

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor,
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 489

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

August 22, 1938

LINCOLN'S DIPLOMACY

At no time in the history of the nation were diplomatic relations under such strain as during the Civil War. The nation went safely through the struggle without foreign intervention, largely because there was a diplomat in the president's chair. The following excerpts give some idea of Abraham Lincoln's tact and skill in handling even the minor difficulties which confronted him.

Please do not ruin us on punctilio.

I name none lest I wrong others by omission.

In a word, in every locality we should look beyond our noses.

Let all be so quiet that the adversary shall not be notified.

Be careful to give no offense, and keep cool under all circumstances.

Such exclusive and inflexible plan would surely become a new entanglement.

It is a case, as appears to me, in which I could do nothing without doing harm.

While so much may seem rather large, any thing less is too small—I think it better be done.

As Solomon says, there is a time for all things, and I think the present is a time for silence.

I intend keeping my eye upon these gentlemen, and to not unnecessarily put any weapons in their hands.

Please say to these gentlemen that if they do not work quickly I will make quick work with them.

It is bad faith in the government to force new terms upon such as have kept faith with it—at least so it seems to me.

Drop past differences, and so conduct yourselves that, if you cannot be at peace with them, the fault shall be wholly theirs.

It is not entirely safe when one is misrepresented under his very nose to allow the misrepresentation to go uncontradicted.

I cannot, by giving my consent to a publication of whose details I know nothing, assume the responsibility of whatever you may write.

I wish this letter to not be made public; but no man representing me as I herein represent myself will be in any danger of contradiction by me.

In this, the true sense of my proposition, I deny that there is any thing censurable in it—anything but a spirit of mutual concession, for harmony's sake.

It is fixing for the President the unjust and ruinous character of being a mere man of straw. This must be arrested, or it will damm us all inevitably.

Concede that the new government of Louisiana is only what it should be, as the egg to the fowl, we shall sooner have the fowl by hatching the egg than by smashing it.

I venture to hope it will appear that we have practiced prudence and liberality toward foreign powers, averting causes of irritation, and with firmness maintaining our own rights and honor.

I do not know whether you are Dr. Blades or not. If you are Dr. Blades, you may use my name; if you are not Dr. Blades, if Dr. Blades says you may use my name, you may do so.

I wish you and Lane would make a sincere effort to get out of the mood you are in. It does neither of you any good. It gives you the means of tormenting my life out of me, and nothing else.

A public expose, however, though it might confound the guilty, I fear might also injure some who are innocent; to some extent, disparage a good cause; reflect no credit upon me, and result in no advantage to you.

The gifts will be placed among the archives of the government where they will remain perpetually as tokens of mutual esteem and pacific disposition more honorable to both nations than any trophies of conquest could be.

I think it is safer, when a practical question arises, to decide that question directly, and not indirectly by deciding a general abstraction supposed to include it, and also including a great deal more.

While it might embrace the practical question mentioned, it might also be the nest in which forty other troublesome questions would be hatched. I would rather meet them as they come than before they come, trusting that some of them may not come at all.

We had better have him a friend than an enemy. It will dissatisfy a good many who otherwise would be quiet. More than all, we first relieve him, then restore him, and now if we relieve him again the public will ask, "Why all this vacillation?"

I pray God to have your country in His holy keeping, and to vouchsafe to crown with success her noble aspirations to renew, under the auspices of her present enlightened government, her ancient career, so wonderfully illustrated in the achievements of art, science, and freedom.

A drop of honey catches more flies than a gallon of gall. So with men. If you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his sincere friend. Therein is a drop of honey which catches his heart which, say what he will, is the great highroad to his reason.

In this unusual agitation we have forborne from taking part in any controversy between foreign states, and between parties of factions in such states. We have attempted no propagandism, and acknowledged no revolution. But we have left to every nation the exclusive conduct and management of its own affairs.

The offer of condolence in such cases is a customary ceremony, which has its good uses, though it is conventional, and may sometimes be even insincere. But I would fain have Your Majesty apprehend on this occasion that real sympathy can exist, as real truthfulness can be practiced in the intercourse of nations.

If there be in it any statements or assumptions of fact which I may know to be erroneous, I do not, now and here, controvert them. If there be in it any inferences which I may believe to be falsely drawn, I do not, now and here, argue against them. If there be perceptible in it an impatient and dictatorial tone, I waive it in deference to an old friend whose heart I have always supposed to be right.