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# LINCOLN AND SLAVERY

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AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE STUDENT BODY OF FISK UNIVERSITY, NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE, ON EMANCIPATION DAY,  
JANUARY 1, 1920.

By **ROBERT McMURDY,**

of the Chicago Bar.

(A Member of the Board of Trustees of the University.)

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This is a world of compensation; and he who would be no slave must consent to have no slave.—Lincoln, 1859.

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## FISK UNIVERSITY.

Nashville, Tenn.

The University is 50 years old.

Living graduates number 1,000.

Former students exceed 4,000.

In 50 years only one graduate has been convicted of crime.

Forty-two per cent of its graduates are teachers.

Students enrolled in College, 264; in all departments, 515.

Annual budget, \$115,120.00.

Within twelve hours of Nashville live one-half the colored people of this country.

The General Education Board and the Carnegie Corporation have just spent \$150,000 in repairs and betterments on the Fisk campus.

The University is now raising a fund of \$2,000,000 for increases in salaries and for permanent buildings.

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An address delivered before the student body of Fisk University on  
Emancipation Day, January 1, 1920,

BY

ROBERT McMURDY.

In a reply to one of Horace Greeley's vitriolic appeals Lincoln, on August 22, 1862, used these words:

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 to destroy slavery.

If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and, if I could do 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.

To the prejudiced or careless this might seem the declaration of a man who did not look upon slavery as a serious matter and who was not moved by the lot of the slave.

Of late years these words have occasioned a doubt in some quarters that Lincoln was sincerely an abolitionist. On this anniversary day let us review the testimony and determine for ourselves whether there is any real basis for doubt.

When we undertake to construe a man's words, dissociated from events and circumstances under which the words were uttered, we are likely to lose his viewpoint and therefore their true significance. Words are sometimes used according to the Talleyrand formula to conceal thoughts. Again they are intended to be recorded truth.

Generally they mean something between these extremes. They are never understood by any two persons in exactly the same meaning; their meaning is varied by the viewpoint of the critic, and what the critic believes to be the viewpoint of the one who uses the words.

It becomes desirable, then, for us to know what was Lincoln's viewpoint when he wrote these words.

First, let us remind ourselves of his real sentiments on the slavery question, as gathered from previous utterances.

It is fairly well established that when Lincoln visited New Orleans in 1831, just after reaching his majority, and saw slaves chained and scourged, and sold on the block, he formed a permanent opinion as to the iniquity of the institution, such as we would expect in one whom we may truly style *Great-heart*.

Five years later, Lovejoy was murdered, and when the next session of the Illinois General Assembly, of which Lincoln was a member, passed a resolution condemning the abolitionists and declaring that Congress had no power under the Constitution to interfere with slavery in the South, Lincoln drew up and filed a protest in which he declared that slavery "is founded on both injustice and bad policy," said to be "the first formal declaration against the system of slavery that was ever made in any legislative body in the United States, at least west of the Hudson River." That he then remembered his trip to New Orleans and expressed his real sentiments is rendered certain by subsequent history.

Among a number of fragments gathered by Hay and Nicolay, one, probably penned by Lincoln in 1854, demonstrates the true sentiment of the man at that early day in the development of the question. It reads:

If A can prove, however conclusively, that he may of right enslave B, why may not B snatch the same argument and prove equally that he may enslave A? You say A is white and B is black. It is color, then; the lighter having the right to enslave the darker? Take care. By this rule you are to be slave to the first man you meet with a fairer skin than your own. You do not mean color exactly? You mean the whites are intellectually the superiors of the blacks, and therefore have the right to enslave them? Take care again. By this rule you are to be slave to the first man you meet with an intellect superior to your own. But, say you, it is a question of

interest, and if you make it your interest you have the right to enslave another. Very well. And if he can make it his interest, he has the right to enslave you.

In the same year he gives us a description of the slave-dealer. While it does not purport to express his own sentiments but merely to recite a known fact, one is sure, as he reads, that Lincoln has merely chosen this form to express his own views upon the slave traffic.

