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# LINCOLN LITERATURE

ADDRESS BY

WILLIAM H. LAMBERT,

BREVET MAJOR, U. S. V.

Mr Daniel Fish

with regards

Wm W Lusk



ABRAHAM LINCOLN  
1809-1909

LINCOLN LITERATURE

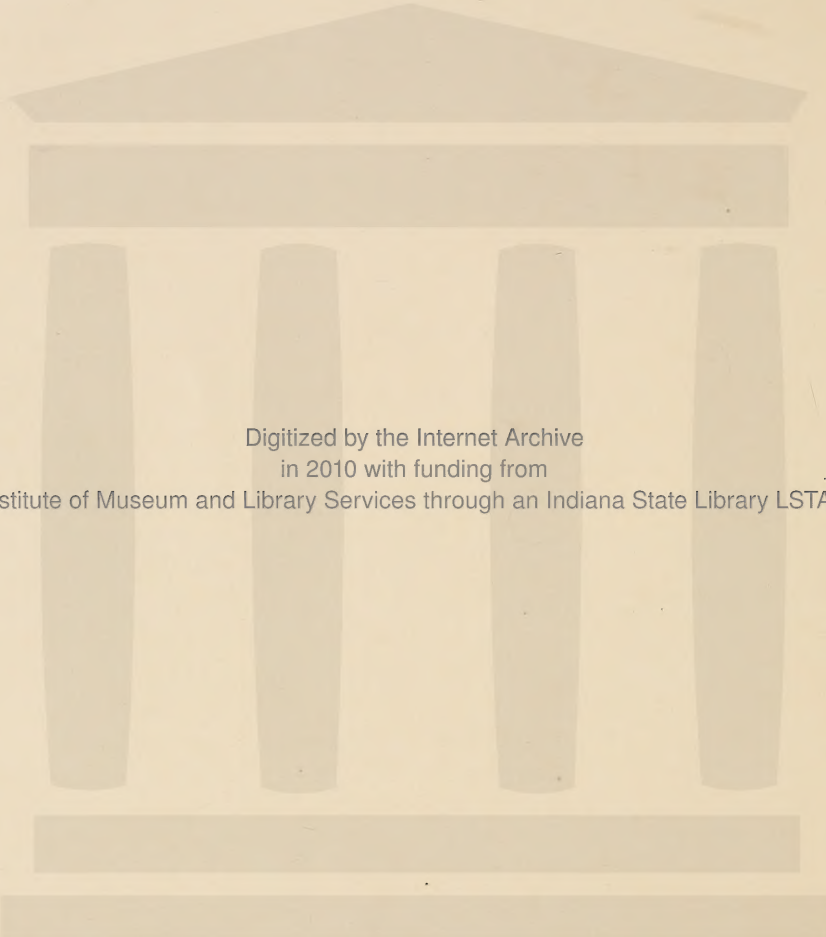
ADDRESS BY

WILLIAM H. LAMBERT,  
BREVET MAJOR, U. S. V.

Before the

Commandery of the State of Pennsylvania  
MILITARY ORDER OF THE LOYAL LEGION  
Memorial Meeting

February 3, 1909



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*"I cannot find in any country a special department of literature collecting around the name of any statesman of the nineteenth century like that which celebrates the name of our Martyr President. This mass of literature is produced and collected and cherished because the hearts of men and women go out to Lincoln. It is not mere admiration for his mental and moral qualities, but a silent response to the magnetic influence of his humanity, his unselfish and world-embracing charity. And thus though dead he yet speaketh to men, women, and children who never saw him, and so, I think, he will continue to speak to generations yet unborn."*

*Horace White in "Abraham Lincoln in 1854."*

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## LINCOLN LITERATURE.

Whether, or not, it be true, as has been asserted, that the personal literature relating to Abraham Lincoln exceeds in extent that pertaining to any other human being, it is probable that in proportion to the length of his public career the printed matter relating to him is greater in bulk than that evoked by the life and work of any statesman, or leader, who preceded him.

