The Lincoln Mass of American People

Edgar R. Harlan

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Friend Morris:

I have heard it insinuated that Baker has been attempting to get you or Miles or both of you to violate the instructions of the meeting that appointed you to go for him. I have insisted and still insist that this cannot be true. Surely Baker would not do the like. As well might Hardin ask me to vote for him in the convention.

Again, it is said there will be an attempt to get up instructions in your county requiring you to go for him. This is all wrong. Upon the same rule, why might not I fly from the decision against me in Sangamon and get up instructions to their delegation to go for me. There are at least twelve hundred whigs in the county, that took no part. And yet I would as soon put my head in the fire as to attempt it. I would feel myself strongly dishonored by it.

Besides, if any one should get the nomination by such extraordinary means, all harmony in the district would inevitably be lost. Honest whigs (and very nearly all of them are honest) will not quietly abide such enormities. I repeat, such an attempt on Baker's part can not be true. Write me at Springfield, how the matter is. Don't show or speak of this letter.

As ever yours

A. LINCOLN

April 14, 1848.
THE LINCOLN MASS OF AMERICAN PEOPLE

BY EDGAR R. HARLAN

Herewith we reproduce in facsimile all original letters from the hand of Abraham Lincoln known to be owned by the State of Iowa. They all came by gift to the Historical Department from those addressed or from their heirs. No comment, other than the explanatory notes we make, is needed. For everyone who is versed in Iowa history knows all to whom Lincoln wrote these letters. All others who are expert in Lincoln lore seek only the thoughts of Lincoln. These letters are authenticated by the script of the Lincoln hand.

It is interesting to note that by both land and water routes peoples had come into and gone from the area including the mouths of the Illinois and the Missouri rivers throughout untold generations prior to white men’s arrival. These paths leading to and from the Cumberland Gap and the Alleghenies and beyond, beginning like rivulets, then rose almost to flooded outlets from reservoirs of civilized society. Flowing by gravity along these ancient channels to their confluences, they finally commingle in the social lowlands of the Lincoln region. From the stuff for civilization they carried in suspension there slowly precipitated that solid character and consistency of purpose of a people for which the entire area is now historically known. As this mass rose and leveled back along the affluents of the Mississippi it formed a people of common level and uniform consistency, with neither strata nor fault of structure.

We feel that these letters support the proposition seldom exhaustively discussed if ever stated by accepted authority, that Lincoln was not different unless in height and breadth from those who composed society about him. The earliest of these letters reveals him clearly. It also reveals his correspondent no less
clearly. Lincoln drained through his quill and across the page into the mind of his correspondent, part of his own character. Had that letter been received by a weak hand and read only by a negative mind, it would yet have revealed Lincoln's purpose, process of thought and method of expression. His strength and style would have been as fully shown. But that letter reached its destination; bore into another's strong mind a part of Lincoln's, making of the matter mutual thought and moving two minds to act, and to act as one. And so it is with all the letters we have here set out.

Each letter is not only self-proved, but is addressed to a person who at the time of its receipt or afterward, was a citizen of Iowa. So Lincoln influenced, was influenced by and mutually performed or refrained from performing in association with these Iowa men. By other evidence, of course, immeasurably more was done by Lincoln and Iowa men in consequence of other contacts, direct or indirect. That helps one to see that there was no interval in time or space between the people of the settlements and between those of the states in the upper Mississippi Valley on and earlier than Lincoln's death April 15, 1865. There had been both constancy and consistency of Anglo-Saxon blood flowing into that area coursing through the heart of the English common law throughout the time after the English acquired the eastern, and the United States the western portion from the French. Society, as we conceive it, solidly established itself, filled that social vacuum with people such as Lincoln—a mass that might now or later be thought of as the Lincoln Mass.

It is true that Lincoln was distinguished beyond others of his mass. It was the mere difference of altitude and expanse. Facts and forces that actuated or impelled him worked throughout the mass. Lincoln was a railsplitter, but only one of thousands of them. Lincoln was a lawyer, a surveyor, a legislator, but neither alone, nor conspicuous as such. He was but second in all these to hundreds of his mass. Nor did he claim, or aim at fame through any of them. What he aimed at and what is here claimed for him is that, as shown by these letters and the thousands like them, he was with and of the mass and rose above without rising from it; remained of its grain and fiber; supported and was supported by the common genius and purposes of his mass. That
this mass was of Illinois is clear, but not clearer than that it was not all of Illinois, or that Illinois was not the whole of it. The mass was never cloven by boundaries of counties or states earlier than or during his time, as Lincoln's identity is not split today by the boundaries of nations, languages or cultures.

