PERSONAL
RECOLLECTIONS AND
IMPRESSIONS
OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

By Francis Durbin Blakeslee
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REPUBLICAN NOMINATIONS.

For President
Abraham Lincoln.
For Vice-President
Hamblin Hamlin.

A. Lincoln

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PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS AND IMPRESSIONS
OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

By Francis Durbin Blakeslee, D.D., Litt. D.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED WITH ABBREVIATIONS AT LOS ANGELES BEFORE THE RETIRED METHODIST PREACHERS' ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, AT THE MEMORIAL DAY SERVICE IN HONOR OF THE VETERANS OF THE GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC TENDED BY THE SHAKESPEARE CLUB OF PASADENA, AND ON MANY OTHER OCCASIONS

GARDENA, CALIFORNIA
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A recent school examination in England the question was asked, "If King John were alive, what would be his attitude on Home Rule?" One boy replied, "If King John were alive to-day, he would be too old to be interested in politics."

Although I am what the old woman called an "octogeranium," I am not too old to be interested with you in one of the greatest characters that ever appeared upon the stage of human history—Abraham Lincoln.

Someone has said, "That nation is death-stricken that ceases to reverence the memory of her great men." And so we in America are raising memorials to our Washingtons, our Lincolns, our Grants, our Roosevelts, and are commemorating their birthdays. The British are doing the same for their great heroes. There is a good deal in common between our British cousins and ourselves. John Wesley was a Britisher but there are millions in our land to-day who also claim him as theirs. No man could possibly be more of an American than was Abraham Lincoln, but to-day he belongs to the world.

There is a greater demand for information concerning Abraham Lincoln than concerning any other of the world's immortals. It has been figured that, were he to return to earth and live out his fourteen years to threescore and ten,—he died at fifty-six,—it would take him every available minute simply to read what has been written about him.

In the estimation of some of the critics, the best biography of Lincoln and the best dramatic presentation of his life were both written by Englishmen: Lord Charnwood's "Life of Lincoln," and John Drinkwater's play, "Abraham Lincoln."

In the palmy days of ancient Greece, at one of their Olympic Games, the multitude recognizing their great historian, Herodotus, seized him and bore him on their shoulders about the great Arena, shouting, "Let us honor the man who has written our history!" To-day, as an American, I say: "Let us honor the man who has made our history!"

James Russell Lowell once said, "It is a benediction to have lived in the same country and at the same time with Abraham Lincoln." I am now speaking to none, probably, who are not
of the country of Abraham Lincoln; but there are very few here who lived at the time of Lincoln. That was my privilege!

I hold in my hand a letter written to a member of my family by a woman on the tenth day before she was a hundred years old, I recall having heard her tell of her interview, when a girl, with George Washington. There is but one link then between me and the Father of his Country, who died the last month of the year 1799!

As I tell you this, I am wondering if some of you are not looking upon me very much as the little girl looked upon her grand-daddy. He had a long white beard; his face was gnarled and seamed, and he wore a crown of silver. The little darling, sitting in his lap, looked up and said, “Grandpa, were you in the ark?” “Oh, no, my dear; I wasn’t in the ark!” “Then why weren’t you drowned?” . . . Well, I escaped the drowning anyway, and am happy to be here with you to-day.

I have no oration on Abraham Lincoln. I am not competent for that high theme. But, although I am well known in some sections as an ardent prohibitionist, I have a confession to make: I do sometimes indulge—in what the old woman called “rum and essences,”—reminiscences,—of those far-off days of the Civil War.

I was a clerk in the Quartermaster General’s Office at Washington for a year and a half, including the close of that great struggle. In consequence I had frequent opportunities of seeing the great President. Not often on the street—he was too busy to be there—but in great assemblies and elsewhere.

It was a custom in those days to hold services on Sunday afternoons in the House of Representatives. The most prominent preachers were secured. On one occasion, Bishop Simpson of the Methodist Episcopal Church,—one of the greatest orators that this country ever produced,—then a guest at the White House, was the preacher. I remember, as if it were yesterday, seeing there the President and all his family. On another occasion Murdock, the great elocutionist, also a guest at the White House, gave a reading. Again Lincoln was present.

I attended, in the same place, a meeting held in the interest of the Christian Commission. Secretary Seward presided. General Fiske was one of the speakers. Admiral Farragut was there and
other prominent actors in that great drama of the Civil War. It was impossible to proceed because of the continued applause, until the great President unlimbered himself and bowed right and left to the waiting multitude.

In the summer the Marine Band gave free concerts on the White House grounds on pleasant Saturday afternoons. One day I stood so near the White House that I was within ten feet of the President as he came out to mount his horse to ride to the Soldiers’ Home. I could have stepped three paces and touched him. He could have no vacation in war time, but he could go for the night some four miles out to the Soldiers’ Home, embowered in a grove, and get that much of country air. At another time I saw him riding in a carriage to the Soldiers’ Home with a squad of cavalry as his escort.

