the misfortune of the previous Whig administration that the organization of the territory acquired from Mexico,

opening the question of slavery as it did, fell to its lot. The agitation widened the breach between the Whigs of pro-slavery and those of anti-slavery proclivities. Consequently when the campaign of 1852 drew on, though the Democracy was divided as to candidates, it was united as to policy.

The leading name on the Democratic list was that of Gen. Cass. True he had been defeated four years since, but it was hoped the schism in New York would not again manifest itself, and the personal popularity of Taylor was out of the way. Cass was from as free a state as any in the Nation. The great preponderance of sentiment through-out his immediate constituency was anti-slavery, yet his servitude to the "peculiar institution" was abject. But his Nicholson letter had not attracted the attention nor stirred the jealousy which its descendant—Douglas' Popular Sovereignty scheme—was to call forth. Gen. Cass was a man of purest morals, and though past seventy years of age still maintained his vigor. He had made an honorable career, and the people counted him more safe than brilliant. His most dangerous competitor was James Buchanan, also a man of age. These were the embodiment of "Old Fogysm," so called in an ungrateful manner by the partisans of Douglas and Pierce. Buchanan hailed from Pennsylvania, a free-state harboring much of bitterness in regard to the Fugitive-Slave Act. While Northern by birth and education, he had no moral scruples concerning slavery, and had obtained prestige in Democratic councils by his support of Jackson and as Polk's Secretary of State.

Next to Wm. L. Marcy, of New York, Stephen A. Douglas was strongest besides Cass and Buchanan. He had devoted friends, but they were indiscreet in thrusting forward, to the detriment of rival candidates, the charge of senility. Yet, they were very effective with their plea for the recognition of "Young America." Douglas was noted for bravery, even to the point of recklessness, and commanded the quality of admiration which always attaches to impudent aggressiveness. Forty-nine ballots were taken before the final result was reached. This ballot was a stampede for Franklin Pierce, he having 282 votes to 6 for all others.

In the nomination of Pierce, "Old Fogysim" was defeated, yet triumphed. Douglas had hoped to receive the distinction, but the virulent attacks upon the seniors, for which attacks his friends were responsible, snatched the victory from him and bestowed it upon an American not only "young," but generally unknown.

So far as the effect of the nomination for party success was concerned, it was probably the best that could have obtained. Indeed, the only question in the minds of many was to secure a candidate acceptable to all sections. At first sight Pierce did not seem to be this candidate. Prominent Democrats were mortified and angered over the turning down of honored leaders for the sake of the "Young America" idea. If Cass and VanBuren should have persisted in their quarrel, Buchanan or Marcy would have been eligible. But the main thing was to secure a man whose sentiments were not in actual conflict with those of his party. The nominee at once put them at rest upon this point. He accepted the nomination, as he said, "Upon the platform adopted by the convention, not because this is expected of me as a candidate, but because the principles it embraces command the approbation of my judgment, and with them I believe I can safely say there has been no word or act of my life in conflict." That he had no independent ideas was all the better for his candidacy. The party had been passing through a vigorous contention of ideas, and it desired time for a breathing spell. To have opened the question of slavery agitation would have been fatal to the success of any candidate or of any party.

Franklin Pierce was a son of New Hampshire, and, at the time of his nomination, had not reached his fiftieth year. He was a graduate of Bowdoin College, and a lawyer who had declined many offers of distinction. At the age of thirty-three he represented his state in the United States Senate, being the youngest member of the body. He had served modestly in the Mexican war, and was considered a man of fair ability. It is probable he did not care for the nomination, and shrank from participation in public life. But he was known to be an ardent supporter of the Compromise Measures and this was all his party asked.

Regarding the Compromise of 1850, the platform was,

of course, strongly imbued with the "finality" sentiment. It affirmed that Congress had no power under the Constitution, to interfere with or control the domestic institutions of the several states; that such states were the sole and proper judges of everything appertaining to their own affairs, not prohibited by the Constitution; and deprecated the meddlesome interference of the Abolitionists, declaring this interference to have an injurious effect upon the happiness of the people, and charged it with endangering the safety of the Union. To these sentiments were added the two following resolutions :

"*Resolved*, That the foregoing proposition covers, and is intended to embrace, the whole subject of slavery agitated in Congress, and therefore the Democratic party of the Union, standing on this national platform, will abide by, and adhere to, a faithful execution of the acts known as the 'Compromise' measures settled by the last Congress,—the act for reclaiming fugitives from service or labor included; which act being designed to carry out an express provision of the Constitution, cannot with fidelity thereto be repealed, nor so changed as to destroy or impair its efficiency.

"*Resolved*, That the Democratic party will resist all attempts at renewing in Congress or out of it, the agitation of the slavery question, under whatever shape or color the attempt may be made."

With its Northern candidate, and its so-called neutral platform, the party appealed to a people willing to listen to the cry of peace when there was no peace.

After the lapse of a fortnight, the Whigs assembled in Baltimore for the purpose of making their platform and selecting their candidate. As usual, many of the ablest men of the country were present; amongst them Choate, Fessenden, Evarts, Sherman, and Clayton. Only three names were presented. They were those of Daniel Webster, President Fillmore, and Gen. Scott. Fillmore had disappointed the anti-slavery men of the party, but was in possession of the good will of their pro-slavery brethren—especially at the South. Hence he made a strong candidacy for the nomination. As for Gen. Scott, he was wonderfully helped by his war record. A Southerner by birth, he readily accepted the non-agitation policy of Whiggery. Moreover Generals Harrison and Taylor had been the successful Whig candidates for the Presidency, and military glory is a powerful argument with the people at large.

The name of Daniel Webster was presented in a speech

of remarkable eloquence by Choate, but upon the first ballot secured only twenty-nine votes, and during the whole fifty-three ballots never received more than thirty-two. His strength was in New England, yet, New England was by no means solid for him. His only hope laid in a possible deadlock between Fillmore and Scott—a complication which never came about. On the fifty-third ballot, Gen. Scott was nominated.

The platform acquiesced in the Fugitive-Slave Act, deprecating any meddling with the question, and declared the system, as presented in the Compromise Measures, "essential to the nationality of the Whig party and the integrity of the Union." Strangely enough, negative choice was given altogether by Northern delegates who had voted for Scott in opposition to Webster and Fillmore.

So far as candidates and platforms were concerned, touching the slavery issue there was small choice between those of either Democratic or Whig party. Both stood upon the same ground, and both were fondly of the opinion that a party say-so and a national vote-so, would forever silence the disunion heresies of the so-called Abolition fanatics.

The most remarkable circumstance connected with the Whig convention, and, indeed, with the whole campaign was the rebuke and rejection of Webster. After his Seventh-of-March Speech all hope of political preferment in his case was idle. No Southern constituency relished the idea of the candidacy of one who had so thoroughly vanquished the state rights champion—Hayne. Moreover, the impression prevailed that Webster had not always given his cordial support to the Fugitive-Slave Act. So far as the North was concerned, Webster's influence had sadly waned. His Seventh-of-March Speech was regarded by anti-slavery Whigs as rank apostacy. It was in reply to this speech that Wm. H. Seward made the statement: "There is a Higher Law than the Constitution," which statement though not so intended, was taken up by the ultra anti-slavery men as a condemnation of the Fugitive-Slave Act.

With intense interest everyone awaited the speech of Webster. Anti-slavery Whigs hoped and expected the foremost expounder of the Constitution would take at least

as advanced ground as that assumed by the slave-holding Taylor. Consequently, their disappointment was crushing when, in his second great defense of the Constitution, the "Sage of Marshfield" seemed to play into the hands of the South. Undoubtedly the judgment of forty-five years ago that whatever may have been its spirit, the speech was an egregious blunder, will always hold. But the attacks upon it were cruel, and, viewed in the light of unimpassioned research, the harsh claim that the speech was a bid for the Presidency can hardly be maintained. With no proper sense of justice may one seek to lay upon the memory of Daniel Webster the stigma of demagoguism. Beyond question, he suffered from the effects of Presidential fever through the grandest years of his life, but he was not a man who could throw aside patriotic consistency for the sake of self-advancement.

Shorn of its rhetorical verbiage, the speech presents an humble acquiescence in the Compromise Measures of the eminent Kentucky Senator. It was an unburdening of inner emotion, which long pent up, burst forth into manly utterance. Quietly studied to-day, it appears to display none of the cringing subserviency which Wendell Phillips thought he saw. In a just analysis of the speaker's meaning, the spirit of the very first sentence of the oration should be carried through it all. No one can doubt the sincerity of these words: "I wish to speak to-day, not as a Massachusetts man, nor as a Northern man, but as an American." Perhaps, because of the sectionalism which then prevailed, this was counted a mistake—a throwing away of all personal conviction. But such a judgment is read into the speech. With irresistible logic, the orator placed the responsibility of slavery intrigue where it belonged; at the door of the South. He also showed that in Congress the North had been a virtual ally to the pro-slavery schemes of the South; not a willing one, perhaps, but a consistent one, because of the compromises in the Constitution which bound her to help protect the "system."

With a statesman's vision, Webster foresaw the true nature of secession, and he shuddered over the contemplation. "Peaceful secession," said he, "is an utter impossibility. Is the great constitution under which we live,

covering this whole country, is it to be thawed and melted away by secession, as the snows on the mountain melt under the influence of a vernal sun, disappear almost unobserved, and run off? No, Sir! No, Sir! I will not state what might produce the disruption of the Union; but, Sir, I see as plainly as I see the sun in heaven what that disruption itself must produce; I see that it must produce war, and such a war as I will not describe in its two fold character."

Judged by its logic, the Seventh-of-March Speech is not greatly at fault. Indeed, some of the propositions, so hotly repudiated at the time of their utterance, were long after admitted by the repudiators themselves to avert that war which Webster saw, but would not "describe in its two fold character." Such, for instance, is the argument for a better fugitive-slave law. Here the South had a real grievance; for every day showed how increasingly hard it was for the North to live up to this part of her contract. The fact also has been pointed out that Webster's objection to the application of the Wilmot Proviso to New Mexico, "was statesmanship of the highest order."

The cardinal mistake of the oration was its cold spirit toward the slave and his friend at the North. In a cool, calculating, strain the speaker defined the absolute, constitutional, rights of the slave-holder, and the duty of the North to stand by these rights. He seemed too much concerned in the welfare of the slave-holders themselves, and too calmly accepted the results of the Mexican imbroglio to suit his Whig constituency, let alone the Abolitionists. Of these latter people he said some things harsh, if not utterly cruel. It was an error the Abolitionists construed as slander couched by Webster in the following words: "Then, Sir, there are the Abolition societies, of which I am unwilling to speak, but in regard to which I have very clear notions and opinions. I do not think them useful. I think their operations for the last twenty years have produced nothing good or valuable." And again: "Everything that these agitating people have done has been, not to enlarge, but to restrain, not to set free, but to bind faster, the slave population of the South." These were strange words from a Massachusetts Senator, and they struck the

anti-slavery hosts at the North as a blow in the face. They show that Webster not only deprecated further agitation, but that he sat in judgment on the motives of men, the result of whose actions he divined with far-seeing ability. Had he confined himself to the discussion of principles, and to the laws of their operation, the censure heaped upon him would have been less. It was the polished sting in his words that goaded its victims to frenzy. It was the covert sneer in the allegation that, for twenty years, their societies had produced "nothing valuable" which gave to the Abolitionists mortal offense. Nor is this a matter of surprise. Even though mistaken as to method, these men were doing about all that was being done toward the overthrow of slavery, and they were possessed of the highest humanitarian spirit. But they were despised and insulted enough without having to endure the taunt of disloyalty from one who was supposed to represent the acme of free-state sentiment. However, the impartial pen of History has vindicated the spirit of Webster's prophecy. He was right in feeling that there was much to be feared of the radical anti-slavery agitators.

• A more heroic and, at the same time, inconsistent character than the typical Abolitionist has never crossed the stage of American political life. As to political authority, he considered no pledge binding which assumed to define moral attitude. To him the Constitution was a compact with darkness, and the Union a Union with hell. Rejecting the premises of constitutional opinion, he could not admit the logical sequences of the same. He was Freedom's John the Baptist. He spoke the unpopular truth because he dared not repress it. Without a murmur he accepted society's obloquy and fraternal ostracism because, sweet as were the privileges these denied, they had been bitter used to cover principle. He was so constituted that the more clearly he stood in the light of moral revelation, the less able became he to make allowance for darkened places and groping hearts. His intensity of purpose carried him past the sin to the sinner, past the sinner to those oblivious of the sin, so that he did not separate the individual from the institution. To him there was no shade of difference between the doing of a wrong and the

quietly witnessing the doing of the same wrong. Every day he became more ideal, less concrete. Once keenly alive to it, he lost the power to comprehend the true relation of things—even of those things which concerned him most. He prayed without ceasing that the bondmen might be free, yet he plotted against the Union whose perpetuity was the sole hope of freedom. The impressions he made were multitudinous. As he misjudged others, so others misunderstood him. To some he appeared the ill-tempered ranter, and was correspondingly despised; to others he seemed the misguided fanatic, and was therefore proportionately shunned; before still others he rose as the dangerous disturber of the Union, and thus became an object of intense alarm; to others yet, he spoke as the voice of Truth out of time, and in them were his works manifest in the day of the Nation's sorest trial. Of necessity, during the last years of the conflict, the Abolitionist became a negative and illogical force. He could stir the strife, but he lacked the secret of its administration. Mistaken as he was, and merciless too, his work may not be overvalued, though it is often indiscriminately lauded to the detriment of his memory. Indeed, his greatest good to the cause was accomplished about the time of Webster's denunciation. He sublimely accomplished his mission when he struggled the fiercest for rights guaranteed by a Constitution which he bitterly hated, for it was under the spur of his appeal that John Quincy Adams took the lead in the surpassingly noble struggle in Congress for the right of free petition.

The truth is, Webster suffered the fate of any peace-maker between parties who contend over principles of fundamental concern, in a conflict which is "irrepressible." But his spirit was that of unselfish statesmanship, which, in lieu of the tact of Clay for constructive compromise, he sought to throw into the balance, hoping thereby to effect an equilibrium simply impossible of attainment. One does not wonder that he was deceived. He states he had thought carefully, and conferred with able friends; that his mind was made; that he had "a duty to perform," and that he meant "to perform it with fidelity." Taking into consideration the nature of the man, his past record and his subsequent one as well, History must affirm that he

tried to perform a ministry which he conceived to be a responsibility. But he was not closely enough in touch with the very men whom he discountenanced. The note from Wm. E. Channing, appended to his oration in the published volume of his works, throws a flood of light upon the motives which led him to the making of the speech.

On the other hand, the speech was distasteful to ultra pro-slavery men, because it reiterated Webster's opposition to the annexation of Texas, and reaffirmed his sympathy with the idea conveyed in the Wilmot proviso. For this reason it received the denunciation of Jefferson Davis; than whom no man of the South was more slyly (if slowly) drawing this section of the country to his way of thinking.

Viewed in the light of succeeding events, the Seventh-of-March Speech is seen to have surpassed boldness and become bravery. Let no one deceive himself into thinking Webster imagined he should not lose friends whose friendship he cherished. But so anxious was he to avert the terrible consequences he knew would flow from the controversy; so eager was he to maintain the flag of his country with "not a stripe erased or polluted, nor a single star obscured," that miscalculating the effects of his oratory, he hoped to secure the countenancing of the Compromise measures upon the part of the North, and, at the same time, to allay the fears of the South. The mistake cost him more than any other man, or set of men, or principles held by men.

The chief value of the speech lays in its honesty, intensified by a prophetic vision of the future. The candid critic is bound to admit that its author was torn with conflicting doubts concerning the stability of the Union. It is childish to affirm that Daniel Webster deliberately trampled his life-long convictions under foot; and this too, at a time when such action could result in nothing short of political suicide. To so think is not only to regard him devoid of moral principle, but it is to write him down as being either in his dotage, or as an incomprehensible fool—neither of which few will be inclined to admit. The time was not greatly distant when loyal men were to offer far greater compromises to the slave owners than Webster

ever was willing to make. The influence of the Seventh-of-March Speech marks an epoch in the struggle for the Union, for while it angered men, it opened their eyes as well. The arraignment of the Abolitionists only led this class to intensify their labors and to drive the wedge of anti-slavery sentiment deeper. Granting this the final controversy over the Union was the more plainly emphasized. Webster's anxiety for the safety of the Nation served to impress the real danger she was in, and while the Abolitionists dinned their cry of Whig apostasy, quiet, but more thoughtful men took counsel of the speaker's pathetic appeal for the Union, and the witness of years has testified to the power of this appeal. Though she spurned him immediately, and with reluctance received him again to her bosom, when the shock of war came, and the sun did rise "on States, dissevered, discordant, belligerent," inspired by the words of her most illustrious son, New England stood for the Union with the firmness of a rock.

The campaign of 1852 sounded the death-knell of the Whig party. It had done its best to compete with the Democracy in stopping the ear of the Nation to the cry of the slave. The difference between it and the Democracy was more in character than principle, and this fact accentuated its disintegration. Not only did its attitude disgust the friends of liberty at the North, but it also repelled its own members who were lovers of liberty. Webster was placed without the pale of Presidential possibility. Clay was even then on his death-bed, and Gen. Scott was fitted neither by nature nor training to attract a hearty personal following. As was natural, the benefit of the Compromise accrued largely to the Democracy, because they were united upon it, and a people tired of the controversy took them at their word and elected Franklin Pierce President.

Even a cursory study of the various state papers of President Pierce will reveal as remarkable a revolution in personal sentiment as any like documents in our history can show. To one unacquainted with extraneous affairs, these documents of themselves would betray profound change in public opinion, provided in them the President voiced the sentiment of the people. Electing their ruler upon the policy of non-interference in the then existing

status of the slavery question, the country expected this ruler to correctly embody its idea in his Inaugural Address and in his Message to Congress. However, one may believe that notwithstanding their real desire to see the issue forever closed, the people looked with comparatively slight interest upon any other feature of the Inaugural Address. This very anxiety gave the lie to their professions of unconcern.

True to his bidding, the new Executive spoke in terms which could not be misunderstood. He said :

" I hold that the laws of 1850, commonly called the ' Compromise Measures, ' are strictly constitutional, and to be unhesitatingly carried into effect. * * I fervently hope that the question is at rest, and that no sectional, or ambitious, or fanatical excitement may again threaten the durability of our institutions, or obscure the light of our prosperity. "

In the second Annual Address of President Pierce, the student searches in vain for even a word concerning the legislation of 1850. Beyond the fact that it is a strong State rights document, nothing noteworthy may be stated.

December 31, 1855, the President sent to Congress his third Annual Message. After discussing foreign affairs, and matters of minor domestic concern, the Message took up the question of resistance to Federal law in Kansas, and proceeded to launch into an extended historical defense of the State rights dogma. It took pains to rebuke the Northern commonwealths for their alleged interference with the social affairs of their Southern neighbors, and taunted them with being unable to properly manage abuses within their own boundaries. The history of the Compromises of 1820 and 1850 was next discussed, following which came these most remarkable statements :

" When more recently it became requisite to organize the territories of Nebraska and Kansas, it was the natural and legitimate, if not the inevitable consequence of previous events and legislation, that the same great and sound principle, which had already been applied to Utah and New Mexico, should be applied to them—that they should stand exempt from the restrictions proposed in the act relative to the state of Missouri.

" These restrictions were, in the estimation of many thoughtful men, null from the beginning, unauthorized by the Constitution, contrary to the treaty stipulations for the cession of Louisiana, and inconsistent with the equality of the states.

" * * If any vitality had remained in them it would have

been taken away, in effect, by the new territorial acts, in the form originally proposed to the Senate at the first session of the last Congress. It was manly and ingenuous, as well as patriotic and just, to do this directly and plainly, and thus relieve the statute-book of an act which might be of possible future injury, but of no possible future benefit; and the measure of its repeal was the final consummation and complete recognition of the principle, that no portion of the United States shall undertake, through assumption of the powers of the general government, to dictate the social institutions of any other portion."

Further on, the Message declared :

"The measure [repeal] could not be withstood upon its merits alone. It was attacked with violence, on the false or delusive pretext that it constituted a breach of faith. Never was objection more utterly destitute of substantial justification. When, before, was it imagined by sensible men, that a regulative or declarative statute, whether enacted ten or forty years ago, is irrepealable—that an act of Congress is above the Constitution?"

A comparative study of the aforementioned documents discloses complete revolution in sentiment. Whence this radical disavowing of principles? Why this trampling upon the issue which, of all others, in fond hope of "finality" upon the matter of slavery, placed President Pierce at the head of the Nation? A careful *resume* of the history of Congressional action after and immediately succeeding 1853-1854 will be necessary for the answer.

Early in the year 1853, Senator Douglas, as chairman of the Senate Committee on Territories, tried to get through the Senate a bill for the organization of the territory of Nebraska. At this time, the chairman of the House Committee on Territories was Senator Douglas' fellow-citizen, Wm. A. Richardson, of Illinois. On Feb. 8, 1853, the matter came up in the lower branch of Congress, under the direction of Mr. Richardson. As the debate proceeded, a member arose with the question: "I wish to inquire of the gentlemen from Ohio (Mr. Giddings) who, I believe, is a member of the committee on Territories, why the Ordinance of 1787 is not incorporated in this bill? I should like to know whether he or the committee were intimidated on account of the platforms of 1852?" To this inquiry Mr. Giddings replied by pointing out the fact that the provisions of the Missouri Compromise prohibited the introduction of slavery, and that the question

was not touched at that time because a re-enactment of the Missouri Compromise measure was unnecessary. With this understanding, the bill obtained passage by a tremendous majority, and found its way into the hands of Mr. Douglas. The Senate committee reported it back Feb. 17, without amendment, but as the session was near its close the bill could not attain sufficient attention to pass; consequently it was laid on the table.

At the next session of Congress, an Iowa Senator introduced a Territorial bill which was referred to Douglas' committee, by whom it was reported to the Senate with the statement that the committee abided by the Compromise of 1850; neither affirming nor denying the validity of this Compromise. Such was the nature of the report, but a hidden history lay within. Truth is, the Democratic party was badly split, and the cogitations of the Territorial Committee revealed an alarming state of affairs. The Southern representatives declared that they had Constitutional protection in carrying their slaves into Federal Territories, while Douglas maintained his idea of State sovereignty; laying the question upon the shoulders of the inhabitants of a territory, or of even a state. As no settlement could be reached, the matter was left open to some future decision of the Supreme Court.

On Jan. 16, 1854, Congress was startled over a proposition, offered by Senator Dixon of Kentucky, to repeal the Missouri Compromise. Mr. Dixon, who was a Whig, stated to the Senate that when the bill to establish a Territorial government in the territory of Nebraska, should come up for consideration, he should offer the following amendment:

"SEC. 22. *And be it further enacted,* That so much of the eighth section of an act approved March 6, 1820, entitled, 'An Act to authorize the people of Missouri Territory to form a Constitution and State Government, and for the admission of such State into the Union upon an equal footing with the Original States, and to Prohibit Slavery in certain Territories,' as declares; 'That in all that territory ceded by France to the United States, under the name of Louisiana, which lies north of 36 degrees 30 minutes North latitude, slavery and involuntary servitude, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes, whereof the parties shall have been duly convicted, shall be forever prohibited,' shall not be so construed as to apply to the Territory contemplated by this act, or to any other Territory of the

United States; but that the citizens of the several States or Territories shall be at liberty to take and hold their slaves within any of the Territories of the United States, or of the States to be formed therefrom, as if the said act, entitled as aforesaid, and proved as aforesaid, had never been passed."

With the movement ripe for revolution, and its avowal by Dixon, who was influential in his party-councils, the scheme was readily accepted by Stephen A. Douglas and David R. Atchison of Missouri, acting vice-President of the United States; though both of these men had declared themselves opposed to any opening of the question. The Senator from Illinois had said, in 1849, that the Missouri Compromise was "canonized in the hearts of the American people as a sacred thing which no ruthless hand would ever be reckless enough to disturb." Later he resolved to make no further speeches upon the slavery issue, and he hoped no occasion for such speeches would exist. Of all men in the country he would have been the last suspected by the people at large in the undertaking of such a revolutionary scheme as the repeal of the Missouri Compromise; and no less on record against opening the question of slavery agitation stood Senator Atchison, who, hardly a year before, in Congress declared his willingness and determination to submit to the Compromise. When the Dixon bomb was exploded in the Senate, these men found themselves anxious, and ready to turn their backs upon previous utterances; ready to throw the whole weight of their personal and official influence into the balance in favor of repeal. Atchison even expressed a willingness to resign his position as vice-President, if he could thereby gain the chairmanship of the Senate Committee on Territories. Douglas promptly relieved his mind of this burden, by agreeing to introduce the measure himself. Douglas was aware of the danger of the step. In a conversation with Foote, he posed as a martyr to consistency, and though deprecating his loss of prestige at the North, which he foresaw, urged by "the sense of duty," as he called it, which animated him, he was ready to make the sacrifice. To the scheme President Pierce gave his willing acquiescence, and agreed to adopt the amendment as an administration measure.

On Jan. 23, 1854, Douglas introduced his third Nebraska bill into Congress, organizing two territories instead of

one, and declaring the Missouri Compromise "inoperative." The effect upon Congress and the country would be difficult to describe. Nearly four months of debate ensued during which administrative threat and promise were applied in turn. It was an additional spur to party action that the resolution condemning the Compromise measures of 1820, on the ground that they were rendered inoperative by the provisions of the Compromise measures of 1850, was substituted for the original.

The repeal of the Missouri Compromise and the abrogation of the Compromise of 1850, brought into surpassing prominence the name of its author, and, while it virtually destroyed all his chances for the Presidency, made Stephen A. Douglas the logical leader of Northern Democrats. Henceforth he was to play an incessant part in the great drama which was hastening through its last ten years to completion.

The ambition of this man knew no bounds, and he was quite willing to play a desperate role if thereby, he might gain its satisfaction. He read past history aright, and present history told him that the price of political preferment was complete subservience to the demands of the slave oligarchy. Polk and Pierce were creatures of this power, and had not the North tamely submitted to the cool assumption of these men that the South was an outraged party? Besides, though elected as Whigs, and upon Whig principles. Tyler and Fillmore (especially the former) had found it convenient to abrogate their party pledges in order to get along with the Southern people—though in these cases it had not been an unwilling abrogation. Douglas thought that in the long run, the charge of Abolitionism upon them would silence the critics at the North, and there was no hope of success without a united South. But he miscalculated events. Because he had no conscience upon the slavery question, he vainly imagined few others of influence had. Though he carried his measure through Congress* and had the satisfaction of seeing it become the law of the land,† his victory soon came to bear all the sting of defeat. It was his lack of moral principle in matters political which led him to make the fatal leap, not into the arms of an all-powerful

* By a vote of 37 to 14 in the Senate, and of 113 to 100 in the House.

† May 30.

South, as he supposed, but into that current which bore him beyond the Scylla and Charybdis of Northern anti-slavery Whiggery and Democracy, only to cast him forth against the Republican rock of a united anti-slavery sentiment.

Few characters in our history better represent the possibilities of our Democracy than that of Stephen A. Douglas. More than in any other nation, in this where there is a will reaching for distinction there is a way, and to him who understands the secret of this way, life presents a succession of accomplishments, the enjoyment of which is only enhanced by the bitterness of occasional defeat.

Douglas won distinction while yet a youth in Illinois, because of characteristics dear to the heart of the rough frontiersmen with whom he associated. He had brain, pluck, and all the self-assurance imaginable. His physical habit was no small factor in his success. Short, well-formed and sturdy, he commanded admiration by his bravery, for he was as ready to thresh the neighborhood's bully as he was to act as his referee in a game of fisticuffs, and he was as willing to mount the stump as to do either. Equipped with a good education, which he knew how to employ, he never approached a man but to use him. He made many friends, but they were to be stepping-stones to higher positions, dreams of which his overweening ambition always kept before him.

His tact was of the keenest order. He could so handle a jury that it would declare black white or white black. Without arguing the point at issue he would deploy all around it, with burly demonstrations of oratory and dazzling generalities of speech; would seem to exhaust the subject, yet might hardly touch it. His intense interest merely served to enforce the wrong impression, and like a whirlwind he could carry all men with him, save the few most independent thinkers. He was skilled in the arts of the demagogue. He sized an individual at first glance, and proceeded to bully or to wheedle him as the case might require. Willing to serve the people in any way if they would serve him, he often worked himself into inconsistencies, to extricate himself from which he relied upon his

wonderful powers of deception in matters of casuistry.

But Douglas was more than a mere demagogue. He possessed legal ability of a high order, and was an orator of unusual worth. He was a firm friend of the common people, and as a circuit judge maintained the dignity of the bench. His opinions in law commanded the respect of the legal fraternity, and few could elucidate a point more clearly than he. While his great independence of character secured for him devoted friends, it also made enemies and made them where they were particularly influential. If for no other reason, the South looked upon him as a dangerous man because he had opinions. Had he sat in Fillmore's place, or Pierce's, he would not have been the pliant tool they were.

Notwithstanding his aggressive self-independence, Stephen A. Douglas would probably have succeeded had it not been for an inherent defect, not so apparent then, but more real. He was intrinsically selfish. With the appearance of openness he combined subtlety to the last degree. Though no more unscrupulous than thousands about him, he was far abler, and used his ability to subserve selfish ends, and to cloak inherent defects of moral character. But he relied upon the arts of the demagogue for success, and ought not to have been surprised when shifting public opinion no longer swore by him.

