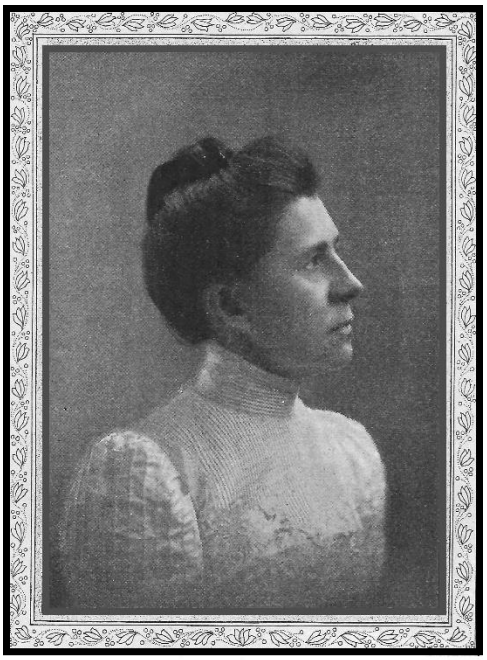
Introduction to Ida M. Tarbell

Miss Tarbell wrote biographies on Elbert H. Gary, the first chief executive of U.S. Steel, and Owen D. Young, chairman of the board of General Electric. She authored a series of articles on the "Life of Napoleon" for *McClure's Magazine*, and she worked with a former Assistant Secretary of War, Charles A. Dana, ghostwriting his *Recollections of the Civil War*. Her *History of Standard Oil* exposed to the public one of the most powerful and exploitative monopolies in American history. President Roosevelt branded her and her associates with the unique identifying moniker of muckraker because he believed they were only concerned with "debasing" and "the vile." Although she did not like being classified a muckraker, she is recognized as one of first and most visible of the profession.

Ida M. Tarbell,
***McClure's Magazine*, April 1898**

A passage in *Owen D. Young: A New Type of Industrial Leader* expresses her frustration with being typecast in such a negative role. She closes the foreword with, "I have never been one who felt that the praise of him you believe to be a good man is a shame to a writer, any more than I have felt the condemnation of a man you believe evil is a particular virtue in a writer." She called the concept of muckraking "stupid." She felt that the profession eventually replaced a "passion for facts" with a "passion for subscriptions." But as the passage of time has shown, when Miss Tarbell captured, evaluated and wrote down her facts, she searched—not just for the worst in humanity—but also for the best. She believed it was her job to do both, and (as shown in the footnote) *McClure's Magazine's* subscriptions were the better for it.[1]

[1] Ida M. Tarbell's "Life of Napoleon" began in *McClure's Magazine* in November 1894 and finished in April 1895 and was called by the magazine, "the most successful feature—by far. … Rarely, in all the course of magazine publication has there been a success equal to it." It was surpassed a few months later by the "Early Life of Lincoln." Ida Tarbell's first article on Abraham Lincoln added more than 40,000 new subscribers within ten days of publication, and by the release of her third article, the series added a "clear increase" of 100,000. This raised *McClure's Magazine's* subscriber base from 150,000 to 250,000 in just three months. Her series the "Life of Lincoln" started in November 1895 with "Abraham Lincoln" and appears to have ended with "Lincoln's Funeral" published in September 1899.



Ida M. Tarbell,
McClure's Magazine, October 1902

She was a hard woman. She focused her mind on the integrity of facts and in her writings, preserved for posterity what her disciplined and inquisitive intellect discovered. She applied the accountability of facts to what and about whom she wrote. The leadership of the suffragettes felt her pen's pointed analysis. She never disagreed with or sought to hinder their long-term objective, but she found their tactics quite disagreeable: she openly challenged the movement's leaders who painted women as victims with men as their eternal oppressors. When others said that women had been forever oppressed, she wrote articles on some of the greatest women of the American Revolution and of her day: Mercy Warren, Abigail Adams, Esther Reed, Mary Lyon, Catharine Beecher, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Success was not only within a persistent woman's reach but, in many cases, had been achieved. She saw the leadership of the suffragette movement turn what should have been a forward movement for the combined male-and-female democratic masses into a divisive war of the sexes: it may have been tactically smart, but it was strategically wrongheaded.

To her, the human spirit was the backbone of democracy. To implement a law without a long-term change of heart was promoting a change without a solid foundation because laws can never fully light a righteous path. Even the most just of laws are sadly ineffective in the hands of those with a pathetic, non-ethical compass. This meant that the means were critical in achieving sustainable, life-changing, long-term ends. She believed that to establish a lasting social change an informed mind must overturn a righteous heart's wrongly-held convictions. It is the righteous heart guided by a right-thinking mind that must lead the way, not legalities or an over-zealous, counterbalancing extreme. Her simplest touchstone commandment was, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you," just as it was so many of America's greatest 20th Century industrialists.

As amazing as her prose was, she felt her calling was not as an author; as insightful as this speech was, she never viewed herself as a gifted orator; but she was both a talented author and an insightful speaker because she remained faithful to her true calling: a journalist driven to find truths through research. She mined data. She searched through dust-covered records on long-forgotten shelves, and

critically assessed the insights of an all-to-fallible human recollection obscured by time or inflated by ego. Information spoke to her like few others of her day as she journeyed by train, canal barge, horse-drawn and horseless carriage to remote, small townships to decipher handwritten scribbles filled with misspellings.