I called on the President on Monday, January 2, 1865. My diary reads: “Accompanied by Miss Fannie and Miss Laura,” (young women at my boarding-place,) “called upon the President.” Then, with boyish irreverence, I continue: “Shook his paw with a gusto.” With the increasing wisdom of maturer years, I now see that I should have done it with my right hand!

I heard Lincoln’s last public address, which he delivered from a second-story window of the White House, three days before his assassination. He had just returned from Richmond. The cruel war was over. There was intense rejoicing, not exceeded on Armistice Day after the World War. Cabinet members and other prominent officials were serenaded and made speeches. Flags, bands and bunting were much in evidence. The President had been asked for a speech the previous evening. He replied that he was so busy that evening that he could not possibly give us any time, but that if we cared enough about it to come the following evening he would arrange to receive us. Of course we cared, and I was one of the hundreds that stood on the White House grounds and heard Abraham Lincoln’s last speech. It was about twenty minutes long and related to the problems confronting the nation at that crisis of its history, and may be found to-day among his published addresses.

On two different occasions, five years apart, I have spoken at patriotic services in Patriotic Hall in Los Angeles. On Lincoln’s birthday a year ago, the presiding officer, Mr. M. T. Salida,
who has been blind ever since a Confederate bullet went through his temple, said, in introducing me: "Dr. Blakeslee is the only person who, after all the intervening years, I know stood with me on the White House grounds and heard Abraham Lincoln's last public address." When I arose, I said: "After all these years, and I have met many who were connected with those times, Mr. Salida is the only person who I know stood with me on the White House grounds and heard Abraham Lincoln's last public utterance." I have been saying that in my addresses ever since.

I spoke at the Mission Inn, Riverside, on Sunday evening, the thirteenth of last February, the second time in successive years. After the lecture, a Mrs. Russell came to me and said, "I want you to know that as a little girl I stood with you on the White House grounds and heard Abraham Lincoln's last public utterance." So now there are two that I know, who stood there with me that evening.

On April 3, 1865, upon receipt of news of the fall of Richmond, I heard Stanton, "Andy" Johnson, Seward, General Butler, and Senators Nye, Sherman, Preston King, and M. C. Smith. The next evening there was a great mass meeting in front of the Patent Office. Vice-President Johnson said in his speech referring to the "Rebels," "If I had my way, I'd hang them higher than Haman!" We know his subsequent record in dealing with the "Rebels."

I saluted Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln at the Navy Yard, the afternoon of the very day that he was assassinated. Some fellow clerks and I had gone there to see the monitors, damaged in the Fort Fisher engagement, which had come to the Navy Yard for repairs. They were "rare birds" to landsmen. As fast as builded, they were rushed into service. All Washington, as it were, turned out to see the ironclads which marked such a revolution in naval warfare. We went all over three of them. The autopsy on the body of the assassin, Booth, was later held in the gun-room of one of these, the "Montauk."

The President and his wife drove up and halted at the end of a platform, similar to a railway platform, upon which my friends and I were standing. We saluted, and the salute was returned. Many years later, I had an interview with Schuyler
Colfax in Providence, Rhode Island, following his lecture on Abraham Lincoln. Mr. Colfax then told me that he knew for a fact that I saw the great man later than did any of his Cabinet. He said to me, "I know where they all were that day and evening, and not one of them saw Mr. Lincoln as late as you did." No credit to me; only one of the accidents or incidents of my early manhood. "But I am ahead of you," he continued; "I was talking with him at the White House when he entered the carriage to go to the theatre."

I am surprised that, after all these years, the disputed question of where the President's last drive was taken seems to hinge, in the minds of some historians, upon my testimony. Mr. John W. Starr, Jr., of Millersburg, Pennsylvania, is author of two books, "Lincoln’s Last Day" and "New Light on Lincoln's Last Day." In his second book he quotes my diary and extracts from letters that I had written him.

I stood beside the casket in the White House. My diary of that day reads: "Thousands were unable to enter." There was no business at the office that day. I was foot-free, and with a boy's enthusiasm I went early and waited long—and finally got in, and stood by the casket and looked into the cold face of him whom I had saluted in life a few hours previously.

Not only that, but I took part in the funeral procession. I doubt if there is now another on earth who can truthfully say that. I was a youngster. The others were older. They are probably all gone.

The Quartermaster General's Office was a bureau of the War Department, and the clerks were drilled periodically during office hours. In a recent reading of my diary, I find this entry: "We drill now every day." We had some humble part in defending Washington when it was attacked by the Confederate General, Early, in the summer of 1864. When the officials in charge came to make up the military part of the funeral pageant, they put our company in line. My diary of April 19, 1865, reads: "At 8 o'clock we all repaired to the office where we put on our uniforms and equipment, and from that time till half past two had to stand in the sun. We then fell in with the funeral procession, and marched up around the Capitol and back. We were just as near dead when we got back as could be."

