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ARTICLE VI.

THE PARTNERSHIP OF ORGANIZED SOCIETY.

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SOCIAL and political principles confined to paper are powerless; when incorporated in personality, they become the moving and constructive energies of history. Character makes common men heroes when geniuses fail. Character creates nations more than political resolutions or legislative assemblies do. Nations rally round their strong characters in the midst of distress and its threatened confusion. Unselfish character, with honesty to the truth, in the long run rules the world and fixes the lines of progress. And so it has always been that every monument for the perpetuation of social gains has been inspired and sustained by a man who has been the living embodiment of the cause. Such an one was Julius Cæsar. He saw clearly and felt keenly the need of ending the chaos of the Republic. For the end of preserving Roman society he laid the foundations for the authoritative order of the Empire. Beyond question, Washington, above all other patriots, embodied those principles of protest and constructive freedom which were involved in the war for American Independence. It is just as clear that in Abraham Lincoln lived the ambition of the hoping and aspiring millions to keep their self-respect free from the assault of the ancient crime of might making right.

These and all the other benefactors of mankind have not

been the mere products of their environment. They have grown to greatness and power in spite of it. They have conquered the many hereditary enemies and have riveted fetters on the fiends of envy and selfishness. The histories usually begin with the statement that Lincoln was of humble origin. Humble is a word of comparison, both in grammar and life. Its meaning changes with the generations. One or two centuries ago, the people of humble condition in the South were the small planters with a few slaves, above them were the rich planters, beneath them were the slaveless whites. Their condition was pitiable in the extreme. There was no social commerce between them and their white neighbors.

In the early days of this country the soil was the only assured source of wealth. The minerals of the mountains waited for the miner, and the abundant sea food of its shores was in small demand by the sparse population. There was much rich land in Virginia between tide-water and mountain. The insatiate demands of slave agriculture required all of this. If a poor man had established a clear title to a tract of this, direct and indirect methods were used to effect his removal by storebill and mortgage. He was forced back onto the "thinner soils," and his prospect of betterment was darkened proportionately. His children grew up in ignorance, because he could not teach them and there were no public schools. Returned hunters told of the wonderful country on the other side of the mountains. Here was a new land for a new start in life, and thousands of this class set their faces towards the sunset.

Among this brave and fearless people — conquerors of the wilderness — were Lincoln's progenitors. A literary fad of much biographical writing has been the finding of a strong strain of blood between Adam and the person, and so account

for exceptional qualities. Usually it has been made to appear that the materialization has taken place nigh to where

> "The raging waves dashed high
> On a stern and rock-bound coast."

This attempt to explain him greatly amused Mr. Lincoln. He said: "I don't know who my grandfather was, and am much more concerned to know what his grandson will be." He was not of a type. He stands alone. He had no traces of the self-centered and complacent exclusiveness of the Puritan, and he was entirely free from the patronizing loftiness of the Virginia planter. His controlling ideas were absorbed from the great mines from which were forged out the fundamental principles of English liberty. Accordingly, he had a profound confidence in government by discussion, and was never disappointed with results, when holding fast to it seemed a squandering of patience.

The poor white people who sought a home beyond the mountains were doomed to disappointment. Over the mountains also came the surplus sons of their old rich neighbors. They had money and intelligence, and against these ignorance and poverty contend in vain. This led to their second migration across the Ohio River into the great Northwest Territory, which had been made free soil by the Ordinance of 1787. In it there was to be none of the social degradation of slavery and none of its compelled industrial weakness. Thousands of these people from Kentucky and Tennessee settled more than the southern half of the great States of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. From Pennsylvania there were strains of Dutch-Scotch-Quaker blood, but this people furnished the controlling social traditions, cast of thought, and intensity of religious emotion. Their great working capital was their Saxon manhood. They had resolved and determined that the assault of

slavery on their manhood, and on that of their children, should stop forever.

There was an unwritten law among the Greeks that a fellow-Greek should never be enslaved. In times of social rest, this tradition was probably lived up to. But when the poisons of the slave system began to work social disease and weakness, then men forgot that they were of one tribal stock. The strong pounced upon the weak, and made it appear that the legitimate place of the defenseless was in the slave-market. The free man was sold for as much as his physical strength and endurance would bring. Like causes produce like results everywhere and always. Practically, this people had been already excluded from the partnership of government, and, like the Hebrews of old, were determined not to be compelled to take the next step in social obliteration. They turned their backs upon the disappointments of many generations which the slave-owner had put upon them. In the free wilderness the remedy was sought.

