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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The pages of sacred and profane history, in all the ages of the world, have been sprinkled with the biographies of men who have risen from comparative obscurity, and in some instances from extreme poverty, to eminence, power and wealth among their fellow-men. Jacob's son Joseph, from a condition of slavery and imprisonment upon false accusation, rose at a bound to the governorship of Egypt and became second in authority only to the king. David, from herding his father's sheep, became the great and powerful king of Israel. Jephtha, the despised son of a cocubine, became the Judge of Israel. And coming down to more modern times, Martin Luther, the son of an humble German peasant, became the leader and founder of the principle which set man free from ecclesiastical tyranny and unfettered his mind from a system little short of mental slavery.

Pre-eminently, however, America has been the country in which men born to poverty and a childhood of obscurity, have in mature years risen to eminence in various walks of life. The list of these, whose names are household stories in many American households, might be greatly multiplied by applying it to all the walks of life. But it must suffice in this article to mention but the few who have risen from a low, or, in some cases, a comparatively low, estate, to the highest honor the American people can bestow, the Presidency of their country.

The first of these to be named in this connection, was Andrew Jackson, who was born in the Waxhaw settlement in North Carolina, March 15, 1767, the son of a poor Scotch-Irish widow, whose husband died a few days before his birth. Next among those who reached the Presidency from a boyhood and early manhood of toil and privation, was Millard Fillmore, who in his early years worked in a woolen factory, and who became President upon the death of President Taylor. Eight years after the expiration of his service as Chief Executive, Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated into that high office and was followed in April, 1865, by Andrew Johnson, who at his majority was unable to read, lived in a cabin in Tennessee, and earned his livelihood as a country tailor. Johnson's successor was Ulysses S. Grant, who, though his parents were not poor were yet in comparatively humble circumstances and had no idea of the eminence to which their son would attain. The next representative of the common people who entered the White House as the Chief Magistrate of the country was James A. Garfield, the son of a poor widow, who at the age of 19 years was driving mules on the towpath of a canal. The last to attain the high destiny of the head of this great country, from a comparatively humble beginning, was Grover Cleveland, the son of a Christian minister who was not particularly eminent in that calling.

All of those named had to make their own way in life without the advantages enjoyed by others who gained the high station; but not one of them rose from the depths of such poverty as was experienced by Abraham Lincoln in his childhood, and none of them became his peer in achievement and in his native greatness. Volumes have been written about him, but his life was an inexhaustible subject as his history has never been and never can be written. Self-taught, he became a master of the one language with which he was familiar—the English tongue. In erudition he surpassed the most learned of the highest literary geniuses of this or any other country. In cogency of reasoning and in logical argument he was much more than a match for that great man Stephen A. Douglas. It is impossible to read his speeches in his great discussion with Douglas, in 1858, without realizing that from beginning to end his was the master mind in the controversy. That he resorted to no subterfuges or tricks of oratory to divert the minds of the people who heard the debates, from the real issues involved in the controversy. His language, though simple, was singularly pure English, always straightforward and going to the very heart of the subjects discussed.

This much about his attainments in language. In logic he was a master, but it was not learned. It was an innate quality of his mind which was seldom at fault when called upon thus to exercise it. And so, while he was great in mental ability he had, what perhaps is better than mind, a heart of pure gold. Rarely in man's history have these two qualities ever existed to a greater extent in one individual than they appeared in the life of Abraham Lincoln. As was said of Abou Ben Adhen, his name could have been written at the head of the list of those who loved his fellow-men, and it might be added, who served them. For his was a life of service. He never saw a human being or a dumb creature in distress that his great heart was not moved with sympathy and a desire to extend help and comfort. Nor was the desire only present, but it was put into action. Innumerable stories of that habit and practice have been told and written about him, but new ones are frequently coming to light.

One of the latest of these stories, which had never before been told, has recently appeared. It relates to his sympathy for two distressed birds. It was back in the days when the lawyers of Illinois were in the habit of going to widely separated courts to practice the profession, when such courts were in session. They usually traveled on horseback and in each other's company. Mr. Lincoln followed the practice, and, on one occasion while thus traveling from court to court, gave a practical example of his sympathy with dumb creatures. Riding along the road he and his companions discovered a bird's nest, with young birds in it, lying on the ground. The parent birds were fluttering about and manifesting their distress as well as they could in bird language. But there seemed to be no remedy for their trouble and the party rode on. After a little while Lincoln turned back, leaving his companions to wonder what caused him to do so. He explained, however, that he had forgotten something. When he rejoined the company he was closely questioned as to what his purpose had been, and in the simplicity of his heart he did not hesitate to tell that he had gone back to see if something could be done for the birds. He was distressed for them and he made use of his practical common sense, by securely fastening the nest to a limb of the tree. He could not have slept soundly if he had neglected to make the effort in which he was successful.

