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Lincoln and His Veterans

A Centenary Ode

by

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Chaplain 41st Illinois U.S.V.

During the War for the Union

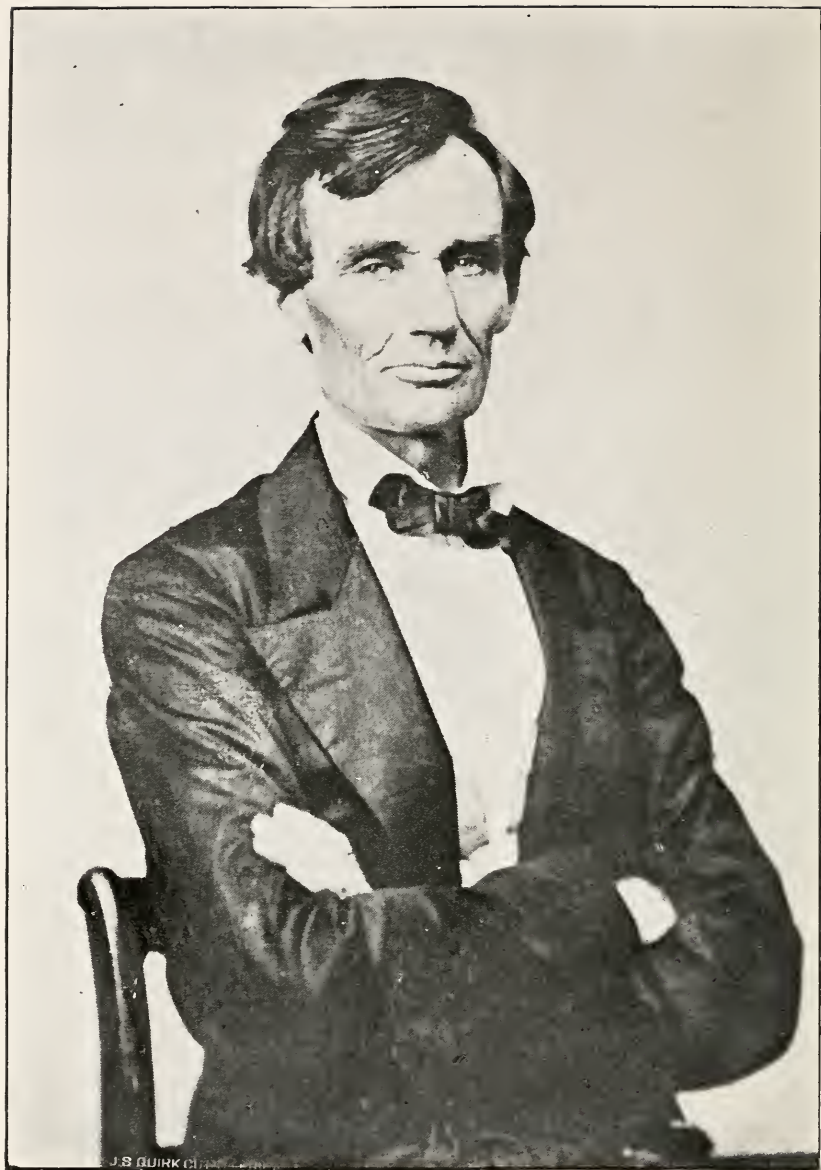
Chaplain 2d Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers

Spanish-American War



Read before the Pennsylvania Commandery
of the Loyal Legion

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1809

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

1909

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From the author

Henry C. McCook

Birkcamp,
Levon, Pa.

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I.

THE VETERANS AS VOLUNTEERS.

Turn back the gates of Time, ye Veteran band,
Youth of the Sixties, saviors of our Land!
List! Hear you not our Chieftain's high command
Sound down the vista of the garnered years
The Nation's war-trump on our startled ears?
Hearken the echoes! Hear those swelling cries!
See host on host, from sea to sea, arise!
With brows unwrinkled, and with undimmed eyes,
With forms unbent by age, with unflecked hair,
A Nation's force and fire embodied there!
With springing, swinging step they Southward move,
Their youthful hearts aflame with newborn love
For that dear Flag they proudly bear above.
With loyal cheers the hills and prairies ring,
And patriot songs our fathers used to sing;
With beat of bounding hearts and vocal tongues,
Marching in time to Freedom's war-born songs;
Thund'ring their mighty cry from shore to shore:
"We're coming, Father Abraham, three hundred thousand more!"

II.

THE VETERANS AT LINCOLN'S BIER.

