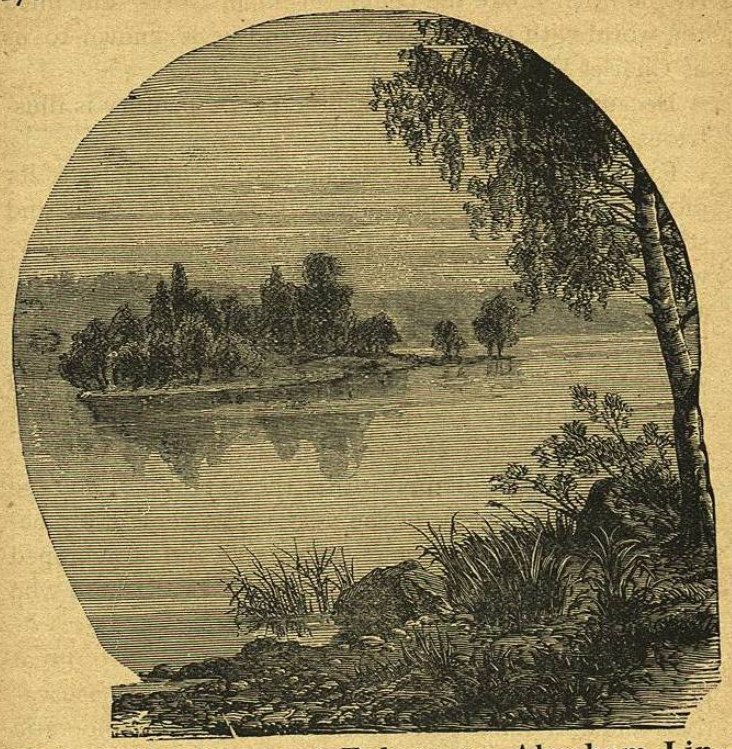


Ingersoll's Eloquent Eulogy on Abraham Lincoln.

(Delivered in the Auditorium, Chicago, Feb. 12, 1892.)

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: — Eighty-three years ago to-day two babes were born—one in the woods of Kentucky amid the hardships and poverty of pioneers; one in England, surrounded by wealth and culture.

One associated his name with the enfranchisement of labor, with the emancipation of millions, with the salvation of the Republic. He is known to us as Abraham Lincoln.

The other broke the chains of superstition and filled the world with intellectual light, and he is known to us as Charles Darwin.

Because of these men the nineteenth century is illustrious.

Every generation has its heroes, its iconoclasts, its pioneers, its ideals. The people always have been and still are divided, at least into two classes—the many, who with their backs to the sunshine, worship the past; and the few, who keep their faces to the dawn—the many, who are satisfied with the world as it is; the few, who labor and suffer for the future, for those to be, and who seek to rescue the oppressed, to destroy the cruel distinctions of caste, and to civilize mankind.

Yet it sometimes happens that the liberator of one age becomes the oppressor of the next. His reputation becomes so great—he becomes so revered and worshipped —that the followers in his name attack the hero who endeavors to take another step in advance.

In our country there were for many years two great political parties, and each of these parties had conservatives and extremists. The extremists of the Democratic party were in the rear, and wished to go back; the extremists of the Republican party were in the front, and wished to go forward. The extreme Democrat was willing to destroy the Union for the sake of slavery, and the extreme Republican was willing to destroy the Union for the sake of liberty.

Neither party could succeed without the vote ot the extremists.

This was the political situation in 1858–60.

The extreme Democrats would not vote for Douglas,

but the extreme Republicans did vote for Lincoln. Lincoln occupied the middle ground, and was the compromise candidate of his own party. He had lived for many years in the intellectual territory of compromise—in a part of our country settled by Northern and Southern men—where Northern and Southern ideas met, and the ideals of the two sections were brought together and compared.

The sympathies of Lincoln, his ties of kindred, were with the South. His convictions, his sense of justice, and his ideals, were with the North. He knew the horrors of slavery; and he felt the unspeakable ecstacies and glories of freedom.

He had the kindness, the gentleness, of true greatness, and he could not have been a master; he had the manhood and independence of true greatness, and he could not have been a slave.

