

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 1090

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

February 27, 1950

THE LINCOLN ENCYCLOPEDIA—SHAW

THE LINCOLN ENCYCLOPEDIA. The Spoken and Written Words of A. Lincoln Arranged for Ready Reference. Compiled and Edited by Archer H. Shaw. The Macmillan Company. 395 pp. \$6.50.

Anyone who has developed a particular interest in a well defined subject usually has available, close at hand, certain books which serve as key volumes of information and reference. Archer H. Shaw's *The Lincoln Encyclopedia* is such a book of special significance for students of Abraham Lincoln. Not since the bibliography edited by Jay Monaghan came from the press in 1943 has a more important working tool in the field of Lincolniana been produced.

With the exception of the Bible and the complete works of Shakespeare no compilation of literature is more often quoted in America than the written and spoken words of Abraham Lincoln. The total wordage of his collected writings are greater in number than the total wordage of either the Bible or Shakespeare. This fact immediately allows one to note that the Shaw publication is something more than just another Lincoln book. It becomes a valuable source volume for any author or speaker who cares to have at his finger tips the most significant statements in Lincoln literature.

While the book is not a concordance, locating with exact citation every important word Lincoln spoke; nor even a glossary, attempting to interpret phrases of uncertain inference; yet it does cover most of the important subjects associated with the life of Abraham Lincoln. Topics are arranged alphabetically and where more than one quotation is exhibited, the references are numbered and arranged chronologically. In each instance the actual occasion of the writing or saying is noted with date, as well as the author, title and page of the book where the complete context can be found.

The subject classification of the book is so well organized that it will invite a still larger consideration of Lincoln's philosophy. The compilation of several quotations relating to a single topic will allow students to weigh the consummate value of several exhibits on a particular theme rather than emphasize a single isolated quotation. The bringing together of many statements of Lincoln on the same subject should encourage the student to observe the evolution of Lincoln's thought process until he finally arrives at a certain conviction. The chronological sequence of the quotations under their various headings will make it possible for the student to accomplish this important task.

Those not versed in Lincolniana may for the first time appreciate the richness and poetic beauty of Lincoln's simple but impressive diction. His unique way of saying things, the quaint western terminology and the spontaneous humor will be enjoyed. Of special interest to military men will be the clarity of expression in his telegrams although not always couched in the vernacular of a soldier's manual.

The encyclopedia should also contribute much to the accuracy and dependability of quotations credited to Abraham Lincoln and constantly displayed in all types of publications. There should be little excuse now for misquoted paragraphs as the original sources are available or cited. Spurious quotations of which there are many can be challenged if the alleged saying does not appear in the book. Not that the compilation claims to be exhaustive, but the absence of an axiom should at least encourage the searcher to make a further investigation of its alleged authenticity, before crediting it to Lincoln.

There is just one phase of Mr. Shaw's work that this reviewer would wish to have otherwise if it were his production. Through personal conversation and correspondence he has talked freely with Mr. Shaw about this problem and he is willing to admit that there is something to be said in favor of Mr. Shaw's viewpoint. Mr. Shaw has thought it expedient to include along with the actual statements and writings of Lincoln some few reported conversations and hearsay comments which the objective historian might not wish to accept as authentic Lincolniana. The fact that the author has been careful to note his sources would allow the trained student of evidences to be cautious in placing too much confidence on some of the reported conversations. If this interesting and sometimes invaluable data had been eliminated altogether the volume possibly would have been considerably strengthened as an absolute authority. Associated with these hearsay quotations are a few spurious writings but these are so few in number that possibly there is little point in calling them to the reader's attention.

The Lincoln National Life Foundation welcomes the publication of this widely distributed reference source which will greatly relieve the demands upon the Foundation for information now readily accessible in the encyclopedia. With this volume available to the reference departments of public libraries just a telephone call will allow the inquirers to receive almost immediately information on about any important statement made by Lincoln. We do not see how any public library which prides itself on outstanding reference volumes can overlook this contribution by Mr. Shaw. The director of the Foundation can truly visualize the reference value of the publication, because over a period of twenty years or more he has been continuously compiling and using, day by day, an exhaustive index system of Lincoln quotations requiring over 3000 typewritten cards. The Shaw work will greatly supplement this independent file of the Foundation.

The *Lincoln Encyclopedia* by Archer H. Shaw immediately becomes eligible for listing among any half dozen outstanding reference books in the field of Lincolniana. It also should find acceptance in literary, historical and governmental circles as well as in the libraries of individuals and public institutions.