

# LINCOLN LORE

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## AMONG THE PINES AND THE PROCLAMATION

Few people are aware that the Edmund Kirk, who in 1862 wrote the sensational and dramatic portrayal of slavery called, *Among the Pines*, and the James R. Gilmore, who engineered the peace mission in 1864, were one and the same person, Gilmore having chosen the former appellation as a pen name.

The first printing of *Among the Pines* appeared in a magazine called *The Continental Monthly* in which Gilmore had a financial and literary interest. Richard B. Kimball, who was writing a novel for the magazine, probably was the first one to suggest to Gilmore that the series of articles about slavery conditions in the South should be put in book form. At Kimball's suggestion, Gilmore submitted the manuscript to Carleton, the publisher, who politely rejected it.

Mr. Charles T. Evans, a representative of the publishing house of George T. Putnam, next urged Gilmore to go ahead with the publication, stating he had secured an estimate on the printing and that an edition of two thousand books could be published for \$600.00. Gilmore consented to the arrangements after Evans promised to secure orders in advance to finance the project. The following day a deal was made by Evans with Mr. M. Doolady, a bookseller, to take one thousand copies of *Among the Pines*.

The first edition was sold out within thirty days, and the following month the total sales reached over nine thousand copies. Collections were slow, however, and Putnam would not finance further printings, so Gilmore again strolled into Carleton's one day and the publisher greeted him with the statement, "What a dunce I was not to have taken that book '*Among the Pines*'."

Gilmore then informed Carleton that it was not too late and furthermore advised that he was Edmund Kirk the author. Gilmore stated that Carleton immediately advanced \$2000 and offered a twenty-five percent royalty on subsequent editions. Within the next six months Gilmore received from Carleton \$4,700 and the book eventually brought to Gilmore a total of more than \$13,000 in royalties.

Gilmore had this to say about the publication of the book and its reception by the President. "The book '*Among the Pines*' was published in June, 1862, and as soon as it was issued I forwarded a dozen copies of it to Robert J. Walker; and being in Washington in the August following he told me that he had given a copy to Mr. Lincoln who read it and desired to talk with me about it." When Gilmore visited Lincoln with Walker, shortly after this, they first engaged in some conversation about a piece of poetry Gilmore had written and then Lincoln told Gilmore that he wanted "to ask him a few questions." This is Gilmore's version of the conversation:

"As he said this, he took from the drawer of his table a copy of '*Among the Pines*,' every few leaves of which had a page turned down. Then looking at me searchingly, he asked, 'How much of this book is true?'"

"I answered that in a certain sense all of it was true; that the book was made of detached experiences, put together to form a symmetrical whole. Every incident in it occurred as I related it, and under my own observation; but not in the sequence or localities represented.

"This old darky's sermon, did you hear that?" he asked.

"I answered that I did, twenty years before; but I had repeated merely the substance of it,—the actual sermon was far better than I had reported it.

... "Then opening the book again, he went, in order, through the turned-down pages, asking me question after question in rapid succession, and saying at the close, 'You say that Colonel J— is an actual character! What was his social position,—how was he thought of in the community?'"

"I answered, 'He stood very high,—exceptionally so. He was what is styled "very popular".'

"And yet this man, so passionate, so lost to self-control, so reckless of human life, had absolute power over two hundred of his fellow beings!" exclaimed Mr. Lincoln, with a tone of intense earnestness.

"The man was the product of the institution, Mr. President," said Governor Walker. 'I have known many like him, only not so manly and kind-hearted; and I could tell you of at least half a dozen who live openly, as he did, with two wives, one their slave, and both mothers to their children. Mr. Gilmore has not overdrawn a single picture in the book.'

"I said then that I could tell things far worse than any told there, but I had avoided anything too bad to be believed. Besides, long association had given me a kindly feeling for the Southern people. I had seen that the fault lay not so much with them, as with the system which had blunted their humane feelings in their relations with the negro. They had come to regard him as a mere animal, to be fed and driven. 'We have,' I said, 'rogues and human brutes in the North, but they are restrained by public sentiment; at the South there has been no public sentiment to restrain the white man from dealing as he pleases with the black man or woman.'

"It is horrible—horrible," said Mr. Lincoln. 'One can realize its enormity when such things are told by an eye-witness, and you tell them in a way to command belief. Governor, is it not about time that action was taken on this subject?'"

"It is high time," answered Mr. Walker. 'I fear we shall have no success until you issue that proclamation.'

There have been a great many individuals who claim to have had some influence in bringing about the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation. Here is an instance where it seems that the reading of a book more or less hastened the preliminary announcement. It was on August 18 when Gilmore and Walker conferred with Mr. Lincoln and the above conversation about the truth of Gilmore's book was discussed. If Lincoln had even at this time any misgivings about the moral effect of the proclamation he must have had them removed after conversing with the author of *Among the Pines*.

It seems something like a paradox that the man who as Edmund Kirk would advocate and urge emancipation, the most aggravating question brought up during the war; but two and a half years later would apparently be just as urgent in directing the Gilmore mission for bringing about peace.