And this suggests and explains one of the marked characteristics of this people. It was an atmosphere of gloom and despondency. The individual and the community must grow and conquer to escape decay and death. Without this progress, undervaluation and impeachment are brooded. Lincoln had his full share of this racial depression. One of the noblest and most persistent fights of his lifetime was for the mastery of it. He told his supporters in an early political campaign that he knew how to take defeat, since his life had been seasoned with disappointments. He was all the time at war with "the frightful fiends of doubt and care." In his determined effort to smile and to have others join in, there was the effort to preserve his sanity and freedom. That he came to be the prince of story-tellers shows how successful he had been in

keeping his mind and heart free in the atmosphere of truth and privilege. In the darkest days of the war, he rose above the gloom of defeat by reading Artemus Ward and the comic papers. In this way he kept his mental and heart powers free to make an elastic response to the great problems of his position.

This people in their new environment were keenly sensitive to the involved responsibilities. They knew the art of conquering the wilderness; laying the foundations of a civilization which has grown since in beauty and effectiveness was a wonderful achievement. From these great commonwealths for the past hundred years have come the directing and constructive influences of American life. Circumstances compelled these projectors of social and industrial empire to rely upon their own initiative and power of selection. The traditions of slave society were rejected and cast out as both intolerable and vicious. Those of New England had been refined to such a point of supposed excellence as to be declared by a solemn ecclesiastical body as unsuited to the country "west of the Hudson River." They were only for the elect and predestinated. This simple home-building people had long been classed among the non-elect. While they had been pushed from pillar to post, they held fast the Saxon traditions of Democracy. They recognized no blood superiority nor social antecedents, and maintained that a man was a man

"For a' that and a' that."

Like all frontier communities, they knew what they wanted and would not tolerate the imposition of disagreeable laws and customs. Sustained by a rugged self-respect, and moved by an earnest enthusiasm that social growth should ripen into a common betterment, they took up the work of giving a new expression to the partnership of organized society.

It is sometimes said that society in Illinois seventy-five years ago was rough and indelicate. It was so everywhere. The age was one of brawn and coarseness. The expression of the tremendous physical energy varied in different sections. In one, the prize-fight was considered a fine exhibition of manly superiority. The London *Times* expressed the grave opinion that the Hennan-Sayres fight would foster more satisfactory relations between England and the United States. Sermons were preached to show that this sort of thing fostered the best social morality. The fellow who first went under the table was effeminate; the last to do so was the best of the bunch. The standards of the people among whom Lincoln grew up included those of physical strength and endurance. He could chop more wood than the next one, and could outlift the crowd. He was the champion wrestler. He preferred a book and when compelled to these feats he stooped to conquer, but always kept himself free from their brutalizing tendencies.

In one thing he was not a good mixer: he would have nothing to do with the prevailing type of religion. This was very largely a pure emotionalism, seasoned with the fumes of sulphur and brimstone. Everywhere this was the prevailing religious interpretation. In the East the emotionalism of Edwards and Finney was the same, though refined by a higher social culture and an intellectual sobriety. It was called "the covenant of faith": character-building by obedience to the law of love and forgiveness was called "the covenant of dead works." Those submitting the emotions to spiritual knowledge and the moral judgment were rated as unbelievers. Lincoln's position on this matter went heavily against him in his first campaign for the legislature. His opponent was the redoubtable Peter Cartwright. It is easy to picture the great emotionalist appealing to voters to keep this unbeliever out

of the legislature. Soon, however, the people came to the sober judgment, and relegated Peter to the one line of effort in which he was an expert. There is no foundation for the statement that Lincoln was an unbeliever. He left Springfield in February to take up the great duties of the Presidency. The clouds of the coming tempest were gathering. He saw clearly and felt deeply the grave responsibilities before him. Among his last words to his old friends and neighbors were these: "My friends, no one not in my position can appreciate the sadness I feel at this parting. A duty devolves upon me which is perhaps greater than that which has devolved upon any other man since the days of Washington. He never would have succeeded except for the aid of Divine Providence upon which at all times he relied. I feel that I cannot succeed without the same divine aid which sustained him. I hope you, my friends, will all pray that I may receive the same divine assistance with which success is certain." [1]

The men who organized these great commonwealths were mostly lawyers. They were profoundly impressed with the

[1] In 1860 there were twenty ministers resident in Springfield. In a canvass of the voters all but three of these were against him. This fact called from Lincoln the following, and because it shows that he had read the New Testament more accurately than a good many ministers now professing to be orthodox, it is well worth being made known:—

"I know there is a God and that he hates injustice and slavery. I see the storm coming and I know His hand is in it. If He has a place and work for me, and I think He has, I believe I am ready. I am nothing, but truth is everything. *I know I am right because I know that liberty is right, for Christ teaches it, and Christ is God.* I have told them that a house divided against itself cannot stand, and Christ and reason say the same thing; and they will find it so. Douglas doesn't care whether slavery is voted up or voted down, but God cares, and humanity cares, and I care; and with God's help I shall not fail. I may not see the end, but it will come and I shall be vindicated; and these men will find that they have not read their Bibles aright."