Circumstances showing the consistency of the mass, recognized in early Iowa, are still apparent. Lincoln and Peter Cartright were briefly in contact as politicians, but Cartright's empire was Methodism, whose paths he trod to the uttermost limits of that expanse, even to camp meeting grounds in Van Buren County, Iowa. The widowed mother of Ann Rutledge took Presbyterian paths. Among her surviving children and among scores of the pioneers of this Lincoln mass of people she spent her last years in the same county. Mrs. Nannie B. Manning, George C. Duf- field and others of Keosauqua attended Lincoln's funeral at Springfield, in frontier spirit of neighborly respect.

These letters, as mere utterances of Lincoln, were and remain vital. They established and now prove mutuality of thought and action by Lincoln with those receiving them. To an extent the recipients are shown to have added to the bulk of Lincoln. From a fragment of this Lincoln Mass two hundred years deep and a thousand miles across, our state was formed. The letters imply that whoever studies Lincoln but overlooks the Iowa portion of this Lincoln Mass, has not fully surveyed the Lincoln theme. Whoever knew or knows only Lincoln, yet knew none or few of the persons, processes and events of that whole mass from which Lincoln rose, is an unreliable leader of thought through the history, philosophy, tradition or romance of Abra- ham Lincoln. Interpretation of these letters will amply indicate that as Iowa was formed of the Lincoln Mass so Lincoln was of Iowa both in symbol and in fact.
Springfield, Ills, Sep. 11, 1857.

Yours, of the 30th, I just received.

There is some mistake about my expectations at Warrensville.

of the 10th. I don't wish to go to your City on the 12th, and
of the 14th. I have not the slightest idea of being
there. It is true, I have to be present at the race for
some one person, if I neglect my law,

in this year as well as last. It would please me

much to see the city, and good people, of

. But for this year it is better for me to stay,

in Washington.

I am constantly receiving invitations which I am

compelled to decline, and I am praying earnestly to

my friends in this situation, that I may be able to

go to all of them. I am now offered two places, to

be Judge in Ohio. These last two prompt me to

go there. I am ready to take the

flying trip to Columbus by steamboat,

and to spend a few weeks there. It

I do hope you will have no personal trouble

in town. What thinks you of it? I

have met many about the

city.

- President Lincoln.
Sprangfield, Ill., April 21, 1860

Hawkins Taylor, Esq.

My dear Sir:

Yours of the 15th just received. I trust you have written twice, without receiving an answer. I have been answered as I have received from you. Some certainty and peace (my return from the East—Opinion here, as to the prospect of Douglas, being nomination and quite conflicting.) Some very confident he will, some other that he will not be. I think his nomination possible, but that the chances are against him—

I am glad there is a prospect of your party passing this way to Chicago. With you to make your visit here as pleasant as we can, we wish you to notify us as soon as possible, whether you come this way, how many, and when you will arrive.

Yours very truly,

[Signature]
Springfield, Ill. Aug. 11, 1860

Mr. B. Miner, Esq.

Dear Sir:

Yours of the 9th inst.
newspaper p.p. attached; I receive;
ones for which I thank you.

Yours trly,

A. Lincoln.
Executive Mansion.

March 12, 1861

Hon. Postmaster General:

My dear Sir:

I understand that the outgoing and incoming Representatives for the eleventh district were for recommending Edmund Lowe, for P. W. in the city. The Senator Parsey has considered the case & declined to interfere. Neither (so other Mr. interferes) knows their circumstances, if correct, I think Mr. Lowe better an appointee.

Yours truly,

A. Lincoln

NOTE: Letters addressed to Postmaster General were transmitted to John A. Kasson, Assistant Postmaster General, and were by him given to the State of Iowa.
Executive Mansion
March 13, 1861

Honor Father.

Dear Sir,

The bearer of this
Mr. C. J. Kemper, is a
Virginia man who wishes to get
for his son, a small place
in your Dept. I think
Virginia shown his home,
in such case.

