ABRAHAM LINCOLN

A HISTORY

BY JOHN G. NICOLAY
AND JOHN HAY

VOLUME ONE

NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.
1890
Let this be done.  

Abraham Lincoln

July 27, 1864.
TO THE HONORABLE
ROBERT TODD LINCOLN
THIS WORK IS DEDICATED
IN TOKEN OF
A LIFE-LONG FRIENDSHIP
AND ESTEEM
DEPARTMENT OF STATE.
WASHINGTON
February 12, 1904.

Dear sir:

I have received your letter of the 11th of February.

The portrait of the younger man of the group is of myself. The other, with a beard is Mr. Nicolay. The photograph was made, I think, in the year 1863.

Yours very truly

Judd Stewart, Esquire.

71 Broadway, New York.
AUTHORS' PREFACE

A GENERATION born since Abraham Lincoln died has already reached manhood and womanhood. Yet there are millions still living who sympathized with him in his noble aspirations, who labored with him in his toilsome life, and whose hearts were saddened by his tragic death. It is the almost unbroken testimony of his contemporaries that by virtue of certain high traits of character, in certain momentous lines of purpose and achievement, he was incomparably the greatest man of his time. The deliberate judgment of those who knew him has hardened into tradition; for although but twenty-five years have passed since he fell by the bullet of the assassin, the tradition is already complete. The voice of hostile faction is silent, or unheeded; even criticism is gentle and timid. If history had said its last word, if no more were to be known of him than is already written, his fame, however lacking in definite outline, however distorted by fable, would survive undiminished to the latest generations. The blessings of an enfranchised race would forever hail him as their liberator; the nation would acknowledge him as the mighty counselor whose patient courage and wisdom saved the life of the republic in its darkest hour; and illuminating his proud eminence as
orator, statesman, and ruler, there would forever shine around his memory the halo of that tender humanity and Christian charity in which he walked among his fellow-countrymen as their familiar companion and friend.

It is not, therefore, with any thought of adding materially to his already accomplished renown that we have written the work which we now offer to our fellow-citizens. But each age owes to its successors the truth in regard to its own annals. The young men who have been born since Sumter was fired on have a right to all their elders know of the important events they came too late to share in. The life and fame of Lincoln will not have their legitimate effect of instruction and example unless the circumstances among which he lived and found his opportunities are placed in their true light before the men who never saw him.

To write the life of this great American in such a way as to show his relations to the times in which he moved, the stupendous issues he controlled, the remarkable men by whom he was surrounded, has been the purpose which the authors have diligently pursued for many years. We can say nothing of the result of our labor; only those who have been similarly employed can appreciate the sense of inadequate performance with which we regard what we have accomplished. We claim for our work that we have devoted to it twenty years of almost unremitting assiduity; that we have neglected no means in our power to ascertain the truth; that we have rejected no authentic facts essential to a candid story; that we have had no theory to establish, no personal grudge to gratify, no unavowed objects to subserve. We have aimed to write a sufficiently full and absolutely honest history of a great man and a great time; and although we take it for