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I could almost have thrown a stone from the house where I was rooming to Ford's Theatre. I overslept the night of the assassination; and although Washington was seething with an excitement never before known in its history, I was utterly oblivious of it all. I went late to my breakfast the following morning and, as I entered the restaurant, noted the unusual quiet which prevailed. While the waitress was filling my order, the only other man at my table turned his daily paper—and I then read the black head-lines telling me of the awful event of the night before! My father, living hundreds of miles away, and the great centres of the country knew of the tragedy before I did.

I met Boston Corbett at a Methodist classmeeting on the second of May, six days after he had shot the assassin, Booth, in the Garrett barn in Virginia. I obtained his autograph and had a short chat with him. He told me that the pistol with which he shot Booth, and for which he had been offered over $1,000, had been stolen. He had promised the loan of it to a great fair at Chicago in the interest of the Sanitary Commission. When he went to get it, it was gone.

I saw the Grand Review for two days; attended for two days the trial of the assassins at the Arsenal, and obtained the autograph of every member of the Military Commission constituting the court. Of course I had excellent opportunity of seeing the conspirators, Mrs. Surratt among them. She was one of the four who were executed.

On February 12, 1865, I heard Chief Justice Chase and Senator James W. Patterson from New Hampshire. On the evening of February 26, 1865, I was present in the House of Representatives when Chief Justice Chase presided at a meeting celebrating the third anniversary of the Freedmen's Relief Association. Theodore Tilton was one of the speakers and greatly impressed me with his eloquence. I saw and heard General Ben Butler more than once.

I was President of Iowa Wesleyan University, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, when Senator James Harlan, the first president of that institution, and later President of the Board of Trustees that elected me, died; and I spoke at his funeral in the college chapel. He was elected to the United States Senate while President of the University. Senator Harlan was father-in-law to
the late Robert Todd Lincoln, the eldest son of Abraham Lincoln. I first met Robert at the funeral of Senator Harlan. Later Bishop McCabe and I had an interview with him in his office in Chicago, when he was President of the Pullman Company. I saw Mrs. Robert Todd Lincoln more frequently, for she spent a good deal of time at her father's home at Mt. Pleasant. I first met Senator Harlan in Washington when I was a boy, and at that time obtained his autograph.

I hold in my hand an autograph of Abraham Lincoln! He wrote every line of what I read you: "For G. H. Blakeslee—A. Lincoln—Nov. 2, 1864."

G. H. Blakeslee was my father. He was a Methodist pastor at Binghamton, New York. At the call of the Christian Commission, which antedated the Red Cross, he, with other pastors, went to the front to serve on battlefields and in hospitals and to hold religious services with the troops. Upon returning from the front, he stayed a night with me in Washington. At the breakfast table he said: "We are going to call upon the President this morning," referring to a brother minister who was stopping elsewhere in the city. At night he showed me the autograph, which I have treasured these many years.

A few years ago, to my utter surprise, I found in my attic two cheap little blank-books which proved to be my father's diary of all those days, from October 4 to November 4, 1864. I turned with greatest interest to November 2, and there was the following entry:

"At 2 p. m. accompanied by Rev. E. W. Breckinridge visited the Presidential Mansion. Four young men approached the President who were anxious to get his aid relative to a matter which I did not understand. But Mr. Lincoln, who was seated in his chair, replied to them kindly but firmly, 'I can do nothing for you.' When they urged that their papers should be read, he replied, 'I should not remember it if I did. The papers can be put in their proper places and go through their proper channels.' A lady next appeared and presented a paper. He took it and read it and replied: 'This will not do. I can do nothing for your husband.' 'Why not?' said the lady. 'Because,' said Mr. Lincoln, 'he is not loyal.' 'But he intends to be; he wants to take the oath

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of allegiance.' 'That is the way with all who get into prison,' replied the President. 'I can do nothing for you.' 'But you would,' said the lady, 'if you knew my circumstances.' 'No, I would not. I am under no obligation to provide for the wives of disloyal husbands. Hasn't your husband the consumption?' 'No,' replied the lady. 'Well,' said the President, 'it is the only case. Nearly all have the consumption.'

"Another lady presented her case which was a similar one and met a similar result. Next Rev. E. W. Breckinridge presented himself and handed him his card. 'What is your name?' asked Mr. Lincoln. 'Breckinridge,' replied Brother B. 'Rather a suspicious name, but I am loyal.' " (Breckinridge was the name of one of the candidates representing the disloyal element of the South, opposing Lincoln for the Presidency in the campaign of 1860.) "I have long desired to see you and take you by the hand. I am glad to see you bearing your labors so well. You have the prayers of the people, and I pray for the speedy and peaceful termination of the war on the principles of your proclamation.' Meanwhile I shook the hand of the President and asked him for his autograph. He took the book which I presented and cheerfully gave his name. Brother B. presented his book and received Mr. Lincoln's signature. We then bade him goodbye and took our leave, thankful for the privilege of seeing and shaking hands with the President.

