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BY BAYARD TAYLOR.

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY SOL. EYTINGE, JR.,*

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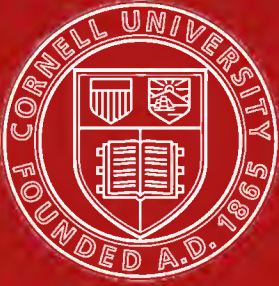
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# THE BALLAD OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

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C OME, leave the tales you love so well,  
Of fairy joy and woe:  
Another story I shall tell  
Of one whose name you know.

Like him who was a herdsman's son,  
Yet lived to be a king,  
His life the highest honor won  
Our native land can bring.

His arm was strong, his heart was bold,  
His deeds were wise and true;  
He did not live in days of old,  
But here at home with you.

And who he was, you can't forget;  
You've surely guessed his name;  
For all the land is ringing yet  
With Abraham Lincoln's fame.

Away in old Kentucky's wild,  
Where Nolin's waters flow,  
There he was born, a settler's child,  
Just sixty years ago.

From other settlements removed,  
The Indian tribes were near,  
And round his father's cabin roved  
The brown bear and the deer.

Ah! little sport and little joy  
In that lone place he knew;  
A rugged, tanned, and barefoot boy,  
A forest child, he grew.

One blessing, only, cheered his days,—  
A mother, pale and fair,  
With kinder heart and gentler ways  
Than other women there.

She knew her boy; by many a touch  
Of care and watchful love  
She did her best—it was not much—  
To guide him and improve.

No schools or books were there, to give  
Instruction to the youth,  
But yet she taught him how to live  
In honesty and truth.

She taught him courage and content,  
And patience under pain,  
When they had left the settlement  
To buy and build again.

And when, at last, the hardships broke  
Her strength, awhile she lay:  
Of love to God and man she spoke,  
And then she passed away.

No church was in the solitudes,  
Nor church-yard for the dead;  
And so, amid the lonely woods,  
They made the mother's bed.

And little Abraham, weeping there,  
Cried: "Mother, I will be  
In heart as true, in life as fair  
As you have hoped of me!"

THE BALLAD OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

Beside that grave the boy began  
To think, and work, and wait,—  
To make himself an honest man  
And worth a better fate.

Whatever offered to his hand,  
On that he set his mind:  
There was no boy in all the land  
As ready and as kind.

For he would work through sun or snow,  
And help, when there was need;  
And many a mile he'd gladly go,  
To find a book to read.

Few books there were could help impart,  
Few teachers could he find:  
It was his brave and patient heart  
That helped his eager mind.

So year passed onward after year:  
The boy grew tall and strong,  
And bold of will,— his only fear  
To do or suffer wrong.

And now the father, wandering west,  
By better promise drawn,  
Settled upon the prairie's breast  
Beside the Sangamon.

They built themselves a cabin rough,  
With walls of logs and clay:  
The doors and seats were oak-wood tough,  
The beds were prairie hay.

Around the chimney-place they drew  
Content, when winter came:  
The snow-flakes, whirling down the flue,  
Died ere they reached the flame.

With scanty space and humblest cheer  
The dreary days went by,  
Till spring had thawed the frozen year  
And warmed the gusty sky.

Then Abraham, strong from steady toil,  
Went forth with axe in hand,  
And while his father ploughed the soil  
He fenced the prairie-land.

Tree after tree, he made them fall,—  
The chestnuts, straight and thin:  
With stalwart arm he swung the maul,  
And drove the wedges in.

A fence around ten acres rose,  
And they who saw it, say  
That better, evener rails than those  
No man can split to-day.

When all was finished, Abraham said:  
"Now, Father, you've a home,  
With wood and grass, and meat and bread,  
So give me leave to roam!"

"I'm twenty-one, and called a man,  
And greater grows my need  
(As 't was my own and mother's plan)  
To be a man indeed!"

"Whate'er I've learned, I'm far behind;  
My chances here are few:  
And, feed the body, starve the mind,—  
That I shall never do!"

"Whatever comes, I will not shirk  
My duty clear and plain:  
There must be knowledge, must be work,  
Which such as I can gain!"



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THE BALLAD OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

Then forth he went. 'T was hard at first  
His bread alone to earn,  
While more than hunger, more than thirst,  
Was his desire to learn.

He felled the woods, he tilled the land, —  
Hard work and little pay ;  
Yet honest heart and willing hand  
Will always make their way.

The people found that he was true,  
That toil to him was light, —  
That what he promised he would do,  
And what he did was right.

And soon a flat-boat, laden well,  
They gave into his care,  
To seek New Orleans, and to sell  
The boat and cargo there.

So Abraham, with his river-boys,  
Put off, and drifted slow  
Past wooded bluffs of Illinois  
And castled rocks below.

Missouri's mouth, that stains with mud  
The Mississippi's wave,  
They passed, and where Ohio's flood  
Washes the pirate's cave : —

Where, westward, woods of cypress stand  
In water to the knee :  
Where, eastward, rolls the pleasant land  
Of fertile Tennessee.

