

## A PLAIN MAN OF THE PLAIN PEOPLE.

Portion of an Address Delivered by Edward Osgood Brown of Chicago, at the Lincoln Banquet of the Rock Island Club, Rock Island, Ill., February 12.

Forty-eight years ago last night Abraham Lincoln, a plain man of the plain people, bade good-bye to his friends and neighbors in our sister city of Springfield, telling them that to them he owed everything, and that he left them to take up a great task with a sadness unappreciable to one not in his situation. To his partner he said that the old sign ought not to be disturbed, as after his term as President of the United States he should return to practice again in the same old way.

Thus modestly and quietly, this plain country lawyer left his home on the prairies of Illinois to confront at Washington a situation than which, considering the man and his equipment as it was then supposed to be, nothing more appalling and disheartening could be imagined. To all who had not an inspired faith in the final triumph of democracy, and the rule of the people, it seemed a desperate one.

Said Charles Francis Adams, the son of one and the grandson of another President of the United States, and himself a foremost figure in our political life, "I must then affirm without hesitation that in the history of our government down to this hour, no experiment so rash has ever been made as that of elevating to the head of affairs a man with so little previous preparation for his task as Mr. Lincoln."

Wendell Phillips, the petted mouthpiece of the literary Brahmins of New England, cried out: "Who is this huckster in politics? Who is this country court advocate?"

Who indeed was he? In Illinois he was known as a lawyer and advocate of ability and tact, and a man shrewd and forceful, as well as honest, in political affairs and management. In the country at large he had a reputation for ability, very moderate in kind and degree, based on his local prominence and on his having met on equal terms, in what he made almost a drawn battle, the political idol of a million of his countrymen, the great Senator from Illinois, Judge Douglas.

But he had never held an executive office; his experience as a legislator even was very limited. He was poor in pocket, obliged to borrow money to feed his family in Washington until his salary should be payable. He was ungainly and almost shambling in appearance; sometimes melancholy and moody in disposition; careless in dress; simple and unconventional, almost rustic, in his habits: absolutely without the capacity of posing, either physically or intellectually, as a great man. There were no stained glass attitudes at his dis-

posal or in his thoughts. A simply acting, simply speaking man, without pretense or pretension; neither imposing himself on others as great nor intimidated by the arrogance of others who might so consider themselves, he moved among ordinary men and those who believed themselves extraordinary, with the same unaffected and unassuming mien.

What was it he took that journey forty-eight years ago to confront?

He had, nearly a year before, to the bitterest disappointment of many of its leaders and despite his inexperience, been made the nominee of a new and powerful but sectional party, for the Presidency. After a contest of great bitterness that party had won the fight, but its victory, which owed all its significance to its position of determined hostility to the extension of slavery to the Territories, seemed to have turned into demoralization and disaster after the election. The larger part of the South was in open rebellion, the rest preparing to follow; half of the country all ablaze with the enthusiasm of new born, hopeful revolution; the Federal Government in doubt and irresolution, with many of its principal officers in open sympathy with the insurgents; the army, navy and treasury depleted.

The fruits of the great victory of liberty lovers in the election of an anti-slavery President would have seemed hard enough to obtain, were it the South alone that thus in defiant arms stood ready to resist; but at the North also the situation was depressing. The joy of the fight over—something like dismay and remorse seized the very men who had won it. A sudden fear changed their cry from that of opposition to the spread of slavery at any price to that of peace and union at any price. Concession and compromise on the vital matters on which the political contest had been waged were demanded on every side.

The new President was criticised and distrusted by men who had voted for him and apparently believed in him up to the time that their faith should have been proved by their works, while the opposition, comprising half the people, were naturally vehement in denunciation and direful prophecy. He was to assume the reins of government with a cabinet made up largely of disappointed rivals, who felt themselves his superiors, and its chief, the Secretary of State, must take up our foreign relations with the knowledge that the great powers of Europe were looking with ill-concealed joy, and still more ill-concealed certainty of expectation for the disruption of the Republic.

These were the conditions under which Lincoln entered the White House in 1861.

A little more than four years later the return to Springfield came. It was not, however, to take up again his residence and work among the friends of his youth that Lincoln came back. Borne by

weeping mourners, his body was brought back to rest on the prairies he loved so well. In the very moment of supreme victory he had been stricken down by the hand of an assassin.

