

The present year will long be remembered for two very important and instructive events in American history: one of which brought unspeakable joy and hope to the national heart, for it was the sudden collapse and downfall of a stubborn, protracted, fierce and sanguinary rebellion, undertaken and prosecuted, for no other earthly object, than to perpetuate a privileged class in the Southern States and to make Slavery perpetual in this Continent. The other event to which I refer, and which will mainly occupy our attention this Evening, filled the national heart with the bitterest anguish it ever knew, for it was, in fact, the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, one of the best men that ever presided over the destinies of this or any other Country. This eventful year is now drawing to a close, but a few days of it remain to us for good or for evil: Yet judging from the ominous clouds that hang on the political sky, this same ^{year} of ours which has borne so many marked features, is fated to bear still another, one which shall be more striking, and revolting than either, Rebellion or Assassination.

~~The crime of Crimes, to which I allude, and which I take to be impending over us, and which only needs the sanction of the Country and the Congress for its consummation: is the Restoration policy of Andrew Johnson. I shall have more to say of this painful probability at another part of this discourse.~~

The American people have experienced many shocks during the last four years: some of these have been heavy and terrible in the extreme causing the very pillars of the State to tremble and the boldest to quail in view of the possible fate of the Republic. But the ~~last~~ shock caused by the assassination of Abraham Lincoln was the heaviest of all and should never be forgotten.

It was as if some grand Convulsion in Nature had occurred; for had the solid Earth opened and swallowed up one of our Chief towns or Cities. had the tombs burst beneath our feet and the sheeted dead risen from the dust of ages and stalked through our streets in open day the sensation of horror, could not have been more profound than when this terrible Crime was first announced. A hush fell upon the land as though each man in it heard a voice from Heaven, an uninterpreted sound from the sky and had paused to learn its meaning.

The Calamity was so sudden, so out of joint with the prevailing sense of security, involved such a transition from one extreme of feeling to another, from the wildest joy and exultation of victory to the very dust and ashes of sorrow and mourning - that few could at first believe it.

As at no time before during all the war, the Loyal people were rejoicing in great and decisive victories. The Rebel Capital so long besieged and desperately defended had fallen. General Lee with his boasted invincible Army composed of the elite of Virginia had surrendered to General Grant. Mobile and Wilmington had capitulated. Loyal Black troops were tuning their high footsteps to the tune of Old John Brown in the City of Charleston, the very mesh of the rebellion. The Rebel Army was every where beaten in the field. Scattered like the dust before the North wind, and the end of the rebellion seemed at the door.

The great North was ^{even then} beginning to soften down its justly kindled wrath, and to exhibit unexampled magnanimity in its clemency and forgiveness towards the rebels. The tone of our public journals was rapidly assuming that sickly sentimental character which so disgusted earnest ^{men} during the first two years of the war.

Southern Generals were becoming decidedly popular at the North. Lee was spoken of with ^{only a} little less respect than General Grant. Men seemed as thankful to General Lee for surrendering as to General Grant for making him surrender. The South was no longer our deadly foe but ~~seem~~ our evening Brother.

It was at such a time as this when the Nation was weary of war sick of blood, gladly laying off its Armour, meditating mercy- it was when the whole Southern horizon so long dark and grim with clouds of war, was fringed with the golden dawn of peace, that Slavery dealt us its heaviest blow- and committed its most stupendous crime-

I do not intend to treat you to a lecture entirely devoted to the life and Character of Abraham Lincoln. That is already a well trodden field. It has been gleaned from Centre to Circumference. The press the pulpit, the platform, Poetry and Song, Art and Skill in all their departments have been busily employed in illustrating his Character- and Commending his many virtues. All, therefore, that I can do in what I have to say of him, will be to give back in some humble measure to my audience their own thoughts and feelings.

The function of the orator is high, but it is seldom higher or nobler than this. ~~At~~ Where most successful, he resembles his audience as the wave the ocean. His weight and volume his strength and beauty are borrowed from the sea out of which he rises.

