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A D D R E S S

ON

The Death of

ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

President of the United States.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

LEXINGTON LITERARY ASSOCIATION,

NEW YORK, APRIL 19, 1865.

BY

JOHN DAVIDSON.

NEW YORK:

JOHN J. REED, BOOK AND JOB PRINTER,

43 & 45 CENTRE STREET.

1865.

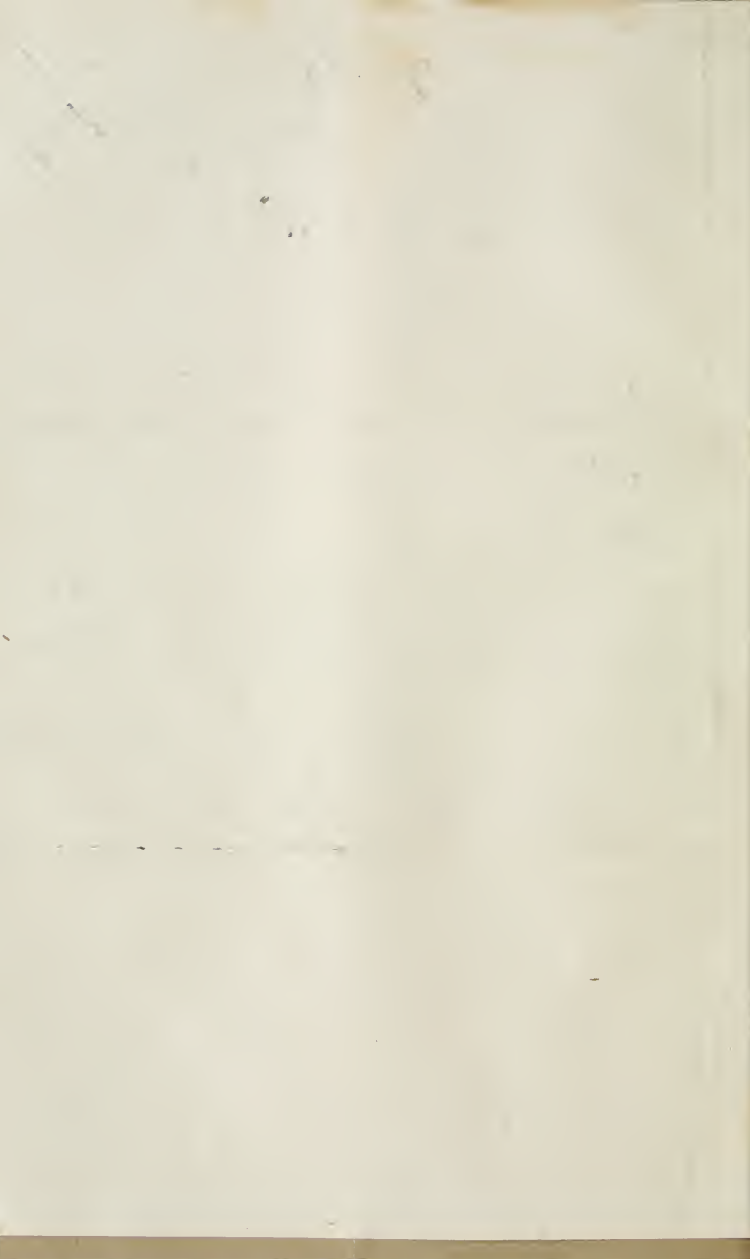
290. Broadway N.Y.
Jan'y 7th 1867

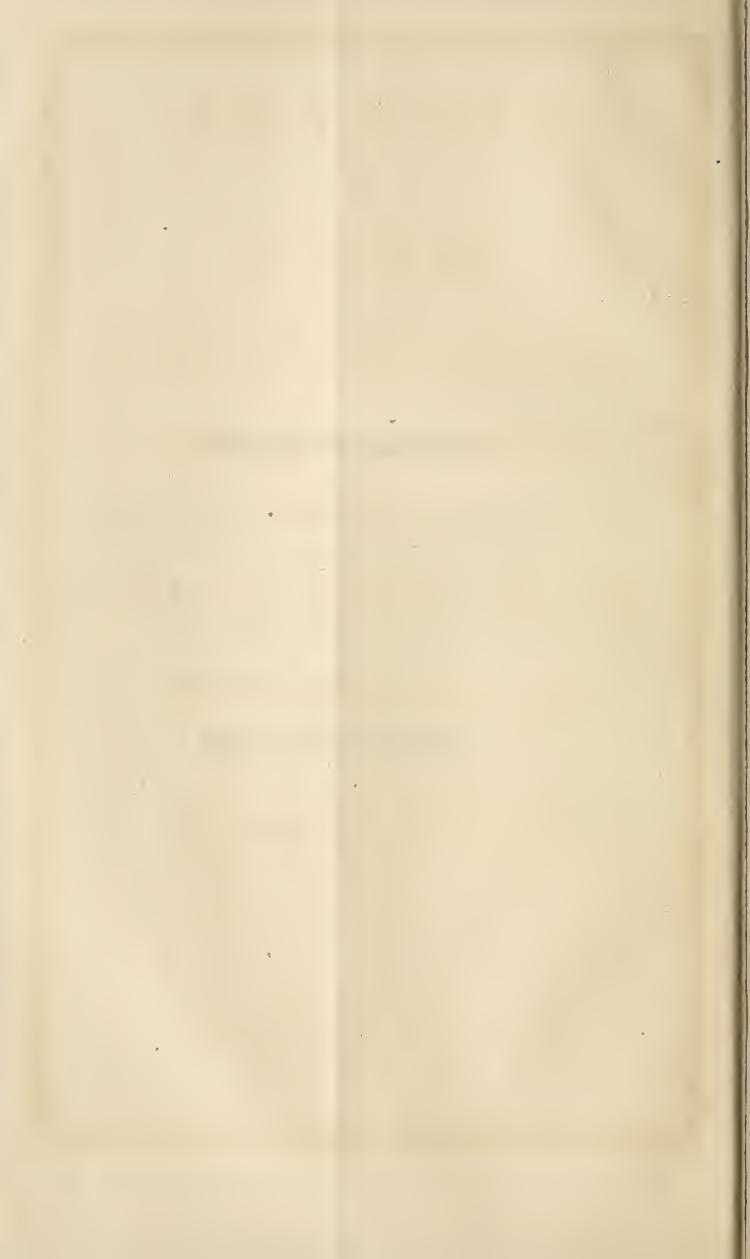
Mr. C. A. Hart

Dear Sir,

Yours of the
5th inst. is received, in reply
thereto I would state, that there
were 5000 copies printed of the
address Apl. 19th and 10000
copies of "Our Sleeping Heroes"

Yours with respect
John Caniden,





ADDRESS

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ADDRESS.



HARK ! I hear the minute gun and solemn sounding bell ! I see our city, the busy haunts of commerce, draped in the garments of mourning ; and the flag of our country, which a few days ago spread its ample and beautiful folds to the winds of heaven, now drooping in sorrow beneath a nation's anguish.

I listen to the throb of the American heart, and to day it beats in solemn stillness. Alas ! the mighty has fallen. Our pilot in every storm,—our guiding star in every trouble,—our sentinel in every danger, is now no more ! Clad in the habiliments of the tomb, the father of our country is now sleeping his last and unwaking sleep, from whose slumbers no sound shall awake him—till the final appearing of the just on the resurrection morn.

The great calamity overwhelms me, and I feel myself ill-fitted to discharge the duties of this solemn hour.

