

The Illinois Life and the Presidency of
Abraham Lincoln.

—
AN ADDRESS

AT

The University of Illinois,

Lincoln's Birthday, 1896,

BY

President Draper.

President Draper's Address.



IN 1860 my way to school led me, with unvarying regularity, by the stately mansion which had been the residence of one of New York's greatest governors and most gifted sons, William Henry Seward. The association of this house with one of the greatest names in the history of the state gave it un-

usual interest to all, and, in connection with events which were then transpiring, led it to exert a considerable influence upon my childish thought. Its former occupant was not yet a memory. He was still a great force in the public life of the people. He was representing his great state in the senate of the nation, with a wealth of scholarship and literary culture, as well as of high-minded thought and courage, which reflected lasting honor upon himself and his people alike. He was a common and an attractive figure about the capital of the state, and the halo of glory which surrounded him, the principles for which he stood, the fluency of his speech and the grace of his style readily awoke the responsive echoes in the chambers of my awakening soul.

When the state presented him to the convention of his party as its candidate for the presidency, and when all the people about me never doubted the

acceptance of so promising a leader, there is no wonder that I was his young and enthusiastic partisan. And when this finished statesman was set aside for a "rail splitter" from the far-away wilds of Illinois, and New York people felt so badly, and Mr. Thurlow Weed declared that New York had become the servant rather than the master of the new party, it was not strange that I had some little share in the common disappointment. The names adopted by that convention were new and long and strange to me, and I wrote "Abraham Lincoln" and "Hannibal Hamlin" on a piece of paper and put it in my pocket so that if occasion should require I could tell what they were. But that paper soon became useless, for in a day the nominee of that convention became a leading figure in the world. And each passing day only strengthened the conviction that what was then done was fortunate and was well done; indeed, that it was directed by that Providence which is in and about all of the affairs of men.

It is my purpose to-day to inquire what were the qualities, and what had produced the qualities, in Abraham Lincoln, the child of poverty, the hardy son of toil, the itinerant country lawyer, the politician of limited experience in the affairs of the nation, which made his administration of the presidential office during the critical period of the Civil War so much more beneficent than we can possibly believe would have resulted from the election of the rich, gifted, able, no less upright, and far more experienced senator from the Empire state, that all coming generations will be thankful that that national political convention acted as it did.

STUDY OF THE CHARACTER OF LINCOLN.

Recent years have witnessed an intensive study

southern Illinois among a people who were strongly sympathetic with the people of the south by reason of kindred and associations. The ties of birth, of kindred, of years of familiar association with a chivalric people, and of marriage, all combined to give the man whose official acts were to gather the greatest army that a constitutional state ever marshalled to subdue insurrection, a deep and abiding sympathy with the people of the south.

This it was that led him when the crucial moment had come which required him to speak from his great office to an agitated people, already torn into fragments, to take his inaugural address upon his knee, even when surrounded by multitudes of great men and the excitement of a great occasion, even after the bugles had sounded the onward march of the inaugural procession, and add the important part of these memorable words:

“In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you.”

“You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the government; while I shall have the most solemn one to preserve, protect and defend it.”

“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 cord of memory, stretching from every battle-field and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely as they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”

It was this knowledge of the southern people which enabled him to take the course, and take it promptly, which prevented his native state with her great associates upon the border line from following the six sisters with which they were closely allied and which had already assumed to go out of the Union, and thus to win at the outset a memorable triumph in administration without which we cannot but fear that the struggle for the union must have broken in disaster. It was this sympathy with the south which led him to tinge his most drastic official acts with expressions of feelings so kindly to the south that no man could be embittered unless already crazed by passion, and which gives his memory a recognized place in the warm feelings of the great South-land to-day.

SYMPATHY WITH THE PEOPLE.

Abraham Lincoln was the child of the common people. The training for his great work was in the school of poverty and of toil. His rough pioneer life opened to him the secret springs of human action. It was not money, but brawn which could put down the Rebellion. The people of the north had been separated by political discussion and hate. They were to be united in feeling before an army could be marshalled. His sagacious words, born of his experiences in Illinois, did the work. Could the great New York senator have said from his standpoint what I heard Mr. Lincoln say to the New York legislature, and with like effect? Hear him:

‘I deem it just to you, to myself and to all, that I should see everything; that I should hear everything; that I should have every light that can be brought within my reach, in order that when I do so speak, I shall have enjoyed every opportunity

to take correct and true grounds; and for this reason I don't propose to speak, at this time, of the policy of the government. But when the time comes I shall speak, as well as I am able, for the good of the present and future of this country—for the good both of the north and the south of this country—for the good of the one and the other, and of all sections of the country."

