

**ABRAHAM  
LINCOLN:  
A LECTURE**

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Abraham Lincoln: A Lecture by Robert G. Ingersoll

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**ROBERT G. INGERSOLL**

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Abraham Lincoln.

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# ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

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## A LECTURE

BY

ROBERT G. <sup>INGERSOLL</sup> INGERSOLL.

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Nothing is grander than to break chains from the bodies of men—nothing nobler than to destroy the phantoms of the soul.

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## ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

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### I.

ON the 12th of February, 1809, two babes were born—one in the woods of Kentucky, amid the hardships and poverty of pioneers; one in England, surrounded by wealth and culture. One was educated in the University of Nature, the other at Cambridge.

One associated his name with the enfranchisement of labor, with the emancipation of millions, with the salvation of the Republic. He is known to us as Abraham Lincoln.

The other broke the chains of superstition and filled the world with intellectual light, and he is known as Charles Darwin.

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bodies of men — nothing nobler than to destroy the phantoms of the soul.

Because of these two men the Nineteenth Century is illustrious.

A few men and women make a nation glorious — Shakespeare made England immortal, Voltaire civilized and humanized France, Goethe, Schiller and Humboldt lifted Germany into the light. Angelo, Raphael, Galileo and Bruno crowned with fadeless laurel the Italian brow, and now the most precious treasure of the Great Republic is the memory of Abraham Lincoln.

Every generation has its heroes, its iconoclasts, its pioneers, its ideals. The people always have been and still are divided, at least into classes—the many, who with their backs to the sunrise worship the past, and the few, who keep their faces towards the dawn—the many, who are satisfied with the world as it is; the few, who labor and suffer for the future, for those to be, and who seek to rescue the oppressed, to destroy the cruel distinctions of caste, and to civilize mankind.

Yet it sometimes happens that the liberator of one age becomes the oppressor of the next. His reputation becomes so great — he is so revered and wor-

shipped—that his followers, in his name, attack the hero who endeavors to take another step in advance.

The heroes of the Revolution, forgetting the justice for which they fought, put chains upon the limbs of others, and in their names the lovers of liberty were denounced as ingrates and traitors.

During the Revolution our fathers to justify their rebellion dug down to the bed-rock of human rights and planted their standard there. They declared that all men were entitled to liberty and that government derived its power from the consent of the governed. But when victory came, the great principles were forgotten and chains were put upon the limbs of men. Both of the great political parties were controlled by greed and selfishness. Both were the defenders and protectors of slavery. For nearly three-quarters of a century these parties had control of the Republic. The principal object of both parties was the protection of the infamous institution. Both were eager to secure the Southern vote and both sacrificed principle and honor upon the altar of success.

At last the Whig party died and the Republican was born. This party was opposed to the further extension of slavery. The Democratic party of the

South wished to make the "divine institution" national—while the Democrats of the North wanted the question decided by each territory for itself.

Each of these parties had conservatives and extremists. The extremists of the Democratic party were in the rear and wished to go back; the extremists of the Republican party were in the front, and wished to go forward. The extreme Democrat was willing to destroy the Union for the sake of slavery, and the extreme Republican was willing to destroy the Union for the sake of liberty.

Neither party could succeed without the votes of its extremists.

This was the condition in 1858-60.

When Lincoln was a child his parents removed from Kentucky to Indiana. A few trees were felled—a log hut open to the south, no floor, no window, was built—a little land plowed and here the Lincolns lived. Here the patient, thoughtful, silent, loving mother died—died in the wide forest as a leaf dies, leaving nothing to her son but the memory of her love.

In a few years the family moved to Illinois. Lincoln then almost grown, clad in skins, with no woven stitch upon his body—walking and driving the