"As we passed out of the Presidential Mansion we met on the veranda the President's son, some nine years of age." (He was really eleven.) "He was handling some boards that lay there for the purpose of building a scaffold. We shook hands with him and Brother B. inquired his name. He replied, 'Tom.' " (He was the one called "Tad.") "We went from there to the Quartermaster General's Office and found Durbin. We repaired to the rooms of the Commission on 10th Street, and spent the evening very pleasantly with a number of the delegates."

This book, in which is the autograph of Abraham Lincoln, is a record book like that which was given to all delegates, as they were called, serving in the Christian Commission. On the three pages preceding that on which Lincoln's autograph appears are the autographs of Grant and every member of his staff, obtained by my father at the headquarters of the Army in the
Field. On the back of Lincoln's page is the autograph of Theodore Roosevelt, obtained for me by a friend a few months before Roosevelt's death.

Under celluloid, inside the cover of this book, I have a light green silk lapel badge of the Wide-Awake Clubs, worn in the first campaign for the election of Lincoln in 1860. It has the youngest-looking portrait of Lincoln that I ever saw, with a fac-simile of his signature. I found this in the same attic where, a year or two later, I found my father's diary. I never have seen another. Roosevelt was more interested in this badge than in anything else in the book. I believe that he had never seen one like it.

Years ago I spoke for a few minutes to a Sunday School at the Methodist Church of Geneva, New York. I had said a few things about Lincoln's temperance principles. An official of the church then told me that the widow of the man who sold Booth the glass of brandy which he took in the saloon adjoining Ford's Theatre, just before the assassination, was sitting in the audience. The story in brief was that the bartender years before had become a Christian, had moved to Geneva, where he had been for years a member of the Methodist Church, and had died about three years before.

The very next Sunday, the Presbyterian pastor at Marathon, New York, told me of an interesting character whose funeral he had conducted at his former charge. This man was in the saloon when Booth came in, and he saw Booth drink the brandy. He asked the bartender who the man was. "Don't you know? That is Booth the actor." "No, I have never seen him before to know him," the man replied. This man went into the theatre to witness the play, and after a little saw Booth edging along the gallery toward Lincoln's box. Having just learned that he was an attaché of the theatre, he thought nothing of it. Soon the awful tragedy! This man passing out through the vestibule was met by those coming down the opposite stairway carrying Lincoln. They said to him: "Here, give us a lift; we haven't quite help enough." He then helped carry Lincoln's prostrate form over to the room across the street, where Lincoln died the next morning. These two interesting experiences came to me on two successive Sundays.

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I am sometimes asked concerning the personal appearance of Abraham Lincoln. When in repose his countenance was sad. His face was rugged and seamed. The late Rev. Dr. Ervin S. Chapman, an acquaintance of Lincoln, who, when in his eightieth year, published a life of the great President, suggests in his book that Lincoln’s reputation for ill looks is largely due to a projecting lip. He prints a portrait of Lincoln from his mouth up, and challenges anyone to produce a nobler countenance. A prominent woman in Washington once said: “When Lincoln’s face is lighted up with the animation of public speech, he is the handsomest man I ever saw.”

In his young manhood, while following a trail in the wilderness of Kentucky, Lincoln was met by a native, who, when he was near enough, took the rifle from his shoulder—nearly everybody carried a rifle in that section, in those days—and pointed it at Lincoln. “Hold on there, stranger,” cried Lincoln; “what do you think you are doing?” “I took a vow on the grave of my mother that if I ever met a homelier man than I, I’d shoot him!” Lincoln looked him over a second or two and then said: “Well, stranger, if I am any uglier looking than you, I think you’d better shoot me.”

We ought not to limit our consideration of Abraham Lincoln to my personal recollections of him. His character and career have many important lessons for this generation.

Among other things, his career teaches the importance often of a mother’s influence.

In the great majority of cases, character is fixed in the earliest years.

“A pebble in the streamlet scant
Has turned the course of many a river;
A dew-drop on the baby plant
Has warped the giant oak forever.”

When nine years of age, standing by the bedside of his dying mother, the boy Lincoln promised her that he never would use intoxicating liquors. He kept that vow. And this at a
time and in a region where nearly everyone drank liquor at least occasionally.

Abraham Lincoln was a prohibitionist a generation ahead of his time. The oration which he delivered on Washington's Birthday, 1842, in the Presbyterian Church at Springfield, Illinois, I regard as the great English temperance classic. The exigencies of the Civil War pushed out of sight Lincoln's attitude on the liquor question. In recent years, however, this has been receiving the attention which it deserves. A few years ago there appeared a book entitled "Lincoln and Prohibition," by Charles T. White, which gives valuable information regarding this subject.

