

Views on Business

Drawer 4

Vocations

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Abraham Lincoln's Vocations

Views on Business

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

Industry Hews Closer to Lincoln's Ideals

By B. C. Forbes.

LINCOLN'S grip upon America, upon the world, increases. The reason?

In a small southern city years ago a country lad was rapidly making his mark in a bank. Country folks especially were attracted to him, and the bank's business was increasing at a rate which attracted local attention. One morning a country caller stood waiting outside the bank and asked a passer-by when it would open. After giving the information and being told the visitor's mission, the local citizen asked, "Tell me, why do so many of you folks from the country come to see this young man?"

"I suppose it is because he is so durned common," came the reply.

The youthful banker was Percy H. Johnston, who, when only in his thirties, became president of the famous Chemical National Bank of New York.



B. C. Forbes.

IS it not because he was so "durned common" that Lincoln's hold upon mankind grows? George Washington typified the flower of America's aristocracy. Abe Lincoln personified democracy.

Shakespeare charmed the intellect of his own day and of all subsequent generations, but Dickens won a warmer place in the hearts of his fellow countrymen and he is more widely read in Britain than is Shakespeare. Sir Walter Scott, an aristocrat, delighted with his brilliance; but it is Robert Burns, who foresaw and sang of the essential democracy of the human race, that lives and glows incomparably today. Burns was the prototype of Lincoln. It was Scotland's plowman bard who foretold "it's comin' yet, for a' that, that man to man the world o'er will brithers be for a' that."

WHAT can the industrial and business world learn from the career of Lincoln?

Among other things, the value of winning good will, the co-operation, the loyalty, the liking of others; the importance of becoming saturated through and through with the spirit of democracy; and, too, the wisdom of generously sharing honors and rewards with others.

AMERICA'S towering business organizations are today run more democratically than before. The president of General Motors carries this principle so far that he never issues an order to those associated with him; every problem is fully discussed by all those interested and affected and no step is taken until all agree on its desirability. Also, this most profitable of all the world's corporations is the most liberal sharer of profits with those who help to make the profits, from high executive to ordinary workman.

AMERICA astounds Europeans who come here to study our industrialism. They cannot fathom how it has been possible to bring about the co-operation existing here between employers and employed, between executives and wage earners. The enthusiasm of workers over new "records" achieved by their concerns baffles foreign employers as well as foreign trade union delegates sent over here.

THIS spirit of co-operation is becoming vividly illustrated, also, between companies engaged in the same industry. Trade associations of all kinds are multiplying as never before. Helpful knowledge gained by one concern frequently is made freely available to other concerns. Discoveries made in our numerous magnificent research laboratories are promptly given to the world.

THE modern industrial and business trend in the land of Abraham Lincoln is becoming increasingly in harmony with the character and ideals of Abraham Lincoln. Critics may sneeringly deny it, but it is profoundly true that the goal set by the most enlightened of our great business enterprises today is the better service of the public, the furnishing of the greatest possible value at the lowest possible cost.

THE closer industrial America hews to Lincoln's principles and practices, the more Lincoln is set by as a model by our ambitious young men, the more worthy will the nation become of his struggles and sacrifices.

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The Real Abe Lincoln —Was He a Good Businessman? What Became of Booth?

February 12 is Abraham Lincoln's birthday anniversary. Each year The Pathfinder gets a great number of questions asking why Lincoln's birthday isn't a holiday like George Washington's? Lincoln's birthday is a holiday in 21 states and Alaska while February 22, Washington's birthday, is a holiday in every state in the Union and all the territories. Why?

There are several reasons why Lincoln's birthday is not observed as a holiday as extensively as Washington's. In the first place Lincoln was a sectional president and naturally was never very popular in the South. Tennessee is the only former Confederate state which has made Lincoln's birthday a legal holiday.

Then, too, Abe picked out a bad time to be born. Washington's birthday was already widely observed long before Lincoln was born. Besides, right after Christmas and New Year's some people think it is too much to observe two holidays in February within 10 days of each other.

In some states, however, Lincoln's birthday is even more extensively observed than Washington's. Last year practically the whole year was given over to observance of the 200th anniversary of Washington's birth and we didn't hear much about Lincoln's birthday or any other birthday. But this year things will be more normal and Lincoln will get his dues. Perhaps the biggest Lincoln day celebration each year is at Springfield, Ill., where the great Emancipator is buried.

