

PATIENCE

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# Abraham Lincoln's Personality

## Patience

Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

# The Journal

## LINCOLN, THE PATIENT.

"Patience is a necessary ingredient of genius." The quotation is from Benjamin Disraeli.

One might know nothing of Abraham Lincoln and yet recognize him as a man of infinite patience by one glance at that wonderful face in every line of which is written tolerance and forbearance. Lincoln used to joke about his own homeliness. Posterity looks lovingly on his sorrow-laden countenance, no less than beautiful in its sadness, and takes issue with him. *Sioux City, Iowa*

Lincoln's sojourn in the White House was one long siege of sorrow and travail, from March 4, 1861, when he was inaugurated president, lacking the confidence not only of the people of the republic, but of his own party and even of his own cabinet, until April 15, 1865, when he died a martyr to his country's cause, but vindicated before the world as a man of wisdom and might. And during all that time it might well have been said of him:

With strength and patience all his grievous loads are borne,  
And from the world's rose bed he only asks a thorn.

2 12.1915

Lincoln had one single purpose in mind—to preserve the union. He lost sight of himself, absolutely, in his devotion to that purpose. Patience being a first cousin to unselfishness, Lincoln found much opportunity to draw on his store of it in his determination to save the republic, even at the cost of himself. What mattered it that he—an individual citizen—should be made to feel the sting of ingratitude, that he should be held up as the butt of ridicule, abuse and misrepresentation, that he should be forced to suffer humiliation and heartsickness, if only the union might be saved for all the people? Who was Abraham Lincoln that his comfort, his welfare, his peace of mind or his self respect should be considered alongside the life of the nation? All these and everything else he was willing to and did subordinate to that one great idea of preserving for generations that shall never cease to bless his name the United States of America.

President Wilson, in an interview in the Saturday Evening Post, recently recalled a characteristic reply that President Lincoln made when someone reported to him that Secretary of War Stanton had called him a harsh name: "Well, Stanton usually knows what he is talking about." As a matter of fact, Stanton had begun ridiculing and abusing Lincoln even before Lincoln had called him to his cabinet. He had even suggested the advisability of overthrowing the Lincoln government and setting up Gen. McClellan as military dictator. As secretary of war he was most troublesome to Lincoln, criticizing him freely, attempting to belittle him and often defying him. No one but Lin-

coln, under the circumstances, would ever have offered such a man a place in his cabinet and no one but Lincoln could for four long years have tolerated his imperiousness. But Lincoln's patience was a wonderful asset to him. It made him big enough to recognize Stanton's virtues as well as his shortcomings; and it made him wise enough to retain him as head of the department of war, because he seemed to be the most capable man in the country for that most difficult position.

Who but Lincoln would have suffered the interference and the abuse that Lincoln suffered at the hands of Horace Greeley and yet have so restrained himself as to be able, to his own great advantage and that of the republic, to rally Greeley to his cause at a most critical stage of the war? Who but Lincoln could have remained calm under the wicked charge of Gen. McClellan that the administration at Washington was bent on destroying the Army of the Potomac for purposes of politics, and then heaped new honors on the head of his accuser? Who but Lincoln could have watched a conspiracy which entered even into his own cabinet to weaken his administration and raise Secretary of the Treasury Chase to the presidency, and then, when opportunity presented itself, raised the same Chase to the chief justiceship of the supreme court?

What an example indeed of self-sinking and forbearance—this great president of a great nation in a great crisis—for those of us who in our own little everyday affairs may be inclined how and then to exaggerate the importance of both our own selfish selves and our problems—to chafe perhaps under the seeming ingratitude of a friend—to fret over apparent lack of appreciation on the part of a cold, cold world—to rebel against a mysterious perverseness of fate in dealing us out our share of prosperity and joy!

Who but Lincoln could have treated the south with the magnanimity and the patience he showed from the beginning to the end of the great struggle? It was always with sadness, unsullied by any thought of revenge, that he viewed its desperate effort to wrest itself from the republic. Unwavering, to be sure, in his purpose to preserve the union, his thought, nevertheless, seemed ever to be set on how best he might solve the overwhelming problem with least humiliation and disaster to the south. He seemed never to lose sight of the fact that he was president of the entire nation and not only a part of it—that in spite of the wholesale incorrigibility in its midst, he was the father and protector of the whole family of the United States.