For all his weakness, he possessed many traits of true manhood and nothing more unjust to his memory may be imagined, than the attempts of certain political historians to depict him as the arch-enemy of all things honorable. The sobriquet "Little Giant" was applicable in more respects than one, and the honest student cannot fail to admire his indomitable will-force, his brain-power, and his splendid audacity, which, many a time, reached the altitude of bravery, as, for instance, in the case of his speech at Philadelphia, July 4, 1854, denouncing Know-nothingism. This refreshing bravery in the face of an unfriendly audience won the admiration of enemies, and he loved nothing dearer than an attack which placed him on the defense, when his courage might win to him friends. Had he been honest with himself, it is probable no avenue to fame and

to large usefulness would have been closed to him by the suffrage of his fellow countrymen.

Popular Sovereignty, or, as its enemies termed it, "squatter sovereignty" was no new thing with Douglas. The first notable declaration of this doctrine is to be found in Cass' Nicholson letter, aimed against the principle of the Wilmot proviso. The idea was in contradistinction to that of Calhoun, who based his exposition upon two leading tenets:

(1. That the power given to Congress to dispose of, and to make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory of the United States referred only to the territory then held by the United States in which slavery had already been prohibited by the Ordinance of 1787. Consequently in the cases of Louisiana, Florida, and Texas, Congress should legislate, under the Constitution, to protect the slave owners therein, and wherever it found slavery it should protect it by ample legislation; and

(2. That the Constitution being a compact between separate and sovereign States, Congress, representing the States, had no right to discriminate against settlers from slave-states emigrating into the territories, because this would be depriving citizens of such states of their rights in the territories, which were held as common property.

The Nicholson letter contended that the principle involved in the "Wilmot Proviso" should be kept out of the National legislature, and left to the people of the Confederacy in their respective local governments; and that the people of the territories should be permitted "to regulate their internal concerns in their own way." This was the kernel of Douglas' doctrine of Popular Sovereignty.

At first, the South gladly accepted the dogma of the Illinois Senator as she had great hope for the territorial adoption of slavery, but when this hope was shattered, the whole school of Southern politicians went over to the Calhoun dogma as opposed to that of Douglas. But, with characteristic vigor, this Senator breathed the breath of new life into the ghost of Popular Sovereignty, especially because, when the Compromise of 1820 was abandoned,

some pretext for the annulment of the eighth section of that act was necessary. In his celebrated speech on the Lecompton Controversy, Douglas said :

“ We repealed the Missouri restriction because that was confined to slavery. That was the only exception there was to the general principle of self-government. That exception was taken away for the avowed and express purpose of making the rule of self-government general and universal, so that the people should form and regulate all their domestic institutions in their own way.”

Throughout all the ensuing conflict; throughout the Lecompton imbroglio; until the mutterings of civil strife, with never abating vigor, Douglas pounded over his pet dogma and raised such a din and dust that the minds and eyes of one-half of his great party, and of a not inconsiderable number out of other parties, were sadly befuddled and beclouded. Resting it on fact enough to make it entertainable, the Illinois Senator threw about it the halo of his rhetorical sophistry, and made the most from it possible—yea, more than was profitable, for it proved too much, and, when carried out to its logical extreme, provoked its advocate to an eloquent appeal for the preservation of the Union.

To fully know the great powers Douglas had in debate—powers of assumption and of construction—the student should peruse his Congressional speeches in regard to the Kansas-Nebraska Act; and his celebrated Essay, published in Harper's Monthly Magazine.* In the former, against all reason and fact, he struggled to maintain the preposterous idea that the Kansas-Nebraska Act did not repudiate the Compromise of 1850, but that it simply annulled the eighth section of the Missouri Compromise of 1820. According to his inimitable logic, the conceivers of the Missouri Compromise were laboring under a delusion as to the constitutional interpretation; as were the framers of the Compromise of 1850. The eighth section of the former Compromise was in plain violation of the duty of Congress to keep clear of the vexatious problem of territorial government in regard to slavery—so he argued. Against the understanding of Wade, and Seward, and Chase, and Sumner, representing fully the anti-slavery sentiment at the North; against the understanding of

* September, 1859.

Toombs and Stephens at the South; against the tacit agreement of Atchison and his followers at the West, Douglas boldly raised the claim that he, of all men, understood the meaning of the Compromise Measures of 1820.

In his celebrated debate on the Kansas-Nebraska Act, he sought to disprove the idea of the Compromise being a compact; continually professed to bring his opponents to the point, and invariably deployed all around the point himself. The speech may not be reviewed here, but the following is submitted as a specimen of the Senator's cool assumption in the face of History, and of recognized understanding. Said Douglas :

“ Well, Sir, what is this Missouri Compromise, of which we have heard so much of late? It has been read so often that it is not necessary to occupy the time of the Senate in reading it again. It was an act of Congress, passed on the 6th of March, 1820, to authorize the people of Missouri to form a Constitution and a state government, preparatory to admission of such state into the Union. The first section provided that Missouri should be received into the Union ‘ on an equal footing with the original states in all respects whatsoever.’ The last and eighth section provided that slavery should be ‘ forever prohibited’ in all the territories which had been acquired from France North of 36 degrees 30 minutes, and not included within the limits of the State of Missouri. There is nothing in the terms of the law that purports to be a compact, or indicates that it was anything more than an ordinary act of legislation. To prove that it was more than it purports to be on its face, gentlemen must produce other evidence, and prove that there was such an understanding as to create a moral obligation in the nature of a compact. Have they shown it?”

March 6, 1857, the Supreme Court rendered the famous Dred Scott decision, and thereby struck Douglas the hardest blow he had yet received. The decision was a virtual abrogation of Popular Sovereignty in favor of the doctrine of Calhoun. The South was heartily sick of trying Douglas' scheme; She clearly enough saw that the forces of free-state civilization were away and beyond those of the slave-states, so far as the ability to prepare territories for statehood was concerned—and Eli Thayer's administrative acumen doubly discounted the clumsy maneuvers of Atchison and John Calhoun. Border-Ruffianism and New England Refinement had it out on the plains of Kansas, and it was quickly seen that, without the help of a willing and powerful Administration, from President down, Border-

Ruffainism was doomed to certain and ignominious defeat.

To be fair with its able expounder, the Kansas struggle was not a true representation of the application of Popular Sovereignty—it was the abuse, rather, of the doctrine. Yet, it was the logical outcome of the teachings to which Douglas lent himself. In the then existing state of affairs, Popular Sovereignty was too tempting a weapon to be placed in the hands of an oligarchy which had warped Congressional legislation since 1787, to suit its own desires.

Often, at one and the same time, the Dred Scott decision is defended as an exposition of law, and condemned as an unwarranted avowal of extraneous opinion. There can be no doubt that the latter feature of the case, much more than any other one, angered the North; this was but natural. The brutally, blunt statement of Justice Taney that, before the adoption of the Constitution, Africans had been considered beings “so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect, and that the negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit,” was easily brought down to mean a present identical putting of the case. But the fact must not be lost sight of that the decision was vitally wrong—both as to historical and as to legal exposition.

Chief Justice Taney's holding was :

(1. That the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States referred to negroes as property only; hence they could not sue nor become citizens;

(2. That Missouri possessed the right to settle her Dred Scott case in the manner she had employed;

(3. That the United States Constitution recognized slaves as property, which it was in duty bound to protect; and

(4. That the Missouri Compromise, and like prohibitory laws were unconstitutional.

Not only was this a brutal thrust at the rights of humanity in common, but the cold abrogation of the rights of the negro was not based on sound historical fact. Judge Taney was aware of this; and hedged in the following words :

[A present application of the words of the Declaration of Independence.] “Would seem to embrace the whole human family.

But," he continued, "it is too clear for dispute, that the enslaved African race were not intended to be included, and formed no part of the people who framed and adopted this declaration."

To this, Justice Curtis, in a dissenting opinion, paid his respects thus :

"In five of the thirteen original States colored persons then possessed the elective franchise, and were among those by whom the Constitution was ordained and established. If so, it is not true, in point of fact, that the Constitution was made exclusively by the white race, and that it was made exclusively for the white race is in my opinion not only an assumption not warranted by anything in the Constitution, but contradicted by its opening declaration that it was ordained and established by the people of the United States for themselves and their posterity, and as free colored persons were the citizens of at least five States, and so in every sense part of the people of the United States, they were among those for whom and whose posterity the Constitution was ordained and established."

Plainly, the majority of the Court, and especially the Chief Justice, was clearly at fault in its exposition of fact.

But what is more to our purpose, the doctrine of Congressional protection of slavery was placed in contradistinction to that of Douglas, who declared that it was the "intent of Congress not to legislate slavery into a Territory or State, nor to exclude it therefrom." The Court's decision was an affirmation of the soundness of Popular Sovereignty only by half, for it recognized the right of a Territory to permit the introduction of slavery, but not to prohibit it. The kind of state sovereignty upheld by the decision, was the sovereignty of the Southern States to demand the protection of their "peculiar institution" wherever they chose to carry it. There was but one way in which the champion of Popular Sovereignty might ward off this body-blow. This way he instantly perceived and employed. In his Harper Essay, Douglas cunningly sought to affirm a correspondence between Popular Sovereignty and the spirit of the decision by maintaining that the question of dealing with slavery was not enumerated by the Court in its exposition of prohibited powers.

The language of the Court in this respect is explicit. It states :

"The power of Congress over the person or property of a citizen can never be a mere discretionary power under our Constitution and form of Government. The powers of the Government and the

rights and privileges of the citizen are regulated and plainly defined by the Constitution itself. And when the Territory becomes a part of the United States, the Federal Government enters into possession in the character impressed upon it by those who created it. It enters upon it with its powers over the citizen strictly defined, and limited by the Constitution, from which it derives its own existence, and by virtue of which alone it continues to exist and act as a Government and sovereignty. It has no power of any kind beyond it; and it cannot, when it enters a Territory of the United States, put off its character, and assume discretionary or despotic powers which the Constitution has denied to it. It cannot create for itself a new character separated from the citizens of the United States, and the duties it owes them under the provisions of the Constitution. The Territory being a part of the United States, the Government and the citizen both enter it under the authority of the Constitution, with their respective rights defined and marked out; and the Federal Government can exercise no power over his person or property, beyond what that instrument confers, nor lawfully deny any right which it has reserved.

"A reference to a few of the provisions of the Constitution will illustrate this proposition.

"For example, no one, we presume, will contend that Congress can make any law in a Territory respecting the establishment of religion, or the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people of the Territory peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for the redress of grievances.

"Nor can Congress deny to people the right to keep and bear arms, nor the right to trial by jury, nor compel any one to be a witness against himself in a criminal proceeding.

"These powers, and others, in relation to rights of persons, which it is not necessary here to enumerate, are in express and positive terms, denied to the General Government; and the rights of private property have been guarded with equal care. Thus the rights of property are united with the rights of person and placed on the same ground by the fifth amendment to the Constitution, which provides that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, and property, without due process of law. And an act of Congress which deprives a citizen of the United States of his liberty or property, merely because he came himself or brought his property into a particular Territory of the United States, and who had committed no offense against the laws, could hardly be dignified with the name of due process of law.

"So, too, it will hardly be contended that Congress could by law quarter a soldier in a house in a Territory without the consent of the owner, in time of peace; nor in time of war, but in a manner prescribed by law. Nor could they by law forfeit the property of a citizen in a Territory who was convicted of treason, for a longer period than the life of the person convicted; nor take private property for public use without just compensation.

"The powers over person and property of which we speak are

not only granted to Congress, but are in express terms denied, and they are forbidden to exercise them. And this prohibition is not confined to the States, but the words are general, and extend to the whole Territory over which the Constitution gives it power to legislate, including those portions of it remaining under Territorial Government, as well as that covered by States. It is a total absence of power everywhere within the dominion of the United States, and places the citizens of a Territory, so far as these rights are concerned, on the same footing with citizens of the States, and guards them as fully and plainly against any inroads which the General Government might attempt, under the plea of implied or incidental powers. And if Congress itself cannot do this—if it is beyond the powers conferred on the Federal Government—it will be admitted, we presume, that it could not authorize a Territorial Government to exercise them. It could confer no power on any local Government established by its authority, to violate the provisions of the Constitution.’”

It will be seen that the decision of the Court repudiates any idea of Popular Sovereignty so far as the question of slavery is concerned. Douglas perceived this also, but with characteristic effrontery attempted to warp the mandate of the judges into an endorsement of his dogma. When this could not be done, he made use of dishonest statements of fact; as, for instance, in the Harper Essay where he says:

“Some persons, who have not examined critically the opinion of the Court in this respect, have been induced to believe that the *slavery question* was included in this class of prohibited powers, and that the Court had decided in the Dred Scott case that the territorial Legislature could not legislate in respect to slave property the same as all other property in the territories. A few extracts from the opinion of the Court will correct this error, and show clearly the class of powers to which the Court referred, as being forbidden alike to the Federal government, to the states and to the territories.”

From this on, for a few paragraphs, the writer quotes from the opinion of the Court in the case where the prohibited powers are enumerated. In doing so he gives the words of the Court in regard to religion; freedom of speech and of the press; power to petition; power to keep and bear arms; the quartering of soldiery; and the laws of forfeiture of property for treason; but very conveniently *omits* that portion which deals with the rights of property—the words which the reader finds italicised in the quotation given above from the Dred Scott decision.

Granting the fact that the decision repudiated his pet

dogma, for the sake of argument, Douglas proceeds, in the Essay, to carry the reasoning to its logical ends:

"If this sweeping prohibition—this just, but inexorable restriction upon the powers of government—federal, state and territorial—shall ever be held to include the slavery question, thus negating the rights of the people of the states and territories, as well as the federal government, to control it by law (and it will be observed that in the opinion of the Court 'the citizens of a territory, so far as these rights are concerned, are on the same footing with the citizens of the states') then, indeed, will the doctrine become fully established that the principles of law applicable to African slavery are *uniform throughout the dominion of the United States*, and that there 'is an irrepressible conflict between opposing and enduring forces, which means that the United States must and will, sooner or later, become either entirely a slave-holding nation or entirely a free-labor nation.'"

As the opinion of the Court in regard to the status of the African at the formation of the Constitution was shown to be erroneous in fact, so also was it in descanting upon the powers of Congress in dealing with the matter of slavery. In a dissenting opinion, Justice Curtis exposed the error of the Court, and made the following statements in general thereon:

"Here are eight distinct instances, beginning with the first Congress and coming down to the year 1848, in which Congress has excluded slavery from the territory of the United States, and six distinct instances in which Congress authorized government of Territories by which slavery was recognized and continued, beginning also with the first Congress and coming down to the year 1822. These acts were severally signed by seven Presidents of the United States, beginning with General Washington and coming down as far as Mr. John Quincy Adams, thus including all who were in public life when the Constitution was adopted. If the practical construction of the Constitution, contemporaneously with its going into effect, by men intimately acquainted with its history from their personal participation in framing and adopting it, and continued by them through a long series of acts of the gravest importance, be entitled to weight in the judicial mind on a question of construction, it would seem to be difficult to resist the acts above adverted to."

But of all the comments on the Dred Scott decision, by Douglas, perhaps the most significant—certainly so in regard to him personally—was that which he made in his own state, at Springfield, June 12, 1857. In this speech he labored, as at other times, to broadly endorse the decision, and to deny that it came into conflict with his pet

idea. But for the first time, he boldly enunciated the doctrine of "unfriendly police regulation," a dogma which accomplished little else than to involve him deeper than ever in factional quarrel.

This monstrous travesty on Constitutional interpretation was the creature of a daring mind, but the philosophy of its origin is simple. It was absolutely necessary for Douglas to take such ground if he did not care to be repudiated by his own constituency. He hoped a quiet statement of the doctrine, at Springfield, in 1857, would place him right with this constituency! Did he imagine that it would then be forgotten, and remembered against him no more forever?

Upon Dec. 8, 1857, President Buchanan submitted an Annual Message to Congress. In this document he accepted the Lecompton Constitution, and indicated that it would be the future policy of the Administration. Previously, Douglas had protested to the President against such a policy, but to no avail. The Administration was bound to accede to the wishes of the Calhoun school, and Douglas clearly put himself without his party's pale. But he was soon to meet his constituency on the stump, and to secure their approval was his first task. Accordingly, when the Lecompton scheme was presented in Congress, and the English bill substituted, he opposed these measures consistently enough, though with damaging effect upon himself. He saw the logical end of his previous line of reasoning and rebelled. While, without doubt, he was conscientiously opposed to the Lecompton scheme, and to the whole method of administrative control of affairs in Kansas, he was influenced, more or less, by the fact that his constituency was dead-set against the whole thing. The fate of Shields in 1855 was too dear a lesson to be soon forgotten. Stephen A. Douglas had a certain degree of moral bravery which, at times, lifted him above party clap-trap and showed him to have possessed the qualities of the statesman. These were manifest in his quarrel with the Administration, and it is no wonder they won him friends and even adherents amongst Free-Soilers and Republicans

as well. Had not his moral inability to see the difference between slavery and freedom been so apparent in the struggle, it is possible he could have been a much more formidable antagonist in the campaign of 1858.

The rupture between the President and the Illinois Democracy was now complete. The "Washington Union"—the Administration journal—ranted in an especially bitter manner, and Douglas, in his Twenty-second-of-March Speech, aimed at it blows he intended for authorities beyond. In the editorials of this organ, he saw the handiwork of the administration itself, and was not afraid so to say.

It is not the design of this study to give an exhaustive account, or even an outline, of the troubles in Kansas, but a sketch which will place before the reader the salient points of the struggle.

A large portion of the present state of Kansas was of the territory of Louisiana and Missouri previous to 1821. After the Compromise of that year, for a third of a century it was without territorial organization; it was not until 1854 that Kansas became organized into a territory by the celebrated Kansas-Nebraska bill. This bill repealed the Missouri Compromise and left the new territory open to slavery or freedom—then began the struggle between the forces. Missouri outlaws moved over the border and threatened free-state men who came across Missouri to the new territory. In this manner the pro-slavery men secured the first delegate to Congress; in doing so they cast 1729 illegal votes. The election occurred Nov. 29, 1854. In the mean time President Pierce had appointed Andrew H. Reeder, of Pennsylvania, to assume the administration of affairs in the new territory, and this Governor ordered a legislative election, to be held March 30, 1855. But so great was the influx of free-state men, that the Missouri tactics were again resorted to, and Border Ruffians swarmed into the territory the night before election. They alleged that the Emigrants' Aid Societies were sending settlers, twenty millions strong, to intimidate voters, and thus the whole border between the two sections was aroused to an intense pitch of enthusiasm. Again fraud triumphed, the count showing a vote of 5427 for the pro-slavery, and 791 for the free-state candidates. Of these, 4,908 pro-slavery

votes were subsequently discovered to be illegal. The Governor and the pro-slavery men became engaged in a desperate quarrel over the matter, and under stress of force Reeder issued certificates of election to all but one-third of the pro-slavery candidates. The Governor wished to call the territorial legislature together at Pawnee, but the legislature was as anxious to meet at Shawnee Mission, and did so after the first day of the session; adjourning thither by a vote taken over the Governor's veto. This bogus legislature proceeded to make Kansas a slave territory; enacting the Missouri code entirely and providing for the support of the system by passing a law which challenged every voter to swear to the Fugitive Slave Law. In honor of the Chief Justice of the territory, Samuel D. LeCompte, who was a willing tool in their hands, the legislature named the newly formed capital Lecompton. This town, more famous in story than in fact, lay twelve miles west of the thriving municipality of Lawrence. In the latter town, the free-state men assembled, and decided to hold a convention at Big Springs, Sept. 5, 1855. Governor Reeder was present at this convention, and was nominated, by acclamation, for territorial delegate to Congress. At the ensuing election he received 2,849 votes.

The free-state delegates met at Topeka, Oct. 23, and framed a state constitution which was submitted to the suffrage of the people and received 1731 votes. Accordingly it was presented to Congress, Mar. 24, 1856; where it failed to pass. Douglas, who was Chairman of the Committee on Territories in the Senate, rejected it upon the ground that "it was the movement of a political party instead of the whole body of the people of Kansas." Nevertheless, he endorsed the Bogus Laws and legislature in their entirety.

The movements of the free-state men frightened the Administration and President Pierce warned them to give over. He also removed Reeder and appointed Governor Shannon in his stead. Before the next gathering of the free-state men at Topeka, July 4, 1856, this second appointee to the gubernatorial seat was also obliged to flee from the territory. Backed by the authority of and pursuant to the call of the Administration, Federal troops en-

tered the town and dispersed the provisional legislature. The free-state men readily acquiesced. A civil war ensued between the pro-slavery and the anti-slavery forces; to quell which, Governor John W. Gerry, of Pennsylvania, (who arrived in Kansas, Sept. 9, 1856) bent all his energy. He succeeded, in part, but was obliged to relinquish the task, and resigned, Mar. 4, 1857. He bitterly complained of the lack of support at Washington, and fled after his eyes were opened to the fact that the Kansas cabal and the Administration acted as one man. In the mean time there occurred a national election in which President Pierce was superseded by James Buchanan. At this time, the Kansas trouble was such a stench in the nostrils of the North, that the new Administration regarded it with extreme caution.

Thus far, the pro-slavery men had held out. They had compelled the resignation of three Governors, and had retained the ardent support of the Administration. But they went a trifle too far in the sacking of Osawatomie and Lawrence, two free-state towns. Governors Reeder, Shannon, and Gary had each proceeded to the territory fully of the opinion that the pro-slavery men were in the right, and looking upon the free-state men as the cause of all the disturbance. A few days' residence in the territory and a few hours' dealing with the Bogus Laws, and legislature revealed to them the true state of affairs, and aroused their hostility. Thus they were brought under the ban of an Administration which appointed them not to subserve justice, but to keep in subjection the Topeka "insurgents," whether or no.

But the pro-slavery men now began to waver. To their minds, it became evident that Kansas could never be a slave-state. Still, their brethren, outside the territory, were not convinced of the fact, and the Administration made one more desperate attempt to subvert the will of the people. Robert J. Walker was appointed to the Governorship. This gentleman, was a resident of Mississippi, and had been an able Secretary of the United States Treasury. Much against his will he was prevailed upon to assume the control of affairs in Kansas, and he undertook the task under express agreement that the Administration would stand by him in a full and fair trial to obtain a constitution

which would represent the will of the majority in the territory. Both Douglas and Buchanan professed to be in hearty sympathy with the newly appointed Governor, who conferred with them and revealed to them his plans before entering upon the duties of his office. Though Governor Walker was ardently pro-slavery in sentiment, and hoped that Kansas would enter the Union as a slave-state, a few days' residence in the territory convinced him of his error. Nevertheless he manfully set about his task of bringing order out of rebellion, and would have succeeded had others lived up to the bargain so faithfully as he.

In the meantime, the pro-slavery party used its opportunity to call a convention, which met at Lecompton Nov. 7. This convention framed a constitution, sanctioning slavery in the proposed state, prohibiting the passage of emancipation laws by the legislature, and forbidding amendments for the length of ten years. Governor Walker had assured the free-state voters that the constitution should be presented to them for adoption, but this promise the convention evaded by submitting to a popular vote (Dec. 21) no provision but that which invoked the question of slavery. The people might vote for the constitution with slavery or without slavery, but, in either case, it was a travesty on Popular Sovereignty, as they were not given the opportunity of rejecting the constitution itself. The free-state men abstained from voting, and the constitution received 6,266 votes favorable to slavery as against 567 opposed. Thereupon the legislature again submitted the question to the people, this time putting before them the whole constitution. The election took place Jan. 4, 1858, at which time the constitution was voted down by a majority of over ten thousand. Congress then took up the issue, and the Administration did its utmost to secure the acceptance of the Lecompton constitution. In the Senate the measure easily succeeded, but it failed in the House because of the deflection of the Douglas Democrats. April 30, 1858, Congress substituted the English bill, which offered Kansas a land gift if she would accept the Lecompton constitution. Aug. 3, the people voted this down by as nearly an overwhelming majority as they had recorded against the original Lecompton constitution in the preceding January.

Thus the people of Kansas had shown themselves too resolute to be intimidated by either the Border Ruffians or by a pro-slavery Administration; too brave to be successfully bribed by Congress; and freedom-loving enough to wait until their population should be sufficient to admit them as a free-state. Thus, four territorial Governors were basely deserted by the Administration, and Stephen A. Douglas had defeated the success of the Lecompton measure in Congress. Democracy split in twain, and the battle was transferred from the plains of Kansas, and the halls of Congress to the prairie towns of Illinois.

PART II.

Lincoln in the Struggle for the Union.

In a speech delivered at Chicago, Friday evening, July 9, 1858, Senator Douglas defended his anti-Leocompton attitude and took occasion to characterize his greatest political opponent in the words :

“I have observed from the public prints, that but a few days ago the Republican party of the State of Illinois assembled in convention at Springfield, and not only laid down their platform, but nominated a candidate for the United States Senate, as my successor. I take great pleasure in saying that I have known, personally and intimately, for about a quarter of a century, the worthy gentleman who has been nominated for my place, and I will say that I regard him as a kind, amiable, and intelligent gentleman, a good citizen, and an honorable opponent; and whatever issue I may have with him will be of principle, and not involving personalities.”

Of the man thus mildly complimented, it now becomes our duty to speak.

Physically, Abraham Lincoln was one of the most striking characters of his day. Not only was he tall, and awkward, but, in general bodily make-up he was deceiving. Because of inordinate length of leg, he appeared taller when standing than one supposed him to be when one observed him seated. His hands and feet were large; the latter abnormally so. His countenance was peculiar. The retreating forehead was crowned with a shock of black, unruly hair; the broad, smoothly shaven chin defined a bold up-curve; the large, firm mouth bore lips thick enough to be full of feeling; while the prominent nose betokened characteristics of intelligent leadership; and the small, gray eyes, set far under shaggy brows, seemed to pierce to one's very soul. When spoken with, or addressing

others, a kindly smile lighted the plain, sad face, and every feature changed. Humor played on the mouth and in the facial lines, the eyes flashed in their cavernous sockets, and an air of intense interest, and sympathy, livened the whole countenance. If the face in repose was interesting, nothing short of fascination was aroused by its changes under the controlling moods of mind and soul.

In personal magnetism, he fell short of the attainments of his noted rival. Stephen A. Douglas courted popularity and won it. He got it from utter strangers, and none could set a crowd to cheering more wildly than he. It was otherwise with Lincoln. Not that he was indifferent to public opinion of himself, for he was anxious on this score, but his popularity was strongest amongst those who knew him best. In demeanor at times, he was repellent. He did not offend, but he held off at arm's length. Yet, none was more cordial than he, and it was his dual nature which presented him differently to different people, then as well as later in his career. Without seeming to realize it, he bore an individualistic carriage and habit which strangely and strongly impressed every one with whom he had to do.

When he emerged from comparative private life, in 1858, to respond to the call of the Illinois state Senatorial convention, Lincoln surprised his friends and startled his adversaries by the most remarkable speech he had ever made. No other effort so noteworthy was evolved from the anti-Nebraska struggle. Indeed, so far back as 1855, during the Trumbull campaign, in a speech full of eloquence and feeling, he smote hip and thigh, those who were involving the Nation in turmoil. If previously he had been indifferent to the true condition of affairs; if he had been contented with making partisan pleas for Harrison, and Taylor, and Scott, or with satirizing Cass in Congress, all this unconcern was thrown aside by 1855, and there appeared before the Illinois constituency a real "giant," who was aroused by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise as by a trumpet in the night. Tradition, only, preserves most of the words spoken in the legislative contest which preceded the election of Trumbull; but Herndon indelibly impresses the effect of the speech deliv-

ered at Springfield, in October, 1854.* As now, so then diverse estimates of the man were not only consistent, they were inevitable. There was the superficial view which regarded most his eccentricities. This view was held by many old neighbors who recalled his yarns, and the traditions of his early life; the accounts of his skill at woodchopping or his feats in the ring. Such as remembered little of him but his tales on the circuit, or his quaintness in conducting a trial looked to the coming contest (if indeed they looked at all) as a promise of rare stump-fun and of story-telling politics. The thought of their ignorance concerning the man never disturbed their minds, and they were ever ready to account for his rise with the simple though indolent philosophy, which is summed up in the remark of one of them: "Well, Abe was always the luckiest dog on earth, anyhow!"

There was another class of men who knew Lincoln better. These were his associates who had the opportunity of closely observing him, and the good sense to study his character more or less critically. To this class belonged N. B. Judd, David Davis, Lyman Trumbull, Wm. H. Herndon and others like them. It is not to be presumed they came anywhere near a just comprehension of his ability, but they came the nearest of any; near enough to realize him to be the man in the approaching contest. To them this contest was vital. Not only was Douglas a dangerous man in his party, but out of it as well, and so subtle was his sophistry no ordinary opponent might disclose it. Thus, by force of fitness Lincoln stepped forward to assume the task which thinking men unhesitatingly accorded him. Hardly did they; indeed, hardly did Lincoln, give full credit to the philosophy of this fitness, yet it lay there deep, sure, and unmistakable. His was no tender genius which shrank from uncouth surroundings. On the contrary, such condition caused it to thrive more heartily, for Lincoln possessed the rare faculty of selecting the best from every circumstance in life. The world has gotten the idea that his was an uncrowned head to which the American people had to turn in dire distress; but he was no god, descended from the cerulean height. If his consummate

* See *Life of Lincoln*, Vol. II, pp. 36-38.

ability gave him the right to it, no less did the genius of thorough preparation bring him to the task of conducting this Nation through the supreme crisis of her life.

