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OPEN LETTERS.

The Works of Lincoln as a Political Classic.

DURING the academic year 1894–5, at the University of Pennsylvania, perhaps for the first time in this country, the "Speeches, State Papers, and Miscellaneous Writings" of Abraham Lincoln were made the basis of a special course for graduate students in the constitutional history of this country, from the repeal of the Missouri Compromise in 1850 to the adoption of the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1870. Of the course of American government, commonwealth and national, during this period, relatively far less is known than of its course during the entire preceding period of our history. Nor is this strange. The political ideas of our earlier statesmen, Washington, Franklin, Adams, Jefferson, Hamilton, Marshall, and of their immediate successors, Webster, Calhoun, Clay, Benton, have been accessible in their published works. But of the ideas of the succeeding generation of our public men but little is now known. After 1850 the histories of the United States become military records: the evolution of American government is imperfectly traced in the best of them. Military history has little place in a course of study outside of a military school. There is not at present a constitutional history of the United States during the most critical period of our history — from 1850 to the close of the era of reconstruction. There is, however, a vast mass of material comprising the documentary record of American government, commonwealth and national, during this period, in the various departments — legislative, judicial, executive, and administrative. This material, comprising about thirty thousand volumes, has never been collected in one library, and it is impossible for any other than the wealthiest universities to possess even a portion of it. Most American schools, in the courses in American history and government which they offer, must be satisfied to use the works of American statesmen and the treatises prepared by specialists.

During this critical period of our nineteenth-century history, Abraham Lincoln bears a part and serves a function comparable only to Washington's in the eighteenth century. The publication of the complete works of Lincoln by The Century Co. in 1894 is the most important contribution of our times to a just conception of the evolution of American democracy during this period. In the debates with Senator Douglas, Lincoln is the voice of American democracy. He is not then the Lincoln whom we now know; he is the Lincoln of political debate, not the Lincoln of national administration. He grew in thought as the people grew. In his state papers this growth is recorded; and it is undoubtedly true that in no other records of the time is the course of public opinion in America so accurately traced as in the speeches, in the state papers, and in the miscellaneous writings of this man. His political ideas are, in our day at least, authoritative and classic, and the exhaustive study of them is the natural course for any person who expects to understand the political evolution since his death. Aside from the fascinating character of the man himself, the study of his notions of representative government, in correlation with the course of events in which his was individually the leading mind, is an equipment for American citizenship; and such equipment was never more needed than at the present time.

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Zachariah Chandler in Lincoln's Second Campaign.

MR. NOAH BROOKS, in his admirable article on "Two War-Time Conventions," in the March CENTURY, dwells on the intense depression that was felt during the summer months preceding President Lincoln's reëlection, and especially on the Wade-Davis manifesto, which, coupled with Frémont's nomination, represented the hostility of the radical Republicans. It is now evident that Mr. Lincoln would have been reelected in spite of the Frémont-Cochrane movement and the Wade-Davis defection; but all writers agree that the uncertainties of that summer of 1864 were such as to imperil the chances of success for the Republican party.

It is known that later in the campaign Senator Wade took the stump for Mr. Lincoln; that Henry Winter Davis suddenly dropped his destructive pen; and that General Frémont, forgetting his former biting criticisms, withdrew from the contest, and came out in favor of the Baltimore ticket. It is also known that during the campaign Mr. Lincoln asked for the resignation of his postmaster-general, Montgomery Blair. That all these changes came about as the result of negotiations undertaken by Senator Chandler of Michigan is not generally known; and so far as I can discover, none of the biographers of Lincoln has undertaken to connect the resignation of Blair with the withdrawal of Frémont and the conversion of Senator Wade and Representative Davis.

Zachariah Chandler had been one of a trio (Cameron and Wade being the others) who, before the war, had agreed to take up one another's quarrels in case of an insult from a Southern senator; and the knowledge of this combination had secured a considerable degree of respect on the part of the Democratic majority in the Senate prior to 1861. As a result of this early friendship, Mr. Chandler was in a position to appeal to Wade to withdraw his opposition to Mr. Lincoln. Moreover, the two men were much alike, both being quick-tempered, rough-spoken, and aggressive. The interview took place at Mr. Wade's home, near Ashtabula, Ohio; and Mr. George Jerome of Detroit, who accompanied Mr. Chandler, describes the meeting as rather titanic in its nature. Mr. Wade finally gave as his ultimatum the withdrawal from the cabinet of Montgomery Blair, whom the entire radical faction of the Republican party believed to be at heart a Democrat, and against whom they had worded one of the planks in the Baltimore platform.

Going directly from Mr. Wade to the President, Mr.