Truly, if, as Disraeli suggests, patience plays an important part in the making of genius, then was Abraham Lincoln one of the world's greatest geniuses.



# Patience in Diplomacy

BY LOUIS MURPHY:

1916

Is there understanding of the enormity of the burden President Wilson is bearing today and has borne since the very day of his inauguration? No president since Abraham Lincoln has been called upon to exercise so much of the rare virtue of patience as Mr. Wilson. Mr. Lincoln had to bear with war; he had to steel his nerves to withstand the shock of disaster to the union's troops; he had to suffer the disappointment of men raised to leadership falling at crucial times and he had to, with collected wits, seek out other leaders while the fire of conflict raged about him; he had to look upon fields strewn with dead and view on every hand the waste of carnage; he had to stifle the sentiment in his breast and say to mothers pleading for the lives of their sons that their sons must die, and he had to face through years the prospect that the tomorrows held no promise of an end to the fratricidal strife.

Lincoln had to bear with more than this, but it was more casily borne because it affected himself and not others. It wounded him, not them. He had to bear with cruel lampooning, with insult, jeer and contemptuous reference to himself, with misrepresentation, abuse and slander. He was persistently misunderstood. He had to recruit his faith, as great men in despair must always do, in prayer and lean for support upon nothing earthly, but upon God. Never in the world's history, nor in the Biblical narrative of Job was there patience to compare with Lincoln's. Through the perspective of years men now see the very marvelous strength of the man, the supergreatness of his qualities of head and heart and the wisdom of his mind.

Woodrow Wilson has been spared the horrors of war. He has not been called upon to witness saturation of the soil with the blood of American soldiers through months and weary years, and to say in the presence of the horror, "the war must go on." But he has been daily crucified with apprehension that the morrow might bring war—crucifixion as extreme in its cruelty to an imaginative mind and a sensitive soul as pain that follows the fact. Like Lincoln, whose name must be synonymous with patience through all future time, Mr. Wilson has been patient, to a fault his critics say, as Lincoln's enemies said of him. If Lincoln had been impatient, we see now, there would have been disaster worse than the war of the rebellion. And if Woodrow Wilson were impatient, this country would now be ringing with the wails of sorrowing women.

At a time when the leading candidate for the presidency of the opposition party indicts President Wilson for his diplomacy, which is to say for his patience, let thought be taken of the virtue of patience. "All human power," said Balzac, "is made

up of time and patience; men of influence watch and wait." E. B. Browning accounted patience synonymous with power, "I worked with patience which means almost power." Disraeli, than whom England never had wiser judge, declared that "patience is a necessary ingredient of genius." Lowell set up endurance as "the crowning quality," and "patience all the passion of great hearts." Patience and peace as cause and effect Dekker thus groups:

"Patience, my lord! Why, 'tis the soul of peace;  
Of all the virtues 'tis nearest kin to heaven;  
It makes men look like gods."

It was the crowning glory of Lincoln that he was merciful; it was the richest fruit of his administration that he was patient and his patience of the enduring kind. History is in the making and no man knows what the new day will bring forth. Yet knowing much of the temper of nations which do us wrong, that the wrongs they do us are without malice against us and are the outgrowth of what they regard as their necessities, we can afford to be patient with them until the time comes when, as Burke said, "forbearance ceases to be a virtue." We were better consigning our destinies to the keeping of one who has proved his greatness in his patience than to one who has proved his weakness to his impatience. And we were better employed in giving him the strength imparted by encouragement to go on being patient, than harass and badger him with criticism arising from our own impatience. He is carrying a burden of responsibility that might easily become a crushing weight—bearing it bravely and strongly without complaint and without retort in kind to foes who seek not national peace or common good, but selfish ends.

The cost of the Villa expedition to date is \$1,000,000, or nearly 40 per cent of the internal revenue collections in Iowa during the fiscal year ended June 30, 1915. Those who talk of war in one breath and complain of taxation in the next, have here food for thought.

