The Chicago Tribune.

EDITORIAL ROOMS.

Chicago, May ~~April~~ 15, 1896.

New Wks

Editor McClure's Magazine,

New York City,

Dear Sir:

You invited my attention recently to H. C. Whitney's report of the great, radical "anti-Nebraska" speech of Mr. Lincoln, delivered in Bloomington May 29,1856, before the first Republican State Convention of Illinois; and as I was present as a delegate and heard it you ask me to state how accurately according to my best recollection is it reproduced in his report.

I have carefully and reflectively read it, and taking into account that Mr. Whitney did not take down the speech stenographically, but only took notes and afterwards wrote them out in full, he has reproduced with remarkable accuracy what Mr. Lincoln said, ~~partly~~ largely in his indentical language and partly in synonymous terms. The report is close enough in thought and word to recall the wonderful speech delive-

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red forty years ago with vivid freshness. No one was expecting a great speech at the time. We all knew that he could say something worthy of the occasion, but nobody anticipated such a Demosthenean outburst of oratory. There was great political excitement at the time in Illinois and all over the old North West growing out of the efforts of the South to introduce slavery into Kansas and Nebraska. The free soil men were highly wrought up in opposition, and Mr. Lincoln partook of their feelings.

I am unable to point out those sentences and parts of the reported speech which vary most in phraseology from the precise language he used, because there is an approximation of his words in every part of it. The ideas uttered are all there. The sequence of argument is accurately given. The invectives hurled at pro-slavery aggression are not exaggerated in the report of the speech. Some portions of the argument citing pro- slavery aggressions seem rather more elaborate than he delivered; but he was speaking under a high degree of excitement and the convention was in a responsive mood, and it is impossible to be

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certain about it. The least that can be said, is, that the Whitney report not being shorthand is yet a remarkable good one and is the only one in existence that reproduces the speech.

During all the preceeding year the public mind of the West had been lashed into a high state of commotion over the repeal of the Missouri Compromise the year before, which had excluded the introduction of slavery into all territory north of 36,30 degrees. Taking advantage of the repeal ~~of~~ the slaveholders of Missouri and other slave states, aided by the ~~Democratic~~ Administration of Franklin Pierce, were striving to convert Kansas and Nebraska into slave states. This bad work was carried on actively in the spring of 1856. Many houses of the free state men of the new City of Lawrence, including their hotel, were burnt. Printing offices were destroyed; store goods were carried off; horses and cattle were stolen; sharp fights were taking place; men were being killed and civil war was raging in "bleeding Kansas". In Washington, Brooks of South Carolina entered the Senate chamber and nearly clubbed

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to death Senator Sumner of Massachusetts. Judge Trumbull offered a resolution in the Senate to prevent civil war in Kansas.

While this state of things was going on the first State Republican Convention, ever held in Illinois, assembled in Bloomington, May 29,1856. It was composed of Abolitionists, Free Soil Whigs and "Anti-Nebraska "Democrats. Owen Lovejoy embodied the first named, Abraham Lincoln and John M. Palmer the second and third elements--the whole united made the new Republican party which has dominated the state ever since, though Palmer, now Senator, returned to the Democratic party taking Trumbull with him. Several years ago.

At this Bloomington Republican convention delegates were appointed who voted to nominate Fremont for President. Abraham Lincoln was placed at the head of the State electoral ticket, and Col. Bissell (of the Mexican war) was nominated for Governor, and free soil resolutions were passed. Mr. John M. Palmer presided and made a stirring free soil speech. Mr. Lincoln, who was a delegate, counselled every

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step that was taken in his quiet, persuasive way. A sharp dispute broke out in the Platform committee between the radicals led by the Abolitionist Owen Lovejoy (afterwards M.C.) and O. H. Browning (afterwards Senator and Sec. of Interior) leading the conservatives. Lincoln acted as a peacemaker and counsellor. He advised the committee to endorse the Declaration of Independence and the rights of man, and to declare that in accordance with the opinions and practises of the great statesmen of all parties for the past sixty years, Congress possessed full constitutional power to prohibit slavery in all territories and that such power should be exerted to prevent such extension, which was done. Mr. Browning (Conservative) was allowed to add some high sounding platitudes to the platform. He made the opening speech in the convention and delivered it in a courtly manner and orotund voice, advising great moderation, and invoking the convention "to ever remember that slavery itself was one of the compromises of the Constitution and was sacredly protected by the Supreme Law." He was folowed by the radical, Owen Lovejoy, in a terrific declamation against slavery and all its works.

