



The Every-Day Life of Abraham Lincoln (Illustrated)

FRANCIS FISHER BROWNE

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The present revision of "The Every-day Life of Abraham Lincoln" was the last literary labor of its author. He had long wished to undertake the work, and had talked much of it for several years past. But favorable arrangements for the book's republication were not completed until about a year ago. Then, though by no means recovered from an attack of pneumonia late in the previous winter, he took up the task of revision and recasting with something of his old-time energy. It was a far heavier task than he had anticipated, but he gave it practically his undivided attention until within three or four weeks of his death. Only when the last pages of manuscript had been despatched to the printer did he yield to the overwhelming physical suffering that had been upon him for a long time past. His death occurred at Santa Barbara, California, on May 11.

The original edition of this book was published about twenty years after Lincoln's death at the close of the Civil War. At that time many of the men who had taken a prominent part in the affairs, military and civil, of that heroic period, many who had known Lincoln and had come in personal contact with him during the war or in his earlier years, were still living. It was a vivid conception of the value of the personal recollections of these men, gathered and recorded before it was too late, that led to the preparation of this book. It was intended to be, and in effect it was, largely an anecdotal Life of Lincoln built of material gathered from men still living who had known him personally. The task was begun none too soon. Of the hundreds who responded to the requests for contributions of their memories of Lincoln there were few whose lives extended very far into the second quarter-century after his death, and few indeed survive after the lapse of nearly fifty years,—though in several instances the author has been so fortunate as to get valuable material directly from persons still living (1913). Of the more than five hundred friends and contemporaries of Lincoln to whom credit for material is given in the original edition, scarcely a dozen are living at the date of this second edition. Therefore, the value of these reminiscences increases with time. They were gathered largely at first hand. They can never be replaced, nor can they ever be very much extended.

This book brings Lincoln the man, not Lincoln the tradition, very near to us. Browning asked, "And did you once see Shelley plain? And did he stop and speak to you?" The men whose narratives make up a large part of this book all saw Lincoln plain, and here tell us what he spoke to them, and how he looked and seemed while saying it. The great events of Lincoln's life, and impressions of his character, are given in the actual words of those who knew him—his friends, neighbors, and daily associates—rather than condensed and remolded into other form. While these utterances are in some cases rude and unstudied, they have often a power of delineation and a graphic force that more than compensate for any lack of literary quality.

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