In the following speech at the University of Michigan, she spoke about Abraham Lincoln. This day, if not an author or orator, she was a teacher. She demonstrated the value of on-going research that incessantly sought and welcomed new knowledge. Her entire journalistic career she researched, wrote and published material about Lincoln: a series of articles over four years for *McClure's Magazine*, several collections of finely-tuned biographical sketches such as a *Boy Scouts' Life of Lincoln*, multiple human-interest novellas such as *A Reporter for Lincoln: The Story of Henry E. Wing,* and a four-volume masterpiece entitled *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*.

In this speech of oratory excellence, Ida Tarbell brought Lincoln down from Mount Olympus and shared with a new generation his life on earth as Abraham. Her theme was simple: If we can understand how one of mankind's greatest leaders accomplished his life's goal, there is hope that others can and will emulate him. If we accept her premise, we can also believe that somewhere in an American classroom there sits a child who will raise *his or herself* up to lead us into a new century.

Although Ida M. Tarbell delivered her message in a bygone century, it still carries a modern-day relevance. It is especially pertinent in a country where cynicism is creating a vast void between two types of its citizens: those who only see roadblocks everywhere, and those who overcome their individual roadblocks to achieve success.

Do not despair; be forever hopeful; there is more to America than a superficial "passion for clicks" achieved through debasing and highlighting the vile.

Ida Tarbell found a way. Together, so can we.

Abraham Lincoln

An Address

Delivered

By

Miss Ida M. Tarbell

For

The Students' Lecture Association

Of the

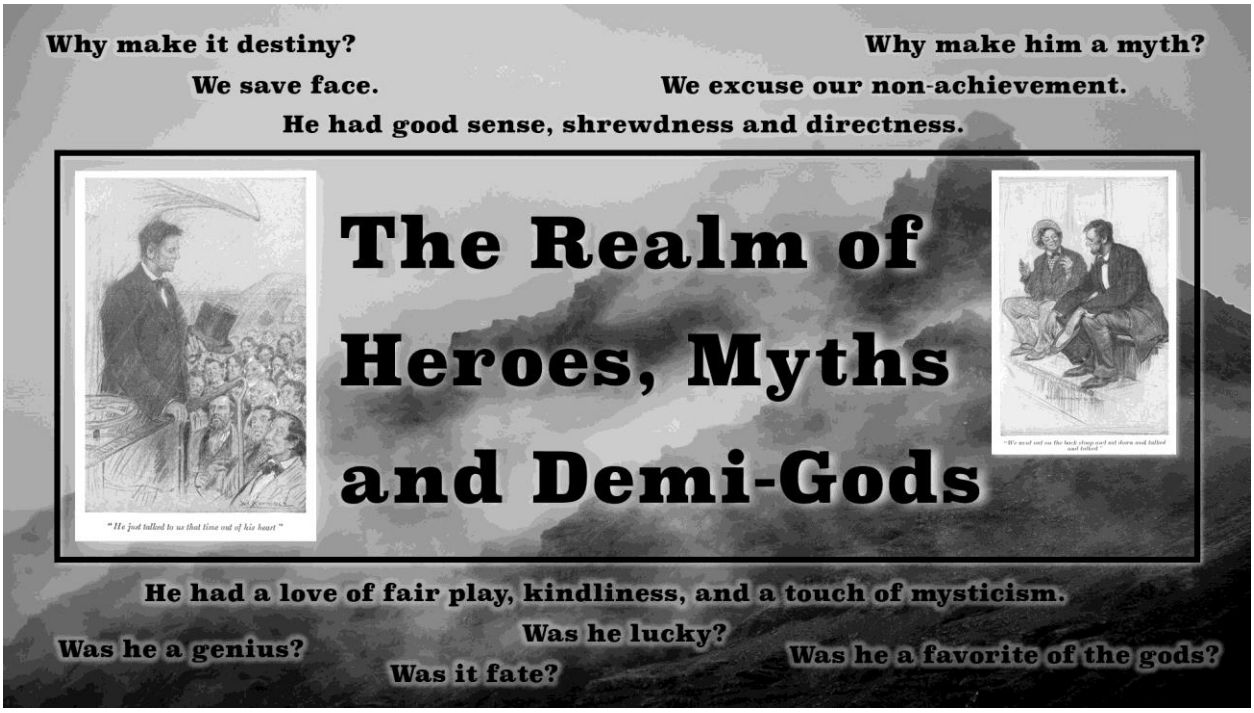
University of Michigan

Friday Evening, February 12, 1909

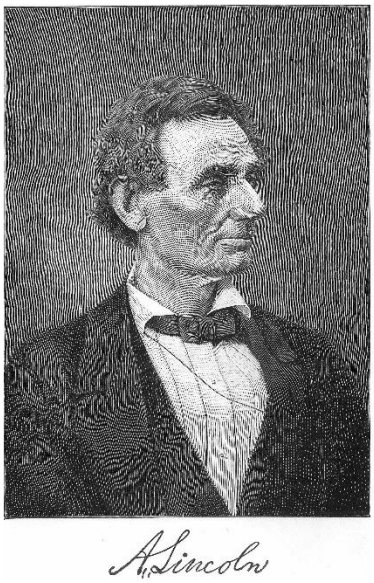
In commemoration of the

Centennial Anniversary of Lincoln's Birth

[subtitles added by Peter E. Greulich]



The value of Lincoln is as a man, not as a hero, myth or demi-god



Abraham Lincoln,
Selection of Letters, 1911

A man who leads a people safely through a period of war and danger runs the risk always of becoming blurred by tradition until he is little better than a myth. His proportions become those of the half-god, huge, dim, and uncertain. His mind is endowed with supernatural qualities. His acts are mysterious. He ceases to be one of us and becomes a fabulous personage that you cannot sit down comfortably with and study on something like an equal footing. It is never man-to-man with a hero. He is not a man. He is a myth.