If it may be considered that the conflict between Slavery and Freedom, between Anarchy and Union began long before the guns of Sumter aroused the Nation; that it had its inception with the birth of the Union, or even before, it may be assumed, as well, that the peculiar fate which transferred the struggle from Congress to Kansas, and from Kansas to Illinois, was not blind chance; nor was it mere fatalism that singled out the Whig leader of the state to successfully challenge the champion of that subtle kind of pro-slavery argument which needed to be divested of its dangerous influence before the consummation of the contest could be entered upon. To meet the problem a sort of training, and a kind of personal character were necessary, which are always rare in their union. Moreover, the work before him who was to conquer Douglas was of such a nature that it could have been prepared for only through years of experience and toil. Not only was character of a certain quality necessary, but prestige also. This character and this prestige, Abraham Lincoln possessed.

In the work before him, two things were essential and several were extremely helpful. The necessary things were: a shrewd mastery of politics, and moral bravery. The helpful things were: a wholesome vein of humor, and extraordinary gifts of oratory. The careful student cannot fail to notice that these very elements were displayed by Lincoln through his entire life, and that their intelligent cultivation was the same mysterious talisman which carried him safely beyond the demoralizing influences of backwood's association, and through the labyrinth of disloyal sophism.

Lincoln was a born story-teller. Amongst a race of story-tellers, he was chief. He appropriated the kernel of a good yarn and saw its availability upon the instant. Not only did this habit arise from a natural taste for the ludicrous, but also from keen powers of observation. Though he had the genius of humor, in its use he was not so constructive as he was adoptive, for in him the instinct of juxtaposition was strong. Moreover his humor was

clear and powerful. His speech in Congress against Gen. Cass rivals the effort of Tom Corwin against "the late lamented Mr. Crary, of Michigan." It is a fair specimen of good natured sarcasm, chiefly valuable as compared with his later sallies.

The quaintness of Lincoln's humor was of the quality which lends great prestige to its possessor, and which is apt to bring his memory into danger of an exaggerated traditional judgment, but it was of eminent service to the young Illinois lawyer who met all classes of the sovereign people on his legal circuits. He could indulge in humor before a jury with very dangerous results to his adversaries. The opposing lawyers were in a continual fret lest some rich sarcasm or witty illustration should thwart their pains-taking efforts. There was no way of foreseeing the comical gravity and shrewd thrust which would often convulse judge and jury. In this field he ranged unchallenged, and many a winter's night rang with the laughter of those who were privileged to gather about the grocery stove and rehearse the inimitable sallies of "Abe" Lincoln.

As to the quality of Lincoln's jokes, they were always rich and often racy. He did not seem to possess any sense of propriety other than that of application. But, it may honestly be presumed that he did not indulge in broad stories from innate taste for the vulgar. If a joke had point, it mattered little to him about its setting—but he knew how to rebuke a story wantonly coarse.

Lincoln's ability as a story-teller won him friends everywhere. It was a most natural thing for one of those unlettered, but shrewd, jurymen to carry the impression of the man back to his home, there to dilate upon his affability and humor, thus enhancing the lawyer's reputation for brains and hard sense. Not only did this characteristic win Lincoln friends, it also taught him to read human nature. To such a man the hearty country-folk opened their minds. He could get near to their desires and understand their needs. His kindness and geniality were not suggestive of ulterior motives.

Douglas lacked a sense of the humorous, and though his hold on the people was great, it was different. By dint of energy he worked his way, and by a brilliant show

of ability maintained his hold upon his constituency. Though a formidable antagonist, he could not successfully cope with his opponent in the use of humor upon the stump, for with great effect in a campaign, Lincoln employed this ability. His law practice taught him the use of wit as a weapon, and the rostrum gave him a broader field in which to wield it. In its use he could be merciless. But he was balanced. A rare, good nature kept him sweet-tempered, even when misquoted in a despicable manner.

He often transcended the bounds of humor and became witty, but his wit served a deeper purpose. Even in repartee he was logical, and in the use of the *reductio ad absurdum* he displayed unusual skill, so that he appealed at once to the risibilities and to the understanding of his hearers.

Lincoln was an orator. His oratory was true because he possessed great tenderness of heart. An intelligent sympathy enabled him to perceive, and to respond to stirring sentiments wherever manifested. Being an orator, he was strangely susceptible of the oratory of others. On Feb. 2, 1848, while in Congress, he wrote the following letter to his partner, Herndon :

“DEAR WILLIAM :

“I just take up my pen to say that Mr. Stephens, of Georgia, a little, slim, pale-faced, consumptive man, with a voice like Logan’s, has just concluded the very best speech of an hour’s length I ever heard. My old, withered, dry eyes are full of tears yet. If he writes it out anything like he delivered it our people shall see a great many copies of it.”

Like those of most young men, Lincoln’s first attempts at speech-making were somewhat turgid, but early in his career this defect dropped away, and he came to realize, as does any true orator, that language is but a vehicle.

An orator is such not because of his words. He is such from the occasion and his connection therewith. Geo. W. Curtis mentions three consummate orations in American History; the orators are Patrick Henry, Wendell Phillips, and Abraham Lincoln; the occasions, the meeting of the Virginia Assembly, the mass gathering at Faneuil Hall, and the dedication at Gettysburg. Thus, Lincoln showed his ability as an orator only when aroused by the requirements of circumstance. It is significant that he succeeded

at no other time. When mere office was at stake he was an indifferent campaigner. He once made such a miserable failure in a speech advocating the candidacy of Harrison that the committee retained him more from sympathy than from the hope of effective work. In this campaign he was afterward more successful, but it was in the defense of *principles*. The celebrated acquittal of Armstrong affords an instance of his ability when convinced of the justice of a cause.

But it is only after the repeal of the Missouri Compromise that the student discovers an unusual depth and power in his speeches. It is certain he surprised as well as charmed his friends when he made the remarkable speech at Springfield in the legislative canvass of 1854.

Lincoln's powers of analysis displayed him at his best when engaged in philosophical or ethical discussions. Usually abstract principles are not handled so skillfully as he was to handle the issues involved in the Douglas debates. It was to become noticeable that the people applauded Douglas more, but listened to Lincoln better.

Acting on the principle alluded to he never relied on the force of mere language, nor did he employ it for the sake of cloaking conviction. Of his language, whatever may have been its intrinsic excellencies (and they were many), its power lay in the fact that it corresponded to his ideas. Thus, a comparative study of his speeches from the first crude effort at Pappsville, in 1832, to the masterly presentation of issues in the House-divided-against-itself Speech of 1858, discloses much of the growth of the man. A significant biography might be written with few data other than his letters and orations.

The selection of Lincoln to meet the "Little Giant" in the campaign of 1858, is one of those acts which lucidly illustrate the law of the "eternal fitness of things." While it was done under the knowledge that no other man could be as successful, subsequent history has shown it to have been an act of consummate wisdom.

He was the ideal exponent of anti-slavery thought. Comparatively few would have admitted this in 1858, but it soon became clear enough. The dangers to be feared from anti-slavery speakers were the ones he shunned. Nothing

is more natural in men whose hearts are on fire, than denunciation and abusive arraignment. Nothing is more common with them than distorted presentations of the tenets of an adversary. Even without the "holier-than-thou" spirit, so common in moral agitation, one who throws one's whole soul into a conflict, is in danger of becoming uncharitable because of the tendency to view all things at a single angle. But, in such conflicts, a deal depends upon winning the class whose hearts are susceptible of the influence of reason rather than of passion. It is easy for men to think themselves candid, and yet to be untruthful. Not only did these facts appeal to the philosophic mind of Abraham Lincoln, but he felt himself to be the man who could successfully avoid committing the errors they involve. This confidence led him before the people, the best prepared champion of freedom and the Union.

But he was to prove his worth, for, in public debate, the first impressions concerning him were almost certain to be the wrong ones. In repose, the disjointed figure, the sallow, angular face, the clumsy gestures were not prepossessing, and during the opening moments of a speech his voice, piercing and strident, seemed to display lack of culture. But all this soon changed. The eyes flashed, the gestures became singularly appropriate, and the voice assumed a tone of earnest sadness. By the subtle law of correspondence, these changes served to more deeply fix his words.

Mr. Horace White, who witnessed the effort at Springfield, Oct., 1854, says :

"All strings that play upon the human heart and understanding were touched with masterly skill and force, while beyond and above all skill was the overwhelming conviction pressed upon the audience that the speaker himself was charged with an irresistible and inspiring duty to his fellow-men. This conscientious impulse drove his arguments through the heads of his hearers down into their bosoms, where they made everlasting lodgment."

Again, Mr. White says :

"Although I heard him many times afterward I shall longest remember him as I then saw the tall, angular form with the long, angular arms, at times bent nearly double with excitement, like a large flail animating two smaller ones: the mobile face wet with perspiration which he discharged in drops as he threw his head this way

and that like a projectile—not a graceful figure, yet not an ungraceful one. After listening to him a few minutes, when he had got well warmed with his subject, nobody would mind whether he was graceful or not. All thought of grace or form would be lost in the exceeding attractiveness of what he was saying.”*

The student in his audience would not be long in discovering where the power of the speaker lay, and though his opinions were hostile, could not help feeling the influence of this power.

The first impression his words conveyed was that of candor. Says one who, as an unsympathetic reporter, went to one of his speeches, in acknowledgment of this power:

“Nobody who heard him could have questioned for a moment his absolute sincerity, the complete truthfulness of the man.” †

Not only was he truthful; he was fair. The habit of years prominent in his law practice asserted itself upon the stump. He was so fair that the greater portion of his speech would win even the foes in his audience. It was the clinching of his two or three points which taxed their consciences and minds. Lincoln got this training in his law practice as he studied the “twelve good men and true” who sat before him. Often his client thought him to be giving his case away only to be astounded at the logic of the closing remarks which generally brought the jury to the speaker’s way of thinking. Of course such a man would be misunderstood by the Abolitionists, but the task was to undermine the constituency of Douglas—the Abolitionists could take care of themselves.

Not only was he fair; he was comprehensive. This was due to his minute preparation. For years he had cogitated over the issues involved in the struggle concerning slavery. He had viewed them in every light. Rejecting the guidance of mere feeling, he was not satisfied until his reason attested the truthfulness of a proposition. His honesty of thought was severe. Consequently when he appealed to an audience not only was he lucid but convincing as well. Men felt that the impulses of the politician were overcome by an effort to get at the truth of things, and to comprehend them in their every phase.

The oratory of Lincoln, in its nature, bore the stamp of the greatest school known to man—that of every-day

*See Herndon’s *Life of Lincoln*, Vol. II, pp. 91-92.

†Junius Henri Browne; statement, Feb. 12, 1895.

life. Through contact with men of every class and of all dispositions, it had become rounded and pointed. By the severest mental drill, and by the force of merciless introspection it had become deepened and broadened. It was vibrant with the warmth of human tenderness and with a passionate love of justice. It was tried oratory. Through nearly two score years it had passed in its development, and it had learned to discard the extraneous. It was not sycophantic; neither was it illiberal. It was manly; it was shrewd; it was convincing. In two consummate instances it was destined to reach the high-water mark of a particular kind of human expression.

In this as in no other nation, the politician wields the masses. Once let the people get the idea that he is one of them, and his success is apt to be brilliant. There seems to be an inherent tendency to trust this individual until he proves himself unworthy. He may be as educated and refined as he choose; his hold upon his constituents is enhanced thereby provided he grow not away from them.*

The American people are intrinsically political. No one understood this better than did Lincoln. Not only was he a friend-getter; he was a friend-keeper. This helped him to the leadership of his party in Illinois, and made him candidate for speaker of the legislature—jean suit, backwoods style and all.

It also opened the way for his ascendancy which lasted for thirty years, until his state put him forth as the representative man of the Nation. Had he been of the dominant party, there can be no question of the honors which a willing people would have heaped upon him—probably he might have been smothered in honors. But his success is the evidence of his preparation.

In the small things of political life he was learned. No man kept his ear closer to the ground, and none swept his eye more comprehensively over the horizon. He was quiet, but it was the silence of observation. He was calculating and knew the trend of things at any given moment. That he was quick to measure the extent of deflections, and accurate in his judgment of their effect is shown by his letters and conversations—a good example may be

*See von Holst, Const. Hist. of U. S.

found in the letter he wrote to Harrison Maltby during the Fremont campaign.*

Lincoln was a wire-puller. He knew human nature and laid in a stock of shrewd wisdom with which to handle it. Later on the people were to discover this trait, but some few were aware of it by 1858. November 27, 1854, this letter was sent to a friend :

“ T. J. HENDERSON, ESQ.,

“ MY DEAR SIR :—It has come 'round that a Whig may, by possibility, be elected to the United States Senate ; and I want the chance of being the man. You are a member of the legislature, and have a vote to give. Think it over and see whether you can do better than go for me. Write me, at all events, and let this be confidential.”

In a letter to the Hon. E. B. Washburne, written from Springfield, January 6, 1855, Lincoln displays the keen knowledge of men and their actions which belongs to the consummate politician. In it he says that he knew Mr. Washburne's district probably better than did that gentleman himself—for he names this man and that man, “ Dr. Little,” and “ Rev. Mr. Lawrence,” “ Judge Parks,” and “ Old Mr. Diggins ;” speculating on their choice, either upon the first ballot or succeeding ones. A careful recapitulation of the legislature is made ; it being divided into those who are anti-Nebraska, and those who are the regular Nebraska men. One is shown to be missing ; an explanation is offered for the then recent loss of Sangamon to the Whigs, and the whole thing is gotten up as could have been done by no one versed in anything less than the intricacies of township politics.

These are the arts of the politician pure and simple. Though they display much sagacity and hard common sense, they are usually wrought on a depressed plain, and when unaccompanied by higher motives sink their employer to the mere level of the professional politician. It was not possible for such a man as Lincoln to be long satisfied with such attainments, and when the change came, it was rapid and sure. After 1854 it became evident that he was possessed of a broader vision than ever before in matters political. Then began to dawn upon him the consequences of Douglas' false teachings. Because he saw more clearly than others the results of the repeal of the Missouri

*See Lincoln's Works, Vol. I, page 221.

Compromise, he assumed his duty before the people in exposing this monstrous fraud.

Consequently, in his speeches from 1854 on, the student finds something deeper, more comprehensive, than in any delivered previously. Thenceforth it almost seems that Lincoln were a new man. He *was* a new man.

The thrilling speech he gave at Springfield in 1854 was delivered under the spell of a new birth into a larger political world. For the first time there was unfolded to him the meaning of the great conflict he was starting into. His growth never ceased.

The House-divided-against-itself Speech marks an epoch. It is the true barometer of the political atmosphere of the time. Seemingly, it was an act of blundering stupidity; and the question frequently arises; "Had he a right to so endanger the chances of his party in the ensuing campaign?" Unquestionably he had, seeing the effect meant more to himself than to anyone else. But it cannot be granted that it was poor policy, even. Lincoln was the acknowledged leader of his party in the state, and was the best exponent of the political change then being wrought—had weighed matters well, and knew the philosophy of things. Moreover, he was close to the people, and reflected their minds. With him, as with them, it was a conflict for principle, and the mere politician sank from sight in the seeker after truth. True, the proceeding was in strange contrast with Lincoln's accepted reputation in such matters, but it goes to show that he was a politician of the greatest and strongest type. The best vindication of his actions has been made—the testimony of years to their wisdom and exalted character.

But Lincoln was to meet a man who ranked as king among the politicians of his time. All the arts of the demagogue were to be given full play. No loop-hole could be passed without testing; no sophistical doctrine could be hidden under seemingly good logic without exposition, provided the Republicans were to be winners in the battle. The selection of Abraham Lincoln to meet Mr. Douglas is evidence enough of his reputation as a politician, shrewd and knotty; and a study of the debates will fully justify the wisdom of the choice.

No amount of political sagacity can save a man who lacks moral bravery. In time of prosperity he may ride the popular wave, but, in time of adversity, he is certain to be overwhelmed. Lincoln's statement that though on the field of battle he might be the first to run, he believed he did not know what moral fear was, must be taken literally. He was incapable of a wantonly unfair or immoral act. Nor was this the result of anything other than a peculiar habit of temperament. It arose from his judicial ways of thought. Still it is helpful to reflect that though in his early days he was surrounded by men far from virtuous, no unclean personal habits attached themselves to him. It is an evidence of natural desire for purity that he never learned the use of tobacco or liquor. Says Lincoln's most privileged critic: * "His conscience was ruled by one faculty—reason. His heart was ruled by two faculties—reason and conscience." His habit of refusing law cases which involved inconsistencies, arose from his bravery of character, as well as incapacity for such work. He had no willingness to prosecute such cases. His bravery of character was of the kind which brooked no iota of deceit—either of himself or others. Hence, in the pursuit of a logical end he was merciless. Truth alone brought any satisfaction to his mind. His great power over his hearers was due to a keen analysis of the subject he had in hand, but back of this analysis lay the untiring quest after truth and the inflexible honesty of purpose. He never learned the truth that he might juggle it, as some others did. When necessary he was not afraid to expound it, leaving it to impress its own worth and to do its own work. When satisfied as to principles, and upon seeing them put into operation, he did not become impatient. At such times he manifested rare capacity for waiting.

Lincoln's moral bravery was the thing which lifted him from his early surroundings. The bitterness of his abject poverty was not enough to overcome his decision of character. Before him there was always something better to be attained. Some phases of his early life may seem to contradict this, but beyond question an untiring ambition to make something of himself was ever a motive in him.

Not only was he brave with himself; in the prosecu-

*Herndon.

tion of duty he was fearless before others, and had a certain spirit of frank independence withal. His first political speech shows this. In a previous circular, addressed to the voters of Sangamon,* he had said, after soliciting their support at the polls: "But if the good people in their wisdom shall see fit to keep me in the background, I have been too familiar with disappointments to be very much chagrined."

The struggle from 1854 on had put a premium upon moral bravery in politics. The political party which cajoled the people into accepting the Kansas-Nebraska bill, and led them into the election of Buchanan, went a trifle too far in demanding of them acquiescence in the Lecompton outrage. None knew this better than the two men who stood before the country, in Illinois, during the memorable campaign of 1858. But one of them could look back upon a record marred by political inconsistency. He had spoken of the Missouri Compromise as "a sacred thing which no ruthless hand would ever be reckless enough to disturb," and had then thrust forward his own fist, smiting the "sacred thing" he once canonized. He had labored to deceive himself into thinking there was no difference between that Compromise and his Kansas-Nebraska bill; that no constitutional right was violated by his pet scheme. He had acknowledged the Dred Scott decision to be just, deprecating the attempts of "the partisan leaders to array them (the people) in violent resistance to the final decision of the highest judicial tribunal on earth," and had himself, in the face of that decision, promulgated his "monstrous" doctrine of "unfriendly legislation." He had sprung from a state as truly anti-slavery as any in the Union, yet he had no moral compunctions on the question of slavery.

On the other hand, his opponent had been consistent in the eyes of the people of his state. As a young legislator he became involved in the vast schemes for "improvement," which characterized the early settlers of the West. His ambition was to be called the 'DeWitt Clinton of Illinois'†—but it was a dream, the error of which he acknowledged, and he did not seek to have the state repudiate its debt.

*See Lincoln's Works, Vol. 1, p. 1.

†Lincoln to Joshua F. Speed, about 1836.

More than was usual with men in those days he was consistent in his attitude upon the slavery question. As a member of Congress he opposed the opening of the Mexican war, though it was an unpopular stand for him to take, and he was the only Whig representative from Illinois. When the war was initiated, however, he would not vote to withhold supplies from the troops; but he never admitted the justice of the struggle. His attitude upon the question of slave-holding was freely known. He had the pleasure of voting for the Wilmot proviso some forty times, and he fathered a bill in Congress for the Abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia which was so fair that it commanded the support of both anti and pro-slavery men.

Two consummate instances in his career had proven his moral bravery in the face of political opposition. Though optimistic, the Lincoln-Stone Protest was not recklessness, but pure bravery. At the time he was looking forward to large political preferment, had no powerful political friends, and was obliged to hew every step of his path.

The second instance was that of his attitude in the Lincoln-Trumbull Campaign, in 1854. It has been seen how eager he was for the distinction. Admirers are wont to exalt his magnanimity in throwing the election to Trumbull. It was a brave thing, to be sure, but it was necessary. He knew the alternative was the choice of Matteson and he could not hesitate a moment in making his preference tell. The bravest thing the student has to note at this time in Lincoln's life is the bold stand he took for principle. Recalling what it meant to protest against the imperious rule of the slave-oligarchy even as late as 1856, we can appreciate the courage he showed when he addressed the meeting called at Springfield to ratify the action of the Bloomington Convention. Only three had the temerity to attend, and Lincoln was one. Let not these words spoken there be forgotten :

"While all seems dead the age itself is not. It liveth as sure as our Maker liveth. Under all this seeming want of life and motion, the world does move nevertheless. Be hopeful and now let us adjourn and appeal to the country."

But before 1856 he had spoken as bravely. In the campaign of 1854 he said, at Peoria :

"This declared indifference, but, as I must think, covert real zeal, for the spread of slavery, I cannot but hate. I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world; enables the enemies of free institutions with plausibility to taunt us as hypocrites; causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity; and especially because it forces so many good men among ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty, criticising the Declaration of Independence, and insisting that there is no right principle of action but self-interest. * * *

"When Southern people tell us they are no more responsible for the origin of slavery than we are, I acknowledge the fact. When it is said that the institution exists, and that it is very difficult to get rid of it in any satisfactory way, I can understand and appreciate the saying. I surely will not blame them for not doing what I should not know how to do myself.

"When they remind us of their constitutional rights, I acknowledge them—not grudgingly, but fully and fairly; and I would give them any legislation for the reclaiming of their fugitives which should not in its stringency be more likely to carry a free man into slavery than our ordinary criminal laws are to hang an innocent man. * * *

"Some men, mostly Whigs, who condemn the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, nevertheless hesitate to go for its restoration, lest they be thrown in company with the Abolitionists. Will they allow me as an old Whig, to tell them, good-humoredly, that I think this is very silly. Stand with anybody that stands right. Stand with him while he is right, and part with him when he goes wrong. Stand with the Abolitionist in restoring the Missouri Compromise, and stand against him when he attempts to repeal the fugitive-slave law. In the latter case you stand with the Southern disunionist. What of that? You are still right. In both cases you are right. In both cases you expose the dangerous extremes. In both you stand on middle ground, and hold the ship level and steady. In both you are national, and nothing less than national. This is the good old Whig ground. To desert such ground because of any company, is to be less than a Whig—less than a man—less than an American. * * *

"In the course of my main argument, Judge Douglas interrupted me to say that the principle of the Nebraska bill was very old; that it originated when God made man, and placed good and evil before him, allowing him to choose for himself, being responsible for the choice he should make. At the time I thought this was merely playful, and I answered it accordingly. But in his reply to me he renewed it as a serious argument. In seriousness, then, the facts of this proposition are not true as stated. God did not place good and evil before man, telling him to make his choice. On the contrary, he did tell him there was one tree of the fruit of which he should not eat, under pain of certain death. I should scarcely wish so strong a prohibition against slavery in Nebraska."

Such were the qualifications of the man called upon by the common consent of his party to meet the great expounder of Popular Sovereignty. The struggle in Kansas had introduced a new phase of the subject. Men saw it was not to be a conflict between two doctrines, solely, but began to think the life of the Union was in imminent danger. Before them Border Warfare and a recreant Administration were taking part in incipient rebellion, which was not to be confined to the plains of Kansas alone, but which was to spread along the whole border between North and South; wherever free-state and slave-state opinion could come in conflict. Hence the ensuing speeches were parts of no mere forensic struggle worked out before the people of Illinois and of the Nation. They were evolved during a contest wrought in the breathless interest of a people who had not come up to the understanding of but vaguely forboded Harper's Ferry and Sumter.

We, of to-day, may look back in complacency upon the scene, but, in the audience before Lincoln and Douglas, stood men with bated breath and clenched fists, who could not forget that, only yesterday, the powerful Federal Government had sent its troops into the town of Topeka to blow into pieces the representatives of the rightful majority of the territory the moment those representatives should dare to formulate the will of the people into constitutional expression. Deep in the hearts of the free-state men, setting them aflame, were the words of Jackson: "The Union; it must and shall be preserved." The instinctive query rose to their lips: "It shall be, but how?"

The campaign proper, of 1858, opened with the speech Lincoln delivered at Springfield, on the evening of June 17th. This speech was carefully prepared, and submitted to the judgment of his friends. With a single exception they condemned it as unwise. However much they happened to agree with its sentiment, they were of the firm belief that it was a foolhardy attempt at raising an issue which would better have been approached cautiously, if indeed, at all. Especially unfortunate they considered the opening portion. One of Lincoln's warm friends afterwards stated

that the first ten lines of the speech defeated its author in the immediate election. But Lincoln was decided. Politic or not, he conceived it was time the truth should be spoken. His comment is interesting :

“ Friends, I have thought about this matter a great deal, have weighed the question well from all corners, and am thoroughly convinced the time has come when it should be uttered ; and if it must be that I must go down because of this speech, then let me go down linked to truth—die in the advocacy of what is right and just. This nation cannot live on injustice,—‘a house divided against itself cannot stand,’ I say again and again.”

Subsequent events settled the question of policy. Says Lamon : “ Mr. Lincoln never penned words which had more prodigious influence upon the public mind, or which more directly and powerfully affected his own career.”

The speech is remarkable in that it displays a spirit of aggressiveness unusual upon the part of Lincoln, who was constitutionally conservative. For this reason, it is not a matter of surprise that his intimate political associates deprecated the effort. Public opinion at the North was not up to the high standard set in the Springfield speech, and had Lincoln been so widely known, his “house-divided-against-itself” sentiment would have been as unfortunate for him as was the “irrepressible conflict” doctrine of Seward.

Nevertheless, a calm, dispassionate study of succeeding events fully justifies the Springfield speech. Though the people of the North thought they were not ready for its seeming radicalism, it was time they were getting ready, and the speaker knew them even better than they knew themselves. It opened their eyes to facts they had not weighed. Its lucid exposition of the designs of proslavery men was unanswerable, and Douglas replied to it only by distorting its thought and language.

The emphasis of the co-relation of Congress in passing the Kansas-Nebraska bill, of the Supreme Court, in the Dred Scott decision, and of the people in electing Buchanan, was putting things in a novel light. But it was not less novel than effective. Though he tried it afterward, Douglas never succeeded in satisfactorily refuting the charge of coalition. Lincoln's definition of Douglas' principle of “squatter sovereignty” was apt. He said the logical

intent was "if any one man choose to enslave another, no third man shall be allowed to object." This very aptness and fairness carried with it great conviction.

But no amount of earnestness alone would have sufficed. A clear, historic exposition, invincible argument, and a logical statement of the necessary trend of pro-slavery aggression, made the speech widely influential, and elevated the forensic controversy at the start, so that the ensuing campaign was one of education to the voting constituency of the Nation. Not only were men made stronger in individual purpose, but the policies of two great political parties were inaugurated, and the necessity for a third party made. The disruption of the Democracy and the unification of the Republicans in 1860, was due largely to influences which sprang from the campaign of 1858.

The bold declaration that "a house divided against itself" could not stand, backed by the prophecy that it would not fall, but would cease to be divided, drew into broad light the animus of the time, and formed the text for Senator Douglas during a large portion of the subsequent debates. The Senator spent his time in trying to prove Lincoln a disunionist; everywhere putting against this assertion the boast that he himself believed in the sacred right of the people to govern themselves.

The Springfield speech must be looked upon as forming the key-note of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, and, together with the cornering of Douglas at Freeport, it constituted the most valuable result of the debates. At the same time the contest of these men is the most novel in the history of American politics.

To a critical foreigner, this method of transferring the fundamental questions of state-craft to an heterogeneous audience, in groves, on river-banks, and in public-squares, to be thrown forth by the partisan press, might have seemed illy advised, or, at least, incongruous. But it was a question upon which legislatures had been in the habit of following the voice of the people, and no more representative presentation and hearing could have been obtained. Certainly, Congress was in no shape to properly handle the matter; and the Supreme Court had outraged the best sense and conscience of a great multitude of irreproachable

patriots. It is true that one of the contestants prevaricated and that he juggled the truth, but he was a formidable foe, who stood as the champion of an error deeply rooted. Only clear logic, a cool head, and an earnest heart could destroy his influence. These, Lincoln furnished.

In a sense the struggle was grotesque. The "Little Giant" faced a "Big Giant," as Arnold says. Moreover, he talked to many in the audience, and beyond it, who were giants. Stephen A. Douglas had great sympathy from the fact that with him it was a life or death conflict. Every art of casuistry was employed by him to gain success, and deeper than the plea of the patriot, lay the finesse of the politician.

Fortunate it was that these two men, of such differing temperaments, wide experience, and intimate mutual acquaintance, stood pitted against each other. All the elements favorable to success in either case were present in the complete familiarity which ensued. Douglas knew where to take Lincoln, and Lincoln knew where to attack Douglas; but it is sad for his memory that Douglas chose to take Lincoln in an underhand manner, constantly distorting his tenets and argument. He made the mistake of believing that an attack upon "Black-Republicanism" was equivalent to Lincoln's annihilation, and insisted upon construing the words of his opponent as he pleased. For Lincoln there was nothing else to do but to enter his protest, and engage in the discussion of the questions at stake upon their merits.

