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PRESIDENT LINCOLN,

A FAITHFUL SON.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

HIGH SCHOOL,

AT LAWRENCEVILLE, N. J.,

BY

SAMUEL M. HAMILL, D.D.,

June 1st, 1865.

TRENTON:

MURPHY & BECHTEL, PRINTERS, OPPOSITE THE CITY HALL.

1865.

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CLASSICAL AND COMMERCIAL HIGH SCHOOL,
LAWRENCEVILLE, N. J., June 8, 1865.

DEAR SIR:—Permit us to suggest to you, the propriety of publishing the address delivered before this Institution, on the first day of June. It impressed us, as bringing out features of character in our late lamented President, which are very desirable to be presented to the minds of the young. We think its publication will do good.

Yours Truly,

H. HAMILL,
EDWARD P. WOOD,
WILLIAM SWAN,
EDMUND McKINNEY.

GENTLEMEN:

In accordance with the suggestion contained in your note, the address delivered before the High School, on the first day of June, in relation to our late lamented President, is submitted for publication.

Most Truly Yours,

S. M. HAMILL.

Rev. H. Hamill, Edward P. Wood, Wm. Swan, Edmund McKinney.

A D D R E S S .

We are assembled on this day of humiliation and prayer, in obedience to the proclamation of the President of the United States, in accordance with the sentiments of the community in which we live, and with the feelings of our own hearts. We have need to be humbled under the mighty hand of God, to stand in awe as we see His stately stepplings, and listen to His voice, as He proclaims in terrible majesty, "Be still and know that I am God." "I will be exalted among the nations."

The inscrutable Providence which allowed our late beloved President, to be stricken down by the ruthless hand of the assassin, is one of those remarkable instances where God has asserted His control and made Himself known, in a manner that has led men to pause in amazement and stand in awe of Him. He has taught the nation and the world a lesson which the memory of man will never forget. Time may roll on—its sweeping current carry myriads to the tomb, generations may die, centuries may close up their long cycles, nations may be revolutionized, the vast fabrics of empire may all crumble and others arise in their places, but the short and eventful public life and violent death of Abraham Lincoln will be remembered away beyond them all. How wonderful the Providence that has caused the very manner of his death to concentrate an interest in his life, to a degree beyond all

human calculation ; to make that life one of the great focal points in the history of man.

At the close of the deeply solemn and interesting funeral ceremonies which took place in the executive mansion, at Washington, at which it was my privilege to be present, twelve stalwart veteran soldiers carried the body of the President out of the East room. It was taken to the Capitol and to the railroad car, to be borne off over thousands of intervening miles to Springfield, Ill., to rest with his beloved children in the silent grave. But a nation in mourning has caught up his name, and will bear it onward, and onward, and onward, as the sweep of its empire widens and strengthens, and prolongs its reign. A moment accomplished his death ; but eternity alone will reveal the results of his life. A nation saved will be his witness ; a race set free will corroborate the testimony. Thousands of volumes will proclaim his eventful rule, and history, in its calm and truthful record, will bring out in bold relief the fact that his was

“One of the few immortal names
That were not born to die.”

The proclamation of the President suggests that on this occasion we should dwell upon the virtues of the deceased. In this duty there is a melancholy pleasure. And as I am addressing a company of youth, let me gather from the life of the lamented dead, the instruction that will be most profitable for you.

President Lincoln's life speaks volumes to American youth. His simplicity of character, his artlessness, his honesty of purpose, his wonderful perseverance, his love of what Virgil, in his Georgics, terms the “*labor improbus*,” his striking illustration of what such labor can accomplish, his steady bearing in a single line of action, his planting his foot firmly and in

the right spot, and then maintaining his position because it was right, against any and all men, his faithfulness as a son, his respect for religion, his humility, his humanity, his influence over the minds of men, his heroic virtue, and the wonderfully massive results of his eventful career, point him out as one of the most remarkable of men. He stands out before the world and for all time, as a remarkable instance of what American institutions can produce. They can pick up an humble farmer's boy, without a dollar and without a book, and carry him away from fencing his father's farm, and after taking him through a course in the district school, such as the frontiers afford, and of training in American law, prepare him to become a great leader of men and controller of mind, and at last place him at the head of the greatest of nations. What institutions can be found elsewhere which, with such simple instrumentalities, can produce such amazing results.

