THE GILBERT STUART PORTRAIT OF WASHINGTON
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WASHINGTON AND LINCOLN
THE FATHER AND THE SAVIOUR OF THE COUNTRY
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The most widely read of American poets wrote of the American Ship of State:

Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee,
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,
Are all with thee—are all with thee.

If in accord with our hopes and contrary to our fears, two hundred years more should be added to the one hundred and forty-five years of the present life of the American Union, the individual of that remoter time will probably pay tribute to the memory of Washington and Lincoln alone of all the thirty-one Presidents of our own past.

For all their divergencies, the one from the other, in early life, in lines of development, in numerous traits, there were certain underlying characteristics common to both. The letters of Washington, the youth, and of the young Lincoln, written to acquaintances asking for assistance in their advancement, were alike in appreciation of the truth expressed in Lincoln's reported saying that he would have made no progress had he waited for men to proffer it to him.
A recent biographer has contrasted Lincoln on non-military lines, to their disadvantage, with Alexander, Charles XII., the Duke of Marlborough and Napoleon. Among builders of a nation, to find a prototype of Washington, we have to turn from these great leaders in warfare to William of Orange, who was also called the Father of his country, who also placed life and fortune at stake in becoming the leader of a successful rebellion, who made of separate provinces a nation, The Netherlands, which by an eighty years’ war broke the power of the most powerful nation of Europe, and, according to John Adams and Benjamin Franklin, was the example and model followed by the men who created the United States of America, as may also be known by the stars, the colors and stripes on the American Flag, by the Declaration of Independence, and by the American Constitution.

As one star differs from another star in glory, so is there a difference in human aristocracies. There is the aristocracy of Austria, the summit of the white man’s structure, and there is the aristocracy of the Negroes of Africa. That of Washington represented the best type of American aristocracy, of which Robert Morris and Charles Carroll also were examples, in willingness to sacrifice estate if need be, and the ability to take the leadership of a people. The aristocracy of Lincoln was intellectual. Commonplace, undiscerning observers of Lincoln have recorded a thousand trifles about him. Most of his biographers have missed the flash-light revelation of an observer of a different kind, who said that Lincoln offended many men by an unconscious assumption of intellectual superiority.

Our two great Presidents, greatest of all Americans, were alike in possessing extraordinary physical strength. There are the familiar stories of Washington throwing a silver coin across the Rappahannock River, of his broad jumping, of his horsemanship. Of
Lincoln's feats of physical strength there are many records.

The world is prone to attribute a great man's qualities to the mother. It is, however, a well known law of heredity that to transmit a quality with certainty to the offspring both parents must possess it. Lincoln's mother died too soon to influence even his youth. The influence of Washington's mother ceased when in his boyhood she prevented him from becoming a sailor. She looked without favor upon his military life, and often regretted that her son had turned against King George III. and England.

An important, a shaping influence in the lives of Washington and Lincoln was the rural environment of their early lives. Both through life stood with their feet firmly planted upon the ground. Both drew many lessons from Mother Earth. Their mental processes were to go to the root of things. The sophistication which amuses the reader of many a modern novel, so far removed from the blood and brawn of the stories of another day; the mere technique of many a present day painting, so different from the substance beneath the technique of a Rembrandt; the prettiness of a pleasing lyric, so remote from the deep tones of Beethoven in music, or of Goethe in poetry; the surface of things, apt to be highly polished in a time more or less decadent, bear no similarity to the methods of Washington and Lincoln.

When during the Civil War Lincoln one day crossed the Potomac into Virginia, a lady in the party misnamed a certain tree. The President said, "Now, trees are something I know about. Let me tell you," —and he went on to give an interesting talk to the group, pointing out the different varieties of trees in sight, and giving an account of their habits. Again he said, "I like the trees better in winter than in summer because the shape can more readily be seen."
another time, visiting the army of the Potomac, where many trees had been felled, he pointed to the stumps to show where a good woodsman and where an unskilled one had cut down the tree.

Washington's love of trees was shown at Mount Vernon. There he planted six varieties of cherry trees, the peach, the apricot, thirteen varieties of pear trees, the plum, the green gage, the damson, and four varieties of apple trees, including the Newtown Pippin, the best of all apples. The nut trees which he planted embraced eight varieties. He was persistent in gathering shrubs for Mount Vernon, and he transplanted there some thirty-three different kinds of native trees other than fruit or nut trees and also the English yew. He also planted a cherry walk, not as extensive as that of his friend, George Mason, at Gunston Hall, which was 1,200 feet long.