Following the outbreak of war, England, desiring to keep the money out of Germany's hands, refused to guarantee against capture German ships interned in American ports which Americans purposed to buy, and the deal for their purchase fell through. Feeling now the urgent need of more ships, England wants neutrals to buy and operate the interned ships, but Germany refuses to sell. Neither England nor Germany foresaw what the submarine would do to commerce, or the one would not have prevented and the other would not have offered the ships for sale. The vision of statesmen is sometimes as far as the end of their nose.

## THE IMPATIENT LINCOLN.

The north has always believed that Lincoln was a man of inexhaustible patience, a patience born of a serene nature and a tolerance of human frailty. That is the quality of the Lincoln who stands in Lincoln park and in even greater measure it is the Lincoln who sits in serenity in the Doric temple at Washington.

Lincoln's patience, we have been taught, was never better displayed than in the months between his election in November and the call for volunteers in April, 1861. A southerner whose admiration for Lincoln is great presents a contrary view in the current Scribner's.

"After the election," he says, "though the south was out of the union it was peacefully out. The time, it would appear, was a time for conciliation. President Lincoln seemed to be conciliatory but in reality he was not, for he would consider no concession. He underestimated the spirit and the earnestness of the south. Almost any concession would have been better than the sacrifice of more than a half million the bravest Americans. . . ."

In support of this view, Lincoln is charged with provocative behavior at Fort Sumter and far more provocative behavior in calling for volunteers immediately afterward. In addition, it is charged, he acted without calling congress. Had he shown greater patience he might have held Virginia and all the border states in the Union and without them the confederacy would have fallen of its own weight.

Lincoln was elected in November. On December 20, the Charleston convention met and South Carolina seceded. By February all the states from South Carolina to Texas had joined the movement, a government was set up, and the confederacy had elected its president. Congress, aware of the danger, had exhausted itself in drafting a compromise which would bring the south back into the union. The compromise was favorable to the south but it was defeated through the failure of six southern senators to vote. Subsequent attempts to achieve the same end offered small hope of success, and there must have been much reason to fear that should congress be called again, debate would excite rather than allay passion. On that point, we believe, Lincoln's position is unassailable.

Meanwhile, the south was arming, and there was no doubt what the arming was for. Lincoln's behavior was patience itself in contrast, for example, to the temper shown by Jackson at the attempt of South Carolina to secede in 1832, and that was a mild threat, indeed, in contrast to the one presented to Lincoln. Had he withdrawn the troops from Fort Sumter it is possible that the south might have repented of its rashness but it is at least equally probable that the surrender of the fort without a struggle would have encouraged rather than discouraged the secession movement in the border states. At best, the surrender of Sumter without a fight could only have created

a Sumter somewhere else unless the temper both north and south had miraculously cooled.

It is easy to say now that Lincoln might have hesitated longer before calling for troops. The bond of the union today is so strong that we are in danger of believing it was always so, and that the danger of disrupting the union was never really serious. It is nearer the truth to say that if the nation is close knit today, it is exactly because Lincoln acted as he did. The secession which he put down was the last which threatened the country but it was not the first. The revolt against the alien and sedition laws was followed by the far more menacing movement in New England during the war of 1812 and that in turn by South Carolina's attempt to break away in the thirties. Armed force was promptly applied or threatened in each instance, excepting only against the New Englanders, and then armed force was not used only because the President had none available. Whatever hesitation Lincoln showed in appealing to arms was in violation of the precedents established for him. Jackson would not have hesitated a moment, and it is difficult to see how any man of character elected President of the United States could long remain inactive while the union was dissolving.

When he called for volunteers Lincoln was making the only answer which could be made to the challenge. He had no assurance that delay would keep Virginia in the union and he had much reason to fear that delay would make the task of

defeating the rebellion far more difficult. In this he can hardly be convicted of impetuosity. He chose war only when no other course presented itself.