There is an interesting psychology involved in this fact. It is easier to let the imagination play on a career than to face its facts. We understand facts so poorly – we dread so their inexorable logic. We are so inclined to underestimate what is and overestimate what might be. Fancy is so much dearer to us – and easier for us than reason – that we gradually elevate our hero out of our own ranks until we have him seated in Olympus or Valhalla, according as our learnings are Greek or Teutonic.

Then, too, when anyone achieves more than the rest of us we save our face – excuse ourselves for our non-achievement by endowing him with special qualities – special opportunities – special guardianship. He is a genius – a favorite of the gods – he has a star. He is lucky. Kipling hits off this tract when he makes Sir Anthony Gloster say in explaining his career: "I didn't begin with askings. I took my job and I stuck; I took the chances they wouldn't, an' now they're calling it luck." This is the tendency always in regard to a career of great moment to the world – to attribute it to something beyond ordinary human efforts and processes – to ascribe it to Destiny – Fate – Luck.

Ever since Abraham Lincoln's tragic death there has been a tendency to make a hero and a myth of him. Men early said that there was a mystery about his birth – that he was the son of an unknown but highly endowed father. A nonsensical claim with no foundation but gossip. Indeed, the parentage of Lincoln is far more fully bulwarked by documents than is customary in pioneer districts. Many who do not think of disputing his birth are ready to overlook his years of labor and say he was "raised up" to save the country, others say he was lucky, and when he was killed at the very moment of peace – a whole people dropped on its knees. He became in a moment a prophet, a priest, a Guide.

Now without denying the value to a people of a gallery of demi-gods, I do contend that as far as Abraham Lincoln is concerned he is eminently more valuable to this people if understood, and studied as a man like the rest of us. A man of high qualities, no doubt, but of qualities common in some degree to all of us.

Focus on the qualities of the man, not the man himself

"We went out on the back stoop and sat down and talked and talked"

He Knew Lincoln and other Billy Brown Stories, 1922

His endowment was a typical American endowment – good sense, shrewdness, directness, a love of fair play, kindliness, and a touch of mysticism. The difference between him and most men were less in the quality of the endowment than the methods he used in developing his endowments. I hardly know a character in history myself whom it is more satisfactory to study, for there never was a more logical career – one whose achievement was more directly and inevitably the result of the conscious and deliberate operations of the mind and heart.

It is not necessary to go far afield to search for the clue to Abraham Lincoln's life. It stares us in the face in every human

document of him from his boyhood up – an enormous interest in everything within his range: men, facts, ideas, coupled with a passion to understand. In any community, the mind that does more than dully to accept the facts of its immediate environment is rare. All the majority of us do is to take what is put into our minds and hands by others. It is not the way of the mass to ask at each stop, why, why, why, and not cease until we have an answer. Sadly enough, many of those who start with the insistent "why" are met with the authentic "don't ask questions," until curiosity is blinded, and they join the unthinking crowd.

In the humble community into which Lincoln was born his was the questioning, serious, prying, unresisting mind. A more unpromising field for a mind to bite on it would be hard to conceive. There in what we call a god-forsaken land, so dreary and unfruitful it seems – in a log cabin – with not over a half dozen books in it, with no teachers, except itinerant school masters, under the strain of severe physical toil to support daily life, without contact with educated persons, and with no stimulating opportunities, Abraham Lincoln familiarized himself with the laws of nature, learned the essential rudiments of mathematics and of civil government, became saturated with some of the greatest English poetry, learned the secrets of meeting men of all classes on equal grounds and of interesting and swaying them, acquired a mastery of English prose expression at once individual and elegant, one that by general concession of opinion places his among the masters of English prose, and kept alive his native spiritual qualities.

He did all this by grasping everything about him, turning it over, pulling it to pieces, putting it together, making it *his* in its facts, its spirit, its tendencies. His early schoolmates who have left their impressions of him invariably speak of his persistency in getting to the bottom of problems, his energy in committing to memory the contents of the books which came in his way, his zeal in hunting books, borrowing and reading them. One of his father's standing complaints was the boy's habit of dropping his work to talk with a chance traveler, his instance in taking part in the neighborhood discussions, and his remorseless pinning down of everybody to explain what they meant.

That was what he was always and eternally after – what things meant – what *people* meant. He grappled problems as if they were enemies on whose overthrow his life depended. He walked the floor with them at nights, the furrows with them by day – until he saw light. He must not only understand it, "see it" as we say, but must have it classified and arranged in his mind – placed where it belonged in his mind – in relation to other ideas and facts. I believe that Lincoln had the same necessity for intellectual order that many people have for physical order – mental slovenliness was as much a

discomfort and humiliation to him as having the buttons off the coat, the room undusted, the table badly set is a physical discomfort to most of us.

