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By WILLIAM A. MOWRY, LL.D.

The human family is ever fond of heroes. In all ages the distinguished personages have been reverenced and often worshipped as demigods. The tendency is to throw a halo around those who in former times were the leaders of men.

Our own country in the earlier days of its history offered unusual facilities for hero-worship. Many people think that the life of Washington has been too much idealized to give us a correct view of his character and achievements. In a true sense, doubtless, he was "First in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

Then, among our people the tendency is to extol the merits of Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, and many others; among the rich to favor Gerard, Astor and others of more recent day; among statesmen, Webster, Clay, Calhoun; among orators, Everett, Gough, Phillips, Beecher, and the like; among poets, Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes and Whittier, and I might greatly enlarge these lists.

It is the duty of the present age to honor, honestly and with good judgment, the heroes and great men of the past, but the honor offered to their memories should be tempered with wisdom and truthfulness.

I fancy that in more recent times there has been less opportunity for heroic deeds and superior achievements than in the earlier period of our history. Greater intelligence generally pervades the masses of the people, and far greater exploits are expected from everybody. There seems to be less opportunity for rising far above the common people than in former generations.

Moreover, so much light is now thrown upon all the doings of public men that their misdeeds and failures become well known, as well as their great and good achievements.

Self-Made Man

I have to speak to you this afternoon of "Some Incidents in the Life of Abraham Lincoln," which may help you to form a just estimate of his character and of what he accomplished. In the first place I call your attention to the important fact that Lincoln was what may be called purely a self-educated man, but notice that he was "broadly educated." I will illustrate this by a single incident. I well remember that in 1859 Mr. Lincoln lectured in various places in New England. He spoke in Norwich, Conn., one evening and the next day went by rail to New Haven. Rev. J. P. Gulliver, D.D., then a clergyman of Norwich, rode with him, and on the way a conversation took place, substantially as follows: Mr. Gulliver said: "Mr. Lincoln, I understand that you are a self-educated man and I have frequently observed that such men generally fail in analytical reasoning. They seem to lack the power of logical analysis. Now I was struck last evening, with your unusual power of logical analysis --of correct reasoning. How did you acquire it?"

"Ho! Mr. Gulliver," said Lincoln, "I'll tell you that. You see, when I was but a kid, at any rate, when I was in my teens, I was studying law in a law-shop and pretty soon the question came up to my mind, 'When is a thing proved? What is proof?' Then I was floored, 'What is proof? I don't know.' Then I asked myself, 'Lincoln, what business have you in a law-shop, if you can't tell when a thing is proved?' Well, I left the office and went home. It was in the fall of the year. Soon after that an old book fell into my hands and I looked into it and noticed it was full of printed matter and lines, diagrams, triangles, etc., and as I read the print I could not make head nor tail out of it. It was all choctaw to me. Well, I turned back to the first page and read what it said and studied the triangles, and I said: 'That is true. I see that.' Then I read the next one, and, 'That's easy,' and so on. I understood it all. That book was Playfair's Euclid, and that winter I went through the book alone, plain and solid Geometry, and learned it all. I mastered the Geometry. So, it happened that in the Spring one day, I said to myself: 'Lincoln, do you know when a thing is proved?' and I answered quick, 'Yes, sir, I do.' 'Well, then, you can go back to the law-shop,' and back I went."

Mr. Gulliver published an account of this conversation in a weekly paper and I read it, at the time it was published. I have never forgotten the story of Lincoln and his Euclid.

That trip of Lincoln's to New York and New England including his great speech in Cooper Institute made him President.

Nicolay and Hay in their great work on Lincoln give their estimate of the effect of these addresses upon the minds of Eastern people. They say: "In New England he met the same enthusiastic, popular reception and left the same marked impression upon his more critical and learned hearers. They found no little surprise in the fact that a Western politician, springing from the class of unlettered frontiersmen, could not only mold plain, strong words into fresh and attractive phraseology, but maintain a clear, sustained, convincing argument, equal in force and style to the best examples in their college text-books."

