

Lincoln

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A DISCOURSE

ON THE

DEATH OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

DELIVERED IN

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ST. MARK'S METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,

AND REPEATED (BY REQUEST) AT THE

LAFAYETTE ST. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

Buffalo, April 23, 1865.

BY REV. J. B. WENTWORTH, D. D.

Of the Genesee Conference.

BUFFALO:
PRINTING HOUSE OF MATTHEWS & WARREN,
Office of the Buffalo Commercial Advertiser.

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DISCOURSE.

TEXT.—*There is a prince and a great man fallen.*—2 SAM. 3: 38.

As a church and congregation we dedicate this morning's services to a commemoration of the Life and Death of Abraham Lincoln, late President of this Republic, who, on the 15th day of this present month, finished a glorious career on earth to enter, as we trust, upon a still more glorious one in heaven.

When bereaved affection has so far recovered from the stupefying shock occasioned by the death of its beloved object, as to find vent in tears and words, it naturally gives expression to itself in strains of solemn eulogy. The memory of the dear departed becomes sacred in the estimation of surviving friends; the whole past life of the deceased becomes elevated, purified and ennobled, and no language seems appropriate which is not employed in depicting his virtues. That "nothing but good should be spoken of the dead," is a maxim derived from and sanctioned by the tenderest and holiest instincts of the human heart.

And were this not prompted by the feelings we have been wont to cherish towards the subject of this funeral discourse, we would yet be practically compelled to adopt and act upon it in what we have to say of his character and career. For, could we speak of our late Chief Magistrate in the exercise of calm, cool,

critical judgments, uninfluenced by our personal grief, and unswayed by the general sorrow, we should be unable to use any other language than that of eulogy,—we could say nothing of him but good: for his character was compounded of virtues, and his life singularly free from blemishes.

But who can approach and discourse upon this theme, in this sad hour, with calmness and collectedness of mind, and do exact and impartial justice to the nation's departed chief. I must confess this to be impossible to myself, at this time: nor do I now propose to attempt any such impossible task. Though a week and more has passed since the appalling news of his death reached us, we have not yet recovered from the stunning and stupifying blow that intelligence gave us. We have not yet been able to collect our thoughts, and reflect with composure upon this sad event. It came upon us so unexpectedly, that we can hardly as yet realize the fact, or appreciate the magnitude of our own and the nation's loss. We had scarcely anticipated even the possibility of Mr. Lincoln's death. It seemed to us that God would protect and preserve the life of him whom the people had chosen, in preference to all others, as our chief ruler in this period of national peril. As we felt confident that God is the friend of our nation, and will bring us safely through all our civil troubles, we believed that He would surely watch over and defend the man upon whom the hopes of the country were centered, and whose life seemed so essential to the well-being of the Republic. And we have not yet rallied from the shock of so sudden and unexpected a bereavement.

We are, moreover, appalled and horrified at the manner of his "taking off." Had he fallen by the hand of disease, and not by the hand of the assassin, we could sooner bring our minds to think with calmness upon the sad event, and more dispassionately consider the probable consequences which will flow here-

from. Horror, indignation, and an apprehensive fear of similar calamities in the immediate future, mingle with our sorrows, fill our minds with perturbations, and add to the perplexity and confusion of our thoughts.

But, were all these exciting and appalling surroundings of the President's death removed, and we permitted with ordinary composure of feeling to approach this subject, we could not, even then, do anything like justice to the character and services of Mr. Lincoln, nor appreciate the nature and extent of the national bereavement. The deplorable event is too recent to admit of this. Some Bancroft or Macauley, who shall rise up in the coming age, will be alone competent to this great undertaking. Influenced as we must necessarily be by our prejudices, living as we do in the midst of the scenes in which the late President took so distinguished a part, and the effects of the policy and measures which he introduced not having yet fully appeared, how are we prepared to render adequate praise to the memory of the man who, during the terrible four years last past, has stood at the helm of state? More than one generation must pass away before any just computation can be made of the debt of gratitude the nation owes to Abraham Lincoln. The far-off future can alone furnish the data upon which to base such a computation.

But even now our grief requires appropriate expression. We must gratify the demands of sorrowing affection and respect for the great departed, by an attempted rehearsal, however imperfect, of his virtues, and by paying our meed of praise to his memory for the blessings and benefits which we are now able to see that he, under God, was the means of bestowing upon our bleeding and distracted country.

Even this is a saddening and melancholy gratification. For, hereby, we are made still more conscious of the loss which in his death we and the nation have sustained: and our sense of

this is already overwhelming. As, therefore, we enter upon the performance of this melancholy duty, and undertake to meet the demands of the hour, we look to God, and implore his special assistance, support and guidance. Our hope and trust, O God, we would place more implicitly in Thee, as we behold the strongest human pillar of the government removed.