As each new idea or fact acquired was adjusted to what was already in his storehouse, he realized more and more the effect of new knowledge – the necessity for it. The result was he was always a student to the day of his death, always looking for the new knowledge, which would correct the old.

Verbalize your beliefs so a child can understand

When Lincoln had arrived at a satisfactory understanding he must put his conclusions into words. He seems, somehow, to have felt that the intellectual process was incomplete until expressed. No dead scholarship for him. What he believed he must say, and he must say it so any man, any boy, could understand it. Unless he could make it clear to others, he felt that the idea was not conquered, not yet really his. Hence, he was always trying what he had worked out on others – explaining things to them – forcing their indolent intellects to action.

To a friend who asked him once how he had achieved his pure style he said: "When a mere child, I used to get irritated when anybody talked to me in a way I could not understand. I do not think that I ever got angry at anything else in my life; but that always disturbed my temper, and has ever since. I can remember going to my little bedroom, after hearing the neighbors talk of an evening with my father, and spending no small part of the night walking up and down and trying to make out what was the exact meaning of some of their, to me, dark sayings.

"I could not sleep, when I got on such a hunt for an idea until I had caught it; and when I thought I had got it, I was not satisfied until I had repeated it over and over; until I had put it in language plain enough, as I thought, for any boy to comprehend. This was a kind of passion with me, and it has stuck by me; for I am never easy now, when I am handling a thought, till I have bounded it north and bounded it south, and bounded it east and bounded it west."

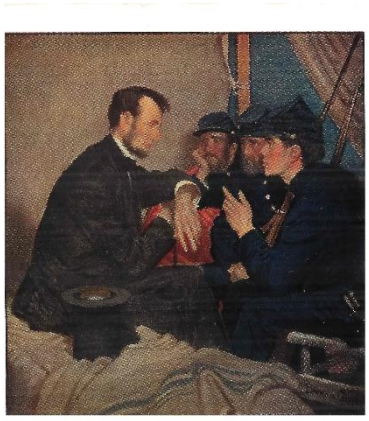
This passion for clear expression grew on him. The simplest words, the fewest, was his aim. Verbosity, undigested material, technicalities, always irritated him. A bulky report, weighted down with these faults, was once handed him, "Why can't an investigating committee use a little common sense," he said. "If I send a man to find out about a horse for me, I expect him to tell me that horse's points, not how many hairs he has on his tail!"

There was no smartness, no pretension, no imitation in what he wrote – it was always his – a clear, carefully turned phrase, distinctively personal – shaped purely to say what he wanted to say – to convey ideas or arouse emotion, not to show how well he could handle jargon. Nobody, indeed, ever indulged less in professional or literary cant[2]. His English was like his ideas – his own – and both were founded on his instinct for the truth and his patient effort to realize it in his conclusions, and his expressions.

The result of his painstaking [effort] was a mental machine of unusual strength and exactness, one which turned out judgements which were durable, workmanlike, trustworthy, expressed in language that a child could understand. The result of this training is that his writings are full of quaintly expressed wisdom.

Speak truthfully with an understanding of human nature

Some of his wisest reflections are directed to his own profession. People discussed much in his day, as I understand they continue to do, whether it was possible in the practice of law for a man to do as he would be done by. We know Lincoln was troubled by the proposition, but he worked it out finally, and in this way: "Discourage litigation," he wrote. "As a peacemaker the lawyer has a superior opportunity to be a good man. There will still be business enough."



"I Reckon He Learned More From the Soldiers Than He Did From the Generals"

Father Abraham, 1909

It was in the war that his philosophy came out strongest. Rarely [is there] a letter or speech in the period that is not marked by some quaint, effective putting of a wholesome truth. The result was an extraordinary literary output, a certain part of which, particularly the speeches, we are familiar with. His letters are too little known. They should be studied. He who would know Lincoln should read his letters. His letters to his generals were among the best things he ever wrote. Take the admirable letter he wrote to Hooker in January of 1863, when he appointed him to the command of the Army of the Potomac:

> General: I have placed you at the head of the Army of the Potomac. Of course, I have done this upon what appear to me to be sufficient reasons, and yet I think it best for you to know that there are some things in regard to which I am not quite satisfied with you. I believe

[2] The singsong of words without meaning. The word itself comes from the French word *canter* meaning to chant.

you to be a brave and skillful soldier, which of course I like. I also believe you to not mix politics with your profession, in which you are right. You have confidence in yourself, which is a valuable if not an indispensable quality. You are ambitious, which, within reasonable bounds, does good rather than harm; but I think that during General Burnside's command of the army you have taken counsel of your ambition and thwarted him as much as you could, in which you did a great wrong to the country and to the meritorious and honorable brother officer.

I have heard, in such a way as to believe it, of your recently saying that both the army and the government needed a dictator. Of course, it was not for this, but in spite of it, that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain successes can set up dictators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship. The government will support you to the utmost of its ability, which is neither more nor less than it has done and will do for all commanders. I much fear that the spirit that you have aided to infuse into the army, of criticizing their commander and withholding confidence from him, will now turn upon you.

Neither you nor Napoleon, if he were alive again, could get any good out of an army while such a spirit prevails in it; and now beware of rashness. Beware of rashness, but with energy and sleepless vigilance go forward and give us victories.