Although Lincoln has been dead for



Statue of Lincoln as a youth—a 23-year-old volunteer in the Blackhawk war—the work of Leonard Crunelle of Chicago.

nearly 68 years (we hope we don't make any clerk's face red) the post-office at Springfield recently received a letter from a Chicago business firm addressed to Abraham Lincoln at that place. But that clerk shouldn't feel too badly about it because Abraham Lincoln himself was notorious among his colleagues and fellow lawyers for his lack of business system.

It was his habit to put things in business letters that no careful business man would think of including. While he was a partner of Stephen T. Logan at Springfield, Lincoln had occasion to write to a wholesale store at Louisville, Ky.

After notifying the firm as to the result of a lawsuit in which they were interested Lincoln added: "As to the real estate we cannot attend to it. We are not real estate agents, we are lawyers. We recommend that you give the charge of it to Mr. Isaac S. Britton, a trustworthy man, and one whom the Lord made on purpose for such business."

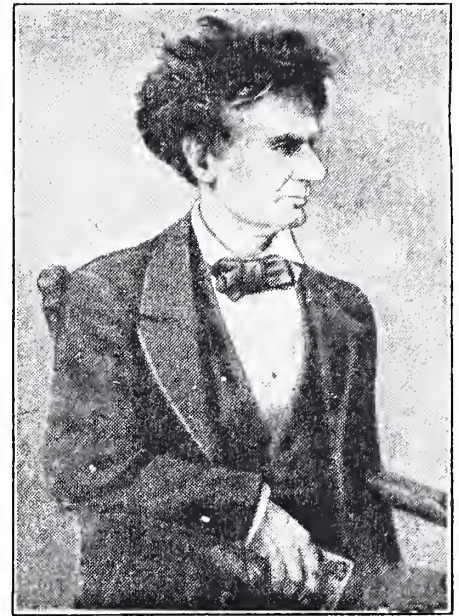
One of the readers of The Pathfinder, Viola Richardson, who now lives in Mexico, sent us the accompanying picture of Lincoln. She calls it the real Abraham Lincoln and says: "Those admirers of Lincoln who prefer to know him as he was rather than as some idealists would prefer to picture him, will be delighted with this unique portrait from the original photograph, which for 55 years has been in the possession of Park H. Sercombe, now of Mexico City."

The date the picture was taken is not known, but it was in the days when the young firm of Lincoln and Logan, attorneys, was practicing in Illinois towns.

Circumstances regarding the taking of the picture, as related by Abram Brokaw, wagonmaker, when he presented the picture to Mr. Sercombe, follow: One morning young Lincoln sat on the Bloomington court house steps chatting with his friend Brokaw, running his fingers through his great shock of hair, while waiting for court to open. A lawyer friend came up and dared Lincoln to have his picture taken with his hair all tousled. Lincoln took him up and they went across the street where the picture was made by a photographer named Waterman.

Almost every school boy and girl the country over knows the story of John Wilkes Booth's assassination of Abraham Lincoln as told in accredited text books on American History. Yet every once in a while a new myth crops up or some writer makes a mistake in facts, which only serve to recall the assassination of the Emancipator and give wing to the many conflicting stories and myths of Booth's supposed escape.

Other questions frequently asked our query man are: Did Booth really escape? Was he killed in Virginia or Maryland? Where was he buried? etc. History tells us that John Wilkes Booth paid the penalty for his assassination of President Lincoln with his life when he was shot in the head by Sergeant Boston Corbett while attempting to escape from the barn on



Lincoln as a Young Lawyer

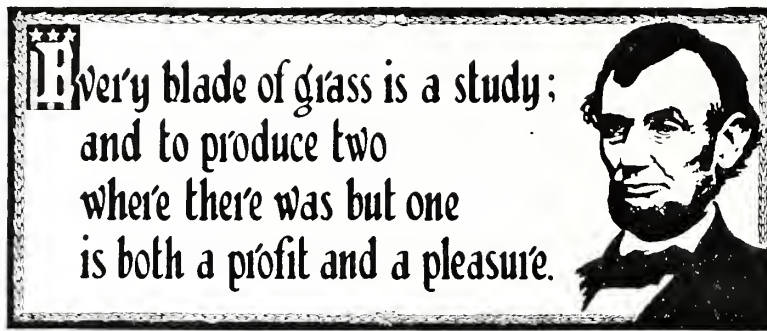
the Garrett farm near Port Royal, Va., (not Maryland).