Perhaps some of the stories of his kindness of heart and his illimitable patience with those in distress may have been manufactured, but the editor of the Sentinel was a witness of a scene in the White House at Washington, more than fifty years ago, that aptly illustrates these qualities of Mr. Linicoln's mind and heart. Several persons were waiting in the President's room for an opportunity to interview him, when a neatly dressed, middleaged lady approached his desk, and without further preliminary, said:

"Mr. Linicoln, I've been robbed."

"Ah, Madam," he replied, "how did that happen,"

"Well, sir," she replied, "I had $3,000 of New Jersey bonds, and $5,000 in United States 5-20 bonds, in a bureau drawer in my house in New Jersey, where I live, and somebody broke into the house and stole them. Governor Newell has gotten me duplicates of the State bonds, and I want you to get me duplicates of the United States bonds."

"What sort of bonds were they? registered or coupon bonds," Mr. Lincoln inquired, and the woman promptly answered, "coupon bonds."

Then Mr. Lincoln explained that coupon bonds were very much like bank notes. They had to be paid to the person in whose hands they happened to be found. That the coupons would also, when clipped, be paid to the holder by any subtreasurer. But the woman was not satisfied with the explanation, and at once said:

"But Governor Newell has gotten me duplicates of the New Jersey bonds and I don't see why the United States wants to cheat me out of the 5-20 bonds."

Then Mr. Lincoln explained at length and in detail the difference between registered and coupon bonds; but the woman could not, or would not see it that way, and returned to the attack repeatedly with the story of Governor Newell's action. And every time Mr. Lincoln explained, in the most minute manner and in every possible detail the difficulty of the situation. I was simply surprised, not to say amazed, at the kindness, forbearance and patience he had displayed, and was wondering how he would ever get rid of the woman without summarily dismissing her. Throughout the interview and until it closed he had not uttered an impatient word nor shown the slightest lack of sympathy for the woman. She was in deep distress and he could only let her know that, while he could not help her, he did truly sympathize with her. He might in the very beginning have referred her to the Treasury Department as the proper place to make her appeal. But that either did not occur to him or he was loath to let her retire under an impression that it was not inability but unwillingness to grant her request that prevented his doing so. At any rate he had exhibited genuine sympathy for her and treated her with patience beyond what seemed possible in any human being. And he finally escaped from his dilemma by saying to her:

"But after all, madam, it is not my place to consider matters of this sort. You should have taken it to Mr. Fessenden, the Secretary of the Treasury."

"I tried to do so, sir," she replied, "but they wouldn't let me in."

"Oh, they wouldn't?" he answered, "I'll fix that," and turning to his desk he wrote something on a card and handed it to her, saying: "That will get you in."

The woman retired, profusely thanking him for his kindness, and I thought I caught a twinkle in his eye as he felt that he had perpetrated a joke on Mr. Fessenden. For in his moments of deepest distress and trouble he was not without a saving sense of humor, that probably enabled him to bear a much heavier burden of sorrow and anxiety than falls to the lot of most men.

Like other men, Mr. Lincoln had his faults, but they never were grievous ones. His virtues were so transcendant that they far outshone any weakness of a contrary character. Gratitude was ingrained in his nature and he never forgot a kindness done to him or his, and few are the instances in which these kindnesses were not requited in kind. It is believed today by some of those who were once his bitter enemies, that he was the agent of God, raised up for the great work he accomplished and that ended in his martyrdom.

Today is the 106th anniversary of the day in which this great man was born in a one-roomed hut, with an earth floor, out in Kentucky. It is a day when that event should be and will be commemorated in the large cities and many of the country places in America. It is to be fittingly celebrated in Westminster by the Lincoln Day dinner to be given tonight at he Main-Court Hotel.

