

**HERNDON'S LINCOLN; THE TRUE
STORY OF A GREAT LIFE, ETIAM
IN MINIMIS MAJOR THE HISTORY
AND PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS
OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN, VOL. I**

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Herndon's Lincoln; the true story of a great life, etiam in minimis major the history and personal recollections of Abraham Lincoln, Vol. I by William H. Herndon & Jesse William Weik

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WILLIAM H. HERNDON & JESSE WILLIAM WEIK

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HERNDON'S LINCOLN

THE TRUE STORY OF A GREAT LIFE

Etiam in minimis major

THE HISTORY AND PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

OF

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

BY

WILLIAM H. HERNDON

FOR TWENTY YEARS HIS FRIEND AND LAW
PARTNER

AND

JESSE WILLIAM WEIK, A. M.

VOL. I

THE HERNDON'S LINCOLN PUBLISHING COMPANY

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These volumes are submitted as faithful reproductions of the original "Herndon's Lincoln". We have endeavored to make the body of the work conform, line for line and word for word, to the original.

THE PUBLISHERS.

TO
THE MEN AND WOMEN OF AMERICA
WHO HAVE GROWN UP SINCE HIS TRAGIC DEATH, AND
WHO HAVE YET TO LEARN THE STORY OF
HIS LIFE, THIS RECORD OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S CAREER
IS FAITHFULLY INSCRIBED

PREFACE

A QUARTER of a century has well-nigh rolled by since the tragic death of Abraham Lincoln. The prejudice and bitterness with which he was assailed have disappeared from the minds of men, and the world is now beginning to view him as a great historical character. Those who knew and walked with him are gradually passing away, and ere long the last man who ever heard his voice or grasped his hand will have gone from earth. With a view to throwing a light on some attributes of Lincoln's character heretofore obscure, and thus contributing to the great fund of history which goes down to posterity, these volumes are given to the world.

If Mr. Lincoln is destined to fill that exalted station in history or attain that high rank in the estimation of the coming generations which has been predicted of him, it is alike just to his memory and the proper legacy of mankind that the whole truth concerning him should be known. If the story of his life is truthfully and courageously told—nothing colored or suppressed; nothing false either written or suggested—the reader will see and feel the presence of the living man. He will, in fact, live with him and be moved to think and act

with him. If, on the other hand, the story is colored or the facts in any degree suppressed, the reader will be not only misled, but imposed upon as well. At last the truth will come, and no man need hope to evade it.

"There is but one true history in the world," said one of Lincoln's closest friends to whom I confided the project of writing a history of his life several years ago, "and that is the Bible. It is often said of the old characters portrayed there that they were bad men. They are contrasted with other characters in history, and much to the detriment of the old worthies. The reason is, that the Biblical historian told the whole truth—the inner life. The heart and secret acts are brought to light and faithfully photographed. In other histories virtues are perpetuated and vices concealed. If the life of King David had been written by an ordinary historian the affair of Uriah would at most have been a quashed indictment with a denial of all the substantial facts. You should not forget there is a skeleton in every house. The finest character dug out thoroughly, photographed honestly, and judged by that standard of morality or excellence which we exact for other men is never perfect. Some men are cold, some lewd, some dishonest, some cruel, and many a combination of all. The trail of the serpent is over them all! Excellence consists, not in the absence of these attributes, but in the degree in which they are redeemed by the virtues and graces of life. Lincoln's character will, I am certain, bear close scrutiny. I am

not afraid of you in this direction. Don't let any thing deter you from digging to the bottom; yet don't forget that if Lincoln had some faults, Washington had more—few men have less. In drawing the portrait tell the world what the skeleton was with Lincoln. What gave him that peculiar melancholy? What cancer had he inside?"

Some persons will doubtless object to the narration of certain facts which appear here for the first time, and which they contend should have been consigned to the tomb. Their pretense is that no good can come from such ghastly exposures. To such over-sensitive souls, if any such exist, my answer is that these facts are indispensable to a full knowledge of Mr. Lincoln in all the walks of life. In order properly to comprehend him and the stirring, bloody times in which he lived, and in which he played such an important part, we must have all the facts—we must be prepared to take him as he was.

In determining Lincoln's title to greatness we must not only keep in mind the times in which he lived, but we must, to a certain extent, measure him with other men. Many of our great men and our statesmen, it is true, have been self-made, rising gradually through struggles to the topmost round of the ladder; but Lincoln rose from a lower depth than any of them—from a stagnant, putrid pool, like the gas which, set on fire by its own energy and self-combustible nature, rises in jets, blazing, clear, and bright. I should be remiss in my duty if I did not throw the light on this part of the picture, so