The associations of both Washington and Lincoln with Pennsylvania were many. Washington first became known throughout the colonies by reason of his negotiations with the French in western Pennsylvania, his surrender of Fort Necessity and his participation in Braddock's defeat. Most of his important battles were fought for the defence or control of Philadelphia. He came here to the Congress of 1774, to subsequent meetings of the Congress, to the Constitutional Convention, and seven of the eight years during which he was President he spent here at the National Capitol. Here he became President of the Society of the Cincinnati, and he attended the exercises of the University of Pennsylvania.

The home of Lincoln's Pennsylvania forebears still stands in Berks County, a good example of the substantial stone Pennsylvania home. But one generation of Lincoln's American forefathers, and that represented by but one individual, his father, was obscure. In Massachusetts, New Jersey and Pennsylvania they
have been iron masters, active, prosperous. The early Pennsylvania iron master, usually in an isolated spot along a creek, remote from courts and banks, was the executive, administrator, banker and judge of the affairs of the people about him. Aside from the local need for simple utensils his market was distant. In the management of a practical business, in settling the disputes, even the fist fights, of the people about him, were required wisdom, courage, force of character. Such experience with ability developed the iron master and his son for larger problems. The first Mordecai Lincoln in Pennsylvania owned a one-third interest in iron works on French Creek and more acres of land than were owned by most of the “cavaliers” in Tidewater Virginia. His son Thomas was Sheriff of Berks County, wrote a copperplate hand and spelled with precision. Another son, Abraham, was county commissioner, member of the Assembly, and was chosen to make the address to Washington in Philadelphia after the Revolution. No far reaching fancy could portray to him that one of his kin, and one bearing his name, would succeed Washington in guiding the country in the second of its two most important crises. He married Anna Boone of the homestead of Daniel Boone, still to be seen in Berks County near the home of the Pennsylvania Lincolns.

An important Pennsylvania influence in shaping the thought of Washington is found in the “Letters of a Farmer” by John Dickinson, the ablest of the pre-Revolutionary controversialists, a copy of which Washington owned and read. On the wall at Mount Vernon hung a portrait of David Rittenhouse, the greatest of America’s early scientists.

If there was similarity on some lines in the lives of Washington and Lincoln, there was more than one sharp divergency. The inventory of his estate prepared by Washington to accompany his will, after
deducting $250,000 worth of bequests, placed a value of $530,000 upon the residue. A present day statistician asserts that this residue was worth a million dollars. After Lincoln's re-election he thought that by the end of eight years in the Presidency with the modest salary then paid, he would have been able to save $100,000, and that then with his earnings as a lawyer in Springfield he and his family could find the peace and comfort, which because of the death of a son and the tragedy of the Civil War, they had not known in the White House. The ambition of youth in both Washington and Lincoln, long before their public service ended, had disappeared, and devotion to duty had become their controlling mentor.

Both Washington and Lincoln entered upon a war, the one upon a war of eight years, the other upon a war of four years' duration, without requisite technical training. Superior as Washington's was to Lincoln's, it was nevertheless inadequate for the task before him. Conrad Weiser, the Pennsylvania interpreter for the Indians, recorded the opinion of one Indian chief that at Fort Necessity Washington did not know how to handle the Indians, that he treated them like slaves, and therefore his friendly Indians fell away from him, an experience which taught a profitable lesson, and subsequently his method changed.

Similarly, with increased knowledge the broader Washington's sympathies changed his view in regard to the peace sects of Pennsylvania, the Quakers, their forerunners, the Mennonites, and the Dunkers. He had written when leading his army through southeastern Pennsylvania at a time when Wayne, Muhlenburg, Mifflin, Cadwalader were fighting for independence, when there were Pennsylvania colonels, majors, captains and other officers in his command, and many a home along his line of march had a private in his army, that the people of the region were "disaffected
to a man.” At that time he did not fully comprehend the centuries’ growth of the fundamental beliefs of the peace sects in the separation of church and state, in adult baptism, in refusal to participate in war, or the deep affection and veneration of the people of these sects for the memory of William Penn, under whose liberal and helpful government they had found refuge from the oppressions of Europe and its warfare, wherein the French had burned the German Palatinate “to a nail,” destroying the homes, the farm buildings, the vineyards, the orchards. But later in life Washington wrote that in Virginia he had seen little of the Quakers, but with greater familiarity he had come to consider them a most valuable element of society.

