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# Speeches Honoring Abraham Lincoln

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Address entitled  
"HE RESCUED THE SLAVES"

Delivered by  
Beverly W. Howe

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When a boy growing up in Kentucky, I asked an old negro, a former slave who was working for my father, why it was that all the colored people voted the Republican ticket. I had not yet realized the debt of gratitude the colored voters owed, but I knew that every colored vote was counted in advance for the Republican candidate. (I know that isn't the case today; but that is another story.) Old Uncle Ben explained to me that "Abe Lincoln freed the niggers". Born into a family whose immediate ancestors on both sides had lost considerable money and property, including some slaves (freed before the war closed), on account of the Civil War and its results,

the atmosphere of my youth was not designed particularly to make me in those years an ardent admirer of "Old Abe". As I grew older, however, I soon learned that "freeing the niggers" was the least of his accomplishments, as great as it was. And now I yield to no man in my admiration for the great American commoner and in appreciation of the service to our country and the world of Abraham Lincoln.

I am pleased, therefore, to participate in this celebration of the 131st Anniversary of the birth on a small farm in what was then Hardin County and is now LaRue County, Kentucky, of one who, moving in early boyhood to Indiana and in young manhood to Illinois, was destined to become the 16th President of the United States and one of the heroes of the American people. I am pleased to speak here under the auspices of the Lincoln Life Foundation directed and operated so ably and so efficiently by my friends, Dr. Louis A. Warren and Mr. M. A. Cook. Like all Lincoln students and devotees, I am a grateful recipient

of their Lincoln Lore, which reaches my desk regularly and is supplemented by occasional exchange of correspondence throughout each year.

I think it is a commendable custom for the Boy Scouts of the Anthony Wayne Area/<sup>Council</sup>to make a pilgrimage each year to "Abraham Lincoln the Hoosier Youth", this fine statue of Lincoln in bronze, so appropriately erected in the plaza of its building by the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company. If I could have my way about it, more people in all communities would make periodic pilgrimages to the several Lincoln shrines of the country as well as elsewhere in the world. For many years I have made it a practice to look up and visit such places. I have done it frequently when touring with the family.

This last summer Mrs. Howe and our two grown daughters and I spent three months in Europe. When we were planning the itinerary one of the girls remarked: "On this trip Daddy will not be looking up

any Abraham Lincoln places as he always does when we are touring anywhere in the United States." I let the remark pass then. I thought to myself, however, that I might fool them - and I did. On our trip we found and visited many Lincoln shrines of special interest - in Great Britain principally. I wish to tell you about one of these.

I refer to the statue of Abraham Lincoln in Manchester, England. It may surprise some of you even to know there is a statue of Abraham Lincoln there; and, further, that it is only one of several statues of him in Great Britain. *Another is opposite Westminster Abbey in London.* Manchester is the capital, as it were, of Lancashire, the center of one of the most extensive manufacturing districts in the world and the fourth city in size in England. It was not on our itinerary. Hearing about the statue of Lincoln there, however, I made a special pilgrimage to it from Chester, another interesting city we visited. By motorcar the journey was 150 miles over there and back.

The statue, I learned, was in a park known as

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I do not mean to indicate that the statue itself is so fine. I have visited many of the 50 or 60 sculptured Lincoln memorials in this country - some of them several times. Many of them are in your great state and include the one at which we worship today. Of course I have visited the magnificent memorial at his birthplace in Hodgenville, Kentucky and his tomb at Springfield and the monumental memorial in Washington which I think is the most inspiring patriotic shrine extant. I do not belittle the privilege I have enjoyed, and hope to enjoy again, of visiting these Lincoln shrines in our own country when I emphasize the thrill that was mine upon the realization with my own eyes of the appreciation accorded him abroad.



Platt Fields. Arriving in Manchester early in the afternoon, we inquired of several Bobbies at intersections before we found out where Platt Fields was. Finally we found it, and realized it was a sort of recreational park, with playgrounds, bowling greens, art gallery and museum and the like. As we approached the entrance I got a glimpse of old Abe and was out of the car walking over to him immediately. It was enchanting indeed to look upon this Statue of Abraham Lincoln in a foreign country!

