

# AN ADDRESS

IN COMMEMORATION OF

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

DELIVERED IN THE MEETING-HOUSE

OF THE

*First Baptist Church of Philadelphia,*

ON THE DAY OF HIS FUNERAL AT THE NATIONAL CAPITAL,

APRIL 19, 1865.

BY THE

REVEREND GEORGE DANA BOARDMAN,

PASTOR.

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## A D D R E S S.

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How different this scene, my countrymen, from that which was witnessed last Friday morning within these walls!\* Then all was gladness and triumph and festal song and gay festoon. Now all is grief and apprehension and requiem and ebon drapery. Why this awful change? Why this universal suspension of business, this awful stillness of the cities and the hamlets? Why, if men appear in the streets, do they walk with slow and measured tread, their hearts failing them through fear, and a grief more crushing than fear? Why from countless spires toll the funereal bells? Why from fort and arsenal and camp and military academy and navy-yard and man-of-war mournfully boom the half-hour guns? Why, from the Golden Gate in the far-off West to the St. Croix, aye, to British Newfoundland in the far off East, from every flagstaff and window and balcony and colonnade, from car and engine and steed, float the funereal emblems, fluttering like the ebon wings of countless death-birds? Why this darkness that has fallen on all the land, a darkness so thick that

\* This allusion is to the festive services in commemoration of the re-establishment of the national flag at Fort Sumter, April 14.

it may be felt? Why this cry that goes up from every hearthstone, a universal, piercing cry, such as there was none ever like it, nor can be like it any more? It is because there is not a house in all the land in which there is not one dead. The nation's Father has been struck down in all his gentle kingliness. And we could almost ask the very sky to quench its too bright sun, and come down to meet our anguish, closing around and enshrouding in its celestial pall the mighty heart that lies so still and cold and dead. O God! help us to be strong to-day as we gaze on Abraham Lincoln lying dead on the nation's bier!

I cannot, stricken countrymen, speak long to you to-day. I trusted, last Sunday, when I gave the announcement for this occasion, that, ere this, I should have regained sway over myself. But in preparing for this solemn hour I have felt the same indescribable stupefaction that I felt on that dreadful Saturday morning. For an hour or two after I read the curdling tale, I felt such a strangeness as I never had felt before, and as I pray God I may never feel again. I felt no anger, not even sadness. I read the awful intelligence over and over and over again; and still it hardly affected me more than if I had never read it at all. And thus an hour or two passed on, in which, like thousands of my countrymen, the soul itself seemed benumbed. And though subsequently the horrible stupefaction passed away, to be succeeded by most poignant bitterness of soul, yet, in endeavoring to arrange my thoughts for this dreaded

occasion, I have felt the same stupefying, freezing horror creeping over me again. It seems to me that brain, heart, pen, are paralyzed. Instead of attempting to say aught to-day, I feel like escaping from the presence of my fellow-men into some secluded forest-dell, where I may breathe out a sorrow too sacred for words. All I can do is to bring the briefest tribute, and reverently lay it, amidst the dew of your tears, at the feet of the mighty dead.

Abraham Lincoln was born of respectable parentage in Kentucky, February 12, 1809. In 1816, his parents removed to Indiana, where in their new home Abraham spent the next ten years in hard manual labor on his father's farm. The only school education which he ever received was that which he obtained at intervals during this time, amounting in the aggregate to about a year. In 1830 he removed with his father to Illinois, and in the following year was employed as one of the hands in navigating a flat-boat down the Mississippi to New Orleans. On the breaking out of the Black Hawk war, in 1832, he served his country for three months as the captain of a volunteer company. On his return he began the study of law, to which he devoted himself with most persistent assiduity. In 1834 he was elected to the legislature by the highest vote cast for any candidate in the State, which position he held for six years in virtue of consecutive re-elections. Meanwhile he had removed to the capital of the State, where he rapidly