There is a charm about the life and Character of the illustrious deceased which

which will never lose its power.

A thousand years hence, when even the solid marble that shades his honored dust shall have crumbled, when the great names of military heroes which are now every where greeted with a shout shall cease to dazzle and shall be forgotten by the masses, when even the harrowing details of the late rebellion shall have faded from the page of history, and when the tremendous war which filled ^{the} eye of the civilized world during four years, shall seem but as a speck upon the immense distance of time, the name of Abraham Lincoln like that of Dear Old John Brown, will still hold its place in the memories of men, and find eloquent tongues to discourse of his virtues and hold up his character for admiration and imitation.

For wherever men love good Government and abhor treason; wherever simple manhood commands respect, and kindness of heart awakens love; wherever freedom has an advocate, the oppressed a friend and the tyrant a foe, the name of Abraham Lincoln, will be honored, venerated, loved.

His life requires a book rather than a lecture. More history that will live has been made in connection with his name, than with that of any other American, not excepting Washington.

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 The position he occupied at the head of the American Government, the grandest of the Continent and which may even yet be the grandest of the globe; the social depression from which rose to eminence and greatness illustrious in his character the best peculiarities of his Country, and the benignant tendencies of free Institutions; the mighty perils through which he successfully conducted the Country; the singular purity of his life, and the tragic manner of his death, afford matter for volumes.

One great Charm of his life is that he was indebted to himself for himself. He was the architect of his own fortune, a selfmade man, a flat boat Captain, a splitter of rails, a man of toil - one who travelled far but made the road on which he travelled - one who ascended high, but with hard hands and honest work built the ladder on which he climbed. Thung upon the sea of life in the mid night storm, without oars or life preservers he bravely buffeted the billows - and with steady arms saw an ice safety, where other men despair and sink.

You all know his life by heart. All know of his excellent temper which no violence could disturb

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His good natured anecdotes so humble and yet so wise; all know of his caution, his vigilance, his firmness, his industry, and his honest devotion to his duties as the Chief Magistrate of the Republic, and are familiar with the leading qualities of the man.

Why then do I make him the subject of discourse on this occasion? The answer is ready - The assassination of Abraham Lincoln, is an instructive and convenient medium through which we may survey to some extent the dangers, and learn the solemn duties of this hour.

We are indebted to our enemies here as elsewhere, they have given us in this, as in many other instances during the last thirty years the events which have been most efficient in the overthrow of slavery and the slave power.

They annexed Texas twenty years ago and swelled the vote for freedom from seven thousand to seventy; they repealed the Missouri Compromise, and thereby unmasked their revolting designs to nationalize slavery; they through the Virgin soil of Kansas with border ruffians and thereby roused the loyal North to make Kansas a free state; they enacted a fugitive slave bill, and each slave caught made a thousand abolitionists; they hanged John Brown, and thereby kindled the wrath of the civilized world against slavery.

and placed his name with those of
 Saints and heroes.

Had Abraham Lincoln
 died from any of the numerous ills, that
 flesh is heir to, and by which men are
 ordinarily removed from the busy scenes
 of life; had he reached that good old age of
 which his excellent Constitution and his
 equally excellent temperate habits gave
 promise, ^{had} the Curtains of death falling gradually
 around him, we should have followed him
 sadly enough to his honored grave; placing
 him side by side with our most honored
 dead, but without any special distinction,
 and without the manifestation of those unusual
 signs of national bereavement for which his
 funeral will be ever memorable.

But dying as he did die, for a
 Cause that takes hold of human nature;
 Dying as he did die, by the red hand of violence;
 Dying as he did die at a moment when
 evincing his greatest trust in the people,
 going among them freely like a common man
 without a guard when he was Commander
 in Chief of a million of armed men.
 Snatched suddenly away from his work
 without warning - killed, murdered, assassinated

not because of any personal hate which any malice in him provoked, for no man who knew Abraham Lincoln could hate him.