As I walked up to it I saw an elderly gentleman and lady sitting on a bench nearby. As if I did not know, I asked them who it was. There was no name or inscription on the Statue in large enough letters to be read that far away. The lady said promptly, "It is Lincoln". Walking nearer to it I discovered a plaque containing the following:

"This Monument of Abraham Lincoln, the work of George Gray Barnard, was, through the friendly offices of the Sulgrave Institution and the Anglo-

American Society, given to the City of Manchester by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Phelps Taft, of Cincinnati, Ohio, U.S.A., in commemoration of Lancashire's friendship to the cause for which Lincoln lived and died, and of the century of peace among English-speaking peoples. 1919."

It is a replica of the original statue in Cincinnati not far from the Taft Home there, <sup>and is known as The Cavalier</sup> Another replica is in Louisville, Kentucky.

While nothing specifically is said on the plaque or elsewhere about it so far as I could discover, undoubtedly the interesting contact Lincoln had during the Civil War with the working men of Manchester had much to do with the statue being erected there. As you will recall, <sup>from your study of history</sup> the blockade of Confederate ports during the war was naturally a severe blow to the English manufacturing centers like Manchester, which had depended upon the Southern States for their supply of cotton. But the working classes of England, in

marked contrast with the upper classes, displayed strong Union sympathies throughout the struggle. Lincoln received an address and resolutions from the workingmen of Manchester praising his administration and the ideal for which he was struggling. In reply Lincoln wrote a letter of appreciation, dated January 19, 1863.

While I was looking at the Statue, three little boys who had been playing nearby came up and stood by me. I asked them who that was. All said "Lincoln". I said, "Who was he?" One said, "He rescued the slaves". I doubt if every American boy would make a better answer than that. My grandmother, a slave owner, would have said, with a decided tone of anger, "He freed the niggers!"

During this time the courier was back several hundred feet taking some pictures of the Statue while I was making notes about it. Soon several other boys and girls had congregated. I think there were ten in

all. They wanted to know what I was doing there and I explained that I was an American, born in the state where Lincoln was born and living in the same State from which he went to the Presidency of the United States and in which he is buried, and for these and other reasons was an ardent Lincoln lover. I then told them a little about Abraham Lincoln, how he was born in a log cabin, had suffered many hardships, had very slight organized education, <sup>despite these hardships</sup> became a great lawyer, a great orator and rose to the highest elective position in the world, <sup>became the savior of the American Union</sup> is remembered by liberty loving people in all the nations of the world as their magnanimous fellowman, and his career gives assurance to young people of every country, no matter how underprivileged, that they, too, can rise by their own efforts to heights of success.

Some of my gang, as I got to calling them before we separated, were little tots and all of them might well be classed as "dirty little urchins" so far as outward appearances were concerned. But they

manifested great interest. <sup>one</sup> ~~You~~ would not want a better audience than they constituted. After I concluded my little speech to them, I got them in unison to repeat after me: "Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States, one of the heroes of the American people and friend of all mankind". It was a struggle for some of the little fellows, but they all went through with it with great enthusiasm.

This incident will, I believe, convince you Boy Scouts of America that the young people of other countries, too, are informed concerning, and are eager to learn more about, Abraham Lincoln. I hope it will constitute a challenge to you and all young people in America to learn more about the Great Emancipator. The incident also should, I think, cause us to realize more than ever that, after all, Abraham Lincoln has turned out to be a citizen of the world. It is true that, from and after his death, ~~he~~ "belongs to the ages". It is equally true, I think, that he belongs to the world.

If the democratic spirit ever lives and thrives everywhere, he will have been among those responsible for such development. That spirit, originating with Christ himself ~~and which~~ was the dominating factor when Abraham Lincoln rescued the slaves. <sup>It</sup> is the spirit, and the only spirit, which can be the dominating factor in the rescue of mankind from the ills which since the beginning of time have intermittently fallen upon humanity. We need most of all in the world today more of the spirit of Christ, which so definitely and effectually asserted itself in Abraham Lincoln.