It is a day of peculiar interest to the editor of the Sentinel, who is the last survivor of the Maryland delegation in the National Convention of 1864, by which Mr. Lincoln was renominatetd for the Presidency. Few, if any other members of that convention from other States are living. The editor of the Sentinel was one of the youngest members of the body. Probably the very youngest. He was the Maryland member of the notification committee, on which there were four or five governors of States and other distinguished members. The committee went to Washington in a body, and met Mr. Lincoln in the East room of the White House, where Governor Dennison, of Ohio, made the notification address. The editor of he Sentinel recalls with pride and pleasure, in his old age, his part in that convention, and also several interviews he had with Mr. Lincoln personally. He is one of a very few citizens of Carroll county who ever saw the great American.

He has no apology to make for this long story, written hastily, and without any attempt to embellish or exaggerate a word. The name of Lincoln should be cherished in the heart of hearts of the boys and girls, the men and women of America.

IF NOT A BLOCKADE, WHAT?

Germany's declared intention, as announced in the notice to neutral countries last week, that after the 18th of this month all vessels attempting to enter any port of Great Britain would be subject to destruction by German submarines, no matter in what capacity they might be sailing, is being considered adversely by the government at Washington and probably by all other neutral maratime nations. It is certainly indefensible and the announcement of Germany's purpose in the matter was probably only made as a means of ascertaining the attitude of this and other countries on the subject.

Some color is given to this opinion by a statement coming from Berlin to the effect that the "naval measures of Germany against British commerce are in no sense a blockade" and that "German submarines and warships will endeavor by every means in their power to avoid sinking American and other neutral ships, and will take every precaution to avoid a mistake." This statement however, does not come from a recognized official source and is only sent out as the "correct interpretation placed upon the German proclamation in competent circles in Berlin." Clearly that does not bind the German government to any course of action and is not justified by the explicit declaration of the official proclamation, which, properly construed, declared a blockade of all British ports and the intention to take no prizes but to destroy and sink all vessels, whether those of the enemy or of neutrals, on sight.

Just what form the objections of the United States government to this declared purpose of Germany will take has not appeared as this is being written, but it should mean not only a vigorous protest but a pronounced intention to protect American shipping and passengers on American ships from danger or injury. Germany is within her rights in any legitimate effort to destroy British commerce, but she must also respect the rights of neutrals. To run amuck against vessels of every class and of every nation attempting to enter British ports, under neutral flags, or even under the British flag flying from a strictly passenger ship, would be a violation of the rights of neutral travelers. Perhaps an exception may be made in the case of the last named, but even that question is yet to be threshed out. The subject has its perplexities and will probably give rise to a prolonged discussion between the governments of the United States and Germany.

Involved in it, also, will be the question of a belligerent assuming to seek protection from capture or destruction under a neutral flag. Perhaps that question is not strictly germain to the subject, but it has arisen indirectly by the act of a Cunard liner entering the harbor of Liverpool under the American flag. The captain of the ship, the Lusitania, hauled down the British flag and raised the Stars and Stripes, claiming that the act was legitimate as a means of protecting the American passengers on his vessel. He had no precedent for that course and it is now being discussed and criticised, adversely generally, in this country. Congress will probably enact a law to prohibit this use of the American flag, upon pain of the confiscation of the offending vessel. But after all, there will be an undercurrent of sympathy with and admiration for the captain of the Lusitania who resorted to this ruse to protect his passengers and save his ship from the danger of possible destruction by a German submarine. It is a ruse, however, that cannot be safely put into general practice, even if it shall be held to be allowable.

There is, all things considered, great necessity placed upon the government of the United States to consider all these new problems with wisdom and impartiality; to avoid mistakes and to take no step that cannot be maintained. This country has not come out with great credit of its controversy with Great Britain concerning the latter's methods of the search and seizure of American ships upon suspicion of carrying contraband of war. Its protest against those methods was made with considerable vigor, but has had no appreciable effect upon the practice. Wise statesmanship is needed, that this government shall not demand more than is meet and accept nothing that is not absolutely justly demanded.

AN EVEN BATTLE

The American people, that is the real American people, must be deeply interested in the fight going on in their Senate, over the proposition to create a partnership in ship-owning, in which the government shall become an incorporator. The administration, which is backing the enterprise, and which indeed originated it, was on the verge of a signal defeat last week, but has rallied its forces and is now fighting as if for life. And it is said to be a fairly equal battle, with uncertainty as to the outcome; that, possibly, the vice-president may have the casting vote; that is if it ever comes to a vote. The opponents of the measure are takinig no chances on that, but are filibustering with energy and determination. It is yet, however, sixteen days till the present Congress will expire, and it looks impossible to stave off final action till that time.