This was humility which was not assumed. While it was a seeking for light and for guidance which was known to be sincere, because of the history of the man, it was strongly suggestive of a high purpose, worthy of the great place to which he was going and of the momentous acts which soon plunged the whole country into the awful vortex of war.

Mr. Lincoln was not an aristocrat, as the term is commonly understood, and he could not be. There was no artificiality about him. He never pretended to be other than he was; indeed he was careful not to appear to be other than he was. He carried his Illinois ways and his Illinois ideas with him to the presidency. When he spoke he drew freely upon his Illinois experiences. Some who lived in a kind of artificial society thought at the time that he was coarse. He was not coarse. He was simply natural, unaffected and honest. Of course under the influences of his great position and his new surroundings, his life underwent a change. As he would say, he "bought a new coat." He avoided being odd. He conformed to the reasonable conventionalities of the place, while he ripened and grew in strength, but he never dissembled. There was nothing of which he was so proud as his right to a place in the crowd, upon the ground floor of the great human family; and

nothing which afforded him so much pleasure as to recall the events of his youth and recount the stories of his young manhood in Illinois. And there was a freshness and a reality and a transparency about it, which lent a charm to his person and gave great force to his administration.

His feeling for the lowly and oppressed was intense, almost consuming. He could treat a stalwart man with indifferent familiarity, but the cry of a child touched his heart and the pleadings of a woman unnerved him.

He commenced the growth of his whiskers upon receiving a childish letter from a little girl, and when his inaugural train stopped for a moment at Westfield he asked for her and then got down into the crowd that he might kiss her.

He always spoke familiarly to the officer who stood at his door and seemed to relish a chat with the private soldier upon his beat more than with the commanding general at his headquarters.

It was this sympathy for the lowly and the weak which led him to put death sentences from the army into his desk without his approval until the military authorities procured a change in the law in order to get around him. When the Judge-Advocate General laid the first one before him he said: "I will keep this a few days until I read the testimony." When the second came he said: "I must put this by, until I can settle in my mind whether this soldier can best serve the country dead or alive." To the third he said: "The General commanding the brigade is to be here in a few days and I will speak with him about it." When the next came and he was told that it was an extreme case, that the man was worthless and without mother, wife or children, and that the dis-

cipline of the army demanded summary action, he said to General Holt: "Well, after all, Judge, I think I must put this with my *leg cases*." "Mr. President, what do you mean by 'leg cases'?" was asked. "Why, those papers in that pigeon hole all refer to cases of 'cowardice in the face of the enemy,' but I call them 'leg cases'. If Almighty God gives a man a cowardly pair of legs how can he help their running away with him?"

After all, this consuming sympathy with the unfortunate was the quality in his nature which fitted him for the leadership at the crucial time and gave him the inspiration for the Emancipation Proclamation. And this quality grew out of the experience of his own life.

HIS FAIRNESS AND KEEN INSIGHT.

Mr. Lincoln was probably not what would have been called a great lawyer at the time of his nomination. He certainly was not a *case* lawyer. In his practice he did not cite, and doubtless he did not know, the precedents in the reports. But he had read the law from its original sources. He assimilated what he read. He knew the secret springs of the common law. He drank in its spirit. Or, more accurately, it found rich ground for fruitage in the great soul which the Almighty had given him. He was judicial, fair, and just by nature. The circumstances of his Illinois law practice made his mind keen and incisive, and the experience of his political contests prepared him for leading and managing men, and fortified him for his quickly coming share in great events.