In the remarks I have on this occasion to offer, I shall not speak of Mr. Lincoln as he was or might have been independently of his official character and relations. Though it might be proper, and even instructive, to begin with his early life and trace up his history to the time when he was called by the People to occupy the Presidential chair, and note the influences brought to bear upon him and the formative processes through which he passed to fit him for that high seat of honor, neither present circumstances, nor the feelings of our hearts, make such biographical research necessary. We do not wish to consider him apart from the executive office which he filled and honored. It was only as President that he became fully known to the nation and beloved by the People. Prior to the commencement of his presidential career, there were many of our public men who filled a larger place in the popular vision. We learned to appreciate and admire him especially *as our Chief Magistrate*; and, as such, we now especially mourn his untimely end. Should we leave out of account the record of his official career, scarce any data would remain from which to make up an estimate of his personal qualities. To undertake to discriminate between Abraham Lincoln the man and Abraham Lincoln the President, while under present circumstances, would be an uncalled-for and useless task, would, at the best, be almost hopeless and impossible. The two are indissolubly blended, and are now wedded together forever by the martyr-death visited upon the man because he was President. Henceforth we shall never think or

speak of him but as the nation's murdered chief,—the Saviour and second Father of his country. He gave all there was of himself to the nation; and the nation has already accepted the entire gift, and will forever claim his whole being and nature as its own. He now, in the entirety of his character, lies enshrined in the nation's heart. The nation's matchless history during the last four years will evermore remain as his biography and epitaph; and the Republic saved, and the Union restored, shall, through all time, be his monument.

Though we may not separate Abraham Lincoln the man from Abraham Lincoln the President, yet we do lose sight of the man in the President. No man, in the whole list of his predecessors, brought to that office so much individuality of character, nor exercised its functions with so complete a maintenance of his individuality, as he. All his state papers, all his official utterances, the whole policy of his administration and the manner of its execution, bear the unmistakable stamp of his own original genius and unique character. His personal character shone forth in all that he said and did in the discharge of his executive duties; and he succeeded in more fully infusing himself into the national mind and consciousness, than any of the great men who preceded him in the chair of State. The people never enjoyed so clear a view of the personal character of any of our Presidents, as of his. He stood before the eyes of the nation in the full length of his towering form, and every one was permitted to look at him as he was. He did not wrap himself in his official robes to conceal himself from the public scrutiny, nor restrain his personal freedom of action or of speech by allowing the red-tape of precedent and routine to be wound around him. If it shall be alleged that his administration was without consistency and unity, from lack of any preconceived political theory upon which it was moulded, it must be acknowledged that it finds a more glorious unity, a

grander consistency in his own majestic personality which permeates through it and binds all its parts in one.

Nor did the strongly marked and determined individuality of his character at all disqualify him for the grave responsibilities of his high position. Rather did the idiosyncracies of his noble nature qualify him to meet and discharge those responsibilities all the more successfully. The choice of the people, which fell on him, seems to have been directed by the inspiration of God. If not born a President, he was at least trained up and disciplined and fitted for the pilotage of the Republic during the stormy period through which we have passed. God, we may believe, had raised him up and been preparing him for this very thing. His very peculiarities made him the more completely adapted to the work to which he was called. He was precisely the man for the crisis. His broad, many-sided and luxuriant nature completely filled the office, and made him equal to all its duties. The crisis found the man; and the man proved himself perfect master of the situation. He entered upon his duties as President, and continued to discharge them, as though in the fulfillment of a mission for which he had been all his life preparing.

Abraham Lincoln was a man of colossal proportions, mentally as well as physically. A truly great man; a man to enrich a century; a tall, commanding figure, around whom the historian may group the other personages of this era, in giving harmony and unity to his descriptions. The crisis is great; but he was as great as the crisis. Few men of his breadth and largeness of soul have appeared on the stage of the world. His was a nature so broad, so full, so many-sided, that we could all find in it some ground of contact, some point of attraction, by which we might attach ourselves to him and claim him as our own.

And this is evidenced by the peculiar grief, the sincere sorrow, with which all our hearts are affected in view of his death.

The public manifestation of grief is not elicited by his assassination; nor is it merely ceremonial and decorous—as being actuated by sentiments of propriety in paying respect to a departed President. The people do not put badges of mourning upon their persons, their residences, and their churches, as a mere matter of ceremony fitting and appropriate to the occasion. All loyal and right-minded citizens are moved with profound grief, with deep and heartfelt sorrow at his loss. Somehow we all felt that he was a brother and friend to us all. Unconsciously to ourselves, we felt a deep personal interest in him, and affection for him. His great soul had drawn us to him; and now we mourn for him as though a Father or a Brother had been taken away from us. Only great and noble natures have the power to awaken this general personal interest and attachment in the minds of all good men.—But it is their prerogative. And herein do we find the grand proof and touchstone of genuine greatness. Little natures, stunted souls, do not gain a strong hold even upon the hearts of their associates and familiars. A community will part with some of its members, whom accident has lifted up and made conspicuous, with but little regret or sense of loss. A nation sometimes sees with indifference the passing away of many of its public men and chief rulers, and deems itself to have paid due respect to their memory by cold words of formal eulogy pronounced over their graves, in which the heart pays no tribute. But when a great man,—one whom God has made great, and has commissioned to bless the world by his presence and labors among men,—is stricken down by death, the good and true of all lands in spirit attend his funeral as mourners, and weep over his grave as that of a brother. For, truly great men belong to the race: they live and labor for humanity, and the whole world claims them as its own. And so it is with Abraham Lincoln. Not only we,—but the good and virtuous of all nations, will

feel, as the tidings of his sad end shall reach them, that they have lost in him a brother and a friend; and, with us, they will see to it that the memory of his name and nobleness "shall grow green with years, and blossom in the flight of ages."

