

LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY 1896



ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

A Soldier's Story of the War.

BY COL. GILBERT A. PIERCE.



TALL, gaunt man, with grizzled beard and hair, and something of the soldier in his air. He told to us, in simple phrase, this story About himself, the army, and "Old Glory."

"They're talkin' nowadays," said he, "right smart About the great Napoleon Bonaparte. An' 't'other day the boys says, 'Uncle Dan, You tell us who you think the greatest man.'"

"I don't know, boys," I says; "there's Washington, An' Alexander, an' Napoleon, An' lots of others, but my way o' thinkin' There's none of 'em come up to Old Abe Lincoln—"

"For greatness isn't jest a bein' stern, An' solemn-like, an' carin' not a dern For anybody on the top of earth Except yourself, an' thinkin' no one worth The powder 'n lead to blow him out o' sight, Unless he bets on you as Jes' 'bout right."

"Now, Uncle Abraham could hoe his roe With any of 'em argyin', you know. And then, some way, he kind o' had the swing Of them old prophets, when he come to sling His English; an' I guess, take him all round, He was the biggest man on top o' ground."

"You see, at first, I, bein' a reglar 'crat, Was thinkin' that the savage little spat Betwixt the North an' South was all a owin' To what them Abolitionists was doin'. But goah! I soon got crazy as the rest An' carried coal oil lamps, an' yelled my best, An' pretty quick I got to howlin' round 'Bout John Brown's body molderin' in the ground."

So when Steve Douglas said, right fair and square, That this was treason lurkin' in the air,

I run my flag up, an' I says, says I, B' jinks! like old man Adams, 'Live or die, Survive or perish,' you can count on me As for the Union an' for liberty."

"An' so is Billy," says my wife—our Bill, Jest barely turned fifteen, but who could fill The place of any feller of his size That ever walked beneath Ohio's skies.

"Of course," I says, 'but Billy he must stay An' plow an' sow an' make the corn an' hay. I'm still the fightin' member o' this firm, Though some 'ay lately I ain't worth a dern. But anyhow, there ain't no use of prayin'— I go and you and Billy do the stayin'."

"An' then, although somehow the tears would start, I marched away to try and do my part, With little Billy cryin' after me: 'I want a chance to strike for liberty.'"

"Just then I never thought the time would come When Billy couldn't fairly stay at home. But thinnin' ranks require new bone an' muscle, An' so recruiting officers must hustle; An' when two years had passed I heard one night That Billy had enlisted for the fight."

"God! how I watched that boy! Sometimes with pride, Then fearful as he kept step by my side Into the battle—up the mountain height, Trying to keep his boyish form in sight, Praying and sometimes swearing too, maybe, When he exposed himself too carelessly."

For boys, somehow, with twice the cause to live, Seem twice as reckless when a life's to give.

"At Vicksburg, in the charge, the rascal gained The parapet, but fell back, crushed an' maimed,

Before the sweeping fire of that red hell Jest by the spot where gallant Nevils fell.

"I took him in my arms and bore him back Down under shelter, where the fire was slack. Then called a surgeon, while I cried an' swore And dashed myself against the fort once more."

"He railed from that wound an' he an' I Walked side by side on that fourth day o' July When Pemberton begged Grant the siege to lift An' we marched in with arms 'right shoulder shift."

"So time went on, an' we had stood together In lots o' battles an' in wildest weather; But, some way, he had never seemed so sound After the day he got that ugly wound. I used to take the little fellow's place On picket, 'specially when there was a trace Of wandering in his manner or a kind of strangeness, like he didn't know his mind."

"One night—'twas in the midst of that campaign When skirmishes were daily, an' the aim Of Sherman an' of Hood was, day and night, To get a chance to start a winning fight— Billy was placed on picket duty, where The danger seemed to hover in the air. He had relieved me, strange enough to say, An' I had charged him, as I came away, To keep his wits about him an' his eyes Wide open, or he'd meet with a surprise."

"I didn't like his looks; he turned from me An' kind o' grasped his musket carelessly, Walking away upon his dangerous 'beat' With dreamy look an' kind o' dragging feet."

"I rolled up in my blanket, but somehow I couldn't sleep; before me, plain as day,

Was that boy, marching up an' down—his face With that queer look of gazing into space, An' not the first idea of danger near, Or shadow of anxiety or fear, But just as if his thoughts were far away To where his mother bowed her head to pray."

"I couldn't stand it, so I took my gun, An' stepping over comrades, one by one, I hurried to the outposts silently, Anxious to find him once again an' see If all went well, an' if it did, why, then I'd jest turn in an' try to sleep again."

"I reached a spot close underneath the hill, When at a sound my very heart stood still. A scuffle! then a cry! an oath—an' then I saw the forms of half a hundred men Between me an' the twinkling stars' dim light, That jest outlined their figures on the height."

"It wa'n't no time to think! I raised my arm! The good old musket rung out the alarm! A dozen answering shots the rebels sent, Then turned an' run, a yelling as they went."

"I scrambled up the hill, an' awful dread Choking my breath! the boy! he must be dead! An' others came, an' soon we found his form Stretched out upon the ground, but moist an' warm; A blow upon the head that stunned, that's all, His gun all right, with powder, cap, an' ball, An' when I saw it—wall! I felt a smart That hurt more'n a if the wound was in his heart."

"Asleep upon his post! He turned to me An' put his arm around me lovingly; 'I couldn't help it, dad,' he said, an' then He smiled that boyish smile of his again, Jest saying, as he turned once more, 'You see I've had my chance to strike for liberty! Don't tell the folks at home, I beg and pray.' An' then between the guards he marched away."

