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PLASTERING, BRICK AND CONCRETE WORK

1809—The Lincoln Centenary—1909
The Religion of Lincoln"None Felt a Greater Faith
In Divine Righteousness,
Justice, Truth and Guidance."
— Lover of Principle

By James A. Edgerton

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THE very phase of Abraham Lincoln that was greatest, that determined all the rest, is the phase concerning which little is said. Even those nearest him failed to see his mighty soul, his supreme spiritual quality. By glimpses some of his particular friends beheld this great luminous side of his nature, but for the most part those who looked on him had eyes and saw not. They were not acquainted with the royal race of great souls, hence did not know the earmarks. They were looking for form, not substance. They sought a sign, and no sign was given them. Outwardly Lincoln was an unbelieve in certain forms and shells of religion, and if those who knew him most intimately are to be credited, he remained so to the end of his life. But it was only the seeming, the man-made interpretations, the empty letter, that did not appeal to him. No man had more of the substance; none felt a greater faith in divine righteousness, justice, truth, mercy and guidance.

There were times when all who saw Lincoln felt that he was like one of the old prophets—that he was filled by sudden and overwhelming inspiration. His face at such moments seemed transfigured until its homely features grew beautiful, being suffused with a great inward light. The testimony of these witnesses is ample and authenticated, but we do not need it. We can find the same spiritual quality of

has been present until this hour. What is needed is that the eyes of men shall be focused on this aspect of the emancipator rather than on the mask of his personality. The mask was ephemeral and has passed. The innermost truth of him, the white soul, the thing that made him Lincoln, that made us love him, abide and will abide, pleading for men to know and interpret it.

William H. Herndon, Mr. Lincoln's law partner and biographer, said there were times when the future president's soul "seemed fresh from God." Can you picture those times, the forgetfulness of self, the fire of a great principle, the love of humanity, the determination to make the world better which was Lincoln's life passion, all these expressed in his face with an ineffable something greater than all of them? I want the world to see this man's soul. It is, for this I am writing these sketches. I know I cannot do him justice, but if I can give some glimpse of that tall, white, loving, mighty being that was the real Lincoln I shall have rendered a service not so much to him as to mankind.

One of Lincoln's chief characteristics was tenacity of principle. When he saw a thing was right he never gave it up. He would sacrifice his own reputation to make the people see that truth. Stephen A. Douglas, his life-long antagonist, was of a different make. Douglas was one of the ablest politicians in American history, but

seems well authenticated and is doubtless correct. Even so, I know of no man in our time or in any time, for the matter of that, who patterned his life more fully on that of the Man of Sorrows. Both were born poor, one in a stable and the other in a cabin not so good as most stables. One was the Saviour of mankind and the other the savior of his country. Both taught love and mercy, both clung to truth, both regarded the substance more than the form, and both were heard gladly by the common people. Both were denounced by those in power and power, both were reformers, both came to bring liberty to the captive, and both at last gave their lives for mankind.

Both were meek, both were sad, both taught in parables, and both set their faces against the worship of Mammon. Other similarities can be shown, but enough have been stated to reveal the fact that, whatever Lincoln said of theology, he was a true follower of the Nazarene in life and deed. Those who count the life and the deed more than the word will rate him accordingly.

All of Mr. Lincoln's biographers speak of certain mystical tendencies in his character. These have doubtless been magnified beyond their true worth. For example, there is the statement that he dreamed of a rapidly moving ship just before great events in his life. There is also the story of his having seen two images of himself in a mirror, one paler than the other, from which occurrence Mrs. Lincoln is said to have predicted that he would be elected twice to the presidency and the last term would be short. He is also said to have had premonitions that he would be assassinated. People have even gone to the length of alleging that President Lincoln believed in spiritism and sometimes consulted a medium. So far as I know, there is no evidence to prove the truth of this. As for the other phenomena mentioned, they are scarcely of the highest character, whether true or false. The order of mind that looks for a sign might be impressed by them, but the evidence of the noblest and finest spirituality in Lincoln's whole life so infinitely transcends these psychic signs and wonders, even if they are worthy of credence at all, that they may as well be discarded. They are more of the non-essential and trivial that have gathered about this great name.