Booth, an American actor, was born in Maryland, and was yet a young man when, on the night of April 14, 1865, he shot Lincoln in the head in Ford's theater in Washington. The presidential party had gone to the theater to witness a performance of "Our American Cousin."

In leaping from the presidential box after the shooting the assassin broke his left leg. But he managed to get to his feet and across the stage shouting "Sic semper tyrannis" (So may it always be with tyrants) and "The South is avenged." He escaped through a side entrance to the alley where he mounted his waiting horse and made his get-away to Southern Maryland. His leg was set by Dr. Samuel Mudd, but the riding Booth was forced to do over rough country unset the leg.

Aided by a few southern sympathizers Booth and David Herold, one of his fellow conspirators, crossed the Potomac, and on into Virginia across the Rappahannock river to Garrett's farm where federal troops surrounded them in a barn, set fire to the barn, captured Herold and shot Booth. Booth died several hours later and was brought to Washington on a boat. At the local navy yard his body was identified by Dr. John F. May, famous surgeon who had performed an operation on Booth's neck.

The assassin was first secretly buried under a cell in the old seventh street arsenal or federal prison which stood where the Army War College now stands. The body remained there for something like two years when Edwin Booth, famous actor, secured an executive order permitting him to have the body exhumed and transferred to a Baltimore cemetery. At that time the Booth family fully identified the body. Records of the Maryland Historical Society show that it was taken from Washington to Baltimore and put into a vault until final interment in the Booth family plot in Greenmount cemetery on June 6, 1869.



By

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The Business Philosophy Of Lincoln

The sound business philosophy of Abraham Lincoln will endure as long as his name is known. While he has not often appeared in the role of philosopher, yet one who is at all familiar with his writings, marvels at his understanding of human nature.

Having gained such information as he was able to acquire through "the pressure of necessity" as he remarked, it is not strange that he could speak from experience in both the fields of success, and the fields of failure.

Abraham Lincoln polled all but three of the 281 votes cast in his own precinct in his first political effort when but 23 years of age. At 25 years of age he was elected to the Illinois Legislature. Two years later he was chosen Whig floor leader of his party in the legislature. When but 29 years old he was selected as the minority choice for speaker of the house in the same legislative body. In both of the presidential elections of 1840 and 1844 he was chosen a presidential elector for Illinois. In 1854 his congressional term was vindicated

by his election to the General Assembly of his state. Two years later he received an unsolicited vote as nominee for Vice President in the First National Republican Convention at Philadelphia. Two years later he received a larger popular vote than his famous rival, Stephen A. Douglas, in the Senatorial Campaign, and in 1860 was elected the 16th president of the United States.

He could speak about success from experience and these timely proverbs which we glean from his writings help one to understand the background of his remarkable achievements:

"I need success more than I need sympathy."

"Having made the attempt, you must succeed. Must is the word."

"Success does not so much depend on external help as on self reliance."

"We cannot succeed unless we try and if we think with care, we can succeed."

"Let no feeling of discouragement prey upon you, and in the end you are to succeed."

"We can succeed only by concert. It is not 'Can any of us imagine better' but 'Can we all do better?'"

"Always bear in mind that your resolution to succeed is more important than any other one thing."

"I say try, if we never try we shall never succeed."

"You cannot fail if you resolutely determine that you will not."

"Determine the thing can and shall be done, then we shall find the way."

"The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion."

"It is a difficult role and so much greater will be the honor if you perform it well."

"When you lack interest in the case, the job will very likely lack skill and diligence in performance."

"Whatever piece of business you have in hand, before stopping, do all the labor pertaining to it which can then be done."

