

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 750

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

August 23, 1943

DID LINCOLN SAY IT?

One of the most certain proofs of the immortality of a man is the tendency to emphasize the importance of the epigrams he used. The anthology of Lincoln's pointed sayings, approaches in wisdom, the proverbs of Solomon, and they have contributed immeasurably to the fame of the prairie philosopher. It is not known, generally, that the writings and printed speeches of Abraham Lincoln, in total wordage exceed the complete works of Shakespeare.

Another element which confirms the eternal fame of a man is the tendency to put in his mouth, as it were, words presenting some certain philosophy of life which the ghost writer desires to advance. We are now in that stage of the Lincoln apotheosis when a great mass of spurious quotations are being credited to Lincoln which he never recited.

The first Lincoln token which the editor of *Lincoln Lore* can remember receiving, and which he now cherishes with much satisfaction, is a motto post card sent to him while in college by his mother. This is the epigram on the card:

Success
By Abraham Lincoln
To a Young Man

"There is no success save it be self-wrought—Your employer will generally reward those who generously labor for him—Those who are kind, charitable and just will inspire a return of love and gratitude—It is a fact that 'Like begets like,' and that if we desire from our fellows the rewards of the world, sacrifices must be made, or we shall neither merit nor receive them."
Copyrighted by R. L. Welles, 1907.

Apparently the quotation is spurious and while Lincoln's famous statement on the same subject—"Success does not so much depend on external help as on self reliance"—is quite familiar, the origin of the postal motto, if it be genuine, through all these years has remained unidentified.

There is still another classification of remarks credited to Abraham Lincoln which are nothing more or less than propaganda, and these appear periodically when any important political or social question is discussed. The latest contribution in this field is a quotation about Lincoln's attitude toward labor, which seems to have been coined for the present labor and management controversy.

From four widely separated sources there has come to the Foundation, queries about the authenticity of the following statement, alleged to have been made by Abraham Lincoln.

"All that serves labor serves the Nation. All that harms labor is treason to America. No line

can be drawn between these two. If any man tells you he loves America, yet hates labor, he is a liar. If any man tells you he trusts America, yet fears labor, he is a fool. There is no America without labor, and to fleece the one is to rob the other."

The earliest record of this quotation, thus far traced, appeared in *The Country Parson*, a Georgia paper and according to the contributor the words were spoken by Lincoln on October 1, 1854.

A query about the authenticity of this quotation was sent to *American Notes and Queries*, by George Seldes, in his memorandum appearing in the October 1842 issue of that publication.

The quotation is often found in an abbreviated form with these two sentences omitted, "No line can be drawn between these two," and the concluding phrase, "and to fleece the one is to rob the other." The word "helps," used twice in the first sentence, seems to be interchangeable with "serves."

October 1, 1854, came on a Sunday, and there is no record of any speech Lincoln made on that day. It is likely he was in Springfield or en route to Springfield from Metamora, Ill. The state fair was about to open in the capital city and on Tuesday Lincoln was in attendance.

While Lincoln held both labor and capital as invaluable to the American system, it is rather doubtful if he used such expressions as "liars" and "fools," in referring to classes or groups of citizens.

While we are on the question of spurious Lincoln writings, perhaps some of the readers of *Lincoln Lore* would be willing to submit chapter and verse for the following alleged quotations by the Emancipator, all of which appear in print and some of them in conspicuous places.

"Teach economy. That is one of the first and highest virtues. It begins with saving money."

"The next fight will be between Capital and Labor, and Labor would have to carry the yoke."

"I don't know who my grandfather was, and I am much more concerned to know what his grandson will be."

"I believe a man should be proud of the city in which he lives, and that he should so live that his city will be proud that he lives in it."

"If ever this free people—if this government itself is ever utterly demoralized, it will come from this incessant human wriggle and struggle for office, which is but a way to live without work."