But consider what this plain man of the plain people had achieved in the four years that had intervened between that departure and that return! Mighty armies had sprung into being at his bidding—like magic, great navies had risen from the sea. Battles that in their fierceness and persistency staggered the military students of the world had been fought and won under the leaders selected by his supreme command, fought and won oftentimes under his specific advice and instructions. The Union had been preserved; our country, saved, was triumphant over internal discord and foreign jealousy; the Stars and Stripes honored and respected abroad as never before, had proven their right to float among the proudest standards of the world; and, greatest of all the achievements of that wonderful four years, the United States of America had had a new birth of freedom; the foul stain of slavery had been removed from it, and with that removal the knell of chattel bondage in all the civilized world had sounded. The plain man of the plain people had become the Emancipator of a race!

This work had been done, this responsibility borne, these ends attained by him in the face of almost incredible difficulties and amid multiplied discouragements, carping criticisms, open and concealed hostilities, rivalries and jealousies!

But with the bullet of the assassin came a change! Criticism ceased. Hostility died. Jealousy hid itself away. On the glad sounds of victory in the land there came first a hush and then succeeded a wail of grief. All civilized mankind seemed stricken with the same sorrow and every tongue joined in eulogy of the great dead.

From the days that he was struck down, his fame, his praise in the gates, has never ebbed. It rises higher with each succeeding year. Grand and lovable—the best of men we deem him. His memory is enshrined in our hearts, and we are handing it down to our children with pride that we of Illinois can claim in him a peculiar kinship and comradeship.

"All the world can see his worth," declares a recent writer, "but only we who know the taste of the climate, the smell of the prairie, the tone of fresh and democratic life, can quite appreciate his flavor."

But there is something more wonderful and more significant than the triumph of the man and statesman, Abraham Lincoln, over all the manifold difficulties of the situation in which he was placed. His success was not the mere success of a citizen called to a position of stress and danger in troublous times; it was the success of democracy put to its final and completest test. It was the trial of democracy in the fire of disaster.

No greater task had ever fallen to the lot of statesman or warrior than fell into the hands of this heir of poverty and insignificance, this child of the forest and the prairie, this simple, rustic, modest gentleman, this plain man of our plain people! We had had great leaders before—a Washington, the scion of an English country family; a Jefferson, a colonial aristocrat, proud of his lineage; a Franklin, of typical English yeoman stock; but never, until Lincoln, a true son of the people.

A democracy breeds, as does every form of government and of social organization, many an unlovely character, and, as in every other form of society, they sometimes come to the front and into the limelight. It is unpleasant, but no cause for despair, to find them there.

But when from the very undistinguished herd of men in a democracy we see, in time of supreme peril, a man step forth, unlearned save as he has taught himself, earnest, not brilliant, true, not dashing, without assumption of superiority or symptom of disdain for the humblest of his brothers—a plain, simple, honest, manly citizen—looking at all men alike with the level eyes of intelligence and modest self reliance—and see that man become the leader of the people to great heights of sacrifice, endeavor and accomplishment, and through it all remain the unpretending, plain, unassuming citizen still, allied to the masses intimately and warmly, rich in saving common sense, rugged honesty and patient perseverance—drawing gradually the hearts of all the plain people to him with sympathetic feeling, because he is of them, because he understands them, because he appreciates and esteems them, and always remains within sight and touch of them, then we know that democracy has triumphed; that a government of the people, for the people, and by the people need never perish from the earth!

Such a man was Lincoln; such the crisis he met; such the way he met it. He triumphed and with him, in the greatest test of modern civilization, triumphed the democratic spirit and experiment.

Fitting, therefore, is it that tonight, alike in the great cities and in the lonely hamlets of America, from Sandy Hook to the Golden Gate, from the headwaters of the Mississippi to the Everglades of Florida; alike in those sections of the country that supported Abraham Lincoln in his great task, and in those which "with malice toward none, with charity for all, but with firmness in the right as God" gave him "to see the right," he was obliged to confront in arms,—the plain people of our great democracy are celebrating in varied ways, but all in the same spirit, the centennial anniversary of his birth. For it is in no mere spirit of hero worship that it is done, in no idolatry of an idealized hero—a heaven born genius sent to be "A Savior of Society." It is in no such

frame of mind that arches and statues have been reared, that schools and colleges and churches have gathered their members to listen to the story of his life, that armies and navies are parading in his honor.