A. Lincoln

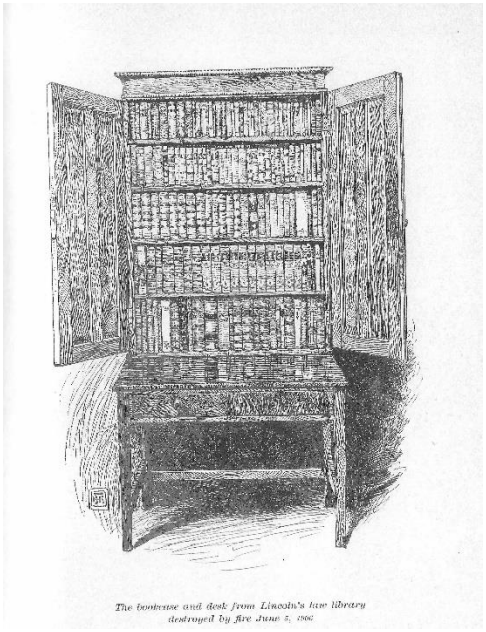
Quite as striking as the admirable common sense of this letter is its sense of Hooker's character. Lincoln understood men, their capacity, their limitations, what could be expected of them and what could not. It was one of his greatest elements of strength in the war.

Be forever the observant, confident student

One invaluable result to Lincoln of his continued effort to understand and put his convictions into plain language was the courage and confidence it gave him to attack any new subject which he needed to know. When he first decided to enter public life, he was only twenty-three years old. Up to that time he had been little more than a jack-of-all trades, as far as employments was concerned, but he was ambitious. He had studied carefully the so-called great men of his communities – the lawyers, preachers, State Assemblymen – trying to discover their secret, to make up his mind what there was about them, if anything, which was not within his reach. He concluded there was nothing at all. He

could, if he worked, do all that they had done. He would enter politics, announce himself as a candidate for the state legislature – those were the good old days before the convention system, you will remember. A friend to whom he confided his ambitions told him his English was too poor, that he did not understand Grammar.

"But I can learn it," Lincoln said. The story of how he did learn it is familiar enough. How thoroughly the work was done one has only to study his letters and speeches to realize. Outside of an occasional blunder with "shall" and "will" there is but one error in construction to which Lincoln was addicted throughout his life – he always split his infinitives. However, he has much good company in this.


The bookcase and desk from Lincoln's law library destroyed by fire June 2, 1906

Abraham Lincoln, 1907

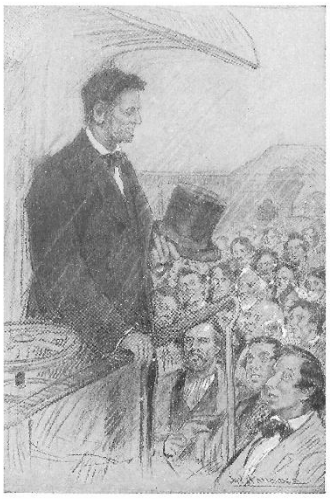
Lincoln learned surveying as he had the opportunity, practically unaided in six weeks. He attacked law in the same way. Then Lincoln came to the first great test of his powers, the study of the slavery question, his mind was ready for it—a mind accustomed to grappling and mastering hard questions. The series of speeches which he delivered between 1854 and his election of 1860, in which he developed his argument against the extension of slavery, must be counted, I think, as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, intellectual feat any American has ever performed.

The process by which he worked out his argument is worth the most careful study of everyone who aims to develop his intellect to its full capacity, to train himself to exact thinking and to sound conclusions.

Master the subject and seek new knowledge

To begin with, the man saturated himself with his subject: The very essential of any great intellectual performance. He studied it, handled it, lived with it until he gradually constructed an argument which was practically flawless. He was like a master builder putting up the framework of a great building. Every timber fits, every nail goes into the exact spot where it is needed, and no useless nail is driven, no piecing out, no defective material. It is a strong, well-proportioned, sound framework. Such was

Lincoln's argument in his anti-slavery addresses and letters. So sound was he, that no trick of oratory, no subtilty of argument, no brutality of attack on Douglas' part could surprise him.



"He just talked to us that time out of his heart"

He Knew Lincoln and other Billy Brown Stories, 1922

He not only saturated himself with his subject, but he was never satisfied that he knew it all – never satisfied that he had presented it in the best way. He used to say that he could never make the same speech twice, that the subject was constantly taking on new meaning – new significance. It was that which gave increasing freshness to his handling of the question. His mind was never allowed to get stale by incessantly repeating that with which it was thoroughly familiar. On the contrary, it was kept alive and stimulated by the addition of the new to the old – that is, he had the growing mind. He recognized that no matter how much we know on a subject we never know it all, that we can never get more than half the truth, do the best we can. One of the most conspicuous differences between Lincoln and Douglas in their debates was right there. Douglas thought he knew it all and he let his matter, his argument, become stale.

This is made particularly clear by comparing the way the two men treated fresh objections, facts or arguments. Lincoln tackled them promptly with zest and sincerity – welcomed them. Douglas evaded or ridiculed when forced to notice an unexpected point, and flew into violent passion. The one man was working his mind, the other was relying on the work he had done in the past. This eagerness for new ideas, new light, new material, was a source of enormous strength to Lincoln during the Civil War. He listened to every man, argued with every man, examined every man's papers, tested his opinions by every man's.