You have among you a sneaking individual of the class of native tyrants known as the Slave-dealer. He watches your necessities, and crawls up to buy your slave at a speculating price. If you cannot help it, you sell to him; but, if you can help it, you drive him from your door. You despise him utterly. You do not recognize him as a friend, or even as an honest man. Your children must not play with his; they may rollic freely with the little negroes, but not with the "slave-dealer's" children. If you are obliged to deal with him, you try to get through the job without so much as touching him. It is common with you to join hands with the men you meet; but with the "slave-dealer" you avoid the ceremony,—instinctively shrink from the snaky contact. If he grows rich, and retires from business, you still remember him, and still keep up the bar of non-intercourse upon him and his family. Now, why is this? You do not so treat the man who deals in corn, cattle, or tobacco.

In August, 1855, he writes freely and honestly to his friend Speed:

You know I dislike slavery, and you fully admit the abstract wrong of it. So far there is no cause of difference. But you say that sooner than yield your legal right to the slave, especially at the bidding of those who are not themselves interested, you would see the Union dissolved. I am not aware that any one is bidding you yield that right; very certainly I am not. I leave that matter entirely to yourself. I also acknowledge your rights and my obligations under the Constitution in regard to your slaves. I confess I hate to see the poor creatures hunted down and caught and carried back to their stripes and unrequited toil; but I bite my lips and keep quiet. In 1841 you and I had together a tedious low-water trip on a steam-boat from Louisville to St. Louis. You may remember, as I well do, that from Louisville to the mouth of the Ohio there were on board ten or a dozen slaves shackled together with irons. That sight was a continual torment to me, and I see something like it every time I touch the Ohio or any other slave border. It is not fair for you to assume that I have no



interest in a thing which has, and continually exercises, the power to make me miserable. You ought rather to appreciate how much the great body of the Northern people do crucify their feelings in order to maintain their loyalty to the Constitution and the Union. I do oppose the extension of slavery because my judgment and feelings so prompt me, and I am under no obligations to the contrary. If for this you and I must differ, differ we must.

In 1856 the General Assembly of the State balloted for United States Senator. The Republican members were voting for Lincoln for that highest office in the gift of the State. As the balloting proceeded Lincoln feared the election of a supporter of slavery and threw the votes under his control to Lyman Trumbull, an abolitionist. Nothing could more clearly demonstrate his deep abhorrence of the institution than thus sacrificing his personal ambition to make sure that Illinois should be represented in the United States Senate by a man opposed to slavery, a man who later as chairman of the judiciary committee was destined to report to that body in its present language the Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, prohibiting slavery.

At the time of the birth of the Republican party on May 29, in this same year 1856, in its first state convention Lincoln said:

The battle of freedom is to be fought out on principle. Slavery is a violation of the eternal right. We have temporized with it from the necessities of our condition, but as sure as God reigns and school children read, that black foul lie can never be consecrated into God's hallowed truth.

From these illustrations and public expressions, all antedating the Greeley reply by many years, we perceive Lincoln's viewpoint under changing conditions; if we take into account that these statements were made in a hostile atmosphere, when most men in public life would not have had the courage to utter them, we can not doubt his convictions nor the sincerity of his utterances.

It must be remembered that Lincoln's state, judged by its laws, was distinctly backward in anti-slavery sentiment. One Article of the State Constitution of 1847 made it mandatory on the General Assembly to pass "such laws as will effectually prohibit free persons of color from immigrating to and settling in this state; and to effectively prevent the owners of slaves from bringing them into this state for the

purpose of setting them free." Subsequently, as late as 1853, the state added to her intolerant legislation on the subject an act in conformity to the constitutional mandate. By a coincidence this act went into force on Lincoln's forty-fourth birthday anniversary, and it remained a law until after the war. Again, it so happens, two months before the reply to the Greeley letter, provisions of a proposed new Constitution similar to the Article in the old, but submitted to the voters as separate propositions, were carried by majorities ranging from 107,000 to 176,000, significant indications of the popular sentiment in Illinois.

Let us now consider another phase of this question of viewpoint.