I would fain draw the picture of the life of our departed President—but before the members of this body the task is useless. His life, his fame, his name, are as familiar as household words. And yet the occasion should not pass without noticing a few of the leading traits in the life of this truly great

man. Let us draw near to his lifeless form, and bending over the silent, peaceful, eternal slumberer, draw lessons from his life useful for ours. Brought up in poverty, and in the very lowest walks of life passing his childhood—youth's bright, sunny hour to him was one continuous struggle with fortune. Learning at an early period of his days that this life was a hard and thorny road, he carved his way through every obstacle and triumphed in every conflict. The thorns of adversity were to him as the spur is to the horse. And if he did not view, he certainly put in practice the dream of the infant Hercules, when Luxury and Virtue appearing to the god of strength, when in his slumbers he was addressed by Luxury—"My ways are happy—you shall have a cheerful, careless life if you follow me," and Virtue—"My path is thorny, troublesome and laborious days are before you, but afterwards glory and immortality," and grasping at the hand of Virtue, exclaimed—"Thee will I follow, to thee devote my life."

In choosing the latter, he sought the only true path to enduring greatness and honor. And in that dim twilight, wherein the bright pictures of youth blend in the stern realities of manhood, and manhood's struggles and trials blend with the rainbow span of youth's bright pictured years, he realized it was

"Not all of life to live,
Nor all of death to die."