There was much fretting in Washington because he saw so many people, but he persisted. In his open office he got what he called his "public opinion baths," the refreshment and correction of points of view which he believed essential to keeping his mind informed and alive.

A leader must stand by their informed convictions

But if so ready to listen to the advice and judgments of others he was the hardest of men to move, when he had reached a conclusion. His conclusions were the result of so much close and patient study that they were naturally held tenaciously. Indeed, Lincoln would always give up any temporary

advantage in politics rather than yield an opinion, which he was convinced was correct. The most important thing to his mind was that his country should think right. It was his business before all to help her think right. If he believed a judgment was the true one, he must be true to that even if it cost him and his party the particular thing they were working for at the moment.

"You're actin' like a lot of cowards. You've helped make this war, and you've got to help fight it"

He Knew Lincoln and other Billy Brown Stories, 1922

There are two familiar illustrations of this, the first belongs to 1858, when in his debates with Douglas he insisted on asking a certain question which if answered as everybody believed Douglas would answer it, would lose him the election to the Senate of the United States, which he was contesting with Douglas. Lincoln asked the question, and lost the election, but he succeeded in getting the truth he wanted before the people, and it was the recognition of this truth and the fact that he stood for it that won him the nomination to the presidency.

In 1864 he did the same thing in regard to the draft. It was the summer before the Presidential election. The war was at a standstill. The country was growing daily more discouraged and consequently more dissatisfied with Lincoln. He saw that there must be a new outpouring of men. His friends besought him to wait until after the election, a draft would certainly defeat him. That does not matter, said Lincoln, we must lose nothing even if I am defeated. I am quite willing the people should understand the issue. My reelection will mean that the rebellion is to be crushed by force of arms, and he called for volunteers at the moment of greatest despair.

Now this is nothing else than the highest sort of integrity. It is what Kipling means when he talks of "doing the thing as we see it, for the God of things as they are." It is what Lincoln meant when he talked of "firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right." It is the most essential point in the development of the mind – this recognition of the necessity of being faithful to your conclusions. The mind is a proud and sensitive organ. Treat the results of its operations lightly – evade them, temporize them, juggle them – and it takes its revenge. It leads you where your will backs you up in false views—tricks and deceives you. It is just as essential that one play fair with his mind as that he feed and exercise it if he wants honest work from it.

Plant, water, apply faith, and patiently await the flower

A most important and most impressive part of Lincoln's handling his intellectual problems was his patience. He learned, early, one of the most fundamental principles of great achievement – that it takes time, that no great achievement is a stroke, a coup d'état, a leap, a flight, that it is always a growth. One of the superior advantages of those who are thrust largely on their own resources lies here. They are forced to learn patience if they conquer. They learn that the law of nature is that the mind, the heart, the life, shall unfold, not burst forth. Lincoln learned this in the hardest kind of a school – against every hindrance. He never had what we call facility – that is, he never learned easily – his nature was those which flowers late. But in spite of this slowness, the painful effort needed, he had a serene and unshakable faith: that flower and fruit are inevitable if you plant and water.

When he took hold of the anti-slavery problem, he recognized that no one campaign, or election would settle it, that it was a long slow struggle, and he was content to hold on through thick and thin, because of this belief. The contrast between Lincoln and his associates in this period is most instructive. The late Carl Schurz once told me that the defeat of Fremont in 1856 for a time overthrew his entire faith in popular government.

"I thought the cause of freedom was forever lost," Lincoln said of Fremont's defeat. "Let everyone who really believes and is resolved that free society is not and shall not be a failure, let bygones be bygones; let past differences as nothing be; and with steady eye on the real issue let us re-inaugurate the good old central idea of the republic. We can do it. The human heart is with us. God is with us. We shall again be able *not* to declare that 'all states as states are equal,' *not* yet that 'all citizens as citizens are equal,' but to renew the broader, better declaration, including both these and such more, that 'all men are created equal.'"

After his defeat in 1858, his party was much cast down. Lincoln accepted the result with a serenity inexplicable to his friends. "You are feeling badly," he wrote to one of them, "this too shall pass away. The cause of civil liberty must not be surrendered at the end of one or even a hundred defeats. The result is not doubtful. We shall not fail if we stand firm. We shall not fail. Wise counsels may accelerate, or mistakes delay it, but sooner or later the victory is sure to come." His vast patience, his high faith, never deserted him.

Even in the frequent heartbreaking disasters of the war, he kept it. As the news of one after the other of the awful defeats and retreats of the Army of the Potomac came to him, the news of Bull Run, of Fredericksburg, of Chancellorsville, the news of Lee's escape after Gettysburg – men saw him white and haggard, stagger in his steps, saw him drop his head in his hands and sob, saw him walk the floor crying wildly what will the country say, what will the country say: But he never gave up. By an almost superhuman effort he again and again put disaster behind him and turned his forces to the needs of the moment.

"What Am I That Thou Shouldst Ask This of Me"

Father Abraham, 1909

Understand and motivate men

The methods Lincoln used in attacking intellectual problems was the method used in handling men. He began by studying them. Take the situation in which he found himself at the breaking out of the Civil War. He was forced to find generals to lead the armies. He was obliged to choose them from untried stock. In the records of the war one can see his studying each new recruit at his work. At the end of practically every day he knew what each man had done, and he had formed his own private opinion of the wisdom of the move.

