

CLOSING DAYS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S LIFE



By permission of "McClure's" Abraham Lincoln

(Albert Miller in Pacific Outlook.)

It may not be given to this generation to realize with what nearly infinite joy the news of Lee's surrender was received over the entire North. No imaginations may supply the experiences of those four years of dreadful strife. There was not a home in all the land in which the war did not erect an altar of sacrifice to its necessities, whereon even the greatest made offerings of life and treasure. The news that was flashed over the country in the two words, "Lee surrenders" meant the cessation of the frightful requirements the war increasingly made. At length it was all over. The nation had been preserved. Tens of thousands slept in soldiers' graves, a huge debt weighed down the republic, but the union had been perpetuated, and joy overwhelmed the whole people.

Lincoln himself became a wonderfully changed man in the few days that were given him of life after Lee's surrender sealed the end of the Confederacy. He had borne the burdens of the war and of the nation, and in a day they were partly lifted from his worried shoulders. The end for which he had fought had been achieved or was measurably within attainment, and he became possessed of a high serenity that transformed his very being. He does not seem to have had any premonition of the fate that even then brooded in the swiftly advancing days. It has been urged that when returning to Washington from City Point he read to Sumner of Massachusetts the lines from Macbeth:

"Duncan is in his grave:
After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well;
Treason has done his worst; nor steel
Nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign, levy, nothing,
Can touch him further!"

If, when he read, he made personal application of any of these lines to himself, there is nothing to show that he did so, because of apprehension of his impending death. There is, oppositely, abundance of evidence to sustain the belief that he looked forward confidently to the carrying out of the nobly generous reconstruction policies he meditated.

On Monday, the day after Lee's surrender, so great a number of people gathered in front of the White

House that, against his inclination, for he preferred to reserve what he had to say for a formal gathering planned for Tuesday night, Lincoln addressed them. He made an end of his impromptu speech by saying:

"I propose now closing by requesting you to play a certain air or tune. I have always thought 'Dixie' one of the best tunes I ever heard. (Laughter.) I have heard that our adversaries over the way have attempted to appropriate it for a national air. I insisted yesterday that we had fairly captured it. I presented the question to the Attorney-General, and he gave his opinion that it was our lawful prize."

The unsated popular enthusiasm compelled his reappearance later the same afternoon, and he made a formal speech on the night of the next day, Tuesday, April 11. Meanwhile news from the armies fanned the general delight to continuous ecstasies. Sherman had learned on the 12th of Lee's surrender, had captured Governor Vance of North Carolina the next day and was awaiting an interview with General Johnson set for the 15th. After an attack lasting nearly two weeks, Mobile surrendered on the 18th, and Montgomery, Alabama, the first Confederate capital, had been occupied.

April 14, 1865 dawned on Washington with all the promise of a perfect day. The very soul of spring was in the air. It was one of the lovely days that come in that latitude after the last suggestion of winter has departed. The whole earth conscientiously seemed to respond to the soft windings of that ethereally beautiful day. What wonder that Washington, wrung at exaltation by recent events, was acutely susceptible to the exhilarations of the season? The illumination of the night before had by no means exhausted joy in its expression. Like the country, the capital still intoxicated with enthusiasm.

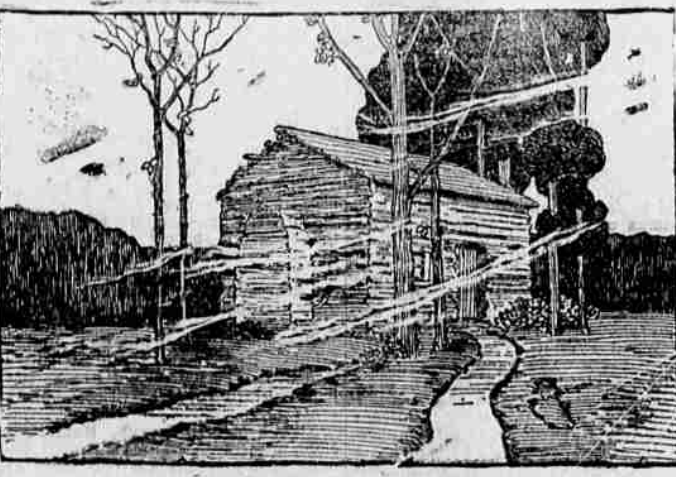
The White House overflowed with happiness. Robert, the son, returned that morning, bearing to his father details of the events that followed in such swift succession after the president sailed down the river on April 8. Grant had come to the front to discuss with Lincoln the problem that was still to be solved. It was Friday, then, as now, a regular day of meeting of the cabinet, and reconstruction was the theme that day considered, Grant being in attendance. How Lincoln's kindly heart beat then with generous emotions. There was no thought of revenge, of punishment, or of harsh measures in that great, sagacious mind. There was but one object—the restoration of unity; and for the method sought—that which should attain that single object most surely and with the least friction or delay.

In the afternoon he drove, as was his wont, with Mrs. Lincoln his sole companion. Returning, he read to friends from some late book of idle humor, protracting his reading so that dinner was delayed because of it. A theatre party had been planned for the night. Laura Keane was giving a performance of "Our American Cousin," which was at once her farewell and her benefit. Grant was to have been a guest, with Mrs. Grant, and the very fact that Grant's changed plans took him from Washington

made attendance more imperative with Lincoln, that the audience assembled in expectation of their evening might not be disappointed. So, with Mrs. Lincoln and two young friends, the president was driven to Ford's theatre, but a few blocks away, arriving after the performance had begun. The actors suspended, the orchestra broke into the inevitable "Hail to the Chief," and the audience rose in greeting that was a tumult of enthusiasm as Lincoln, conspicuous everywhere because of his great height, made his way along the wall of the gallery to the box that had that morning been reserved for his occupancy and decorated in his honor.