Both Washington and Lincoln had to create an army, and both learned by discomfiture in campaign and battle. At the battle on the Brandywine, when Howe divided his army, Washington did not assault the remnant left in his front, as Frederick or Napoleon would probably have done. At Germantown he undertook one of the most difficult of military feats, that of concentrating upon the field with imperfectly trained troops, one of the results being that one body of his force fired into another. Not until the winter of 1777–78 at Valley Forge when the German soldier, von Steuben, early and late drilled the ragged soldiers and prepared plans for an army organization to remedy the defects of the past, a plan which still shapes the administration of the United States army, did Washington have an army under his command. The ensuing battle of Monmouth, from which the British army stole away in the night, and Washington was left in possession of the field, is an historic story differing markedly from the tale of Long Island, Brandywine and Germantown. Monmouth pointed the way to Yorktown.

Similarly, many months went by during which Lin-
coln's selection of army commanders, Pope, Burnside, Hooker, were productive of disheartening disaster, and his forcing upon McClellan of corps commanders, not one of whom long endured the test of battle capacity, may be attributed to the same lack of military experience and of that intimate knowledge of military men acquired by Jefferson Davis as a Mexican War soldier and as Secretary of War.

Knowledge of detail and a broader comprehension steadily progressed with the two greatest of Americans. It was as a Virginian, not as the American he soon came to be, that Washington wrote upon the repeal of the Stamp Act that Parliament should have permitted the colonies to develop freely farming and trade, while effectually preventing them from manufacturing, a distinction which would have made impossible the fundamental industry of Pennsylvania.

The degree of religious belief in Washington and in Lincoln is undetermined. Washington was a vestryman of the Church of England in Virginia, the established church. To hold public office in that colony it was essential to be a member of the church, a union of state and church that reformers in Holland, Penn in Pennsylvania and others elsewhere had abolished. The fear of an established church in other colonies was one of the contributing causes to the Revolution. But while a vestryman, there is no record of Washington's having partaken of the Communion. He did not so partake during the many years when he was in Philadelphia. After the clergyman in his sermon called attention to the bad example set by persons who left the church as the Communion Service began, Washington remained away from church on Communion Sundays. Bishop White never saw him kneel in prayer in Christ Church. The myth that Washington knelt in a prayer for the American cause in the woods at Valley Forge, being entirely out of the Washington picture, and con-
trary to his well-known practice, is unbelievable. The recent issue by the United States post office department of a postage stamp portraying this mythical scene, like so many acts of American officialdom, was done at the behest of a personal interest, although probably the responsible official had little faith in the myth himself.

The degree of Lincoln’s acceptance of the entire Christian faith is likewise uncertain. Churchmen may regret that this should be so, but they may also find consolation for their regret in the fact that there are no nobler models for human conduct than are to be found in the lives of Washington and Lincoln.

Lincoln was a master of the artistic use of the English language as in his celebrated letter to General Hooker in which he completed a sentence with the words “beware of rashness” and began the next sentence with the same words. Therein he excelled Washington as he did also in many an inclusive phrase, such as, “The Mississippi goes unvexed to the sea,” and in humor as in the sentence, “Our gunboats go wherever the ground is a little damp.” Washington excelled Lincoln in the uniform maintenance of a poise indicative of greatness. Lincoln rose from a lower plane to greatness when occasion demanded, as on the day when the leading bankers of New York called upon him to end the war by making terms with the South. One after another the bankers spoke of the impossibility of continuing the struggle because of the cost. Lincoln listened to them all and when they had finished, I was told by my informant who was present, he gave them upon a lofty plane a rebuke under which they cowered, and the New York bankers left the room so humbly that they suggested punished school boys. Fortunately, in Philadelphia there was a banker of another kidney, Jay Cooke, who placed three thousand million of national securities without a direct profit of a penny.
As to our international bankers of today, it is enough to say, "Other times, other methods."

Holding together his inadequate military force as well as he could, and as no other man could have done at all, using the militia, often not to be depended upon, in operations where they could be helpful, retiring here and there when necessity required, holding his hand many times, but striking at Trenton and Princeton and at Stony Point with the flashing sword of Wayne, and with greater effect at Monmouth, where for the first time his army stood face to face with the British army and kept the battlefield, until at last came Yorktown, and the "lion tamer" as the poet Byron called him, had won. Again the same energetic poet, who in prose asked, "Who would write if he could do anything better?", who turned from poetry to do something better in the hope of liberating Greece, wrote:

Great Washington had thanks and nought beside,
Except the all cloudless glory (which few men's is)
To free his country.