Take Grant at Vicksburg, plodding, taciturn, self-contained – a butt for the complaints of the fanatical and the impatient. Lincoln was by no means sure of him. As a matter of fact, he doubted the wisdom at first of practically each move that the general made in the approach to and siege of Vicksburg. But he kept silent, watching and waiting, supporting himself on the answer he gave those who clamored for Grant's removal, "I can't spare this man, he fights." When his patience was finally justified, and Vicksburg had fallen, he frankly confessed to the General the doubts he had. He did it that everybody might know that Grant had done right, though he had been wrong. It was a shrewd lesson to the country in the wisdom of giving men a chance.

He was as careful always to gauge a man's limitations as he was his capacity. He saw that it was his duty both to a man and to the country to know what *could not* be expected of them as well as what could. It was one of his greatest elements of strength in the war. He generally saw nearly what he was going to get, but must supply from some other sources. If he knew a man was capable of rendering a given service, he would never throw him over because of something he knew he could not expect of

him or because his habits or actions which might be offensive to him in themselves. It was the secret of his patience with general after general, official after official.

Many are the stories which illustrate this. There is one of a certain important and very able and useful person who made a great deal of noise and fuss about whatever he had to do. His associates complained to the president. It was intolerable to be troubled by the man's lamentations.

"He reminds me of something I saw the other day at the launching of a ship. Everything was ready. The master of the yard had sent a young lad under the hull to knock out the trigger which was to release her, when I heard the most heart-breaking cries coming up from him. The officer did not notice them, and finally I said something must have hurt the boy. 'Why don't you send someone to his assistance?'

"The master smiled. 'No,' he said, 'He's all right. That's just his way. The moment he gets under the hull he begins squealing, but he always hits the trigger square and true.'

"And in a moment, he did it, and the boat glided into the water and the boy came out smiling. Now that's the way with this general. When he undertakes a piece of work he begins to howl. It's just his way. He only wants you to understand how hard his task is and that he is on hand performing. And that's the important thing. Don't mind him."

There are many examples of this humorous upholding of a valuable officer or official, who had disturbed somebody's nerves or prejudices. Probably the most valuable to the country was Lincoln's reply to the scandalized citizen who came to ask that Grant be relieved because he drank too much.

"What kind of whiskey does he drink?" asked Lincoln. "I should like to send some of our generals a barrel of the kind Grant drinks."

Disagreement and discord come with conviction and passion

Not even a personal insult would swerve him from appointing or supporting a man whom he believed useful to the administration. In the case of Edward Stanton, Lincoln had suffered a kind of insult very hard for a man of superior mind and character to overlook. An intentional rebuff, one founded solely on the fact that the outward appearance is not what the person is accustomed to or believes essential. Lincoln was always a badly dressed man. His clothes loose and ill-fitting, and not often renewed. His first meeting with Stanton was in Cincinnati, where both men had been engaged

as counsel in a famous [law]suit. One of the lawyers in this case once told me, with bitter self-reproach, of his and Mr. Stanton's attitude toward Mr. Lincoln.

"We knew nothing of him except that our client believed in him and wished him employed, and when he joined us in the hotel corridor, with his queer clothes and his big cotton umbrella grasped in the middle, we deliberately turned our backs on him. We snubbed him throughout the trial, because of his appearance. I feel that I deserve the humiliation I feel in telling this."

Mr. Stanton was bitter in his contempt for Lincoln later, but Lincoln learned at Cincinnati when he heard Stanton arguing the case that here was a great lawyer. He came to believe later that he was a great patriot and he brought him into his Cabinet for the sake of the country. And Stanton had not been long in the position before he learned as did Seward and Chase and many another, that this man of awkward manners and queer clothes was their master – absolutely and finally that *he* extracted and directed their policy. One by one they all came, Seward and Stanton among the first to say openly and honestly – He is the best man of us. It is not to be supposed that Lincoln was insensible to insults like that of Stanton at Cincinnati, to supercilious such as Seward showed at the opening of the administration. There is evidence enough that he was entirely conscious of the differences in general culture and address between him and many of his Washington associates, entirely conscious of the limitations of his education.

But nobody had a more just sense of the relative importance of things – estimated more exactly essentials and non-essentials, or planted himself more firmly on the proposition that character, intellectual integrity, ability to execute, outweighs the manner and the address. He never let the most perfect polish disturb his relations with those with whom he was dealing, nor did his own conscious lack of it hinder him in his business. He took men for what they really were and quietly compelled them to take him in the same way.

The rebuffs and superciliousness and neglect he received from those who judged him by his clothes and queer ways he treated with something of the same amused tolerance that he did the general who howled over his hard work but did it. It was childish, an evidence that they had not yet grappled with real things, not yet placed their values. If they did their part of the work of saving the Union, why he did not mind.

The result was that Abraham Lincoln grouped about him in the Civil War an extraordinary collection of different kinds of men, and before he was through he had the devotion and the reverence of them all.

The true value of Lincoln is to "see him" as a man

Father Abraham, 1909

These were the methods then which Abraham Lincoln brought to bear on his gigantic problems – the methods by which he helped men to help him – solve them. They are methods which he worked out almost unaided and the vast superiority of which he amply proved. Intellectual cleverness shows up poor enough when placed beside his intellectual integrity. Plausible theories and panaceas for settling hard questions seem flimsy stuff indeed when set beside the vast patience and downright hard thinking he gave them. The most brilliant maneuvering for tempting advantages crumbles to pieces when compared with his long-sighted campaigns for permanent results.