When the time came he grasped those events with a firm hand and a comprehensive understanding. It is impossible now to even enumerate the

circumstances which lead up to the Civil War. There was negro slavery in the south and the constitution had recognized it. But the great ordinance for the organization of the Northwest Territory, which in importance rivalled the constitution itself, dedicated to freedom all that part of the public domain north of the Ohio. Other territory acquired later beyond the Mississippi was left to uncertainty and controversy. The Missouri Compromise was only a temporary expedient. For forty years the slave power had sought to extend its system into the parts of this territory where southern men had found their new homes. The convention which nominated Mr. Lincoln had not declared against the slave system within its old limitations, but had taken decided ground against its extension into the newly formed territories of the west.

His election, even on this platform, embittered the slave power on the one hand, and, on the other, stimulated while it did not satisfy the righteous and continually growing public sentiment in the north which demanded the overthrow of the slave system altogether. When he took the oath of office he stood between these extreme and contending forces. Six states had already assumed to go out of the Union and set up a confederated republic of their own. With his hand on the Book, he took his position with exactness. It was a position which pleased none of the extremists. He said he derived all his powers from the constitution, the laws, and the people, and that it was not within his commission to interfere with the slave system in the slave states. It was his business to save the Union and enforce its laws. Whatever it was well to do to save the Union, not prohibited by the con-

stitution, he would do; what it was well to leave undone in order to save the Union he would forbear. He was commanded to enforce the laws of the United States by the fundamental law, and he would do it upon every rod of her territory with such force as might be necessary, so long as he could command it.

This was a simple platform. Its strength was in its simplicity, in its clearness, in its freedom from demoralizing and confusing allusions. It was worthy of a great man and proved equal to a great occasion. Upon it all patriots could stand, and upon it they did stand. Before it party lines disappeared for the time being and under it the greatest army was gathered that ever was marshalled by a constitutional state for the suppression of insurrection. Under this platform and through this army slavery was finally abolished and the slave power overthrown, and all else was done that was so well done.

This is not the day, although the temptation is great, to tell the fascinating story of that heroic army. It went through all the horrors of an awful war to restore the Union and enforce the laws. After a contest, which in length of time and in unnumbered horrors had not been anticipated, it met with complete success. While succeeding generations will look upon each faithful member of that grand army as a hero, coming generations will value more and more deeply the great master spirit which was behind it, which called it into being, gave it form and organization, framed the simple creed which made it a cosmopolitan army of thinking patriots, and nerved its arm for the most heroic deeds in history.

That great mind never departed from its simple

creed. The waves of selfishness, of supercilious self-importance, of political hate, of bigotry, all beat against him, but the rock stood the storm.

The times were unusual. The whole country was a military camp. The financial system was overthrown. Credit was low and the government began printing its own money. The needs of the army and navy were enormous, and the business transactions were such as we had never imagined before. Greed was rampant. The writ of *habeas corpus* was suspended and laws were shaped to suit unusual circumstances. The resulting commotion threw all manner of minds into activity. The good and the bad, the wise and the cranks, all came to the surface, and all concentrated and intensified at the presidential office, but the President adhered to his simple creed and went steadily on his way.

He treated all patiently, but frankly. He had an intuitive sense of proper perspective; he knew the true importance of things. When a company of temperance people came to ask that General Grant be removed because he drank too much, he inquired what kind of liquor he drank, and said he wanted to know so he could send some to other generals that they might win such victories as Grant was winning. "Temperance is a good thing," he said, "but we are saving the Union now."

The intrepid confederate army made no more trouble in front than the sincere but impatient abolition leaders did behind him. To Horace Greeley, the greatest of American editors, his party associate and the stinging thorn in his flesh, he wrote:

"I have just read yours of the 19th instant, addressed to myself through the New York Tribune."

“If there be in it any statements or assumptions of fact which I may know to be erroneous, I do not now and here controvert them.”

“If there be any inferences which I may believe to be falsely drawn, I do not now and here argue against them.”

“If there be perceptible in it an impatient and dictatorial tone, I waive it in deference to an old friend whose heart I have always supposed to be right.”

“If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them.”

“If there be those who would not save the union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them.”

“My paramount object is to save the Union, and not either to save or destroy slavery ”

“If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it — if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it — and if I could do it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that.”

“What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union, and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union.”

“I shall do less whenever I shall believe that what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do more whenever I believe doing more will help the cause.”

“I shall try to correct errors when shown to be errors, and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be true views.”

“I have here stated my purpose according to my views of official duty, and I intend no modification

of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men everywhere could be free."