Skilled Orator and Debator.

Born, as Mr. Lincoln was, in extreme poverty and debarred from all the advantages of school education, he conquered great obstacles, rose rapidly in spite of all the drawbacks, and became a remarkably skillful orator and debater.

A well known incident illustrates this.

One of the most important arguments in the extremely vigorous and brilliant discussions between Lincoln and Douglas was at Freeport, Ill.

The story has been told after this fashion: Lincoln prepared some questions for Douglas to answer. Among them was this: "Can the people of a United States Territory, in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits, prior to the formation of a State Constitution?"

At his headquarters Lincoln submitted this question to his friends before the debate came off. They strongly implored him not to ask that question. Lincoln persisted in his determination to force Douglas to answer it. "Finally his friends in a chorus cried out: 'If you do, you can never be Senator,' 'Gentlemen,' replied Lincoln, 'I am after larger game; if Douglas answers it he can never be President, and the battle of 1860 is worth a hundred of this.' "

A Great Statesman

Lincoln was a great statesman. Early in the war occurred the Trent affair, when Seward, Secretary of State, prepared a very delicate despatch to Great Britain, which of course was submitted to the President. Lincoln found one or two places where by changing a few words a belligerent sentence could be toned down to a mild and friendly meaning. It has been generally—if not universally—understood that this simple, statesmanlike act of the great President saved us from a war with England, which doubtless would have established the Confederacy of the South.

Many years ago I met Governor Curtin, the war-governor of Pennsylvania, in Washington. It was in the office of Col. Dawson, the United States Commissioner of Education. He told me several, memorable incidents, relating to Mr. Lincoln.

I must be pardoned if I relate one that did not deal with Lincoln, but had special reference to himself, although in a way connected with the White House. Governor Curtin said: "On one occasion I ran over to the White House to see Lincoln for a moment, on business, and in the waiting room I observed a woman dressed in black and weeping.

I approached her and asked if I could be of any assistance to her. She replied that she wanted to see the President, but she could not gain admittance to him. I asked her what the case might be, and was told that she was from Pennsylvania, that her son was in the army, that a telegram told her that he was shot in battle and that he probably would not live. She had hastened down to the army in season to see her boy alive, but he had died and was buried, that on her return she had reached Washington when her money was exhausted and she could go no further. She was without friends in the city and she did not know what to do. As a last resort she had tried to see the President, but could get no further—could not secure access to him.

The Governor told her that he was the man she needed to see. He was the Governor of Pennsylvania and inquired how much she needed to relieve her present embarrassment and carry her to her home. Having handed her what money she required, he called a hack and telling the driver to take her to her hotel, he paid him liberally, and sent them off.

Then the Governor went upstairs, transacted what business he had with the President and started on foot down Pennsylvania Avenue.

Just after passing Willard's, he observed that hack drawn up to the sidewalk and the driver—who now showed that he was a drunken Irishman—standing at the hack door and telling the woman to "Git out. You've rode fur 'nough." She was insisting that he must carry her to her hotel. She had heard the Governor tell him so. "No, you must git out. You've rode fur 'nough." Governor Curtin pulled the man away from the door and began to upbraid him. The Irishman showed fight, and, in telling it Curtin said: "I really thought I should have to fight that drunken Irishman right there on the sidewalk of Pennsylvania Avenue, when, on looking down street I saw a solitary Pennsylvania Bucktail coming up the Avenue with his musket on his shoulder. I stepped up to him and told him the case, and, putting a $5.00 bill in his hand, I said to him, 'Now lick him.' He pitched in and at first the Irishman was too much for him, but finally he got the best of the drunken driver, and on cuffing him soundly on each side of his head, the fellow begged and promised to do anything he wanted. He was let up and put on the box, and the Bucktail beside him, when I told him to see that she was landed safely at her hotel and if the driver did not behave himself to prick him with his bayonet."

