

LINCOLN LORE

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SIGNIFICANT LINCOLN BIRTHDAY TRIBUTES

One of the most interesting publications which came from the press shortly after Lincoln's assassination was called *The Tributes of the Nations to Abraham Lincoln*. It contained resolutions, expressions of sympathy and praiseworthy recognition of the lamented President from all over the world. A whole shelf of books would be necessary today to publish the voluminous number of tributes paid to Abraham Lincoln. Occasionally it seems appropriate to review in February some of the better known brief eulogies which have appeared on Lincoln's birthday of other years.

Henry W. Grady 1886

"Great types, like valuable plants, are slow to flower and fruit. But from the Union of those colonists, from the straightening of their purposes and the crossing of their blood, slowly perfecting through a century, came the first who comprehended within himself, all the strength and gentleness, all the majesty and grace of this republic—Abraham Lincoln."

John A. Kasson 1889

"If ever the student shall search all the records of literature which time has spared, to find the name of at least one heroic man who possessing great power, confronted all its opportunities for self-aggrandizement without experiencing one single throb to use them for that end, he shall finish his search when his eye falls on the name of Lincoln."

Robert J. Ingersoll 1892

"Nothing discloses the real character like the use of power. It is easy for the weak to be gentle. Most men can bear adversity. But if you wish to know what a man really is give him power. This is the supreme test. It is to the glory of Lincoln that, having almost absolute power, he never abused it except on the side of mercy. . . . Lincoln was the grandest figure of the fiercest civil war. He is the gentlest memory of our world."

Henry Watterson 1895

"Where did Shakespeare get his genius? Where did Mozart get his music? Whose hand smote the lyre of the Scottish plowman, and stayed the life of the German priest? God, God, and God alone; and as surely as these were raised up by God, inspired by God, was Abraham Lincoln; and a thousand years hence, no drama, no tragedy, no epic poem will be filled with greater wonder, or be followed by mankind with deeper feeling than that which tells the story of his life and death."

Judge Nathan Goff 1909

"Through all the ages that have come and gone, since God said, 'Let there be light,' and light was, a propitious providence has not given to mankind, save only once when Jesus of Nazareth came to earth, so great a boon, as when one hundred years ago today Abraham Lincoln breathed the breath of life."

Leo Tolstoi 1909

"Of all the great national heroes and statesmen of history Lincoln is the only real giant. Alexander, Frederick the Great, Caesar, Napoleon, Gladstone and even Washington stand in greatness of character, in depth of feeling and in a certain moral power far behind Lincoln. Lincoln was a man of whom a nation has a right to be

proud; he was a Christ in miniature, a saint of humanity, whose name will live thousands of years in the legends of future generations. We are still too near to his greatness, and so can hardly appreciate his divine power; but after a few centuries more our posterity will find him considerably bigger than we do. His genius is still too strong and too powerful for the common understanding, just as the sun is too hot when its light beams directly on us."

Homer Hoch 1923

"There is no new thing to be said of Lincoln. There is no new thing to be said of the mountains, or of the seas, or of the stars. The years go their way, but the same old mountains lift their granite shoulders above the drifting clouds, and the same mysterious sea beats upon the shore, and the same silent stars keep holy vigil above a tired world. But to mountains, sea and stars men turn forever in universal homage. And thus with Lincoln for he was mountain in grandeur of spirit; he was sea in undervoice of mystic loneliness; he was star in steadfast purpose of purity and of service. And he, too, abides."

George M. Bailey 1923

"The pyramids in time may sink beneath the desert sands, the fame of the Caesars vanish in the darkness of oblivion, but surely as long as the race endures it will behold in the familiar form of the martyred son—strange, gaunt, silent, colossal, with agony written in the lines of his kindly face and love glowing in his wistful eyes—the saddest, gentlest and most pathetic figure in all human history."

Calvin Coolidge 1933

"In wisdom great, but in humility greater, in justice strong, but in compassion stronger; he became a leader of men by being a follower of the truth. He overcame evil with good. His presence filled the nation. He broke the might of oppression. He restored a race to its birthright. His mortal frame has vanished, but his spirit increases with the increasing years, the richest legacy of the greatest century."

Judge R. J. Hopkins 1936

"Lowliness propagates and nurtures ambition. Poverty is the universal mother of great men. . . . When destiny sought this child of genius she turned her back on the mansion and the palace. She went to that humble home in the forest. There she kept her vigil and led forth the child of genius, Abraham Lincoln. He was a new type, an unspoiled product of nature."

W. J. Cameron 1939

"Unmistakable, even in his earlier portraits, are the lines of natural nobility. Neither popular esteem nor exalted office put them there: they came from the native breed of the man. Son of the soil he was none the less an aristocrat. By that brow and eye and mouth and chin you have his natural pedigree and his coat of arms. Poor stock never yet produced a thoroughbred."

Lord Halifax 1942

"I believe therefore, that I may feel free to speak of him, as I might speak of Plato, or St. Paul, or any other of that little group of men but for whose lives and thoughts we should all be different from what we are."