To the charge of Douglas that the house-divided-against-itself doctrine was vicious, Lincoln replied by asking: "Does the Judge say it can stand?" To the implication that the "fathers" cared not which way the slavery question was settled, Lincoln brought an abundance of negative historical proof. To the personal profession of Douglas that it mattered not which way the question was voted, Lincoln replied that it was a matter of deep concern to him. His vision could detect a difference between the matter of slave legislation and the "cranberry laws" of Indiana. The anxiety of Douglas to cover argument with vituperation was answered in this tart style: "If you have ever studied Geometry, you remember that

by a course of reasoning, Euclid proves that all the angles in a triangle are equal to two right angles. Euclid has shown you how to work it out. Now if you undertake to disprove that proposition and to show that it is erroneous, would you prove it to be false by calling Euclid a liar?"

But the most serious charge Lincoln had to refute was the one claiming that he was at an attempt to impinge the rights of the slave-holders in the slave-states, but also to jeopardize the safety of the Union itself. In the mouth of Douglas, this was a very strong argument for, more than all else, it damaged Lincoln and his principles in the estimation of men whose influence was greatly needed in the coming election. Their vicious vagaries concerning disunion is what brought the Abolitionists into ill-repute, and so far as slavery was concerned, no one of judgment expected its abolition south of the Mason and Dixon line. Therefore, in his reply to the Senator, delivered at Chicago, on the evening of July 10, Lincoln paid considerable attention to these charges, as he did during the course of the succeeding joint debates. In the speech at Chicago he said :

"Judge Douglas made two points upon my recent speech at Springfield. He says they are to be the issues of this campaign. The first one of these points he bases upon the language in a speech which I delivered at Springfield, which I believe I can quote correctly from memory. I said there that 'we are now far into the fifth year since a policy was instituted for the avowed object, and with the confident promise, of putting an end to slavery agitation; under the operation of that policy, that agitation had not only not ceased, but had constantly augmented.' 'I believe it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed.' 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' 'I believe this government cannot endure half slave and half free.' 'I do not expect the Union to be dissolved'—I am quoting from my speech—'I do not expect the house to fall, but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the 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 forward until it shall become alike lawful in all the states, north as well as south.'

"What is the paragraph? In this paragraph which I have quoted in your hearing, and to which I ask the attention of all, Judge Douglas thinks he discovers great political heresy. I want your attention particularly to what he inferred from it. He says I am in favor of making all the states of this Union uniform in all their internal regulations; that in all their domestic concerns I am

in favor of making them entirely uniform. He draws this inference from the language I have quoted to you. He says that I am in favor of making war by the North upon the South for the extinction of slavery; that I am also in favor of inviting (so he expresses it) the South to a war upon the North, for the purpose of nationalizing slavery. Now, it is singular enough, if you will carefully read that passage over; that I did not say that I was in favor of anything in it. I only said what I expected would take place. I made a prediction only—it may have been a foolish one perhaps. I did not even say that I desired that slavery should be put in course of ultimate extinction. I do say now, however, so there need be no longer any difficulty about that. It may be written down in the great speech.

* * * * *

“I am not, in the first place, unaware that this Government has endured eighty-two years, half slave and half free. I know that. I am tolerably well acquainted with the history of the country, and I know that it has endured eighty-two years, half slave and half free. I *believe*—and that is what I meant to allude to there—I *believe* it has endured, because during all that time, until the introduction of the Nebraska bill, the public mind did rest all the time in the belief that slavery was in the course of ultimate extinction. That was what gave us the rest that we had through that period of eighty-two years: at least, so I believe. I have always hated slavery. I think as much as any Abolitionist—I have been an Old Line Whig—I have always hated it, but I have always been quiet about it until this new era of the introduction of the Nebraska bill began. I always believed that everybody was against it, and that it was in course of ultimate extinction. [Pointing to Mr. Browning, who stood near by] Browning thought so: the great mass of the nation have rested in the belief that slavery was in course of ultimate extinction. They had reason so to believe.

“The adoption of the Constitution and its attendant history led the people to believe so: and that such was the belief of the framers of the Constitution itself, why did these old men, about the time of the adoption of the Constitution decree that slavery should not go into the new territory, where it had already gone? Why declare that within twenty years the African Slave Trade, by which slaves are supplied, might be cut off by Congress? Why were all these acts? I might enumerate more of these acts—but enough. What were they but a clear indication that the framers of the Constitution intended and expected the ultimate extinction of that institution? And now, when I say, as I said in my speech that Judge Douglas has quoted from, when I say I think the opponents of slavery will resist the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest with the belief that it is in course of ultimate extinction, I only mean to say, that they will place it where the founders of this Government originally placed it.

“I have said a hundred times, and I have now no inclination to take it back, that I believe there is no right, and ought to be no inclination in the people of the free-states to enter into the slave-states, and interfere with the question of slavery at all. I have said

that always; Judge Douglas has heard me say it—if not quite a hundred times, at least as good as a hundred times; and when it is said that I am in favor of interfering with slavery where it exists, I know it is unwarranted by anything I have ever *intended*, and, as I believe, by anything I have ever said. If, by any means, I have ever used language which could fairly be so construed (as, however, I believe I never have), I now correct it.

“So much then for the inference that Judge Douglas draws, that I am in favor of setting the sections at war with one another. I know that I never meant any such thing, and I believe that no fair mind can infer any such thing from anything I have ever said.”

This position was maintained during the joint debates and, at the risk of being tiresome, a few extracts from the first joint discussion, at Ottawa, Aug. 21, must be given. After quoting at some length from his Peoria speech of 1854, Lincoln continued :

“Now gentlemen, I don’t want to read to any greater length, but this is the true complexion of all I have ever said in regard to the institution of slavery and the black race. This is the whole of it, and anything that argues me into his (Douglas’) idea of perfect social and political equality with the negro, is a specious and fantastic arrangement of words, by which a man can prove a horse-chestnut to be a chestnut horse. I will say here, while upon this subject, that I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so. I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and the black races. There is a physical difference between the two, which, in my judgment, will probably forever forbid their living together upon the footing of perfect equality, and inasmuch as it becomes a necessity that there must be a difference, I, as well as Judge Douglas, am in favor of the race to which I belong having the superior position. I have never said anything to the contrary, but I hold that, notwithstanding all this, there is no reason in the world why the negro is not entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence, the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I hold that he is as much entitled to these as the white man. I agree with Judge Douglas he is not my equal in many respects—certainly not in color, perhaps not in moral and intellectual endowments. But in the right to eat the bread, without leave of anybody else, which his own hand earns. *he is my equal and the equal of Judge Douglas, and the equal of any living man.*”

To such arguments there was no reply. Douglas never answered them but kept insisting that Lincoln’s object was to destroy slavery in the slave-states; produce amalgamation of the races; and thereby disrupt the Union. But it made little difference whether or not his opponent chose to

admit the force of Lincoln's logic—it was intended for the common people, and they, unblinded by self-interest and unhampered by political alliance, could, and did freely form individual opinions. Somehow the impression grew in their minds (and this was especially true of the people of Illinois) that if the crisis, so dramatically announced by Douglas, should come the logical defender of the Union would not be the man who had broken with his party, and practically sought to annul the dictum of the Supreme Court, which he, at the same time, inconsistently acknowledged to be his guide.

During the course of the debates, Lincoln delivered many speeches other than those given at the joint-meetings. In some of them, he made his clearest expositions, such as at Edwardsville, where he drew the remarkable distinction between the Democratic and Republican parties. Again at Paris, he gave a lucid exposition of the kind of Popular Sovereignty invented by Douglas. As the Cooper Institute Speech is the flower of those remarkable years, and may well serve to-day as a model of its kind, it must be granted more than a passing glance.

Its force on the printed page is in its intense logic. Withal it is so clear that it appeals irresistibly to him who will admit the truth of its premise. Taking up the assertion of Douglas that "Our fathers when they framed the government under which we live understood this question just as well and even better than we do now," Lincoln assented to the truth of the statement, and added, "It simply leaves the inquiry 'what was the understanding these fathers had of the questions mentioned?'" With an exposition of History clearer than any he had made theretofore, the speaker showed how the majority had put themselves on record as understanding that "No line dividing local from Federal authority, nor anything in the Constitution, properly forbade Congress to prohibit slavery in the Federal territory." Following the voices of the fathers as they were heard through the years of History down past the Ordinance of 1787; the cession of territory by Southern states; the organization of the Territory of Mississippi; the purchase of Louisiana; and the Missouri question, in all covering a period of thirty-six years since the formation

of the Constitution, Lincoln showed beyond peradventure the preponderance of their authority for his doctrine of ability upon the part of Congress to prohibit slavery in the territories. He clinched this point as follows :

“The sum of the whole is, that of our thirty-nine fathers who framed the Constitution—twenty-one—a clear majority of the whole—certainly understood that no proper division of local from Federal authority, nor any part of the Constitution forbade the Federal Government to control slavery in the Federal Territories ; while all the rest probably had the same understanding. Such, unquestionably, was the understanding of our fathers who framed the original Constitution ; and the text affirms that they understood the question better than we.”

But those who insisted upon the Federal control of slavery in the territories pointed to the amendments. The Dred Scott case was decided upon the fifth amendment, while Senator Douglas planted himself upon the tenth. But Lincoln showed that the same men who framed the Constitution made the amendments thereto, and, through a course of simple reasoning, if they violated the spirit of the original Instrument, in so doing they were guilty of incomprehensible inconsistency. Said he :

“So far as being guided by the fathers, if we supplant the opinions and policy of our fathers in any case, we should do so upon evidence so conclusive, and argument so clear, that even their great authority, fairly considered and weighed, cannot stand : and most surely not in a case whereof we ourselves declare they understood the question better than we.”

Changing the entire line of argument, Lincoln next proceeded to plead with the Southern brethren upon behalf of the Union. With perfect candor, appealing to them as follows : “In the general qualities of reason and justice, you are not inferior to any other people ;” then he charged them with misrepresenting Republicans and Republican doctrine. To the assertion that the Republican party was sectional, he said that as soon as it obtained votes in the South it would cease so to be. To the claim upon the part of pro-slavery men that the North was radical, and that they alone were conservative in the matter, Lincoln replied :

“What is conservatism? Is it not adherence to the old and tried against the new and untried? We stick to, contend for, the

identical old policy on the point in controversy which was adopted by our fathers who framed the government under which we live: while you with one accord, reject and scout and spit upon that old policy, and insist upon substituting something new."

He kindly, yet persistently showed the South that they were the ones who made the slavery issue more prominent, by discarding the principle of the fathers, and so far as the John Brown raid was concerned, not a single iota of evidence could be adduced other than that it was the effort of a misguided fanatic.

In regard to disunion threats, Lincoln plainly showed the South that unless her constitutional rights were being withheld "by mere force of numbers," she would have no palliation, much less justification. But the Supreme Court was not unanimous in its Dred Scott decision even amongst those who held to the dogmas of the South; "It was made in a divided court by a bare majority of the judges, and they not quite agreeing with one another in the reasons for making it,"

Upon the other hand, the fathers who framed the Constitution, in deciding the question to the contrary, did so without a division of opinion either at the time or after it was made.

In closing his argument to the South, Lincoln said :

"But you will not abide the election of a Republican president. In that supposed event, you say, you will destroy the Union: and then, you say, the great crime of having destroyed it will be upon us! That is cool. A highwayman holds a pistol to my ear, and mutters through his teeth 'stand, and deliver, or I shall kill you: and then you will be a murderer.' To be sure, what the robber demanded of me—my money—was my own: and I had a clear right to keep it: but it was no more my own than my vote is my own: and threat of death to me to extort my money, and threat of destruction to the Union, to extort my vote, can scarcely be distinguished in principle."

As a parting sentiment, he appealed to Republicans to maintain peace in the Nation. He urged them to drop passion and ill-temper. It was asking a great deal in view of Kansas-Nebraska, Dred Scott, Popular Sovereignty, and the execution of Brown. Yet conciliation was to be tried. "Let them [the South] alone," said the speaker, and "convince them that we do let them alone," they would do their best to make the North call slavery right; to annul the free-state constitutions, so far as their bearing upon

the question was concerned. The logic of the South would compel its legislators to make a war of extermination upon the anti-slavery sentiment of the land. In peerless force of reason, and power of feeling only human, the orator closed his appeal with the following words :

“ Wrong as we think slavery is, we can yet afford to let it alone where it is, because that much is due to the necessity arising from its actual presence in the nation; but can we, while our votes will prevent it, allow it to spread into the national Territories, and to overrun us here in these Free States? If our sense of duty forbids this, then let us stand by our duty fearlessly and effectively. Let us be diverted by none of those sophistical contrivances wherewith we are so industriously plied and belabored—contrivances such as groping for some middle ground between the right and the wrong; vain as the search for a man who should be neither a living man nor a dead man; such as a policy of ‘don’t care’ on a question about which all true men do care; such as Union appeals beseeching true Union men to yield to Disunionists, reversing the divine rule, and calling, not the sinners, but the righteous to repentance; such as invocations to Washington, imploring men to unsay what Washington said and undo what Washington did.

“ Neither let us be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to the Government, nor of dungeons to ourselves. Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it.”

Beyond question, at the time, this was the most valuable speech made by Abraham Lincoln since the one at Springfield in 1858. Not only did it appeal to the people by its incomparable setting forth of historical fact, but by its penetrating logic as well.

However, that it powerfully swayed its immediate hearers, intelligent as they were, was not a necessary proof of its inherent worth. The audience was in political sympathy with the speaker. They were in a position to be prejudiced in his favor. But it was an ominous sign when the leading minds of the nation’s metropolis, and its most influential journals gave unqualified approval of Lincoln’s presentation.

The greater worth of the speech lay in its consummate appeal to reason and heart. The language was firm yet not harsh; conciliatory, yet not cowardly. In these words may be found a foretoken of the future utterances of this most patient man, always winning by his patience as well as by his reason.

The chief intrinsic value of the speech was in the irrefutable argument from history to the effect that the fathers believed they placed the institution of slavery in the course of ultimate extinction. This point was denied by all pro-slavery men of every class, and has been insisted upon by all such writers upon the question even after the war had, in fact, settled the controversy. Thus, Stephens, the ablest of the *post bellum* state rights advocates, in speaking of slavery says: "The same difference of opinion exists to a more general extent, amongst those who formed the Constitution, when it was made and adopted—The changes have been mainly to our side." But the first half of Lincoln's Cooper Institute Speech has never been refuted successfully. Nor, indeed, can it be. In a succinct manner it literally exhausted the subject, and nothing of material worth may be added to that argument.

The appeal to the South was masterly; proof, the succeeding history of this section added force to its meaning and turned the words of warning into the language of prophecy.

It was putting the question differently from what the Eastern people had expected, not only differently from what they had expected from Lincoln, but from anyone else. If curiosity compelled their attendance, reason held their attention and candor won their acquiescence. They had been exasperated with the harangues of Phillips and Thompson; they were encouraged and taught by the arguments of Lincoln.

The gaunt form, wrinkled face and earnest soul upon the platform of Cooper Institute gave them a more potential illustration of the conflict between Slavery and Freedom, Union and Disunion than Phillips at Faneuil Hall or Brown, on his Virginia scaffold; more potential because the ultimate master in the "impending crisis," was, of necessity, a man not only firm of purpose and warm of heart, but searching of intellect and crowned with common sense. If the student would know the secret of the one's failure and of the other's success let him analyze the force and influence of these typical sentences:

"We gibbet a Northern hound to-day, side by side with the infamous Mason, of Virginia."

“I am loath 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.”

Aside from the great effect of the Freeport heresy, and the anti-slavery argument of the Cooper Institute Speech, vital service was done for the cause of Union in the general character and tone of the debates. Lincoln predicted the logical conclusion of the system of slavery extension, and showed how it would come to involve the freedom of the free-states themselves. The speeches in Ohio and the Cooper Institute Speech extended the influence of previous declarations—the latter being rendered doubly efficacious because of its scholarly tone.

As to the matter of slavery, it was the basis of all discussion because it was the basis of all thought. So far as Douglas was concerned, he played on the popular antipathy to Abolitionism to far better advantage than he could have discussed the straight issue of Union or disunion, for in their inmost hearts there was no difference between the two men on this issue—hence the danger to the Union of Douglas' vagaries. Lincoln contributed powerfully to the unification of Northern anti-slavery sentiment, but the Abolitionists did not relish his speeches because they were conservative. They regarded his disavowal of negro social equality as being a politic attitude, and persistently refused to allow to him elevation of motive or honesty of purpose. Douglas impeached them when he sought to stigmatize his opponents by classing him amongst them. But by showing the incompatibility between the spread of slavery and the maintenance of the Constitution, Lincoln made the strongest kind of an argument for the Union. The House-divided-against-itself Speech was the key-note of the whole campaign, and around it swung the ideas in every speech of Lincoln from 1858 to 1860.

A careful study of the Lincoln-Douglas debates will convince the impartial student of two things; (1) of the insidiousness of the “don't care” theory of handling the question; and (2) of the superior power of argument needed to meet this theory successfully. It is probable that Senator Douglas was deceived by his own logic, and his moral nature was of such a cast that he could see no differ-

ence between the matter of handling a Virginia slave and a Virginia oyster. To him it was a question of mere property. He really conceived that his quarrel with the Administration was based on equitable grounds. Popular Sovereignty was a great right; Lincoln nowhere denied it. But the Popular Sovereignty of Douglas was a delusion and a snare, because of its author's inability to regard the rights of the white and black as being anywise equal. If the Illinois Senator was deceived, it is no wonder that, at the outset, a great many earnest men at the North kept him company.

It is a question how far this deception of Douglas went—no doubt to a great extent. We can admire the man, since he dared so much to uphold his pet dogma, and there is the seeming fact that he argued himself into inconsistencies so preposterous that it was an easy thing to believe them after such a course of argument. Again, where a man's treasure is there is apt to be his heart, also. If there was one thing above another which Stephen A. Douglas hated, it was negro equality. This hatred led him to make absurd statements even in such a dignified campaign as that of 1858; as for instance in his attack upon Fred Douglass during his speech at Freeport.

But the serious danger was not so much in the deception of Senator Douglas as in the hoodwinking of many honest men. He was comparatively powerless; they were very much so. He was the servant of the people; they were the masters of the servant. He had a personal ambition to gratify; they had a Union to save. Thanks to the cool and clear-headed opponent who confronted him, this power for evil was largely disintegrated, and Douglas came out of the fray more deceived than deceiving. Still, with all the vigor of an intense faith in his views, and with magnificent ability to emphasize these views, Stephen A. Douglas was the most formidable antagonist the anti-slavery men at the North had to meet.

Moreover, he was especially dangerous because of two important reasons: (1) He paraded under the banner of popular-rights, potent to influence a popular constituency; and (2) He succeeded in getting the Abolitionist, disunionist Greeley, and the Union, pro-slavery Crittenden

upon his side of the issue; and this, not so much from an understanding of his argument as from sympathy with the man who was suffering for his anti-Lecomptonism. The logic of these reasons might not have been sound, but its force was tremendous. There is a vein of goodwill in American nature which sympathizes with the "under-dog." It does this without taking the pains to learn why he is under. Douglas was in this position. An Administration which he had disavowed was trying to drive him from the party, and the persecution was too valuable not to be turned into capital.

But beyond this lay Douglas' real power. That two men so antipodal as Crittenden and Greeley were, should unite in their support of one and the same man, was not only surprising, but alarming as well. It was the attempt of two irreconcilable principles to be represented through a man himself holding principles foreign to both and destructive of one. But, on the slavery question, Greeley and Crittenden were exponents of a great deal of the sentiment at the North. It is clear that any dogma which promised to satisfy them both was sophistry and if successful, would bitterly disappoint one of them, postpone the slavery struggle and endanger the Union. None saw this better than Lincoln, and he was determined that, because of his principles, Douglas should not be put forth as the exponent of Northern sentiment upon the question, neither now nor in the future, when some expected he would be in the camp of the anti-slavery men, fighting for freedom; not as a Democrat, but as a Republican. Happily, the people of Illinois, and of the Nation, also, saw the sophistry of such a prediction, and their immediate judgment upon the outcome was the true one. Lincoln met Douglas and his short-sighted friends and conquered them. "Reason, cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason,"* did a great share in the overthrow, but there was also the eloquence which comes of the knowledge of injustice; injustice not alone to the negro, but also to the white man. What could be finer than this?

"My friends. I have endeavored to show you the logical consequences of the Dred Scott decision, which holds that the people of a Territory cannot prevent the establishment of slavery in their midst. I have

*Lincoln's Works, Vol. 1, p. 15.

stated what cannot be gainsaid, that the grounds upon which this decision is made are equally applicable to the free-States as to the free-Territories, and that the peculiar reasons put forth by Judge Douglas for endorsing this decision, commit him in advance, to the next decision and to all other decisions coming from the same source. And when, by all these means, you have succeeded in dehumanizing the negro: when you have put him down and made it impossible for him to be but as the beasts of the field; when you have extinguished his soul in this world and placed him where the ray of hope is blown out as in the darkness of the damned, are you quite sure that the demon you have roused will not turn and rend you? What constitutes the bulwark of our liberty and independence? It is not our frowning battlements, our bristling sea-coasts, our army and our navy. These are not our reliance against tyranny. All of those may be turned against us without making us weaker for the struggle. Our reliance is in the love of liberty which God has planted in us. Our defense is in the spirit which prizes liberty as the heritage of all men, in all lands everywhere. Destroy this spirit and you have planted the seeds of despotism at your own doors. Familiarize yourselves with the chains of bondage and you prepare your own limbs to wear them. Accustomed to trample on the rights of others, you have lost the genius of your own independence and become the fit subjects of the first cunning tyrant who rises among you. And let me tell you, that all these things are prepared for you by the teachings of history, if the elections shall promise that the next Dred Scott decision and all future decisions will be quietly acquiesced in by the people."

The power of the debates was characterized by more of earnestness than is usual in political contests. Both men were profoundly in earnest; and one of them was supremely honest. Both men were shrewd lawyers of the highest ability. They pleaded their cases as lawyers do. It is easy for an unthinking man to say that truth is stronger than error, and that truth settled the case. But how hard to extract truth from a mountain of sophistry, and convince a people against that people's will!

Nothing less than three things gave Lincoln the victory; a complete knowledge of his antagonist; a shrewd understanding of the American people; and a clear vision of the trend and effect of insidious political theory. It is beyond dispute that the man who possessed these three things, and he alone, was capable of success in three other things; the overthrow of Douglas' supremacy at the North; the unification of anti-slavery factions; and of being the logical champion of the Union against a wrong and annihilating creed.

True to the prophecy of Lincoln, Douglas could not reconcile his Freeport doctrine with his political professions, when he went back to his Senatorial brethren. In the second session of the Thirty-fifth Congress he was bitterly assailed for his heresy, and particularly by Jefferson Davis. The wily Illinois Senator then discovered that it was easier to answer his untrained constituency than to make himself good again with such Democrats as Davis and Brown, of Mississippi.

The sharpest senate debate was precipitated Feb. 23, by an amendment offered by Senator Hale to an appropriation bill. The amendment struck out from the bill for the admission of Kansas, approved May 4, 1858, the proviso that the state should be admitted "whenever it is ascertained, by a census duly and legally taken, that the population of said Territory equals or exceeds the ratio of representation required for a member of the House of Representatives in the Congress of the United States," which words are hereby repealed."

Senator Brown opened fire upon the non-intervention doctrine and spoke of Douglas' Popular Sovereignty thus:

"I utterly, totally, entirely, persistently, and consistently, repudiate the whole doctrine of squatter sovereignty. By squatter sovereignty I mean territorial sovereignty. I utterly deny that there is any sovereignty in a territory."

Said Senator Jefferson Davis:

"I have heard many a siren's song on this doctrine of non-intervention; a thing shadowy and fleeting, changing its color as often as the chameleon, which never meant anything fairly unless it was that Congress would not attempt to legislate upon a subject over which they had no control; that they would not attempt to establish slavery anywhere nor to prohibit it anywhere, and such was the language of the Compromise Measures of 1850 when this doctrine was inaugurated. Since that it has been woven into a delusive gauze thrown over the public mind, and presented as an obligation of the Democratic party to stand still; withholding from an American citizen the protection he has a right to claim; to surrender their power; to do nothing; to prove faithless to the trust they hold at the hands of the people of the States."

Said Gwin, of California:

"I am not going to enter into this discussion, but I wish to state to the Senate that if the Senator from Illinois had given the same interpretation as he does now to the Kansas-Nebraska bill

when that question was before the Senate, I never should have voted for it. * * * I undertake to say that there is not a member of this body that voted for the bill at the time, with the exception of the Senator, who entertains the same opinion in regard to its operation that he has expressed to-day."

In reply to criticisms on his policy, Douglas retorted that Buchanan had won his elevation to the Presidency on condition of his espousing the dogma of Popular Sovereignty, when he issued his letter of acceptance of the nomination on the Cincinnati platform. "The people of the North," said Douglas, "certainly understood him to hold the doctrine of self-government in the territories as well as in the states, and as applicable to slave property as well as to all other species of property. I undertake to say," he added, "that he (Buchanan) would not have carried one-half the Democratic vote in any free-state, if he had not thus been understood."

To this attempt at shifting of responsibility upon the President, Davis responded:

"As for the conclusion the Senator draws in relation to the vote, it may be very suggestive, and very useful to those who are to be subjected to such a task hereafter: but as, in the course of his remarks, he puts that party to which I belong in what I esteem to be a false position, I must say to him that, without assuming to know what would have been the vote in Pennsylvania, or what would have been the vote in Ohio, or what will be the vote in Pennsylvania, or what will be the vote in Ohio, upon a candidate who asserts the truth in relation to the Constitutional rights of the South, I take issue with him entirely upon the ground which he assumes when he says that the President, in his letter, gave promise of the doctrine which he denounces. The President, in his letter, said 'The people of a Territory, like those of a State.' Then the question arises, how can the people of a state act upon this subject? The people of a state act in convention when they form a constitution. The inhabitants of a Territory, when they become a people, have a convention to form a constitution, and then act like the people of a State. The President could not mean more than that, because the platform to which the Senator refers had specifically referred to the time when this power would be possessed, when, with a certain population, they formed a constitution and asked to be admitted into the Union. The letter of acceptance could not have been intended to war with the resolutions of the convention by which the President was nominated: and if not so intended, it is to be construed in connection with these resolutions."

It will be seen that Senator Douglas was totally unable to reconcile his utterance upon the stump in

Illinois with the attitude Southern members had marked out for him. In their estimation, the Freeport doctrine was the rankest kind of heresy, and he who could so far forget his Democratic principles as to give countenance to such a dogma, much less to originate it, henceforth had no favor in their eyes. Thus was Douglas ground between the upper and nether of Northern distrust and Southern hate.

In spite of Douglas' negation; in spite of Congressional circumlocution; in spite of the attempted self-deception upon the part of the North and South, there was an "irrepressible conflict" which no self-interest could obviate. Men largely felt as they saw and the question could not appear the same to men whose angle of vision differed.

Now that forty years have elapsed, the interested, but unprejudiced student can believe that most men on all sides were sincere in their views, however mistaken these might have been. When he sees Douglas with mouth full of sophistry, and manner burdened with buncombe, he abominates the spirit; when he beholds the "Little Giant" contending against an adverse Administration, he admires the pluck. Though he was so prone to demagogism, this man possessed noble traits, and his great error was committed because of his inherent inability to look upon the matter of slavery as being of more importance, as his opponent said, than the "cranberry laws of Indiana."

But a farther fact remains to be noted. Douglas was spurred on to his anti-Lecompton attitude by the uncompromising opposition of his constituency to that swindle. As a politician it was his business to combat the Administration. This, however gave influential Whigs and Republicans no excuse for deserting Lincoln and Republicanism. The cause needed a champion who had not taken the stand for truth unwillingly, but whose moral grasp of the controversy lay in an inherent knowledge of the dangers as well as of the inhuman trend of pro-slavery tenets. Such a champion was Abraham Lincoln.

In Congress, as elsewhere, three opinions of Federal power in relation to slavery obtained, dividing the body into three well-defined classes.

The first consisted of those who denied Congress the

power to legislate to extend slavery, but held that it could prohibit. Consequently, the territorial legislature, drawing its authority from Congress, as regarding slavery could legislate to prohibit only.

The second class assumed the opposite position. According to their idea, Congress had no power to prohibit slavery, but were in duty bound to protect it. Slavery being recognized under the Constitution, should be admitted to the territories, which were the common property of the states. Moreover, the territorial legislature "being the creature of Congress could not exercise powers greater than those possessed by the creator."

The third class consisted of men, some of whom thought one way, some another, as to the question of Congressional power to legislate for the "admission, extension or prohibition of slavery in the territories," but all of this class of reasoners "claimed for the people of the territories the power and the right, acting through their legislatures, to admit or exclude, protect or prohibit African slavery."

Of the first class, Senators Chase and Wade were representatives, of the second, Brown and Davis, and of the third, Douglas and Cass.

The night of Sunday, Oct., 17, 1859, witnessed one of the most remarkable events of the whole anti-slavery struggle. This judgment of its importance is made guardedly.