Without feeling the advancing steps of our lamented dead, suffice it to say, that by his own individuality he passed from the lowest to the highest rung in the ladder—from the depths of obscurity to the highest point of honor and station in the gift of the American nation—from his rude cabin in the We tern

wilderness, to the supreme chair of the nation, once the seat of Washington, Adams and Jackson.

Rebellion, foul and hell-like, then broke forth. State after State wheeled into the line of armed resistance to the Constitution, till the whole Southern half of the nation was a seething caldron of treason. Still, with a father's love, he spoke to them on that memorable 4th of March, 1861—"Intelligence, patriotism, Christianity, and a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land, are still competent to adjust, in the best way, all our present difficulty. In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The Government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without yourselves being the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the Government! while I have the most solemn one to 'preserve, protect and defend it.' I am lothe to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic cord of memory, stretching from every battle-field and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over the broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as they surely will be, by the better angels of our nature."

Regardless of these tender words, cannon and mortar, shot and shell, opened on Sumter's walls. The conflict forced upon him, he called upon the loyal North, and not in vain.

"Thrice doubly armed is he
Who hath his quarrel just."

For four years we have been passing through the Red Sea of affliction as a nation. We have witnessed our brothers and

sous go forth to battle to return no more. We have witnessed the starry folds of our beloved flag bathed in blood—we have in this four years seen it floating in triumph and in defeat, trailed by its foes in the dust. We have seen the clear and the clouded sky. We have beheld hope and despair. We have rejoiced at victory and mourned at defeat. Our hopes have been exalted and as often blasted. We have had our day of doubting and our hour of humiliation. Yet amid all our hopes, our joys, our tears, we have ever turned to the pilot who stood by the helm undaunted by dismay, and in serene composure hushed our troubled thoughts to sleep. Our beacon light in danger ! Our Eddystone in the storm !

This, sir, is the hour of humiliation for America. Her Chief Magistrate is struck down in the Capital of the Republic. In the very hour of victory—when the whole heart of the nation, with one acclaim, was sending up to the Pilgrims' and our fathers' God the anthems of praise—when flag, banner and bunting were streaming to the breeze—when the loud huzzas of our victorious armies were rending the air—when the grand old army of the Potomac sent up the cheer for victory won and Richmond taken, and echoed over hill and dale, till Sheridan's troops caught up the strain, and sent the echoes back again ! And from the South came the song of victory from Sherman and his conquering legions ; and still the chorus swelled from Thomas and from Stoneman, till the whole land was filled with rejoicings, and the very portals of heaven made to ring with the joyous shouts of a people who saw their triumph nigh.

Bright indeed was the future,—auspicious the coming day. Voice and instrument were alike inadequate to tell our feelings, and the great heart of the nation could only find its outgushings

in the universal song sung in mid-day in the thronged streets of our busy metropolis—

“ Praise God from whom all blessings flow.”

Alas ! alas ! for human joy—the glad song had not yet ended, when our rejoicings were turned to grief—our huzzas to tears. Quicker than with the wings of the wind flew the tidings that ABRAHAM LINCOLN, President of the United States, was shot by a Southern rebel ! And faster sped the mournful fact that at twenty-two minutes past seven o'clock, April 15th, 1865, the spirit of the good man passed into the presence of his God ! What a change ! Oh, my country ! What a spectacle for the present, for future generations, and for the historic page ! Well may we bedeck ourselves with mourning. Well may we enshroud our country's flag in black. Well may the scalding tears run down the cheeks of youth, manhood and age. Yea, fire the minute-gun—toll the mournful bell—half-mast the starry flag—for America mourns to-day as she never mourned before. Deep indeed has been her tribulation in the past, but deeper far the tribulation and grief of this hour.

Misguided men ! think you that in striking down our honored Chief you kill that Northern spirit of love for our whole land—that by this means you paralyze the heart and unnerve the arm of freemen ? Nay—we mourn our grief, but we draw renewed resolution from his prostrate form that the labors so nobly begun by him, shall go on to a full, complete restoration of every foot of American soil to the American flag—the battle will not stop—it must go on.

“ Freedom's battle once begun,
Bequeathed from bleeding sire to son,
Though baffled oft, is ever won.”

The last act of this great life—thus ruthlessly taken from us—was an act of clemency and mercy to these very traitors of the South. They know not what they do. In their blindness and fury they sent the fatal bullet into the brain of the best and truest, wisest and most magnanimous friend the South ever had.