He sprang from lowly parentage,—the source whence the world's great men have usually traced their origin. It requires a deep, strong soil to sustain and nourish large growths,—the rich alluvium of the valley. The tallest and most stately trees strike their roots deepest down into the subsoil. For a human soul to be nursed and nurtured into greatness, it must draw its nourishment from the breast of our common humanity. One must be brought in contact with the common people, and from his youth up feel the pulsations of the great popular heart, in order to the education of those broad sympathies and love of all things human which characterize all great and noble natures. They who are nurtured in aristocratic circles, are usually but hot-house productions. Though beautiful, they are not massive; though straight and supple, they are not strong and majestic. Mr. Lincoln was happily not nurtured amid such surroundings. His origin was lowly; and his massive nature found free expansion and development as he grew up among the common people,—sharing in their toils, mingling in their gatherings, sympathizing with them in their interests and convictions, and loving them for their honest and homely virtues. Thus coming up from the humblest social condition, and, in his upward course, making his way successively through each stratum into which society is divided until he reached the summit of human power and glory,—not forgetting in his upward career anything that he had learned, nor relaxing his hold upon, or affection for, any class of society with which he had previously been connected, he at length became the man of the whole people: for he had belonged to each class; and while he thus understood the views and feelings of

each, he loved them all. We have had Presidents before who worked their way up from humble life through all grades of social distinction to the highest; but not one of them had that breadth and compass of large heartedness which enabled him to take into his sympathies and enter into the views and feelings of each and every class of American society with which he had thus been successively brought into practical contact and connection, to the extent that was true of Mr. Lincoln. And hence did he draw to himself, and secure the hearty esteem and affection of the masses of the loyal people of every grade, occupation, and profession. And the instincts of the masses were truer and more sagacious, in this instance, than the sharpened intellects of politicians. The masses trusted him, while the politicians shook their heads ominously, and talked of his inexperience and incompetency. But never, in all history, have the masses given their adhesion to, and confided in, a weak man. When left to themselves, they instinctively and unconsciously, but infallibly, rally around and repose their faith in those who are strong in native endowments, and equal to the given emergency.

And when, in 1860, the elements of secession and discord were gathering and crystalizing into organized form, and the great crisis of our history had well nigh arrived, as if they had premonitions of the coming storm and whirlwind, with a sagacity all the more infallible for being instinctive, they turned away from the crowd of politicians and statesmen who had for long years engaged the eye and ear of the public, and selected Abraham Lincoln as the nation's chief. The results have justified the choice, and furnished another illustration of the wisdom of popular elections as a means of designating men for high public stations.

And when about to take the reins of power which the people had elected him to hold, all inexperienced as he was, and though

the clouds of secession fury were already rolling up and covering our political heavens, he shows no trepidation, no fear. Calmly he steps forth from his quiet Western home, makes the modest and touching request of his neighbors and townsmen who gather about him to bid him good-by and God-speed, to remember him in their prayers and implore for him divine help to guide the nation safely through the perils which he clearly saw impending, and with an unflinching step and unblanched countenance proceeds to the national capitol and assumes the dread responsibilities of his office. Never before did a human being take upon him such a load of trying and complicated duties, the settlement of such momentous questions, the bearing such heavy burdens and cares of state.—An ordinary man would have been overwhelmed and crushed at the outset. But so far from being crushed or appalled, he is cheerful, hopeful and buoyant in spirit, and bears himself as one who is conscious of his strength for the work before him, and of his ability to succeed. He speaks words of conciliation and kindness to the malcontents, and seeks to dissuade them from their desperate undertaking, and with dispassionate calmness, such as no one but a man of the most marvellous personal power and greatness could, in such an hour, have displayed, declares to them and the whole country, that he shall keep his oath of office,—support the constitution and enforce the laws, and repossess and hold all forts, arsenals and public property belonging to the Federal Government which the insurgents had then seized. The Southern traitors did not then appreciate, as they have since, the nature of that inflexible resolve so simply uttered and in so unimpassioned a style. They were not the least shaken in their diabolical purpose, and the war began. You know the dreadful story of the last four years of blood and carnage. You can call to mind the dark days through which we have passed; those seasons of awful peril during this rebellion when

it seemed that the ship of state was well nigh foundered, and about to be engulfed by the yawning waves. There is no need that I should recount and describe them: they will never be forgotten by you. And do we not remember, also, when, at those times, we turned our anxious eyes to the man at the helm, how calm and unmoved he always stood;—with no cloud upon his brow, no pallor on his cheek? He seemed not to regard the angry waters which others feared would prove our ruin: his longer sight and clearer vision enabled him to descry in the distance the cheerful sunlight and a quiet sea. In all the trying exigencies through which we have passed, he was never overwhelmed, never confused; never did he once yield to the weakness of despair. Cool and collected in every emergency, he in no instance indulged in any angry or ill-judged utterance; never counseled any unwise or violent measure; never adopted any rash or hasty expedient. Many times and oft, during this war, have our great men and state counsellors been confounded and almost given up all for lost. But he never faltered: at such times, like another Atlas, he took the Republic upon his own broad shoulders, and carried it safely through.