Abraham Lincoln first saw the light on the 12th day of February, 1809, in Hardin county, central Kentucky. He had that greatest of blessings to any youth (and yet a blessing which youth are apt to undervalue), a pious mother. There is always hope of a boy that has had the early training of a pious mother, especially if he respects and loves her. This godly woman had no doubt sent up many an earnest prayer on behalf of her dear son, when he was sleeping in infancy upon her lap. That care which none but a mother knows, and no son can sufficiently value or repay, followed him through infancy and boyhood. Her earnest desire that he should learn to read the Bible, soon made him familiar with this book. In this sacred volume is found the foundation of all law. His knowledge of it, lighted up his way through many an intricate case, when a practitioner at the Bar. It

was often quoted by him as the highest authority in important decisions, when presiding over the destinies of the nation. On more than one occasion a simple Scriptural truth, aptly applied by him, settled great national principles. A clergyman, who was present, stated to me the following fact. It occurred at Washington, and illustrates this point. A cotton speculator was urging his plea for executive aid in carrying out certain plans. The President heard his statements patiently and declined action. The man urged the point. President Lincoln said to him, at last, "Do you know what the good book says?" looking earnestly at the man and pointing with his finger enforcing every word, he continued: "It says, 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon.' Now, my friend, I say to you, that in this transaction, you cannot serve cotton and country, and I could not aid you if you were my own brother." The man was struck dumb, and felt that here was an ultima ratio that carried conviction and from which there was no appeal.

The important truths drawn from the Inspired Word, learned by the boy, under his pious mother's instruction during the first ten years of his life in his rural home, made the man. They became, under God, a power. That power, with its tremendous leverage, lifted him to the Presidency. And that Presidency became the instrument of salvation to a nation, of freedom to a race, and of life to millions.

The boy starts to school with his spelling book at seven years of age. It is one of three books which constitute the family library. What an illustration that it is not mere books that make men. It is what a boy draws from them. It is more than this. It is what they draw from him. He may have his desk full of books and yet learn almost nothing. He may have access to the choicest libraries, yet

learn very little. It is not what is in the books, but what he transfers from them to his mind and heart and life, that makes the scholar and the man. Abraham Lincoln's well used copy of Dilworth's Spelling Book and Bible were worth more to him than a whole library to a boy that would not use them.

The removal of his father from the State of Kentucky to Indiana, took the subject of our remarks into a new sphere at the age of eight years. At this early age he was a most important aid to his father in constructing the log tenement which was to house the future President for the next twelve years of his life.

A new trial soon happened to him. It was the death of his excellent mother. It must have been a great source of consolation to both, however, that he was able to read the Bible to her on her dying bed. And when she died he was able to write, at this tender age, to a minister of the Gospel to come and preach her funeral sermon.

In his new home he found a school, to which he was eager to go, and where he soon became a diligent pupil. Two lines of record, with regard to him, tell the whole story. It is this: "His progress was rapid, and his perseverance and faithfulness won the interest and esteem of his teacher." Such a record of any youth is an index of future greatness.

At nineteen years of age, we find him making a trip to New Orleans, in execution of an important commission which he successfully carried out. The confidence that he inspired at this early period, in his energy, business qualifications, skill and honesty, may be inferred from the fact that the product of several farms were committed to his care, with a companion, to be transported on a flat boat fifteen hundred miles away, to find a market in a distant city, and their value to be brought safely back.

He remains faithfully with his father until he has reached manhood. He shows none of that restlessness so common among our youth to get away from parental restraint and the ties of home. He has learned to obey his parents and to respect and honor them. He accompanies his father in the various changes of his home and labors for his support and that of his family. He remembers the command "Honor thy father and thy mother." How beautiful is obedience to parental authority, wherever you see it. It is a guarantee of a happy and successful future. It is said that he delighted, even when President, to show a cane made from one of the rails split by himself when he was a young man on his father's farm. He had none of that sickly sentiment which leads a youth to be ashamed of his early history.