Mr. Lincoln's biographers also accuse him of having been a fatalist. Is this the whole truth? There is no evidence in his restless energy in trying to change public opinion, no indication in his tenacious will and masterful character, no hint in his clear reasoning power or common sense philosophy, that he was a fatalist in the accepted sense of the term. He was a thorough believer in cause and effect, but that does not constitute a fatalist. It still leaves room for individual initiative in setting up causes.

He was also profoundly convinced of an overruling Providence in human affairs. It is in this that he was a fatalist in the sense that he believed God and God's law governs the world the charge may stand, but that does not imply fatalism since it leaves wide latitude for the choice of the individual. In a large way, like Napoleon Bonaparte, Mr. Lincoln may have felt that a man brings his destiny with him. Most great souls born into the world with a work have felt the same. But by no means reduce a man to a machine, a blind puppet of forces over which he has no control. The true man is master of his own world, and few men have revealed more of this mastery over all given into their hands than Abraham Lincoln. Whatever his words may have said, his life and deeds said beyond any question of doubt that he was anything but a fatalist. Those who call him so have surely failed to go beneath the mask of his personality. They belong to the same school that called him a materialist because he was cautious and careful and reasoned his way slowly and surely. Yet there has been no man in modern times that dwelt more in the moral world than Lincoln. There has been no man that had a profounder faith in God and his intervention for righteousness than Lincoln. No man had a firmer belief in the final triumph of the just forces of justice and truth. Do these things belong to the materialist and fatalist? The man that says so does not know the meaning of words.

Mr. Lincoln was such a many-sided man that it would take several chapters to do justice to his many-sidedness. He rolled into one to furnish his counterpart. He was a combination between a Jewish prophet and a Kentucky frontiersman, a composite photograph of a patriarch, a Greek lawyer and an Illinois horse trader.

Lincoln's tenderness for animals and many other points in his character suggest the most Christlike monk of the middle ages. St. Francis of Assisi, Francis was the preacher and exemplar of poverty, the friend and helper of the unfortunate, was noted for meekness and patience and gained undying fame by his kindness to animals. Yet he was by nature a merry hearted boy, loved sports and games. The reader will readily recognize the likeness to Lincoln's character. Lincoln's severe logic also suggests one of the medieval schoolmen.

Schuyler Colfax stated that Lincoln had two ruling ideas—hard of heart and sympathy with the lowly and humble, whom he desired to lift up. Theodore Tilton tersely said of the war president, "He bound the nation and unbound the slave."

Lincoln was a nineteenth century prophet. He was probably the most spiritual man in our time. The true vision of the future will see him so, for it will look past the shams that live by the letter and behold those God-filled souls that are too great to pretend.

CUSTER'S FIGHT AND FORSYTH'S SIEGE BY BUFFALO BILL FROM TRUE TALES OF THE PLAINS

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GENERAL SHERIDAN instituted methods of fighting the Indians somewhat in their own style and continued them under the most distressing conditions in the winter. Among his ablest and most daring lieutenants at the time was General George A. Custer, the dashing cavalry hero of the Army of the Potomac.

His final campaign is so strikingly remembered that it is well here to give a short description of one of his thrillingly successful battles, sometimes called "Custer's Victory of the Washita."

General Sheridan, who was in command of the Department, was himself in the field. These Indians having perpetrated many outrages, popular indignation demanded and demanded active retaliation. The Indians naturally in winter drifted southward if possible, and Sheridan had made a rendezvous at Camp Supply, in Indian Territory, a hundred miles south of Fort Dodge. Believing that they were in camp in concealment somewhere, Sheridan decided to detach Custer and his regiment to search for them. Custer, who had been sent on a scout, with a hundred men, was in another direction, with Camp Supply as a base. On Nov. 23, at 4 o'clock in the morning, in a snowstorm, Custer reported himself ready to march with his usual evidence of anxiety to fight on the 20th the Canadian river was reached, and Major Elliot was sent on a prospecting tour, while he crossed the river with his immediate command. The ice was not strong enough to hold them up, so they had to break through it in fording the river. After crossing Scott Creek brought news that Elliot had struck a trail on the south side of the river. This he was sent orders to follow until night and then to wait for Custer and his men. Leaving the wagon train behind him under an escort, abandoning some and taking their pack train of mules, a hundred rounds of ammunition and commissary stores of one day's rations of coffee and hard tack and some forage for his horses, he hastened on. Troop after troop was relieved at the front for breaking the road, and the horses were pushed to the limit of their condition of safety, as the Indians, if they were in as large a number as believed, might ambush Elliot and his men. They reached Elliot at 9 o'clock.

