

# LINCOLN LORE

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## LINCOLN LORE

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### ENGLAND'S APPRAISAL OF LINCOLN

Much has been written about the attitude of the English people toward our Civil War president. Withdrawn from the immediate scene of the struggle and observing from a non-partisan view-point the manoeuvres of the rival statesmen and military leaders, these English writers might be expected to give an unbiased appraisal of Lincoln's worth.

In all the great mass of Lincoln literature which the editor of Lincoln Lore has examined, no brief paragraph has been discovered which more truly sets forth the underlying characteristics in Lincoln's personality than does the following tribute by an anonymous writer in London:

"Not by birth, not by the sword, not by the influence of wealth; not by intrigue, not by the clamour of the mob, not even by remarkable superiority of talent, of eloquence, or of learning, but by untiring energy, by unswerving integrity, by uncompromising courage, by kindness of heart, by general humor, by strong common sense, by respectable talent, and by moderate eloquence, has Abraham Lincoln commended himself to his countrymen and won himself a place amongst the princes of the earth."

This appreciation written shortly after Lincoln's election and before his inauguration seems to have escaped the pen of the political eulogist or the demagogue. It is a part of the introductory chapter of a book entitled "A Memoir of Abraham Lincoln, President Elect of the United States of America." The preface states that the book is "a short sketch of that man's career who takes command of the American State-ship upon the eve of what threatens to be the blackest weather she has yet encountered." This foreword is signed R. B. and dated London, Jan. 9, 1861.

With this auspicious introduction of Lincoln it is interesting to compare the reaction of the English people after the assassination of the president, as revealed by their leading newspapers.

*Globe*

"Mr. Lincoln had come nobly through a great ordeal. He had extorted the approval even of his opponents, at least on this side of the water. They had come to admire, reluctantly, his firmness, honesty, fairness, and sagacity. He had tried to do, and he had done, what he considered to be his duty, with magnanimity. He had never called for vengeance upon any one."

*Pall-Mall Gazette*

"For four years Mr. Lincoln discharged the most difficult duties which could fall to the lot of a human being, not indeed in a way to strike the imagination of those who care for mere external show, but with a degree of substantial judgment and good sense which it would be almost impossible to overrate. He was our best friend. He never lent himself to the purposes of that foolish and wicked minority which tried to set enmity between America and England. He never said or wrote an unfriendly word about us. It would be hard to show that he made one false step in the management of the great trust committed to him."

*Spectator*

"There never was a moment in the history of his country when firmness, and shrewdness, and gentleness were so unspeakably important, and the one man in America whose resolve on the crucial question was unchangeable, whose shrewdness statesmen indefinitely keener than himself could never baffle, whose gentleness years of incessant insult had failed to weary out, who, possessed of these qualities, was possessed also of the supreme power, and who had convinced even his enemies that the power would be exerted under the influence of the qualities, has been taken away from his work."

*Daily Telegraph*

"A wonderful life was Lincoln's—a life quite as startling and surprising as his death; but, at any rate, the worst part of his work seemed over. The resistance of the South had been crushed. A sturdy, sensible Western man, with long limbs and a longer head, Mr. Lincoln had worked his way in the world without any dishonourable subterfuges or mean devices. Clear, direct, simple, and straightforward, he had already, during his brief term of office, outlived many suspicions, jealousies, misconstructions, and dislikes. He bore his honours well, and was settling down into a quiet simple dignity of manner, and a kindly moderation of thought and temper. Terrible had been the trial through which he had victoriously passed."

*Daily News*

"For in all time to come, not among Americans only, but among all who think of manhood as more than rank,

and set worth above display, the name of Abraham Lincoln will be held in reverence. Rising from among the poorest of the people, winning his slow way upwards by sheer hard work, preserving in every successive stage a character unspotted and a name untainted, securing a wider respect as he became better known, never pretending to more than he was, nor being less than he professed himself, he was at length, for very singleness of heart and uprightness of conduct, because all felt that they could trust him utterly, and would desire to be guided by his firmness, courage, and sense, placed in the chair of President at the turning-point of his nation's history."

*Morning Star*

"To us Abraham Lincoln has always seemed the finest character produced by the American war on either side of the struggle. He was great not merely by the force of genius—and only the word genius will describe the power of intellect by which he guided himself and his country through such a crisis—but by the simple, natural strength and grandeur of his character. . . . He seemed to arrive by instinct—by the instinct of a noble, unselfish, and manly nature—at the very ends which the highest of political genius, the longest of political experience, could have done no more than reach. He bore himself fearlessly in danger, calmly in difficulty, modestly in success. The world was at last beginning to know how good, and, in the best sense, how great a man he was. It had long indeed learned that he was as devoid of vanity as of fear, but it had only just come to know what magnanimity and mercy the hour of triumph would prove that he possessed."

*Times*

"The office cast upon him was great, its duties most onerous, and the obscurity of his past career afforded no guarantee of his ability to discharge them. His shortcomings, moreover, were on the surface. The education of a man whose early years had been spent in earning bread by manual labour had necessarily been defective, and faults of manner and errors of taste repelled the observer at the outset. In spite of these drawbacks, Mr. Lincoln slowly won for himself the respect and confidence of all. His perfect honesty speedily became apparent, and, what is, perhaps, more to his credit, amid the many unstudied speeches which he was called upon from time to time to deliver, imbued though they were with the rough humour of his early associates, he was in none of them betrayed into any intemperance of language towards his opponents or towards neutrals. His utterances were apparently careless, but his tongue was always under command."