Wonder not, my friend, at this closing act in the four years' drama. What else could be expected from men who, without the slightest provocation, could raise the arm of rebellion against our common Country and Constitution; which, as Alexander H. Stephens truthfully said, in a speech delivered in the secession convention of Georgia, on the 31st day of January, 1861 :

“It is for the overthrow (the rebellion) of the American Government, established by our common ancestry, cemented and built up by their sweat and blood, and founded on the broad principles of Right, Justice, and Humanity. And, as such, I must declare here, as I have often done before, and which has been repeated by the greatest and wisest of statesmen and patriots in this and other lands, that it is the best and freest Government, the most equal in its rights, the most just in its decisions, the most lenient in its measures, and the most inspiring in its principles to elevate the race of men, that the sun of heaven ever shone upon.”

Yet, against this just, lenient, humane, and inspiring Government, they raised their parricidal hands. What else could be expected from men who for two hundred and forty years have separated husband and wife, mother and child, a defiance alike of the laws of God and man, men who have sold on the auction block the unhappy children of Africa,—who have wounded and beat, bruised and

scourged his fellow man, and even women and helpless children,—who have deprived them of that knowledge without which man is little above the beasts of the field,—who have supported that accursed and damnable institution of slavery—"The sum of all villainies"—and with polygamy, the relic of a barbarous age? What else, I ask, could be expected from men who would, by a process of slow and gradual starvation and exposure—worse than the crimes of the Sepoys of India, and the ancient tortures of the Persian Empire; worse, a thousand fold, than the history of any age or nation, of any race or people, at any time, ancient or modern, has ever revealed to us—put to death sixty thousand Union prisoners. You read of recantations when martyrs were brought to the stake, and the thumb-screw of the middle ages applied. But you will search in vain for one recantation from the lips of these god-like martyrs. Even now I can hear the echo of their songs of glad cheer in the rebel dungeon. From Libby Prison—that worse than Calcutta Hole, and Belle Isle—worse than Austrian dungeon; from Andersonville, Florence, and Millen the echo comes, borne on the breeze—

"Rally round the Flag, boys,
Rally once again,
Shouting the battle cry of Freedom!"

What else could be expected from men who burn crowded cities, and apply the incendiary torch to house, theatre, and hotel at the dead hour of night, endangering innocent life without regard to age, sex or condition?

The same malignant, fiendish spirit has burned our merchantmen and robbed their passengers; landed helpless babes and tottering age upon barren islands, and in affected climes. The last and most fearful crime, the assassination of our Chief Magistrate, is, I say, in

keeping with all the acts of traitors, whose motto seems to be, like Milton's rebel angel,—

“To reign is worth ambition though in hell.
Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven.”

But why speculate on traitors and their treasonable acts, when the dead form of our loved President lies in the embrace of death, in the Presidential mansion !

Death loves a shining mark at which to aim his arrows. Assassination has always been the desire of mean and dastard souls. Lurking in the darkness of the night ; crawling behind the back. Entering by false pretences the chamber of the Secretary of State—lying upon a bed of pain and perhaps of death, prostrate in mind and body—the assassin plunges again and again his fatal knife. Southern chivalry ! Blush, my countrymen ! Humanity, hide thy face ! Justice stands paralyzed. A Nation mourns. Where, tell me where, in the light of these facts and in the history of the last four years, where is your boasted Southern magnanimity ?

The history of the whole world may be searched for a parallel, and in vain. True, Cæsar was assassinated at the age of fifty-six, in the Roman Senate, in the year 44 before the Christian era. The assassins, led by Brutus and Cassius, inflicted twenty-three wounds upon the prostrate Emperor. Cæsar had many virtues and many faults ; but the charge laid at his door falls powerless when applied to Abraham Lincoln.

William of Nassau, Prince of Orange, the founder of the Dutch Republic ; a man of virtue and marked ability, met the same fate, at the murderous hands of Balthasar Gerard, in 1584, at Delft.

Henry IV, of France, surnamed the Great, son of Antony of Bourbon, king of Navarre,—brave, frank, liberal, and sincerely de-

sirous to promote the happiness of his people—after a glorious reign of twenty-one years, met death by the assassin hand of Ravailiac, on the 14th of May, 1610.

Abraham Lincoln, Sixteenth President of the United States,—honest, just, liberal, patriotic, of uncommon common sense ; a worthy successor of George Washington ; a ruler whom the nation loved ; inflexible in right, never cast down in the darkest hour of gloom—a man and a President :

“ Take him for all in all,
We ne'er shall look upon his like again,”

met death on the 15th day of April, 1865, in the fifty-sixth year of his age, by the assassin hand of Southern chivalry.