rose to great distinction as an advocate in jury trials. In 1846, at the age of 37, Illinois sent him as one of her representatives at Washington. His Congressional career was marked by a scrupulous devotion to the duties of his office, by an inflexible adherence to principle, by a generous, intelligent sympathy with all measures of reform, among which I may particularly mention the resolution which he offered, on January 16, 1849, for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, on what he conceived to be a constitutional basis. After the expiration of his Congressional term, he applied himself ardently to his profession till that dark deed, the Repeal of the Missouri Compromise, called him again into the political arena. He was immediately acknowledged as one of the most prominent political leaders in the State. In 1858 he was unanimously nominated by his party as candidate for United States Senator in opposition to Judge Douglas. You have not forgotten how these two remarkable men canvassed the State together, with what extraordinary ability and courtesy the debate was conducted on both sides, and how profound an interest the canvass excited throughout the Union. The result of this contest was, that though Mr. Lincoln received a popular majority of four thousand votes, yet Mr. Douglas was elected Senator by the joint ballot of the legislature. On May 18, 1860, he was unanimously nominated by the Republican National Convention a candidate for President, which nomination was ratified by the people on November 6, and, on the 4th of

March, 1861, having succeeded in reaching Washington in spite of the most desperate obstacles to prevent it, was inaugurated the sixteenth President of the United States. At twenty minutes past four o'clock on the morning of April 12, 1861, the grand conspiracy inaugurated civil war in America by opening the fire of one hundred and forty guns on Fort Sumter, Major Robert Anderson commanding. Who needs to have the tale, henceforth so harrowing, repeated? It is enough to think of the dead President, without dwelling on the intervening years of mingled woe and glory. One event, indeed, must be specialized; for it overtops all the other great events of this unparalleled epoch, as towered the Olympian Jove above the lesser gods of the Grecian heaven. Your own swelling hearts have anticipated me when I tell you that it was the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1st, 1863. Without particularizing further, it is enough to say, that in the terrific and long-continued tornado which burst upon the country on the bombardment of Sumter, whenever the ship of state plunged most wildly amidst the engulfing billows, or grated most heavily on the foundering reefs, or echoed most hoarsely with the shrieks of the despairing, one man there was who ever walked her deck with quiet intrepidity, his great heart ever true and trustful, his clear brain ever vigilant and wide-sweeping, his strong hand ever untrembling, towering, placid and imperial, like Neptune's brow, above the white foam, and smiling it into peace. After

a canvass of unexampled intensity, throughout which he preserved the same calm beauty of soul, he was, on the 8th of November, 1864, re-elected President of the United States by an almost unprecedented electoral majority; and on the 4th of March, 1865, he reassumed the executive functions in an Inaugural of most impressive yet gentlest majesty. On the 14th of April, 1865, the national flag was by his command re-uplifted on the ramparts of Sumter, as a symbol of the re-establishment of the national sovereignty throughout the Republic; and on the evening of that memorable day the kingliest man that ever breathed the air of the Western hemisphere was laid low by a bullet thrice accursed, for it was sped by an assassin, a traitor, and a slavery worshipper.

Such, in briefest terms, is an outline of the career of America's foremost son. What more can be said as we gather in tearful reverence around his bier? Without distinction of lineage, he gained a distinction which no lineage could give. Born among and as one of the common people, he ever retained, amidst a courtliness of power which European dynasties a thousand years old might envy, a fellow-feeling with the common people, by his own inherent greatness rising to be their typical aggregate, embodiment, and symbol. But passing over those years of boyish poverty and struggle, and also the years of youthful brain and will endeavor, and conquest too, let us gaze on him when, in the ma-



turity of his powers, he wields a sceptre more august than that of Roman Cæsar. It is difficult to form a just estimate of his character; for, its vast proportions are lost in its extraordinary symmetry. For, as in entering for the first time St. Peter's basilica at Rome, you are disappointed, because the grandeur of outline is melted and lost in the exquisite adaptation of detail, so to the thoughtless observer the character of the late President seems less great than it really was, because lost in its perfect equipoise and rounded globe. But let us proceed with our attempt at delineation. The historian to be born a hundred years hence will, I judge, say of Abraham Lincoln something as follows.

