

**THE RIVERSIDE LITERATURE SERIES.  
NUMBER 32, JANUARY, 1888. THE  
GETTYSBURG SPEECH AND OTHER  
PAPERS AND ESSAY ON LINCOLN.  
[CAMBRIDGE-1890]**

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**ABRAHAM LINCOLN & JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL**

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THE GETTYSBURG SPEECH  
AND OTHER PAPERS

BY

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

AND

AN ESSAY ON LINCOLN

BY

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

*WITH INTRODUCTIONS AND NOTES*



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1890

## PREFACE.

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It is still too early to know Abraham Lincoln, but it is none too soon to use such knowledge as we have for adding to our conception of him, and for shaping our praise and honor. He lived so openly among men, and he was surrounded by such a mass of eager, positive men and women in a time when the mind of man was especially alert, he was so much the object of criticism and of eulogy, and above all he was himself a man of such varied attitude toward other men, that we are likely for years to come to have an increasing volume of testimony concerning him.

Meanwhile there is slowly taking form in the general apprehension of men a figure so notable, so individual, so powerful, that men everywhere are recognizing the fact, that however other Americans may be regarded, there is one man who holds the interest, the profound respect, and the affection of the people as none other has yet done. Franklin has been widely influential, but he has not appealed to the highest spirit. He does not invite reverence, and only he is truly great to whom we look up. Washington has a place by himself, so aloof from other men, that with all our efforts we cannot perfectly succeed in humanizing him, but are content to leave him heroic. Jackson is the idol of a party; but Lincoln, appearing at a critical period, and showing himself a great leader, is

so humane, he comes so close to the eye, his homely nature seems so familiar, that every one makes him a personal acquaintance. He had detractors during his lifetime; there are a few now who are repelled by some characteristics of the man, but his death did much to hallow his memory, and the emphatic testimony of poets and statesmen, who are quick to recognize their peers and their superiors, has been accumulating an expression of feeling which represents the common sentiment that has never been absent from the minds of plain people.

Every year the anniversary of Lincoln's birth is likely to have increased honor: its nearness to Washington's birthday is likely to cause a joint celebration of the two great Americans. Both then and at other times, Lincoln's career will be studied, and this pamphlet is put forth as a modest aid to those who desire some brief handbook. It contains as an introduction the important essay by James Russell Lowell, who was one of the earliest, and he has been the most persistent, of American scholars to recognize the greatness and the peculiar power of Lincoln. Lowell's own sympathy with the soil quickened his apprehension of sons of the soil. As a tail-piece, so to speak, it has the threnody by Walt Whitman, one of the notable bits of verse called out by Lincoln's death, and so rhythmical, so charged with feeling, that one scarcely observes the almost random use of rhyme, — it all seems rhymed; nor does one resent what on close inspection might seem an arrogant assumption of the poet's individual grief, for every one will feel that he is himself a solitary mourner for the dead captain.

The body of the pamphlet is occupied with a few of the most striking speeches, messages, and letters of the

President. It would be easy to increase the number, but these will be found significant of Lincoln's character and political policy. Introductions and notes have been added wherever it seemed desirable to make the matter clearer. But it is to be hoped that our schools will take the opportunity afforded by the great mass of material easily accessible to acquaint themselves in detail with Lincoln's life.

In order to aid teachers and scholars in this work, we have added to the pamphlet some pages which give suggestions for the celebration of Lincoln's birthday, a brief chronology of the leading events in his life, and a sketch of the material which is at the service of every one for carrying on a study of this most interesting and important subject. No one can apply himself carefully to an inquiry into Lincoln's life in its whole course without acquainting himself with the most vital principles of American national life. He must study the democratic social order, the slavery conflict, and the war for the Union. It is greatly to be hoped that the growing interest in American history, and the increasing attention paid to the investigating rather than the mere memorizing method of study, will tend to give a conspicuous place to the biography of Abraham Lincoln.



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## ABRAHAM LINCOLN.<sup>1</sup>

BY JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

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THERE have been many painful crises since the impatient vanity of South Carolina hurried ten prosperous Commonwealths into a crime whose assured retribution was to leave them either at the mercy of the nation they had wronged, or of the anarchy they had summoned but could not control, when no thoughtful American opened his morning paper without dreading to find that he had no longer a country to love and honor. Whatever the result of the convulsion whose first shocks were beginning to be felt, there would still be enough square miles of earth for elbow-room; but that ineffable sentiment made up of memory and hope, of instinct and tradition, which swells every man's heart and shapes his thought, though perhaps never present to his consciousness, would be gone from it, leaving it common earth and nothing more. Men might gather rich crops from it, but that ideal harvest of priceless associations would be reaped no longer; that fine virtue which sent up messages of courage and security from every sod of it would have evaporated beyond recall. We should be irrevocably

<sup>1</sup> This paper was published by Mr. Lowell originally in the *North American Review* for January 1864. When he reprinted it in his volume, *My Study Windows*, he added the final paragraph.

cut off from our past, and be forced to splice the ragged ends of our lives upon whatever new conditions chance might leave dangling for us.

We confess that we had our doubts at first whether the patriotism of our people were not too narrowly provincial to embrace the proportions of national peril. We felt an only too natural distrust of immense public meetings and enthusiastic cheers.

That a reaction should follow the holiday enthusiasm with which the war was entered-on, that it should follow soon, and that the slackening of public spirit should be proportionate to the previous over-tension, might well be foreseen by all who had studied human nature or history. Men acting gregariously are always in extremes; as they are one moment capable of higher courage, so they are liable, the next, to baser depression, and it is often a matter of chance whether numbers shall multiply confidence or discouragement. Nor does deception lead more surely to distrust of men, than self-deception to suspicion of principles. The only faith that wears well and holds its color in all weathers is that which is woven of conviction and set with the sharp mordant of experience. Enthusiasm is good material for the orator, but the statesman needs something more durable to work in,— must be able to rely on the deliberate reason and consequent firmness of the people, without which that presence of mind, no less essential in times of moral than of material peril, will be wanting at the critical moment. Would this fervor of the Free States hold out? Was it kindled by a just feeling of the value of constitutional liberty? Had it body enough to withstand the inevitable dampening of checks, reverses, delays? Had our population intelligence enough to comprehend