Lincoln's notable public service was comprised within five years, for while he had served a term in the National House of Representatives, and had been twice a candidate for election to the United States Senate, and had become famous through his great debate with Stephen A. Douglas, so little was the impression that he had made upon the political literature of the time, that his name was not included in either of the two popular biographical compilations published in 1859-60, giving sketches of the lives of the men whose names were therein mentioned as possible candidates for the Presidential nominations of their respective parties. Had Lincoln died before 1860 it is possible that his biography would have been confined to the brief paragraph in the "Dictionary of Congress," published in 1859, or to its extension, in the later edition of that work, to include perhaps the facts of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates and the date of his death.

The literature then to which your attention is now asked, and which has attained such vast dimensions, is that relating to the life and services of a man

who, unknown to the mass of his countrymen in 1860, completed his career within five years thereafter, having attained renown second only to Washington, who as soldier, statesman and President had served his country forty years.

It will be understood, of course, that the word literature is here used in its broadest sense as comprising books and pamphlets directly relating to Lincoln, irrespective of their literary quality, or lack of it, but not including the greater mass of printed matter relating generally to the War of the Rebellion, most or all of which might properly be included in a bibliography of him who was the Commander-in-Chief.

Many of Lincoln's early political speeches in Illinois had been printed in the local papers, some had appeared in pamphlet form, as also had at least three of his speeches in Congress, but that part of Lincoln literature that comprises his own writings may be said to have begun with the issue in book form during the spring of 1860, of the Lincoln and Douglas Debates, which publication attained prior to the National election that year a sale of about 30,000 copies. Subsequently to this publication, and during his candidacy for the Presidency, numerous compilations of these and others of his speeches were made as parts of the many campaign lives, while during his Presidency wide circulation was given to all of his public utterances, and the number of separate issues of his letters and his speeches was very great. Full collections of these and of the earlier speeches were published during the political campaign of 1864, and immediately after his death numerous volumes appeared giving extracts from his various writings; among the earliest and best of these were "The Martyr's Monument," edited by Dr. Francis Lieber, and "The President's Words," compiled by the Rev. Edward Everett Hale. Such compilations have continued to be popular, among the later issues of similar character the volumes edited by Bliss Perry and Richard Watson Gilder and that in the "Everyman's Library" edited by the Hon. James Bryce, the British Ambassador, have especial value.

No authoritative, or complete, collection of Lincoln's works appeared until 1894, when the Century Company issued them in two volumes, edited by his former private secretaries Nicolay and Hay, as a fitting sequel to their great History of Lincoln. Recently a new edition of the works has been published



by the F. D. Tandy Co., of New York, which is extended to twelve volumes by the addition of much hitherto unpublished material and by the use of larger and more generously spaced type, as well as by the inclusion of a number of eulogistic tributes. Almost simultaneously another edition, not so complete, but beautifully printed and supplemented by Schurz's essay, Choate's address and a biography by Noah Brooks, was issued by G. P. Putnam's Sons; still later an abridgment edited by Marion Mills Miller, prefaced by a life by Henry C. Whitney, and comprising nine handy volumes, appeared under the auspices of the Current Literature Co., a special feature of this edition is the omission of the purely formal documents, and the classification of the letters under the names of the recipients instead of solely chronologically as in the other editions.

The biographical literature had its beginning in the brief sketch already mentioned, which is, so far as I know, the earliest appearance of a biographical sketch of Lincoln in a book. It is especially interesting because it was based upon the material furnished by Lincoln himself, who, in answer to Lanman's request for the information requisite for the purpose of his "Dictionary of Congress," wrote: "Born February 12, 1809, in Hardin County, Kentucky. Education defective. Profession, a Lawyer. Have been a Captain of Volunteers in Black Hawk War. Postmaster at a very small office. Four times a member of the Illinois Legislature, and was a member of the lower house of Congress." With the substitution of the word "limited" for "defective" and a few slight verbal changes by the compiler, this sketch was printed in the "Dictionary," which was copyrighted in 1858 and bears the imprint of J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1859.