Lincoln was essentially and at all times a lawyer, ever analyzing the evidence, weighing the ultimate consequences, regardful of precedents, restrained by the conservatism which grows stronger with each year of study, of experience, and of contest. His legal experience was far greater than that of most active lawyers of the present day. For a generation he traveled the circuit, constantly trying cases. Pitted against him were men of talent and like wide experience. In the evening these men during all these years argued with him the questions of the day. He was in court by day and in a debating society at night, two incomparable agencies for sharpening human wits. At that time precedents were few, and lawyers argued principles. In this school Lincoln's logic was strengthened, his horizon expanded, his sympathies deepened, and, above all, his love of justice became a passion. Under such conditions he could not fail to venerate the Constitution, to intelligently interpret it, or to respect the obligation of an official oath to support it.

As a lawyer and student of the Constitution he knew that the instrument of that day recognized and permitted slavery, and that as President under that Constitution he was bound to recognize the fact publicly.

Our wise forefathers who framed the instrument had a very tender regard for the feelings of one another. They were very courteous gentlemen. One of the greatest of them, who made the first draft of the Declaration of Independence, had learned manners in *la belle France*. Most of this tenderness and chivalry was, however,

born of fear, for it was by no means certain that a sufficient number of them were such gifted compromisers as to agree upon a Constitution, and it was much less certain that the instrument would be ratified. Such situations evolve very polished gentlemen, jealously scrupulous regarding the feelings of others. So it was that the instrument euphemizes and obscures its sanction of slavery.

Article I, Section 2, does not refer in terms to slavery; it does not use the word *slave*; the wish of Madison had been respected: "The word *slave* ought not to appear in the Constitution"; the language concerns apparently other matters altogether, but the sanction is there, implied in the last five words:

Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several states which may be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three-fifths of all other persons.

As we know, "all other persons" meant the slaves, and this section was one of the great compromises by which the instrument was to be given a chance to live.

Again, Article I, Section 9, provided:

The migration or importation of such persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the year one thousand eight hundred and eight.

To be sure, in Lincoln's day this provision had ceased to be operative since it was limited to the period prior to 1808.

But, again, Article IV, Section 2, was in these words:

No person held to service or labor in one state under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due.

This language is so polite that it leaves the mind in doubt as to whether it refers merely to apprentices—indeed it was argued by Charles Sumner in the United States Senate that this is the true interpretation of the words.

But all interpretation of this character is apart from the point. If the Constitution did not impliedly sanction slavery it did not prohibit



it. Thus it was that Lincoln, in common with all fair, logical men, believed that slavery was lawful under the Constitution, and that Congress had no power to prohibit it within the states; indeed the states had come into the Union under it, and had relied upon its terms.

By not prohibiting slavery the Constitution left the question to the several states.

The tenth amendment to the Constitution, proposed by the first Congress, in 1789, expressly so provides:

**The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.**

It is evident that the soundness of this position was conceded, for Garrison, more forceful than reverent, declared the Constitution to be "a covenant with Death and an agreement with Hell."

The question so long controverted was whether Congress had power to forbid slavery in the territories; the great word battles prior to the war were upon this question, and involved only the *extension* of slavery.

Let us now make sure of Lincoln's view, as expressed in his utterances, a few only being chosen, made before the time of the Greeley letter under circumstances which make it clear that he was expressing his convictions—and not merely acting to be consistent.

We find that in the protest already referred to, in the General Assembly of Illinois, way back in 1837, he makes the protestants say:

**They believe that the Congress of the United States has no power under the Constitution to interfere with the institution of slavery in the different states.**

In 1858 he puts in the form of a creed his conviction in regard to this matter, saying:

**I believe . . . that by our frame of government, States which have slavery are to retain it, or surrender it at their own pleasure; and that all . . . are constitutionally bound to leave them alone about it.**

These views were expressed frequently down to the time of his first inaugural, in 1861, wherein he said:

I understand a proposed amendment to the Constitution \* \* \* has passed Congress to the effect that the Federal Government shall never interfere with the domestic institutions of the states, including that of persons held to service \* \* \* holding such a provision to now be implied constitutional law, I have no objection to its being made express and irrevocable.