What might we look for from such a training? We may look for manly, vigorous traits of character, and we have them. He starts out for himself. He feels that he can depend on himself, and, with the blessing of God, will succeed. He teaches and imparts successfully the knowledge he has acquired. He has learned to govern himself, and is capable of governing others. Men are called for to defend that section of country against the Indians. A company is formed where he resides. He joins them and is elected their captain. Though one of the youngest of their number he is selected as their leader. How strong this testimony in favor of so young a man. He is made captain, not by wealth or overpowering influence, but by merit. He leads successfully and gathers new honor. He lays aside the sword and cultivates the arts of peace. He becomes a student of law. He is admitted to the Bar, and in less than ten years his able and learned legal instructor pronounces him his own superior before a jury. He is sent to the Legislature of the State of

his adoption. He rises to distinction here, and is repeatedly sent back again. He is elected to Congress, and there, with manly independence, stands forth as the only advocate from Illinois of great principles which have since become the fixed policy of the government and country. But he lived to see the State of Illinois indorse that policy. He is sent to important conventions, and displays remarkable ability and tact. He gains new laurels at every point. Men look at him. They see elements of character. They see honesty of purpose and marks of great leadership. They trust him and their confidence is fully met. He was never known to have been placed in a position, where he failed to meet the reasonable expectations of his friends.

When he had reached his profession and established a reputation, Providence had provided for him a suitable partner. She was the descendent of a Revolutionary patriot. Let us note how God rewards faithfulness.

About the year 1758 there settled in eastern Pennsylvania, near the Trappe, in Montgomery county, a pious couple, John and Isabella Todd. They trained up their numerous household in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The period of 1776 found their children grown up. They espoused the cause of the Colonies. Their sons were able to bear arms. Three of them were in some of the most important battles of the Revolution. They were severally present at the battles of Germantown, Monmouth, Trenton and Princeton. Two of them spent the memorable winter with Washington at Valley Forge. When the Revolution was over, these two sons of that interesting period went out, with the blessing of their parents, to seek a home in the West. They settled eventually in Kentucky. The Lord prospered them and gave them influence. He gave their name to one of the

counties of Kentucky.* He gave, too, a grand-daughter of one of them to be the wife of President Lincoln, who, ardent, faithful and heroic, might bless him with her love, cheer him by her smiles, and sustain him by her sympathy. Thus was the faithfulness and patriotism of a son of the Revolution, rewarded even to the third generation.

But ah, the keenness of the anguish that fills that stricken widow's heart, the sadness that fills those of her beloved boys, now more dear to her than ever! Our own hearts are melted into tenderness as we dwell upon it, and sorrow comes rushing in upon us like a flood. A nation mourns in sadness too.

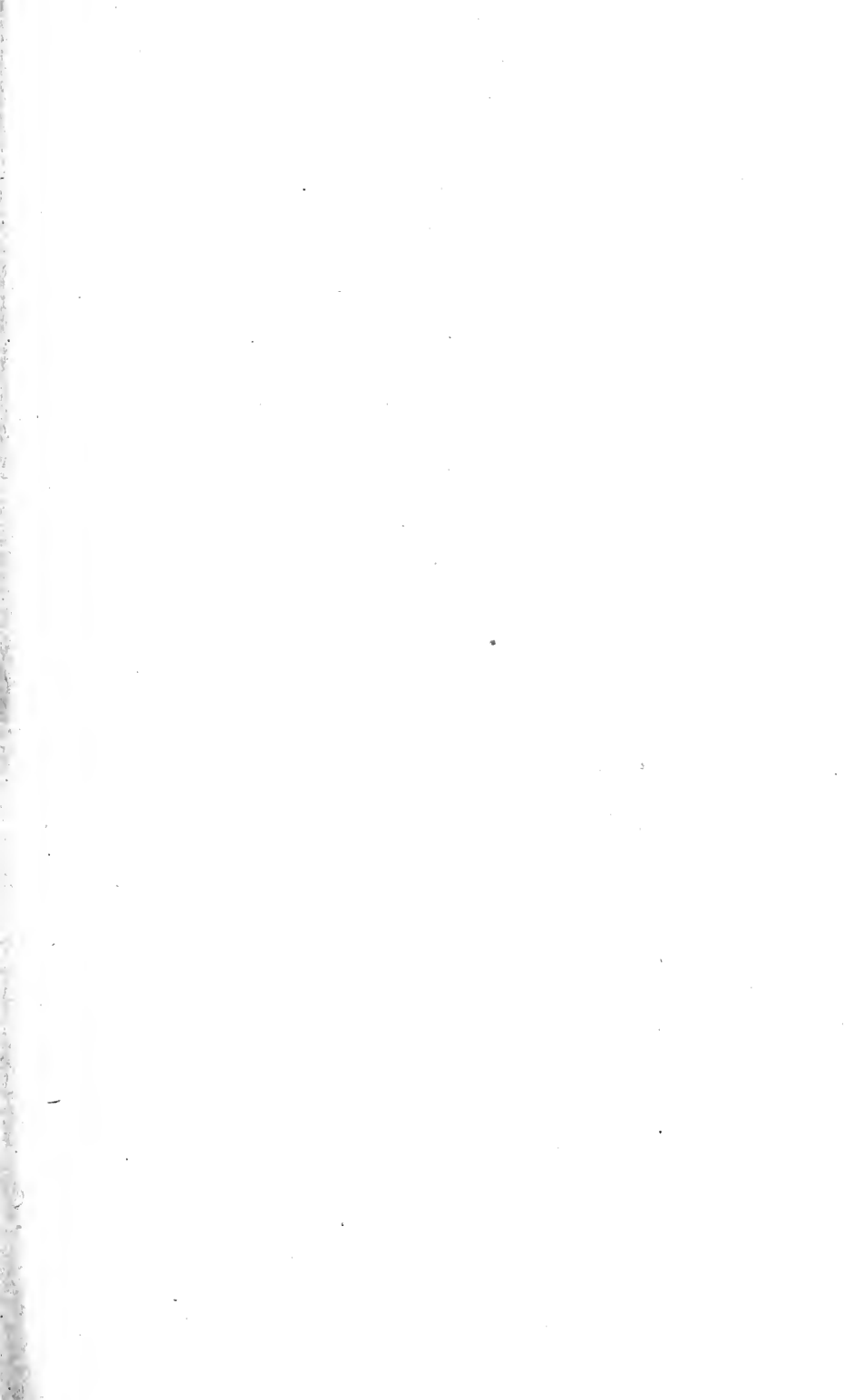
Some have expressed wonder that such a man should be permitted to die such a death. But sacred history informs us that righteous Abel was stricken down by the hand of violence, and that the hand of his own brother. Good King Josiah, one of the best of Israel's rulers, was pierced by an arrow and weltered in his own blood in his chariot. The devout Stephen was slain by a mob. And the Apostle to the Gentiles, after his great mission was completed, was beheaded in the presence of a Roman emperor.