The friends of Lincoln who wanted him nominated for the Presidency, realized the importance of making the country better acquainted with him, and one of them, Jesse W. Fell, formerly of Pennsylvania, solicited the brief autobiographical sketch that was used as the basis of articles commending Lincoln, which appeared in papers of the Middle and Eastern States. Subsequently, but prior to the nomination, Lincoln on the 27th of February, 1860, delivered his great speech at the Coöper Institute in New York. This speech which was printed in full in leading New York journals made a profound impression, and was further widely circulated in pamphlet form in several editions

and in various languages, one edition being printed with special care and fully annotated by Charles C. Nott and Cephas Brainerd, of the New York bar, who were much impressed by Lincoln's thorough acquaintance with the historic facts referred to in his address.

Lincoln was nominated for the Presidency, May 18th, 1860; on the next day the New York "Tribune" contained announcements by five publishers that they "have in press and will speedily publish" lives of the new candidate of whom so much less was known than of Seward and Chase and others who had been his chief competitors. Meanwhile appeal had been made for still fuller information than that which had been imparted to Mr. Fell, and the data furnished in answer to this new request was the foundation for the several campaign lives, which, supplemented by description of Lincoln's person and his home, by copious quotations from his speeches and in some instances by imagination, attained fair proportions.

The first of these works issued was the "Wigwam Edition" by Rudd & Carleton, New York, and was of anonymous authorship. Zeal for priority of publication apparently outweighed care for accuracy of statement, and probably accounts for the author's abbreviation of the subject's Christian name to Abram, and the assertion that his father died when the boy was six years old, and that the mother was left with several children, the facts being that the mother died when her son was nine years of age, that but two children survived her, and the father lived until 1851. Notwithstanding the author's material ignorance of the immediate family history, he boldly asserted that his hero "has Revolutionary blood in his veins, the Lincolns of Massachusetts were his progenitors, General Lincoln was of the same family," facts which were apparently unknown to Abraham himself, who said of his ancestors that "an effort to identify them with the New England family of the same name ended in nothing more definite than a similarity of Christian names in both families."

One of these campaign lives was written by Mr. William D. Howells and was, I believe, the first of his books to bear his name as author; recognizing the disadvantages under which the life was written the author prefaced it thus: "When one has written a hurried book one likes to dwell upon the fact that if the time



had not been wanting one could have made it a great deal better. This fact is of the greatest comfort to the author, and not of the slightest consequence to anybody else. It is perfectly reasonable, therefore, that every writer should urge it. A work which seeks only to acquaint people with the personal history of a man for whom they are asked to cast their votes, and whose past ceases to concern them in proportion as his present employs them, will not be numbered with those immortal books which survive the year of their publication. It does not challenge criticism, it fulfills the end of its being if it presents facts and incidents in a manner not altogether barren of interest. It is believed that the following biographical sketch of Abraham Lincoln will be found reliable. The information upon which the narrative is based, has been derived chiefly from the remembrance of Mr. Lincoln's old friends and may therefore be considered authentic. It is hardly necessary to add that no one but the writer is responsible for his manner of treating events and men." Possibly because of this literary service the author was in 1861 appointed to the Consulate, from which resulted his charming books "Venetian Life" and "Italian Journeys." This was not the only campaign biography written by Mr. Howells, who in 1876 wrote a life of Rutherford B. Hayes, probably inspired to this effort, less by the success of the first, than by his personal relation to his later subject.

Mr. Howells was not the first eminent American author who wrote a "campaign life," for he had been anticipated by Hawthorne who wrote a biography of Franklin Pierce, a task probably not less difficult than Howells' first venture, and which won a much more lucrative reward in the Consulate at Liverpool.

Several of the lives issued in 1860 were compiled by authors who with equal facility would have written the lives of any other candidates, having in other books covered widely divergent biographical subjects.