A council was called, and it was decided to wait until the moon rose and then to follow the Indian trail. The rest of the command some good, the saddle girths being loosened and the horses given their scanty supply. With the able disposition of the scouts in advance, Custer led his men, and in about an hour's ride Little Beaver approached and said he smelt fire. A halt, and Custer and the scouts went forward, crawled up over the ridge.

With a cheer the cavalry charged, saw a little fire smoldering, which the scout said had been used by those guarding the ponies. The main camp was at no great distance.

Whispered commands were given and Custer's sharpshooters dismounted and advanced. The regiment was divided into four squadrons—Major Elliot was to go around on the left and get in the rear of the camp; Thompson, on the right, was to connect with Elliot; Captain Myers on the right and Thompson on the left, with Custer and four troops in what would be the center. Hoping for no discovery by the foe, Custer was to gauge the time and give the signal to attack with the bugle.

About an hour before dawn Captain Myers' troop took up the last and nearest position. A moment before the general was about to order the charge sounded a rifle shot signal was heard from one of the Indian guards in the camp, and Custer's bugle sounded.

Three columns came from three different directions, the cavalry charging and with cheers the frays opened. Jumping from their lodges, hiding behind trees or in the bulk of the little stream that acted as a life pit, the Indians fought in vain. Black feathers were killed, besides 103 of his warriors. The village was captured; the pony herds were shot, as they could not be carried away, taking an hour to kill 875 of them. The village and all its possessions of winter provisions, including a thousand buffalo robes, hundreds of pounds of dried meat, and were destroyed. Over 500 pounds of powder and a thousand rounds of lead were at the same time captured. Fifty-three squaws and children were made prisoners, thus entirely destroying Black Kettle, Elliot and a party of fourteen, who had followed some flying parties, were missing, having run into a larger band of Indians in a large adjoining village, which threatened now to rush on the command and give it for fat, but Custer rallied every man, threw out skirmishing parties and advanced, with his hands and bullets playing, and after some sharp fighting the Indians, believing that he must have reinforcements and seeing Major Elliot, with an escort, coming, dashed with a load of ammunition, which by the way, was badly needed, and having killed Little Rock, their fighting chief, they broke away and scattered. An unknown number were killed and wounded during the all day fighting. A white woman and child were found in the village who were killed by the Indians for revenge during the opening of the fight. One loss was seven killed and eleven wounded.

Owing to the condition of the weather, etc., it was necessary to get back to Camp Supply to recuperate, which was successfully accomplished. That same winter Custer repeated the same trick on a larger village and wiped it from the face of the earth and captured Satanta, whom he held until many white captives were given up in exchange. After some rest following the battle of the Washita, a search party was sent out to find trace of Elliot and his men, whose remains they found, the story being afterward learned from the Indians how catastrophe overcame them. Pushed with success in the Black Kettle village, Elliot pursued the flying band and ran into the midst of a big band of braves coming to assist in the fight. They were seen, an ambush was quickly effected, and they were surrounded. Their horses were shot down and the riders dismounted, and they stood back to back till all died gallantly fighting.

Often the white men had narrow escapes from the Indians. General George A. Forsyth's siege on the Arkansas river in September, 1868, being a famous example.

General Forsyth was in command of a body of about fifty plainsmen, enlisted as scouts, and camped beside the Arkansas river, a small stream in northwestern Kansas. The Indians had been reported as uprising, and the expedition was projected for the purpose of finding out the true state of affairs. It being a season when very little water was in the river, the party removed its camp to an island in the middle of the stream. There their worst fears were early realized, for at 9 o'clock on the morning of Sept. 17, 1868, Chief Roman Nose entered the river valley with his braves, squaws and children and prepared for an attack. Roman Nose was a heroic specimen of the Indian warrior, and he headed a party of nearly a thousand hostile braves.