Beautiful and balmy as the morning had been, the night was cold, and feeling after a time a sense of chilliness, Lincoln put on again the overcoat he had removed. Seated in an arm chair, he appeared to enjoy the performance thoroughly. Between the acts his box engaged a larger share of the attraction of the audience than was usual, for Grant's appearance there was momentarily expected and all were anxious to see the silent general who had achieved such world-enduring victories.

The hum of low-toned conversation rose while the orchestra's brisk music supplied the entertainment of the intermissions. Literature, politics and finance doubtless formed the subjects then, as they do now. Our Mutual Friend, by Dickens, was then running as a serial, as was Armada, by Wilkie Collins. Thackeray had died but a little more than a year before. Speculation ran riot in the shares of Pennsylvania oil companies. People still talked of the adventures of the Waterer, a war vessel which had sailed from Hampton Roads the year before to round the continent



THE BIRTHPLACE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

by way of the Straits of Magellan, and with its 20 officers and 186 men had been given up as lost. The stage itself supplied subjects for entertaining gossip the while, during the intermission after the second act, the audience still scrutinizing the presidential box. Had not Edwin Booth, at the little White Garden theatre in New York, but just concluded a three months' run of Hamlet, regarded as "an incident in Shakespearean history quite unprecedented?"

At length the curtain rose for the third act. Grant had not come, and hope of his coming was now abandoned. The audience addressed itself to enjoyment of the play, as did the occupants of the presidential box. The first scene over, the second was in progress. So completely did the action of the stage engage attention that few noted, fewer heeded, the

movement through the theatre of a man extremely pale and extraordinarily handsome. Entering the door that opened on the passage in the rear of the president's box, he closed and barred it behind him. Opening then unnoted the door to the box itself, he stood within a few feet of the president, Lincoln's countenance, so lined and aged with heavy cares, so relaxed in smiles. His sad, deep, sunken eyes, darkened with great troubles so long a time, gleamed in humorous appreciation. He released himself to the enjoyment of the hour in the happy consciousness that with the union and himself, all went well.

The uninvited comer raised his Derringer, took deliberate aim and fired. The ball sped true to its lodgment in Lincoln's brain, piercing the left side of the skull just behind the ear. There followed a few hours of unconsciousness. Then, his life work done, Lincoln passed, as Stanton said with inspiration, into the possession of the ages.

PUNCH'S TRIBUTE TO LINCOLN

Sir John Tenniel, the chief artist of England's Punch, during the course of the war between the states, drew many cartoons in most of which Lincoln was caricatured. Some were amusing, some were merely cynical, and some were brutal. But when Lincoln was assassinated Tenniel drew a cartoon that appeared over the caption: "Britannia Sympathizes With Columbia." In the issue of May 6, 1865, representing Britannia laying a wreath on the martyred Lincoln's bier, it was accompanied by these verses:

You lay a wreath on murdered Lincoln's bier,
You, with mocking pencil went to

Beside this corpse, that bears for winding sheet.
The Stars and Stripes he loved to rear anew.
Between the mourners at his head and feet.
Say, mortal jester, is there room for you?
You had lived to shame me for my sneer.
To lance my pencil and confute my pen—
To make me own this kind of prince peer.
This rail-splitter a true born king of men.

My shallow judgment I learned to rue,
Noting how in occasion's height he rose.
How his quaint wit made home truth seem more true.
How, iron-like, his temper grew by blow.

How humble, yet how hopeful he could be,
How in good fortune and in all the same;
Nor bitter in success, nor boastful he,
Thirsty for gold, nor feverish for fame.

The words of mercy were upon his lips,
Forgiveness in his heart and upon his pen,
When his vile murderer brought swift eel-pipe
To thoughts of peace on earth, good will toward men.

The Old World and the New, from sea to sea,
Utter one voice of sympathy and shame!
Sore heart, so stopped when it at last beat high,
Sad life, cut short just when its triumph game.

A deed accurst! Strokes have been struck before,
By the assassin's hand, whereof men doubt
If more of honor or disgrace they were;
But thy foul crime, like Cain's, stands darkly out.

Vile hand, that bradest murder on a strife,
Whate'er its grounds, stoutly and nobly driven,
And with the martyr's crown crownest a life
With much to praise—little to be forgiven.

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!
(Abraham Lincoln, died April 15, 1865.)
O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done;
The ship has weathered every rack, the prize we sought is won;
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead!

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills;
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding;
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still;
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will;
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done;
From fearful trip the victor comes in with object won;
Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells! But I, with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.
Walt Whitman.

JUST LIKE A MAN
"My husband spoiled this whole day for me; he warned me not to buy anything I could not afford."
"Isn't he silly?" If we bought only what we could afford, shopping wouldn't be any fun at all.—Chicago Tribune.

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The "Willing Workers" will give an ice cream social at the Christian church at Marcola Saturday evening, April 18, the proceeds to be used toward buying an organ. Every one cordially invited to attend.

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