During the war, Lincoln was once on a revenue cutter in Hampton Roads and was awfully seasick. There was a good deal of him to be seasick, for he was six feet four! The Captain, thinking to do him a favor, brought him a glass of champagne, saying, "I think this will help you." "No, no!" said Lincoln; "I have seen too many people seasick on land from drinking that stuff,"—and he would have none of it.

He was always interested in meeting anyone taller than himself. He once met a man who was two or three inches taller. Looking him over a minute, he said: "Will you please tell me how you ever know when your feet are cold?"

The total abstinence pledge which Lincoln in his young manhood wrote out for himself, and which he induced others to sign, was adopted by the Lincoln-Lee Legion:

"Whereas, the use of alcoholic liquors as a beverage is productive of pauperism, degradation and crime; and believing it is our duty to discourage that which produces more evil than good, we therefore pledge ourselves to abstain from the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage."

To this pledge have been obtained the signatures of over six million of the Sunday-school children of the Nation.

Napoleon when asked, "What is the greatest need of France?" instantly replied, "Mothers!" "All that I am, or ever hope to be, I owe to my angel mother," said Lincoln. It is more than possible that had it not been for that godly mother we never would have heard of Abraham Lincoln.
Another lesson, especially important to the youth of to-day, is that Lincoln when a boy improved to the full all of his advantages.

And how meagre were those advantages! His home was a home of abject poverty. The Lincoln family one winter in Indiana lived in a three-sided shack, the front all open to the weather, with the thermometer at times down to zero. As a boy Lincoln never had so much as a sheet of paper or a lead pencil, a slate or a slate pencil. So poor was the family that they had no candles; and the boy Lincoln used to lie face down before a large open fire for light, and with a dead coal from that fire, work out his arithmetic on the back of a wooden shovel. When he had filled it, he would plane it off and begin again.

At first the boy had almost no books except the Bible. Later he had Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress, Aesop’s Fables, Robinson Crusoe, Weems’s Life of Washington, and a History of the United States. “Beware the man of one book!” This does not necessarily mean that we should confine our reading to one volume. The sentiment is, that he who masters one book often has more mental power and equipment than he who superficially reads a hundred books. Lincoln mastered those books, and they were to him “the well of purest English undefiled.” This mastery of everything that he studied, which characterized him through life, resulted in the fact that few if any of the English race have been so masterful in logic, so forceful and felicitous in the use of the English tongue. In his writings, speeches, and official documents eighty-five per cent of the words are monosyllables. They went like bullets to the mark. Leaning back in his chair during an interim in a cabinet meeting, Lincoln repeated page after page of Shakespeare. Finally Secretary of State Seward said: “Mr. President, we do not understand this. You never had the advantages of the schools, and here you are quoting Shakespeare as I could not possibly do; and I have some little reputation as a Shakespearian scholar.”

Go to Oxford University where, we are told, the purest English is written and spoken, and being an American, you may be invited to enter a certain corridor to see a copy of Lincoln’s
letter to Mrs. Bixby of Boston, who, the President had been told, laid her all—five sons—upon Freedom’s altar. They will tell you that it is the finest letter of condolence in the English language. You may go to the British Museum, where the books if placed on one shelf would reach fifty miles, and ask for the finest short speech in the English tongue, and immediately they will hand you Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address.

The Battle of Gettysburg was the Waterloo of the Confederacy. Later the battlefield was to be dedicated as a National Cemetery for our heroic dead. Edward Everett, then considered America’s greatest orator, was engaged to give the oration. Six weeks later the President was asked if he would attend and make “a few remarks.” Edward Everett delivered his great oration,—and it was a great oration, comparable to the great orations of history. Lincoln then made his “few remarks.” We are told that after Lincoln had finished speaking and had taken his seat, Edward Everett arose and went to him, extending his hand and saying: “Mr. President, if I could feel that I had as clearly presented the issue in my two and a quarter hours as you have in your two and a quarter minutes, I should be a happy man.” I doubt if there can be found in all the land to-day a single person who can quote three consecutive sentences from Edward Everett’s great oration. But we are emblazoning on bronze tablets Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, and affixing them to our schoolhouse walls; and there are untold thousands of the school children of to-day who can repeat every word of it. Emerson, Lowell, and Victor Hugo place it among the three masterpieces of all literature. Gladstone said of it: “The ideas it contains are loftier than any ever before uttered in the annals of the world.” And I well remember that an English review at the time characterized it as the “grandest speech that ever fell from human lips.”

Lincoln when a boy improved to the full his opportunities.

Lincoln’s career again teaches us that moral character is an essential element of real greatness.