No man ever defined his character better, than himself, when he said as in his last inaugural he had malice towards none but charity towards all. but he died as I have said for a cause. He died for the country for loyalty as against treason, for Republican Government based upon Liberty and Equal rights—as against a proud and selfish Class Government based upon the enslavement of millions of their fellow men.

Dying thus, his name becomes a text from which to preach that Liberty, and that human Equality, to strike down which he was ruthlessly murdered.

The name of Abraham Lincoln pleads to day with all the eloquence of martyrdom, for the utter extinction, of every root, and fibre, not merely of slavery, but of the insolent, aggressive, and malignant oligarchy—or privileged class founded upon it.

Since his death, every man who gives ^{his} voice or his vote, in a way to uphold this privileged class at the South stamps upon the grave of Abraham Lincoln, insult his memory, and wounds the ~~great~~ martyr afresh.

He will shrink from all those manly enterprises which require strength and develop energy. The same is true of a nation.

The weakman depends upon cunning. He conceals his opinion if he dares to have one, for fear of inability to defend it. He is ever ready for a compromise where needed. He does not dare to espouse the cause of the weak against the strong - but folds his hands and talks about the wisdom of minding his own business and leaving other people to manage their own affairs. The courageous, the noble and heroic, do not exist for him. Self preservation becomes his constant and all controlling thought.

Now it cannot be denied that our nationality under the name of the Union has leaned very much towards the ignoble attitude of the weak man. Under the predecessor of our martyred President the Union was too weak to defend itself from treason. The preservation of the Union was with all parties a few years ago, as the very end of the Law for Righteousness. The dear old Union was always sick just before an Election, and the leaders of the people insisted that if certain things were done, or certain things were left undone the Union would ~~rather~~ dissolve. We were kept constantly in a state of alarm. The general aim was not to do - but to be.

The opinion formed of our National Government by European Statesmen and Political Philosophers was not calculated to increase our faith in free institutions. They warned us that though well enough in a calm ^{the} ship ^{of state} was too weak for stormy weather. That though beautiful to the eye, strong to the touch and swift upon the waves. When the skies were bright and the wind fair. ~~She~~ ~~should go down~~ she would go down in the first great storm.

With them there was nothing stable but thrones, nothing powerful but standing armies. Nothing authoritative, unsupported by the pretension of Divine Right. It is not strange that men educated in distrust of the wisdom and very virtue of the people should entertain such opinions. We should waste no indignation on those foreigners of little faith. It was natural for them to see, ~~in~~ as they did see, at the beginning of the slaveholders rebellion the certain downfall of the American Republic.

The same thing was felt at Rome. and if thus in the Green tree, of vigorous democratic institutions, what else could have been expected in the dried up. Mummified, King Craft and Priest Craft Governments of the old world.

Nor was doubt of free popular Government confined to unfriendly thinkers at home or abroad. Many of the most patriotic

men of this country shared in that doubt. Thomas Jefferson saw the conflict coming and trembled for his country. Many of the Fathers of the Republic argued in favor of a strong and against the union on the ground of its weakness.

Well, the trial has come. The experiment has been tried. The strength of the Republic has been tested - tried by treason, by rebellion and by the assassination of its Chief; tried as few forms of Government were ever tried before.

What is the result? This it is, the country was never stronger than to day. Certainty has taken the place of doubt. Strength has taken the place of weakness, and men now talk of principles where they once dreamed only of compromise. A solid nation takes the place of a deceptive union - and the national will dictates the law instead of an insolent Oligarchy composed of the traffickers in human flesh. We no longer tremble for the safety of the ship of state. There is a feeling of security and repose among all on board, except those of the crew who attempted to convert our gallant bark into a pirate.

Happily too, this general confidence is not confined to the limits of our own country. Over the seas, and distant continents it has gone.

He never awed by his silence, nor silenced by the volubility or authority of his speech. Willing always to give, he was ever, equally willing to receive. He managed to leave his visitor not only free to utter his opinions, but by a wise reserve in the manner of insisting upon his own, he got even a little more from his visitor than his visitor got from him.