A year later, to all the border-state members of Congress then in Washington, invited by Lincoln to his presence, he said that "emancipation was a subject exclusively under the control of the states and must be adopted or rejected by each for itself; that he did not claim, nor had the Government any right to coerce them."

Later still, on many occasions, he recognized that a state might make slavery lawful without violating the Federal Constitution, saying, among other things, that it was "so nominated in the bond."

So it was that he felt that as President he could not interfere. He thus expresses his views in April, 1864:

I am naturally antislavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think and feel, and yet I have never understood that the Presidency conferred upon me an unrestricted right to act officially upon this judgment and feeling. It was in the oath I took, that I would, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States. I could not take the office without taking the oath; nor was it my view that I might take an oath to get power, and break the oath in using the power. I understood, too, that, in ordinary civil administration, this oath even forbade me to practically indulge my primary abstract judgment on the moral question of slavery. I had publicly declared this many times, and in many ways; and I aver that to this day, I have done no official act in mere deference to my abstract judgment and feeling on slavery. I did understand, however, that my oath to preserve the Constitution to the best of my ability imposed upon me the duty of preserving, by every indispensable means, that Government—that nation—of which that Constitution was the organic law.

But while no such power existed in time of peace it was possible as a war measure to free the slaves. We all are now familiar with the war time powers of the Constitution, and by the language of the Proclamation itself Lincoln expressly justified emancipation merely and only as a "war measure." Indeed, it concerned slaves only and

not slavery—that institution was still left fully protected by the Constitution.

Lincoln discusses this point in a letter to a Springfield neighbor in his usual logical manner:

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? Armies the world over destroy enemies' property when they cannot use it; and even destroy their own to keep it from the enemy. Civilized belligerents do all in their power to help themselves or hurt the enemy.

But Lincoln was more than a lawyer. His every utterance is judicial—in tone and in spirit. Questions are discussed as a just judge might analyze and decide. And not only was he able to perceive the merits of opposite contentions, and to sympathize with both contenders, in obedience to a fundamental law of his nature—the love of justice—he advanced beyond and was able to name the ground upon which all fair men—stripped of prejudice—could stand. Sumner might well have had him in mind when he wrote:

All ages have abounded in lawyers and judges; there is no churchyard that does not contain their forgotten dust. But the jurist is rare.

Lincoln believed in gradual emancipation. He considered that the best sentiments on the subject of the best men everywhere would bring about the desired change by the force of public opinion, which would prevent the extension of slavery and in time end it. In this regard he lays down a rule:

When the conduct of men is designed to be influenced, persuasion, kind, unassuming persuasion, should ever be adopted.

But this rule admitted, nevertheless, the adoption and use of a plan of action, which he put forth in his speech before the Illinois Republican convention of 1856, when he said:

Let us draw a cordon, so to speak, around the slave states, and the hateful institution, like a reptile poisoning itself, will perish by its own infamy.

But gradual emancipation was not the core of his plan. He had another—a master idea, and now that the smoke of battle and the haze of hate no longer pollute the air, we must acknowledge that the idea embodied the economical, the wise, the humane, and the statesmanlike solution of the great problem.

It was not original. And it was not new.

The Constitution had not been in force a generation when the Legislatures of Ohio, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania memorialized Congress to emancipate the slaves and at the same time to compensate the owners, stating that those states were willing to bear their share of the burden.

Great Britain, under her emancipation act of 1833, paid £20,000,000 to the masters; and ten years later, upon freeing 12,000,000 slaves in her East Indian possessions, she paid a like sum.

Possibly inspired by these facts, Lincoln, as early as 1849, while in Congress, fathered a motion instructing the Committee on the District of Columbia to report a bill with a referendum to abolish slavery in the District and to compensate the masters. It provided, among other things, that all children thereafter born of slave mothers within the District should after the service of an apprenticeship become free, and that the owner of adult slaves should receive, if he so desired, the full value of the slaves from the federal treasury. As we all know, Congress made no such provision for the bondmen, but this was not the last of Lincoln's efforts to that end.