He was not a man lustrously brilliant in any one direction. No one faculty of brain markedly towered over another. But he was none the less great in that his greatness was so rounded, having less the transient dazzle of the meteor than the steady quiet sparkle of the fixed star. His logic was intuitive rather than tentative, instinctive rather than elaborative. He was wont to come to his conclusions less by the laborious workings of his reason than by the unconscious floatings of his instinctive, inborn shrewdness and sagacity. Hence the facility with which he detected the pivotal point in any question, however complex. Hence the ease and precision with which he led the people to catch the same point, leading them directly thither by the avenue of a diction which, however peculiar and homely, was

as straightforward and pellucid as his own judgment. Hence, also, it was that he so rarely made mistakes. Hence it was that every public act or plan of his, however wide-spread or intense the execration with which it was first received, was sure, sooner or later, to win the applauding verdict of the people. Guided thus by a system of well-nigh infallible instincts, by which he knew what he ought to do, and when to do it, and how to do it, he might well have taken as his own motto the heraldic bearing of the Earl of Buckinghamshire, *Nulla vestigia retrorsum*.

But because the ~~instinct~~<sup>ability</sup> of the late President was intuitive rather than ratiocinative, it does not follow that he was not intellectually great; for as, according to the profounder theologians, the intuitive John was greater than the syllogistic Paul, so, it seems to me, that Mr. Lincoln, intellectually surveyed, stands in the very first rank of those who have, in either hemisphere, wielded the sceptre. He had an unusually comprehensive mind, taking in at a glance all the aspects of the most many-sided question, almost always coming unerringly to a conclusion, when an inferior and less spherical mind would have been puzzled and paralyzed by a seeming contradiction, as, for instance, when a social or a political necessity is balanced by a legal or constitutional difficulty, or when a pressing moral obligation is offset by a present practical impossibility. Seeing all sides of a question, and intuitively just, he was enabled to equate the problem, thus steering the ship of state safely be-

tween the Charybdis of fanatic propulsion and the Scylla of timorous procrastination. The highest eulogy that can be pronounced on the intellectual character of a ruler, in times of great civil convulsion, is that it is his policy to have no policy, content with keeping his ship trim as he permits her to sweep downwards with the precipitous torrent. That eulogy the late President deserves beyond any ruler the world has seen.

And yet Mr. Lincoln was not wanting in executive force. Because he made no pretensions to special firmness, and vaunted not his purposes, people at first imagined that he was irresolute. But as time rolled on we began to see that beneath that mild, unassuming exterior lay an imperial will, that serenely swayed all who came in contact with him, however high in the military or executive councils of the nation they stood; and yet so quiet was this sway that they hardly knew that the sceptre was over them. Observe the modest assurance with which he rules the Secretary of State and the Lieutenant-General, placidly reserving to himself every ultimate responsibility. Nor was his inflexibility less than his force. All the powers of earth could not drive him to take a step till he thought it was right; and when convinced that it was right, all the powers of earth could not prevent his taking it. And all this, too, was without the slightest ostentation. Like a wire-bridge across a mountain gorge, he could sway to the softest zephyr, yet, like the same wire-bridge, the whirlwind could not uproot him.

Gifted with this intellectual judgment so instinctively infallible, and this gentle steadfastness of will, the late President blended with it a moral nature remarkably pure, keen, sensitive, and controlling. He was the very soul of integrity. It were as much as a man's liberty, certainly more than his expectations, were worth, to enter the presence of Abraham Lincoln with either flattery, threat, or bribe. Himself as transparent as crystal, he loathed whatever was refractive or opaque. He was absolutely incorruptible. Shrewd beyond most men, his shrewdness was the clear, piercing vision of a clean, single heart, that knew not how to

Spread its sails  
With 'vantage to the gale of others' passions.

Conscious of personal integrity, self-reliant, constitutionally genial, having an abiding faith in the instinct and persistence of the people as a corporate whole, assured of the justice of the majestic cause, and having a deep confidence in the overruling and merciful God, he was enabled to retain, in hours of darkest gloom, a cheerfulness of spirit, which often found vent in broadest and most grotesque humors. I doubt not that this constitutional blithesomeness of soul was one of the elements which contributed to the preservation of his life beneath the most crushing responsibilities that ever fell on man. And amidst all these distracting, hardening, shrivelling cares, he ever retained the same freshness and tenderness of soul. While just and kind to all, he