The commanding position that Mr. Lincoln had taken and held so well, was strengthened by his discussion of great principles with the late distinguished Senator from Illinois, (Hon. S. A. Douglas,) who had earned the title of the giant of the west. That discussion, managed so adroitly and ably by Mr. Douglas, and so manfully, vigorously and successfully by Mr. Lincoln, will long be remembered as one of the ablest exhibitions of forensic power ever made in this country. The two champions in that remarkable debate became eventually the standard-bearers of two great parties in a contest which shook the nation to its centre.

* Todd County.

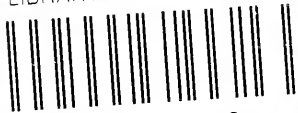
When the Chicago Convention of 1860 sought a candidate for the Presidency, all eyes were turned to Mr. Lincoln. The streams of influence flowed in toward Springfield as the rivers flow to the sea. The successful advocate, the wise counsellor, the honest man, was called into requisition. The voice of the people summoned him to Washington, to lay his hand upon the helm of state. How eventful the time! How the nation trembled! How men's hearts failed them for fear! The heavy cloud of civil war was already above the horizon. It ascended in awful grandeur to the zenith, and overspread the heavens. The lightning flashed, the thunder rolled, and the storm burst forth with terrific fury, threatening ruin everywhere. And yet, self-poised and calm, amidst the raging elements, the gaping wave and rushing flood, this helmsman stood, with steady hand and fixed eye, with nerves of steel and patriotic heart. His playful pleasantry promoted cheerfulness and hope, while hope inspired confidence, and confidence insured success. And when the people's voice again, in louder, stronger, fuller tone, proclaimed a nation's confidence in him, and insisted that he should maintain his position, the storm gave way, and the noble ship moved forth upon a calmer sea. All honor to the illustrious chief who directed her way. But as the storm abates, the chieftain falls. The hand of violence has struck him down. Just as the nation looks in admiration on the man, and hearts of swelling gratitude and love speak forth his praise, he is no more. Just as a burden is rolled off from every loyal heart, we are overwhelmed with sorrow. How sad the calamity! How inscrutable the Providence!

Faithful son! unswerving patriot! judicious counsellor! beloved President! illustrious man! Thy nation has lost a martyred father! Thy country mourns a most noble son!



P. H. H.

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