He was just, and he was incapable of putting a burden upon others that he himself would not willingly bear.

He was merciful and profound, and it was not necessary for him to read the history of the world to know that liberty and slavery could not live in the same nation or in the same brain.

The Republic had reached a crisis, the conflict between liberty and slavery could no longer be delayed. From the heights of philosophy—standing above the contending hosts, above the prejudices, above the sentimentalities of his day—Lincoln was good enough and brave enough and wise enough to utter these prophetic words:

"A house divided against itself can not stand, I believe this country can not permanently endure half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved; I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all the one thing or the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction or its advocates will push it farther until it becomes alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South."

This declaration was the standard around which gathered the grandest political party that the world has ever seen, and this declaration made Lincoln the leader of that vast host.

In this, the first great crisis, Lincoln uttered the victorious truth that made him the foremost man in the Republic.

Then came another crisis—the crisis of secession and civil war.

Again Lincoln spoke the deepest feeling and the highest thought of the Nation. In his first message he said:

"The central idea of secession is the essence of anarchy."

He also showed conclusively that the North and South, in spite of secession, must remain face to face—that physically they could not separate—that they must have more or less commerce, and that this commerce must be carried on, either between the two sections as friends or aliens.

This situation and its consequences he pointed out to absolute perfection in these words:

"Can aliens make treaties easier than friends can make laws! Can treaties be more faithfully enforced between aliens than laws among friends!"

After having stated fully and fairly the philosophy of the conflict, after having said enough to satisfy any calm and thoughtful mind, he addressed himself to the hearts of America. Probably there are fewer and finer passages of literature than the close of Lincoln's first message:

"I am loth to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break, our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory stretching from every battle-field and patriotic grave to every loving heart and hearth-stone all over this broad land, will swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our natute."

These noble, these touching, these pathetic words, were delivered in the presence of rebellion, in the midst of spies and conspirators—surrounded by friends, most of whom were unknown and some of whom were wavering in their fidelity—at a time when secession was arrogant and organized, when patriotism was silent, and when, to quote the expressive words of Lincoln himself, "Sinners were calling the righteous to repentance."

When Lincoln became President he was held in contempt by the South—underrated by the North and East—not appreciated even by his Cabinet—and yet he was not only one of the wisest but one of the shrewdest of mankind. Knowing that he had the right to enforce the laws of the Union in all parts of the United States and Territories—knowing, as he did, that the secessionists

were in the wrong, he also knew they had sympathizers, not only in the North, but in other lands. Consequently he felt that it was of the utmost importance that the South should fire the first shot, should do some act that would solidify the North and gain for us the justification of the civilized world. He so managed affairs that while he was attempting simply to give food to our soldiers, the south commenced actual hostilities and fired on Sumter.

This course was pursued by Lincoln in spite of the advice of many friends, and yet a wiser thing was never done.

At that time Lincoln appreciated the scope and consequences of the impending conflict. Above all other thoughts in his mind was this: This conflict will settle the question, at least for centuries to come, whether man is capable of governing himself, and consequently is of greatest importance to the free than to the enslaved. He knew what depended on the issue, and he said: "We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last, best hope of earth."

Then came a crisis in the North. It became clearer and clearer to Lincoln's mind, day by day, that the rebellion was slavery, and that it was necessary to keep the border States on the side of the Union.

For this purpose he proposed a scheme of emancipation and colonization—a scheme by which the owners of slaves should be paid the full value of what they called their "property." He called attention to the fact that he had adhered to the act of Congress to confiscate property used for insurrectionary purposes—that the Union must be preserved, and that therefore all indis-

pensable means must be employed to that end.

He knew that if the border States agreed to gradual emancipation, and received compensation for their slaves, they would be forever lost to the Confederacy, whether secession succeeded or not. It was objected at the time by some that the scheme was far too expensive; but Lincoln, wiser than his advisers—far wiser than his enemies—demonstrated that from an economical point of view his course was the best.