From the hour of that touching farewell speech to his neighbors in the Springfield depot, down to the fatal night in Ford's theatre, his life was consecrated to the restoration of a dissevered country. Everything else was subordinate. It is a supreme satisfaction to know that his life's ambition was consummated before he went to his everlasting reward

MR. LINCOLN AS A SPEAKER.

Mr. Lincoln was not an orator in the sense that his great competitor in the nominating convention was an orator. He was awkward in person. He was a reader of literature; but he seldom used its flowers to ornament his addresses. Here, as in everything else, he was plain and unassuming. He attempted none of the graces of the traditional orator. We have been led to admire the fluency of speech of other candidates for, or occupants of, the presidential office since then, but surely he ranks below none of them. In purity of style he surpassed them all. And he made many speeches. In his inaugural journey alone he made thirty-six more or less substantial addresses upon great questions, and always with safety and marked acceptability. He, himself, was hardly in his addresses. He was eminently successful as a speech maker, but his success was not in his appearance, or his manners, but in the substance of what he said. His cause was always held up before his auditors; his logic was irresistible; and his style, acquired before the debating clubs and before the farmer juries and the plain people who constituted the political assemblages of Illinois, at that time, was so simple, pure, and penetrating, that it has

become distinctive in the literature of the English language.

EVERY INCH THE PRESIDENT.

With all his modesty he was every inch the president. He took his positions promptly and with certainty. He never hesitated to exercise any of the prerogatives of his great office. In an unusual crisis he even strained those prerogatives and put them to the accomplishment of unusual ends. Going into an official circle of the nation's greatest statesmen, and without experience or familiarity with administrative functions himself, he did his great work with his own hand and stopped at nothing which would save the Union.

His messages to congress were penned with the confident air of a veteran. His proclamations rang like great signal guns from ocean to ocean. He took the most heroic action with the utmost quietness of manner. He directed his cabinet officers with a gentle, but an unhesitating hand. Within ninety days of his inauguration he took Mr. Seward's memorable dispatch to Minister Adams, upon our relations with Great Britain, made erasures, changes, and additions, until the original now on file in the State department looks worse than a theme after being slashed by the professor of rhetoric in our University; and all the world quickly says that every change was an improvement. His laconic direction to the great, iron-handed Secretary of War was the simple indorsement upon the papers: "Do this," with only the initials, "A. L." beneath. He was never uninformed about the army. He made the plan of organization, he selected the leaders, he advised movements with a military insight possessed by few and worthy of

the greatest professional military men of the age.

He was alert and his acts were timely. He censured delay unsparingly. He thanked the army for victory very quickly. He promoted the deserving. Again and again he called upon the nation to humble itself in prayer before the God of nations.

Upon the second night of the decisive battle of Gettysburg he wrote an order as Commander-in-Chief to General Meade, directing him to intercept Lee's retreat and give him another battle. He sent it by a special messenger, with a private note saying that this seemed to him to be the thing to do, but that he would leave it to the ultimate decision of the military commander on the ground. The general order was not a matter of record, and need not be. If Meade would undertake the movement, and it was successful, he need say nothing about it. If it failed, he could publish the order immediately. In other words: "Go ahead. Make an heroic attempt to annihilate that army in its disheartened state and before it can recross the river. If the attempt succeeds, you take the glory of it; and if it fails I will take the responsibility of it."

The people of the state of New York will never think less of Governor Seward than they always did, but rather they will hold his memory in higher and still higher esteem with the passing years. But the people of New York will always look with entire satisfaction upon the original draft of the Emancipation Proclamation in their state library, in the long, clear hand of the great Emancipator himself, with only a formal beginning and ending in the handwriting of the accomplished Secretary of State. The greatest act of his life, perhaps the greatest act of any life, was deter-

mined by the intelligence and performed by the hand of this plain Illinois lawyer in his closet.

HIS WIT.

In speaking of the character of Abraham Lincoln it is not permissible to omit a special reference to his wit, for it was proverbial and a part of the man. In quick retort, in apt illustration, in ready humor, he had few peers. This accomplishment is commonly dangerous to public men, but his wit was so pure, so spontaneous, so apt, and his services were so transcendent, that he has not suffered in consequence of it. Indeed it was fortunate that he had it, for it came to his aid at critical junctures. It helped relieve the hours of his despondency, and they were many. It enforced his views. It saved him when at the breaking point.