By his will Washington emancipated his negro slaves making provision for those who were too feeble to care for themselves. Lincoln emancipated all the slaves, the culmination of the initial movement of Pennsylvania whose Assembly had been the first to abolish slavery, in which state had met for many years long before the time of Garrison, the Conventions of the anti-slavery people of the union with delegates from the southern states, but none from New England. The New Englander's invention of the cotton gin, a device excellent in itself, fastened slavery upon the cotton growing states directly and upon Virginia where the raising of slaves for the cotton states' market became greatly profitable.

The war won, Washington turned with longing eyes to Mount Vernon from which he had been absent so
many years. His farms, his fortune had suffered, partly from the economic stress of war, partly by the absence of his guiding hand. He had accepted no pay for his military service, one of his stateliest gestures. His warning against entangling foreign alliances, Americans of today, now paying for the privilege of entering the World War, have good reason to take to heart. Soon sent back to Philadelphia as a member of the Constitutional Convention, wherein he impressed another member as being the wisest of the delegates, and to the Presidency for eight years, seven of them spent in Philadelphia, encountering conflicts and difficulties with his cabinet, the Whiskey Insurrection, the disappointments of the defeats by the Indians of the Pennsylvania soldiers, Harmar and St. Clair, and finally the satisfaction of Wayne’s great victory at the battle of Fallen Timbers, which opened the west to settlement by the whites, his administration set the wheels of our government in action. Again he returned to Mount Vernon hoping to be undisturbed by further self-sacrificing public service. That hope was temporarily blasted by the threat of war with France when once more he was called upon to be prepared to be his country’s military leader. Fortunately the war cloud blew away. A little while more and Washington was dead. Fifty-four years ago I heard Pennsylvania’s foremost orator in one of the two or three of the greatest of America’s historical orations, say of Washington that he was “the greatest of good men, the best of great men.” There could be no better tribute.

So too Lincoln won his war for the Union, after years of defeats, mistakes, rivalry and criticism. Moving, wisely, as some thought too slowly, towards his ends, he cared little for the general run of newspaper comment, because as he said he knew all that the editors knew and many things that they did not know.
The contest between two civilizations in one country, the one founded on slave labor, the other upon free labor, was ended in the favor of the greater morality. Lincoln won not so directly and personally as Washington won in the Revolution but through the successful Generals and armies. But just as it is inconceivable that any one but Washington could have held the colonies and the troops together for the Revolutionary war, it is improbable that anyone but Lincoln could have held together the diverse elements in the Northern states through the often disheartening events of 1861-65. Personally democratic in every day matters, he had exercised as occasion demanded an autocratic power beyond that which was lodged in Washington in war time. His war for the Union won, Lincoln did not live to mould and see its fruits as Washington lived to see results.

If some of those fruits of the Civil War gathered by other hands were over-ripe to rottenness, both the present day comment upon the efforts in Louisiana and other states to re-establish a form of African slavery and the concurrent comment upon the Reconstruction policy designed to prevent this indirect restoration of slavery, make the unreasonable demand upon human nature that after decades of angry debate and four years of great battles the people of the South and the people of the North should suddenly assume the conduct of the drawing-room.

Today with our Federal and State overlapping bureaus, our national commissions for regulating much that could be better done in other ways, our Federal assumption of powers that should belong to the states, we have run far beyond the Federalism of George Washington. In our costly and ineffectual primary elections with the consequent lowering of former standards in the United States Senate and in other national and state officials, in the substitution of rep-
resentatives of selfish clamor in place of a competent leadership, we have far outrun the Democracy of Abraham Lincoln. In large measure in ceasing to be a representative Republic such as Washington fathered and Lincoln saved, we have got away from the national constitution. It is a period of chaos. Whether we are entering upon that static condition prophesied by Henry Adams, where we shall have reached the limit of energy, or whether from the precepts and example of Washington and Lincoln our ship of state can be guided into safer seas, no man can forsee. Our national history is splattered with the sounding of false prophecies uttered by Americans not unknown to fame. Herbert Spencer said that of course some dreams come true, because the millions of dreams in England every night covered the whole range of human experience. Of the thousands of prophecies as to the future of our country, one here or there may possibly hit the mark. For all, that our ship of state now seems to be in the doldrums, the outcome of ignoring Washington’s warning against entangling foreign alliances, we will still say with the poet:

Our faith triumphant o’er our fears,
Are all with thee—are all with thee.