The great metoric star of New England, Daniel Webster, once said : “ They can take away my life, can destroy my name, but they can never undo what I have done for my country.” Our lamented President can adopt these words ; for the benefits conferred on America by this man can neither be undone nor forgotten, until the grand dissolution of Empires, Kingdoms and Republics shall announce to a slumbering world, the second appearing of the Son of Man.

Washington bade farewell to earth, and passed from mortal cares to immortal bliss as an Emancipationist. Abraham Lincoln trod the same hallowed ground as the Emancipator of a Nation's Slaves.

Our late President was no more noted for patriotism—which was of that high and pure type, soaring above party cliques and creeds, and comprehending as his duty the entire circle of States, and every beat of whose heart was true to America—than he was for his simplicity,—the simplicity of great men with great minds. His intellect of the highest and purest mould, he could take the telescope of

his mind and, with the eye of patriotism, look into the dark future, and, through the bursting heart-strings of a nation and the smoke of carnage, discern the clear, unclouded sky, and the bow of promise, as a canopy, spanning the American nation.

Honest and just in every act of his life, public and private, known and unknown, he has earned for himself a name in this particular, which will be classified by the future historian with Aristides, the Just ; a name greater than Conqueror. His heart and soul large enough to embrace his whole country. Every act of his life prompted by the purest motives. Never hasty, but always sure. He weighed his words and acts, as in the scale of Justice. His life has fled ; but his name will live—it cannot die. Graven upon the hearts of loyal millions is the record of his deeds. Death may steal his life, but the keen tooth of time cannot touch his name. Generation succeeding generation will tell of the great man. Painters will delineate on canvass ; sculptors, in marble ; poets, in song ; orators, in living words ; and historians, on the recording page, will each and all vie, with a holy emulation, in committing to imperishable works and words the many virtues and deeds of that great and good man's heart and life.

The four millions of ransomed and redeemed sons and daughters of Africa will lisp, in softened accents and with streaming tears, the virtues of that heart who, with a God-like simplicity and power, broke in pieces the clanking and galling chains of a barbarous servitude.

What need of monuments, marble column, or granite shafts, to perpetuate his fame ? It is American. It can never—never die ! Circling years and rolling centuries will but add increased lustre to that name, now bright as the first clear streak of day. And as future generations see and realize the full glory of the meridian sun of universal liberty, and feel its benignant rays, blessing the land

with its untold, uncounted mercies, they will with one accord crown Abraham Lincoln the morning star of American Liberty.

* "Should no marble column raise to his memory, nor engraved stone bear record of his deeds, yet will his name be as lasting as the land he honored.

"Marble columns may indeed moulder into dust ; time may erase all impress from the crumbling stone, yet will his fame remain, for with American Liberty it rose, and with American Liberty only can it perish."

In the midst of our profound sorrow, let us look up to that God who in mercy heals all our woes. Our loss is His gain. Removed from the world so suddenly ; angels bore his pure spirit, on the wings of love, to the bosom of his Father and his God, to dwell forever with the blessed and pure of heart, and to enter upon that supreme rest reserved for the people of the Lord. Let us wipe our weeping eyes, and, through the cloud of mourning, penetrate, with the eye of faith, the glorious reward upon which he has entered. Behold the welcome, as he enters the gates of the Celestial City. Met by the purified spirit of Washington and the vast congregation of Revolutionary sires ; welcomed by the three hundred and thirty-thousand warriors who bled and died for their country's cause,—see there the sixty thousand martyrs of Rebel barbarity, now clad in shining garments. And in that great throng I recognize my loved brother, William, a noble martyr for this noble cause, a crown of victory upon his forehead ; and, it seems to me, that with higher and loftier accents of praise, he tuned his voice and harp, as he beheld our martyred President pass through the shining hosts, amid

* Webster's Eulogy on Adams and Jefferson.

the heavenly song of triumph, to the Throne of God, to receive that crown which never fades away.

May the mantle of our departed President, like that of Elisha, fall upon his successor. Heaven grant that he may be enflamed by the same patriotism ; guided by the same wisdom ; trust in the same God. Let us sustain him with heart, with soul, with prayer. Let the blessing and benediction of heaven rest upon him. May he trust in our fathers' God, and he will not be confounded. May he learn in humility the great lesson of the hour. And oh, that our loved land may soon behold the white-winged messenger of Peace,—which we now see approaching through the cloud and storm of war—spread her silvery wings over America, ransomed, redeemed, regenerated, reunited, disenthralled.

God bless Andrew Johnson.

“ God bless our native land,
Firm may she ever stand
Thro' storms and night.”

