

Greensboro, N.C.

27 April 1916.

Hon. Francis G. Blair;  
Superintendent of Public Instruction,  
Springfield, Ills.

My Dear Sir;

Your letter asking me for a letter to be used in your Memorial Day pamphlet was duly received. I am glad you understand something of the difficulty of writing such a letter, but my intimate relations with two of the great men whom you have selected, being the son of one and the Private Secretary of the other, prompt me to comply with your request as far as I can.

My friendship with General Grant began in 1865, when I was only sixteen years of age. I was then a student in Georgetown University, and when I was not at College, made my home with my stepmother in Washington. General Grant was living in the house that had been given to him in what was then called Minnesota Row. It was one of a block of three houses on I street, near New Jersey Avenue, that Vice President Breckenridge, Senator Rice and my Father had built in <sup>1856</sup> ~~1865~~ for their residences. It was the Breckenridge house that was presented to General Grant. My stepmother was living almost directly across New Jersey Avenue. Our families became quite intimate and both General and Mrs. Grant, to whom I was sincerely attached, treated me with an almost affectionate friendship.

I graduated at Georgetown University in 1867, and went to North Carolina, my native State, to look after the property inherited from my mother. While there I was tendered and accepted the position of Private Secretary to the Governor, which I resigned to accept the tendered position of Secretary to the President. <sup>in March 1869.</sup> I held the position of Assistant Secretary for about seven months, when I was promoted to Private Secretary to the President of the United States under General Grant, three months before I became twenty one years of age. This position I resigned at the beginning of his sec-

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and term to accept the position of U.S. Marshal for North Carolina. I had the highest admiration for General Grant, which was not based solely upon my personal regard or the splendor of his fame, but was woven from a thousand golden threads gathered through years of intimate association.

Of my Father, I have thought it best ~~to simply mention~~ simply to mention a few incidents which tend to illustrate the leading characteristics of his life.

He was born in the Town of Brandon in the State of Vermont on the 23rd day of April 1813, and died in the City of Chicago on the 3rd day of June 1861, being forty eight years of age.

In my published letter to Mr. Bowman on the occasion of the semi-centennial of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates at Alton, I recalled the fact that my Father was personally opposed to slavery, and showed his sincerity by refusing a valuable gift of slave property tendered him by my grandfather, Robert Martin, a wealthy planter of North Carolina; and that in consequence of this refusal, Colonel Martin provided in his will that in the event of the death of his daughter without children, the slaves refused by Judge Douglas should be sent to Liberia at the expense of his estate. Judge Douglas could have accepted the slaves, sold them, and invested their proceeds in real estate in Chicago; but this was not his idea of emancipation. He neither wanted a slave nor the proceeds of a slave; and he did not think it any worse to own a slave than to sell one.

~~At~~ Stephen A. Douglas was elected by the General Assembly an associate Judge of the Supreme Court of Illinois on 15 February 1841, being then twenty seven years of age. At the ensuing July term Mr. Lincoln brought up on appeal his celebrated case of David Bailey, appellant vs. W. Cromwell et al, Executors of Nathan Cromwell deceased, appellees. Mr. Lincoln appeared for Bailey, who was resisting the collection of a note he had given for the purchase of a negro girl. There was no sufficient evidence that the girl was a slave, and her fate practically depended upon the legal presumption as to color. The Supreme Court held with Mr. Lincoln that: "It is a presumption of law that every person is free without regard to color."





The opinion was written by the Chief Justice and concurred in by Judge Douglas, and indeed apparently by all the Judges. It seems singular that Stephen A. Douglas sustained Abraham Lincoln in so important a principle of human freedom, and that S.T. Logan, for so many years Mr. Lincoln's law partner, should have appeared in that case against Mr. Lincoln, contending that a negro was legally presumed to be a slave without any other evidence than the color of his skin. This case is reported in 3 Scammon, page 71. Judge Douglas also concurred in the opinion of the Court in *Kinney vs. Cook*, 3 Scammon, page 232. And yet my Father was not an abolitionist as then understood. Having taken a solemn oath to obey and support the Constitution of the United States, he did not feel that he had any right to interfere with slavery wherever it lawfully existed under the sanction of the Federal Constitution. He did not believe that the Declaration of Independence referred to the freedom of slaves, because Jefferson, who wrote it, was himself a slaveholder, and every delegate who signed it represented a slave holding State. While several States had sought to prevent any further importation of slaves, and one or two had enacted some legislation looking to future emancipation, yet the fact remains that at that time negroes to a greater or less extent were actually held in slavery in every State in the Union. It is true that Jefferson looked forward to the ultimate freedom of the negro; but he well knew that at that time forced emancipation would lead to civil war. None realized this more fully than my Father, whose marriage to <sup>a</sup> the southern woman, and consequent visits to the South, brought him into personal contact with the slave holding class in their homes. For instance, Senator Reid of North Carolina, who served with my Father for several years in the Senate, was his wife's first cousin and his personal friend, but his political opponent.

My Father had no misconception of the length and magnitude of the coming war. He told a distinguished citizen of Illinois, General John M. Palmer: "This will be a great war. It will last for years. This continent will tremble under the tread of a million armed men."

The first thing I noticed when I stepped out of the car was the cold. It was a sharp contrast to the warm blanket of the car. I looked up at the sky, which was a pale, hazy blue. The air was still, and the silence was broken only by the distant hum of traffic. I took a deep breath, feeling the cool air fill my lungs. The ground beneath my feet was wet and slick, reflecting the light from the sky. I walked slowly, my steps echoing on the pavement. The world around me seemed to be holding its breath, waiting for something to happen. I felt a sense of anticipation, a mix of excitement and nervousness. The day was just beginning, and I knew that whatever was to come, it would be unforgettable.

I continued to walk, my mind racing with thoughts of the future. The city around me was a blur of colors and shapes, a constant flow of life. I felt a sense of connection to the world, a sense of being part of something bigger than myself. The sun was low in the sky, casting a golden glow over everything. The air was thick with the scent of flowers and the sound of birds. I felt a sense of peace, a sense of being home. The world was beautiful, and I knew that I was exactly where I needed to be. I took another deep breath, feeling the warmth of the sun on my face. The day was just beginning, and I knew that whatever was to come, it would be unforgettable.



In his speech at Springfield five weeks before his death, he declared that: "The shortest way to peace is the most stupendous and unanimous preparation for war.<sup>22</sup> He dreaded Civil war, but heart and brain re-echoed the slogan of his old hero, Andrew Jackson, "Our Federal Union; it must be preserved."

Thanking you for your kindly remembrance, and wishing you the fullest measure of success, I am

Carbon.

Sincerely yours,

Robert M. Douglas