

THE DEATH OF LINCOLN.

BY

CLARA E. LAUGHLIN

PUBLISHED BY DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & CO

NEW YORK 1909

Page 20-24.

- - 1864.

My Dear Sir:

You may use this as you think best. But as some may wish to know when, who and why, and as I know not how to direct, I give it (in the words of your master) "To whom it may concern":

Right or wrong, God judge me, not man. For be my motive good or bad, of one thing I am sure, the lasting condemnation of the North.

I love peace more than life. Have loved the Union beyond expression. For four years I have waited, hoped, and prayed for the dark clouds to break, for the restoration of our former sunshine. To wait longer would be a crime. All hope for peace is dead. My prayers have proved as idle as my hopes. God's will be done. I go to see and share the bitter end.

I have ever held the South were right. The very nomination of Abraham Lincoln, four years ago, spoke plainly of war - war upon Southern rights and institutions. His election proved it. "Await an overt act." Yes, till you are bound and plundered. What folly. The South was not wise. Who thinks of arguments and patience when the finger of his enemy presses on the trigger? In a foreign war, I, too, could say, "country, right or wrong." But in a struggle such as ours (where the brother tries to pierce the brother's heart) for God's sake, choose the right. When a country like this spurns justice from her side she forfeits the allegiance of every honest freeman, and should leave him untrammelled by any fealty soever, to act as his conscience may approve.

People of the North, to hate tyranny, to love liberty and justice, to strike at wrong and oppression, was the teaching of our fathers. The study of our early history will not let me forget this, and may it never.

This country was formed for the white, not for the black, man. And looking upon African slavery from the same standpoint held by the noble framers of our Constitution, I, for one, have ever considered it one of the greatest blessings (both for themselves and us) that God ever bestowed upon a favored nation. Witness heretofore our wealth and power, witness their elevation and enlightenment above their race elsewhere. I have lived among it most of my life, and have seen less harsh treatment from master to man than I have beheld in the North from father to son. Yet heaven knows, no one would be more willing to do for the Negro race than I, could I but see a way to better their condition.

But Lincoln's policy is only preparing the way for their total annihilation. The South are not, nor have they been, fighting for the continuation of slavery. The first battle of Bull Run did away with that idea. Their causes since the war have been noble and greater far than those that urged our fathers on. Even should we allow they were wrong at the beginning of this contest, cruelty and injustice have made the wrong become the right, and they stand now, (before the wonder and admiration of the world) as noble band of patriotic heroes. Hereafter, reading of their deeds, Thermopylae would be forgotten.

When I aided in the capture and execution of John Brown (who was a murderer on our western border, and who was fairly tried and convicted before an impartial judge and jury of treason, and who, by the way has since been made a god), I was proud of my little share in the transaction, for I deemed it my duty, and that I was helping our common country to perform an act of justice. But what was a crime in John Brown is now considered (by themselves) as the greatest and only virtue of the whole Republican party. Strange transmigration! Vice to become a virtue, simply because more indulge in it.



I thought then, as now, that the Abolitionists were the only traitors in the land, and that the entire party deserved the same fate of poor old Brown; not because they wished to abolish slavery, but on account of the means they have ever used to effect that abolition. If Brown were living I doubt whether he himself would set slavery against the Union. Most, or many, in the North do, and openly curse the Union, if the South are to return and retain a single right guaranteed by every tie which we once revered as sacred. The South can make no choice. It is either extermination or slavery for themselves (worse than death) to draw from. I know my choice.

I have also studied hard to discover upon what grounds the right of a state to secede has been denied, when our very name, United States, and the Declaration of Independence, both provide for secession. But there is no time for words - I write in haste. I know how foolish I shall be deemed for undertaking such a step as this, where, on the one side, I have many friends and everything to make me happy; where my profession alone has gained me an income of more than twenty thousand dollars a year, and where my great personal ambition has such a great field for labor. On the other hand, the South have never bestowed upon me one kind word; a place where I have no friends, except beneath the sod; a place where I must become either a private soldier or a beggar.. To give up all of the former, besides my mother and sisters, whom I love so dearly (although they so widely differ from me in opinion), seems insane, but God is my judge. I love justice more than I do a country that disowns it; more than fame and wealth; more (heaven pardon me if wrong) than a happy home. I have never been upon a battlefield; but, O my countrymen! could you all but see the reality or effects of this horrid war, as I have seen them (in every state, save Virginia) I know you would think like me, and would pray the Almighty to create in the Northern mind the sense of right and justice (even should it possess no seasoning of mercy), and that He would dry

up this sea of blood between us, which is daily growing wider. Alas, poor country, is she to meet her threatened doom?

Four years ago I would have given a thousand lives to see her remain (as I had always known her) powerful and unbroken. And even now I would hold my life as naught to see her what she was. O my friends! if the fearful scenes of the past four years had never been enacted, or if what had been, had been but a frightful dream from which we could now awake, with what overflowing of hearts could we bless our God and pray for his continued favor. How I have loved the old flag can never now be known. A few years since and the entire world could boast of none so pure and spotless. But I have of late been seeing and hearing of the bloody deeds of which she has been made the emblem, and would shudder to think how changed she has grown. Oh how I have longed to see her break from the mist of blood and death that circles around her folds, spoiling her beauty and tarnishing her honor! But no, day by day she has been dragged deeper and deeper into cruelty and oppression, till now (in my eyes) her once bright-red stripes look like bloody gashes on the face of heaven. I look now upon my early admiration of her glories as a dream. My love (as things stand today) is for the South alone. Nor do I deem it a dishonor in attempting to make a prisoner of this man, to whom she owes so much of her misery. If success attends me, I go penniless to her side. They say she has found that "last ditch" which the North have so long derided, and been endeavoring to force her in, forgetting they are our brothers, and that it's impolitic to goad an enemy to madness. Should I reach her in safety and find it true, I will proudly beg permission to triumph or die in that same "ditch" by her side.

A Confederate Doing Duty upon His Own Responsibility,

J. WILKES BOOTH