A book entitled to special mention is that by James Q. Howard, published by Follett Foster & Co., of Columbus, whose original announcement that the work had been authorized by Mr. Lincoln brought from him a letter of protest which was so effectual that when the book appeared it bore this note by the author, "The following sketch of the life of Abraham Lincoln embraces simply the material facts in his history. Fictitious embellishments to suit the varied

imaginings of readers are left to be supplied by the readers themselves. For whatever the sketch contains the writer alone is responsible."

The life that probably had the largest circulation was that published simultaneously by the New York "Tribune" and the Chicago "Press and Tribune," in compact and inexpensive form, especially adapted for campaign distribution. No author's name was given but it is known that it was written by John L. Scripps, editor of the leading Republican newspaper of Chicago, who being familiar with Illinois politics and personally acquainted with Lincoln was better equipped for the work than any of his rival biographers and his book is the best of its time. Extensive as was its circulation this pamphlet is to day by no means common, the edition with the Chicago imprint being one of the rarest of the Lincoln books of 1860.

Scripps' life was read by its subject as is shown by this characteristic story; the author had stated in his book that Lincoln in his youth read Plutarch's lives, this he did simply because as a rule almost every boy in the West, in the early days, did read Plutarch. When the advance sheets of the book reached its subject, he sent for the author and said to him: "That paragraph wherein you state I read Plutarch's lives was not true when you wrote it, for up to that moment in my life I had never seen that early contribution to human history, but I want your book, even if it is nothing more than a campaign sketch, to be faithful to the facts, and in order that that statement might be literally true, I received the book a few days ago and have just read it through." This Life has the further distinction of having been reissued in a limited edition, superbly printed upon choice paper and with tasteful binding, but unfortunately the title page is marred by the words "The first published," to which honor the book is clearly not entitled.

Probably the least familiar of these lives, as it is the smallest, is the 32 mo. edited and published by Reuben Vose, of New York; of this ten thousand copies are stated to have been printed, and yet only one copy is known to a group of diligent collectors, and there is none in the Library of Congress.

The campaign of 1864 brought forth a new series of biographies much fuller of course than their predecessors because now, instead of telling the story of an

unknown Western politician, they were narrating the history of the most powerful ruler of his day. Some of the new books were enlarged editions of earlier works, others were entirely new, the most meritorious being that by the editor of the New York "Times," Henry J. Raymond, whose "History of the Administration of Abraham Lincoln" was well written and authoritative. Raymond was an influential and able supporter of the Administration, was familiar with its policy and himself an important factor in the politics of the time and held the responsible position of Chairman of the Republican National Committee. A later edition published after the President's death, completed the story of his career, and is I think the best history of its subject that appeared prior to the monumental work of Nicolay and Hay.

This later edition of Raymond's book contained as a supplement the anecdotes gathered by Frank B. Carpenter, the artist who painted the picture of the President and Cabinet known as the "Signing of the Emancipation Proclamation," during his sojourn in the Executive Mansion; these stories were subsequently issued in book form entitled "Six Months at the White House with Abraham Lincoln," that had large circulation and many editions. It was the forerunner of the numerous collections of Lincoln stories more or less authentic.

Orville J. Victor was the author of a little book "The Private and Public Life of Abraham Lincoln," that had immense circulation as one of the widely known "Beadle's Dime" publications.

The years of Mr. Lincoln's Presidency were prolific in publications of every variety relating to him—speeches, letters of protest and advice, satires, burlesques, song books,—the pamphlet output was stupendous.

The magazines of the time were crowded with articles about the President and the War. The "Atlantic Monthly" and the "North American Review" were easily foremost among the loyal supporters of the Administration. In the "Review" appeared a series of powerful essays by James Russell Lowell, treating of the various phases of the great conflict and more or less directly of Lincoln. The most important of these essays that on "The President's Policy," which appeared in July, 1864, is remarkable for its clear characterization of Lincoln, its



appreciation of his fitness for his tremendous task and as a prophecy of his fame that has been wonderfully verified.