Of itself considered, John Brown's raid did not possess one-half the thrilling features which characterized the border warfare in Kansas. To his most partial friends the attempt at seizure was a chimerical transaction and History can never designate it by any other term. The madness of the outbreak finds explanation in the character of the man who stood at its head. Reared in the strictest tenets of Calvinistic religion, through a long and eventful life carrying to its utmost bounds of absurdity the doctrine that right makes might; dreaming dreams and seeing visions of guardian angels on the belligerent plains of Kansas; insanely possessed of the idea of the efficiency of an armed negro insurrection; encouraged by such men as Parker, Sanborn and Higginson, it is no wonder that John Brown,

with complete equanimity, undertook his preposterous mission at Harper's Ferry. Little did the quiet denizens of this sleepy town dream how great their day and place were. In the tall, gaunt form, of military carriage, in the great beard, and bushy hair; in the sharp nose, and piercing, gray eye, they saw nothing more than Yankee shrewdness and push. But in this character fanaticism and religious fervor were greater than prudence and qualities of leadership, for commanding but twenty-two men, Brown struck a blow at the institution whose life was to be taken only after four years of unparalleled strife. With plans known to but the little company, here was a band which fondly hoped to strike terror into the heart of every slave-holder from Virginia to the Gulf. Not only was the North ignorant of the design; but the negroes themselves, worked day after day in the fields, and slept peacefully in their cabins all unconscious of an insurrection gotten up for them, and dependent for success on their co-operation.

From the beginning, there was no shadow of success; Garrison would have said so. So would have spoken Gerritt Smith. Even the fiery Phillips would have counseled against the madness of the attempt. Was man ever more bereft of reason, or did he ever strike under circumstances more unpropitious? But Brown's raid was remarkable and fair criticism will adjudge his work far-reaching, and him a martyr. Wendell Phillips struck the truth when he said, in his eloquent oration upon Harper's Ferry: "Virginia did not tremble at an old, gray-headed man at Harper's Ferry; they trembled at a John Brown in every man's own conscience." The words bespoke a literal truth. Though no man of sense upheld his method, hundreds of thousands felt a sincere pity for the old fanatic, and inwardly rejoiced at the terror of the South. John Brown had only put into act the thought of a vast number of his fellow countrymen. It is not true that any considerable number at the North sympathized with slave insurrection, but an ever increasing class earnestly believed that no settlement of the controversy between slavery and freedom would come short of physical force. Just as the North eulogized Sumner, and the South Brooks, so now the South hanged Brown and the North canonized

him. The same philosophy lay at the bottom of actions in both instances. It was that of the "irrepressible conflict," and, calmly reviewing the fearfully strained relations between the two sections, from 1854, the wonder is that the actual blow should have been reserved until the dying months of 1859.

Of John Brown himself, little more need be said. History can not approve the verdict of Pollard, that he was a desperate outlaw "who had obtained in Kansas the notoriety of a horse-thief and assassin;" neither will it accept the fervid encomiums of Phillips, with his extravagant statement: "But if Virginia tyrants dare hang him after this mockery of a trial, it will take two Washingtons at least to make the name of the State anything but abominable in time to come."

In his Kansas warfare, Brown committed some depredations not unlike those indulged in by the class of men who afterward engaged in bush-whacking, with this difference; they did their deeds in the name of bondage, he wrought his for the sake of liberty. Notwithstanding his checkered career, John Brown was as real a martyr as History produces. His eloquent address to the Virginia court which sentenced him proves his unselfish devotion in behalf of God's "despised poor." With all his eccentricity and lawlessness, such was his heroism that the hand which throttled him is raised in acknowledging his valor. It is not to be wondered at that the song of which he is the subject rang in every loyal household at the North and cheered many a regiment as it swept on to battle. Yet, it was a remarkable transformation that placed this song in the repertory of the musical bands of the same army, which in different arms first drew up on the streets of Topeka, before the Free-State convention, and afterward battered down the doors of old John Brown's extemporized fort, at Harper's Ferry. Garrison put it well in these words:

"The sympathy and admiration now so widely felt for him prove how marvelous has been the change effected in public opinion during thirty years of moral agitation—a change so great indeed, that whereas, ten years since, there were thousands who could not endure my lightest word of rebuke of the South, they can now easily swallow John Brown, whole, and his rifle into the bargain. In firing his gun, he has merely told us what time of day it is. It is high noon, thank God."

“The lamentable tragedy at Harper’s Ferry is clearly traceable” to the “unjustifiable attempt to force slavery into Kansas by a repeal of the Missouri Compromise,” wrote ex-President Fillmore to a Union convention held in New York immediately after the execution of Brown. But it meant far more than any other event following the repeal. Heretofore, the struggle had been in Congress, on the stump in Illinois, and on the prairies of Kansas. It was a matter of territorial controversy. The states were rather indirectly concerned. John Brown transferred the conflict to the seat of war, where it was to be ultimately settled—between states divided by the terms free and slave. If the warfare on the Kansas border had been spasmodic and illy defined, this was a certain blow at the institution of the South on her own soil. It was the opening of a new and more vital phase of the dispute. Two hundred medical students left their school in Philadelphia, and were publicly received by Governor Wise. It was an omen of the break-up. The Brown raid made the South fearfully angry—and, in view of their Legrees, it is not to be wondered at that, beyond all else, they dreaded a slave-insurrection. But they had reason to believe that John Brown had able sympathizers at the entire North. Though the partisan attempt to fasten guilt upon the Republicans failed, hardly a politician of note raised his voice against the principle Brown died for. They condemned his method; they secretly wished that he might have gotten well out of the clutch of the law. But there was one exception. Seward, who was in Europe during the Harper’s Ferry episode, returned only a day or two before the opening of 1860. Upon resuming his seat in the Senate, he spoke on the question of the admission of Kansas Feb. 29, and said of Brown:

“While generous and charitable natures will probably concede that John Brown and his associates acted on earnest though fatally erroneous convictions, yet all good citizens will nevertheless agree, that this attempt to execute an unlawful purpose in Virginia by invasion, involving servile war, was an act of sedition and treason, and criminal in just the extent that it afflicted the public peace and was destructive of human happiness and human life.”

Of course such words as these called down upon their author’s head the most virulent abuse of the Abolitionists,

and many not of this political household wished they had not been uttered. At the time Seward was branded a trimmer, having in mind the election of the coming autumn. But all such criticism was unjust. Though Seward was a politician, History shows these utterances to have been brave. Certainly he could expect nothing from the South which had not given a single electoral vote to Fremont, and if such sentiments as he uttered were to make for him enemies, they would be drawn from the North; many from his own party. The truth is, Seward was right in his estimation of the nature of Brown's raid. No community could allow such an outbreak to go unavenged. The fault of the New York Senator laid in his seeming indifference to the spirit of John Brown, and in his indiscriminate classing of the little band at Harper's Ferry amongst the most lawless desperadoes of the Kansas border.

But another had rendered his judgment upon the affair, and so calm, unprejudiced and just was this judgment that it has come down to us unchallenged. It was not the eulogy of Phillips, nor the merciless logic of Seward; it was the common sense of Abraham Lincoln which placed the *emeute* at the Ferry in its proper light. Said he at Cooper Institute:

"John Brown's effort was peculiar. It was not a slave-insurrection. It was an attempt by white men to get up a revolt among slaves, in which the slave refused to participate. In fact, it was so absurd that the slaves with all their ignorance, saw plainly enough it could not succeed. That affair, in its philosophy, corresponds with the many attempts related in history, at the assassination of kings and emperors. An enthusiast broods over the oppression of a people, till he fancies himself commissioned by heaven to liberate them. He ventures the attempt, which ends in little else than his own execution. Orsini's attempt on Louis Napoleon and John Brown's attempt at Harper's Ferry, were, in their philosophy, precisely the same. The eagerness to cast blame on old England in the one case, and on New England in the other, does not disprove the sameness of the two things."

Whatever may have been the feelings of his hearers, the politic Lincoln so put the matter that truth was served and prejudice disarmed. In its own good time the raid was to bear its fruit; but the Union was to be saved only after the most strenuous efforts at compromise for its salvation. The affair at Harper's Ferry was not representa-

tive of the true spirit of the North. Looking back now, the student sees that compromise was out of the question—he also sees that Abraham Lincoln, swearing to support the Constitution on the Fourth of March, 1861, would have been without efficient power had he not stood there to win Union by peace, if possible; by force only if necessary.

Seward, and Douglas, and Davis, and Lincoln were mistaken in their estimation of the intensity of the “impending crisis.” Phillips said it would be a bloodless revolution, but it was the statesman’s business to be conservative. The John Brown raid was a chimerical assault upon law, but deeper than man’s law, lay the fundamental precepts of human right. Though his act was inexcusable, in God’s providence it opened the *finale* of the “irrepressible conflict.” Only a little longer was the “house to be divided against itself.”

In leaving the question, let the eloquent words of Frederick Douglass be commended to the student of this phase of the anti-slavery conflict. Concerning Brown, the noted negro orator said:

“If John Brown did not end the war that ended slavery, he did, at least, begin the war that ended slavery. If we look over the dates, places and men for which this honor is claimed, we shall find that not Carolina, but Virginia, not Fort Sumter, but Harper’s Ferry and the arsenal, not Major Anderson, but John Brown began the war that ended American slavery, and made this a free republic. Until this blow was struck, the prospect for freedom was dim, shadowy and uncertain. The ‘irrepressible conflict’ was one of words, votes and compromises. When John Brown stretched forth his hand the sky was cleared,—the time for compromises was gone,—the armed hosts of freedom stood face to face over the chasm of a broken Union, and the clash of arms was at hand.”

The first party to make nominations in the memorable campaign of 1860 was the Constitutional-Union. This was an heterogeneous organization composed of Old Line Whigs, pro and anti-slavery in sentiment, and former Know-nothings. Says vonHolst: “The Fillmoreans of 1856 were the foundation of the new party’s structure, and from the Fillmoreans it accepted unchanged the programme, based on principle, of having no programme.”

The *personnel* of the convention was beyond reproach. Men of the purest motives, and of undoubted ability were

the main-spring of its deliberations. But the very spirit of its platform, professing to be non-partisan, was the evidence of its weakness. Men could be no factor in the great conflict unless partisan. The dividing line was sharp, well-defined. To pass an ambiguous resolution so worded that it might be interpreted to meet every shade of opinion was the height of political lack of sagacity. It was a cutting of the Gordian knot which solved no difficulty, and a display of cuteness which received no extended sympathy. The crying of "Peace, Peace," when there was no peace, deceived not an honest soul. It was the old habit of men who tried to make themselves believe, in spite of reason, that the ghost of murdered compact would forever down. There had been many men in 1858 who were like unto the Bell-Everetts, but John Brown's raid opened the lid of Pandora's box and the sight convinced multitudes who would like to have remained deceived.

The philosophy of the Constitutional-Union party is to be interpreted by that principle which leads men to shrink in the face of absolute danger; that spirit which prefers disgraceful ease to manly resistance, when a desperate conflict over opinion is likely to occur.

Thus, entirely regardless of the rights of the negro, this broad-cloth gentry met in National convention to solemnly affirm that the Union was in danger, and to warn "geographical and sectional" parties to take care how they misled and deceived the people. Beyond the hope that Congress would settle a disputed election in their favor, the Constitutional-Union party cared not to go. But the convention served an important purpose after all. The inherent defect in the deliberations was not the tremendous emphasis put upon the necessity for Union, but it was the studied ignominy of the slavery-question. *Union* could not be too much emphasized. History was to prove these men correct in this, at least, that in Union was there hope of a true settling of the conflict—that nothing could be done without Union. Notwithstanding the Abolitionist's sneer, Seward was right in his Senate speech of Feb. 29, 1860, when he reversed the motto of Webster "with a vengeance." It was "Union and Liberty"—and it was "Union before Liberty." Had these men possessed as much

political sagacity as they did love for the Union, they would have awaited the convening of the only true Union party—sectional in spite of itself, and with a burning conscience touching the cause of the “irrepressible conflict.”

The succeeding history of the Constitutional-Unionists as a political organization only served to prove the futility of the hope that a peaceable settlement was within the range of possibilities. The value of the episode lays ultimately in the fact that it was one of the chapters in the long tale of attempts at adjustment which had to be told. Were it to have remained unwritten there would be a mischievous hiatus in the annals of anti-slavery contention.

Of the Democratic convention, little may be said here. Its history was the inevitable sequence of the contest in Congress. What Jefferson Davis and Stephen A. Douglas had quarreled about in Congress, they fought over in Charleston and Baltimore. The breach in the party was permanent because the principles upon which it was divided were intrinsically opposite. The South was determined not to surrender one advantage given her by the Kansas-Nebraska bill and the Dred Scott decision. The North demanded the enthronement of Douglas or nothing. They insisted upon the application of the doctrine of Popular Sovereignty because with it rose or fell Stephen A. Douglas. But while, in spite of Popular Sovereignty, the South might have been brought to accept Douglas on a Southern platform, and for the sake of Northern votes, she could not trust the man who was guilty of the dogma of “unfriendly legislation.” It is probably true that the South expected to elect Breckenridge, at least it was so expected when he was nominated; still there can be little doubt that Douglas went into the convention ridiculously beaten. Lincoln had settled his opponent’s fate at Ottawa, and Douglas had fitted his own coffin at Freeport. The “Little Giant” was a dangerous public character. He was not only dangerous as a political opponent; he was absolutely jeopardous as a political leader of the people. His heresy was subtle and insinuating, enough so, as has been seen, to capture Greeley and Crittenden.

The disruption at Charleston was of great service to the Union because: (1) it unmasked the Democratic party;

(2) it disarmed Douglas; (3) it assured the election of Abraham Lincoln and the vindication of Republican policy. The outcome of the struggle in the Democratic convention of 1860 justified the sagacity of Lincoln's reply to those who protested against his Ottawa interrogatory in 1858: "No, gentlemen, I am killing larger game. The battle of 1860 is worth a hundred of this."

It is well-nigh impossible to view calmly the proceedings of the Republican National convention, which assembled in Chicago, May 16, 1860. Never before in the history of our Nation were circumstances so peculiar. Not that we had never seen crises just as important, for we had, but the spirit of this crisis differed from that of any previous one. In every sense of the term, the convention was ideally representative. Leaders of public opinion were at the helm. Not National figures, as vonHolst well points out, but local leaders whose authority was unquestioned because backed by character untainted. They were men of ability typifying all shades of anti-slavery opinion, and oftentimes entirely at variance along extraneous lines of policy. Within the wall of the "Wigwam" were gathered Whig and Democrat, Know-nothing and Abolitionist. Surely, the man who held Jackson as his ideal could not strike hands with him who idolized Clay, unless there had been some all-absorbing issue in common between them. To the unthinking man, this heterogeneity of character might have seemed a fatal weakness, but in truth it was the strength of the convention. It may be depended upon in political history that where elements so diverse coalesce it is after an attempt upon the part of each one to solve the problem in its own way. Thus many who cast their lot with the Republicans in the Chicago convention, were Republicans only on the issue of the non-extension of slavery. Blair and Giddings, Greeley and Wilmot were strange yoke-fellows and the utmost right to be in common convention existed, else they never would have been thrown together. It was the logic of events. One feeling animated the minds of the delegates; a feeling which could not be repressed. It smote the phantom of discord, and assured the accomplishment of something from the start. Though the shadow of the slave-mart fell athwart the

land, the sun of freedom was climbing to his zenith, and that shadow was soon to disappear.

The men who met on the prairies of Illinois were happy men because they were neither bound by gag of party nor silenced by fear of opinion. Many of them had dared public opinion when such daring meant obloquy ; now they themselves were destined to largely control public opinion.

The platform was thrilling—a little high-colored perhaps, but it was not expected that such a body of minds, so explosive, so possessed of the importance of the hour could frame its sentiments in the ordinary phraseology of political declaration. Stripped of its rhetorical verbiage, the platform struck things squarely in front. The whole gist of deformed theories, born of the distress of the slave interest, was forcibly denounced. Dred Scott, Lecomptonism, Popular Sovereignty were thrust into the bag, jumbled about and cast forth as of a common lot, unfit for farther consideration, a delusion and subversive of the true interests of the Union.

With a hurrah the platform was adopted, but it proved to be food for thought long after the resounding rafters of the "Wigwam" blackened with time. In the appeal for home-stead lands for actual settlers ; in the declaration for a Pacific railroad ; in the opposition to any change in the naturalization laws may be seen a wise policy not so extraneous as would seem on first thought. Actual settlers had opened Kansas to freedom, and there was further territory to be rescued from slavery's maw. What better than a great iron highway to populate the territories, and what surer to call foreigners than a just chance with American-born citizens, in the exercise of the franchise ! Considering the temper of the convention, its platform was a remarkable creation, and showed that good heads and warm hearts worked together. The Constitutional-Union party had declared for Union, but without a single reference to slavery ; and here was a creed of *action* that put to shame the silly sophistry of men just as honest but not at all logical.

Of course ultra Abolitionists were not satisfied with this declaration of principles, and it is well they were not. Had it been framed to their liking, it would have called

for the abrogation of the Fugitive-Slave Law, and for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. But, clearly, this would have been too hasty a step. Not only would such a declaration have transcended the sentiment of the constituency represented in the convention, but it would have united the factions of Democracy by providing for them a common ground of opposition. The Republican party sprang into being to check the territorial aggressiveness of the South. To call for the abolition of slavery in its stronghold would have been like unto one's casting a huge rock into the midst of a pool, only to be splattered with filth.

Much has been written concerning the nominations of the convention, and the student is led to believe that a deal of it has been penned for effect. Of necessity many things in connection with such a gathering are done in secret, and, beyond question, some shall be lost to the historian; but particulars do not interest us to-day. The newspaper descriptions in detail were fascinating; they are yet as aids to the picture. The deeper philosophy of man's actions is the valuable lesson posterity needs to learn. This lesson was bountifully illustrated in the convention at Chicago. Laughter and tears, animal spirits and inspiring eloquence all found expression in this wonderful gathering of men "upon the free prairies of the West;" found expression because men are men and their hearts respond to the stress of circumstances as the strings of the harp bound under the touch of the harpist, or tremble in the breeze.

There never was a time during the convention when more than two men could have commanded any serious following, and there never was a moment when the chances of but one of these were sufficient for success. In his blunt way, Horace Greeley says that Lincoln was nominated simply because he got votes enough. This is a characteristic remark, but explains nothing. A deep meaning lay beneath the selection of Abraham Lincoln.

What were the influences at work in the convention which made for the success of the one and worked the defeat of the other? In the first place, there was the matter of locality. It cannot be denied truthfully that the

city of Chicago was a propitious site so far as Lincoln's chances were concerned. The enthusiasm of the Illinois people in the convention was not manufactured. In no sense was it simulated and its spontaneity was no small matter in its potency. Chicago streets spoke for "Honest Abe;" he was one of the country. On those streets he had listened to the sophistry of Douglas, and from them he had gone forth to meet the "Little Giant." All this genuine interest was not lost upon the convention. Seward's friends were as fully devoted to the candidacy of their idol, but much of their enthusiasm had the appearance of being forced. Little doubting the nomination of their chief, they sought to impress his worth in a most unworthy manner. A writer of note has put it well: "So far as the effect was concerned, it was indifferent to what extent the importunately loud enthusiasm of the players was genuine. As their spectators did not share it, they appeared to them only like so many puppets in buskins who may indeed win applause but can never warm up an audience."*

But mere locality was not to be the deciding factor, for it alone never could have defeated Seward nor nominated Lincoln. Subtler influences were at work.

A shrewd observer might have noted from the beginning that it was an impossibility to have nominated the New York statesman. He had been so long in politics that he divided his party when it came to matters of personal consideration. The ultra Abolitionists disliked him because of his speech of Feb. 29, 1860, while the most unyielding of them looked upon him as being a second Webster. On the other hand, the conservatives repudiated him because of his radical doctrines—particularly that of the "higher law." Though he was an able man and a good man, his words were too greatly common property and he had ostentatiously paraded his candidacy in public for months. Moreover, he was careless for a politician, while no braver than others who were more favored—certainly not than he who thundered forth the dogma of the "house-divided-against-itself."

Horace Greeley opposed him. This was not necessarily a fatal blow; it was a hard one. Greeley was a strong man in influence, and his motives were unquestioned. Some of

*von Holst.

Seward's friends have fallen into the error of denouncing this opposition as pure spite.* This is a mistake. No piece of spite-work could have turned the nomination in that convention; but its confidence in Greeley made his opposition effective. Whatever may have been Greeley's motives, the student may be certain that he was alarmed over the prospect of Seward's nomination, and this actuated his hostility.

Seward was a politician. He had always been a radical party-man, and had sat chief mourner through the wake of the Whig party. Thurlow Weed stood in his shadow, and New York politics were not noted for their purity. Would it do for the party of high idea, of undoubted morality to win its first election under the leadership of a machine-politician? True, in this respect, Cameron and Seward were far different, but would the public eye be very conscientious about noticing the difference?

Lincoln, also, was a politician, but of a type so unique and refreshing that none of the objections applicable to the case of Seward, affected him in the least. The common opinion, so far as it went, did not identify him as part and parcel of the machine. His politics were of the most consummate kind. He had proved this in his handling of Douglas, and in his utterances upon the issues which now so completely engaged the attention of the convention. But even had he been a politician of the stamp of Seward, his chances would have been better than Seward's were, because he had not been long enough in public life to make those implacable enemies which always rise in the path of the ambitious and widely known professional politician.

But beyond all this comparatively negative influence was a positive one. There were two states whose decisions, (given in the preceding October, just before general election) were to be of prime importance in the coming contest. These were Pennsylvania and Indiana. Each was to elect a Governor, and each one's candidate for this honor came to Chicago to defeat Seward; wherein lay a curious proof of the insidiousness of political sophism. To his everlasting honor, Wm. H. Seward, as Governor of New York, refused to be unjust in the administration of

*For a good example see North American Review, Vol. 124 p. 226.

affairs, when asked to be so, because of the wide-spread antipathy to Roman Catholicism. This standing upon principle weakened him in the convention, for too many Native-Americans voted in the October states to risk the candidacy of Seward. Lane and Curtin both declared themselves defeated if the New York Senator were chosen, and with Pennsylvania and Indiana in the Democratic ranks, little hope of Republican victory in November would be left. The light of History shows that for all the devotion of friends, the record of statesmanship, the prestige of fame, Wm. H. Seward was an impossible candidate from the very beginning. No one man, nor one dozen men defeated him. The circumstances and the logic of necessity overthrew him. He could thank himself largely for his failure.

But Seward defeated, might not have meant Lincoln necessarily successful; i. e. in the opinion of the delegates. They immediately cast about for other names than either of these. The Pennsylvania contingent was powerful, and a bit of secret history by Carpenter and McClure shows that Cameron and Judge McLean were before Lincoln in the choice of this delegation—and the possibility that Bates might get the nomination was what lifted Lincoln to third place in the choice of the delegates. After the first ballot, when it was seen that Seward had no likely chance, the Pennsylvania men retired from the convention, and, contrary to the previous decision upon Judge McLean, one of their number immediately proposed the name of Abraham Lincoln. The proposition was adopted and thus Lincoln's nomination became virtually certain; a certainty which was rendered into History when the delegation went back into the convention. Nor was the nomination of Lincoln hap-hazard. It has been the fashion to declare his election hasty, thoughtless, and a piece of providential recklessness. Never was there greater mistake. In the ultimate analysis of conditions, Abraham Lincoln, and he alone, was the logical candidate. That writer* (a better student of Shakespeare than of statesmanship) who declared Lincoln uncultivated, and untrained for the task thrust upon him, but courted of him, gave utterance to a belief very extended for years, and not entirely changed to

*Richard Grant White. See *North American Review*, Vol. 124, pp. 225-226.

this day. Only a few years since, one of England's most keen political observers expressed this view of Lincoln:

[The first election of Lincoln] "was a characteristic instance of the natural working of such a government [presidential] upon a great occasion. And what was that working? It may be summed up—it was government by an *unknown quantity*. Hardly anyone in America had any living idea what Mr. Lincoln was like, or any definite notion what he would do. * * * * Mr. Lincoln, it is true, happened to be a man, if not of eminent ability, yet of eminent justice. There was an inner depth of Puritan nature which came out under suffering, and was very attractive. But success in a lottery is no argument for lotteries. What were the chances against a person of Lincoln's antecedents, elected as he was, proving to be what he was?"*

It is useless to comment upon this style of thought farther than to observe that the distinguished critic fails to comprehend the economy of the presidential system—particularly as it was illustrated in the case of Lincoln. It was not government by an "unknown quantity" for the very men who knew Lincoln best secured his nomination and these men were representatives of the people with the power to exercise their sense in serving their constituency; and as for his "antecedents," it may be said that the best rulers and thought-moulders have not been dependent upon "antecedents" for success in their missions. Wm. H. Seward was not an "unknown quantity" nor did he lack excellent "antecedents," and had an English constituency been the ones to decide the question they would have made him the candidate: *vulnus inmedicabile*. No, a deeper meaning attaches itself to the choosing of Abraham Lincoln. Not only was he a statesman, but he was also a consummate politician, and had strained every nerve for the sake of political preferment. Where he was known he was appreciated, and he was not greatly known before his debate with Douglas simply because he was a Whig politician living in a Democratic State. The close student of Lincoln's life sees that no man of his day had subjected himself to a more severe training in public affairs. Though quiet, his schooling in such matters was none the less rigorous.

The enthusiasm kindled by old Dennis Hanks before the Illinois state convention in 1860, did not arise out of a purely vulgar idea of political worth. It differed much

*Bagehot, *The English Constitution and Other Political Essays*, pp. 98-100.

from the homage paid to Jackson's corn-cob pipe. It was not because Abraham Lincoln split rails that he was applauded by the rugged sentiments of the humbler classes—it was because, being one of them, he brought to the problem of the hour the same energy, devotion, and common sense he displayed in all the walks of life. Judge Tracey, of California, put the sentiment into words when he said at a ratification meeting held at Cooper Institute, June 8, 1860: “We wage no war upon the South. We merely mean to *fence them in* (pointing significantly to a rail exhibited on the platform); this is all we propose to do to stop the extension of slavery, and Abe Lincoln has split the rails to build the fence.”

The country was amazed at the turn of events because it was misinformed as to the inner history of the hour. Seward was so prominent that he eclipsed all other men in the public mind. This is why the Nation was surprised; not that Lincoln was nominated, but that Seward was defeated.

To the student of American political history from 1858 down to the time of the convention, it does not appear strange that both events took place, but it would have been exceedingly strange had the nomination gone to Bates, or to McLean, or to Cameron. For two years Lincoln had gotten mentioned with Seward, and no other Republicans were so prominent as they. Moreover, it was morally certain that the Northern Democracy was to put forth Douglas. If so, who else but Lincoln would be his logical opponent?

Nor can it be held that Lincoln was in any sense picked up as second choice. Granted that he was not a famous man previous to 1858; granted that he was without the benefit of parliamentary drill in Congress; granted that he was not more than a party leader in his own state; granted that the debate of Douglas made him famous, and that his Cooper Institute Speech turned fame into powerful influence; all this means nothing if we cannot see, back of it, the honest will, the lofty-toned conceptions of right, the ambitious longings which made possible the successful opposition to Douglas, and the persuasive power of the speech at the Institute. If it be claimed that the Douglas

debates and the Institute oration gave Lincoln the candidacy in 1860, it is well to ask what this candidate was doing before these debates and this oration were created.

In enumerating the causes of the failure of Jefferson Davis, a famous historian of the South* names that person's deficiencies, and in so doing gives a remarkably true outline of Lincoln's elemental characteristics which made for his success throughout his entire career. This writer says:

"The especial qualifications of a great leader in the circumstances in which Mr. Davis was placed would have been strong and active common-sense, quick apprehension, knowledge of men, and a disposition to consult the aggregate wisdom of the people, and to gather the store of judgment from every possible source of practical advice within its reach."

Exactly! the "strong and active common sense" which characterized the debates and speeches that Lincoln made subsequent to 1858; "the quick apprehension" of the subtle sophism of "squatter sovereignty;" the "knowledge of men" which enabled him to influence them, and to open their minds to his exposition of this sophism; and the "disposition to consult the aggregate wisdom of the people, and to gather the store of judgment from every possible source of practical advice within its reach" made Abraham Lincoln the strongest and only possible candidate with the master-minds of the convention. Though an "unknown" man in many a Northern household, he was a specially well known man to such influential delegates as Field, and Curtin, and Lane, and Davis, and he was by no means "unknown" to the convention which nominated him. The consummate force of his political speeches, since 1858, made converts in every cross-road over the North, and the man who had whipped Douglas in debate before the "Little Giant's" own constituency was instinctively felt to be the man who could measure strength with him for the Presidency when it was shown that Seward was altogether out of the question. A study of the balloting proves this. Pettis gauged aright the sentiment of the Pennsylvania delegation in that pregnant ten minutes conference when McLean was dropped, and the Pennsylvania delegation never could have turned the tide in Lincoln's favor had men not been ready to accept him. It is true that all this

*Pollard.

was done in the whirl of excitement, and the vast building shook under the roar of the tempest within—but it is to be remembered that Seward's friends were as devoted as Lincoln's and his support from them at least as spontaneous, even if it did appear forced. It was not a stampede such as occurred for Pierce in the Democratic convention of 1852. The first ballot betrayed Seward's fatal weakness, and, paradoxical as it may seem, the intense excitement attending the casting of the second and third, the tremendous applause which followed them, betokened deliberate choice—only time was needed to show that the intuitive detection of Seward's weakness; his instantaneous rejection; and the immediately following selection of Abraham Lincoln were logical steps in a drama, the issues of which were to rest on no caprice of politics or uncertainty of chance.