The telling of this story seemed to arouse Curtin's memory as he sat tipped back in his chair against the wall. He then told story after story of Lincoln. Finally, there came a lull, as he sat there with his eyes closed. Soon he brought his chair forward, opened his eyes, made an emphatic gesture, and with earnestness and force snapped out this statement: "Lincoln! Lincoln! Lincoln was the cunningest man I ever saw." I interposed with: "Cunning? You mean shrewd?"

"No! I mean cunning." Then followed the story of what happened when Lee "came over the mountain wall," prior to the Battle of Gettysburg. Governor Curtin, in substance, said: "I hastened to Washington to confer with the President. Mr. Lincoln said: 'Governor, call out the Pennsylvania militia at once.' I replied: 'But I can't, Mr. President. The Legislature only can call them out.' 'Well, then, call the Legislature together.' 'There is not time.' 'Then take the responsibility yourself and summon the militia. They will obey the Governor's call.' 'Yes, but Mr. President—they must be paid. Who will pay them?' Then the President said: 'I will stand behind you, Governor. I will recommend in my message to Congress to reimburse you.' 'Will you do that?'

" 'Yes, I will, and Congress will certainly do it.' 'Then,' I replied, "I will call them out,' and I did.

"Well, when the battle was over and Lee had recrossed the Potomac, I went to Philadelphia and called together the Bank Presidents. I told them the circumstances and said that the militia must be paid and all the other expenses the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania had incurred on account of the Gettysburg campaign.

I asked them to loan me the money, $700,000 strong, on my own personal notes, the only surety in the case being the promise of President Lincoln.

"The notes were discounted, with my personal signature and no indorser.

"The first Monday in December came around; the President's message went to Congress and it said not one word concerning the payment of this Pennsylvania debt. Naturally, I took an early train for Washington and at once called at the White House. I found the President very cordial, cheerful and agreeable, but he said nothing about his promise. I broached the subject myself and said to him that he had not kept his pledge to me. He asked, 'What pledge?' I told him. He dropped his head and said: 'Why, no, I didn't, Governor. The fact was, when I talked the matter over with Mr. Seward, he told me that would never do.' 'Would never do? What do you mean?' 'Why, Governor, if I should recommend in my message the payment of that bill, other states would put in their claims to be reimbursed for this and that until by and by some member of Congress would go to the tailor and order a suit of clothes and tell the tailor to send the bill to me. Do you suppose that I should pay it?' 'No, Mr. President, I don't think you would, unless you had promised to.'

Lincoln dropped his head, looked down upon the table, thought a few seconds and then deliberately rose, came around that long table—it was in the cabinet room and I was sitting in one of those chairs with long arms—sat down on the arm of my chair, threw his long legs over mine, put his left arm around my neck, and looking directly into my eyes, while playing with a buttonhole in my coat, said: 'Governor, I want you to let up on me on that promise. As President of the United States, I ask you to let up on me. Will you?' 'Why, of course, I suppose I shall have to, if you ask it in that way, Mr. President.' 'Thank you, Governor, thank you,' said Lincoln and went around the table and resumed his seat. He said no more on that subject, but was perfectly at ease as though the whole matter had entirely dropped from his mind.

"I soon left the White House and went directly over to the Capitol. I immediately called on that 'Great Commoner' from Pennsylvania, Thad. Stevens. I told him what had happened at the White House. He was greatly excited. 'He asked you to let up on him? And you did so? (an expletive). He had no business to make such a request and (another expletive) you had no business to do it. Let's go and see him.'

"We immediately went over to the White House. We met the President and Stevens at once said: 'Mr. President, the Governor says that you asked him to let up on you about that Pennsylvania militia business. Did you?'

" 'Yes, Mr. Stevens, I did.'

(Another Stevens' expletive.) " 'You'd no business to ask him to do any such thing and he'd no business to do it.' (Shaking his fist at the President.)

