

certain future—the destiny of our race, dedicated to truth and to God; and we may hear reverberating through the centuries the glad anthem of that varied music from an hundred tongues—Our English Language.

## THE FIRST AMERICAN.

B. H. TIMBERLAKE, U. of M., Minneapolis, Minn.

A quarter of a century ago, the fiercest civil war of history was rending our land. Underlying that strife were two antagonistic principles. Though the supporters of these principles had been pacified for many years by compromise, the bitterness of feeling had ever continued to increase. When at length all hope of reconciliation was lost, and the destruction of the Union was threatened, there appeared a man who led the loyal party to victory, and forever sealed the bond of the states. That man was Abraham Lincoln. He was not only chief in ending the struggle, but he had been one of the first to see its approach. His voice early proclaimed to an agitated nation, "this government cannot permanently endure, half slave and half free." He believed the principle of slavery wrong, and always opposed its extension. The clanking of the chains on the slave dock at New Orleans in 1832, never ceased to sound in his ears till, in 1863, he gave to the world his "Edict of Freedom," and the fetters dropped from four million slaves.

Lincoln was pre-eminently a man of the people. To possess and to maintain the support of the masses, a man must have an open heart. He must not shroud his talents in mysterious greatness, but in simplicity and honesty submit his actions to the tribunal of the people. Lincoln, coming from the New West, where only the genuine passes, bore deep traces of frontier life, and until the tragic end they remained in his honest nature as indelible stamps of integrity. College had neither "dimmed nor polished" his rare native powers. He was ever a learner, and acquired only for use. With a conscience untarnished by the greed of personal gain and with an abundance of common sense, he unerringly distinguished right from wrong, and unflinchingly championed the cause of right. With clear insight into the thoughts of men, he stood before the people the embodiment of their own desires as intensified by his iron logic and the candor of his simple words. With his pure life he wrought the tie that bound him to their hearts.

As an orator and statesman he stands pre-eminent. His oratory was pure, simple, sublime. He claimed the inattentive ear, awakened the dormant imagination, thrilled the cold heart, and convinced the critical brain. His unanswerable logic in debate with Douglas brought him to the head of his party in Illinois, and carried his name into every Northern home. His Cooper Institute speech convinced and electrified the culture of the East, and gave him the nomination at Chicago. His words at Gettysburg touched the heart-strings of every patriot, and ranked him with the leading orators of the world.

His statesmanship was the product of a clear intellect, a faultless judgment and a fearless soul. His first inaugural address is a marvel of conciliation, love, and firmness, all overshadowed by a presentiment of possible national disruption. His selection and retention of his cabinet are the highest proofs of his consummate ability as a leader. His corrections in Seward's dispatch to Adams at the court of St. James, spared us a third English war, and proved beyond question his sagacious statesmanship and diplomacy.

I would not detract one word of praise from the deserving names of Seward and of Chase, of Garrison and of Phillips, of Sherman and of Grant; nor from the other true and loyal men who served their country with rare talent and patriotic zeal; nor from the heroic throng who lost their lives in their country's cause; nor yet from the brave veterans who lived to rejoice over their victories and mourn for their fallen chief; but Lincoln, embodying the earnestness of Garrison and the logic of Webster, the statesmanship of Seward and the leadership of Grant, the unyielding firmness of Stanton and the moderation of Clay, stands in his native majesty, simple, unaffected—the ideal of American patriotism. The candid mind can do naught else than yield homage to his nobler character.

No man ever had a keener sense of humor, or employed it more habitually. His appreciation of a good story, and his power to apply it in illustration, are characteristics which cling to his name with lasting tenacity. Critics have thought to find a lack of sincerity in this; it is but a witness to the

honesty of his nature. No man during the war felt the burden as did Lincoln. When the bitterness of party spirit threatened to rob him of united support, when radical assailed him from the right and conservative from the left, the enormous strain thrown upon him could be endured by no mind unrelieved. When the battle raged and shells were shrieking, no ear listened with more painful anxiety, no eye watched with more vigilant care. When the Union troops began to waver, intense anguish seized his soul and sunk the furrows deeper in his sad and tragic face. In such times as these, a story or the pages of a humorist gave him mental escape, and it is to his lasting credit that he employed them, regardless of the opinions of others.

Lincoln had a strong individuality. His furrowed face betokened the struggles of a burdened heart, his smile brightened every countenance it met. He was original, yet ready to adopt; but when he had reproduced what he had received from others, it was stamped with his own personality. He controlled men with a master hand. To Seward he said: "If this must be done—I must do it;" to Greeley he replied: "I would save the Union;" he said to his cabinet and congress: "One war at a time;" to Governor Seymour he urged: "The draft must go on;" to Secretary Chase he explained: "Only as a military necessity;" to his iron-willed secretary of war he declared: "It will have to be done." Though he was firm, he was never obstinate; nay, he was ever indulgent. What other ruler in the whole history of ages would have tolerated the offences of McClellan? Yet Lincoln knew the general's heart was right, and history commends his forbearance. Nothing so characterizes a man as his use of power. A desire to assert authority when possessing it, is a weakness common to humanity. To use and not abuse, is to pass to the ideal. Lincoln, possessing almost dictatorial power, never abused it unless to pardon.

For piety and goodness he stands among rulers without a peer. Read his farewell address to his friends at Springfield, and there learn his implicit trust in "that Divine Being who attended Washington." Listen to his reproof of the minister who hoped the Lord was on *our* side: "It is my constant prayer that I may be on the *Lord's* side." Follow him in his long black cloak as he goes into the inner chamber at the White House, and there alone in the darkness, pours out his soul to the King of kings, and asks for Divine guidance. Behold his moral courage when the national committee came to inform him of his nomination. "I can offer you my only beverage, pure water," he said, with that modest frankness which is the grace of nature. Watch him as that mother approaches, with suppressed emotion and cautious tread. "Her boy will be shot to-morrow." See that look of sympathy, of tenderness, and watch the countenance of that mother brighten. His pen has saved her boy. Her joy has gladdened his heart. \* \* His sense of justice was like the divine. He sought to convince, not to coerce; to pardon, not to punish; to soothe, not to accuse. "He was mercy mailed in justice."

Thus he stands before us, the Great Emancipator, the First American. He has been a poor boy. His latent energies have been aroused by the suffering of the slave. His noble nature cannot understand why all mankind should not be free. But great as is his heart, it is controlled by a greater mind. He challenges the champion of slavery extension. His penetrating logic shatters the skillful sophistry of his antagonist. His country is in the throes of death and he is called to be its deliverer. Slavery is now recognized to have been the cause of the war. Emancipation is urged. The cherished dream of Lincoln's youth is transferred from his heart to a paper in yonder drawer. But it is not yet time. Oh, the suffering of suspense! Will the Union troops gain no victory? Yes; the stars and stripes float over Antietam, and by his proclamation Lincoln is immortal. He is asked to dedicate to the Union dead the spot where the heroes fell.

See his tall form advancing, his head bowed, his hands folded before him. The perils of the nation rest upon him. The sob that reaches his ear tells the fate of a patriot son. Around him, skirting the throng of throbbing hearts, lie the "honored dead who have consecrated the hallowed ground far above the power of other men to add or to detract, testing whether a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal, can long endure." His key-note is the hope "that the dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." He is advancing to deliver his second inaugural. Look into the