The last Annual Message of President Buchanan, which he submitted to Congress Dec. 4, 1860, was a disappointing one in almost every feature. It met neither the approval of the North nor the demands of the South. The North had the right to expect a Message of no uncertainty—the South looked to Buchanan as her ally and co-worker. It so looked to him because all along he had been its faithful servant. His Administration was inaugurated by the Dred Scott decision, and was characterized as extremely pro-slavery in its dealings with the Lecompton imbroglio. His wing of the party had repudiated Douglas, and had done far more than any other agency to bring about this leader's overthrow. The Pennsylvania Democrat had never proved recreant to his Southern trust; had administered the duties of his high office in a way particularly pleasing to the Southern scions of a slave-holding aristocracy, and now was no time for him to repudiate past policy. But this very thing he saw fit to do—more through intimation than by word. If any one doubts James Buchanan's love for the Union, a careful perusal of this Message will dissipate such scepticism. No one more urgently, pathetically appealed to the distracted elements of the country than did its pitiable, broken down, inefficient Executive.

In his remarkable state-paper he made a strong argument for a centralized government, drawn from Constitutional history and law. Its logic was irrefutable; but so great were his errors of judgment that this good effect was grievously weakened. The very opening of the Message was unfortunate. To say that "The long continued and intemperate interference of the Northern people with the question of slavery in the Southern states has at last produced its effect," and that "the immediate peril arises * * * * from the fact that the incessant and violent agitation of the slavery question throughout the North for the last quarter of a century has at length produced its malign influence on the slaves, and inspired them with vague notions of freedom," was not only insulting to the great, free constituency at the North, but could not be substantiated by fact.

Hardly a year before Alexander H. Stephens, in a speech in his own state, had said: "So far from the institution of African slavery in our section being weakened or rendered less secure by the discussion (of the slavery question) my deliberate judgment is, that it has been greatly strengthened and fortified," and, in October, 1858, Senator Hammond, of South Carolina, speaking upon the same question, declared: "So far, our gain has been immense from this contest, savage and malignant as it has been. Nay, we have solved already the question of emancipation, by this re-examination and exposition of the false theories of religion, philanthropy, and political economy, which embarrassed the fathers in their day, * * * * At the North, and in Europe, they cried havoc, and let loose upon us all the dogs of war. And how stands it now? Why, in this very quarter of a century our slaves have doubled in numbers, and each slave has more than doubled in value."

The next step in the Message was identical with that of Stephens in his famous Union speech. Clearly the South had no sensible pretext for secession because of Lincoln's election, yet, shortly after, Senator Clingman reiterated the charge in the United States Senate when he declared that the North elected Lincoln "because he was known to be a dangerous man;" i. e. so far as the rights of

the South were concerned. But probably the greatest disappointment for the North was to be found in the dogma of the Executive that the government had no power to coerce a rebellious state. This granted, and anarchy was within the pale of apotheosis, nay, was inevitable; but the free-states men were not greatly *surprised* over the policy. Truth is, many anti-slavery men agreed with Buchanan on this point, and it was a matter of great question how far a rebellious commonwealth should be permitted to go. The widely influential "*Tribune*" was to declare, in the very face of war, that while it "denied the right of nullification, yet it would admit that 'to withdraw from the Union is quite another matter;' that 'whenever a considerable section of our Union shall resolve deliberately to go out, we shall resist all coercive measures designed to keep it in.'" Phillips and Garrison were to take the same ground. But the people at the North were chagrined and humiliated that the Executive of the Nation should formulate the sentiment in a Message to the law-making body of the Nation, especially in a moment of such peril. Beyond this, the wisest Unionists perceived the sophistry of the dogma and regretted that a second Jackson had not written the Message; and these most sagacious Unionists were right. No contortion of History, or presumption upon it, should have held for a second that the builders of this government intended it to be helpless when its life was at issue. The law of self-preservation, so forcibly elucidated by the President in voicing the Southern dread of a slave insurrection, was just as natural in the bosom of the Nation, and its execution even more binding. If the President's argument in behalf of a centralized government meant anything, it was in its application at this point.

So far as the condemnation of the North, because of her disavowal of the Fugitive-Slave Law, was concerned, the President was correct legally. There could be no question of the right of the slave-owners to this protection, but here the Executive again strained fact. The law was as successful in its operation as any, and far more so than might have been expected. The President went at too great length when he averred that a want of proper execution of

the Fugitive-Slave Law upon the part of the North justified "revolutionary resistance to the government of the Union" upon the part of the South, even after "having used all peaceful and constitutional means to obtain redress." This statement proved too much, not only for the Union, but for the slave-holders themselves. Carried out to its logical ends, it would have destroyed both.

At still another point, the Executive showed his lack of understanding. He mistook the temper of his people when he declared: "the fact is, our Union rests upon public opinion, and can never be cemented by the blood of its citizens shed in civil war. If it cannot live in the affections of the people, it must one day perish—Congress possess many means of preserving it by conciliation; but the sword was not placed in their hand to preserve it by force." The very "affections" of the people had made possible the present crisis, and if Congress had not the power to act for them it was not to be found elsewhere. What an irony of fate repudiated this doctrine of the President in the four years which followed! Moreover, not only was this a misunderstanding of the sentiment of the Unionists, but the President's plea that the South, in possession of the Federal machinery in the disaffected states, would annul the power of the central government there, was specious, since the government could command from other portions of the country men with the will to uphold the rights of the Union when once vested with power so to do.

Perhaps the most pitiable exhibition of weakness was shown at the close of the document. Buchanan's scheme of an "explanatory amendment," enforcing constitutional protection of slavery, was worse than childish; it was wholly destructive of that interpretation which the Nation was coming to demand. The great mass of anti-slavery men, even if they admitted "the right of property in slaves in the states" where it then existed, utterly refused to believe that the framers of the constitution would have agreed with its territorial spread. Lincoln's Cooper Institute Speech was an epitome of the growing sentiment at the North, and to put an "explanatory amendment" in the Constitution encouraging the further spread of slavery,

may, demanding it, was the very thing the anti-slavery men were bound should not be done. The third point mentioned by the President, the enforcement of the Fugitive-Slave Law, was the most sensible of them all, but even this was too radical. The most dangerous dogma in the whole scheme of the "explanatory amendment" was formulated in a subtle manner. Under the first point, the Message called for "an express recognition of the right of property in slaves in the states where it now exists, or *may hereafter exist.*" These were pregnant words. Lincoln had shown, in dealing with the Dred Scott decision, that the "*hereafter*" of slavery would not be limited to the territories. Douglas, also, foresaw the logical trend of the doctrine. That little term "hereafter" in the organic law of the Nation, would force the people of Illinois, or of Michigan, or of New York to acquiesce in the introduction of slavery in any free-state, provided a second Dred Scott decision would so rule. And why might it not? Lincoln had very plainly shown that such a decision would come. Back in 1858 he had uttered these ominous words: "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 one thing, or all the other." Now these words of the Message were a loop-hole whereby it was to become "all the other:" Granted it were an easy thing to amend the Constitution, which it is not, no such "explanatory amendment" as Buchanan suggested could have been adopted. Under ordinary circumstances it would have been a chimerical proposition; but now, after all that Abraham Lincoln had said, the attempt would have smacked of the very essence of absurdity.

The Message was a humiliating exposition of a struggle between inclination and terror. In his deeper heart, James Buchanan deprecated the hostile deeds of the traitors, yet a strong personality amongst his advisers knew full well how to picture to the trembling old man the horrors of civil strife. In his intense desire to spare such strife, the Executive forgot that a disgraceful policy of non-coercion was worse than death, for it meant death and obloquy.

Though it cannot reverse, posterity will soften the judgment now passed upon this servant of the people. It

will recall the fact that more than one sturdier soul bowed under the storm which broke the Nation's Executive. It will recognize in the Message, the handiwork of many. Back of James Buchanan, in deep shadow, stands Jeremiah S. Black, the real champion of the non-coercion dogma.

Buchanan was too old for his office—not in years, but in fact. At the age when most men are in their dotage, he stood at the forefront of the greatest Nation of earth, during the time of her sorest trial. Though possessed of good ability, and having an honorable record to uphold him, these were not sufficient to thwart the plans of a *coterie* of younger men, of a generation radically different in thought; for had he broken the power of his cabinet cabal, the early years of rebellion would not have been so disgraceful as they were; nor would the North have been so handicapped at the outset. But panic ruled the hour! Later the Nation was to learn that men with reputations for clear-headedness and bravery were to make absurd and weak proposals for meeting the difficulty—indeed the reputedly ideal Republican himself, the anticipated power behind the throne of the incoming Administration, was to form the most preposterous of all such proposals; all of which goes to show that the early months of 1861 were liable to be, and proved to be full of costly experiment in governmental circles. Time was needed first to see the struggle as it was and then to get ready for it.

The cardinal fault of James Buchanan was neither hesitancy of purpose nor weakness of will. Though these were the apparent defects, their manifestation followed logically a cause more hidden. Moreover, his error lay deeper than a mistake of judgment. In short, he possessed the fatal lack which had undone so many publicists of the North. Like Douglas, he could not be brought to see the moral wrong of slavery; and to his mind, it was incomprehensible that this Nation should engage in civil strife over such an issue. In common with many another conservative, he was both pro-slavery and Union in sentiment; and since he could not see the inherent disagreement between these ideas, he could neither comprehend the struggle when it threatened nor oppose it when it began. Hence

he placed the responsibility of the agitation upon the North, and chided the South for her rebellion. But, to the end of his life, he was ardent in his love of the Union, and, during the war, his voice gave no uncertain sound. If his premise were correct, his reasoning was wrong; for if slavery were a sacred right of the South, it was her duty to go the farthest end in maintaining the right.

It is not the purpose of this study to go into detail concerning the history of the dark days between December, 1860, and March, 1861. Only two further salient points, in this history, may be noted. These were (1) the Crittenden Resolutions, and (2) the Formation of Lincoln's Cabinet.

"To consider the condition of the country," a House committee of thirty-three and a Senate committee of thirteen were appointed. Before these committees came numerous plans for conciliation and pacification—all of which involved them in inextricable tangle. For the present purpose a consideration of the Crittenden Compromise is most relevant.

The series of propositions introduced by the honorable Senator from Kentucky, possessed neither the virtue of a philosophic view of the situation, nor the ability to command the support of the mass of Republicans. However desirable, (contrary to the language of the Compromise) it was not in the nature of things "that these dissensions, which now threaten the very existence of the Union, should be permanently quieted and settled by Constitutional provisions" intended to "do equal justice to all sections, and thereby restore to the people that peace and good-will which ought to prevail between all the citizens of the United States," which thing the resolutions aimed to accomplish. It was morally impossible to bring about harmony in such a manner after ten years of difference and contention over the very point in dispute.

Besides, in case of its adoption, there was no probability of the Compromise being anything but a tentative truce. Provided Congress and the people would acquiesce in the measures, was there any certainty that the then existing conditions might be perpetuated? At such a time,

uncertainty was the very element to be avoided, for men were seeking satisfaction. Two great Compromises which every one had reason to expect would be final, had been ruthlessly destroyed, and the confidence of the Nation in such schemes amounted to but little. Senator Hale made a very fair summary of Northern sentiment concerning the measures, when he said to its advocates, in open Senate:

“Will you give an assurance that after the geographical line has been established, and run to the Pacific Ocean, or to the islands beyond, in the progress of time the interests of the country, or the demands of the party, or some new construction of the Constitution, may not require that that shall be abandoned? I should want to have some assurance upon that point before I agree at once to recommend another geographical line.

“I do not believe, Sir, that the remedy is to be sought there. I do not believe that the remedy is to be sought in new Constitutional provisions; but in an honest, faithful execution of the things that are already written in the compact and in the bond * * * But I say, with deference, that I think these new compacts and these amendments are the mere daubing of the wall with untempered mortar. They are not what is required to sustain the fabric of our Government.”

Moreover, the Compromise possessed the identical weakness of President Buchanan's proposed “explanatory amendment.” It would have been folly for the free-states to bind themselves with an organic law admitting the virtue of Popular Sovereignty in the territories. This was the principle over which Lincoln and Douglas contended in their debate and the North had rejoiced in the triumph of Lincoln in this debate. So far as to pledge itself not to interfere with the institution in the states where it obtained, the North was bound to go and did go willingly. Strange as it may appear, the amendment to the Constitution proposed by Congress and recommended by President Lincoln, that slavery should not be molested where it was, was a most natural thing. The people of the North were not Abolitionists in the sense that Garrison and Phillips were and no one recognized this more clearly than did such men as the ultraist Lovejoy himself. But the Crittenden Resolutions went farther than the proposed amendment to the Constitution. Clearly to have acquiesced in their programme would have been to repudiate the

victory so hard-won by Lincoln and his co-adjutors in the conflict of the whole preceding half decade.

Moreover, but little would have been done had the North accepted the Compromise without question, for the extreme pro-slavery men were flushed with dreams of conquest and would not have stopped short of demands which the North was morally bound to reject. A careful study of the Congressional records during the period of debate upon this Compromise, shows how fully it met the desires of men on either side who were real controllers of events; still the proposition would have carried had not the ultra secessionists, by a preconcerted arrangement, refrained from voting for it. Thus it is seen how wildly men clutched at every thing which seemed to offer a solution of the difficulties. The Abolitionist has chuckled over this bit of History for thirty-five years, and enjoys sneering at the men who were panic-stricken in the face of danger, but, it should be remembered, that *he* was ready to give over the Union *entirely*, so long as he might free his own skirts from the blot of slave-holding; so that the verdicts of humanity and of common sense are both rendered against him.

But it is a matter of congratulation that the Crittenden compromise and kindred propositions were offered and discussed. History is enabled thereby to place the responsibility where it belongs, for without the consideration of the compromise or the passage of the remarkable amendment in Congress, neither the border-states nor the conservative and more aggressive Western states would have come up to the measure of their duty. True, the final struggle was inevitable, but it was justifiable only after the utmost attempts at a peaceable settlement upon the part of Union-loving men. Even from the point of view of the Abolition of slavery such a course was necessary, for to have been precipitate would have but endangered the cause of freedom, and must have then involved it in defeat. The times were not propitious for the dreams of the ultra Abolitionists, and without a sustaining public opinion the attempt would have been madness.

But, in the problem of Union-saving, hasty action must have been highly reprehensible. This has been, and

ever will be a Union of the states. To have refused conciliation, to have sped rough-shod over the feelings of the border-commonwealths and the conserative North, would have been to augment a divided North and to split the line of cleavage still wider. In the truest sense, the Civil War was a struggle for the Union, and the North was justified in raising her armies only after all reasonable concessions were rejected, and every honorable hope of reconciliation past. History must acquit the free-states representatives of the charge of cringing baseness and of cowardly overtures so frequently made in considering this period of the conflict. Nothing but the rashness of a deceived people, hugging the delusion of a slave-empire to their hearts, calls for severest condemnation. At no other time, in the history of the Nation, was th  North willing to grant so much, and at no other time did the South more wantonly cast aside the opportunity of gaining her only possible desire.

Never before 1860, had the people witnessed such a humiliating spectacle of insufficiency in high position as Mr. Buchanan presented. Though nominally President he was far from being really such. Thanks to the pressure of the hour, Treason was obliged to lay bare her front, and the servile Executive was freed from the machinations of Cobb and Floyd. The country breathed easier under the *regime* of Dix, and Stanton, and Holt, but their authority was to be of short duration, and all hearts turned heavily to the consideration of the matter of the new cabinet. Though public opinion framed an hypothetical council, the selection of the head of the department of state alone was truthfully surmised. Even here there was a lack of unanimity of sentiment, but the logic of events foreshadowed the selection of Wm. H. Seward.

The problem before Lincoln in the choosing of his cabinet was a serious one; it is safe to say no more difficult similar task ever devolved upon a President. Under ordinary circumstances, the obligation is delicate enough, but in the present case its complexity was rendered doubly acute from the fact that an untried party was to assume

control of events which had demoralized the old and experienced one.

Beyond this, however, rested a greater danger. In the problem, there was something more than the choosing of certain men, the rejecting of others, and the maintenance of party-harmony withal. It was pre-eminently a time for the assertion of principle. In no uncertain manner, then, would the incoming Administration have to impress its policy, somewhat, in the selection of the cabinet. Yet, History informs us that Abraham Lincoln practically made the selection before the morning papers were wet with the print of his victory. This does not mean that he hastily decided his policy for the task had been largely done long since. In his speeches previous to the campaign, he had expressed his views over and over and to these expositions, he was ready to cite all anxious inquirers. Nevertheless the country deemed it incomprehensible that no new phases of policy were to be given out before the Fourth of March. The truth is, the Nation had not kept any kind of pace with its new Executive, and the men who looked, in wonder, at the selection of "this country-court advocate;" "this huckster in politics," were themselves but approaching or recovering the ground, as the case might be, hitherto traversed by Lincoln. Through a process of slow growth he had expanded, until he was able to meet the requirements of the hour; and this growth was none the less fundamental for having taken place without the realization of Lincoln himself. Therein he evidenced the wisdom of his selection. He came to the problem with a comprehensive grasp of the elements in the struggle between Freedom and Liberty; between Union and Disloyalty. Consequently in the selection of his advisers, he needed most of all to be careful that they should conform to his policy.

A word or two here in regard to his spirit at this time may not be out of place. Lincoln himself often said, half-jocularly, half in earnest: "My policy is to have no policy." This was the key-note of his proceeding. But it must be understood to mean nothing like the hesitancy of James Buchanan. In the confusion of the hour, not only enemies but friends misconstrued this idea, and thereby deeply

wounded the new President. A fundamental element in his nature was cautiousness, which is not, at all times, to be construed as conservatism. Seward was conservative, but he was not always cautious, as his treatment of the John Brown episode, and his pronouncement upon the "higher law" had shown. But Abraham Lincoln seldom, if ever, drew any hard and fast line of conduct, and here was a crisis in which his habit of cautious hesitancy performed invaluable service.

Again, the hour demanded an approach to the problem in strict fairness of spirit. A study of the Congressional debates at this season, discloses the fact that much of the misunderstanding of the time, emanated from an unfair judgment of men and of principles; of the latter especially. But Lincoln's innate love of truth which caused him to reject extraneous matters, guided him, as well, to the heart of things, and taught him to rightly interpret the philosophy of events. With him, the problem was to make plain this philosophy, and in doing so he brought to it a rare spirit of judicial fairness. This trait impressed itself by its intrinsic force, and sent Thurlow Weed back to New York eased in mind and willing to trust the new Executive.

But, paramount to all, was Lincoln's regard for the Union; with him this was a passion. His apostrophe to the Declaration of Independence, delivered at Beardstown, in 1858, was the outpouring of his inmost soul.* No grander words, in defense of the Union, ever fell from orator's lips. Through the long anti-Nebraska conflict, this sentiment had been uppermost in his mind. Though the logic of events cast the conflict in the mold of slavery-discussion, and many a man deemed this the vital issue, Lincoln perceived the danger to the white man, as well, and especially to free-government; and with as comprehensive a grasp as that of Webster, took hold of the fundamental element in the struggle for the preservation of the Union.

With the selection of his cabinet came the opportunity of putting his views into tangible shape. But the Nation persisted in misunderstanding him. It so persisted because it would not study the man; would not weigh his speeches.

*See Herndon's *Life of Lincoln*, Vol. II, pp. 83-85.

It is easy now to blame this heedlessness; it is also clear that panic ruled instead of reason, and whatever of palliation there is grows from this fact. However, the consequences were none the less mortifying, and Lincoln could properly say nothing beyond what he had said already. The timid inquiry as to policy, the numberless hints, and the couched commands which flowed in upon him continually were annoying beyond measure. Still, he was proving himself to be the sagacious friend of the people; so soon to be the patient servant of their needs. But, in the time of confusion of tongues, he clearly saw his duty and bravely performed it. No prestige of influence or name could tempt him to transgress this duty, and all anxious inquirers were referred to his speeches already in print. He did this for two reasons; (1) any words of his were certain to be misconstrued by some one, to the positive hurt of the Union; and (2) so pregnant was each day's history that his constitutional caution led him to observe in silence and to weigh in peace. Over much talking had already done mischief, and the load would be great enough to bear without the fear of haunting declarations coming back mutilated or inopportune.

It is readily seen that the successful construction of a cabinet was a task by no means easy of accomplishment; yet, with one or two important changes, the first official council of Lincoln long continued. Never, since the days of Washington, had the principle of so combining antipodal minds been followed. One of Washington's most consummate strokes was the balance he maintained between Hamilton and Jefferson. His example stood alone in our history; a policy feared and shunned by his successors. Yet, the philosophy of the formation of the first cabinet corresponds to the formation of that of Lincoln's. Both were momentous eras, and typical; both Administrations were beset with unusual dangers; and both Executives undertook their labors under the strain of criticism harsh and illy grounded. But, between these epochs, great changes in our National life took place. A remarkable upheaval occurred in the geology of politics, and a frowning fault displayed long subdued elements of political life.

When a sort of American *sans culottism* threw forth

Andrew Jackson, as a type of Democracy, he possessed the opportunity of a century, not alone to thwart the exclusiveness of an aristocratic element, which he did ; but also to lift the understanding of the Democracy at once and effectively to a higher plane of being, which he did not. Great as were his abilities, imperious as was his will, in the administration of office he ruled with all the spitefulness of a jealous child. Drawn from the lower ranks of Democracy, he chose to humor its foibles and to enthrone its weaknesses. And in no one thing did he gravitate more to their level than in his reliance upon the *coterie* of kindred spirits to which a sneering opposition applied the epithet, "Kitchen-Cabinet." His one legacy to the Nation, the rebuke of Nullification, is weakened by a suspicion of personal vindictiveness. But the philosophy of his rise is the true one ; from crude beginnings Democracy was to learn its lesson of real power. Out of the hands of an austere Adams ; an inconsistent Jefferson ; a dangerous Jackson were the reins of authority snatched, to be placed with one who stood as a new type of a better Democracy than ever.

The *seeming* hazard (for it was such only in seeming) in selecting a man who had sprung from such surroundings increases as we unravel the thread of Lincoln's early history. No circumstances of boyhood life could be more pitiable than were his, yet here the parallelism between him and such men as Jackson and Douglas ceases. The hazard in our system of governmental selection, so deplored by the English publicists, was well illustrated in the election of Jackson, but it failed to materialize when Douglas sought preference pleading to a like element in our political society. Truth is, the old type of Democracy had worn itself out with its absurdities, and there needed to be something more than earnestness of purpose coupled with an imperious will. The Nation quickly learned that Abraham Lincoln was incapable of vindictiveness, nor were his intuitions of the coarser grain. The mistake of a "Kitchen-Cabinet" was not to be repeated. When Lincoln consulted with Seward, or Cameron, or Smith, or Weed, they found him as keen as they supposed themselves to be, and a little more so. Though here was a man who had

been hurried from obscurity to transcendent power, it was already evident that no errors were to be committed which calm deliberation and careful understanding might avoid. Blair and Welles, Chase and Seward were as antipodal spirits as could be held in the cabinet, yet, notwithstanding some objection, they were representative men, and their choice not only cemented an heterogeneous party, but somewhat eased the mind of the distracted North.

Thus, with the manly tact of Washington, and without the ostentatious simplicity of Jackson, but with a truer one, Abraham Lincoln successfully re-inaugurated the policy of a comprehensive cabinet, and maintained the wishes of the mass of the free-states people, by providing for them satisfactory representation in his official household. It boots little in opposition to this view that the Nation, much more the politicians, failed to wholly comprehend the meaning of each selection; with the people, it was to be a growth in knowledge—through the weary weeks of the Sumter episode they learned the lesson well, and it adds to his fame that this keen, earnest, high-souled man best of all saw the exigencies of the time, and provided for them in the masterly selection of his cabinet.

It is not within the province of this essay to give an exhaustive account of President Lincoln's Administration—nor can even a full summary be ventured upon. Such a pleasant duty would involve more time and more space than can be spared now and here. Only the two or three most salient points in his policy of Union-saving may be touched; together with something of an inquiry into the certain elements of character which made for his success in the mighty mission Providence and a loving people imposed upon him.

In the mind of the superstitious, the departure of Lincoln for the Nation's capital must have seemed ominous. To such, the dark day; the driving clouds; the hurried rain; the anxious company might readily have typified a broader stage; a darker season; a more perturbed people. But there were happy omens also! Ere leaving them, Lincoln paused a moment to look into the upturned faces of his fellow-townsmen. As he gazed, the scene broadened so

that he saw there the whole anxious North, and, touched by the emotion their dependence inspired, he commended them as well as himself to the care of the great God who had assisted the fathers. Said he, speaking further: "I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which ever rested upon Washington." It was a significant fact that here was a man going forth to his duty with two essential things clearly fixed in his mind; without which he could not have been representative of the people in their needs. He had a knowledge which was at least not disposed to underestimate the importance of his task, and a desire to trust in divine Power to accomplish it. The spurious Executive at the South hastened to his seat of authority with airy predictions of success and abundant confidence in his own sufficiency. But upon Lincoln the burden rested heavily, and to him, as to few others, it presented itself in something like its true proportions. It is not possible to overvalue this clear comprehension of things, for during his tour he met hostile legislatures and incredulous crowds; but his eminent common sense, lack of rancor, and hopefulness made ineffaceable impressions, while his speeches, reserved in tone, inspired confidence that the Union was to have an Executive gifted with enough force of character to stand by his personal convictions. Then, too, the remarkable knowledge of human nature which he possessed showed itself to immense advantage during this tour to Washington; as for instance in his reply to Mayor Wood, of New York City,* and in his speech to the members of the New Jersey Legislature.†

As to policy, in some of the speeches made while *en route* Lincoln foreshadowed his intentions—yet, what he said was calculated primarily to give a general feeling of assurance rather than to be specific. He said enough to convince the people of the silliness of what some of them were still inclined to fancy; that he was an ignorant boor, dangerous more through his lack of capacity than for other reasons, and yet he spoke not enough to embarrass the administration of his office when he should enter upon it.

The one thing noticeable above all others in these speeches is his ardent devotion to the Union, and the con-

*See Lincoln's Works, Vol. 1, pp. 687-688.

†See Lincoln's Works, Vol. 1, pp. 688-689.

fidence that the people were ready to stand by their chosen servant in his defense of that Union. Indeed, his references to this matter are peculiarly touching and eloquent. They were not the ebullition of the hour ; they came from the farthest depths of his great soul, where, for years, they had been gathering force and character. Thus, he said in reply to Mayor Wood :

“ In my devotion to the Union I hope I am behind no man in the Nation. As to my wisdom in conducting affairs so as to tend to the preservation of the Union, I fear too great confidence may have been placed in me. I am sure I bring a heart devoted to the work. There is nothing that could ever bring me to consent—willingly to consent—to the destruction of this Union (in which not only the great city of New York, but the whole country, has acquired its greatness), unless it would be that thing for which the Union itself was made. I understand that the ship is made for the carrying and preservation of the cargo ; and so long as the ship is safe with the cargo, it shall not be abandoned. This Union shall never be abandoned, unless the possibility of its existence shall cease to exist without the necessity of throwing passengers and cargo overboard. So long, then, as it is possible that the prosperity and liberties of this people can be preserved within this Union, it shall be my purpose at all times to preserve it.”

But his route carried him to places of greater historic interest. On February 22, he stood in Independence Hall, Philadelphia, and made what is generally supposed to be most significant speech of the whole journey. This claim may be questioned,* but his utterances then were unusually full of deep meaning. In the course of his speech he said:

“ I am filled with deep emotion at finding myself standing in this place, where were collected together the wisdom, the patriotism, the devotion to principle, from which sprang the institutions under which we live. You have kindly suggested to me that in my hands is the task of restoring peace to our distracted country. I can say in return, sir, that all the political sentiments I entertain, have been drawn, so far as I have been able to draw them, from the sentiments which originated in and were given to the world from this hall. I have never had a feeling, politically, that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence.”

But the student can hardly cull from these speeches the true history of the times, since the broad currents of thought and purpose were hidden. Lincoln's duty was to look the crisis squarely in the face, and yet with pacific words to ease the anxiety of the people, if this might be done. It is true that no man calculated the trend of present

*Cf. with Speech to Indiana State Legislature ; Lincoln's Works, Vol. I, pp. 673-674

opinion more shrewdly than he, while at the same moment, he sought to build hope upon the things of the past. Though they themselves were frightened, the people expected him to remain cool, and without a superior confidence in the genuineness of our institutions any man in his place must have failed ignominiously.

The truth is, at this very time the Nation was in a fearful state. The old Union for which Webster had so eloquently pleaded was already broken. Until it was well-nigh too late, the cruel impudence of the South had controlled the will of the North. Slavery sat as the tutelary goddess over every cotton-field; and before her shrine, politician, priest, President were bowed. She had called forth three Executives, only to cast them off for their fawning meniality. She laughed at the trade-blinded temporizers of the land, and cursed the conscience-goaded Abolitionists of the North. She blotted sumptuary laws all over the Nation's statute-books; she appropriated the wealth of the people for her own borders; she overthrew the great Webster and crushed the peaceful Clay; she tore Kansas limb from limb, and spat upon Buchanan's aged hand because of its slowness; she plotted treason in the very halls where Freedom's altars were consecrated; she scorned the compromises of the North and mocked its aroused sentiment; she sneered at its solicitude for the Union, and defied its power to preserve the Nation; she brought low the sacred confidence in the Nation's highest tribunal, and used Jackson's protege, Roger Brook Taney, as a mouth-piece, through which she spewed her defiance of God's truth, her hatred of freedom, and her slander of souls immeasurably purer than she possessed; she pressed the Nation's feet to brink, into the very flood of disunion, and, when the North shuddered, thrust deep the dagger of disloyalty, and left the Union's helpless form to revive as best it might. Such were the conditions which Lincoln was called upon to face. The North was paralyzed; the South defiant. No great voice inspired much of hope. Even Douglas had not taken the patriotic stand he afterwards assumed. Under these discouraging circumstances Lincoln stepped forth before the Nation to deliver his Inaugural Address. What he said upon this occasion is of the deepest

interest to the student of his career and times, for it marks an epoch in the Nation's life. The policy laid down in the first Inaugural grew from the necessity of the hour. By her reckless action, South Carolina had marked out a plain path for the new Executive to follow in. Would he have the good judgment to do so?

