

LINCOLN LORE

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SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TRAGIC YEAR

All persons who may have an interest in Lincoln history are conscious that the year 1940 marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of many important events associated with the Emancipator. It would be a sad comment on our patriotism if we did not utilize the atmosphere created by the occurrences of these anniversaries to again recall the episodes which finally brought to the nation a lasting peace and to the President his martyrdom.

There have been several attempts to center attention on the last hours and the last days of Lincoln's life, but it seems there has not been a concentrated effort to emphasize the important and far-reaching events taking place during those weeks preceding "The Terrible Tragedy at Washington."

Beginning with this issue, *Lincoln Lore* at intervals will review the more important happenings in which the President was primarily interested between January 1, 1865, and the time of his assassination.

The editor of *Harper's Weekly* in the first issue of 1865 made this prophetic statement: "A Happy New Year! There are few faithful American citizens who can doubt that the New Year will be a happy one, because it will see the virtual overthrow of the rebellion against the principle of free popular constitutional government; the restoration of the Union, and the destruction of the only present cause of national danger."

If Abraham Lincoln made any New Year's resolutions in 1865, he must have resolved to be even more lenient with offenders, if that were possible, than he had been in the past. This supposition is quite important if we approach a study of these clemency cases as indicative of what might be expected of Lincoln in the reconstruction period which was soon to follow.

Early in January the charge against Lieutenant-governor Richard T. Jacob of Kentucky was called to Lincoln's attention. The reaction to it indicates that the public mind as well as Lincoln's was becoming more magnanimous toward those out of step with some of the government regulations.

On January 5 Lincoln wrote to General Grant with reference to Jacob, who was then at Richmond and under orders by General Burbridge "not to return to Kentucky." Lincoln asked that Jacob be allowed to confer with him in Washington. After the conference Lincoln wrote Jacob on January 18 as follows:

"You are at Liberty to proceed to Kentucky, and to remain at large so far as relates to any cause now past. In what I now do, I decide nothing as to the right or wrong of your arrest, but act in the hope that there is less liability to misunderstanding among Union men now than there was at the time of the arrest."

Lincoln was also taking the same conciliatory measure in dealing with dissatisfied executives. Governor Fenton of New York had made a complaint and Lincoln wrote the following note to Stanton about the problem:

"The Governor has a pretty good case. I feel sure he is more than half right. We don't want him to feel cross and we in the wrong. Try and fix it with him."

A letter written on January 9 referring to the granting of a pardon at the request of an unidentified woman is of sufficient interest to copy:

"It is with regret I learned that your brother, whom I had ordered to be discharged on taking the oath, under the impression that he was a private, is a captain. By an understanding, the commissary of prisoners detains such cases until a further hearing from me. I now distinctly say that if your father shall come within our lines and take the oath of December 8, 1863, I will give him a full

pardon, and will at the same time discharge your brother on his taking the oath, notwithstanding he is a captain."

On January 11 Lincoln wrote to General Hooker about a man who had been sentenced to "imprisonment at hard labor." The President commented, "While I incline to the belief that you are technically right, please let General Hovey's modification be acted upon until further order from me."

Early in January Mrs. Harriet C. Bledsoe, wife of Col. Albert Taylor Bledsoe of the Confederate army, appealed to President Lincoln for a pass south through the Union lines. She had managed to run the blockade coming north in hopes of getting wearing apparel for her children. Mrs. Bledsoe had been a close acquaintance of the Lincolns in Springfield, Illinois, and had been especially helpful to Mrs. Lincoln when Robert Todd Lincoln was born. Lincoln gave the southern officer's wife this memorandum:

"Allow the bearer Mrs. Harriet C. Bledsoe to pass our lines with ordinary baggage and go south."
"January 16, 1865. A. Lincoln."

Nowhere is the attitude of Lincoln toward southern sympathizers who might be living quietly in the territory held by the north, more clearly revealed than in a telegram sent to General G. M. Dodge at St. Louis on January 15, 1865. It follows:

"It is represented to me that there is so much irregular violence in northern Missouri as to be driving away the people and almost depopulating it. Please gather information, and consider whether an appeal to the people there to go to their homes and let one another alone . . . may not enable you to withdraw the troops, their presence itself (being) a cause of irritation and constant apprehension, and thus restore peace and quiet, and returning prosperity. Please consider this and telegraph or write me."

Mrs. Mary E. Morton, whose husband was in the Confederate army, had been living peaceably in her home with her children during the period of the war when, sometime in January 1865, her property was seized and she was ejected from her home. She secured a sympathetic hearing from President Lincoln and he advised Major-general Reynolds that any confiscation of property was a matter for the courts and not for the Provost Marshall. The President wrote to Reynolds: "If Mrs. Morton is playing traitor to the extent of practical injury, seize her, but leave her home to the court."

To Major-general Dodge at St. Louis, Lincoln wrote on January 24, "It is said an old lady in Clay County, Missouri, by name Mrs. Winifred E. Price, is about being sent South. If she is not misbehaving let her remain."

The building of good will between all classes at variance with one another was well under way in the early weeks of 1865.

DR. WARREN'S FEBRUARY ITINERARY

For several years the first January issue of *Lincoln Lore* has published the names of the cities where the Director of the Lincoln National Life Foundation will speak during his annual February itinerary. He would be pleased to meet any subscribers of *Lincoln Lore* who may be residing in or near the places named and may be reached at the offices of The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company in these cities: January 23, Richmond, Va.; 24, Roanoke, Va.; 25, 26, Norfolk, Va.; 29, 30, 31, February 1, 2, Newark, N. J.; 5, 6, Philadelphia, Penn.; 7, 8, 9, Baltimore, Md.; 12, 13, 14, Washington D. C.; 19, Racine, Wis.; 20, 21, Milwaukee, Wis.; 22, 23, 24, 25, Madison, Wis.; 26, 27, Appleton, Wis.; 28, Green Bay, Wis.; 29, March 1, Chicago, Ill.