To Lowell it was given to see that which most of his cotemporaries only saw after Lincoln's death, and whilst "Great captains with their guns and drums" were still disturbing judgment, to behold the fullness of fame which was to be that of the first American. It is interesting to know that Lincoln read this essay and without knowledge of its authorship wrote to the publisher of the "Review" modestly expressing his gratification with the article and at the same time suggesting a correction of a statement that seemed to him to have been based on misunderstanding of his purpose. Perceiving the value of this essay, the Union League of our city reprinted it as a pamphlet and gave it wide circulation. In this shape it is highly prized by collectors both for its importance as a Lincoln item and as the first separate issue of Lowell's essay.

Lincoln literature reached wide extent during his life, but was immensely increased by his death, for the publications that followed far outnumbered those that had gone before. The Nation's sorrow sought relief in outward expression and the memorial sermons, addresses, orations and poems that gave it voice were innumerable. Thousands of these tributes were reproduced in the newspapers and many found their way into pamphlets, hundreds of these are known to the bibliographers, probably hundreds more were issued, which have thus far escaped identification. Among the more prominent of the orators and clergymen were Emerson, Sumner, Wendell Phillips, Bancroft, Beecher, Storrs, Bishop Simpson, Albert Barnes and Phillips Brooks.

Not all of the sermons were eloquent, not all are in themselves worthy of preservation, but as the spontaneous manifestation of a people's grief, they constitute a characteristic and convincing memorial of the darkest day of our history.

To many, prose seemed inadequate for expression of the prevalent sorrow and of admiration for the departed Chief, so hundreds of versified tributes found their way into print, not a few of more ambitious character came forth in pamphlet and book. Of many of these poetic tributes, their manifest sincerity was their sole claim to favor, and even that scarcely saves some from ridicule. But there were some in which both sincerity and fervor joined with poetic gift to make

them adequate in their expression of grief and worthy in their tribute. Such are Stoddard's "An Horatian Ode," and Brownell's "Abraham Lincoln," while Whitman's "When Lilies Last in the Dooryard Bloomed," and even more his "O Captain! My Captain!" and Lowell's Commemoration Ode, have attained distinction that will be imperishable.

Nor were the manifestations of sorrow and of appreciation of the greatness of Lincoln confined to our own land, for the spoken and written tributes both in prose and verse were many in England and on the Continent. The French Academy in 1867 offered a prize for the best poem on the death of Lincoln; for this there were ninety competitors, the award was made to Edouard Grenier, whose dignified and eulogistic verse is worthy of its great theme. I do not recall that it has ever been fully translated into English. Unique in its character is the poem by Tom Taylor that appeared in the number of "Punch" for May 6, 1865, apologizing for the manner in which that periodical had treated Lincoln while living, and confessing that it had utterly misjudged him and his work, asked leave to do homage to his memory.

In the wake of the eulogies came many new biographies, most of them hastily written to take advantage of the popular demand of the hour, and built upon easily accessible material. An exception to this characterization is the Life by Dr J. G. Holland, which was the result of conscientious study and personal investigation at Springfield and elsewhere among the friends and associates of Lincoln, and was written with earnest desire to be truthful as well as sympathetic. Arnold's "Lincoln and Slavery" had value as a history of that theme, by one who had been in Congress during the War and had enjoyed Lincoln's friendship; subsequently the author wrote a more personal biography that has considerable merit.

More important than any biography which had hitherto appeared was that issued in 1872, purporting to be by Ward H. Lamon. This was the first life based upon systematic research and with access to a wide range of original material. Much that had been unknown or inaccessible to earlier writers had now become available through the persevering labors of William H. Herndon, who had been for many years Lincoln's law partner. The mass of material that he had gathered