" 'Hold on, Mr. Stevens,' said Lincoln. 'Not so fast. Keep cool. This is merely a business proposition. Mr. Stevens, you are chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means in the House, are you not?' 'Well, what if I am. What has that to do with your keeping your promises?' 'Softly, Mr. Stevens, softly, it has this to do with it. You bring in a bill from your committee and I will leg it for you. You see, it wouldn't do for me, as President, to recommend the payment of this bill, on account of its influence on other states. But a bill from your committee will receive attention, we will all express ourselves favorable to it, it will pass both houses, I'll sign it, and no precedent will be established.' Ah! Wasn't he cunning! The old fox! He foresaw the difficulty in keeping his promise, and he had thought out this scheme to avoid the rock. Long headed, I say. That's statesmanship!" And the aged Governor settled back in his chair, closed his eyes, and resumed his reflections. There is no end to the stories told of him, illustrating his farseeing statesmanship.

But I must hasten. The final trait of Mr. Lincoln's character, of which I wish to speak, was

His Great-Heartedness

He was a whole-souled man, a broad-minded man, with large, unlimited fellow-feeling, great benevolence, noble philanthropy.

In the city of York, Pennsylvania, some years ago, I met that noted editor and lecturer, Col Alexander McClure, a close friend of Lincoln. He related many thrilling incidents of the Civil War and of Lincoln. Among them the following: The President sent for him one day to come to the White House on important public business. As always, he responded at once. The interview occurred in the evening—Thursday evening. The business being over, the Colonel arose to withdraw. "Don't go," said the President, "I want you to stay. Stay here awhile with me." Later, the Colonel proposed again to leave, but Lincoln induced him to remain. Finally, he felt that he must go. "No, no," said Lincoln. "Don't go yet." "But, Mr. President," said McClure, "it is time you were asleep and getting needed rest for tomorrow's duties." "Sleep! Sleep!" Said the President, "I can't sleep tonight. Don't you know what night it is? This is Thursday. Tomorrow is Friday—hangman's day! Tomorrow many of those poor soldiers will be shot. I can't sleep tonight." Ah, my friends! Think of that! It is for various reasons that the old adage has gained universal acceptance—"Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown." But where will you find a case like that. "I cannot sleep tonight. Tomorrow is hangman's day."

Here is another instance. Among other stories that Governor Curtin told me that day in Washington was the following: Just after the unfortunate Battle of Fredericksburg, Curtin had been down to the battlefield, and on his return reached Washington at midnight. As he landed from the steamboat at the foot of Seventh Street, a messenger saluted him and said that the President wanted to see him at once at the White House. Taking a carriage, a few minutes brought him to the President's house. He was told that Mr. Lincoln had retired for the night. He sent in his card and the word came back that the President was in bed, but wanted to see him in his bedroom. Lincoln's salutation was something after this style: Having greeted the Governor, he said: "Well, Governor, you have been down to the battlefield." "Battlefield! Slaughter pen! It was a terrible slaughter, Mr. President." Then Curtin added, "I was sorry in a moment that I had said that, for he groaned, wrung his hands and showed great agony of spirit. He sat up on the edge of the bed and moaned and groaned in anguish. He walked the floor, wringing his hands and uttering exclamations of grief, and I remember of his saying over and over again: **'What has God put me in this place for.'** I tried to comfort him, and by and by, I got him into bed again. But I didn't dare to leave him. After a time I succeeded in getting him so pacified that he told this story: 'Governor, I'll tell you just how I feel.

" 'There was a farmer in Illinois who had a fine apple orchard. One young tree was bearing its first fruit, and he was anxious to sample it. Well, he had two boys, young chaps, up to all sorts of mischief and tricks. So, one day these little imps were in the orchard, sampling the fruit for themselves. The farmer had a large, savage, wild boar, imported, and this boar was in the orchard also. Seeing the boys, the boar went for them. The older one succeeded in climbing a large tree and was safe. But the boar was too quick for the little shaver and was chasing him around one of the large trees. The boar would snap at the running boy and the boy would grab the boar's tail thus trying to keep away from his head. By and by he yelled to his brother, 'Bill, Bill, come down, come down!' 'What for?' says Bill. 'To help me let this boar go,' replied Jim.' Now, Governor, I am like Jim, I wish someone would help me let this boar go."