Never had there been a time in this country's history when we needed more the application of such methods to our national problems. We are struggling to rid ourselves of a carelessly administered democracy – abuses which we have as plainly fixed on ourselves as the country North and South allowed slavery to become fixed. Failure to recognize the inherent wrong of slavery, unwillingness to sacrifice property to justice, a fear of disturbing the peace of the country were at the time bottom of slavery's grip as they are at the bottom of our commercial evils. We have only ourselves to blame for them. We must strip them off and we cannot do it by resolving, they must go; we cannot do it by resolving that under some other system they would not exist. We are forced to deal with things as they are – work out the problem with men as they are.

What would Lincoln have done in our place, we hear people ask constantly. Backing up arguments with quotations from Lincoln has come to be the part of the equipment of every agitator and reformer. The prohibitionists, the women's suffragists, the labor leaders, preachers, teachers, everybody who has a cause tries to strengthen it through him. It is a tribute to the faith that the people have in him. But many of those who quote him fail to get from him the real help he has to give. It is not his particular opinion, not his wit and wisdom, not his wonderful and moving letters and speeches which

are his great contribution. The temper with which he approached his problem, the methods by which he handled them, there lies the deep and real lesson Abraham Lincoln has for every man or woman who would fit himself for service. His life is a call to self-training – of training of the mind until it can form sound workmanlike, trustworthy conclusions, training of the moral nature to justice and rightness, training of the will until it can be counted upon to back up the conclusions of the mind and heart.

It is a call to openness of mind, to willingness to learn, to be forever learning. Nothing is more significant for us in Lincoln's career than the way he constantly took a fresh grip on things most men would have thought they had mastered. For instance, after he was forty-five years old he began a fresh study of law. His first experience with Stanton led him to this. He saw Stanton was a better lawyer than him. "I am going home to study law," he told a friend in Cincinnati. "When these eastern folks come west, I am going to be ready for them."

His method is a constant lesson in liberality toward others – recognition of the fact that the other man's point of view has truth in it as well as yours. That you no more see all the truth than he does and that if what each of you see can be fused, a larger amount of truth will result.

Men who think rightly have Lincoln's potential

Above all this method is a revelation in what a man can make out of himself if he will – in the quality of service he can prepare himself to give. Indeed, I am sometimes inclined to feel that the greatest service Lincoln has done this country was to demonstrate what could be made out of a mind by passionate, persistent effort, what moral heights the mind would rise to if dealt with in perfect candor.

His life indeed gives a new and exalted idea of the capacity for endurance, for sympathy, for understanding, for reverence, and for the higher forms of happiness. He proves the preciousness of life under whatever circumstances. Indeed, the possibilities in all men's lives have been enlarged by this man's individual conquest. The best of it is that his *achievement* is democratic – something open to all – his *methods* democratic, something practical for all.

It is doubtful if this country, if any country, has produced a man so worthy of our study and our following as is Abraham Lincoln. Who indeed is there so fit to guide us in that highest of tasks – the giving of service? Whoever saturated himself so with his subject? Whoever trusted more utterly to the integrity of his logic, and to the appeal for the sense of human justice? Whoever put aside with more

contempt all the tricks of his trade – appeals to emotion simply to stir emotion, wit simply to arouse a laugh, subterfuges and evasion to escape valid objection? Whoever handled with more honesty and respect his tasks? Whoever struggled harder to understand not only with his head but with his heart, and understanding, wrestled more to make others understanding? Whoever looked more deeply, more gently, into the hearts of men, and having looked put into more moving words what he had seen?

He has no parallel. He stands in a towering lonely figure – a man who, by the persistent and reverential following of his own highest instincts, unaided, raised himself from the soil to place of the First American.

THINK Again: The Rometty Edition Overview

THINK Again is about IBM, its leaders, its employees, its shareholders, its customers, its supportive societies, and one-hundred years of their unique interactions. IBM has had its great, good, and bad moments; and, in this century, some of its ugliest. But there is still hope.

THINK Again is about IBM, but it IS NOT a technical book; "mainframe" is the most technical term used. THINK Again discusses IBM's finances, but it IS NOT a financial book; "goodwill" is the most complex financial term used to discuss the company's twentieth-century creation of *good* goodwill, and its twenty-first-century over-production of *bad* goodwill. It IS a book about one of America's greatest corporations: a business that deciphered the seemingly, impenetrable human equation to build an enthusiastic, engaged and passionate workforce that produced ever-higher revenue and profit productivity for eighty-five years.

THINK Again is about IBM's leaders and the risks they have taken. It is about a chief executive officer who personally sacrificed to deliver promised benefits to his employees. It is about a corporation that contributed to the survival of democracy during one of democracy's darkest hours—World War II. It is about the twentieth century's greatest investment gamble that delivered the mainframe. It is also about a corporation that in the twenty-first century has lost its institutional memory: it no longer understands the essence of the human business equation—that an enthusiastic, engaged and passionate employee is a productive employee. This failure has caused a disastrous, seventeen-year work slowdown unlike anything in IBM's history; not because of a labor union but from a natural human response to poor human resource practices. To find prosperity in its second century, IBM will need a new leader who will execute a business-first strategy that returns value to all the corporation's stakeholders.