On the 5th of June, 1863, he wrote General Hooker: "In a word, I would not take any risk of being entangled upon the river like an ox jumped half over a fence and liable to be torn by the dogs front and rear, without a fair chance to gore one way or kick the other." And, in a day, the eighteen thousand dead and wounded Union soldiers at Chancellorsville, immediately bore dreadful testimony to the military foresight of the great war president.

To a committee of congressmen who came to protest against the removal of McClellan, he said frankly that he thought the general had had opportunity; that he complained too much, and that he made no headway. They replied that he was certainly *a great engineer*. "Yes, but he must have run a *stationary* engine," was the answer.

Going down to review the army, he rode upon an army wagon and found the driver swearing at his mules. He said: "My friend, you must be an

Episcopalian?" "No, sir; what makes you think so?" asked the man. "Why, you swear the way Governor Seward does and he is an Episcopalian, but he has mules to drive sometimes and it may be in the business," was the answer.

His grasp upon affairs was sufficiently strong to let him use his wit with impunity. He used it for a laudable purpose and it brought him rest from his great cares.

It would be a profitable occupation for some student to collect the innumerable, published, homely references and witty illustrations used while he was president, and drawn from his life in Illinois. Indeed it is not fanciful to say that this conspicuous trait in his character, this keenness of wit, this love of story telling, this quickness of retort, was largely developed by his experiences in the hotels and in the court rooms when he was an itinerant lawyer upon the 8th circuit of this state.

SAGACIOUS POLITICS.

He had freely declared his indifference to renomination prior to the end of his first term. He had questioned whether the name of some other candidate would not go farther to save the Union. He had avowed his entire readiness to stand aside for any other person whose name would unite the north or advance the armies a single rod upon the field. Before the end of his first term political differences had become intense behind him. It was a great trouble to him. In 1863 he had thoughts of an effort to blot out all parties and unite all patriots in one organization, with one of his old opponents as the standard bearer. He had sent Thurlow Weed to Governor Seymour with a request that the governor should pursue an aggressive war policy in New York and become the candidate of all

unionists for the presidency at the next election. Failing there, he had caused the same proposition to be sent to General McClellan. But politics is a stumbling block for much that is good and it stood in the way of any of these agreements.

When the time came, and he was unanimously and enthusiastically renominated, he thought, and very properly thought, that it was best to undertake to be reelected. The task at first seemed formidable indeed, but his experiences in securing delegates and in leading campaigns in Illinois again came to his substantial help.

When he was menaced by a split from his own party, he asked his friend to resign his position in the cabinet and used the place as a consideration with which to negotiate the independent ticket out of the field.

Mr. Depew says that when he was secretary of state in New York, it was his duty to locate every New York regiment in order to gather in the soldier vote. Going to Washington, and applying to Mr. Stanton for the information, he was gruffly refused on the ground that it was not safe to give such information to politicians, as it would get into the newspapers and so to the enemy. As he was leaving in disgust he met Mr. Washburn at the door of the war department and told him he would go home and publish in the newspapers that the soldier vote could not be taken because of the unreasonableness of the Secretary of War. Mr. Washburn said:

“Have you seen the President? Why, Mr. Lincoln is as great a politician as he is a president. If there was no other way to get them he would start out with a carpet bag and gather up those votes himself. He will find a way.”

In another half hour Mr. Stanton had been reorganized and the difficulty removed.

When two votes were yet needed to pass the amendment to the constitution abolishing slavery, in congress, so that it could be sent to the states, he sent for two members and said: "Those two votes must be procured." When asked how, he replied: "This amendment affects millions now in bondage and many millions more yet unborn. The matter is too large to be fooled with. I am president of the United States, with great powers, and I expect you to procure those two votes." The significance of the remark was understood and the votes were procured, and the acts of the President and the army were soon approved and established by constitutional action.

Mr. Lincoln *was* a politician, but his political operations were commendable for they had a laudable end in view.

RELIGIOUS FEELINGS.