Many incidents might be told, and have been told, illustrating this characteristic of Abraham Lincoln. Sometimes I fancy more stories are told of this kind than to show any other trait of this noble man.

My friends, do not even these few incidents from the life of Abraham Lincoln sufficiently establish his character as the most remarkable man that this country has ever produced.

He was born February 12, 1809, just 104 years ago. He died a martyr by the hand of an assassin, April 25, 1865, at the early age of 56 years—48 years ago. But he had lived long enough to make a record on the scroll of time, which the world will continue to praise for ages to come.

I venture to close these remarks by reading what I consider the finest, truest, most brilliant, condensed eulogy of Lincoln ever pronounced by mortal man. I refer to the words spoken by the great Spanish statesman, Castelar, in a speech in the Spanish Cortes many years ago.

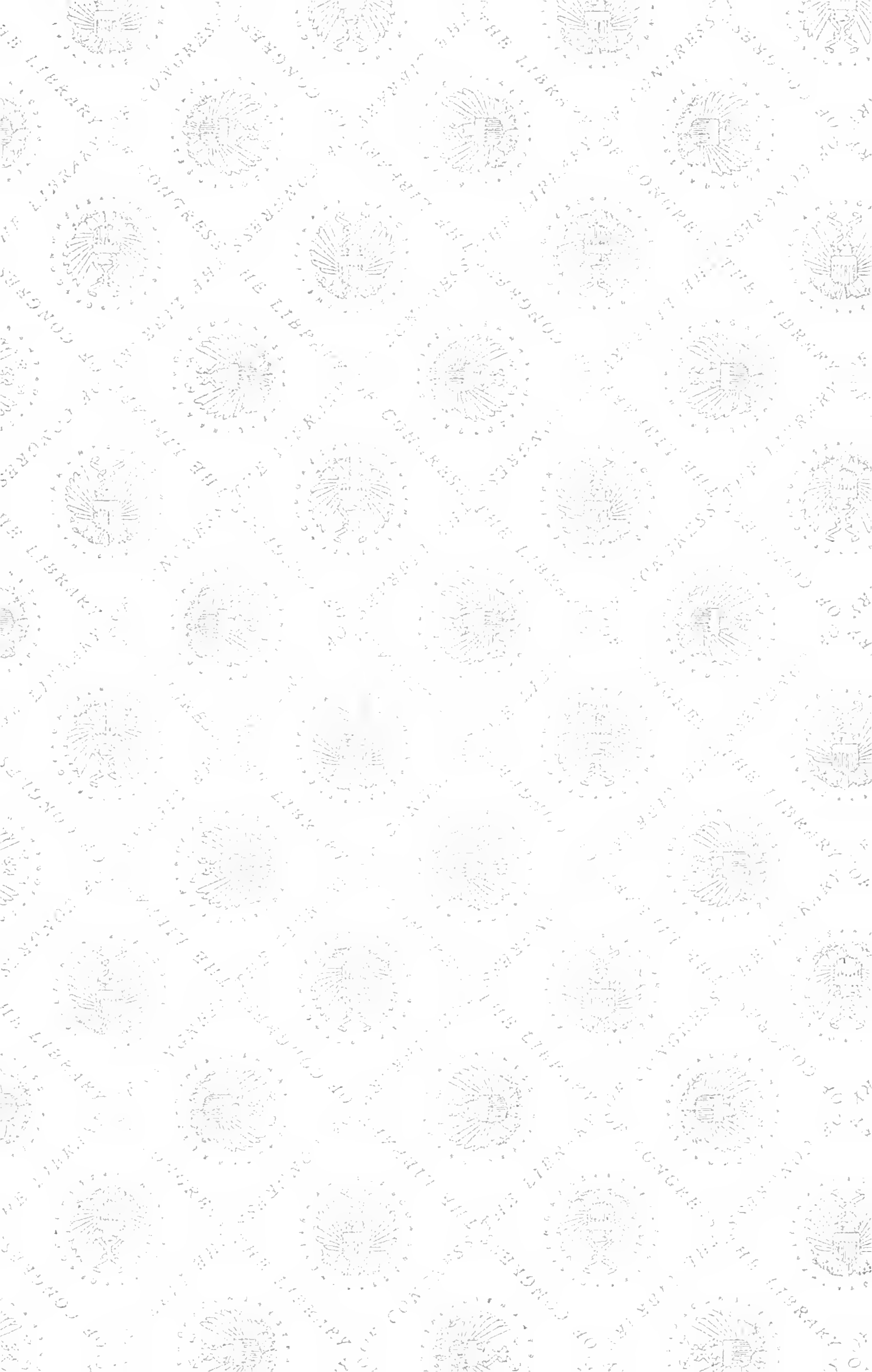
Castelar's Tribute to Lincoln.