Hearken again! The tread of marching men!
As seasoned heroes see them come again!
Wh'er the Nation's Leader bade them on,
With hearts unflinching there that host had gone.
Through rivers stained with fratricidal blood,
In fevered camp, on battled field and flood,
Till o'er the war-thinned ranks of faded blue
Their tattered Union Flags victorious flew.
And now they come, his mourning Veterans come
To bear their fallen Leader to his tomb!
With arms reversed and draped, with muffled drum,
With Flags festooned with crape and drooping low,
With downcast face, with solemn step and slow,
The joy of victory quenched in tears of woe,
Amidst the Nation's sorrowing hosts they go!

TAPS.

Lights are out! Now to Rest!
On thy dear Native Land's loving breast
Comrade sleep, while we weep
Over thee!
Lights are out! Hero sleep,
While the Nation thine Honor will keep
Till the Angels shall sound
Reveille!

III.

THE VETERANS AT LINCOLN'S CENTENARY.

Companions, Comrades, we are met once more!
The old-time summons sounds; but from the shore
Whereon the spirits of the Mighty Dead
Repose in Peace, the Leader and the Led.
A Remnant we; yet, through the parting wall
So near, so thin, we seem to hear his call
Whose fadeless Fame is the resistless thrall
That draws his Veterans, draws the Nation all!
We come—a grizzled, bowed and broken corps;
The rushing ride, the weary march, are o'er;
No more on battle-deck or battled plain
We feel the thrill of martial zeal again;
But round the hearth, or mimic camp-fire's blaze,
Or mustered where the great assembly pays
Its tribute of undying love and praise,
Live o'er with waning zest, our war-time days.
Yet, though these failing limbs wax weak and old,
One spot within our hearts shall ne'er grow cold,
Nor Honor burn with less effulgent flame—,
Where reverent love records our LINCOLN'S name!

IV.

VETERANS OF THE CONFEDERACY.

And former foes, no longer foemen, come,
Their hostile passions silenced at his tomb.
His name they knew; but now they know the Man;
Large hearted, broad of mind, no partisan,
But covering in his care his erst-while foes;
Eager to ease their hurts, and soothe their woes,
War's bitter hates and cruel hurts erase,
And bind its gaping wounds with friendly peace.
So, when the winds obscuring fogs displace,
The Sun comes forth and shows his radiant face.
And now they twine with leaves of Southern palm
Our Northern laurels; and with palm to palm
In union clasped, his Memory we embalm!
Thus, North, and South, and East and West, to-day
Join in the loving Tribute that we pay.

The Tribute

Child of the Forest, o'er thy natal cot
The winter winds blew through the naked groves.
Great monarchs of the wildwood, he hath got
From you that soul of primal human loves,
Simple and strong and large, type of the plan
Great Nature offers when God builds a Man!
Great frame, great aim, great soul, Great Heart, were thine,
A chosen vessel for a task divine!
Child of the Forest, Man of Destiny,
With Nature's vigor young, Heaven dowered thee
To lead the Nation's youth to victory,
And seal this land forever One and Free!

Child of the Prairies! in thy tingling veins
The vital nurture of the boundless plains,
Thy soul grew large, and ever larger grew,
And swept their vastness with still vaster view,
Till all the Brotherhood of Human-kind
Lay in the generous compass of thy mind.
The racial mark was not satanic brand,
But Nature's stamp by One Paternal Hand;
With thee, not office, wealth or social state
Were titles sole that men are truly great,
But Character—the virtuous Life and Aim,
To Manhood's highest rank the surest claim.
Child of the wide, free Plains, Heaven dowered thee
To break all yokes and set the bondsmen free!

Father of Waters, coursing many States,
Binding their shores; not shutting, opening gates,
See on your bosom broad our Hero ride,
Cleaving with stalwart arm your mighty tides!
Child of the Rivers! Heaven hath dowered thee
To seal for aye the Nation's stern decree,
The Mississippi's flood shall still run free,
Unvexed from Rocky Mountains to the Sea!

Child of the People! in his blood are mixt
The sturdiest types within our borders fixt.
Born in the South; of Puritan descent;
Reared in the West when Life, in full ferment,
Gave native forces widest, freest bent;
Nursed at a wise and faithful Mother's breast,
His boundless debt to whom he e'er confest;
Nurtured in want that spurred him to his best
Cradled in virtues that restricted waste;
Mated in love to one whose wifehood drew
To loftiest aims; his friends both wise and true,—
Good Providence, kind nature, social code,
Life's gifts were all so happily bestowed,—
And mixt so well the Elements of Man,
That they in him attained their noblest plan!
Child of the People! So let Lincoln live,—
The worthiest title Freeman may receive!
The noblest title Freeman's hearts can give!

HENRY C. McCOOK.