This universal memorial has a higher source. It is the tribute of affection and reverence to the memory and fame of one who, in his person, proved the inherent strength and enduring power of a free democracy, and furnished inspiration and faith for its triumphant future march.

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### A NEW "ALICE ADVENTURE."

Ben Gardner in the London Labor Leader of January 1st.

"I wonder what latitude or longitude I've got to."  
—"Alice's Adventures in Wonderland."

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"What are you doing here?" shouted the landcrab hoarsely. "I'll have you locked up. I've cautioned you several times, but it doesn't seem to be any use. Didn't you see the notice, 'Trespassers will be prosecuted'?"

"No, I didn't," said Alice, sharply. She was quite used to talking to animals now, and she didn't like to be shouted at.

"Oh! you didn't!" said the landcrab, taking a pencil from the notebook he had produced from one of his many breeches pockets. "We'll see about you. Give me your name and address." He said this in a most bullying tone, and Alice, who did not like his ways at all, said, "I think you might say please."

"I don't say please," he answered; "I send a bailiff."

"Tell him to call next week," cried the poet, who came bounding over the grass, with his long hair flying in the breeze.

"He wants my name," said Alice.

"Don't you give it him, my dear. He grabs everything he can. Fancy calling a crab Alice! Besides, what will you do for a name?"

"Why don't you get your hair cut, and grab things, too, like a reasonable being?" growled the landcrab. "Look at my friend, Profit Squeezer. He started with nothing; since then he has missed nothing. The business he has built up is a monument to industry and energy."

"Add happiness," said the poet; "a monument over the tomb of a great part of the industry, energy, and happiness of his workers. I've written a poem about him."

Taking a piece of paper from his pocket, he read from it as follows:

"Work! work! work! his flavor never lags,  
And what does he taste of?  
Grim casual, toil,  
And shoddy, and British flags;  
Adulteration and dust,

Sweating and oiled machine,  
Overcrowded rooms and full early tombs  
And 'excellent' margarine."

"That sounds like 'The Song of the Shirt,'" said Alice; "but haven't you got it all wrong?"

"No," said the poet; "not all wrong. There's poverty, hunger, and dirt in it."

"It's slanderous," cried the landcrab, "and it's libellous, too, because you've got it written down. You must come with me. You, little girl, are the principal witness. We're going to tell Mr. Profit Squeezer what this scoundrel has said about him. In the name of the law!"

Alice and the poet followed him quietly and obediently.

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They stopped before a great black house beside a dirty river. There was painted up on the front, in big letters, "Profit Squeezer and Co., Unlimited."

"Come into the office, both of you," commanded the landcrab.

They went up a flight of stairs, and he knocked at a door marked "Private." There was no reply to his knocking. He then went to another door and ascertained, so he said, that Mr. Profit Squeezer was out, and that the firm's annual tea to their workers was taking place.

"Everybody is invited," he said, addressing Alice. "We'll go. I want you to see my friend and learn he is not what this young man most wickedly represents him to be."

The tea-meeting was well attended; but they were too late for tea. Alice was disappointed, for she felt hungry. Speeches were being made when they got in. Mr. Profit Squeezer, who was in the chair, was at once pointed out by the landcrab. He was stout and pompous. He wore a suit of clothes with pictures of steam engines and electric motors woven into the pattern. He also wore most benevolent-looking side whiskers, and he smiled continually. He was speaking when they entered, and all they heard of his speech was this:

"I will give our employes my idea of what a successful worker should be. He must work hard, he must be ready to adapt himself to any position, to meet any call made upon him—and this, be it understood, includes her. I have never forgotten a story which my late respected father, the founder of our great firm, used to tell.

"He had a man in his employment in the early days whose adaptability was remarkable. You are all acquainted with our automatic machinery for turning up hoopsticks from worn-out wooden legs. That machinery has lightened the toil of thousands. (Cheers on the platform.)

"These hoopsticks, ladies and gentlemen, at one time had to be made laboriously and slowly by hand. Then they had to be made quicker by hand—competition demanded it. Then they had to be made more quickly. Then they had to be