

**EULOGY ON THE DEATH OF ABRAHAM
LINCOLN: DELIVERED BEFORE THE CITY
COUNCIL AND CITIZENS OF LOWELL, AT
HUNTINGTON HALL, APRIL 19TH, 1865; A
SERMON PREACHED IN
THE ARLINGTON-STREET CHURCH, BOSTON ON
SUNDAY, JULY 3, 1864**

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Eulogy on the Death of Abraham Lincoln: Delivered Before the City Council and Citizens of Lowell, at Huntington Hall, April 19th, 1865; A Sermon Preached in the Arlington-Street Church, Boston on Sunday, July 3, 1864 by George S. Boutwell & Ezra S. Gannett

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GEORGE S. BOUTWELL & EZRA S. GANNETT

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EULOGY

ON THE

Death of Abraham Lincoln,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

CITY COUNCIL AND CITIZENS OF LOWELL,

At Huntington Hall, April 19th, 1865,

BY HON. GEORGE S. BOUTWELL.

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1865.

E U L O G Y .

THE nation is bowed down to-day under the weight of a solemn and appalling sorrow, such as never before rested upon a great people. It is not the presence of death merely,—with that we have become familiar. It is not the loss of a leader only that we mourn, nor of a statesman who had exhibited wisdom in great trials, in vast enterprises of war, and in delicate negotiations for the preservation of peace with foreign countries; but of a twice chosen and twice ordained ruler in whom these great qualities were found, and to which were added the personal courage of the soldier and the moral heroism of the Christian.

Judged by this generation in other lands, and by other generations in future times, Abraham Lincoln will be esteemed as the wisest of rulers and the most fortunate of men. To him and to his fame the manner of his death is nothing; to the country and to the whole civilized family of man it is the most appalling of tragical events. The rising sun of the day following that night of unexampled crime revealed to us the nation's loss; but, stunned by the shock, the people were unable to comprehend the magnitude of the calamity. As the last rays of the setting sun glided into the calm twilight of evening, the continent was stilled into silence by its horror of the crime and its sense of the greatness of the loss sustained.

If we believe reverently that God guided his chosen people in ancient times, that He was with our fathers in their struggle for independence, we are likely also to believe that in the events transpiring in this country the Ruler of all the earth makes his ways known to men in an unusual manner and to an unusual extent. If God rules, then are not all men, even in their imperfections and sins, in some mysterious way and under peculiar circumstances the doers of His will? To the human eye Abraham Lincoln seems to have been specially designated by Divine Providence for the performance of a great work. His origin was humble, his means of education stunted. He was without wealth, and he did not enjoy the support of influential friends. Much the larger part of his life was spent in private pursuits, and he never exhibited even the common human desire for public employment, leadership and fame. His ambition concerning the great office that he held was fully satisfied; and the triumph of his moderate and reasonable expectations was not even marred by the untimely and bloody hand of the assassin. During the canvass of 1864 and with the modesty of a child he said, "I cannot say that I wish to perform the duties of President for four years more; but I should be gratified by the approval of the people of what I have done." This he received; and however precious it may have been to him, it is a more precious memory to the people themselves.

His public life was embraced in the period of about six years. This statement does not include his brief service in the legislature of the State of Illinois, nor his service as a subordinate officer in one of the frontier Indian wars, nor his single term of service in the House of Representatives of

the United States nearly twenty years ago. In none of these places did he attract the attention of the country, nor did the experience acquired fit him specially for the great duties to which he was called finally. He was nearly fifty years of age when he entered upon the contest, henceforth historical, for a seat in the Senate from the State of Illinois. This was the commencement of his public life, and from that time forward he gained and grew in the estimation of his countrymen. At the moment of his death he enjoyed the confidence of all loyal men, including those even who did not openly give him their support; and there were many, possibly in them it was a sin, who came at last to regard him as a Divinely appointed leader of the people. The speeches which he delivered in that contest are faithful exponents of his character, his principles, and his capacity. His statements of opinion are clear and unequivocal; his reasoning was logical and harmonious; and his principles, as then expressed, were consonant with the declaration subsequently made, "that each man has the right by nature to be the equal politically of any other man." He was then, as ever, ebary of predictions concerning the future; but it was in his opening speech that he declared his conviction, which was in truth a prophecy, that this nation could not remain permanently half slave and half free.

In that long and arduous contest with one of the foremost men of the country, Mr. Lincoln made no remark which he was unable to defend, nor could he, by any force of argument, be driven from a position that he had taken. It was then that those who heard or read the debate observed the richness of his nature in mirth and wit which charmed his

friends without wounding his opponents, and which he used with wonderful sagacity in illustrating his own arguments, or in weakening, or even at times in overthrowing the arguments of his antagonist. And yet it cannot be doubted that for many years, if not from his very youth, Mr. Lincoln was a melancholy man. He seemed to bear about with him the weight of coming cares, and to sit in gloom as though his path of life was darkened by an unwelcome shadow. His fondness for story and love for mirth were the compensation which nature gave.

In the midst of overburdening cares these characteristics were a daily relief; and yet it is but just to say that he often used an appropriate story as a means of foiling a too inquisitive visitor, or of changing or ending a conversation which he did not desire to pursue.

During the first French revolution, when the streets of Paris were stained with human blood, the inhabitants, women and men, flocked to places of amusement. To the mass of mankind, and especially to the inexperienced, this conduct appears frivolous, or as the exhibition of a criminal indifference to the miseries of individuals and the calamities of the public. But such are the horrors of war, the pressure of responsibility, that men often seek refuge and relief in amusements, from which in ordinary times they would turn aside.

In Mr. Lincoln's speeches of 1858 there are passages which suggest to the mind the classic models of ancient days, although they do not in any proper sense rise to an equality with them. His style of writing was as simple as were his own habits and manners; and no person ever

excelled him in clearness of expression. Hence he was understood and appreciated by all classes. The Proclamation of Emancipation, his address at the dedication of the Cemetery at Gettysburg, and his touching letter to the widowed mother who had given five sons to the country, are memorable as evidences of his intellectual and moral greatness.

His speeches of 1858 are marked for the precision with which he stated his own positions, and for the firmness exhibited whenever his opponent endeavored to worry him from his chosen ground, or by artifice, or argument, or persuasion, to induce him to advance a step beyond.

His administration, as far as he himself was concerned, was inaugurated upon the doctrines and principles of the great debate. He recognized the obligation to return fugitives from slavery, and it was no part of his purpose to interfere with slavery in the States where it existed. It must remain for the historian and the biographer, who may have access to private and personal sources of knowledge, to inform the country and the world how far Mr. Lincoln, when he entered upon his duties as President, comprehended the magnitude of the struggle in which the nation was about to engage.

The circumstance that his first call for volunteers was for seventy-five thousand men only, is not valuable as evidence one way or the other. The number was quite equal to our supply of arms and materials of war, and altogether too vast for the experience of the men then at the head of military affairs. The number was sufficient to show his purpose;—the purpose to which he adhered through all the