President Wilson is so intent on carrying the scheme into effect that he threatens to call an extra session if final action shall not be had before, or by the 4th of March. That may, however, be a bluff, designed to frighten some of the recalcitrant Senators into line for the purpose of avoiding that catastrophe. The President knows that the Republicans now in the Senate, reinforced by eight or nine Democratic Senators, are giving the bill the hardest sort of a tussle. In the next Congress the relative strength of parties will be materially changed. The Democrats in the House, instead of nearly 200 majority, will have only 23. As presumably the Republicans will stand together as a unit, a dozen of the 249 or 250 Democrats, uniting with them in opposition to the measure, will send it to Coventry, so that its chances of adoption will not be improved by its postponement. If it fails of passage by the present Congress it must come up as an entirely new measure. There is then not much danger of an extra session, unless the President, with his usual pigheadedness, is determined to have his own way. In that case he will add only another to the many acts of his administration calculated to wreck his party. The American people are beginning to see that it is not wise for the government to go into partnership with corporations in ship-purchasing or anything else.

HAS GREAT BRITAIN NO SUBMARINES?

The English apprehension of damage and danger from German submarines is calculated to provoke curiosity concerning the inability of our Englishs cousins to cope with this new feature of marine warfare, so successfully employed by the Germans. Great Britain boasts of her naval superiority and has been enabled to keep the German warships safely bottled up under the protection of impregnable fortifications, except in the case of the Pacific fleet and the recent attempted raid on the coast of England, in which the Germans were outnumbered and beaten. But the German submarines have inflicted serious losses upon English merchant ships and have sunk two British battleships in English waters, one of them in the very mouth of the Thames, and are now practically threatening a blockade of the British ports, wtih these same undersea-going vessels.

In the new arts of war, on land and sea, Germany is far ahead of her powerful enemies, or she would, ere this, have suffered disastrous defeat; but in nothing has she shown her superiority more forcibly than in her submarine activity. She had probably quietly built a fleet of these vessels in advance of the outbreak of the war and had thoroughly tested their practicability and found the best type of such vessels. And here is Great Britain, with a great navy, shivering in her shoes at the daring and efficiency manifested by her enemy in the use of this new method of naval warfare.

Is it a lack of skill on the part of British navel architects or of enterprise on the part of the British government that keeps it lagging behind in this struggle for control of under the sea and that makes it possible for Germany to dictate terms of peace in sight of the tower of London and the English House of Parliament? Why are not British submarines patrolling the British coast and meeting these daring Germans in submarine battle? Or, better still, carrying that sort of naval warfare into German waters? Is Great Britain unable to rise to the occasion and meet these enterprising Germans on equal terms? These are questions that must occur to ordinary observers of the achievements of this strange new type of warships, employed by Germany.

MEXICO PROLIFIC IN PRESIDENTS

Mexico has another so-called President in the person of General Villa, who has proclaimed himself chief executive of the Northern half of the country. But somehow this heretofore successful military leader appears to have lost his grip on Mexican affairs and is not showing the activity and energy that characterized him when co-operating with Carranza. It is something singular that the Mexican people have a tendency to divide up into hostile camps and continue to keep up a perpetual armed conflict between the adherents of rival seekers after a dictatorship. Carranza, who seemed at one time to have been repudiated by most of the malcontents of all parties, has now a large following and is maintaining a seat of government, with acknowledged power, at Vera Cruz. Villa, it is said, is at the head of an army with designs upon Tampico, which he proposes to capture and convert it into another capital. But with the support behind Carranza that is more easily said than done. A recent report is in circulation to the effect that the Villaists, who had captured Monterey, have been forced to evacuate that city by the Carranzaites. Garza and Gutierrez, convention Presidents, are apparently without any standing and are not considered in the movements of the Carranzaites or the Villaists. Apparently there is less cause for complaint by foreign residents of the country than existed sometime ago. Yet the American government has its hands so full in endeavoring to keep up with the questions thrust upon it through the European war that it is paying less attention to Mexican affairs than formerly. About all that can be said about it is that there is no prospect of anything like peace and quietness in the distracted country. The best thing that any foreigner who lives in Mexico, or has material interests there, can do, would be to get rid of those interests at almost any sacrifice, and then take himself out of the country. After three years of insurrectionary strife there is absolutely no prospect of a return of peace to a country so given up to revolutionary schemes, and to the designs of ambitious men, controlled by the lust for power and place.

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