

Box 59-B, R.D. 2,
Tucson, Arizona.
February 14, 1931.

Mr. S. Y. Rossiter,
Attorney at Law,
906 Erie Trust Building,
Erie, Pennsylvania.

Dear Mr. Rossiter:

I hope you will forgive my long delay in replying to your letter of January 19th. I was out of New York when it arrived. I returned to the rush of getting my work out in order for a six weeks absence here in Tucson, where I am giving a course of lectures in the University, and since I arrived I have been in bed with the flu. I hope this long explanation will win your forgiveness.

Your question interests me. Indeed it is an important one in Lincoln's life. I do not feel sure as to whether Daniel Webster or Henry Clay had the greater influence on Lincoln's thinking. I do feel sure that Lincoln's feeling about the Missouri Compromise came from Clay. You see, Lincoln was already a thinking person although only a boy when the struggle of 1820 over that Compromise came. We were close to the war, of course, in 1820, and the fact must have made an impression on the boy, and as he grew older he came to have a stronger and stronger feeling of the sacredness of the Compromise because it saved the Union, and the Union had become a kind of religion with him very early. Have you read Lincoln's Eulogy of Clay, at the time of his death. You will find it in any collected edition of his works.

But there is no doubt that Webster influenced him. He knew Webster in Washington in his one term of Congress and used to attend the political breakfasts that Webster gave. I think he must have felt something about Webster's 7th of March speech as he did about Clay's work for the Missouri Compromise. Both were speeches in the interest of the preservation of the Union and the keeping back of slavery, giving no more new territory to slavery than was essential to prevent an entire break between the North and the South.

Whether Lincoln got the last sentence of his

Gettysburg speech from Webster is still a question in my mind. Theodore Parker used a like sentence in one of his sermons which we know that Lincoln had read. Parker's version was "Democracy is direct self government over all the people, for all the people, by all the people," but this was not by any means the first time in history that something similar had been said. It was said in the Debates of the assembly in the French Revolution, best I think by Condorcet, and I think the French Revolution got the idea from Plutarch. Wherever we have had dreams of a Democratic government it has been of, by and for the people, that they have had in mind and the expression has been a version of Lincoln's sentence, though never any where so perfect, and of course, never at any time, at least in our history, has the idea so taken hold.

Yes, I do think you are right in claiming that Lincoln was influenced by Daniel Webster, though whether more by Clay I should not be willing to say. I think you are quite right in suggesting that it may have been from Daniel Webster that he consciously or unconsciously derived the last sentence of his Gettysburg Address, though I think you would be equally right in saying that he got it from Plutarch's Lives which we know he read.

I shall be much interested in your paper. Will you not send me a copy?

Regretting that I have delayed so long this answer and hoping that my excuses are accepted, believe me, my dear Mr. Rossiter, I am,

Very sincerely,

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