was placed at Lamon's disposal, and his work gives much fuller detail of Lincoln's early life than had been possible for others to obtain. The volume published closed with Lincoln's first Inauguration, the author intending to devote a second volume to the years 1861-65; whether or not this was written, it certainly was not published. Lamon had long been known to Lincoln, they had been associated in a number of cases, and had been together on the law circuit; they had journeyed together to Washington in February, 1861, and one of Lincoln's first appointments was that of Lamon as Marshal of the District of Columbia. He was entrusted with special confidential duties and the association between them continued until broken by death. Lamon professed and doubtless felt a deep admiration for his Chief, so that it seems strange that this book while it reveals much of Lincoln's greatness, and the humble circumstances of his early life and the obstacles he overcame, and so enhances our esteem for the character that triumphed over adversity and untoward conditions, is, nevertheless, written in such curiously antipathetic tone as to suggest the author's dislike rather than his friendship for his subject. The anomaly is explained by the fact, not revealed by the title page, that the real author was Chauncey F. Black, son of Jeremiah S. Black, the Attorney General of Buchanan's Cabinet, political opponent of Lincoln, and though both father and son were Union men they were not in sympathy with Lincoln, the father was at times sharply critical of many of the measures of the Administration, the son later became the Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania, elected upon the Democratic ticket. Lamon procured the material from Herndon, supplemented it by his own knowledge and study, but the book that by innuendo and insinuation seems striving to belittle its hero, and fails only because of his inherent and dominating nobility of character, was not written by Lamon but by Chauncey F. Black, whose selection was due to his association with Lamon in law practice after the President's death.

Two years after the Lamon book there appeared a series of articles in "The Galaxy" magazine, published afterwards with additions in a book under the title "Lincoln and Seward," written by Gideon Welles, Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy. Mr. Welles was led to write because of his strong dissent from the attribution by Charles Francis Adams in his eulogy of Secretary Seward of a



preponderating influence to that statesman in the conduct of affairs, and the implication that the President's part was subordinate.

From his intimate knowledge Welles was able to establish the fact that so far from being dominated, the President was preeminently the master of his Administration. Later revelations in the History of Nicolay and Hay and the assemblage of evidence by Rothschild in his "Lincoln the Master of Men," fully corroborated the allegations of the Secretary of the Navy.

The most important addition to the biographical literature of Lincoln was made by John G. Nicolay and John Hay in their "Abraham Lincoln, a History," first published in the "Century Magazine," beginning in 1886, and subsequently in ten stately volumes. The position of the authors as private secretaries to the President, their long association with him, their familiarity with events, their access to his papers, personal and political, their historic instinct and literary ability, as well as their sympathetic admiration for him, qualified them to write the monumental history of Lincoln, the mine from which all later writers must draw. Yet because the work is so largely historical and subordinates the personal side of Lincoln's life, especially prior to the Presidency, and also because of its magnitude, it is likely that it will always be a book of reference rather than one for wide and popular reading. In recognition of the demand for a more compact life, the senior author later prepared an excellent abridgment issued in a single volume.

In the "Atlantic Monthly" for 1890 Carl Schurz reviewed the great history with such marked ability that his essay is itself of highest value. Its excellent summary of Lincoln's work, its just and discriminating appreciation of his character and its analysis of the sources of his success make this essay the best epitome of his work that has yet appeared in print. Schurz's Reminiscences recently published contain much of interest relating to Lincoln most graphically told.

Simultaneously with the publication in book form of the Nicolay and Hay History appeared "Herndon's Lincoln, The True Story of a Great Life," the joint work of Herndon, for twenty years Lincoln's friend and law partner, and of Jesse W. Weik, who put the book into shape. Later in date than Lamon, using the same material, supplemented by more recent acquisitions and written with greater

sympathy and after longer and more intimate association, this work is much the more valuable. And yet it has limitations for it is needlessly minute in many of its details, attaches exaggerated importance to youthful incidents and characteristics, and with all its admiration for its subject, reveals a seeming jealousy of the popular appreciation of Lincoln, and a desire that the author's estimate should be accepted as final. Apparently Herndon failed to realize how far beyond him his old partner had gone and was unable to comprehend the height of greatness to which Lincoln had attained.