Within seven years Europe gave birth to a new hope—Alexander II. of Russia, was crowned. In his rearing, the customary military education had been largely “honored in the breach,” and his tutor, companion, and guide had been a poet. His heart was, therefore, not trained to the rule of force but of love. It is not surprising that the royal pupil should have been fired with an abiding determination to put into execution a mere theory long and vividly held that the serfs should be freed, but he, too, believed in gradual and compensated emancipation. The crown vested in him autocratic power, and his sentiments were no secret. So it was known when he ascended the throne that serfdom was doomed, and that tens of millions of his countrymen held in bondage would soon be free. The motto which he inspired was also a prophecy:



He puts to flight the gathered clouds and brings back the sun.

When emancipation finally came every serf was allowed the use of from 5 to 25 acres with a hut and a bit of orchard. The land bought by the government for the use of the serfs finally aggregated 350,000,000 acres.

It was announced to the world, officially, as early as 1857, that serfdom would be abolished; it, however, took some time to effect on such a scale a change from the established order, but just the day before Lincoln's inauguration, in 1861, every serf could see placarded throughout the empire the great Russian Emancipation Proclamation.

Two years thereafter the serfs were in fact free. The great human reform had cost untold roubles but not a drop of blood.

In November, 1861, Lincoln sought to bring about compensated emancipation in Delaware, in which state, by the way, there were less than 1,800 slaves; with his own hand he drew up two different bills upon the subject but neither was introduced, it being apparent in advance that no such measure could be passed since the pro-slavery members were violent in their opposition, placing the plan on the basis of a bribe.

On March 6, 1862, he sent to Congress a special message in which he urged the adoption of a joint resolution in the following words:

**RESOLVED**, That the United States ought to co-operate with any State which may adopt gradual abolishment of slavery, giving to such State pecuniary aid, to be used by such State in its discretion, to compensate for the inconveniences, public and private, produced by such change of system.

This resolution was introduced by Roseoe Conkling, passed both houses, and was signed by the President on April 10, 1862.

The recollection of his early endeavor as a Congressman to pass a similar bill must have caused an ineffable smile of satisfaction when as President, in April, 1862, Lincoln signed and made law a bill, to which he was no stranger, whereby slavery was abolished in the District of Columbia, and whereby the masters were to be compensated by the payment of \$300 for each slave.

As late as July 12, in the same year, upon an occasion already referred to, Lincoln labored with the border-state members of Con-



gress to accept compensated gradual emancipation, but the effort failed, and there can be no doubt that at this time his hope became dim of ever inducing Congress to endorse in a broad way his plan of saving the Union by this just and humane solution of the difficulty, and he immediately expressed his intention of issuing a general proclamation of freedom.

His plan was incorporated in the preliminary emancipation proclamation itself, issued two months later, on September 23, wherein he said :

It is my purpose, upon the next meeting of Congress, to again recommend the adoption of a practical measure tendering pecuniary aid to the free acceptance or rejection of all slave states, so called, the people whereof may not then be in rebellion against the United States, and which States may then have voluntarily adopted, or thereafter may voluntarily adopt, immediate or gradual abolishment of slavery within their respective limits.

True to his prediction, Lincoln, in the Annual Message of 1862, proposed to Congress that it should submit an Amendment to the Constitution providing that compensation in the form of Government Bonds should be made to any slave-holding state that should abolish slavery within thirty-seven years, that is, prior to the year 1900, and that freed slaves should remain free and their masters should be compensated.

It will thus be seen that Lincoln ever pursued a consistent course in furtherance of this plan, and we can best perceive how just it was if we consider his own argument supporting it, contained in this message to Congress. He says :

In a certain sense the liberation of slaves is the destruction of property—property acquired by descent or by purchase, the same as any other property. It is no less true for having been often said that the people of the South are not more responsible for the original introduction of this property than are the people of the North; and when it is remembered how unhesitatingly we all use cotton and sugar and share the profits of dealing in them, it may not be quite safe to say that the South has been more responsible than the North for its continuance. If, then, for a common object, this property is to be sacrificed, is it not just that it be done at a common charge?