Where came, beyond the deserts born,  
Arkansas, bright and blue :  
Where Vicksburg rose against the morn,  
Beside the dark Yazoo.

On — on, by sun or light of stars  
They plied the heavy oar ;  
Looked out for snags and sandy bars,  
And kept away from shore.

So winding with the winding stream,  
Still warmer grew the air,  
And changed, as in a wondrous dream,  
The Southern Land was there !

They saw the rich magnolias grow,  
The planter's home to screen :  
The ripened cotton shone like snow,  
The orange groves were green.

Till every cypress swamp was passed,  
And every river bend ;  
And at New Orleans' wharf, at last,  
The voyage had an end.

Then Abraham, faithful to his trust,  
The boat and cargo sold,  
And home on foot, through mud and dust,  
Brought safe the owner's gold.

So trusted afterwards was he,  
That all the work he sought  
Was offered him, with leisure free  
For reading and for thought.

At first, he kept the village store ;  
But, as his knowledge grew,  
The people honored him the more,  
And loved, the more they knew.

And when the State election came  
For men to make the laws,  
They called on Abraham Lincoln's name  
To represent their cause.

THE BALLAD OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

In little things a man is tried  
Till he is fit for great ;  
He served his friends, and they with pride  
Sent him to serve the State.

Of form uncouth and manners plain,  
Yet, when his voice they heard,  
Men felt how sound and clear his brain,  
And listened to his word.

Yet more he studied, further rose  
From out his place obscure,  
Till, working in the path he chose,  
He made his fortune sure.

The boy had grown indeed a man,  
In power and will complete :  
And now a broader life began  
To spread before his feet.

His talents first the neighbors knew ;  
The county knew him then,  
And then the State ; until he grew  
A guide to other men.

His voice was heard in stern debates  
Where, eloquent and brave,  
He claimed that all our coming States  
Should never hold a slave.

His words went ringing through the land  
So simple yet so strong,  
That soon they roused a mighty band  
To meet the threatened wrong.

It was not long before men said :  
"He shall our leader be :  
His honest heart and good, wise head  
Will bring us victory!"

They made him then their candidate,  
As best of all they knew :  
They thought : "So well he served his State,  
He'll serve his country too."

Look, where he stands ! In thirty years  
Since forth from home he went,  
From East to West the people's cheers  
Hail Lincoln President !

In thirty years the poor young man,  
Whose chances seemed so dim,  
Stands foremost in the Nation's van,  
And all look up to him !

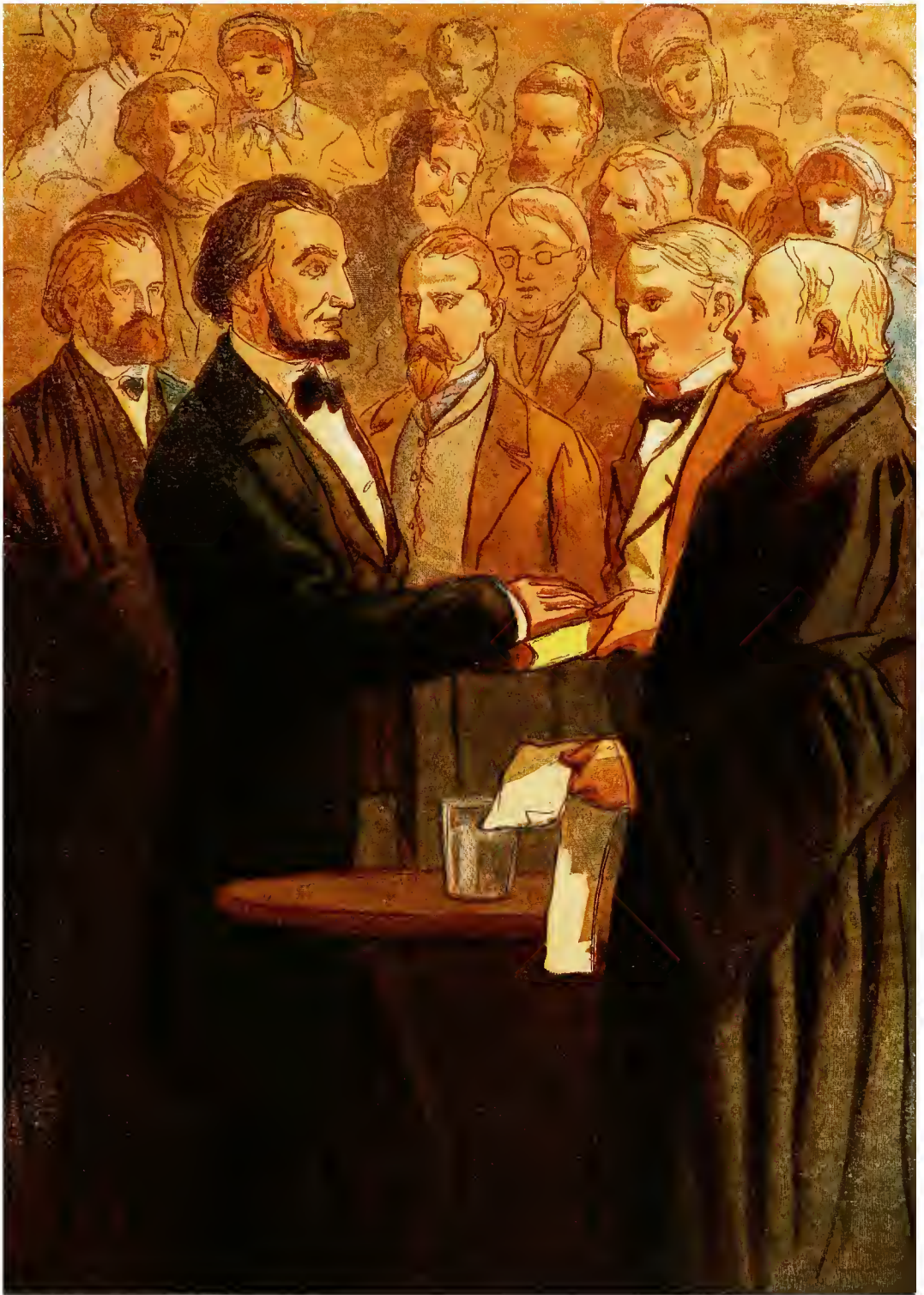
The chosen Chief, he journeyed on,  
Received with glad acclaim,  
Until to stately Washington  
Across the land he came.