Like others of that select class of men of the highest order of greatness, to which Mr. Lincoln belonged, he was endowed with a most marvellous power of Faith. Many of the world's heroes believed in Fate, and were strengthened and sustained by the conviction that Fate had marked out for them the achievement of a glorious destiny. But Mr. Lincoln's faith was in God and his country. And here was the great secret of his strength, the hiding of his power. Here we find the explanation of his calmness in the midst of dangers before which others quailed. Here the reason of the unimpassioned style of his messages and proclamations, with which we were so often perplexed, and sometimes dissatisfied. He seems to have been agitated by no doubts

himself, and could hardly sympathize with those whose fears induced despair of the Republic. In all history there is not another such example of sublime faith and trust. He confided more fully in the immutable principles which underlie our government than any of our statesmen. He rested more firmly than any other man among us upon divine providence and promise. He showed no emotion; for he felt no fear. He made no threats, nor sought to awaken any temporary feelings of hope and joy; for he believed that God had taken the work in hand, and would bring all things out right in the end.

And his Wisdom was equal to his Faith. As we look back now over his administration, we can hardly see how any thing could be changed for the better. And the wisdom of his administration is displayed not so much in a settled and inflexible policy which he himself had reasoned out and was resolved to maintain for the sake of consistency, but in that he watched with wonderful sagacity the progress of events, and allowed emergencies as they arose to dictate his policy and measures. The wisdom of his statesmanship consists in his dutiful waiting upon Providence. Some of us complained that he was too fast, some that he was too slow. But the results show that he never hurried, and never loitered. He waited always for the right time and occasion; and his almost faultless practical sagacity enabled him to detect them with the utmost precision. Thus waiting constantly upon Providence, his own course was almost as unerring as that of Providence itself. The measures he proposed appeared absolutely demanded by the circumstances, and when adopted they became fixed and established beyond all controversy. In what he did, he seemed to have been the executor of Divine purposes; and thus the great acts of his administration have already passed into the permanent policy of the government, and will stand forever. Had he been more of an experi-

enced statesman, with his mind pre-occupied with theories and precedents, he would probably have depended less upon his practical sagacity,—would have been a less faithful and obedient servant of Providence; and might have managed our affairs with far less skill and success. But, as it was, he had no darling theories with which to make experiments,—no pet plans to make doubtful trial of. His one great, earnest purpose was to save the nation and restore the Union, and, for the accomplishment of this, he humbly invoked the assistance of Almighty God, and then, in a spirit of childlike obedience and trust, he went as fast and as far as God opened the way. A less than a transcendently great man would not have done thus. He would have been eager to bring forward his own personal specifics to cure the ills of the State; would have been for trying some remedy which *he himself* had devised; would have sat down at the beginning and marked out some neat and beautiful and consistent theory, according to which the rebellion must be put down and peace restored. But our departed President was too true a man to try any such quackery; too great a man to permit himself to be hampered by small and fine-spun theories; too earnest and good a man to dare trust himself, in such times of danger and trial, to any other measures than such as the providence of God might suggest.

Some have thought, or pretended to think, that Mr. Lincoln was wanting in fixedness of purpose; that he manifested hesitation and vacillation; but such persons, it is sure, do not understand the man, nor the principles by which he was governed: nor have they watched and carefully studied the course of events which mark his administration. It is true, he was ready to listen to advice from every quarter; was always open to conviction; was never so strongly in favor of any one plan as to prevent his careful examination of any other that might be presented.

But when he came to a conclusion, after he became satisfied of the expediency or necessity of a measure, his adhesion to it was invincible,—his determination to carry it into effect was as fixed and immovable as the decrees of Fate. He was as great in his volitive power as in his wisdom and his faith. What amount of pressure was brought to bear upon him to dissuade him from issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, to dissuade him from enlisting and organizing Negro troops, and to persuade him to offer some terms of compromise and conciliation to the traitor chiefs. But he stood as firm as the everlasting hills against it all. Mr. Lincoln's volitive power was of the massive and ponderous order. His will did not act quickly,—did not exhibit itself in the form of forceful and fiery energy and impetuous resolve, as is the case with men of smaller calibre; but, in its action, it took on the form of steadiness, persistence and firmness. It was presided over by prudence, and attended by caution; and, therefore, while it did not burst forth in flashes of fiery energy, it put on a far nobler and grander manifestation in the calm and steady and irresistible force with which it moved on to the accomplishment of its purposes.