Mr. Lincoln's religious views have been surrounded with mystery. In early life he was certainly a doubter, and he expressed his doubts freely, but it is also certain that in maturer years he acquired considerable religious feeling, and all the facts go to show that it deepened with his expanding greatness. Indeed it promoted his greatness. He was not hypocritical. He never paraded. He cared nothing for denominational differences and little for creeds. An analysis of his religious feelings would doubtless uncover points with which many christians would not agree. But he came to be an undoubted believer in God, in immortality, in the larger liberty which makes men

free. As early as 1860 he wrote to Newton Bateman:

“I know that there is a God and that He hates injustice and slavery. I see the storm coming and I know that His hand is in it. If He has a place and a work for me, and I think He has, I believe I am ready. I am nothing, but truth is everything. I know that I am right, because I know that liberty is right, for Christ teaches it and Christ is God.”

In November, 1862, he enjoined the orderly observance of the Sabbath upon the army and the navy as “a becoming deference to the best sentiment of a christian people, and a due regard to the Divine Will,” and added: “The discipline and character of the national forces should not suffer nor the cause they defend be imperiled by the profanation of the day or the name of the Most High.”

There has been much said in relation to the peculiarities of Mr. Lincoln's religious opinions, but the peculiarities are of small account, and the facts are too numerous to leave any room for doubt that he was a man of deep and continually deepening religious culture. He had a constitutional tendency towards sacred things, an intense emotional nature, an innate regard for the truth, an inborn reverence for the right, an abiding sense of his dependence upon God. And all this limited and expanded and correlated his other qualities to the development and upbuilding of a great and uncommon character which safely directed the American republic through the greatest crisis in its history, and perhaps through the greatest crisis of free government in the world.

CONCLUSION.

Walking in the busy streets of the city of Atlanta, not long since, I came upon a fine statue of Henry W. Grady. Beneath the bronze figure of the young orator, whose early death has been so widely regretted, was the legend:

“He died while literally loving a nation into peace.”

Even more suggestive than his cheering words was the act of the southern masses which placed this monument in their busiest thoroughfare, a witness of their satisfaction at the sentiments which had distinguished him. No traveler in the south can doubt that there is a “New South.” The industries are growing and the schools are multiplying. There is a healthier sentiment upon sociological and economic questions, because the slave system is no longer there to throttle it. In spite of lynchings for heinous crimes, and of course they are to be regretted; in spite of provocations, and surely they are innumerable; there is a kindlier, more rational feeling toward the colored race. As Mr. Booker Washington puts it, the negro in the south is to work out his own destiny, with the help of free citizenship under free institutions. The gratifying fact is apparent, that he is to be given a chance, and that he is seizing it; feebly, it is true, but surely he is seizing it. The south has a new feeling towards the north. As we understand each other better, we love each other more. The roads are being broken out. Beaten paths are being made. Commercial intercourse has commenced and fraternal regard is growing. The Ohio river no longer separates two opposing peoples who merely sustain diplomatic relations with each other; there is a chemical affinity in progress; we are amalgamating. The bitterness of a century of

controversy is well nigh gone. The wounds torn by the rough hoof of war have almost healed. The soldiers of the two armies, and the young men and women of the new generation, who "look forward, and not back," have attained this magnificent result. The union is stronger, safer, because it stood the shock of battle. The people are more homogeneous because more free. A hundred millions of united, industrious, frugal, educated, christian people, under a free flag, stand in a place so high among the nations that they can command anything that is right by the force and dignity of their position, and without resort to war.

The work of Abraham Lincoln is accomplished. His qualities point a moral. His career is an inspiration to us.

"Our fathers' God! from out whose hand
The centuries fall like grains of sand;
We meet to-day, united, free,
And loyal to our land and Thee,
To thank Thee for the era done,
And trust Thee for the opening one."

of all of the details of Mr. Lincoln's life. No word of his has been too small, no act too trivial, no association too remote to enlist the quick attention of an interested people. The child of pioneers, he was a pioneer himself. The story of his childhood is one of the most stirring in all the stirring record of American pioneering, and one of the most pathetic in all the history of the world. It is so familiar that there is no need to dwell upon it now. The humble Kentucky log cabin without floor or window or chimney, in which he first saw the light eighty-seven years ago to-day, is as safe from profanation by the instinctive feelings of all true citizens of the Republic as was the ark of the covenant by the written law of the Jews. The book he read in lieu of schooling, the desk upon which he wrote a letter, are relics worthy the care of a whole people. The house in which he lived receives the jealous care of the state to which his renown brings its greatest honor, and the tomb which holds his ashes is a mecca to which all lovers of free government, from all nations and in all generations, will turn with continually increasing devotion.

