

ABRAHAM LINCOLN as a STATESMAN.

The purpose of this paper is to set forth, by means of a few examples, the statesmanlike qualities of Abraham Lincoln.

In the first place let us determine what constitutes a statesman. A statesman is a man of wisdom, a political leader, versed in the art of government, who is able to direct the national affairs into the proper channel.

In the senatorial campaign of 1858, between Stephen A. Douglas and Lincoln, Lincoln, in his first address, startled his hearers and dismayed his party leaders by the outspoken frankness of his language. "Agitation (against slavery)" he said, "has not only not ceased but has constantly augmented. In my opinion it will not cease until a crisis has been reached and passed. 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the house to fall, but I expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all another. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it..... or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in all the states, old as well as new, - north as well as south."

In this example we see the breadth of Lincoln's public policy and foresight. He was not confined in his thought to any part of the country but considered the whole country as a unit.

During that famous political campaign of 1858, already referred to, Lincoln had compelled Douglas to defend the doctrine of "popular sovereignty", and to assert as a logical sequence that a territorial legislature could enact laws hostile to the Dred Scott decision. This and the "house divided" speech made Douglas' candidacy for the presidency distasteful to the slave holders, while Lincoln had gained a foremost place in the Republican Party.

In his inaugural address Lincoln began by saying I have "no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states

where it exists I have no inclination to do so." "The Union", he declared, "is much older than the constitution. It follows", he argued, "that no state upon its own mere motion can lawfully get out of the Union; that resolves and ordinances to that effect are legally void."

"I therefore consider", he concludes, "that, in view of the constitution and the laws, the Union is unbroken; and to the extent of my ability I shall take care, as the constitution itself expressly enjoins upon me, that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the states In doing this there need be no bloodshed or violence; and there shall be none, unless it be forced upon the national authority." "In your hands, my dissatisfied countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you. You cannot have conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to preserve it, protect, and defend it." Thus appealing to the people of both sections of the country he shaped public opinion until it seemed that a new party with a "preserve the Union" platform had been formed, and formed by him.

After he became president, the New York Tribune, edited by Horace Greeley, an abolitionist, bitterly attacked his inactive policy towards emancipation. In his reply, Lincoln manifested his rare singleness of purpose, as well as the wisdom which guided his action.

"I will save the Union; I would save it in the shortest way under the constitution My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would do that." His "personal wish", he concluded by saying, was "that all men, everywhere, could be free;" At this time it did not coin-

cide with his idea as to his official duty as president.

Some of Lincoln's advisors, Seward, Chase, and Cameron, who became, respectively, Secretary of State, Secretary of Treasury and Secretary of War, were his rivals for the presidency. At the beginning of the administration, Lincoln was almost unknown to those about him. They knew very little about the personality or policy of this westerner whose advisors they were. Seward regarded himself as the real head of the government and proceeded to lay out a bold plan of foreign aggression and instruction to Lincoln in regard to the policy to be pursued by the administration. Thus by the waging of war with some foreign nation Seward hoped to re-unite the two sections of the Union. Lincoln quietly set Seward in his proper position, in such a manner as to show his own capacity to manage affairs and his ability to handle men.

Then he issued his first call for volunteers. "The laws of the United States," said the president, "have been for some time past, and now are oppressed, and the execution thereof obstructed, in the states of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, by combinations too powerful to be suppressed by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings.

"Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, president of the United States, in virtue of the power in me vested by the constitution and the laws, have thought fit to call forth, and hereby do call forth, the militia of the several states of the Union to the aggregate number of seventy-five thousand, in order to suppress said combinations, and to cause the laws to be duly executed.

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"And I hereby command the persons composing the aforesaid combinations to disperse and retire peacefully to their respective abodes, within twenty days from this date."

Now at once we see the results of the southerners' blunders. The issue had been one of slavery upon which the northern men were divided; but now it became one for the preservation of the Union upon which the northern people

are of one mind. It was merely a handful of radical agitators in the north and the south that had been keeping the slavery question before the people. As a result of this appeal, Lincoln's political opponents, as well as the neutral people of the law-abiding states gave him their hearty support.

Lincoln soon became convinced that the emancipation of slaves, so far as he could bring it about, would be a justifiable means of distressing the south, and at the same time arouse sympathy for the Union among the foreign nations. Such a measure would satisfy the demands of his intimate political associates and at the same time could be justified to his more numerous supporters as a war measure. But why did he delay? He waited for a victory of the north over the confederacy to show that the action was not the despairing device of a failing cause. Such victory he found in the disastrous defeat of Lee's army while attempting to invade Maryland. On September 22, 1862, a proclamation was issued declaring that on the first day of the year (1863) that he would declare the slaves in those portions of the United States that were still in rebellion against the government to be free. Accordingly, on January 1, 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation was issued. Thus we see Lincoln's remarkable ability to measure public opinion.

And last but not least let us turn our attention to that phase of life called courage. Lincoln's strong courage is exemplified by his doing things that were in direct opposition to the people as well as to the leaders of his party and of the nation. Whence came such power?

Thus Abraham Lincoln had political wisdom beyond others of his time; he had marvelous eloquence; he had ability to lead both the great men and the common people; he had courage to withstand not only the opposition of his enemies but the appeals of his friends. For these and similar virtues the American people justly accord him the supreme place among American statesmen.

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