

32. THE PRESIDENT TAKES A HAND

There are numerous stories of the times that President Lincoln interfered to ameliorate the harshness of a military judgment or the severity of a court martial sentence. Always he was swayed by what he considered the inherent justice of the case and his deep sense of humanity. Stanton and others in the War Department opposed him in this on the ground that it undermined discipline and military authority. The following letter not only shows Lincoln's abiding sympathy for the common folk, but it also carries a lightly veiled stern rebuke to the Secretary of War for not carrying out a previous instruction.

My dear Sir: A poor widow, by the name of Baird, has a son in the army, that for some offense has been sentenced to serve a long time without pay, or at most with very little pay. I do not like this punishment of withholding pay—it falls so very hard upon poor families. After he had been serving in this way

for several months, at the tearful appeal of the poor mother, I made a direction that he be allowed to enlist for a new term, on the same conditions as others. She now comes, and says she cannot get it acted upon. Please do it.

LINCOLN TO SECRETARY STANTON, MARCH 1, 1864.

33. DEDICATION OF A SOLDIERS' NATIONAL CEMETERY

The famous address at Gettysburg contains two hundred and seventy-two words. The Sunday before it was given Noah Brooks accompanied President Lincoln from the White House to Gardner's studio where Lincoln had a long standing engagement to sit for the photographer. Thinking he might have an opportunity to look it over at the studio, Lincoln took with him a long envelope containing an advance copy of Edward Everett's speech, which was scheduled to be the main event at the dedicatory services. Everett's speech was long. It covered both sides of a one page supplement to a Boston newspaper. In response to a remark by Brooks, Lincoln observed that what he had to say would be "short, short, short." There was no danger that it would cover the same ground as Everett's oration. Lincoln told Brooks that his speech was written, but not finished. It is now known that he took considerable pains in formulating "the few appropriate remarks" he had been invited to make.

There are five manuscript copies of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address in his handwriting. The first was written in Washington. Apparently certain revisions in the wording were made by Lincoln at Gettysburg on the evening of his arrival there. These were incorporated in a second copy which was written out by him the following morning. This copy contains the draft of what he spoke later in the day. The other copies were made by him from the second in compliance with requests. In the spoken version, which seemingly was delivered from memory, Lincoln added the words "under God," and they were incorporated by him in subsequent manuscript copies of the speech.

Few of those present at Gettysburg sensed that imperishable words had been spoken. John Hay, one of Lincoln's private secretaries who was in the group that accompanied the President from Washington, noted in his diary the next day that "the President, in a fine free way, with more grace than is his wont, said his half dozen words of consecration."