need of stating accurately, and embodying fully in the fundamental law, the principles of the social partnership of government. New social formations were in the making. In the East, the aristocratic exclusiveness of the Federal party was cracking, and tumbling, and making place for the Jacksonian axiom, that one man was as good as another. In the West it was taken for granted that every man had the right to do as he pleased. Juries in returning a verdict never said, "We find," lest some friend of the accused should make the matter personal. Rather they said, "The law compels us," etc. Jurors were tied up over night, so as to be on hand for the next day's court. Once a judge called for order in his court, and was answered by a derisive laugh. He at once stepped down, gave the leader of the gang a sound thrashing, and remarked as he took his seat, "We'll see whether this court will be respected or not." Another in his morning toilet had forgotten his toe-nails, and cut them as the case went on. Beyond a doubt the community was simple and lived close to the elemental condition, but its leaders were tremendously in earnest that they and their children should be privileged to live according to the noblest traditions of their race.

Lincoln's association with these men was in very truth the turning-point of his intellectual growth and firm grasp of social principles. The Bible and Blackstone were the two important books he read and absorbed in the important days of his mental hunger. They made an impression on his mental and moral growth which was deep and controlling. It is seen in his great speeches and immortal state papers. Both of these books are the original sources of the great social principles of Anglo-Saxon civilization, and have given to it its wonderful beauty and enduring strength. As he rode for ten years the circuit of the eighth Illinois judicial district he was absorbing

these principles as they are embodied in the Common Law. With every court trial and campaign speech, he expounded them with increased clearness. He was never ready to try a case until he had arrived at the involved principle. He discussed with opposing counsel principles and their obvious applications. He never allowed himself to sink down into the professional malaria of personal ambition and money. Accordingly his legal victories were singularly free from the usual bitter feelings of defeat, and his opponents were among his most loyal friends. Once when a client had deceived him, he left the court-room. In reply to the summons of the judge to return, he said: "Go, tell the judge that my hands are dirty and that I have gone to wash them."

The source of the principles embodied in the partnership of organized society is the social needs of men, seeking realization. These are constant and invariable. They are not legislated into existence any more than gravitation or time and space. Rather they form the basis of all wise and efficient social legislation. Between any two human beings social obligations exist, and the advantage of both is secured by discharging them. As well attempt to escape these obligations as to escape hunger or the compulsion of thought. The nature of the involved authority is the same as that of fatherhood. A vote has nothing to do with it, and acceptance simply acknowledges that which already exists. And so it is forever true that the social constitution and needs of human nature form the authoritative source of government and all sound political philosophy. Free government results when it is taken for granted that all men are the same before the law, and have an inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In this land the instrument of government designed and intended to embody these self-evident propositions is the Amer-

ican Constitution. Because the social needs of those living under it are perpetual, the social partnership based upon it must be preserved. The destruction, therefore, of this partnership or union must result necessarily in either chaos or despotism.

These truths were not cordially accepted everywhere during the first fifty years of the Republic. The South every now and then was on the line of rupture from the Union, making the so-called States' right doctrine her sufficient excuse and justification. New England became angry, and threatened to withdraw, because she could not have her own way in some things. But in the great and gloriously ambitious West,— where humanity counted more than musty blood traditions, where there was the persistent effort to let the grandfathers take care of themselves, and for every living soul to make himself worthy of respect and confidence,— these principles of the partnership of a free, organized, social body were cordially accepted from the first days of settlement. Eastern and Southern men, settling in this new domain of freedom, soon caught the enthusiasm for equality and greatness. Very many reasons have been given for the steady success of the Western soldiers in the Civil War. There is truth in all of them; but the mighty social conviction that the issue meant either their death or that of the implacable enemy from whom their fathers had fled, made them invincible.

It is worth while to know that the principles expressed in the nation — which is the supreme secular embodiment of the social partnership — are of Hebrew origin and have come to us through Anglo-Saxon channels. Neither Greece nor Rome ever had any idea of nationality. The former had federated cities, but these, sooner or later, took each other by the throat and destroyed themselves. Rome had an

Empire city and that is all. With the decline of her military power, tribes and provinces reverted to their primal political condition, while the work of developing the sentiment and organization of nationality in Europe has been the severe and costly task of the generations since the last of her legions were crushed by the Northern barbarians.