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Mr. Emery, a "free State" man just from "bleeding Kansas", told of the "border ruffian" raids from Missouri upon the Free State settlers in Kansas; the burnings, robberies and murders they were then committing, and asked for help to repel them.

When he finished Lincoln was vociforously called for from all parts of Major's large hall. He came forward and took the platform beside the presiding officer. At first his voice was shrill and hesitating. There was a curious introspective look in his eyes, which lasted for a few moments. Then his voice began to move steadily and smoothly forward. And the modulations were under perfect control from thence-forward to the finish. He warmed up as he went on and spoke more rapidly; he looked a foot taller as he straightened himself to his full height and his eyes flashed fire; his countenance became wrapped in intense emotion; he rushed along like a thunder storm. He prophesied war as the outcome of these aggressions and poured forth hot denunciations upon the slave power. The convention was kept in an uproar

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applauding and cheering and stamping; and this reacted on the speaker and gave him a tongue of fire. The thrilling scene in that old Bloomington hall forty years ago arises in my mind as vividly as the day after its enactment.

There stood Lincoln in the forefront erect, tall and majestic in appearance, hurling thun derbolts at the foes of freedom, while the great convention roared its endorsement! I never witnessed such a scene before or since. As he described the aims and aggressions of the unappeasable slave holders and the servility of their Northern allies as illustrated by the perfidious repeal of the Missouri Compromise two years previously, and their grasping after the rich praries ofKansas and Nebraska to blight them with slavery and to deprive free labor of this rich inheritance, and exhorted the friends of freedom to resist them to the death. The convention went fairly wild. It paralled or exceeded the scene in the revolutionary Virginia convention of 81 years before when Patrick Henry invoked death if liberty could not be preserved and saying " After all we must fight". Strange, too, that this same man received death a few years after-

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wards while conferring freedom on the slave race and preserving the American Union from disembarment.

While Mr. Lincoln did not write out even a memorandum of his Bloomington speech beforehand neither was it extemporary. He intended days before to make it, and coined it over in his mind in outline and gathered hisfacts and arranged his arguments in regular order and trusted to the inspiration of the occassion to furnish him the diction with which to clothe the skeleton of his great oration. It is difficult to name any speech by another orator delivered on the same subject about that time or subsequently that equalled it--not excepting those made by Sumner, Seward or Chase in strength of argument or dramatic power.

It was my journalistic duty, though a delegate to the convention, to make a "long-hand" report of the speeches delivered for The Chicago Tribune. I did make a few paragraphs of repor t of what Lincoln said in the first 8 or 10 minutes, but I became so absorbed in his magnetic oratory that I forgot myself and ceased to take notes; and joinedwith the convention in cheering and stamping and clapping

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to the end of his speech.

I well remember that after Lincoln had sat down and calm had succeeded the tempest, I waked out of a sort of hypnotic trance, an d then thought of my report for The Tribune. There was nothing written but an abbreviated introduction.

It was some sort of satisfaction to find that I had not been "scooped", as all the newspaper men present had been equally carried away by the excitement caused by the wonderful oration and had made no report or sketch of the speech.

It was fortunate, however, that a cool-nerved young lawyer and arden t friend of Lincoln's who was present, with nimble fingers took down so much of the exact words as they fell from the great orator's lips that he was afterwards able to reproduce the speech almost indentically as it was uttered, and has thus saved it to posterity.

Mr. Lincoln was strongly urged by party friends to write out his speech to be used as a campaign document for the Fremont Pre-

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sidential contest of that year; but he declared that "it would be impossible for him to recall the language he used on that occassion, as he had spoken under some excitement."

My belief is, that after Mr. Lincoln cooled down he was rather pleased that his speech had not been reported, as it was too radical in expression on the slavery question for the digestion of Central and Southern Illinois at that time, and that he preferred to let it stand as a rememberance in the minds of his audience. But be that as it may, the effect of it was such on his hearers that he bounded to the leadership of the new Republican party of Illinois, and no man afterwards ever thought of disputing that position with him. On that occassion he planted the seed which germinated into a Presidential candidacy and that gave him the nomination over Seward at the Chicago convention of '60 which placed him in the Presidential chair, there to complete his predestined work of destroying slavery and making freedom universial, but yieldinghis life as a sacrifice for the glorious deeds.

I am, very respectfully yours,

Joseph Medill.

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