General Forsyth immediately began making the best preparations he could with a view to fortifying his position, digging rifle pits and placing saddles and other available material in a circle around his men. There was so little water in the river bed that he knew hand to hand encounters would result from the impending attack unless the advancing host could be repelled before they reached the imperiled soldiers. Indian sharpshooters ranged in hiding along both banks of the stream began pouring into the Forsyth position a deadly fire at close range. The besieged men crouched in the rifle pits they had dug in the sand, their firearms in readiness, awaiting the word of command. Closer came the cavalry of redskins until their fellow sharpshooters were compelled to cease firing for fear of killing their own men. Then Forsyth shouted "Now!" and a crash of musketry rang from five sides. It was apparent that the Indians were bent upon riding down their prey and killing them on the spot. The first volley made no change in their intentions. At a second volley they did not waver, but when others followed too rapidly to count the ranks began to thin out, and at last Roman Nose went down, shot dead from his horse. The death of their defiant leader sent consternation into the ranks of his followers, and when they were within a hundred yards of the miniature fort they broke in a panic.

During the next two hours the Forsyth party dug their rifle pits deeper, strengthened their barricades with the bodies of their destroyed horses and protected themselves as best they could against a second attack. At 2 o'clock

the Indians were again driven off, and for a third time they returned at 4 o'clock to be once more and finally repulsed. The Forsyth party suffered severely in all three of the attacks. All their horses and mules had been killed, thus cutting off their means of escape. Lieutenant Fred Beecher, a nephew of Henry Ward Beecher, the distinguished Brooklyn divine, and five of his men, had also been killed or mortally wounded, and seventeen men, including General Forsyth, had been seriously wounded. Practically only seven men out of the original number were unharmed.

Fort Wallace, the nearest military post, was a hundred miles away, and the situation was indeed desperate for General Forsyth and his men, without food and surrounded by nearly a thousand Indians. The dead horses were cut into strips for food, and a well made the circular breastworks was dug for water. The defense was further strengthened as best it could be, and, ever watchful, they passed four days with no sign from the Indians save an occasional shot when a scout indiscreetly rose to stretch himself. On the second day the horse meat



They crawled into the buffalo skeleton

could not be eaten. Suffering became intense, and sending for help was absolutely necessary, else the command would perish. Jack Stilwell, a noted scout, then a headstrong youth in buckskin, volunteered to go to Fort Wallace. Old Pete Trueman, a frontiersman, said he would go with him. At midnight the pair crept out from the breastworks and were quickly lost sight of. Stilwell decided that the best route to take would be by going directly ashore and over the bluff and not to detour up or down the river or follow the ravines into the interior, for he judged that the Indians would suspect these seemingly less perilous routes. Old Pete Trueman, a frontiersman, said he would go with him. At midnight the pair crept out from the breastworks and were quickly lost sight of. Stilwell decided that the best route to take would be by going directly ashore and over the bluff and not to detour up or down the river or follow the ravines into the interior, for he judged that the Indians would suspect these seemingly less perilous routes. Old Pete Trueman, a frontiersman, said he would go with him. At midnight the pair crept out from the breastworks and were quickly lost sight of. Stilwell decided that the best route to take would be by going directly ashore and over the bluff and not to detour up or down the river or follow the ravines into the interior, for he judged that the Indians would suspect these seemingly less perilous routes.

Next night they crept away across the south fork of the Republican, and the morning of the fourth day found them on the prairie at the head of Goose Creek. The Indians seemed to have been left behind, and the boy and man decided now to travel also by day. This piece of recklessness nearly cost them their lives, for about 8 o'clock in the morning they saw Indian coming toward them, and they dropped into the grass. Fortunately the Indians had not discovered them, but it was necessary to hide quickly.

In looking for a place to conceal themselves on the open prairie they discovered some weeds growing around a buffalo carcass. Crawling to their prospective shelter, they found that the buffalo had been killed about a year before and that the skeleton was intact, with little bits of hide hanging to the ribs in places. In a moment they had crawled into the skeleton with its almost unbearable stench. The tenacious of their situation, coupled with the dangers at hand, began to affect Trueman's mind, and he almost broke down completely. He wanted to shout, shoot his revolver and leap out from his hiding place, but Stilwell persuaded him to remain quiet until dark, when a refreshing drink of water revived him, and they traveled on through the night. The next day was foggy, and they traveled by daylight without trouble. About 11 o'clock, when almost utterly exhausted, they saw coming out of the haze of the Denver wagon road two soldiers bearing dispatches. The couriers were on the way to Colonel Carpenter's command, lying at Lake Stearns, about fifty miles from where General Forsyth was besieged. Spurring their horses, they made all haste to Colonel Carpenter's camp, and his force was quickly marched to General Forsyth's relief.