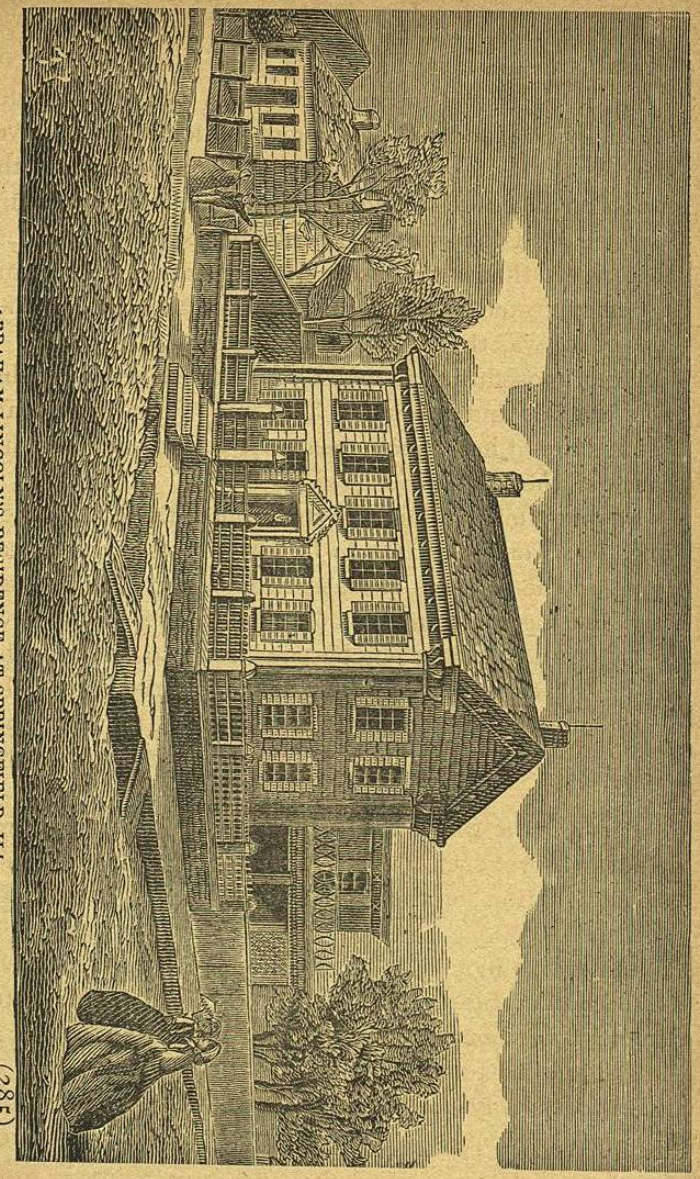
He proposed that $400 be paid for slaves, including men, women and children. This was a large price, and yet it showed how much cheaper it was to purchase than carry on the war.

At that time, at the price mentioned, there were about $750,000 worth oi slaves in Deleware. The cost of carrying on the war was at least two millions of dollars a day, and for one-third of one day's expenses all the slaves in Deleware could be purchased. He also showed that all the slaves in Deleware, Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri could be bought, at the same price, for less than the expense of carrying on the war for eighty-seven days.

This was the wisest thing that could have been proposed, and yet such was the madness of the South, such the indignation of the North, that the advice was unheeded.

Again, in July, 1862, he urged on the representatives of the border States a scheme of gradual compensated emancipation; but the ropresentatives were too deaf to hear, too blind to see.

Lincoln always hated slavery, and yet he felt the obligations and duties of his position. In his first mes-



ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S RESIDENCE AT SPRINGFIELD, ILL.

sage he assured the South the laws, including the most odious of all—the law for the return of fugitive slaves—would be enforced. The South would not hear. Afterward he proposed to purchase the slaves of the border States, but the proposition was hardly discussed—hardly heard. Events came thick and fast; theories gave way to facts, and everything was left to force.

The fact is that he tried to discharge the obligations of his great office, knowing from the first that slavery must perish. The course pursued by Lincoln was so gentle, so kind and persistent, so wise and logical that millions of Northern Democrats sprang to the defense not only of the Union, but of his administration. Lincoln refused to be led or hurried by Freemont or Hunter, by Greeley or Sumner. From first to last he was leader, and he kept step with events.

