

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 1149

April 16, 1951

THE JAPANESE' ADMIRATION FOR LINCOLN

The admiration of the Japanese people for Abraham Lincoln is not veneration which has had its origin in the post-war days, although the reconstruction period has greatly accelerated this esteem. As early as 1895 books about Lincoln in the Japanese language began to appear and only Germany and France can boast of more Lincoln volumes in foreign tongue. Just recently Shunichi Takeuchi, a subscriber to *Lincoln Lore* living in Japan, presented to the Lincoln National Life Foundation six books in the Japanese language all published in 1950. Four of these are exclusively Lincoln and two contain chapters on him. Last year a two volume work on the martyr President was published at Osaka.

The Abraham Lincoln Association at Springfield, originally operating under the name of Lincoln Centennial Association, collaborated with the America-Japan Society during the years 1926 to 1930 inclusive, in conducting a series of essay contests on Lincoln. The awards were presented in February each year. This was a very successful undertaking and the Foundation is fortunate in having a Japanese copy of the prize essay by Miss Sumiko Tokuda, acknowledged in February 1929. The contest was open to "Japanese students of any government, public or private college, university or middle school."

During the pre-war days the most noted expounder of the Lincoln story in Japan was Toyohiko Kagawa. He is one of the most remarkable figures this century has produced and would today rank among the world's half dozen outstanding contributors to the welfare of humanity. It is partly through his great admiration for Abraham Lincoln and his presentation of Lincoln to the Japanese people that interest in the Emancipator has increased so rapidly. When a book was published in 1936 presenting a report of his visit to America at that time, it was given the title *Kagawa in Lincoln's Land*. The title was suggested by the fact that such time as was available to Mr. Kagawa for sight-seeing was spent at Lincoln shrines.

Special preparations were made for Mr. Kagawa's reception at Springfield, Illinois and a trip to New Salem was also included. The same interest was manifested in his sojourn in Indiana where he visited the site of the Lincoln home in Spencer County and the spot where Lincoln's mother lies buried. Possibly the most impressive visitation on his itinerary he made alone. He had reached Louisville and somewhat ill he had been advised to retire to his hotel to rest, with the understanding he would not be disturbed until evening. He had resolved when he left Japan that above all the places of interest he would plan to visit in America, the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln, would have the preference. Unbeknown to the committee in charge at Louisville who supposed him to be relaxing at his hotel, he visited Lincoln's Birthplace although it was necessary for him to travel 120 miles in a taxicab in order to carry out his resolution.

With reference to his visits to the Lincoln shrines he stated. "I got a new inspiration by visiting his birthplace at Hodgenville. I wept when I visited the tomb of Nancy Hanks, Lincoln's mother. Indeed, I shed tears at nearly all of these sacred places where Lincoln spent his early years." Kagawa was interviewed at Rochester, New York and stated that "while in this country I have tried to study the life of Abraham Lincoln very carefully. In Japan I want to lecture on Lincoln. I want to read more books on Lincoln as a child." On another occasion he said, "An Emperor of Japan once said the greatest personality in the world's history is Abraham Lincoln. Even the great Emperor of Japan considered himself inferior to Abraham Lincoln. So I am delighted to visit this Holy Land of America."

After Kagawa's return to Japan in 1936 the editor of *Lincoln Lore* had some correspondence with him. In a letter received dated November 25 that same year Kagawa wrote: "I am much interested in Abraham Lincoln. I feel that we need his spirit in the world today to help us solve the problems of industry and world peace . . . assuring you of my desire to extend the knowledge of Lincoln to our Japanese young people, many of whom are already interested in him. I am faithfully yours."

The America-Japan Cultural Society, established in 1947 of which Jiuji Kasai is president, seems to be the present day motivating influence for disseminating information about Abraham Lincoln among the Japanese people. Mr. Kasai graduated from Chicago University in 1913 and two years later completed a course in the Harvard Graduate school. I first met Mr. Kasai at San Francisco just before the war where I sat beside him at a Rotary luncheon meeting I was to address. Upon his arrival in Japan he wrote to me that he was doing all in his power to avert war. He was then a member of the Japanese Diet. His fine Lincoln Library was completely destroyed by bombs and he stated in a letter early this year that he greatly missed his file of *Lincoln Lore*.

On February 12, 1951 at Tokyo there was arranged a Lincoln Birthday celebration at which Mr. Kasai presided. Mr. Seiichiro Yasui, governor of Tokyo, gave an address as well as Hon. W. J. Sebald, Jr. and John D. Rockefeller, III. The address of Mr. Kasai with which the program closed was entitled "Lincoln's Ideals and the American-Japanese Alliance." The editor of *Lincoln Lore* who has known Mr. Kasai through correspondence for many years sent a cablegram from San Francisco to the Tokyo assembly complimenting the society on its February 12 effort. Possibly Abraham Lincoln may still have a voice in the consummation of "A New Birth of Freedom" which the whole world sorely needs and Japan seems ready for the annunciation.