In 1896 Miss Ida M. Tarbell began a series of articles upon the early life of Lincoln that were the result of laborious effort on her part, aided by careful research among early records and newspapers by Mr. J. McCan Davis, of Springfield. Their collaboration resulted in the discovery of much that had been either generally unknown or forgotten. New light was thrown upon many incidents of Lincoln's earlier days, and positive and valuable information added to our knowledge of him. The series was continued to cover the closing years and the whole published in four well printed volumes, constituting an important biography. Miss Tarbell has since written the delightful stories, "He knew Lincoln" and "Father Abraham," which although fictitious have biographical dignity and value because of their happy characterization of the man and faithful portrayal of many of his traits.

Yet another life based upon acquaintance and research, worthy of mention, recently published is that by Henry C. Whitney, an Illinois lawyer who had been associated with Lincoln in several cases, had seen and heard him frequently, and had told the story of "Life on the Circuit" with him, a work replete with information.

Besides these there are scores of lives, many of them being well written and readable, but adding little that is new; most of them being restatements of well known facts, some indeed so presenting them as to have the force of novelty; one of the best especially for the Presidential career is that by John T. Morse, Jr., in the series of American Statesmen.

Many biographies have been published abroad, one by F. Bungener written in French, first issued in Switzerland, was translated into German, Dutch and

Italian and published in the several countries; another by Joualt in French, published in Paris, translated into Spanish and published in Barcelona. There are still others in these languages, and others printed in Sweden, Denmark, Greece, Russia, two at least, Japan, three, and Hawaii.

Time will not permit the naming, even without comment, of the many volumes that bear Lincoln's name, but the titles of some may serve to indicate the variety and range covered: *The Story Life*, *The True Life*, *The Every Day Life*, *The Heroic Life*, *The Boy's Life*, *The Boy Lincoln*, *The Backwoods Boy*, *The Pioneer Boy and how he became President*, *In the Boyhood of Lincoln*, *The Children's Life*, *The Man of the People*, *The True Lincoln*, *The Real Lincoln*, and *Lincoln Boy and Man*, this last quite recent and an excellent popular compendium.

Some authors have not been content with one or two issues, but responding presumably to popular needs have several works to their credit, among them Isaac N. Arnold has six, William M. Thayer has five different titles in English, besides translations in German and Swedish and Greek. Noah Brooks has "A Biography for Young People:" "Lincoln and the Downfall of Slavery," "Lincoln, His Youth and Early Manhood," and "Washington in Lincoln's Time." William O. Stoddard, who was one of the President's secretaries, has written "Inside the White House in War Times," "The Table Talk of Abraham Lincoln," "Lincoln at Work," "The Boy Lincoln," besides "Abraham Lincoln, The True Story of a Great Life," and the "Lives of the Presidents—Lincoln and Johnson."

Each year since Lincoln's death has witnessed the publication of tributes to his memory, mostly as commemorative addresses, some as recollections by his cotemporaries, but not a few studies of phases of his character or of special episodes in his career, such are Hill's "Lincoln the Lawyer," and Bates' "Lincoln in the Telegraph Office." Each recurring birthday adds new material, and the recent celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Lincoln and Douglas Debates in the several localities where the debates were held has brought forth many reminiscences. The Illinois State Historical Society has just issued the first of a Lincoln Series, under the editorship of Professor Edwin E. Sparks, now of our State



College, a portly volume of great value devoted to the history and ana of these debates.

The approaching centenary of his birth is being preceded by a large output and during the year there will be voluminous increase of this literature.

But however eloquent the oratory past or to come, however instructive and authentic the narrative, however inspired the poet, the most precious and lasting Lincoln literature will always be that of his own writing, for despite his modest assertion to the contrary at Gettysburg, what he said there will be long remembered and with his Second Inaugural will be immortal. These, admittedly his supremest utterances, supplemented by other addresses only less important and by such eloquent and forceful letters as those to Horace Greeley, to General Hooker, to Conkling of Illinois, to Hodges of Kentucky and to the Massachusetts mother, make a vital part of literature and will be an abiding memorial to

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.