"The Puritans are the patriarchs of liberty; they opened a new world on the earth; they blazed a new path for the human conscience;

they created a new society. Yet, when England tried to subdue them and they conquered, the republic triumphed and Slavery remained. Washington could only emancipate his slaves. Franklin said that the Virginians could not invoke the name of God, retaining Slavery. Jay said that all the prayers America sent up to Heaven for the preservation of liberty while slavery continued, were mere blasphemies. Mason mourned over the payment his descendants must make for this great crime of their fathers. Jefferson traced the line where the black wave of Slavery should be stayed.

"Nevertheless, Slavery increased continually. I beg that you will pause a moment to consider the man who cleansed this terrible stain which obscured the stars of the American banner. I beg that you will pause a moment, for his immortal name has been invoked for the perpetuation of Slavery. Ah! the past century has not, the century to come will not have, a figure so grand, because as evil disappears, so disappears heroism also.

"I have often contemplated and described his life. Born in a cabin of Kentucky, of parents who could hardly read; born a new Moses in the solitude of the desert, where are forged all great and obstinate thoughts, monotonous like the desert, and, like the desert, sublime; growing up among those primeval forests, which, with their fragrance, send a cloud of incense, and with their murmurs, a cloud of prayers to heaven; a boatman at eight years in the impetuous current of the Ohio, and at seventeen, in the vast and tranquil waters of the Mississippi; later, a woodman, with axe and arm felling the immemorial trees, to open a way to unexplored regions for his tribe of wandering workers; reading no other book than the Bible, the book of great sorrows and great hopes, dictated often by prophets to the sound of fetters they dragged through Nineveh and Babylon; a child of Nature, in a word, by one of those miracles only comprehensible among free peoples, he fought for the country, and was raised by his fellow-citizens to the Congress at Washington, and by the nation to the Presidency of the Republic; and when the evil grew more virulent, when those States were dissolved, when the slaveholders uttered their war cry and the slaves their groans of despair—the woodcutter, the boatman, the son of the great West, the descendant of Quakers, humblest of the humble before his conscience, greatest of the great before history, ascends the Capitol, the greatest moral height of our time, and strong and serene with his conscience and his thought; before him a veteran army, hostile Europe behind him, England favoring the South, France encouraging reaction in Mexico, in his hands the riven country; he arms two millions of men, gathers a half million of horses, sends his artillery 1200 miles in a week from the banks of the Potomac to the shores of Tennessee; fights more than six hundred battles; renews before Richmond the deeds of Alexander, of Cæsar; and, after having emancipated 3,000,000 slaves, that nothing might be wanting, he dies in the very moment of victory—like Christ, like Socrates, like all redeemers, at the foot of his work. His work! Sublime achievement! over which humanity shall eternally shed its tears, and God his benedictions! * * *"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