Honesty was a trait in his character which everybody beheld and admired. His enemies never called it in question. Nor was his honesty of that ordinary type which the common acceptation of the word *honesty* is taken to represent. It was a grand and rugged honesty, befitting his great and manly soul. It diffused itself through his whole nature, and impressed itself upon the action of all his mental faculties. It imparted that noble simplicity of character for which he was so justly distinguished. He used no artifice, by which to appear better or greater than he was: he gave full license to all to look into his heart, and to read his motives and his principles. His honesty gave frankness to his manners. He sought to impose on no one by pompous

airs, and artificial loftiness of bearing. It imparted directness, clearness and precision to his thoughts, caused him to despise all sophistry, and to go directly to the heart of every subject or question he was called to examine. It shone forth in his style of speech and writing,—inducing him always to say just what he meant, in the use of the fewest possible words, and those the most simple and intelligible. Mr. Lincoln never deceived anybody,—save those who prated of his incapacity and prophesied failure to his administration. He was honest with himself, honest towards the people, and even towards his enemies and the enemies of the country. He dared be honest even in diplomacy, where concealment and deception are customary, and are deemed indispensable to success. He kept faith with all the world, and fulfilled all his promises—even to the rebels. In the midst of speculation, fraud, and knavery, which great civil commotions always stimulate to the highest pitch, he stood forth to relieve the scene,—an example of rugged, incorruptible honesty, inviting the public confidence and challenging the faith of the people.

And his heart was as *tender* as it was incorruptible. His great soul was full of all charitable emotions, of all loving and kindly affections. He loved everything human. His charity embraced all mankind. His genial benevolence was always bubbling up and running over in kindly words and acts and cheerful humor. It thus became contagious, and diffused its benign influence through the social atmosphere of Washington, where secession hate and spleen have had unwonted license of expression; and where, as being the capital of the nation, the fierce and angry passions which war excites have seethed and boiled with intensest fury. We may suppose it to be attributable, in good part, to the influence of the late President's great generosity of feeling, that the Northern temper, notwithstanding the weighty and multiplied provocations, has not heretofore burst the bounds of

self-control, and blazed forth in vengeful and consuming wrath against the Southern people and all the aiders and abettors of the vile Southern Treason. He set us an example of great good-nature which, it may be, we have been carrying to the extreme of weakness. It may be that his good-nature was the weak side of his own character.—If so, it was a virtuous weakness, and does not diminish at all our love and respect for him. Certain it is, that his kindliness of disposition rendered him incapable of any vindictive feelings,—any hatred towards a rival, or of revenge towards an enemy. After the late Presidential election, when called on by citizens who came to congratulate him upon his grand popular triumph, he gave utterance to feelings which, in almost any other man, would have been regarded as ridiculous pretence, when he said that he could rejoice over no man's defeat, and was sorry that his election should be the occasion of pain and disappointment to any.—But no one doubted the truth of this declaration as made by him. Whoever came to him with a complaint of injustice, or a plea for mercy, was sure to receive an attentive and interested hearing, and went away with the conviction that his case would be candidly considered, and his request would be granted—if it were at all consistent or feasible.

But all these great and amiable qualities of Mr. Lincoln did not secure him against vituperation and malignant abuse,—did not save him from the dastardly assault of the rebel assassin. Almost from the beginning of the contest, have the leading traitors and journals of the South delighted in maligning his character and traducing his name. They have spoken of this mildest and gentlest of men as an usurper and tyrant,—cruel, blood-thirsty, and implacable; a monster in human shape,—an ogre revelling in scenes of blood and fattening upon human gore. And thus have they sought to excite the disgust and hate of the

Southern people against him personally. And in this labor of love, they have been wonderfully aided by a class of journalists and politicians at the North, well and truly known as *copper-heads*. Do we not remember how these villians have continually charged him with violating the constitution, called him despot, and accused him of having designs upon the liberties of the people? Some of them, even in our midst, have been wont to paint his personal character in the darkest and most loathsome colors, — describing him as an inhuman monster, who called for ribald songs to be sung among the dead and wounded on the battle-field of Antietam, and held an Irish wake over the glorious dead who fell at the battle of Gettysburg. That this base and causeless malignity manifested towards him by Northern men, encouraged and intensified Southern hatred of his person and character, can not for a moment be doubted. And who shall say that copperheads, North, are not as responsible for his murder, as rebels, South? Would not the Southern traitors be naturally led to suppose, that the death of a President so despotic, and so intensely hated by men in the loyal States, was “a consummation devoutly to be wished,” and would be hailed with joy, by them? The blood of our departed President does not rest on the souls of Southern traitors alone.

That his murder was inspired by political animosity, and is justly chargeable upon those who inaugurated the rebellion and have given it aid and comfort, is evident enough. That a political motive led to this deed of horror, is clearly made known by the words of the assassin, *sic semper tyrannis*, as he leaped forth before the astonished assembly at the theatre with the theatrical flourish of his dagger. And there is proof conclusive that the plot included the assassination of all the heads of the government and the incomparable chief of our army. And surely no motive of private and personal revenge could adequately account