"It wa'n't no use! I begged, I plead; I swore That Billy wasn't like himself no more. But there he was before us, well as ever! He'd never been so bright, I reckon, never. Maybe it was the shock; but, anyhow, He stood before the court, his boyish brow Half hid by curls, an' less affected when The sentence came than all the rest the men. No matter, when I heard the verdict read, I wished with all my heart that I was dead."

"How could I ever nerve my heart to go And tell his mother, who had loved him so?"

"I didn't know jest what to say or do. They gave me leave of absence, an' I drew My scanty pay, an' started, whither bent I didn't try to realize—jest intent On getting aid somewhere; letters I bore To the commanding general of the corps, To senators and governors, an' one Addressed to 'Abram Lincoln, Washington.'"

"With fainting heart I sought each man whose name



FELL BACK.

Was said to make or mar a hero's fame; They kindly spoke—told me to wait; they sent My papers to those near the President; But one by one they all came back, no sign Of hope to me in any cruel line; Only the words that showed no heart was moved— 'The sentence of the court has been approved.'"

"I wrote his mother, an' I said, 'My dear, God has forsaken us an' our's, I fear. Weary an' sick an' growing gray an' bent, I'm going to try to see the President, An' then I give it up, an' you an' I Had better lay our old bones down an' die.'"

"They wouldn't let me in, although I told My story to them; men are mighty cold When griefs are common, as they were jest then, An' all sought favors of the tongue or pen; But I was watching, an' one pleasant day I saw the Lincoln carriage drive away, An' in an hour return at rapid rate An' turn in quickly at the White House gate."

"It rolled up swiftly to the entrance door, An' he stepped out, his eyes upon the floor; His lips were moving as if in his mind Some question he debated, but his kind An' gentle face—wall! it invited me, An' I was starting forward eagerly, When jest as I had almost reached his side They roughly called to me to stand aside."

"He glanced once at the officer so grim, While I looked up beseechingly at him, Then said: 'Who is the man? What would he do?' 'Only a soldier,' said they, 'after an interview.' 'Only a soldier!' said he, musingly. 'Periling his life for liberty! Only a soldier! Marching near an' far, Fighting the battles of this awful war! Come in, my man! Thank God, to speak to me You need no other name or pedigree.' An' then he led me in an' up the stair, While Ministers and Generals waited there."

"I told him, with the sobs half choking me, The story of my grief and misery. His face was sad an' furrowed with a care That I had never seen a mortal wear; But still he listened, an' he bowed his head Sometimes at what I felt or what I said. 'He looked my papers over carefully, Then turned an', smiling, gently said to me: 'They say we must be stern if we would win; That pardons are the death of discipline; But still I think the country would survive With that boy loose an' running round alive. So far's our men's concerned, why, heaven willing,



LOOKED MY PAPERS OVER.

We'll let the other fellows do the killin'— You tell him, though, I count on him to fight, An' prove that they were wrong and I was right; To bravely serve, to die, too, if need be, For God's great boon of human liberty.' An' then he wrote: 'This sentence disapproved! While I sat there an' hardly breathed or moved; An' then I saw him add, my old eyes blinkin', 'Restored to his company. A. Lincoln.'"

"Jest there was where I lost my grip! my, my! I couldn't say the first derned thing—jest cry An' wring his hand an' tremble like the nation, Instead of making, so to speak, a brief oration, An' thanking him an' promising to stand, Both me an' Billy, till the blessed land Was saved. No, sir; I lost my head, Till, finally, I mustered up an' said I thought that God would take good care o' him, Whatever might become of discipline. An'—wall! I had to go without a sayin' Half the things that filled my heart, but prayin' Heaven to treat him kind an' tenderly An' with the mercy he had shown to me."

"In six months Billy stood upon the roll Promoted up to second corporal, An' then, by changes that we underwent, Was come bearer of the regiment. We marched through Georgia, conquerin' to the sea, Bearing the dear old flag triumphantly, An' there, with solid shot and canister, We faced the guns of Fort McAllister."

"A charge was ordered quickly, an' our corps Made ready for a stubborn fight once more. At first the rebels fired at such a rate It seemed to make our column hesitate."

"Billy, with face aflame and scornful glance, Carried the flag far up in the advance; When out the Colonel spoke an' cried: 'Bring back The colors to the regiment! Mid crack

An' crash of guns the bayonet—bring The regiment to the colors! Then, with wings An' shouts an' cheers at Billy's brave reply The whole brigade came rushing madly by, An' almost 'fore they sensed what they had done The fort was taken an' the day was won."

"But Billy had gone down; jest at the last, His fingers holding to the flag so fast, They had to pry them loose; an' on his face A smile a thousand years cannot efface, An' though my eyes were full an' brimming o'er I never felt such pride on earth before."

"Redeemed at last! The General came and said: 'Place his name first among the gallant dead.'"



REDEEMED AT LAST.

Then wrapped the Stars and Stripes around the one They all did honor to—my son, my soul

"When loving hands arrayed the boy that night In his new uniform, with buttons bright, They found his treasures, an' among the rest A picture of Old Abe upon his breast; An' written on the back, like prophecy: 'I've fought, great friend, and died for liberty!'"

HIS GETTYSBURG ADDRESS.

Words That Will Live in History as the Greatest Effort of Lincoln.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any other nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that the nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of



ABE LINCOLN IN 1855.

freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Abraham Lincoln's Son. Robert T. Lincoln, son of the martyred president, is a resident of Chicago. He is the attorney for the Chicago Gas Company. His salary is variously estimated at \$25,000 a year. He served as minister to England when Blaine was secretary of state. He married one of the Honors of the Law in a marble-faced mansion on the Lake Shore Drive. His father-in-law is Mrs. Martha Hanson, president of the board of women managers of the World's Fair. His mother's father was at one time a friend of Abraham Lincoln.