## REV C. G. CHRISTIANSON PREACHES ON LINCOLN

2 - 8 - 1937

### Glory of His Patience and Forbearance as Well as Persistence Lauded

The glory of Abraham Lincoln's patience and forbearance, and at the same time of his persistence was lauded in the sermon on "Lincoln, the Man Who Did Not Forget," preached yesterday morning at First Congregational church by Rev Charles G. Christianson. "Preaching one sermon on Abraham Lincoln is much like preaching one sermon on Jesus of Nazareth," Mr Christianson said. "It just cannot be done to any appreciable degree of adequacy or satisfaction. And in a single sermon all that one can hope to do is to pick out a few gems from a field containing innumerable treasures. When we speak of him as a man who did not forget, therefore, it does not mean that we purport to give the whole truth about him. It means, rather, that for the sake of expediency, we content ourselves with one aspect of his greatness." *S. Roberts*

Mr Christianson pointed out that Lincoln never forgot the human claim of every race, the equality of all men, although he might as easily have done that as some people do the bread lines and unemployed apple stands in New York city. Neither did Lincoln forget his responsibility to his country, or his partnership with God.

"Lincoln's deepest desire," Mr Christianson said, "was to present himself faultless before the judgment seat of the Most High. That accounts for the peerless conscience which was his. As one contemplates Lincoln's relationship with his God, the fact stands out that his faith in God was almost a naive faith, a complete trust in the power of God. Somehow he felt that God himself was shaping the policies of the nation. He felt that he was but a tool in the hand of God, that not he, but God was guiding the destinies of the ship of state, and that God was only using him to fulfill his purposes."



# Patience Of Lincoln

By **GEORGE MATTHEW ADAMS**

THE humanity and humility of Abraham Lincoln grow more pronounced with each oncoming year.

Continually, the more this life is studied, the more it is revealed as a Gibraltar of the Spirit—guiding mankind to higher ideals and clearer outlooks.

In the reading of any life of Lincoln there is revealed his great patience. He would stretch this patience to the point where he would be gravely criticized.

Lincoln was reviled and insulted by those about him, and throughout the country, but his great heart never revolted. He never worried whether God was on his side. What he strove for was to be on God's side.

Here was a leader who had faith, endless courage, and a belief in the higher laws of mankind. He believed in prayer, and, like Washington, habitually offered up a petition to the Almighty for strength and guidance.

He rejoiced in victory but did not believe in revenge. His was a magnanimous heart.

There is no figure in human history more inspiring than that of Abraham Lincoln.

*Pittsburgh (Pa.)  
Press*

*2-12-54*



# Lincoln: Man of Patience and Sublime Words

*No Ghost Writer for Author Who Himself Lived the Gettysburg Address*

## Paul M. Angle in the Introduction to 'Abraham Lincoln: Speeches and Letters'

Mr. Angle, former Illinois State Historian at Springfield and now with the Chicago Historical Society, has edited a new book, *Abraham Lincoln: Speeches and Letters* (Everyman's Library, published by E. P. Dutton & Co., New York). The following is taken from his introduction to this collection which covers the whole range of Lincoln's adult life.

Lincoln took office of 4th March 1861, an untried man. He had had legislative experience; he possessed a logical mind and had the ability to reduce complex issues to simple terms; yet there had been nothing in his life to prepare him for the ordeal he faced. He rose to the challenge magnificently, and guided the nation through four years of war precipitated by the South's determined attempt to secede from the Union.

And at the same time that he was burdened almost beyond endurance by cares that furrowed his face and wore down the rail-splitter's iron physique, he wrote some of the most sublime prose to be found in the English language.

## Emancipator as a Writer

The totality of Lincoln's truly great writing is not large. It would include, when measured by the severest standards, perhaps only the Gettysburg Address in its entirety, a half-dozen letters, and passages in other speeches, notably the first and second inaugural addresses. But of what other writers devoting their lives to the creation of pure literature, can much more be said? And who, at his best, has surpassed the finest work of this man who never completely mastered the niceties of composition, who read almost nothing?

Even below the summit of achievement, Lincoln's writing has compelling interest. Except for a short-lived venture into verse and the story of a bizarre incident from his early years at the Bar, he wrote only for utilitarian purposes. Most of his letters were those of a practicing lawyer, a politician, a high government official. Disregarding two or three lectures, he made speeches in the same capacities.