All the world’s real heroes were God’s men. Christian or non-Christian, they all recognized a Supreme Power that makes for righteousness, and to that Power they gave allegiance. Near the close of his great career, Gladstone said: “I have been brought into contact with sixty master minds of earth, and all but five of
them were lowly followers of the Nazarene." Abraham Lincoln’s career emphasizes, as do few others, that character is greatness.

*He was a Christlike man.*

(1) He was Christlike in his sympathy and tenderness of heart. You doubtless remember those martinets among the army officers who complained that Lincoln by his frequent pardons was ruining military discipline. There are many cases such as the fellow who, on a hot, dusty, all-day march, carried, in addition to his own heavy load, his sick comrade’s equipment. By lot he had to serve on picket duty that night. Of course he fell asleep and by military law should be shot. Lincoln would not have it so. He said, “Those boys are worth more to the Republic above ground than under it.”

One evening Joshua Speed, an intimate friend, was calling at the White House. After a time he took out his watch and said: “Mr. President, I must be going. You are an over-worked man and need your rest.” “Don’t go, Joshua, don’t go. This is Thursday night. I never sleep any Thursday night. Tomorrow is execution day in the army. I never sleep Thursday night. Stay with me, Joshua, stay with me.” Such was the heart of Lincoln.

The Confederate General Pickett, of Gettysburg fame, when a young man, received his appointment to West Point at the hands of Congressman Abraham Lincoln. The day after the Confederate forces evacuated Richmond, President Lincoln entered it. Among other things he sought out the home of General Pickett. The General and all his servants had fled. Mrs. Pickett answered the rap at the door. “Is this General Pickett’s place?” “Yes, Sir,” she replied; “but he is not here.” “I know that, Ma’am; but I just wanted to see the place. I’m Abraham Lincoln.” “The President?” she gasped. “No, Ma’am; no, Ma’am; just Abraham Lincoln, George’s old friend.”

“I am George Pickett’s wife, and this is his baby.” Afterward, relating the incident, Mrs. Pickett said: “My baby pushed away from me and reached out his hand to Mr. Lincoln, who took him in his arms. As he did so, an expression of rapt, almost divine, tenderness and love lighted up the sad face. It was a look that I have never seen on any other face. My baby opened his mouth wide and gave his father’s friend a dewy, infantile
kiss. As Mr. Lincoln gave the little one back to me, shaking his finger at him playfully, he said, 'Tell your father, the rascal, that I forgive him for the sake of that kiss and those bright eyes.' He came not as a conquering Caesar, but as a friend. He visited the so-called "rebel" general, not to upbraid him but to assure him of his love. History has no parallel to that.

When Lincoln was a little boy the mother said to Thomas, the father, "I think Abe looks more like me than he does like you." "Well, that may be," said Thomas; "but, Nancy, he can't sing like you." "Well," said the mother, "maybe he will make others sing." And no man since Calvary has made so many broken hearts sing for joy as has Abraham Lincoln.

(2) Again, his was a forgiving spirit, like his Master's. When reviled, he reviled not again. It is well-nigh impossible for us of to-day to realize the abuse, the malignity, which at one time was heaped upon Lincoln by his enemies. Scarcely any man in public life has ever suffered so. No language was too vile, no epithets too abusive. He was called an ape, a chimpanzee, an orang-outang, a gorilla, a baboon.

Lincoln once sent Judge Holt, who was a subordinate of Stanton, Secretary of War, to release a family imprisoned in Fort Henry, Baltimore. Baltimore had probably more disloyal citizens than loyal. This family had been guilty of carrying on a contraband trade with some of their friends who had gone South. This was not murder, but it was contrary to military law and discipline. Knowing all the circumstances, Lincoln felt that they had been punished enough. Stanton learned of Judge Holt's action, and upon his return to Washington strenuously called him to account. The Judge replied, "Why, Mr. Stanton, you do not suppose that I went down there upon my own initiative!" "Did Lincoln tell you to do that?" stormed Stanton. "He certainly did or I should not have done it," was Judge Holt's answer. "Well, all I have to say is, we've got to get rid of that baboon at the White House!" Stanton said that of his great Chief! This was repeated to Lincoln by one who added, "Mr. President, I would not endure such an insult." "Insult? insult?" said Lincoln; "that is no insult; it is an expression of opinion; and what troubles me most about it is that Stanton said it, and Stanton is usually right."

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But I cannot leave this Stanton story here. In the room to which Lincoln was carried, across the street from Ford's Theatre, were gathered the Cabinet, members of his family, and a few prominent officials. All night long they watched the flame of life flickering lower and lower and lower. As the morning dawned there was a period of silence—and at last the feeble flame went out. Stanton broke the silence: “Now he belongs to the ages.” The next morning, as the body of Lincoln lay in the casket, the Cabinet was invited in. Stanton was again the spokesman: “There lies the mightiest man that ever ruled a nation!” He was a baboon no longer.