To these principles Lincoln held with a calm and serious determination. As articulated in the Union they constituted organized society; the preservation of this was the first and essential end. At the Hampton Roads conference, the Confederate Commissioners asked about the suspension of hostilities. Mr. Lincoln replied with considerable earnestness, that he could entertain no proposition for ceasing active military operations which was not based upon a pledge first given for the ultimate restoration of the Union. The same matter came up again. He repeated that he could not entertain a proposition for an armistice on any terms while the great and vital question of reunion was undisposed of. That was the first question to be settled. He could enter into no treaty with the Confederate States but upon the basis first settled, that the Union was to be restored.

Lincoln voiced the first and greatest necessity to save the Union in these memorable words: "I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slaves, I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it, and if

I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that."

This was the position of President Jackson toward the "Nullies" of South Carolina, as he called them. "The safety of the Republic is the supreme law, which will be promptly obeyed by me." When Sherman was about to enter Atlanta, a committee of the Common Council requested that the Federal army be kept out of the city, lest the people be despoiled of what little they had left. The reply was: "We don't want your houses and goods, nor your cattle and lands; what we do want, and will have, is obedience to the laws of the United States government." When it became clear that the preservation of the Union would be helped by the abolition of slavery, the negro was given his freedom. When the developments of the war showed that foraging freely on the enemy's country would hasten the collapse of armed resistance, it was encouraged. His appeals for support set vibrating in the loyal North many of the most powerful traditions of our Saxon race. More often than otherwise his words were in the realm of moral patriotism and conviction. From this lofty altitude there went forth the energy of an emotion which penetrated and resounded in endless vibrations through all arguments and created an enthusiasm, genuine, wholesome, and lofty. This gave to the movement he led its purely moral motive, which was dominant and decisive. Men were made to feel the presence and throb of the moral and social certainties, and accordingly were lifted into the conquering condition of patient and heroic patriotism. Emotion ripened rapidly into the clear conviction that the uprising against the aggression of the slave power was the resolute determination of the modern social conscience that the old heathen crime against the weak and defenseless should not be perpetuated.

For in the past this power of social destruction has made no distinctions based on the color of the skin. If allowed to gain its end, the principles involved in the partnership of government would be both defeated and suppressed. So Lincoln thought.

It took time for the North to appreciate the stupendous issues sustained by its great leader. With the progress of the war, the hold of Lincoln on the best social instincts of our people became more assured. The response given has only one equal in history. That was the answer Englishmen made to the appeal of the great Chatham for them to preserve their political and religious liberties from the destructive attack of the Napoleonic despotism. England was bleeding and her treasure was low, but it came about then as always that those of the race of Alfred and Harold have never been exhausted when their liberties have been menaced.

The doctrine of organized society being a partnership has been an organic and constructive one in all the eventful generations of our racial growth. For it the Lords, spiritual and temporal, contended successfully with King John in compelling him to sign the Great Charter. They were ready to stake their fortunes and their lives for the maintenance and perpetuation of this principle of political equality and liberty. For the same doctrine, the American Colonies took the stupendous risk of gaining independence from the best-armed nation of the Old World. Because the Articles of the Confederation failed to express adequately the social need involved in a substantial growth, they were laid aside and steps taken for the formation of an instrument of "a more perfect Union." The disruption of a partnership is either by mutual consent or by force. The latter method is used in the courts and the field of battle. Like his constitutional predecessors, Lincoln was

unwilling to surrender the principle of all social political progress to a band of men who boasted that the corner-stone of their proposed government was the degradation of every one they were strong enough to enslave. In this debate of the ages, Lincoln stood shoulder to shoulder with Moses, the resolute ones of Runnymede, the heroes of Valley Forge, and the "Fathers of the Constitution." In insisting on the supremacy of the law and that social desires must be brought into subjection to it, he continued the immortal work of Webster and gave a new extension to the ripest political thought of New England.

For conduct devoted to the advocacy of principle there are great rewards. One is quietness and satisfaction of soul derived from having worked in harmony with the righteous verities which bear the whole creation up and give to it value and endurance. Lincoln was made a nobler and stronger man by the sacrifice and agony engendered by the responsibilities of his great office. His range of thought was always large; it was extended and purified by the fiery discipline of the war. He was rewarded in receiving the cordial approbation of his positions and policy by those who at first had seriously questioned their wisdom and effectiveness. Mr. Seward expressed it this way: "He was the greatest man of us all." After his death one of the many noble expressions of how his greatness had compelled an entire change of sentiment, was in the London *Punch*. It is, like others, a magnanimous recantation of the spirit of depreciation with which it had pursued him:—

"Beside this corpse that bears for winding sheet
The Stars and Stripes he lived to rear anew,
Between the mourners at his head and feet,
Say, scurril-jester, is there room for you?

"Yes, he had lived to shame me from my sneer,
To lame my pencil, and confute my pen—
To make me own this hind of princes peer,
This rail-splitter a true-born king of men."