was, to the very last, in a special sense, the poor man's friend. And among all those who weep over his untimely death, the chief mourners of the land, next to the members of his own family, are the sable millions whom his own hand had set free. I honestly believe that there never trod the earth a more sympathetic, unselfish, large-hearted, forgiving man than he. Whatever filled up the vast circumference of that soul, the thought of Abraham Lincoln's own self was no occupant of it. By one of those spontaneous consents of the people, which spring up only on the soil of truth, he was instinctively styled *Father Abraham*. He was indeed the father of the whole American people, from the St. Lawrence to the Mexican Gulf, and he lived only in his children. For them, east and west, north and south, loyal and insurgent, he lived, and prayed, and schemed, and toiled, taxing every power of his clear and comprehending brain, and every sensibility of his delicate and boundless heart. I know not whether he was a Christian. The All-seeing alone knows that. Accounts, however, of his devotional habits have occasionally reached us too well-authenticated to be set aside. Certainly he had a deep and abiding sense of the holy authority of God, and an inspiring confidence in His merciful providence. I could have wished, indeed, that since he must fall, he had fallen elsewhere, engaged in a purer service, which had some "relish of salvation in't." But let that glide into oblivion. It is the solitary cloud that flecked the expanse of his public career.

If ever mortal obeyed Wolsey's dying counsel, it was Abraham Lincoln :

Cromwell! I charge thee fling away ambition ;  
 By that sin fell the angels ; how can man, then,  
 The image of his Maker, hope to win by 't ?  
 Love thyself last ; cherish those hearts that hate thee ;  
 Corruption wins not more than honesty.  
 Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace,  
 To silence envious tongues. Be just, and fear not !  
 Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy Country's,  
 Thy God's and Truth's ! Then, if thou fall'st, O Cromwell !  
 Thou fall'st a blessed martyr !

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And *this* is the man so augustly rich in the elements of an exalted manhood, who has suddenly been stricken down, not by an adventurous invader from a foreign soil, seeking to avenge his own nationality; not by a reckless highwayman, who must needs replenish his empty purse; not by a staggering madman, crazed by his potations; but by an American desperado, who, whether the appointed and duly certified organ of conspirators or not, it matters little, is nevertheless the actual summation and type of that slaveholding power, which, rather than lose its grasp on the sable chattels made in God's image, after His likeness, has been willing to drench a continent in fratricidal blood. Oh, what a type and symbol of this whole insurrectionary movement of the South, this assassination of President Lincoln has been ! If ever the genius of suicide took upon itself the impersonation of a human form, it was when this colossal slaveholding conspiracy was epito-

mized and became incarnate in the person of the diabolical miscreant, whose only passport to immortality is, that, when the martyr President fell, his descending shadow fell on *him*, and set his name in blackness of darkness forever more. And yet, were a merciful Omnipotence to restore to life the dead President, I doubt not that though some of us may at first have interpreted the voice of his blood, like that of the world's first martyr by the gates of Eden, as a cry for vengeance, yet, when those gentle lips moved again, we should hear a voice, which, like the sweet cadence that softly billowed the air on the first Good Friday, speaketh better things than that of Abel. And I believe that even to-day there are thousands of penitent ones in those desolated Southern homes, whose rebellious pride has been subdued by this awful parricide, and who, were the privilege allowed them, would come and

Kiss dead Cæsar's wounds,  
And dip their napkins in his sacred blood;  
Yea, beg a hair of him for memory,  
And, dying, mention it within their wills,  
Bequeathing it as richest legacy  
Unto their issue.

Yes, it shall be said of the martyred President as was said three thousand years ago of the grand old Hebrew judge and patriot, "The dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life."

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My countrymen! I have woven my garland, simple and unworthy as it is, and hung it on the bier. It is

scarce fitting to linger longer. For even now the sad cortege has begun to move which shall bear to his last sleeping-place all that is mortal of the martyr statesman, patriot, emancipator, and friend. And as in the days of King Joash, when the body of the dead Israelite, on being let down into the sepulchre of Elisha, and on touching the bones of the mighty prophet, was revived and stood on its feet again, so may God grant that as the nation's dead heart reverently touches to-day the dead heart of the great patriot, it may be quickened into life again, and stand before the astonished nations in all the strength and splendor of a new-born majesty!

Yes! move on in majestic state to thy Illinois tomb, amidst the bowing ranks of a weeping nation, thou illustrious martyr for us all! Thy dead, murdered corse is the watchword, and, with God's grace, the victor pæan of an emancipated, chastened, glorified Republic!