And if with less money, or money more easily paid, we can preserve the benefits of the Union by this means than we can by the war alone, is

it not also economical to do it? Let us consider it, then. Let us ascertain the sum we have expended in the war since compensated emancipation was proposed last March, and consider whether if that measure had been promptly accepted by even some of the slave States the same sum would not have done more to close the war than has been otherwise done. If so, the measure would save money, and in that view would be a prudent and economical measure. Certainly it is not so easy to pay **SOMETHING** as it is to pay **NOTHING**, but it is easier to pay a **LARGE** sum than it is to pay a **LARGER** one. And it is easier to pay any sum **WHEN** we are able than it is to pay it **BEFORE** we are able. The war requires large sums, and requires them at once. The aggregate sum necessary for compensated emancipation of course would be large. But it would require no ready cash, nor the bonds even any faster than the emancipation progresses. This might not, and probably would not, close before the end of the thirty-seven years. At that time we shall probably have a hundred millions of people to share the burden, instead of thirty-one millions as now.

\* \* \* \* \*

The proposed emancipation would shorten the war, perpetuate peace, insure this increase of population, and proportionately the wealth of the country. With these we should pay all the emancipation would cost, together with our other debt, easier than we should pay our other debt without it.

\* \* \* \* \*

This plan is recommended as a means, not in exclusion of, but additional to, all others for restoring and preserving the national authority throughout the Union. The subject is presented exclusively in its economical aspect. The plan would, I am confident, secure peace more speedily and maintain it more permanently than can be done by force alone, while all it would cost, considering amounts and manner of payment and times of payment, would be easier paid than will be the additional cost of the war if we rely solely upon force. It is much, very much, but it would cost no blood at all.

\* \* \* \* \*

Is it doubted, then, that the plan I propose, if adopted, would shorten the war, and thus lessen its expenditure of money and of blood? Is it doubted that it would restore the national authority and national prosperity and perpetuate both indefinitely?

\* \* \* \* \*

Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just—a way which if followed the world will forever applaud and God must forever bless.

In our analysis of the reply to Greeley we are now brought to another phase of viewpoint.

The situation as the world thought it to be and the situation as Lincoln knew it to be were entirely different.

As far as the public knew and as far as Greeley knew Lincoln had no intention of freeing the slaves, although the law then just enacted with Lincoln's sanction respecting the colored troops gave freedom to all who served and to their families.

On the other hand, Lincoln, two months before, on June 18, had made a sketch of the preliminary Proclamation, intending evidently to use it at some future day if compensated emancipation failed and when sure that public sentiment would support it without endangering success in the war. The danger in this regard was real. Four of the northern states were slave states, and he had been advised by at least one of his generals that the step would destroy the morale of the army.

It is known that on July 10 he was at work upon his sketch. Three days later he had made up his mind to issue the Proclamation, and so informed two members of his cabinet. On July 22 he laid the sketch in confidence before his full cabinet for their approval as to form only.

This was just three weeks before Greeley addressed to Lincoln the open letter in his newspaper, to which Lincoln made his famous reply, which was, also, an open communication.

Who caused the delay that made possible these letters?

The Cabinet.

Following their judgment, Lincoln postponed the issuance of the Proclamation until there should be a Union victory. At length Antietam settled the question on September 17. And then, perhaps for the love of the dramatic, although Lincoln does not mention such a reason, a day was chosen just one hundred days distant from the first day of the New Year, the time fixed for the black man's Magna Charta to become a final reality.

So it was that Greeley undertook to burn alive the man who was traveling the same path, more steadily and surely if not so swiftly, and he charged him with being moved by considerations wholly foreign to fact. Thus do we fall into a deep pit when we judge

the motives of our fellow-travelers, as well as those whom we meet on the road.

Later on it was Lincoln's judgment that if his preliminary Proclamation had been issued "six months earlier than it was, public sentiment would not have sustained it."

It will be seen now that this letter of Greeley gave Lincoln an opportunity to smooth the pathway for the emancipation he had already determined upon. His reply was calculated to prepare the public mind for what was soon to follow, in the expectation that when history should be written the reply and the Proclamation would be read together by the light of all the surrounding circumstances fully disclosed.