There on the marble portico  
He took the solemn oath,  
No separate North or South to know,  
But justly govern both.

Alas ! you know what followed then :  
How many, led astray  
By words and acts of wicked men,  
Brought on Fort Sumter's day.

Brought on the day that lit the land  
With war's devouring flame,  
Till North and South on every hand  
To siege and battle came.

You know it all : you can't forget  
The names of many a day,  
When, armed for death, our blue-coats met  
The Southern coats of gray.







THE BALLAD OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

You saw the Union's heroes go  
With trump and rattling drum:  
And then—in solemn march and slow,  
You saw their coffins come.

You saw the Nation spend its life,  
Its blood like water poured:  
You saw, thank God! to end the strife,  
The Union's power restored.

Ah, who can tell how Abraham felt  
Through all those fiery years!  
How many times to God he knelt,  
And prayed for help, with tears!

He said: "The sin of Slavery  
Has brought this war and woe:  
I now proclaim the black man free,  
And I will make him so!"

'T was done: thenceforth his path was bright,  
His cause, as all men saw,  
Was that of Freedom and of Right,  
Of Union and of Law.

God prospered him, and when his end  
Of service was at hand,  
The people cried: "He still must mend  
The troubles of our land."

They chose him: he renewed the oath  
Alike for North and South,  
And words that touched the hearts of both  
Came kindly from his mouth.

With firmness in the right we've won,  
We stand, what'er befall,"  
Said he,— "with malice unto none,  
With charity for all.

"God has His own high purposes:  
As He wills, let it be!  
We pray the day may come that sees  
The land united, free!"

And scarce a month thereafter passed  
Before the earnest prayer  
Was heard, and victory came at last,—  
Yea, victory everywhere!

What shouts went up when Richmond fell!  
Grant took the sword of Lee,  
And trumpet, cannon, drum, and bell  
Announced, "The land is free!"

In Richmond streets among the first  
Was Abraham Lincoln then:  
He walked where late his name was cursed  
By desperate Southern men.

But, chanting their thanksgiving psalm,  
The slaves came, clamorous:  
They shouted: "God bless Abraham,—  
He has delivered us!"

They pressed around him as he went,  
They laughed and wept for joy,—  
The gray-haired negroes, worn and bent,  
The mother and her boy.

Though anxious years had made him sad,  
Yet tender was his eye,  
And, such an earnest face he had,  
Some knelt as he passed by.

Alas! as Moses on the height  
Saw Canaan, green and fair,  
He knew the truth, and saw the sight  
Of peace he could not share.

THE BALLAD OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

He heard the roar of battle die ;  
The land no more was red ;  
Then up to heaven there rang a cry : —  
“The President is dead !”

'T was thus, in his triumphal hour,  
The coward murderer came,  
And killed him at the height of power  
And fulness of his fame.

Ah, when was ever grief so deep  
As that we felt for him !  
The memory of it still we keep,  
And still our eyes are dim.

A gloom on all the nation fell ;  
The cities held their breath,  
While muffled drum and funeral bell  
Pealed out the march of death.

By millions wept, his burial car  
Across the land was drawn,  
To lay him on his prairie far  
Beside the Sangamon.

And there, where once the honest youth  
His lonely life began,  
He sleeps, — the soul of right and truth,  
The pure, immortal man.

Wherever men are sore oppressed,  
Where hearts in bondage bend,  
All mourn for him, in East or West  
For they have lost a friend.

And not his State or land alone  
Shall build his future fame :  
Through all the world the worth is known  
Of Abraham Lincoln's name !



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