Our history had been making at such a rapid pace during the preceding months that many leaders of the people had lost their wit; though there was hardly a man without his peculiar panacea for the evils which threatened. Up to this time there had been no concert of action. The Chicago convention had framed a platform which dealt almost altogether with the matter of the non-extension of slavery, and the campaign orators had drilled this conception into the hearts of the people. The Congressional record, were fairly crammed with nervous speeches upon the issue, and the Democratic party had choked to death on this very apple of discord. But, by the events of a day, all this was changed. Actual secession had raised its horrid front, and the real issue stood out clear and unmistakable—to him who interpreted aright the oracles of the hour! Now it became evident that Lincoln uttered no idle speculation when he told his neighbors that his task was the greatest which had ever devolved upon a President. The house was fearfully "divided-against-itself." The question was how long should it stand!

Although the problem looks plain enough to us it was far from being so to many of that day. Upon the question of the extension of slavery the South was a unit, while the North was divided. Upon the question of the coercion of a rebellious state the South had no difference, while the North broke out in factious quarrel. Let the issue be put upon the side of slavery, and the South would be invincible; let it be put upon the side of Union, and the North, with many at the South, would be a unit. All this seems simple now; but the great problem with Lincoln was how to deal with these factions so as to obtain their maximum amount of support with the minimum of resistance.

Lincoln had been elected as a anti-slavery man.* His great reputation had been made on his anti-slavery record, and those who were fair with him knew that he hated

*See Morse's Life of Lincoln, Vol. I, pp. 227-228.

slavery from the depths of his soul. Moreover, his party was an anti-slavery party; its only logical right to be lay in its anti-slavery tenets. Men knew this when they elected it to power, and these men were the majority at the North. The most natural thing for many a ruler would have been to argue thus: "Slavery is the root of this evil weed of disunion. Strike the root and the weed must die. Lop off the leaves and the effort will come to worse than naught!" Hundreds of thousands of people were reasoning in this way, and, no doubt, Lincoln so reasoned within his own heart. It would not have done to alienate this body of men—they needed to be argued from their position; and the argument which was to win them would not be so much of words as of deeds. To do this, Lincoln appealed most adroitly to another body of thinkers. There was a very important and numerous class of citizens at the North who had either taken little interest in the anti-slavery controversy or who held views decidedly antagonistic to those of Lincoln and his party. Their sympathies were not enlisted upon the side of the African. But their love of Union was strong, and with proper handling might be worked into deed. The great thing to be accomplished was the getting of their support in the coming contest. No plea in regard to the non-extension of slavery could win their support; no dilating upon the intent of the fathers, so far as citizens of color were concerned, could have the least influence, but a negative one, with them. These men Lincoln knew. He had met them all through his career. Back in the woods of Illinois, out on the prairies, down in Washington, in southern Ohio, in the East; wherever he had gone he came in contact with this element. The golden opportunity for securing their sympathy had come, and because he knew this class thoroughly, with consummate skill Abraham Lincoln seized the opportunity and used it to its farthest extent. Consequently, the student finds comparatively little in the Inaugural touching the matter of slavery, but it is worthy of careful note that whatever is said is of such a character that the South should have been re-assured. According to her predictions, a Republican President, of necessity, would have to deal to her "sacred institution" the blows of death, but Lincoln did nothing of the kind. He

went to the limit in upholding their rights and in acknowledging the sorrow he felt over the violations of the Fugitive-Slave Law. He assured them of his intention in these words: "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so."

From a brief discussion of slavery, the President hurried on to take up the question of secession. Here, with keen analysis, he showed that an attempt at disunion was not disunion at all, and refused to recognize the claim of seceded states that they were out of the Union. Rebels could find no hesitating policy in such language as this: "I therefore consider that, in view of the Constitution and the laws, the Union is unbroken, and to the extent of my ability, I shall take care, as the Constitution expressly enjoins upon me, that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the States."

The pleasing fallacy which had helped more than one Southern state into secession was well summed up by one of their politicians who claimed that better terms could be made "out of the Union than in it." No one knew better than Lincoln the unsoundness of the idea, and he took pains in his Inaugural to refute the argument. Concerning it he said:

"Physically speaking, we cannot separate. We cannot remove our respective sections from each other, nor build an impassible wall between them. A husband and wife may be divorced, and go out of the presence and beyond the reach of each other; but the different parts of our country cannot do this. They cannot but remain face to face, and intercourse, either amicable or hostile, must continue between them. Is it possible, then, to make that intercourse more advantageous or more satisfactory after separation than *before*? Can aliens make treaties easier than friends can make laws? Can treaties be more faithfully enforced between aliens, than laws can among friends? Suppose you go to war, you cannot fight always; and when, after much loss on both sides, and no gain on either, you cease fighting, the identical old questions as to terms of intercourse are again upon you."

But it was the conclusion of the Address which disclosed the best nature of the man. After telling the people of the South that there could be no conflict unless they themselves were the aggressors, he pleads with them in

such words as they had not expected to hear:

“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 cords of memory, stretching from every battle-field, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearth-stone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”

Though its worth at the time was questioned, but one opinion of the Inaugural holds to-day. Had Lincoln too much emphasized the contention over slavery; had he unduly thrust before the people the mooted question of Popular Sovereignty, his influence would have weakened in direct proportion as he did so. It is a proof of his unerring statesmanship that he cast loose from the old controversy and took his stand by the new. It was the first proof to many that he understood the elements in the struggle. It was as far from his duty as it was from his nature to assume a pugnacious attitude, nor would the people have sustained him in such an attitude. Yet, he went as far as he felt any warrant for going, and this got it into the minds of the people that he was a safe man. There was to be some waiting—Lincoln was a consummate waiter. There was to be some preparation—Lincoln had mastered the art of getting ready. There was to be waiting until the disgruntled Union elements at the North might fuse. The greatest danger lay in their lack of unanimity, but by carefully avoiding the arousing of unnecessary prejudice, Lincoln took the wisest possible course by which to bring about their fusion.

It is true that the most outspoken anti-slavery men were disappointed in the Inaugural; but they had argued themselves into illogical positions, and any view of sound statesmanship was sure to displease them. It was no fault of Lincoln's that they were disappointed, since there could have been no war for slavery or against it. Indeed, Kansas and Harper's Ferry were the nearest this issue came to resolving itself into war. But the fact also remains that there could have been no rebellion without slavery. The Nation tried hard to forget this fact, and so

long as they were in such a frame of mind, the President's duty was to use what leverage he could upon them. And the wisdom of this plan manifested itself the instant Sumter was fired upon. For the hour, slavery was forgotten—as were all the minor issues which clustered about the central one. But a single thought actuated the North; and while this great feeling was certain to experience reaction, its force at the initiative was incalculable, and, thanks to his wise policy, Lincoln was able to draw upon the North for unlimited amounts of men and capital.

But there was another problem involved in the issue, the importance of which appealed more strongly to the logical mind of Lincoln than to that of any one else. This was the holding of the border-states. These states were undergoing the most cruel effects of the rebellion that had as yet been felt. Geographically, their position was such that they were of the utmost importance as strategic points. As to the Unionism of the majority of their inhabitants, there can be no question; but scheming politicians had hood-winked and bullied the people so that they were sorely harassed. Not only were they in a pitiable condition because of the brunt of war which came upon them but they were constantly being placed in an attitude of anomaly. So far as the question of slavery was concerned, there was but one sentiment amongst them. They would have taken instant side with the South, had it been possible that the war was a war for the extermination of slavery. But, though all their sympathies in this matter were with the South, these people were also ardent Union-lovers, and no more jealous defenders of its rights lived than they. With the tenacity of dying men, they clung to the Union as their only hope. However inconsistent this may seem, it admits of ready explanation, for Clay and Benton, though dead, yet lived, and no man exerted a more powerful influence than did the noble John J. Crittenden, of Kentucky. But beyond the influence of these statesmen a more potent argument rested in the fact that a breaking up of the Union would place the border-states on the ragged edge of perpetual internecine war; and they could see no reason why Union with slavery might not always exist.

Wise ruler that he was, Lincoln clearly perceived that these states must be held at almost any cost. Despite the entreaties of aggressive Abolitionists, the border-commonwealths were yet the most important parties to the contract of saving the Union—consequently their opinions were to be respected so long as it was possible that they could be.

Perhaps for no other thing has Lincoln been more harshly criticised than for his so called "Border-state Policy." His attitude brought upon his head the maledictions of many at the North who thought themselves the purest patriots, yet before his Administration closed the genuineness of his policy vindicated itself. Indeed, the immediate effect of his Inaugural was to save these states to the Union. With what friendliness their people, as well as many through the entire North, regarded Lincoln's policy, may be judged by the action of the unflinching Crittenden, who, in July, 1861, introduced into Congress the following resolution (largely adopted by that body.):

"That this war is not waged upon our part in any spirit of oppression, nor for any purpose of conquest or subjugation, nor with any purpose of overthrowing or interfering with the rights or established institutions of those [the revolted] states: but to defend and maintain the supremacy of the Constitution, and to preserve the Union with all the dignity, equality, and rights of the several states unimpaired."

But it was impossible to wage the war in any quarter, long, before the inevitable question of slavery confronted both soldier and statesman. When one takes into consideration the first Inaugural and the first Annual Message to Congress that Lincoln made, it may seem strange that the Emancipation Proclamation was so soon issued. But events were shaping themselves in a way which no man clearly foresaw. Notwithstanding the criticisms of American Abolitionists and of English publicists, the attitude of the Republican party was consistent in its determination not to interfere with slavery where it was—yet the policy of its chief was also consistent in striking the blow at slavery, aimed through the Emancipation Proclamation. Men soon saw what they did not at first anticipate; that though it was a struggle for the Union, it was a struggle in which the Union could not be preserved, except by sacrificing the institution of slavery. When this idea had

been fully ingrained into the mind of the North, she could do naught but follow it to its logical end. But the great care was to understand the growth of this Abolition sentiment, for any undue sympathy, the one way or the other, might bring fatal danger to the Union and, of course, to Abolition. Lincoln seemed to follow public opinion, yet he led it. He followed it when he abrogated the emancipation edicts of Generals Hunter and Fremont; he led it when he formulated his plan of "compensated emancipation" for the sake of the border-states.

Indeed, the latter scheme was especially dear to his heart, though it met with slight favor from the men for whose benefit it was chiefly framed, and with none at all from the impatient people at the North. Much has been said derogatory to this plan of the President. It is claimed that it was more flattering to his heart than to his head. But there can be no question as to one thing—it secured the respect of the leaders in the border-states, even though it failed to gain their approval, as the venerable Crittenden told the President, speaking for a group of Unionists from the border-commonwealths, that, whatever might be their final action, they all thought him solely moved by a high patriotism and sincere devotion to the happiness and glory of his country; and, with that conviction, they should consider respectfully the important suggestions he had made.* And it would seem that the dignified attention of these unfortunate men would count for a deal, when we remember that Lincoln could hardly gain such a hearing from some of the most influential leaders at the North.

Though Congress was not in sympathy with the President's plans of "compensated emancipation" and of "colonization" it passed measures friendly to these plans,† and waited the experiment with selfish incredulity. The hope of the President in these experiments was pathetic. This hope may seem absurd, but there were men about him who assured him that "colonization" could be accomplished; that it was not an impossible physical undertaking. Calling together some of the representative negroes, he addressed them at the White House,‡ laying before them his ideas in the matter, and urging them to make the experiment. Upon trial, the plan failed; partly through the

*See Lincoln's Works, Vol. II, p. 135.

†During the session of 1862 Congress appropriated \$600,000 for the experiment of colonization

‡August 14, 1862. See Lincoln's Works, Vol. II, p. 222.

rascality of a governmental agent, and partly through its inexpediency. It did not have the ardent support of the blacks to say nothing of the white people.

But the appeal on the part of President Lincoln for "compensated emancipation" performed more valuable service for the cause of Union. In the first place, it showed that he knew where the real difficulty lay. He was right when he said to a body of border-state Representatives:

"Let the States which are in rebellion see definitely and certainly that in no event will the States you represent ever join their proposed confederacy, and they cannot much longer maintain the contest. But you cannot divest them of their hope to ultimately have you with them so long as you show a determination to perpetuate the institution within your own States. Beat them at elections, as you have overwhelming done, and, nothing daunted, they still claim you as their own. You and I know what the lever of their power is. Break that lever before their faces, and they can shake you no more forever. * * * You prefer that the constitutional relation of the States to the Nation shall be practically restored without disturbance of the institution; and if this were done, my whole duty in this respect, under the Constitution and my oath of office, would be performed. But it is not done, and we are trying to accomplish it by war. The incidents of the war cannot be avoided. If the war continues long, as it must if the object be not sooner attained, the institution in your States will be extinguished by mere friction and abrasion—by the mere incidents of the war. It will be gone, and you will have nothing valuable in lieu of it. Much of its value is gone already. How much better for you and for your people to take the step which at once shortens the war and secures substantial compensation for what is sure to be wholly lost in any other event! How much better to thus save the money which else we sink forever in the war! How much better to do it while we can, lest the war ere long render us pecuniarily unable to do it! How much better for you as seller, and the Nation as buyer, to sell out and buy out that without which the war could never have been, than to sink both the thing to be sold and the price of it in cutting one another's throats? * * * You are patriots and statesmen, and as such I pray you consider this proposition, and at the least commend it to the consideration of your States and people. As you would perpetuate popular government for the best people in the world, I beseech you that you do in no wise omit this. Our common country is in great peril, demanding the loftiest views and boldest action to bring it speedy relief. Once relieved, its form of government is saved to the world, its beloved history and cherished memories are vindicated, and its happy future fully assured and rendered inconceivably grand. To you, more than to any others, the privilege is given to assure that happiness and swell that grandeur, and to link your own names therewith forever.

Again, in his treatment of the border-states, Lincoln

showed the futility of expecting to finish the war without bringing about emancipation. This he hinted at in the conversation quoted from above. But there were some men from these states who were too blind to see that the inevitable result of war was the overthrow of slavery. To these men he spoke the words of kindly warning and, through them, to the greater South.

But however generous and noble-hearted the President might have been, it is generally admitted that his schemes were impracticable. As Morse very well points out, * Lincoln had little capability for business, and he could not be brought to see the impracticability of "compensated emancipation" as a business proceeding. But it is no discredit to his memory when the larger fact is brought out that Abraham Lincoln was feeling the pulse of the Nation and was preparing for the great Act of Emancipation which followed. And this pulse became very plain to him. It cannot be doubted that he was ahead of the great mass of the people when he first drew up his Proclamation. This did not so seem to such Abolitionists as Greeley, who wrote the idiotic "Prayer of 20,000,000 of the People;" but events shaped history far more readily than did sentiment. The time was yet ripening for the consummate stroke.

Much has been written regarding the supreme importance of the Emancipation Proclamation. It is held that this is the profoundest act of the century; that with it Lincoln's greatest fame shall be associated; and that it sealed the destiny of the Southern Confederacy. To all this, yes, if qualified in the light of logical history, otherwise, no!

In the first place, emancipation was but a means to an end. The war was not begun for its sake, neither did its proclamation constitute the central idea of the Administration. From its limited application it was naught but a war-measure, and was worth simply what the Federal government—or rather the sovereign people of the North could make it. Lincoln himself did not regard it as being anything other than a war-measure, and realized that absolute emancipation could not come short of a Constitutional amendment. In fact, the President had long

* Life of Abraham Lincoln, Vol. II, p. 28.

hesitated in its promulgation, for this Act would depend solely upon the exigencies of the strife on the battle-field. He showed clearly this train of thought in his marvelous reply to Greeley's "Prayer," where he said:

" * * * * As to the policy I 'seem to be pursuing,' as you say, I have not meant to leave any one in doubt.

"I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored, the nearer the Union will be 'the Union as it was.' If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do more whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause. I shall try to correct errors when shown to be errors, and I shall adopt new views as fast as they shall appear to be true views.

"I have here stated my purpose according to my views of official duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men everywhere could be free."

In this masterly paper the President not only discomfited meddlesome anti-slavery fanatics, but also kept firm the purpose of the North to maintain the war as a fight for the preservation of the Union. Such a letter as Greeley dispatched to Lincoln would have deceived some men, but had the President coincided with the views of the erratic editor, it must have become immediately apparent that the "Prayer" did not emanate from the hearts of "20,000,000," or from one tenth of that number.

Lincoln's position was irrefutable. Unless he could insure the maintenance of the Constitution by an expression favorable to Abolition, there existed not the slightest warrant for the making of one. He was right in holding that any personal sentiments upon the issue were irrelevant, and extremely likely to produce disaster. The fact is Abraham Lincoln was the most safe President this Nation has ever had, unless it be the first, for the simple reason

that he understood human nature, and the philosophy of events—he understood this philosophy far better than most of the people, and he knew the people better than they knew themselves. To simple-minded men the problem resolved itself quite readily, but the President was putting as hard study upon the matter as he ever indulged in. His old judicial habits asserted themselves. But with him it was not an argument in equity; it was a step in policy. Thus, he said to a body of clergymen who waited upon him:*

“The subject is difficult, and good men do not agree. For instance, the other day four gentlemen of standing and intelligence, from New York, called as a delegation on business connected with the war: but, before leaving, two of them earnestly beset me to proclaim general emancipation, upon which the other two at once attacked them. You know also that the last session of Congress had a decided majority of anti-slavery men, yet they could not unite on this policy. And the same is true of the religious people. Why, the rebel soldiers are praying with a great deal more earnestness, I fear, than our own troops, and expecting God to favor their side: for one of our soldiers who had been taken prisoner, told Senator Wilson a few days since that he met with nothing so discouraging as the evident sincerity of those he was among in their prayers. But we will talk over the merits of the case.

“What good would a proclamation of emancipation from me do, especially as we are now situated? I do not want to issue a document that the whole world will see must necessarily be inoperative, like the Pope’s bull against the comet. Would my word free the slaves, when I cannot even enforce the Constitution in the rebel states? Is there a single court, or magistrate, or individual that would be influenced by it there? And what reason is there to think it would have any greater effect upon the slaves than the late law of Congress, which I approved, and which offers protection and freedom to the slaves of rebel masters who are within our lines? Yet I cannot learn that that law has caused a single one to come over to us. * *

“Now, then, tell me, if you please, what possible result of good would follow the issuing of such a proclamation as you desire? Understand, I raise no objections against it on legal or Constitutional grounds, for, as commander-in-chief of the army and navy, in time of war I suppose I have a right to take any measure which will best subdue the enemy: nor do I urge objections of a moral nature, in view of possible consequences of insurrection and massacre at the South. I view this matter as a practical war measure, to be decided on according to the advantages or disadvantages it may offer to the suppression of the rebellion.

“I admit that slavery is the root of the rebellion, or at least its *sine qua non*. The ambition of politicians may have instigated them to act, but they would have been impotent without slavery as their

*Sept. 13, 1862.

instrument. I will also concede that emancipation would help us in Europe, and convince them that we are incited by something more than ambition. I grant, further, that it would help somewhat at the North, though not so much, I fear, as you and those you represent imagine. Still, some additional strength would be added in that way to the war, and then, unquestionably, it would weaken the rebels by drawing off their laborers, which is of great importance; but I am not so sure we could do much with the blacks. If we were to arm them, I fear that in a few weeks the arms would be in the hands of the rebels; and, indeed, thus far we have not had arms enough to equip our white troops. I will mention another thing, though it meet only your scorn and contempt. There are fifty thousand bayonets in the Union armies from the border slave States. It would be a serious matter if, in consequence of a proclamation such as you desire, they should go over to the rebels. I do not think they all would—not so many, indeed, as a year ago, or six months ago—not so many to-day as yesterday. Every day increases their Union feeling. They are also getting their pride enlisted, and want to beat the rebels. Let me say one thing more: I think you should admit that we already have an important principle to rally and unite the people, in the fact that constitutional government is at stake. This is a fundamental idea going down about as deep as anything.

“Do not misunderstand me because I have mentioned these objections. They indicate the difficulties that have thus far prevented my action in some such way as you desire. I have not decided against a proclamation of liberty to the slaves, but hold the matter under advisement; and I can assure you that the subject is on my mind, by day and night, more than any other. Whatever shall appear to be God’s will, I will do. I trust that in the freedom with which I have canvassed your views, I have not in any respect injured your feelings.”

In this reply we catch a glimpse of Lincoln’s tendency to argue away his side of the question—save in one or two particulars. It almost seems as though he were reasoning with his doubts. His independence of mind and character is shown by the fact that at this very time the Emancipation Proclamation in rough lay underneath the lid of his desk, and he had practically become decided as to its issue—the great question was, *When?*

On September 22, 1862, President Lincoln issued his “Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation,” “which gave formal notice that unless the Southern States yielded allegiance to the Union within a hundred days thereafter, he should declare the slaves within their limits free.”* The immediately following elections justified the Executive’s hesitancy. He had issued the measure at a most precarious moment, for the people at the North were far

* Wilson, “Division and Reunion,” p. 227.

from being a unit in the matter. At once, the powerful Democracy raised the unpleasant cry that the Administration had switched from Unionism to Abolitionism; and the cry had its effect. Only New England, the states of the Mississippi Valley, and California and Oregon held firmly to their faith. It could not be doubted that the Administration was dealt a stinging blow; but the crisis was past. Lincoln acknowledged that if the Proclamation had been issued six months before it would have resulted in failure. Thus we may know how closely he studied men and events—how right he was in considering emancipation but a step towards Union.

But one of the greatest accomplishments of the Proclamation lay in the proof it gave of the vindication of the President's "Border-state Policy." These commonwealths stood gallantly by Abraham Lincoln, and their votes actually saved the Administration in Congress. By his common sense dealing with the border-states Lincoln had won their confidence and "had saved the party whose leaders had turned against him."*

Though it was a wonderful thing to do, it cannot rightly be claimed that the emancipation of 4,000,000 blacks was the consummate act in Lincoln's career. It was the hard "hit" at the "thing" which, as a boy standing in the slave-mart at New Orleans, he swore to deliver if he should ever have the chance. It was an act which filled his soul with keen pleasure. It, of itself, was sufficient to cause the memory of his name to endure as long as men love liberty and hate bondage. But its transcendent glory lays in the fact that through it the struggle for the Union was destined to be successful. Without it, our position would have been anomalous in the eyes of Europe. Without it, an aroused home-sentiment would have lapsed into unconcern, then disgust, then hostility.

But, in its consummation, as great skill was shown by deference as by action. Its effect was calculated with a nicety which rendered its promulgation powerful for good; and its issue was at the time which proved to be the turning-point of the crisis. The time element involved was recognized, by the intuition of Lincoln, as being the most important of all, for the abstract question was sure to be

* Morse; Life of Lincoln, Vol. II, p. 125.

met and decided affirmatively. But, coming as it did, and when it did, the Proclamation was a blow from which the Confederacy could never recover.

But, more than all else, it laid low the tendency of the North to compromise. One may be sure that when Abraham Lincoln discarded this method of settling a dispute, its usefulness amounted to about nothing. Gradually the people perceived this—and it held them during the dark days of 1862-1863, when a cowardly Democracy saw written on every side naught but “failure.”

Thus, on the grounds of sensible policy, Lincoln was able to defend his measure—for it ever had its bitter enemies—and here is an example of how he did it. August 25, 1863, he wrote to a convention at Springfield, Illinois, styling themselves “Unconditional Unionists,” in part as follows:

“HON. JAMES C. CONKLING,

“MY DEAR SIR:—Your letter inviting me to attend a mass-meeting of unconditional Union men, to be held at the Capital of Illinois, on the 3d day of September, has been received. It would be very agreeable to me to meet my old friends at my own home, but I cannot just now be absent from here so long as a visit there would require.

“The meeting is to be of all those who maintain unconditional devotion to the Union; and I am sure my old political friends will thank me for tendering, as I do, the Nation’s gratitude to those and other noble men whom no partisan malice or partisan hope can make false to the Nation’s life.

“There are those who are dissatisfied with me. To such I would say: You desire peace, and you blame me that we do not have it. But how can we attain it? There are but three conceivable ways: First, to suppress the rebellion by force of arms. This I am trying to do. Are you for it? If you are, so far we are agreed. If you are not for it, a second way is to give up the Union. I am against this. Are you for it? If you are, you should say so plainly. If you are not for force, nor yet for dissolution, there only remains some imaginable compromise. I do not believe any compromise embracing the maintenance of the Union is now possible. All I learn leads to a directly opposite belief. The strength of the rebellion is its military, its army. That army dominates all the country and all the people within its range. Any offer of terms made by any man or men within that range, in opposition to that army, is simply nothing for the present, because such man or men have no power whatever to enforce their side of a compromise, if one were made with them. * * * * *

“But to be plain. You are dissatisfied with me about the negro. Quite likely there is a difference of opinion between you and myself

upon that subject. I certainly wish that all men could be free, while I suppose you do not, yet, I have neither adopted nor proposed any measure which is not consistent with even your view, provided you are for the Union. I suggested compensated emancipation, to which you replied you wished not to be taxed to buy negroes. But I had not asked you to be taxed to buy negroes, except in such way as to save you from greater taxation to save the Union exclusively by other means.

“You dislike the emancipation proclamation, and perhaps would have it retracted. You say it is unconstitutional. I think differently. I think the constitution invests its commander-in-chief with the law of war in time of war. The most that can be said—if so much—is that slaves are property. Is there—has there ever been—any question that by the law of war, property, both of enemies and friends, may be taken when needed? And is it not needed whenever taking it helps us, or hurts the enemy?

“But the proclamation, as law, either is valid or is not valid. If it is not valid, it needs no retraction. If it is valid, it cannot be retracted any more than the dead can be brought to life. Some of you profess to think its retraction would operate favorably for the Union. Why better after the retraction than before the issue? There was more than a year and a half of trial to suppress the rebellion before the proclamation issued; the last one hundred days of which passed under an explicit notice that it was coming, unless averted by those in revolt returning to their allegiance. The war has certainly progressed as favorably for us since the issue of the proclamation as before. I know as fully as any one can know the opinion of others, that some of the commanders of our armies in the field, who have given us our most important successes, believe the emancipation policy and the use of the colored troops constitute the heaviest blow yet dealt to the rebellion, and that at least one of these important successes could not have been achieved when it was but for the aid of black soldiers. Among the commanders holding these views are some who have never had any affinity with what is called Abolitionism, or with Republican party politics, but who hold them purely as military opinions. I submit these opinions as being entitled to some weight against the objections often urged that emancipation and arming the blacks are unwise as military measures, and were not adopted as such in good faith.

“You say you will not fight to free negroes. Some of them seem willing to fight for you; but no matter. Fight you, then, exclusively to save the Union. I issued the proclamation on purpose to aid you in saving the Union. Whenever you shall have conquered all resistance to the Union, if I shall urge you to continue fighting, it will be an apt time then for you to declare you will not fight to free negroes.

“I thought that in your struggle for the Union, to whatever extent the negroes should cease helping the enemy, to that extent it weakened the enemy in his resistance to you. Do you think differently? I thought that whatever negroes can be got to do as soldiers, leaves just so much less for white soldiers to do in saving the Union.

Does it appear otherwise to you? 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 the promise of freedom. And the promise, being made, must be kept.

"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 free men 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 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.

"Still let us not be over-sanguine of a speedy final triumph. Let us diligently apply the means, never doubting that a just God, in his own good time, will give us the rightful result."

Now that we have seen how the policy of Lincoln was best fitted to fulfill the requirements of his selection, it is well to look further into his character in order that a clearer comprehension of the forces working in him and through him for the accomplishment of the end of these requirements may be had. What were the elements of character that kept Lincoln enthroned in the hearts of his countrymen during the four years of its most trying history; which gave him the power to effect just the work and the right work that was essential?

Let the answer be, first; He was a man of supreme honesty. This trait was known to his earliest companions, but was thrown out to the world at large for the first time during the Lincoln-Douglas debates. The same care for the truth which animated him in walking four miles (as the story runs) to make good the amount to a customer who had overpaid at his little country-store, was the one which led him to recoil from the sophistries of the Douglasites when he made his House-divided-against-itself Speech. He could no more help smiting such fallacy than he could help dealing fairly with his butcher; and this same trait invested all his acts with influence over the minds of the people. When politicians cried out against the violation of personal liberty in the suspension of *habeas corpus*, their clamor was of comparatively non-

effect because somehow the common people, down in their warm hearts, had a lingering opinion that "Abe" Lincoln was honest in his purposes, and that he would not trespass upon the real liberties of the people more than necessity demanded. This very confidence would have put any man upon his honor—provided he was intrinsically honest. Thus Lincoln met the expectations of the people, and though he was hampered in its use, exercised unusual authority as no other man could have done.