for so extensive a scheme of murder. We are, then, shut up to the conclusion that rebel malignity inspired the deed. And this conclusion is strengthened by many other facts and proofs. It was proposed to assassinate Mr. Lincoln immediately before his first inauguration, while on his way to the capital; and the skill and precaution of Gen. Scott alone prevented. Southern organs of treason have threatened and recommended the assassination of the President and his chief advisers, time and again, since the war began; and rewards have been offered by them to those who would carry it into execution. Since Richmond was captured, papers have been discovered belonging to the archives of the rebel government containing the organization of a Secret Service Bureau, and a new and secret method of carrying on the war: and we may properly regard the murder of the President and the attempted murder of the chief men of the State, together with the raids upon the towns and villages of our Northern frontier and the plots that have been discovered for burning our principal cities, as the outcropping and development of this New Method of rebel warfare. We trace, then, this horrible crime back to the traitor leaders and their coadjutors, and hold them responsible for it. Doubtless, as soon as it may conveniently be done, those Northern journalists who used to vie with their "Southern brethren" in abusing and aspersing Mr. Lincoln when living, will hasten to the rescue of their Confederate brothers, and seek to shield them from the storm of righteous indignation now gathering from every point of the compass, by endeavoring to show that this crime was committed by irresponsible parties who had no connection with, or encouragement from, the traitor chiefs.—In consistency, they are bound to do their Southern confreres this favor. We shall look for it, and shall know precisely what construction to put upon it.

Dark as is this crime, and disastrous as it now seems to us,

God is able to turn it to good account and cause such consequences to flow from it as shall contribute to the advantage of the national cause. Though we may esteem the death of our beloved Chief Magistrate, who managed our affairs with such consummate skill during the past period of greatest peril, a great calamity, an irreparable loss, in the Providence of God it may be made to bring upon us untold and unlooked for blessings. Even now, with all our blindness and short-sightedness, we can see and anticipate certain beneficial results, to lighten our burden of grief and reconcile us to the ways and dealings of Providence.

In this fiendish murder, is revealed to all eyes the nature of that spirit which is the animus of the Rebellion,—that dark, fell spirit of hate, revenge, cruelty and savagery, which gave rise to secession and has actuated those engaged in it. We now understand the temper, principles and motives of the men who have risen up and made war upon the government, better than ever before. The thin covering of chivalric pretension is now entirely removed from the Southern slaveholders' character, and we get a fair, full view of the brutality and barbarism which is engendered by the ownership and traffic in the bodies and souls of men. It is true, we had enough to open our eyes to all this before: but we were slow to learn. The savagery of Southern slaveholding society had displayed itself for long years, in the maltreatment and murder of Northern citizens traveling in the slave States; in brutal assaults upon Northern statesmen in Congressional Halls; and in the hunting and hanging of clergymen who belonged to churches that did not endorse the divinity of slavery. What, indeed, could we look for but savagery in an aristocracy founded upon man-ownership,—that grew rich by the exposure and sale of its own offspring in the market, and had full license to gratify its vilest passions on defenceless women?

Look, too, at instances of Southern fiendishness and cruelty to be found in the history of this war: the mutilation of our dead; the systematic and cold-blooded murder of our soldiers taken prisoners, by confinement in loathsome prisons, by slow starvation and their wanton exposure to heat and cold; and the wholesale massacre of our Negro troops taken in arms! Surely, we have had enough all along to give us an insight into Southern slaveholding character, and have received insult and injury enough from it heretofore to “stir a fever in the blood of age.” But it took this crowning act of infamy fully to open our eyes, and enable us thoroughly to understand the men with whom we have to deal.—And this is a great thing gained. We shall now know precisely what measures to adopt, and what terms of “reconciliation” and “compromise” to propose in the pending settlement of the controversy.

And this opening of our eyes must tend to a more complete union of our hearts in opposing treason and sustaining the government. As we abominate murder; as we hate the cruelty and brutal passions which characterize savage life, we must all rally now more closely around the standard of the Republic, which, in this contest, represents not only civil liberty, but Christian culture and civilization. From this time forth to the close of the war, all Christian, moral, upright, decent men will constitute one party,—the party of the government and the Union. No divisions will longer exist among *the People*. The murder of the President will bring all patriotic citizens upon the same platform,—the platform of *his* principles and policy. It would have been better had we all been united from the first, and together given our hearty support to the government and the war. But I am ready to concede that many honest and well-meaning citizens have hitherto been misled by the influence of party names, the prestige of partizan leaders, and the persistent misrepresenta-

tions and falsehoods of party journals. It is a pity that their disenthralment and conversion should have been so long deferred, and should now be effected by so deplorable a cause; but we will receive them with open arms; and henceforth, to the conclusion of the war, *the people* of the loyal States will be one. But there is a certain class of politicians among us whom we hope the loyal citizens of the country will never take into fellowship, whatever may be their professions of faith or pretended reformation of life. Their views and feelings will remain unchanged, however they may now for a time veer their course to adjust themselves to the changed condition of the public mind. It is impossible for intelligent and influential men, who have from the beginning of our troubles taken sides with the enemies of the Republic,—villified the administration; cried out against coercion; opposed volunteering and drafting; demanded compromise and virtual surrender to the rebels in arms; described in glowing terms the prowess, resources and military strength of the Confederacy, and expatiated upon the weakness, bankruptcy and demoralization of the government; magnified rebel victories, and mimified Union triumphs; and in every way possible—except by explicit declaration—have manifested their sympathy for the traitors and their wish that they might succeed;—it is impossible, I say, for such men ever to become genuine patriots and entitled to the confidence and countenance of honest, loyal citizens. They may take up the strains of eulogy and unite with the rest of us in praising the virtues of the departed Patriot and Leader, whom they have hitherto been constantly employed in abusing: this will cost them nothing; and, besides, by now praising the dead President, they will gain a stand-point from whence hereafter they can assail the living one to greater advantage. In deference to the general sorrow, they also may profess to deplore his death and execrate the villainy of his “taking off;” but in