We are now able to understand the reply as Lincoln wrote it, inspired by his love of his fellowmen, his reverence for the Constitution, his regret that a better plan had not been found for solving the great human question, and the approaching triumph almost unsurpassed of granting the greatest boon to millions of the oppressed.

We have discussed the reply to Greeley as if it were the sole occasion for doubting Lincoln's hostility to slavery. Other words of his, combed out of a whole generation of changing sentiment, have raised a question among the doubting Thomases, but, judged as of his day, they have no real foundation.

He made a few uncomplimentary remarks about the impatient Abolitionists. In the protest in the Illinois General Assembly, already referred to, he deprecated the agitation of the Abolitionists, but it was merely because he then believed that in the temper of that early day in Illinois, it tended "rather to increase than abate the evils of slavery."

He believed, also, in providing for colonization, but only for those freed slaves who desired to depart voluntarily. And after one disastrous experiment we hear nothing more upon the subject.

By the terms of the bill introduced by Lincoln in Congress in 1849, providing for compensated emancipation in the District of Columbia, the municipal authorities were commanded to "provide active and efficient means to arrest and deliver up to their owners all fugitive



slaves escaping into said district." This circumstance led Wendell Phillips to denounce Lincoln when nominated for the presidency as "the slave hound of Illinois." Lincoln, however, in his inaugural address, sets forth clearly the justification for the provision. Referring to the clause of the Constitution relating to fugitive slaves, already quoted, he says:

It is scarcely questioned that this provision was intended, by those who made it, for the reclaiming of what we call "fugitive slaves," and the intention of the law giver is the law. All members of Congress swear their support to the whole Constitution—to this provision as much as any other.

This matter, then, stands constitutionally upon the same footing as emancipation itself, and need not be further noticed.

We have now reviewed the testimony. Half a century has gone by. Time has lent her perspective to truth. All over the world men have been searching and analyzing. Lincoln, the man; Lincoln, the lawyer; Lincoln, the jurist; Lincoln, the President; Lincoln, the statesman—all may be understood in this latter day. We know now that emancipation was brought about, all things considered, as soon as it could have been safely and wisely adopted, and it was born of kindness, of justice, of a belief that it was the will of God, so that without resentment anywhere the humble servant from the plain people has been enthroned in the hearts of mankind of all lands and of all ages to come as the Great Emancipator.

It is clear, then, that Father Abraham loved his dusky children and perhaps is looking down from his abode on high watching with jealous eye their sorrows, their progress, and their aspirations.

To mitigate their sorrows and to further their progress, Fisk University was founded. But especially was it founded and notably is it maintained to foster their aspirations, to lead them through the highlands of culture to the heights of character. The paths whereby we ascend from the valleys must be open to all. Hope and pride lead upward; if we stifle them the beings in whose breasts they spring are not free.

How fortunate that to aid us in this work of character building the nation is about to bring to all an emancipation from another



slavery! As the earlier slavery was ended with an amendment to the Constitution, so now in but fifteen days will we be delivered from this second slavery by another amendment to the Constitution. It is therefore appropriate to close this review with the prophetic words of Lincoln, in which he advocated this second emancipation, before the Washingtonian Society in 1842:

Turn now to the temperance revolution. In it we shall find a stronger bondage broken, a viler slavery manumitted, a greater tyrant deposed; in it, more of want supplied, more disease healed, more sorrow assuaged. By it no orphans starving, no widows weeping. By it, none wounded in feeling, none injured in interest; even the dram-maker and dram-seller will have glided into other occupations so gradually as never to have felt the change, and will stand ready to join all others in the universal song of gladness. And what a noble ally this to the cause of political freedom; with such an aid its march cannot fail to be on and on, till every son of earth shall drink in rich fruition the sorrow-quenching draughts of perfect liberty.

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And when the victory shall be complete,—when there shall be neither a slave nor a drunkard on the earth,—how proud the title of that land which may truly claim to be the birthplace and the cradle of both those revolutions that shall have ended in that victory. How nobly distinguished that people who shall have planted and nurtured to maturity both the political and moral freedom of their species.

