

# LINCOLN LORE

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## LINCOLN AND COBDEN

Controversy over the British loan has renewed interest in the attitude of Great Britain toward the Union during the Civil War. The name of Richard Cobden has often been mentioned, and with the exception of John Bright, his voice was more often heard than that of any other Englishman, pleading the cause of the North in the War of the Rebellion. The fact that he was an admirer of Abraham Lincoln makes the following observations timely just now:

On Easter Sunday 1865, the day after Lincoln's death, word reached Washington that Cobden had passed away; so Lincoln was spared the pain which the notification of his English friend's death would have brought. Cobden expired, however, on April 2, but news did not travel as rapidly then as now. Of course, Cobden could not have anticipated that his own death notice and the account of Lincoln's death would appear in the American papers at the same time. It would have given Cobden great satisfaction if he could have lived long enough to have learned of the successful culmination of the war, but this was denied him by the interval of a few days.

Lincoln and Cobden were brought up under conditions very much the same, both having been sons of small farmers. They were born about the same time, Cobden in 1805 and Lincoln four years later. The editors of Harper's Weekly commented on Cobden's loyalty to the United States in these words:

"Like all the English liberals, Mr. Cobden has been one of our firmest and truest friends during the rebellion. He had been twice in this country and understood our politics. Still better, he understood the eternal law that prevents injustice in an enlightened people from being permanently profitable; and although not of a sanguine temperament, and knowing the condition of the country and the spirit of the rebellion, he was conscious of the terrible task before us, yet he sincerely believed it would be accomplished."

James Matlock Scovel who claims to have delivered letters from Abraham Lincoln to Richard Cobden gives us this interesting account of the statement which Cobden made about Lincoln on one of these visits: "This century has produced no man like him. Napoleon said, 'The great heart makes the great soldier.' Lincoln is not only a man of great heart, but he is a man of excellent understanding. The moral philosophers tell us that the intellect works best through the sensibilities. And he is a man who has risen from manual labor to the presidency of a great people, and to me he seems to be the one man God has raised up to give courage and enthusiasm to a people unused to the arts of war, fighting what seems to me to be a doubtful battle, in the greatest conflict of modern times. I like Mr. Lincoln's intense veneration for what is true and good. His sense of justice, is exalted, and yet, while he has never studied statesmanship in modern schools, he is capable of writing, at times, monumental English. He has some of the same characteristics that made William the Silent great; and like Azeglio, the Italian statesman he abjured the political finesse of Mac-

hiavelli, but rests his claims to victorious statesmanship on his wonderful good sense and his absolute good faith. His reason seems to rule despotically over his other faculties, and his conscience and his heart are ruled by his reason. It is Pascal who says sublimity is often encountered in daily life and I know of nothing more sublime than the patience of your American president. He seems to be bent on making a republic the great stature of an honest man. I speak of your struggle as doubtful, because Mr. Lincoln will have more to contend against in the hostility of foreign powers than in the shattered and scattered resources of the confederacy."

Immediately after Cobden's death the Paris correspondent of the New York Tribune was allowed the privilege of copying some of the correspondence which Cobden had recently carried on with an American citizen named Balch, then in France. Three excerpts from his letters are of interest to Lincoln students. The first one dated "Midhurst, January 3, 1865" follows:

"I think it depends entirely on the discretion of your own authorities at Washington to remain at peace with all the world until your civil war is ended. I do not say that you have not grievances; but one quarrel at a time, as Mr. Lincoln says, is enough for a nation or an individual. With the British government I do not think, on the whole, you have as much to be angry about as to be grateful for what it has refused to do."

In the month of February on the 17th, Cobden wrote Balch:

"There never was a more absurd canard than that invented by the Southern sympathizers—that England and France contemplated an intervention; and there is almost as great absurdity in the programme which the same party has cut out for you when the war ends—viz. that you are to begin a war with France or England or all the world."

The last excerpt is from a letter written to Balch two weeks before Cobden's death. It was a letter of advice on the financial difficulties which would arise after the war. Dated "Midhurst, March 12, 1865" it follows:

"I have great faith in the aggregate intelligence of your country whenever its attention is forced by adverse circumstances to a serious study of politics. As soon as the war is over, it will be found that you have a great financial difficulty to deal with. We have gone through it all. Political economy, like chemistry or mechanics, is universal in the operation of its laws. You can no more disregard or fail to imitate our financial policy in raising your future revenue than you can reject our locomotives or our last improvement in dyeing calicos."

The following joint tribute was paid to Cobden and Lincoln at the time when the deaths were announced simultaneously: "The two men lived for the same great purpose. The true interest of the people of England and of America have lost two of their noblest friends in Abraham Lincoln and Richard Cobden."