On the 22nd of July, 1862, Lincoln called together his Cabinet for the purpose of showing the draft of a proclamatien of emancipation, stating to them that he did not wish their advice, as he had made up his mind.

This proclamation was held until some great victory might be acheived, so that it would not appear to be the effect of weakness, but the child of strength.

This was on the 22nd of July, 1862. On the 22nd of August the same Lincoln wrote his celebrated letter to Horace Greely, in which he stated that it was to save the Union; that he would save it with slavery if he could; that if it was necessary to destroy slavery in order to save the Union he would; in other words, he would do what was necessary to save the Union.

This letter disheartened to a great degree thousands and millions of the friends of freedom. They thought

that Mr. Lincoln had not attained the moral height upon which they supposed he stood. And yet when this letter was written the emancipation proclamation was in his hands and had been for thirty days, waiting only an opportunity to give it to the world.

Some two weeks after the letter to Greeley Lincoln was waited on by a committee of clergymen, and was by them informed that it was God's will that he should issue a proclamation of emancipation. He replied to them, in substance, that the day of miracles had passed. He also kindly and mildly suggested that if it were God's will that this proclamation be issued, certainly God would have made known that will to him—to the person whose duty it was to issue it.

On the 22nd day of September, 1862, the most glorious date in the history of the Republic, the Proclamation of Emancipation was issued.

The Extreme Democrat of the North was fearful that slavery might be destroyed, that the Constitution might be broken; and that Lincoln, after all, could not be trusted; and at the same time the radical Republican feared that he loved the Union more than he did liberty.

Lincoln had reached the generlization of all argument upon the question of slavery and freedom— a generalization that never will be excelled:

"In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freeddom to the free."

Liberty can be retained, can be enjoyed, only by giving it to others. The spendthrift saves, the miser is the prodigal. He who puts chains upon the body of another shackles his own soul.

The moment the proclamation was issued, the cause of the Republic became sacred. From that moment the North fought for the human race. From that moment the North stood under the blue and stars, the flag of nature—sublime and free.

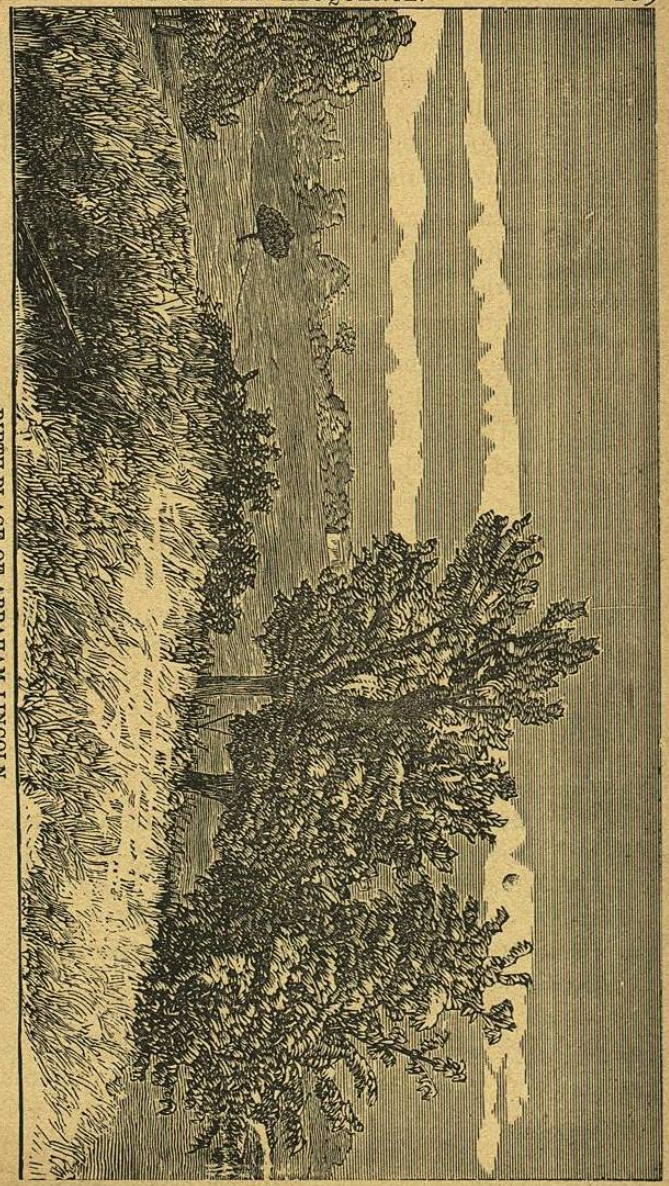
We were surrounded by enemies. Many of the so-called great in Europe and England were against us. They hated the Republic, despised our institutions, and sought in many ways to aid the South.