Likewise his honesty of purpose led him to take advanced ground, which for the time being might have been unpopular, just as truly as it held him back from impolitic behavior. The struggle of months brought forth the Emancipation Proclamation but it came only after a severe trial upon Lincoln's part to make what he was fain to consider a more equitable adjustment. And it was his honesty of conviction which actuated him in his gentle and humane policy of reconstruction. The world will declare him right in considering the Nation a family, and will wholly come to applaud his magnanimous endeavors to protect the South from the fierce wrath of Northern radicals. As few other men saw it he perceived the cruel fate of the rebellious people without some powerful friend to lead them, and he determined to be this friend. Though no man knows, yet it is almost certain Abraham Lincoln's greatest work would have been in the reconstruction of the South; for in the intensity of his love for country and of his love for human right he believed that his work was not supremely accomplished when four million people were unshackled, but only when four million became free.

Again, his honesty of mind gave him fixedness of purpose. Though he might rise to the highest point of feeling, when the Nation was drunk with excitement, and their leaders full of passion, he never lost his balance. Moreover, he was never careless in the handling of events—nor even in their contemplation. It is true that none could feel more deeply than he, yet none could more readily lay aside mere feeling when it rose in the way of duty; it is sometimes forgotten how brave a character is needed in order that this thing may be accomplished. Many a man is imperturbable because unaroused or unfeeling, but

Lincoln was so because he would not forget the fearful responsibility the Nation had thrust upon him.

Now, all this honesty of purpose had its reflex action. It became a part of the mind of the people—too seldom of the politicians—but firstly and all the time, of the great, freedom-loving North; who, despite disaster and defeat, could be not shaken in their trust so far as to doubt the honesty of "Father Abraham."

A second great influence with the people was the ability they saw in Lincoln to grasp the essentials of any problem and to put them in succinct form. The American public could not forget that his sayings, though homely, were sound, and what they needed at every step was soundness of thought. Listen to some of his epigrams:

"Let none falter who thinks he is right."

"If slavery is not wrong, then nothing is wrong."

"Come what will I will keep my faith with friend and foe."

"This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it."

"God must like common people or he would not have made so many of them."

"I believe this government cannot permanently endure half slave and half free."

"Gold is good in its place, but living, brave, and patriotic men are better than gold."

"Slavery is founded in the selfishness of man's nature—opposition to it in his love of justice."

"Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it."

Moreover, the people believed that he was a safe man who could write thus: "I shall not do more than I can, but I shall do all I can to save the Government, which is my sworn duty as well as my personal inclination. I shall do nothing in malice. What I deal with is too vast for malicious dealing."*

Oct. 19, 1864, he said, during a speech in response to a serenade: "Their (the people's) will, constitutionally expressed, is the ultimate law for all. If they should deliberately resolve to have immediate peace, even at the

*Letter to Cuthbert Bullitt, New Orleans, July 27, 1862.

loss of their country and their liberty, I know not the power or the right to resist them. It is their own business, and they must do as they please with their own. I believe, however, they are still resolved to preserve their country and their liberty; and in this, in office or out of it, I am resolved to stand by them."

In a most natural manner these and similar expressions found their way into the hearts of the people, and became lodged there. The common sense of these epigrams and of these speeches gave the Nation such confidence in Lincoln that no amount of partisan ridicule could distract them in this trust.

Again, there was an individuality about them which caused them to stick. Pending his re-election, the people took him at his word when he declared that it would be foolish "to swap horses while crossing the stream." Lincoln spoke in laconic terms because he was a profound thinker. By a single sentence, he would often reveal a world of meaning, and a few words would often settle an ingenious controversy.

This force of language is one of the most wonderful things to be noted of Lincoln.* Though he did not enjoy the advantages of schooling, and though he read but little, what he said was not only usually free from grammatical error but was often couched in purest English. The people have unfortunately hit upon the Gettysburg Address as being, in the popular mind, the best representative of his power in the use of language—but it will be and deserves to be, so long as the tongue has influence, an English classic.

Moreover, Lincoln had an exactness in the use of English which was truly marvelous. Thus, in his reply to Seward when that gentleman submitted to him "Some Thoughts for the President's Consideration," Lincoln's ideas were worded with such consummate tact that the high-minded Secretary became satisfied, without being angered, as to who was the administrator of affairs. In his correction of Seward's diplomatic messages Lincoln probably saved us from at least one war with a great foreign Power. A comparative study of a single dispatch, that to Minister Adams, May 21, 1861, concerning the "neutrality" at-

*See an article in the London Spectator, Vol. 66, pp. 628-629.

titude of Great Britain will reveal the power of discrimination Lincoln possessed in the use of words.

But the supreme example of Abraham Lincoln's ability in the expression of thought is to be found in his Second Inaugural Address. In moral sublimity no American state-paper excells this Address. If there were no other reason it would be remarkable in that it disclosed to the Nation something of the growth of its Chief-Magistrate. To all who looked upon Lincoln as a second Madison, the Address must have been a startling revelation. He, who so often was led by events, now stood before his people to lead them. His re-election showed the abiding confidence of that people in his wisdom, loyalty, and fairness. Those were days which took little thought of men as men. In recognition of this fact Lincoln had said: "I shall do my utmost that whosoever is to hold the helm for the next voyage shall start with the best possible chance to save the ship."* Yet, when called upon a second time to assume his high trust, this man would not look upon it as a personal triumph. To the philosophic student of American history, for the years 1864 and 1865, there is nothing of surprise in the fact that the Second Inaugural Address transcends in power that other magnificent production, the Gettysburg Speech.

The interregnum following Lincoln's first election was a fearful strain upon the Republic. Up to that time it was the severest ordeal our Nation had met. The new President was very right in telling his neighbors that his was a greater task than that which devolved upon Washington. But it can be shown that the period just previous to Lincoln's second Inauguration was even more momentous. Jackson and Washington had both met disunion sentiment. The Whiskey Insurrection and the Nullifier's Banquet were precedents which helped in dealing with this sentiment. To be sure, they were inadequate, but they were something, and the people leaned upon them. Though by no means easy, Lincoln's duty was plain in 1861. Not so in 1865. In 1861, on the issue of Union, he had successfully initiated his Administration, for the majority of those who had voted for Douglas or

* Response to a Serenade, Oct. 19, 1864.

Bell stood with him there. But the war was an entirely new phase of National life, and by 1865 still stranger phases were directly before us. What precedent in our history was there to follow in drawing together a kindred people, one-half of whose numbers were subjugated by the other? President Lincoln had proposed his scheme of reconstruction to his cabinet, by whom it was rejected; and the most radical elements of his party made this policy the peculiar object of their anathemas. In a fearful sense on that anxious Fourth of March, 1865, all eyes were upon Abraham Lincoln; all felt that for the hour he must bear the burden alone. A single ambiguously turned phrase might prove disastrous; any undue sentiment would cause bitter disgust. Yet, when it is studied, the Second Inaugural Address is seen to be great, not only for what it says, but also for what it does not say.

The thoughts in this Address are the noblest ever put forth by Lincoln. The war had taught men to be brief, direct, and intense. Lincoln knew his words were to be echoed in every household. They could be neither representative nor sufficient without humbly striking the highest chords; Hope, Freedom, Justice, the Union, and Confidence in God. To realize this fully, the proper study of the Address is by comparison. If there is consummate tact and deep devotion in the first Inaugural, to a greater degree these are exalted in the second. A weaker soul would have dropped into exultation; would have encouraged selfish rejoicing. It was not possible for Abraham Lincoln to forget the Nation's need of humility.

If anyone doubts this Chief-Magistrate's wonderful fitness for his task let such an one carefully study the opening paragraph of this Inaugural. It has been eloquently said that our Civil War "was the only struggle in history in which one army fought to elevate the privileges of the other." History is bound to declare that Abraham Lincoln spake this Address for every erring brother then in rebellion against his own greatest good. Had they not been blinded by hate, the men of the South could have read in this Inaugural the most hopeful words a great ruler could utter. When this ruler fell, their best possibilities were postponed; how long, future history alone shall tell.

The Second Inaugural Address is great also for what it suggests. Lincoln loved to regard himself as the people's advocate; he never forgot his client. Here again is the lawyer's art of directing to the fact so that the mind instinctively grasps it, yet feels it has struggled to reach it. Wendell Phillips never made such an eloquent appeal for the bondmen as may be found in the spirit of this Inaugural; yet Phillips gave his whole life to the cause of emancipation, while with Lincoln it was an incident—a great incident to be sure, but such only. It is a tender and sublime quality of character which endures the calumny of men professing to do noble things, which is able to rise above such calumny, and which to a far greater extent compasses the professed work of the calumniators themselves. But this, Lincoln accomplishes. The whole previous struggle for human independence had not produced such a triumphant vindication of the rights of the negro as we find suggested in the Second Inaugural Address. Each succeeding year accentuates the justice of this burning acknowledgment of the Nation's sin.

Wonderful as the entire production is, the closing paragraph of the Inaugural is worthiest of the student's thought. When we remember that Lincoln stood at the head of the greatest Nation of earth; that already he was assured of victory in one of the most momentous struggles of mankind; that he was hated profoundly, and without cause, then it is the moral sublimity of the closing words of this Address stands forth. In them there is nothing of the pride of station; quite the reverse. They do not sound an exultant strain. They breathe naught but love for all; there is tenderness even for the men who had brought the evils of disunion upon the Nation. They seek to carry a great people straight to the altar. They pathetically appeal for the unqualified espousal and exercise of patriotic duty, and, more than this, sweep away from the narrow bounds of self alone to all Nations for all time.

The sympathetic student of this Address, at home or abroad, can hardly restrain himself from dealing in panegyric. Says a distinguished English critic:

“Mr. Lincoln had to tell his countrymen that after a four

years' struggle, the war was practically ended. The four years' agony, the passion of love which he felt for his country, his joy in her salvation, his sense of tenderness for those who fell, of pity mixed with sternness for the men who had deluged the land with blood,—all the thoughts these feelings inspired were behind Lincoln pressing for expression. A writer of less power would have been overwhelmed. Lincoln remained master of the emotional and intellectual situation. In three or four hundred words that burn with the heat of their compression, he tells the history of the war and reads its lesson. No nobler thoughts were ever conceived. No man ever found words more adequate to his desire.*

The comment of Abraham Lincoln itself is enough to forever fix in the minds of men the worth of this Address. He said in reply to a congratulatory letter from a friend:

"Thank you for yours on my little notification speech, and on the recent inaugural address. I expect the latter to wear as well as—perhaps better than anything I have produced; but I believe it is not immediately popular. Men are not flattered by being shown that there has been a difference of purpose between the Almighty and them. To deny it, however, in this case, is to deny that there is a God governing the world. It is a truth which I thought needed to be told, and, as whatever of humiliation there is in it falls most directly on myself, I thought others might afford for me to tell it." †

A third great factor which made for the success of President Lincoln, is to be found in the unflinching confidence the people had in his religious convictions. The student is well aware of the fact that this is a dangerous ground to traverse—one upon which have been fought many bitter controversies: and one which for all time will probably be open to new combatants. Still no estimate of the man's services can be at all comprehensive without taking into account the deep religious nature of Abraham Lincoln.

No great character may hope to escape the judgment of History concerning the spiritual side of its life. And more and more will this be true as the development of the race deepens and broadens. Indeed some characters come down to us of whom we know little, save their religious motives. Thus John Bunyan's life shall be projected into the future so long as the world has its "Vanity Fairs;" and so long as Christians ascend the steeps of "Delectable Mountains." Even the grandest of all English authors lives not so much because of "*Il Penseroso*" and "*L'Allegro*" as because of the deep draughts of divine inspiration welling from the record of "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained."

*London Spectator, Vol. 66, p. 629.

†Letter to Thurlow Weed, Mar. 15, 1865. Lincoln's Works, Vol. II, page 661.

On the other hand a defect in spiritual nature, or the want of such nature, is bound to be intensified in the minds of men the more critically such character is studied. Witness the present research in the life of Napoleon the First; never before in the history of events has his character stood forth so deeply black.

The philosophy of all this is simple. The world is bound to know a man's spiritual life, for without such knowledge there can be no hope or understanding. Hence, the man who blasphemes the name of Christ has no truer conception of spiritual forces in character than has the child of Niagara, whose vision is lost in the prismatic rainbow of its mist. To this general law of understanding Lincoln is no exception. Only as we peer into his inner soul may we expect to translate the deeds of this man; than whom no being more profoundly religious ever lived.

Critics are apt to regard Lincoln along the bias of their personal traits of heart and mind: hence he is so presented as to be a startling paradox. A certain act of his will be characterized by one student Humaneness; by another Mysteriousness; and by a third Christianity. In a sense each might be right; in another each might be wrong, for he combined every one of these elements.

At best, any study of Lincoln's religious life is beset with difficulties. His early days were spent amongst men who were not noted for over piety. In the wild woods of Indiana he learned to assimilate wilder superstitions, of which he could never quite free himself. He who has felt the force of early training knows the almost inseparable bonds it fastens. But one thing in this matter is clear; out from the most adverse surroundings, Lincoln came with certain high principles of conduct and habits of living well fixed. Thus he was not immoral, and never ceased to keep before him an elevated ideal of manhood.

He grew to be deeply religious. In him religion was at first a mingling of the melancholy, of the poetical, of the fatalistic. Then reason asserted its sway and ruled him with a rod of iron. He once said his religious experience was like that of an old man whom he had heard at an Indiana church-meeting and who said; "When I do good, I

feel good, and when I do bad I feel bad, and that's my religion." *

Probably this was true so far as Lincoln's early spiritual life was concerned, but he learned that feeling was just as uncertain in the religious world as it is in the metaphysical.

A great deal has been written concerning his infidelity, and much evil has been done thereby. There can be no doubt of his scepticism, and he probably never became orthodox; at least so far as some of the ordinances of the Church are concerned. Indeed, when a young man, he seemed to boast of his infidelity, and even went so far as to write a book upon the subject, which, fortunately, a far-seeing friend destroyed. The biographer Lamont seems to misunderstand the religious life of Lincoln, and, in a tone almost bitter, attempts to refute the claim that he experienced any change of thought on the question.

But, to an unprejudiced student, after 1830, two lives of the man shape themselves. There was the career from 1830 to 1854, and the one from 1854 on. Nothing is plainer than the fact that Lincoln developed marvelously during these two periods, and especially during the last portion of the latter one. In fact, the final four years of his life may be set down as an era of themselves, so peculiarly expansive seemed his mind and heart through them all. After the time when a great people chose him as their leader, the student finds a new seriousness—different from the seriousness of his anti-slavery productions—in the speeches and letters of Abraham Lincoln. There is nothing of the carelessness of religious expression which may be found in some of his earlier addresses and conversations. At all times there seems to be a deep reverence for and belief in things divine. This was the natural result of Lincoln's intuitive grasp of circumstances, for he knew that the American people were profoundly religious, and that no man could represent them who failed to comprehend this element of their life. Thus his Farewell Address was unusually religious in tone as were many of his speeches which he delivered while *en route* to Washington. Nor was this attitude assumed. To the man that admits the honesty of Lincoln's character one explanation alone is

* Herndon, Life of Lincoln, Vol. II, Page 149.

possible—he felt his sentiments, and was a changed and changing man religiously. A careful study of his speeches and letters during the first years of his Administration will show this to be true.

The fact is, Abraham Lincoln was called to pass through deep waters himself early in his Presidential career. No man could love his children more ardently than did he, and one of them dropped out of this life in the forepart of the year 1862. Those who were in his household tell us that the father was fearfully moved by this death—that he was for a time unreconciled and well-nigh demoralized. As a mere matter of history, there can be no doubt that Abraham Lincoln was passing through one of the severest struggles of his whole life. It found expression in almost agonized utterance; not of his personal grief, but concerning the great contest in which the Nation was engaged. On September, 30, 1862, he wrote the following “Meditation on the Divine Will:”

“The will of God prevails. In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both may be, and one must be, wrong. God cannot be for and against the same thing at the same time. In the present civil war it is quite possible that God’s purpose is something different from the purpose of either party: and yet the human instrumentalities, working just as they do, are of the best adaptation to effect his purpose. I am almost ready to say that this is probably true: that God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet. By his mere great power on the minds of the now contestants, he could have either saved or destroyed the Union without a human contest. Yet the contest began. And, having begun, he could give the final victory to either side any day. Yet the contest proceeds.”

What a strange paragraph this would have seemed had it fallen under the observation of some of his old companions back in Illinois! It was such a paragraph as even Lincoln could not have understood five years previously—much less have written. Another passage must be quoted to show his growth—slow, but certain—along Christian lines of thought. On September 4, 1864, he wrote in part as follows to Mrs. Eliza P. Gurney:

“ * * * I am much indebted to the good Christian people of the country for their constant prayers and consolations: and to no one of them more than to yourself. The purposes of the Almighty are perfect, and must prevail. though we erring mortals may fail to accurately perceive them in advance. We hoped for a happy ter-

mination of this terrible war long before this; but God knows best and has ruled otherwise. We shall yet acknowledge his wisdom, and our own error therein, meanwhile we must work earnestly in the best lights he gives us, trusting that so working still conduces to the great ends he ordains. Surely he intends some great good to follow this mighty convulsion, which no mortal could make, and no mortal could stay. * * * * *

And only three days later in reply to a delegation of colored people who presented him with a handsome Bible, he said :

.. * * In regard to this great book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to man.

"All the good Saviour gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it we could not know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man's welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found portrayed in it. To you I return my most sincere thanks for the very elegant copy of the great Book of God which you present."

The honest student must admit that here has been a remarkable growth—there is evidence of a struggle to reach his then present ground, as may be seen when the "Meditation on the Divine Will" and the letter to Mrs. Gurney are compared. Still he was harassed by doubt. Melancholy feelings would come over him, and he would seem to be little else than a fatalist. He found the remedy for this trouble, however. But one year before his assassination he said to his old friend Speed: "I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible. Take all of this book upon reason that you can, and the balance on faith, and you will live and die a better man."

It is probably true that he reached the high-water mark of expression concerning his religious experience when he delivered the wonderful Second Inaugural Address. Though he was not an orthodox Christian, none could have given utterance to nobler Christian sentiment, and its production will stamp his Administration as having a deeply religious element.

Perhaps the worth of History in regard to Lincoln's spiritual nature is comparatively valueless. Certain it is no man ever fully understood the religious life of this mysterious person. It is likely that he did not himself, but his letters and speeches, and conversations are the best data. Writers upon the subject cannot agree; when we

have such antagonistic sentiments as these it is hard to determine. Says Lamon:

"Never did he let fall from his lips or his pen an expression which remotely implied the slightest faith in Jesus as the Son of God and the Saviour of Men."

On the other hand, in reply to an inquiry by Dr. Abbott, Wm. H. Herndon wrote, February 18, 1870:

"I maintain that Mr. Lincoln was a deeply religious man at all times and places, in spite of his transient doubts."

In the quotation given above from the Address of Lincoln to the colored people of Baltimore, who presented to him the Bible, the facts are against Lamon.

But Lincoln himself said more than once that he was forced to his knees, for he had no where else to go. His intimate friends knew him to be a praying man and many thought him a Christian. He once said to Mr. Chittenden, in 1864:

"That the Almighty does make use of human agencies and directly intervenes in human affairs, is one of the plainest statements of the Bible. I have had so many evidences of his direction, so many instances when I have been controlled by some other power than my own will, that I cannot doubt that this power comes from above. I frequently see my way clear to a decision when I am conscious that I have no sufficient facts upon which to found it. But I cannot recall one instance in which I have followed such a decision, where the results have been unsatisfactory; whereas, in almost every instance where I have yielded to the views of others, I have had occasion to regret it. I am satisfied that when the Almighty wants me to do or not to do a particular thing he finds a way of letting me know it."

In order to understand Lincoln's religious experience at all, we must understand him as well, for in exact proportion as we understand him we shall know his experience. A study of the man brings out three apparent traits and three more which are intensely subtle.

He was a man of deep humility. No man in his position could feel more democratic than did he. He was ever ready to acknowledge himself as being but an instrument; and he was intensely zealous for the honor of others to whom honor was due.

He was also humane. The traits of tenderness which led him to protect young animals and weak companions

during his youthful days, led him to guard the rights of the defenseless, when the greatest power given to man on earth, was in his hands. The widowed mother or wife never left him injured by unjust treatment; even the friendless drummer-boy could, and did literally, fly to the President's arms, and the tears of chief and subject mingled. The unfortunate soldier had no warmer friend than his Commander-in-chief, and the enslaved negro looked with veneration upon "Massa Linkum."

He was honest.

He was of an analytic habit. This first of the more subtle traits, was profoundly developed in him. It came out in the debates with Douglas, and may be traced in all his letters and speeches during the struggle for the Union.

He was philosophic. Everything had its cause, and Lincoln could not rest until he ascertained this cause. Thus, when he stood by the side of Niagara, the thought which impressed him most was not of its grandeur nor of its force, but whence its supply of water! This spirit lay at the bottom of all his analysis—he could no more help looking at things philosophically, than he could help looking at them earnestly; hence his safeness as a leader.

He was conservative. Often he had to tell people that he was no prophet, but a servant. He rested securely on what had been well done in the past, and no amount of seeming fallacy disconcerted him, for he always hastened to bring his philosophic habits of analysis to bear upon it. Hence, when he took up the new, he did not discard what was worth saving of the old, but, with unusual ability, he formed a combination of the two. Now, all these characteristics made themselves felt in his religious experience. In one's faith, none can be more humble than was Lincoln. It presents an aspect of sweetness and calmness which is startling when one considers his early life.

Again, his humaneness would not permit him to take the orthodox view of hell. He could not conceive of a God of love who should condemn his children to eternal pain. Seeing how he often shuddered in the presence of a duty which demanded stern justice, and because he laid aside every such case that he possibly could we may readily understand why his mind, or perhaps heart rather, would not

grasp the dogma of eternal punishment. Here he was weak. Many a rascal who richly deserved death escaped. Lincoln was simply unable to withstand the temptation to be lenient, and he was obliged to direct his attendants not to let in pleading women, whom they might suspect, for he could not resist their pleadings.

In his religious convictions as everywhere else, he was honest. Though he would like to have seen victory—God-ordained victory—at the outset of the struggle, he would not blindly claim it as a fact when it was not. Nor would he allow visiting delegations to gain a false impression of his religious views, even though he knew such intelligence might be unwelcome to them.

But, above all, he was honest with himself. No man can tell the agony of doubt through which he passed; only hints are given in some of his letters and remarks to others. But, it is evident that what religious experiences he did enjoy, came through mighty struggle; and what triumphs he gained were the result of intense spiritual travail. It was when he came to apply his mental characteristics in his searchings after religious truth, that Lincoln was plunged into the dark. His conservatism; his philosophic habits of analysis would not stand in the stead of simple faith. Thus, in the course of time, he learned to take all upon reason that he could, and to accept "the balance on faith." As with any other man, so with him, it was a lesson to be learned that matters spiritual cannot be measured, and weighed, and analyzed by the mental faculties of perception and reason.

If it were true of no other, there was one feature of his religious experience which would lead the student to believe it was all genuine; he struggled for light, and never receded from a position when once there was demonstrated to him its soundness. Consequently his religious growth was slow, but intensely sure. As he was a changed man, in almost every respect, on April 14, 1865, from what he was on March 4, 1861, so he was correspondingly developed in religious life.

The critic may inquire: "What has all this to do with the salvation of the Union?" The answer is plain; it was absolutely necessary if Lincoln was to endure the

strain his calling imposed upon him. To the religious man, it is evident that he never could have been successful without a firm trust in divine Providence; to the irreligious man, who has any confidence in Lincoln, it should be enough that he himself declared that, without the assistance of God, he should inevitably fail in his undertaking. Certainly, the servant of the people, in a time of supreme history-making, could not persistently interpret his commission wrongly! As backwoods life in Kentucky and Illinois developed his splendid physique, so that he was able to withstand the tax which no man, physically weak, could have endured for a fourth of the time he did; as his life amongst the hardy frontiersmen and shrewd circuit-lawyers; as his tilts with Douglas, and the minions of proslavery sentiment, strengthened his mental ability to deal with the same elements in open rebellion as no man less prepared could have done; so his religious experience, later, but as influential, and even more profound, taught him to interpret aright the religious life of the Nation, and supplied him with spiritual strength to endure the trial of its attempted dismemberment. He who will deny it is ready to deny the force of any existence beyond the physical and the mental. In a word, Lincoln's spiritual experience may be summed up as follows; though not demonstrative, he was deeply religious, though not an orthodox Christian, his deeds were in perfect harmony with the practices of the Christian faith.

In making an estimate of the services of Lincoln, one must keep in mind the elements of American life. Of us, as of no other people, it may be said we are a land of paradox. Our ancestors burned witches, and exiled Quakers; while their sons instituted a government which takes no cognizance of religion or of freedom of speech. Our forefathers raised such a din about the ears of George III., because he dared to tax us unjustly, that the crazy old monarch tumbled from his throne a confirmed misanthrope and hater of popular liberty, while for the sake of our own coffers, we kept a race in servile bondage eighty long years.

Publicists tell us that the one virtue of Nineteenth Century thought and action is that it tends to break down

the artificial barriers between man and man. Quite likely! But we are to-day, and have ever been, a Nation of aristocrats; and the trend of our aristocracy is the meanest ever evolved by the mind of man—*ordinarily!* We persist in maintaining an aristocracy of birth; not of that disgusting kind which obtains amongst some Nations, but we bow to heredity of brains and character. The founders of the Republic were of this class. There was Franklin and Hamilton, Jefferson and Adams, and Washington; behind them stood Winthrop and Bacon, Penn and Williams, and Standish; since them have come Sumner and Garrison, Webster and Seward, and Lincoln.

In an hour of crisis, every one looks for the ideal leader. English critics say that we are too prone to rely on this hope; that we have not confidence in ourselves. Be this as it is, we have never failed of developing a leader; and two of them are among the world's greatest. Not before, within the compass of a single century, have two such characters as Lincoln and Washington been evolved. A renowned American orator has said that Washington resembles a painting, set behind a glass; an object of admiration, but incapable of arousing much feeling. He is wrong. The child sees the wig and queue, the knee-breeches, and small-clothes, the slippers and lace front, but the man looks beyond, and beholds Yorktown and Valley Forge; he sees the Titan of the Constitutional convention, and the hand that virtually settled the conflict of 1861-1865, when it penned the Proclamation to David Bradford and his insurgents in Western Pennsylvania, maintaining the authority of the central government.

In his excellent defense of the rights of Washington's memory, Lodge has drawn with a pencil none too ardent.* But the fact must remain that while Washington was a great American, and a thorough American, he was not the ideal American. He was born before our independence was thought of, and died before the advent of a distinctive American literature. He was but four removes from British aristocracy and invested his own social life with many of the forms of British society.

Upon the other hand, Lincoln was solely a product of our own civilization. He knew nothing of royalty and

* See Lodge's Washington.

would have cared nothing for it if he had. His ancestry was of a kind which never experienced the exclusiveness of a refined social order. He grew from the soil and was ever of the soil, i. e. never had the desire to travel abroad. His earliest studies were in American history and American polity. He was evolved from the most characteristic type of American life. But his evolution was logical, as much so as that of Cromwell or Napoleon. True, he came unexpectedly; it was because he was to grapple with the subtle elements in our National existence. Though he sprang into the conflict unheeded, generations had contributed to his life. His parent-stock flourished in the "Old Dominion;" he himself came from the frontiers of Kentucky, and he developed into early manhood on the prairies of Illinois. As the Nation is wont to call George Washington its Father, so may it call Abraham Lincoln its son—for East and South and West were his home.

Thus was Lincoln the man of destiny; fitted for the undertaking of the problem his life so marvelously solved. It is sometimes claimed that his martyrdom enhances his glory; perhaps so, but not his worth. Let it not be forgotten that Washington died in an honored old age. Has time tarnished his fame?

Some one has said (a distinguished scholar he is) that Lincoln was not a type. But he was, else his life may now be written down as being a failure. It is inevitable that the American people shall for a time apotheosize his name; but they shall recover themselves. It is well to remember his failings, his lamentable weaknesses; any student of his life knows them—then he is not so far above us that his life may not be taken as a type. It was because his judgment was ripe on most great questions, that he was able to best direct in the preservation of the Union. Of all the reforms of our National life, past and to be, he had a healthy conception; and his life was practical. It lay in touch with the people's best possibilities, and hence it was a safe one.

A Democracy like ours is bound to produce at least three types of character; great, and in their places, essential.

The first type is represented by Jackson—unlettered,

headstrong, tyrannical. In his destruction of the National credit; in his inconsistent policies of administration; in his weak acquiescence in the whims of ignorant sovereignty, he represents the most dangerous elements of Democracy; the flounders and the incapables, upon whose graves must rise the true structure of real Democracy.

The second type is represented by a character untrained in scholastic lore, but a profound student and accomplished scholar in the school of life—Abraham Lincoln was not a partisan for he was ever guided by reason. No man before him was so truly Democratic as he. His name was apt—"Father of a Multitude." In certain respects, i. e., in the development of heart and of mind, no type of Democratic character shall soon surpass him, for in him is embodied the best features of Democracy—its saving elements, and the substance of what it must ever be.

The third type of Democracy shall be built from the second. Its exponent shall have the polish of the schools. Like Lincoln he shall be free from the taint of false pride—either of intellect or of place; he shall have the culture of a century's uninterrupted onward achievement. Like Lincoln he shall feel his ground, and be sure. While great problems are before the American people, and pressing for solution, the fundamental problem of them all has been disposed of; the Union is perpetual. If Abraham Lincoln had led the American people to the accomplishment of anything less than this, his life would have been counted a failure; he could not have led them to the accomplishment of anything greater!

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