LINCOLN LORE

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LINCOLN'S COMMENTS ON LABOR AND CAPITAL

The industrial unrest everywhere evident, makes it timely to compile some of the statements which Lincoln made with reference to the problems of labor and capital as they existed in his day. Care has been taken not to include passages which referred directly or indirectly to the status of slave labor which was then a live question. It should be remembered that Lincoln lived in a period previous to the machine age and its systems of industrialism with which we are so well acquainted.

"There is no permanent class of hired laborers among us."—1854.

"Universal idleness would speedily result in universal ruin."—1847.

"Advancement—improvement in condition—is the order of things in a society of equals."—1854.

"No good thing has been or can be enjoyed by us without having first cost labor."—1847.

"No men living are more worthy to be trusted than those who toil up from poverty."—1862.

"Labor is the great source from which nearly all, if not all, human comforts and necessities are drawn."—1859.

"Let not him who is homeless pull down the house of another, but let him labor diligently to build one for himself."

"The hired laborer of yesterday labors on his own account today and will hire the labor of others tomorrow."—1854.

"Labor is like any other commodity in the market—increase the demand for it and you increase the price of it."—1862.

"Inasmuch as most good things are produced by labor, it follows that all such things of right belong to those whose labor has produced them."—1847.

"When one starts poor, as most do in the race of life, free society is such that he knows he can better his condition, he knows there is no fixed condition of labor for his whole life."—1860.

"Property is the fruit of labor; property is desirable; is a positive good in the world. That some should be rich shows that others may become rich, and hence is just encouragement to industry and enterprise."—1864.

"The strongest bond of human sympathy, outside the family relation, should be one uniting all working people, of all nations, and tongues and kindreds. Nor should this lead to a war upon property, or the owners of property."—1864.

"What is the true condition of the laborer? I take it that it is best for all to leave each man free to acquire property as fast as he can. Some will get wealthy. I don't believe in a law to prevent a man from getting rich; it would do more harm than good."—1860.

"It has so happened, in all ages of the world, that some have labored, and others without labor enjoyed a large

proportion of the fruits. This is wrong, and should not continue. To secure to each laborer the whole product of his labor, or as nearly as possible, is a worthy object of any good government."—1847.

"Labor is prior to and independent of capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration. Capital has its rights, which are as worthy of protection as any other rights. Nor is it denied that there is and probably always will be a relation between labor and capital producing mutual benefits."—1861.

"The habits of our whole species fall into three great classes—useful labor, useless labor and idleness. Of these the first only is meritorious, and to it all the products of labor rightfully belong; but the two latter, while they exist, are heavy pensioners upon the first, robbing it of a large portion of its just rights. The only remedy for this is to, so far as possible, drive useless labor and idleness out of existence."—1847.

"There is no necessity for any such thing as the free hired laborer being fixed to that condition for life. Many independent men everywhere in these States a few years back in their lives were hired laborers. The prudent, penniless beginner in the world labors for wages a while, saves a surplus with which to buy tools or land for himself, then labors on his own account another while, and at length hires another new beginner to help him. This is the just and generous and prosperous system which opens the way to all, and consequent energy and progress and improvement of conditions to all."—1861.

". . . Men who are industrious and sober and honest in the pursuit of their own interests should after a while accumulate capital, and after that should be allowed to enjoy it in peace, and also if they should choose, when they have accumulated it, to use it to save themselves from actual labor, and hire other people to labor for them, is right. In doing so, they do not wrong the man they employ, for they find men who have not their own land to work upon, or shops to work in, and who are benefitted by working for others—hired laborers, receiving their capital for it. Thus a few men that own capital hire a few others, and these establish the relation of capital and labor rightfully—a relation of which I make no complaint. . . ."—1859.

"It seems to be an opinion very generally entertained that the condition of a nation is best whenever it can buy cheapest; but this is not necessarily true, because if at the same time and by the same cause, it is compelled to sell correspondingly cheap, nothing is gained. Then it is said the best condition is when we can buy cheapest and sell dearest; but this again is not necessarily true, because with both these we might have scarcely anything to sell, or, which is the same thing, to buy with.

"These reflections show that to reason and act correctly on this subject we must look not merely to buying cheap, nor yet to buying cheap and selling dear, but also to having constant employment, so that we may have the largest possible amount of something to sell. This matter of employment can only be secured by an ample, steady, and certain market to sell the products of our labor in."—1847.