Mr. Gladstone announced that Jefferson Davis had made a nation, and that he did not believe the restoration of the American Union by force attainable. It was also declared that the North was fighting for empire and the South for independence.

The Marquis of Salisbury said: "The people of the South are the natural allies of England. The North keeps an opposition shop in the same department of trade as ourselves." Some of their statesmen declared that the subjugation of the South by the North would be a calamity to the world. Louis Napoleon was another enemy, and he endeavored to establish a monarchy in Mexico, to the end that the great North might be destroyed. But the patience, the uncommon sense, the statesmanship of Lincoln—in spite of foreign hate and Northern division—triumphed over all.

LINCOLN WAS, BY NATURE, A DIPLOMAT.

He knew the art of sailing against the wind. He understood, not only the rights of individuals, but of nations. In all his correspondence with other governments he neither wrote nor sanctioned a line which afterward was



BIRTH-PLACE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

In what is now LaRue Co., Kentucky, one and a half miles from Hodgenville, and seven miles from Elizabethtown. The three pear trees were planted by Lincoln's father, and mark the spot near where the house stood. Abraham Lincoln was born February 12, 1809. He resided here only a few years.

used to tie his hands. In the use of perfect English he easily rose above all his advisers and all his fellows.

No one elaims that Lincoln did all. He could have done nothing without the great and splendid generals in the field; and the generals could have done nothing without their armies. The praise is due to all—to the private as much as to the officer; to the lowest who did his duty, as much as to the highest. But Lincoln stood at the center and directed all.

Slavery was the cause of the war, and slavery was the perpetual stumbling-block. As the war went on, question after question arose—questions that could not be answered by theories. Should we hand back the slave to his master, when the master was using his slave to destroy the Union? If the South was right, slaves were property, and by the laws of war anything that might be used to the advantage of the enemy might be confiscated by us. Events did not wait for discussion, General Butler denominated the negro as "a contraband." Congress provided that the property of the rebels might be confiscated.

Lincoln moved along this line. Each step was delayed by Northern division, but every step was taken in the same direction.

First, Lincoln offered to execute every law, including the most infamous of all; second, to buy the slaves of the border States; third, to confiscate the property of rebels; fourth, to treat slaves as contraband of war; fifth, to use slaves for the putting down the rebellion; sixth, to arm these slaves and clothe them in the uniform of the Republic; seventh, to make them citizens and allow

them to stand on an equality with their white brethren under the flag of the Republic.

During all these years Lincoln moved with the people—with the masses, and every step he took was justified by the considerate judgment of mankind.

Lincoln not only watched the war, but kept his hand on the political pulse. In 1863 a tide set in against the administration. A Republican meeting was to he held in Springfield, Illinois, and Lincoln wrote a letter to be read at this convention. It was in his happiest vein. It was a perfect defense of his admlnistration, including the proclamation of emancipation. Among other things he said:

"But the proclamation, as law, either is valid or it is not valid. If it is not valid it needs no retraction; but if it is valid it can not be retracted any more than the dead can be brought to life."

To the Northern Democrats who said they would not fight for negroes, Lincoln replied;

"Some of them seem willing to fight for you—but no matter."

"But negroes, like other people, act upon motives. Why should they do anything for us if we will do nothing for them? If they stake their lives for us they must be prompted by the strongest motive—even the promise of freedom. And the promise, being made, must be kept."

There is one line in this letter that will give it immortality;

"The Father of Waters again goes unvexed to the sea."

Another;