their secret heart they rejoice; and when time shall have reduced the keenness and poignancy of the public grief, so that they shall think it safe to disclose their feelings, they will express their satisfaction by hint and inuendo, and the citation of historic instances as parallels in which retribution has been visited, in a similar manner, upon wicked and oppressive rulers. But as the Rebel Commissioner of exchange remarked, when the assassination of the President was announced to him, "That is the hardest blow the Confederacy has yet had," so these Northern traitors will find that it is the hardest blow they have yet received. It deprives them of influence over any respectable portion of the American people, and will prevent them hereafter from plying their villainous occupation with any degree of success.

Another result to be desired and hoped for from this murder of the President, is an awakening and stimulation of the moral sense, the conscience, the sense of righteousness, of the nation. The leading feature of this shocking transaction, is its extreme *wickedness*. It strikes every one as an *awful and unmitigated crime*. It appeals directly to the moral sensibilities of the popular heart, and, like an electric shock, quickens them into activity and causes them to feel how clearly just and right it is that *punishment* should be meted out to the perpetrators of it. And, with our moral feelings thus quickened into activity, as we trace back this crime to its inspiring cause, we and the whole people are better prepared to realize the transcendent criminality of the rebellion, the diabolical wickedness of the traitors who urged and have carried it on, and the full measure of punishment which they deserve.

The people of this nation needed some such quickening of their moral instincts and sensibilities. From the beginning of the Rebellion, we had too lightly regarded, too much overlooked, the criminality of its authors and abettors. We had too exclu-

sively contemplated the war upon the government in its political aspects, and had too generally lost sight of its moral character and bearings. The war, as begun by the slaveholders, had assumed in our thoughts the appearance of a contest for great ideas and principles, rather than a causeless and wicked insurrection, a conspiracy of abandoned and desperate men, actuated by devilish ambition, to overthrow the government and seat themselves in places of power. Treason we had regarded too much as a mere difference of political opinion, and not enough as an enormous crime against society. And since our recent great victories, which indicate a virtual end of the war and the speedy incoming of settlement and pacification, justice and judgment seemed still further to be lost sight of by the people. Exhilarated by the splendid triumphs of our arms, and overjoyed with the prospects of a wished-for peace, we were ready to shake hands with the world all around; almost disposed to forgive the vile and perjured and bloodstained traitors who had brought all our calamities upon us, and take them to our loving embrace as erring prodigals and misguided brethren. And this reckless generosity, this criminal magnanimity, was being stimulated and applauded by many influential loyal men who were connected with the press and thus enjoyed superior facilities for reaching the public ear and affecting popular opinion. Many such men were advocating an indiscriminate forgiveness of the Rebels, high and low. We can hardly conceive how any truly loyal men could be betrayed into tendering such advice and counsel as this, however much their kindly feelings might have been excited by the prospects of immediate peace. That those among us who have always sympathized with the traitors, have argued for them and defended them from the ~~onset~~, should now plead for mercy to be shown them, is natural and what we might expect. In their estimation, the Southern Treason is no crime, and therefore

should not be punished. They have always claimed that the slaveholders were in the right; and they can now consistently claim for them exemption from the penalties of the law. But that any earnest, sincere patriot could plead for mercy to be shown them, is a marvel past our comprehension.

Political society is organized on the idea of Justice, not Mercy. It is the grand function of civil government to execute the immutable principles of moral righteousness among men.— God has ordained it for this end, and empowered it with this prerogative. It is intended by Him to be “a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well.” When the sovereign power of a state is not directed by justice, it ceases to exercise the proper functions of government;—it is no longer a legitimate power, and does not afford real protection to society. That ruler “bears the sword in vain” who interposes his prerogative to screen the guilty. Mercy is well, in its place; but, in the realm of Law, mercy must be held in abeyance, and Justice must bear sway. God himself does not show mercy to hardened and unrepenting criminals: and shall we be required to be more merciful than He? “Justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne.” And, in the administration of his government among the children of men, He overlooks not the claims of Justice any more than of mercy. In the redemptive scheme He devised for fallen man, he required satisfaction to be made to the demands of the violated law; and, even with the gift of his Son, he only pardons on the condition of repentance and works meet for repentance. He has never set us an example of indiscriminate forgiveness. To those who rebelled in heaven, and sought to overthrow the foundations of his righteous government, he never granted any pardon at all, on any terms.—And the crime of the Southern leaders is similar, and its punishment ought to be alike inexorable. These traitors are guilty of the