Although there were certainly times when he consciously strove for effect, on the whole he sought merely to make himself understood, and, when the situation warranted, to convince. Yet this workaday prose exhibits a style simple, direct, terse, which can also be imaginative and metaphorical.

## Ideas and Severe Logic

If two sentences would cover Lincoln's purpose he wrote two sentences, but he did not subscribe to the fallacy that any short letter is better than a long one. If he needed four pages to develop an argument, he took four pages, just as he did not hesitate to make a speech of three hours' duration.

Few writers have ever advanced ideas with more severe logic. (Whether he derived the logical habit of thought from his study of Euclid, or whether an innately logical mind aroused his interest in Euclid, is an open question.) And always, in his prose, there is clarity—clarity in such high degree that only in the rarest instances does one have to read a sentence a second time in order to comprehend its exact meaning.

Still, if the criterion were solely literary, public interest would hardly

support even a limited compilation of Lincoln's writings. But the criterion can never be solely literary. What Lincoln wrote is indispensable to an understanding of the man. The strictly autobiographical documents are few, brief, and incomplete, but they supply facts that could have been established only with great difficulty if at all, from other sources.

Much more important is the light which Lincoln's letters and speeches shed upon his character, personality, and the quality of his mind. Often a casual letter discloses a trait more convincingly than the commentary of long-time associates and friends. He was honest, his contemporaries have said, but their testimony has had to do with the kind of honesty that leads a storekeeper to return an overcharge, that impels a lawyer to take scrupulous care of his clients' money.

What of that greater, rarer quality that induces a politician to state his convictions with complete candor, even though he courts defeat by doing so? No one who follows Lincoln's course on the Mexican War, or reads his speeches in the debates with Douglas, can doubt that here was a man who valued integrity above success.

What of those human qualities so universally admired, so uncommonly practiced—patience, humility, sympathy for the unfortunate and sorrow-stricken, gentleness of spirit? That these were attributes of Lincoln is abundantly proved by letters to hot-tempered friends, to ungenerous critics, to young men discouraged by initial failures, to parents and relatives of soldiers killed in battle.

What of his conception of moral values? His whole discussion of the slavery question reveals one for whom no sophistry could cloud the distinction between right and wrong; who also, knowing that distinction, would

stand unwaveringly on what he considered right. Yet his mind was such that while he could know the right as it concerned relations between men, he could only grope for it as it existed between men and God. But here too his writing shows him to have been a deeply religious man or—unthinkably—an unconscionable hypocrite.

These qualities and characteristics of Abraham Lincoln are aspects of the image which millions of his countrymen have ever shared since his death. Other traits, also exemplified in his writings, the general public has chosen either to ignore or to minimize. He had ambition. For more than 30 years he sought election to office without attempting to dissemble his desires, yet many continue to picture him as one who, but for the urging of his friends, would have effaced himself in the practice of the law.



Abraham Lincoln

He was patient with imposition, but he was not supine. In any personal relationship there came a point on which he would not yield—a point which patrons of his post office, political opponents, generals, and finally the people of the South, discovered to their consternation. Occasionally he became testy, and sometimes at small irritations; less frequently he blazed with anger.

**Your  
Birthday  
By Stella**



*Born this date in 1809. U. S. President Abraham Lincoln*

**Born Feb. 12** you are a person of great patience. Always willing to bide your time, to wait for others to catch up with you before moving on physically or mentally, you never become annoyed when time passes without any real progress being made

**Sunday, February 13**

**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 21-Feb. 19) — Try to talk quietly to small children.

**PISCES** (Feb. 20-March 21) — This may be the time to lie low within the confines of your own room.

**Born Feb. 13**, born today, you are an expansive person who enjoys thoroughly relationships with other people. You possess an exceptional sense of humor, a wry wit, and a sense of timing that enables you to use both to fullest advantage. Your ability to make others laugh, to enable them to see the lighter side even of their own most serious problems, makes you not only a person others admire but also one they depend upon for their own feelings of well-being.