Lincoln
Executive Mansion.

Washington, April 24, 1862

Mr. Post Master General

My dear Sir,

The [illegible] of lower Green from the District including Shown it calls on me about the Post Master at that place. I believe I turned over a copy of the to you from some person. The story a suspension, so as for them to be known, or something of the sort. If nothing, or nothing amounting to anything, has been done, I think the suspension might now be suspended, and the Committee go forward.

Yours Truly

A. Lincoln
Executive Mansion,
Washington, July 31, 1862

Honorable Joseph A. Wright
My Dear Sir,

Our mutual friends R. W. Thompson, and John P. Usher, assure me that they believe you more certainly than any other man, can carry the Tama County District for the Union cause. Please try. The effort shall not go unappreciated, so far as I am concerned.

Yours truly,

A. Lincoln
Executive Mansion,
Washington, Aug. 31, 1865

Honor. W. T. Yellott

My dear Sir,

I have determined to appoint you Collector. I now have a very special in light of matters which is, that you will make it known to Mr. Watkins, and also to me, if you can do something for some of the persons in this business.

Abraham Lincoln
AN ACT to regulate the duties of the Clerk of the House of Representatives in preparing for the organization of the House.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That, before the first meeting of the next Congress, and of every subsequent Congress, the Clerk of the next preceding House of Representatives shall make a roll of the representatives elected and place therein the names of all persons, and of such persons only, whose credentials show they were regularly elected in accordance with the laws of their States respectively, or the laws of the United States.

Approved March 3, 1863,

Executive Mansion

Hon. James M. Slidell,

My dear Sir:

The above Act of Congress was passed as I suppose, for the purpose of putting an improper officer out of office, and some one in whose judgment it did not decide to what act or of what order;--some having an act, there a deduction would be made of the State, the other would be made of the order of the State. I suppose that they may or will be ordered, but that, for greater certainty, you, or perhaps Mr. Washington with you, can meet the Governor, and have an assurance, that the order is according to the form or the act, half of the order, and place another, or, if you can, by stating the law, think of a form that will make proper, prove accidental, certainty, and quite legal the whole or with you to be made in case of necessity. Yet what you give the right state.

Your truly,

A. Lincoln
Executive Mansion
Washington, July 15, 1864

Dear Hon. Greeley,

New York

I suppose you received my letter of the 9th. I have just received yours of the 13th. I am disappointed by it. I was not expecting you to pen me a letter, but to bring me a man, or men. Mr. Hay goes to you with my answer to your letter of the 13th.

A. Lincoln

[Handwritten note:]

Reed 11:25 a.m.
Sent 12/33
By
Surely Ex-Min
Having served four years in the depths of a great and yet unordered national peril, I can view this call to a second term, in no wise more flattering to myself, than as an expression of the public opinion that I may better finish a difficult work, in which I have labored from the first, than could any one else properly shoulder to the task.

In this view, and with assured reliance in the Almighty Ruler who has so graciously sustained us thus far, and with increased gratitude to the generous people for their continued confidence, I accept this renewed trust, with its yet onerous and perplexing duties and responsibilities.

Please communicate this to the two Houses of Congress.

The above is the original manuscript of Abraham Lincoln's acceptance of his second presidential term in his own hand writing, delivered to the joint committee of Congress appointed to inform him officially of his election.

The committee consists of:
- Senator Lyman Trumbull of Ill.
O Captain! my Captain!  
Our fearful trip is done,  
The ship has weather'd every rack,  
The prize we sought is won.  
The French, I hear, are calling,  
While follow eyes the steady keel,  
That marks them true and daring;  
But O heart! heart! heart!  
O the bleeding drops of red,  
Where on the deck my Captain lies,  
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bell;  
Rise up, for you the flag is flung - for you the eagle lifts  
For you the bonnets and ribbons wave - for you the  
Shores are crowding,  
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;  
Here Captain! dear father!  
This arm begrudges your head:  
It is some dream that on the deck  
you've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,  
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulses nor will.  
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, her flag to every yard  
Furled, from fearful trip the victorship comes with object won.

But O heart! heart! heart!  
With best wishes, prayers and love for the  
people of Iowa — W. W.
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