highest crime known to human law. They undertook to destroy the life of the nation, to overthrow the government itself, in which the interests, the property and lives of us all are bound up. The Republic is the embodiment of the will, the intelligence, the heart and soul of the people; it is a colossal man, made up of and including in itself all the citizens of the country: and, by seeking to slay the Republic, the Southern traitors have struck at the liberty and life of every citizen. And their guilt is proportionate to the reach and comprehension of the intended murder. They who cry *mercy* for *them*, are, wittingly or otherwise, enemies to the state. To pardon their crime would be treason to civil justice; to remit their penalty, would be a gross outrage on public law; to let them go free, would be to give license to every species of disorder, and to unsettle the very foundations of political society. Expediency, no less than legal righteousness, demands their punishment. The People, as says President Johnson, need to be taught that Treason is a crime, the highest of crimes. It is necessary that these great villians should be executed according to law, in order to impress upon the public consciousness the idea that Justice is the basis of the state,—not mere popular opinion, or the platforms of parties,—and that none can lay their sacrilegious hands on the ark of our safety and liberty with impunity.

Shall they, who participate in the murder of a single individual, be punished without mercy, and these Southern leaders, who are responsible for the murder of every man who has fallen in battle on either side since the war began, be allowed to escape? Must the wretched Beall and the miserable Kennedy, who were commissioned by Jeff. Davis, and but executed his commands, be tried and hung, and Jeff. Davis himself have the sceptre of forgiveness held out to him in advance? Submit this question of clemency to the hosts of ghostly men who, in the

wreck of their manhood, have been recently returned to their friends after long months of confinement in Southern pens and dungeons, where they were being slowly and surely starved to death; submit it to the widows and orphans of our slain soldiers; submit it to the hunted, persecuted, destitute, and homeless Union refugees from the revolted States; and what would be the response? And shall the wrongs and outrages endured by these be forgotten? Shall the government refuse to redress their wrongs upon the guilty perpetrators, moved by a false philanthropy, a spurious sentiment of charity and mercy?

Some good people have professed a degree of sympathy for Gen. Lee, and expressed a hope that he at least might be exempted from punishment. Can they tell why? Has he not been as great a traitor as the worst of them? Was he not bound to the government by the most sacred obligations, — having been educated at the public expense, and honored and trusted by the government all his days? Was he not, at the outbreak of Rebellion, an officer in our army, and sworn to uphold the Constitution and laws of the country? And has he not been the chief support and stay of confederate Treason for more than two years past? Why, then, should he be excepted? Is it because he has displayed great skill and abilities as a military chieftain? — All the worse for him, and for the country he had sworn to defend. The greater his talents, the greater his guilt.

Some have thought Stevens to be a proper subject of executive pardon. For myself, I must say that my hatred of his treason is heightened by my contempt for his cowardice and hypocrisy. Though he disapproved of secession, he had not the courage to hold to his convictions and breast the tide of fire-eating phrensy. Against the dictates of his own judgment and conscience, he yielded to the clamors of the mob; and consented to give in his adhesion to the Confederacy

—bought up by the offer of the rebel Vice-presidency. A more despicable traitor than he is not to be found in the whole South. He ought to be hung for his meanness and perfidy—if for nothing else.

It is due to history, and to civilized society throughout the world, that we should, in dealing with this whole pack of guilty leaders, set an example of even-handed and impartial justice. It has usually been the case in all the past and under other governments, that the greatest villians have escaped, and that retribution has fallen upon the less conspicuous and hardly responsible offenders. Let our free and Christian Republic reverse this order, by visiting condign punishment upon the traitor chiefs, while generously extending forgiveness to the common people of the South who have been at once their dupes and victims.

And while insisting upon punishment being meted out to the guilty, let us not forget the leading copperheads of the North. These men, who, without any of the motives that were brought to bear upon the minds of Southern people, and impelled by sheer love of wickedness, have turned against their country in her peril and given all the support to the rebellion which their dastardly natures would permit, deserve to be driven from the land, which they disgrace by their presence, and whose institutions they are morally incapable of appreciating. If they are allowed to remain, the least exaction that can in justice be laid upon them, is, retraction of their treasonable and malignant utterances, humble confession before the people of their secret collusion with the authors of the great conspiracy, and silence and circumspection forever after.

Already are there evidences that the assassination of Mr. Lincoln has awakened the public mind to a juster appreciation of the great crime of rebellion which induced his assassination, and aroused the popular resolve to the determination to visit punish-

ment upon the traitors, both North and South. And if this, together with the other benefits to which we have adverted, shall follow as the providential result of the murder of our beloved President, then will he be happy in having been permitted to serve his country as much by his death as by his life.

While, therefore, we grieve for his loss, we sorrow not as those without hope. The Republic still lives; and, by the guiding hand of Providence, the calamity we deplore shall bring it more speedily into the enjoyment of permanent and righteous peace. Having deposited the honored ashes of our dead President in their last resting-place, — having shed our tears and said our requiem over his grave, with more steady resolve, with more inflexible purpose, with more reliant faith in God, will we return to engage in the work of reconstructing the Union, and to aid our brave and patriotic living President in carrying out his already expressed design to rid the country of Treason and Traitors.

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