

and therefore as the English of the world. To what extent these favorable elements are present should perhaps be left for foreign eyes as unprejudiced and friendly as those, for instance, of Professor Bryce to discover. But Americans who see the enormously increasing population of their country, brought from all quarters of the globe into stimulating contact with new phases of nature and life, stirred by contagious, restless, New World activity, and amassing enormous wealth, and believe that throughout this mass of humanity there is a strenuous intelligence and an eagerness and capacity for mental growth paralleled nowhere else, may be pardoned for thinking that the elements demanded cannot be lacking. That we possess the last-mentioned requirement, readiness to adapt and change, certainly cannot be denied. Not the least notable evidence of it is, for example, our comparatively great openness to conviction in the direction of a scientific and practical simplification of our spelling. Thus one can hardly imagine that, as has happened on the other side, if our Philological Association were constructing a great English dictionary which from its nature must be quite independent of popular support, it would practically throw its influence in favor of the most conservative and certainly obsolescent orthography. It is also worth noting that our temper in this direction is precisely that which is needed to make English, what all who speak it hope it will be, the universal language of the future commercial, as French has been of the past political and social world. In a word, the hope that the English language as spoken by our descendants will be its dominant and most widely adopted form is entirely reasonable, and the determination that it shall be such is a worthy national ambition.

Lincoln's Disinterestedness.

THE very heart and substance of the authorized Life of Lincoln are to be found in the installments published in THE CENTURY for December, January, February, and March. No quality that helped to make Lincoln one of the ablest as well as one of the noblest of men fails of illustration in these thrilling chapters. We say thrilling, because we believe that no intelligent student of history — especially no patriotic American of any party or locality — can read these pages without emotion. Has the mental history of a single sublime and world-approved act ever before been so minutely and authoritatively described? The published and hitherto unpublished documents, letters, records of companions, and reported conversations are here gathered together by his private secretaries and displayed in orderly and lucid array. So interesting is every paragraph that one longs for even fuller information — but as it is, the data are full beyond precedent.

As is well known, there were, technically speaking, two Emancipation Proclamations, the preliminary one of September, 1862, and the final proclamation of January 1, 1863, which carried out in due course the programme of executive action laid down in the preceding document. As it was the January edict which actually gave freedom to the colored race in America, it is this

which is generally called the great "Emancipation Proclamation." But the two documents are really one act, and it was the September utterance that reverberated through the world and put forward the march of civilization. For this reason the present installment of the Life is illustrated with facsimiles of both documents — preceded by the original draft, which never appeared till given to the public by Messrs. Nicolay and Hay, in the December CENTURY. It was this original draft with which Lincoln surprised his Cabinet in July, 1862, and it has a peculiar interest as showing how the official utterance first shaped itself in his mind. In the present installment the authors give (on pp. 691 and 699) the first draft of the proclamation of January 1, 1863, as well as the facsimile of the document in its final shape.

One cannot but be impressed anew by the fact that one of the most effective equipments of Lincoln for the performance of difficult duties was a quality which he shared with Washington, and which each possessed to a conspicuous degree — the simple but tremendously powerful quality of disinterestedness. It was tact, *i. e.*, intelligence added to kindliness, which helped make Washington a successful leader; it was tact which helped Lincoln to steer his Administration not only through the perils of war but between the rocks of selfishness and faction — but without purity of purpose, without absolute disinterestedness, neither could have done so well, so completely, the work assigned.

With the enormous and enormously increasing populations, the seething social movements, and the ever-threatening political dangers of the New World, there are not and never will be times of perfect peace and quiet. Every Administration, every Congress, State, community, every year, every day, has its emergency. In our uncertain and ever-shifting scheme of general and local governments good men, bad men, half-good and half-bad men, are continually pushing or being pushed to the front as leaders. Now and again an unscrupulous schemer attains a notable official or unofficial eminence; and his disgraceful and pestiferous "success" tends towards the imitation of his methods on the part of men of easy consciences. The example of Washington, the centennial of whose inauguration is so near at hand, and of Lincoln, who was with us only yesterday, and whose pure and devoted life is now being told for the first time — there will never be a moment when the example of these men will cease to be among the most saving forces of the nation.

It would be a poor investment of energy to talk to some busy and party-honored dispenser of corruption funds or political bargainer with liquor-dealers about the public virtues of Washington and Lincoln; but to the young, or to those who in public life still retain somewhat of the delicacy of innocence, it is always worth while to uphold our most prominent instances of political success, and to repeat continually that selfishness is weakness; that honesty is strength; that disinterestedness is a mighty weapon and often the only one wherewith a man may do what with his whole heart he desires to do.