From the first moment of my interview with him I seemed to myself to have been acquainted with him for years for while he was among the most solid men I ever met he was among the most transparent.

What Mr Lincoln was when in company with white men, of course I cannot tell. I saw him mostly alone; but this much I can say of him, he was one of the very few ^{Americans} ~~white men~~, who could entertain ^{a negro} and converse with ~~a negro~~ ^{him} without in anywise reminding him of the unpopularity of his color.

If you will pardon the egotism, I will mention a fact or two in further illustration of his friendly feeling for the colored race. On one occasion, I remember while conversing with him, his messenger twice announced as in an adjoining room and as willing to see him Governor ~~Beck~~ Buckingham of Connecticut. Tell the Governor to wait, said President Lincoln - I wish to have a long talk with my friend Douglass. I remained a full hour after this, while the Governor of Connecticut waited without for an interview.

The last days of Mr Lincoln were his best days. If he did not control events he had the wisdom to be instructed by them. When he could no longer withstand the current he seceded with it. What he said on the steps of the Capital four years ago did not determine what the same lips should utter four years afterward. No two papers are so strong contrasts. than his first and his last Inaugural addresses. The first was intended to reconcile the rebels to the Government by argument and persuasion, the second was a recognition ^{of the operations} of inevitable and universal laws. ~~of the necessity~~. In this he was willing to let justice have its course. You all remember with what solemn emphasis he expressed this on the fourth March - six weeks before his assassination:

"Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray that this mighty scourge of war shall soon pass away, yet if God wills it continue till all the treasure piled by two hundred and fifty years of the bondman's unrequited toil shall have been wasted each drop of blood drawn by the lash shall have been paid for by one drawn by the sword, we must still say, as was said three thousand years ago - the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

Had Mr Lincoln lived, we might have looked for still greater progress. Learning wisdom by war he would have learned more from Peace. Already he had expressed himself in favor of extending the right of suffrage to two classes

machinery which moves the world on the plane of advancement and civilization.

Our work was prepared before hand. We had enough as a gigantic system of bondage, an offense against the enlightened judgment of mankind, one which we were required by our relations to the outside world to put out of the way or give up the experiment of free Government. We have decided to do the former.

(While thus serving ourselves as a nation, we have done other and greater service to mankind. To the grand sum of human knowledge as to what men will do what great States and Nations will do when great interests are involved and powerful human passions are stirred we have added, ~~the~~ our special and peculiar experience a contribution such as no other nation could make.

During this tremendous struggle for national life, so fierce so sanguinary, so long protracted and so desperate, we have illustrated both extremes of human possibilities exemplifying the noblest qualities which can distinguish human nature, as well as those which most disgrace it.

Perhaps, the history of our war in order to its full effect upon ourselves and the world required some such termination as that of the

Colored men, first to the brave Colored Soldiers who had fought under our flag, and second to the very intelligent part of the Colored population South. This declaration on his part though it seemed to mean but little meant a great deal. It was like Abraham Lincoln. He never shocked prejudices unnecessarily. Having learned Statesmanship while splitting Nails, he ~~always~~ ^{always} used the thin edge of the wedge first, and the fact that he used this ~~as~~ at all, meant that he would if need be, use the thick as well as the thin. He saw the absurdity of asking men to fight for a Government which should degrade them, and the meanness of disfranchising enemies and enfranchising friends. He was a progressive man, a humane man, an honorable man, and at heart an antislavery man. He had exhausted the resources of Conciliation upon Rebels and Slaveholders and now looked to the principles of Liberty and justice, for the peace, security, happiness and prosperity of his Country. I assume therefore, had Abraham Lincoln been spared to see this day, the Negro of the South would have more than a hope of enfranchisement, and no Rebels could hold the ~~any~~ reins of Government in any one of the late rebellious States. Whosoever else, have cause to mourn the loss of Abraham Lincoln, to the Colored people of the Country his death is an unspeakable Calamity.