From this reverential interest in the material things by which he was encompassed the study has passed on with still larger devotion to the thoughtful contemplation of the secret springs of his inner life. His intellectual qualities are being analyzed only to deepen wonder and widen admiration. His innermost religious feelings are being reviewed in the light of every expression having the remotest bearing upon them. His relations to his mother who died in his ninth year, to his always kindly foster mother, to his wife and children, and to the men who were the associates of his

public life, are all under the searchlight of public investigation. Even his first love has lifted the plain name of "Ann Rutledge" to a fame so lasting that all patriotic Americans are tempted to journey far that they may drop a sympathetic tear over the fair head at her humble and untimely grave. His liking for the anonymous hymn, "Oh! Why Should the Spirit of Mortal be Proud?" has immortalized it.

Out of all this thoughtful study there has grown a literature, both in prose and verse, which forms no small part of the general literature of the nation, or indeed of the Anglo-Saxon race. Out of this prolific literature I quickly draw a few suggestions in the hope that they may have some special interest to this vast assemblage of the people of the University, supplemented so proudly by the residents of the thrifty adjacent cities, the teachers and pupils of the public schools, and the veteran soldiers of the Grand Army of the Union. Illinoisans all, proud of our great state and cherishing all that has ennobled her life, we shall hope to find something in the career of Abraham Lincoln in Illinois which specially qualified him for his remarkable record in the presidency and for his world-renowned work.

PLACE OF BIRTH AND SYMPATHY WITH THE SOUTH.

None of us can throw off the influences which spring from the place of our nativity or the associations of our first years. Grounded as Mr. Lincoln was in the principles of free government, strong as he was in his love for the humanities, abhorrent as he was of the slave system, it was fortunate that he was born south of the Ohio and in a slave state, and that his earlier life was spent in

southern Illinois among a people who were strongly sympathetic with the people of the south by reason of kindred and associations. The ties of birth, of kindred, of years of familiar association with a chivalric people, and of marriage, all combined to give the man whose official acts were to gather the greatest army that a constitutional state ever marshalled to subdue insurrection, a deep and abiding sympathy with the people of the south.

This it was that led him when the crucial moment had come which required him to speak from his great office to an agitated people, already torn into fragments, to take his inaugural address upon his knee, even when surrounded by multitudes of great men and the excitement of a great occasion, even after the bugles had sounded the onward march of the inaugural procession, and add the important part of these memorable words:

“In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you.”

“You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the government; while I shall have the most solemn one to preserve, protect and defend it.”

“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 cord of memory, stretching from every battle-field and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely as they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”

It was this knowledge of the southern people which enabled him to take the course, and take it promptly, which prevented his native state with her great associates upon the border line from following the six sisters with which they were closely allied and which had already assumed to go out of the Union, and thus to win at the outset a memorable triumph in administration without which we cannot but fear that the struggle for the union must have broken in disaster. It was this sympathy with the south which led him to tinge his most drastic official acts with expressions of feelings so kindly to the south that no man could be embittered unless already crazed by passion, and which gives his memory a recognized place in the warm feelings of the great South-land to-day.

SYMPATHY WITH THE PEOPLE.

Abraham Lincoln was the child of the common people. The training for his great work was in the school of poverty and of toil. His rough pioneer life opened to him the secret springs of human action. It was not money, but brawn which could put down the Rebellion. The people of the north had been separated by political discussion and hate. They were to be united in feeling before an army could be marshalled. His sagacious words, born of his experiences in Illinois, did the work. Could the great New York senator have said from his standpoint what I heard Mr. Lincoln say to the New York legislature, and with like effect? Hear him:

“I deem it just to you, to myself and to all, that I should see everything; that I should hear everything; that I should have every light that can be brought within my reach, in order that when I do so speak, I shall have enjoyed every opportunity