

**ADDRESS OF  
HON. JAMES R. SHEFFIELD**

**AT THE  
LINCOLN DINNER  
OF THE  
REPUBLICAN CLUB  
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**WALDORF-ASTORIA  
FEBRUARY 12, 1916**



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Feb. 12, 1916.

*Ladies and Gentlemen, Guests and Fellow-members of the  
Republican Club:*

We meet in memory of Abraham Lincoln.

In his name, and on behalf of the Republican Club of the City of New York, I bid you cordial welcome.

Of all our national heroes, he is the one we love best. Of all our public holidays, his birthday is the most truly American. Of all the noble things for which this Club has stood, nothing reflects greater honor upon it than this annual commemorative feast. For this is its thirtieth consecutive Lincoln Dinner.

If it had done nothing more than inaugurate this custom, now followed throughout the land, the Republican Club would have justified its existence and won an enduring place in the halls of fame.

But it did far more than that. It was upon the petition and urgent insistence of this Club that this day was, in 1896, made a legal holiday in the State of New York, and it was largely through its initiative and effort that over twenty commonwealths have now declared the 12th of February to be a legal Saint's day.

It seems, therefore, especially appropriate that we should gather at the invitation of the Republican Club. In no spirit of vain glory, but of honorable pride; in no spirit of partisan advantage, but of deepest patriotism, it welcomes to this feast all lovers of Lincoln and of the liberty and union to which he gave the last full measure of human devotion.

It believes that the setting apart of one day in each year to enable men to rivet attention upon what he did and what he

was would make better Americans of us all, no matter from what racial stock we spring, from what shores we come, or under what Party banners we march.

It is not amid the clashing interests of men, the activities of trade, the noise of machinery, or the clinking of gold, that patriotism is fostered and love of country made supreme. It is only when the hum of industry is stilled, when the banks, the shops, the busy marts of trade, the offices, the courts and the schools are closed, when men are freed from the engrossing cares and duties of the hour, that opportunity is given to think deeply of God and country, and our obligations to each. It is only at such a time that men, recalling his life and his death, may commune with the great spirit of Lincoln, and, in the silence of a world at rest, almost hear the anguished heart-beats of this human savior of a race.

It is then that the laborer, released from his daily toil, may remember what Lincoln did to make labor free; that youth may learn the lessons taught by the majesty of his life and the martyrdom of his death; that wealth and power may pause to be dedicated anew to the keeping of this land a land of equal opportunity and equal rights for all men, rich and poor, and that all of us, on this one day of each year, may assemble together and search our consciences to see if we are striving to make THE America we possess worthy of THE America he died to save.

And so we hold this Lincoln Dinner; and we here each year repeat the story of his life,—not because it is not fully known to all men, but because it is one of the two great stories the world never tires of hearing, and that never grows old.

There are characters of whom the last word will never be said. For twenty centuries the civilized world has listened with rapt attention to the oft repeated story of the cross, and yet, at the end of almost two thousand years, the story of His life still thrills the multitude, and the symbol of His death still points humanity to heaven.

There is mystery as well as majesty in true greatness. Sim-

plicity is an attribute of the strongest man and the sweetest child. He who possesses all of these will forever be an inspiration for the songs and eloquence of mankind.

It is no disparagement of the age in which Lincoln lived that his true greatness was not seen until his death. The processes of growth in blades of grass, in flowers of the field, in trees of the forest and in the children of men, are hidden from our eyes. We sometimes only see when the product is ready for the reaper. We miss the plant until the flower unfolds. We vaguely saw the forest, but we did not see the tree until its stately top appeared above its fellows, and even then its full stature was only known when the woodsman's axe had lain the giant prone upon the earth.

As the tenderest wild flower may spring up amid the desolation of a wilderness, as the rarest orchid may grow upon the trunk of a dying tree, as the noblest pine may start within the crevice of a rock, so the fairest flower of civilization and manhood may start in a wilderness, surrounded by poverty and nurtured by want. So it actually did start in the silence of a great wilderness 107 years ago to-night.

I like to think upon that lowly beginning, not because it was so humble, but because it was so in keeping with the great mother-heart of nature when she plans her mightiest triumphs.

And as he began, so he grew. Strength is the result of effort. Fettered by no luxury, bare-footed, bare-headed, bare-handed, he fought and struggled with man and nature, up through the growing years, until the wild plant of a Kentucky forest blossomed into the perfect flower of a completed manhood, and mind and body and spirit were ready for the supreme test.

Who cares now that his walk was awkward and his features plain. We only remember that the homely beauty of that face was indelibly stamped with the soul of the Creator, and his awkward but never faltering footsteps led a people to the saving of a nation and the freedom of a race.

Such was Abraham Lincoln. His life and his memory now

belong, as Stanton said, "To all the ages." As he lived for all men and for all time, no one people, no one age, and no one Party can ever claim him as exclusively its own. But the precious inheritance of the political doctrines in which he believed, the political principles for which he fought, and the Party faith in which he died, rests as a sacred trust upon the Republican Party alone.

This is a Government of law administered, not by men, but by parties. Every free representative Republic is ruled by Party Government. Philosophers, reformers, and many men who are neither, would have it otherwise. But facts are stubborn things, especially in a Republic—and two parties, one dominant and the other almost dominant, are among the established facts to be reckoned with when your business is the government of Republics. Lincoln knew these truths far better than most.

It was just sixty-six years ago, the 27th of this month, that Lincoln made his memorable address in Cooper Union. He spoke as patriot and American, but he also spoke as a Republican. And this Club, true to its traditions, fearlessly maintains that the Party to which Lincoln appealed from the platform of Cooper Union was his Party then, and it is *his* Party now.

Through victory and defeat, in spite of abuse from without and betrayal from within, caring little who carried the banners, so they beckoned humanity sanely onward and upward, to a higher political plane and a nobler national life, this Republican Party is the only one that through all its history has never lost touch with Lincoln.

It is the same Party that twice elected him President of the United States; that unwaveringly upheld his efforts through four awful years of civil war; that stood back of and made effective the Emancipation Proclamation; that for the first time in history made good in fundamental law the paper declaration "All men are created free and equal," and has continued to make good that declaration in every State in the

Union where that party has held control; that with "malice toward none" bound up the Nation's wounds and fulfilled with honor every national obligation at home or abroad; the same Party that has ever been guided by his teaching; inspired by his example; and the first to do reverence and honor to his imperishable memory.

It faces to-day, as it faced in 1860, a Presidential election. It sees again dangers to the Republic, peril to our national interests, and free government here, and elsewhere throughout the world, on trial for its very life.

Is it mere chance that it goes again, as it went in 1860, to that City on the shores of Lake Michigan where it first nominated Lincoln, there to re-write the old confession of Party faith, and to choose from its own Party membership one who will re-establish the Presidential dynasty of Abraham Lincoln?

Oh, Lincoln! Abraham Lincoln! When the great Party of your love and your allegiance meets in June in the City of Chicago, may it still be guided by your spirit and inspired by your example. May it realize that in doing honor to your memory it will do honor no less to its history and itself. Following your teaching, it will reaffirm its belief in the things that have made this country great, and this people free. It will make clear its purpose that no man or group of men, however great, can jeopardize the liberty of any other man, however weak, and that above the hissing of traitors at home, or the roar of artillery abroad, shall be heard the voice of America demanding from a world in arms that its honor be maintained and its every right respected.

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