We had been so long without war that we had few experienced army officers. George B. McClellan had acquired a reputation at West Point and in civil life as a superior tactician, organizer, and executive. Lincoln appointed him Commander of the Army. A large force was assembled near Washington. But McClellan did not move. He never was quite ready. He asked for more men, more supplies. Lincoln did everything possible to meet his demands. Still he did not move. The nation became impatient. The people were demanding action, and the papers carried headlines, “On to Richmond!” Lincoln, always patient and deliberate, was forced to recognize the situation. He went one evening to see McClellan at his headquarters. The General was out, attending the wedding of one of his officers. Lincoln patiently sat the long evening through. McClellan returned very late and went up a back way to his apartments. An orderly, seeing the situation, rushed up and told him that the President had been there a long time, waiting to see him. “You tell Lincoln that General McClellan has gone to bed!” Does it seem possible! Lincoln meekly went back to the White House. With one stroke of his pen he could have cut off, figuratively speaking, McClellan’s head. An official, talking with Lincoln about McClellan’s behavior said: “I wouldn’t endure such an insult. You ought to dismiss him.” “O, I would gladly hold McClellan’s horse for him, if he would only do something,—if he would only do something!” Finally McClellan had to be removed.

Lincoln’s heart, as big as the world, had in it no place for the memory of a wrong. In the closing words of that immortal Second
Inaugural,—“With malice toward none, with charity for all,” he expressed the mind that was in Christ.

(3) Like Christ, he “bore our griefs and carried our sorrows.” It is impossible for us fully to appreciate the crushing weight that rested upon Lincoln’s heart, as disaster after disaster befell the Northern forces in the earlier years of the war. It nearly crushed him to earth. And like Christ, he trod the winepress alone. There was none to help.

Carpenter, while painting the famous picture of the “First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation” which hangs in the Capitol, was for six months a guest at the White House. He and Lincoln became quite intimate. Lincoln came into Carpenter’s room one midnight, and with his hands uplifted exclaimed: “O Carp, Carp, I can’t stand this much longer! I must have relief! How gladly would I exchange this wearisome hospital of pain and woe, called the White House, for the place of some poor boy that sleeps tonight beneath the sod in a Southern battlefield! I can’t stand this much longer. I must have relief!” He bore our griefs; he carried our sorrows.

_Abraham Lincoln studied and reverenced the Bible._

It is said that he knew the Bible better than did the average clergyman of his day. The speeches, the writings, the messages and public documents of no public man in American history are so redolent of Scripture quotations and allusions as are those of Lincoln. The Bible is the source, the standard, of the highest morality. Lincoln’s moral character was founded upon the Bible.

_He believed in the over-ruling providence of God, and was a man of prayer._

When leaving Springfield for Washington to be inaugurated, in his farewell speech to his friends and neighbors, delivered from the platform of the train, Lincoln said:

“I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being, who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance, I cannot fail. Trusting in Him, who can go with me, and remain

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with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell."

For lack of time, I cannot dwell upon the many irrefutable and often thrilling proofs that Lincoln was a man of prayer; such as his asking Bishop Simpson to pray for him; of James Murdock's overhearing Lincoln in the dead hours of the night pleading mightily with the God of Nations for help in the Nation's extremity; of his telling General Sickles, who was in the hospital at Washington, after having lost a leg at Gettysburg, how he had pleaded with God, before the battle of Gettysburg, and of his having received the assurance that the North would win. When Washington was threatened by Stonewall Jackson and the Cabinet was very much alarmed, Lincoln said: "The thing I fear about Stonewall Jackson is that he is a praying General; he prays before he goes into battle."

Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you Abraham Lincoln as the nearest perfect moral character of modern times. As we go from them, the hills sink; the mountains rise. In moral sublimity and grandeur Abraham Lincoln towers like Mont Blanc and the Himalayas above the lesser peaks of human greatness. Had he been a time-serving politician instead of a Christian statesman, he never would have been the emancipator of a race, the savior of a nation. His moral character was an essential element of his greatness.

Again, Lincoln's career teaches the importance of high ideals in early life.

You will recall that, when a young man, Lincoln took his first trip on a flatboat down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. He there saw for the first time a slave auction. A beautiful mulatto girl on the auction block was struck off to a bestial-looking villain, who went up and took her by the arm and led her off, his property. The soul of the young Lincoln was hot within him. Raising his hands toward heaven, he exclaimed: "By the Eternal, if I ever get a chance to hit that thing, I'll hit it hard!" And when in after years God gave him
his chance, he hit it so hard that those blows, and the sound of shackles falling from the dusky limbs of four million bondmen, roll echoing forever down the corridors of time. He hit it so hard that the impact set ringing the bells of Paradise and struck the keynote of an eternal Ter Deum Laudamus amid the choristers of Heaven. He hit it so hard that he shattered in fragments forever an institution which boasted that it was impregnable fortified in the foundation rock of the new world’s life, and he changed a continent’s civilization. He hit it so hard that he unsettled thrones, and the tyranny of despots can never again be as before Abraham Lincoln was. In that hour there was written a new magna charta of human rights.