# LINCOLN'S PATIENCE WAS VAST

'Of Kentucky White Trash,  
Was Finest Type of American,'  
Says Pastor Davis

The birthday of Lincoln was observed last evening in the West Adams Methodist church when the Rev. W. L. Y. Davis, the pastor, spoke on the Life of Lincoln, saying in part:

"Entering upon his career when his country was torn by disension, Lincoln was the sanest, sereneest, sublimest character of the century.

"Born of Kentucky white trash, he was the finest type of American. A southerner, he died for the south. A Virginian by descent, he turned his country aside from the traditions of his fathers, and under the sanction of battle smoke abolished the slavery of an alien race.

"Loving peace more than any man, he was hurled into the midst of that most hateful of all conflicts, civil war. Having the exquisite balance of a sensitive nature, he was neither depressed by defeat nor exalted by victory.

#### Moved with Multitude.

"Learning little of the jurisprudence of men, but much of the eternal justice of God, he said with a fine statesmanship. A house divided against itself cannot stand. Keeping his ear close to the great heart of the republic he moved with the momentum of the multitude. Passing into the palace of the presidents, his race entered there.

"The whole civilized world stood astonished at this prodigy of the people and the temerity of his genius. The satellites of Europe observed and regarded him as the disturbing factor in their orbits. Jeweled hands of court leveled their glasses upon his unconventionality. But when the caps and gowns of the east perceived a western woodsman giving direction and diplomacy to the state, which had become accustomed to receive these things from the Puritans of New England and the cavaliers of Virginia, their hitherto fettered frenzy knew no bounds. Slavery he came not so much to destroy as the union to save; but in saving the union he destroyed slavery.

#### Patient as Destiny

"Whether receiving a delegation of critics, or dismissing a hostile cabinet; routed at Bull Run, or rejoicing at Gettysburg; enduring McClellan or defending Grant; pardoning a picket or freeing a slave; he was ever the same loyal, loving, Lincoln—never without a parable of hope, ever as patient as destiny.

"Commanding in presence, crystal in thought, childlike in spirit! Real in humanity, buoyant in responsibility, conscious of destiny! Infinite in resources, tender in controls, Galilean in forgiveness! 'The man for the ages!' Lincoln, lover, liberator!"



# WHAT LINCOLN TAUGHT

## HIS LESSON THAT PATIENCE IS SUPREME.

Abraham Lincoln has taught the rest of humankind many lessons. He dealt not with the deathblow to the institution of slavery in America and he preserved the United States that it might offer to his posterity the noblest experiment in democratic government the world has ever seen.

Lincoln gained immortality by his statesmanship. Lincoln won immortality by his valiance.

But Abraham Lincoln did more for all of us than even that. He taught us the supremacy of patience. For patience is supreme in the art of living.

There is a granitelike calm in the face of Lincoln. Men say it was there in life. The greatest sculptors have caught it in death.

And that deep serenity on the face of a man of destiny was not the

serenity of sadness or cynicism. It was not put there by bitterness—though Lincoln had much to make him bitter.

It was the serenity of patience. Lincoln was the great example of both repression and expression. He "let himself go," but he let himself go with high courage straight into the heart of a holy cause.

But faced by the cruel arrows of thousands who thought he was either malicious or crazy, faced by the ever harder criticism of friends who could not understand him; there settled upon him the great repression. And in silence he rose above annoyance and irritability and insult.

He became for all time the sublime figure of Patience in a rampant world.

JOHN CARLYLE.

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#### FLATTERY OF PUBLIC MEN.

The London Spectator, in an interesting discussion of the dangers of flattery to public men, cites Abraham Lincoln as an instance of a public man whom flattery could not affect. It is a fact that there has seldom been an instance of a public man who was less tempted in this way than was Lincoln. The people admired him and were loyally true to him. They saw his greatness sooner than did those in public life. As regards the latter, Lincoln was continually criticised and troubled by them. There was never one of their number to tell him that he was greater than Washington, or even anywhere approaching to the plane of Washington. He was continually found fault with by his own party associates at the capital; not a few of them were inclined to refuse him a second term in the presidency, and some of them intrigued to prevent his having this. The saintlike patience with which Lincoln bore up under this was a beautiful trait in his character. Something made him very strong. Perhaps it was not opposition, but certainly adulation had no part in it.