And when he had finished his task, a work befitting a god, the Eternal, in whose name and for whose sake he had done it all, sent a convoy of His angels to bear him from the earth, which was no longer worthy to hold him, to his place amid the crowned immortals. This man it was, this martyr to the cause of human freedom, this Moses of a nineteenth century slave race, this St. George who slew the dragon of American slavery,—he it was who said: “The slavery of the rum power is a greater tyranny to depose than African Slavery.” He it was who, with a prophet's vision, like Moses on the top of Nebo, catching a glimpse of the Promised Land which he should never be permitted to enter, exclaimed: “And when the victory shall be complete—when there shall be neither a slave nor a drunkard on the earth, how proud the title of that land which may truly claim to be the birthplace and the cradle of both those revolutions, that shall have ended in that victory.”

We have waited long for the fulfillment of that prophecy. What Abraham Lincoln, considerably over three quarters of a century ago, saw as the gray dawning of the morning, we now see approaching the effulgence of high noon. I myself heard more than half a century ago, at the Nation's capital, the booming of the cannon which announced to the city, and by wire to the world, that the American Congress had that minute voted to submit the Thirteenth Amendment, forever prohibiting African slavery. And I thank God that I have lived to see, and have had a little part in, the adoption of the Eighteenth Amendment, forever prohibiting a far greater curse (upon the testimony of
the Great Emancipator himself) than African slavery: the atrocious liquor traffic! How Lincoln’s great soul would have rejoiced could he have lived to see our day! All this, may we not believe, was due to those high ideals of right and duty which he formed in early life and from which he never swerved in all his great career.

I hold in my hand a Lincoln cent. Whenever a Methodist preacher has all his debts paid and has a cent left, he is pretty well off, as Methodist preachers go. But, seriously, did you ever think how appropriate it is that the head of the Great Commoner should be upon our commonest coin?

“Not upon the eagle golden
Will we behold his face,
Nor yet on gleaming silver
The honest features trace;
But to the lowly copper,
The common coin, instead,
Has fallen the distinction
Of bearing Lincoln’s head.

“The millionaire will seldom
Those noble outlines grasp,
But childhood’s chubby fingers
The image oft will clasp.
The poor man will esteem it,
And mothers hold it dear,—
The plain and common people
He loved when he was here.”

And it is because he loved them so, because he had so much of the Christ spirit, that he was such an uncompromising foe of everything hostile to the welfare of the common people. That is why he broke the galling yoke from the neck of the poor, despised, common black man. That is why he was a prohibitionist; for nothing in human history has been so inimical to the common people as strong drink. That is why he was Abraham Lincoln!
He used to visit the hospitals. His great, sympathizing heart impelled him to seek to comfort the sick, the wounded and often dying boys of the army. He had been at one hospital nearly all day with a company of friends. Just as they were entering their carriages to leave, an attendant rushed out and said to one of the party: "There is a Confederate prisoner in one of the wards that the President did not visit, and he wants to see the President." When Lincoln was told, he said, "I'll go back." As he approached the cot and extended his hand, the young fellow exclaimed: "I knew they were mistaken! I knew they were mistaken!" He had heard all that talk about the ape, the baboon, the gorilla; but one glance at the kindly face dispelled it all, and he said: "I knew they were mistaken!"

"What can I do for you, young man?" inquired Lincoln. "O, I don't know anybody up here, and the surgeon tells me I can't live; and I wanted to see you before I die." The President asked him about his home in the Southland; about his father and his mother, his brothers and his sisters. The young fellow's confidence was won, and he told about his family and his home; about his keepsakes and what he wanted done with them. Lincoln listened sympathetically and promised to see that a letter was written. He still tarried, trying to prepare the young man for "the great adventure." Presently he said: "Now, my boy, I have been here nearly all day. I am a very busy man and I ought to be going; but is there anything more that I can do for you?" "I was hoping you would stay and see me through." And the great tears rolled down on Lincoln's coat-sleeve as he continued to minister to the dying boy.

If I had the ability and were asked to put on canvas one scene which above all others would come somewhere near portraying the character of this great man, it would be that scene in the hospital, where the President of one of the greatest nations of earth was helping to prepare for death a prisoner boy from the ranks of his country's foes. His moral character was an essential element of his greatness.

Abraham Lincoln—good in his greatness, and great in his goodness!
We are filling the world with material memorials to his greatness, but he needs them not. Efface every tablet, destroy every effigy, break in pieces every statue, level every monument, raze to the ground his mausoleum, cast to the winds his sacred dust; and it would not diminish one iota, the profound reverence and affection with which he will evermore be regarded by all mankind, wherever civilization shall make known the name of Lincoln.
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Francis Burton Blakeley