The Sunday Star.

WASHINGTON, D. C., SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 30, 1909.

VERSION IS DECIDED ON

Lincoln's Gettysburg Address for National Cemeteries.

BRONZE AND IRON TABLETS

Manuscript as Corrected by Martyr President Is Adopted.

LONG CONTROVERSY SETTLED

Son of Emancipator Defended Father's Right to Revise and Advocated Version Chosen.

President Lincoln's famous Gettysburg address, delivered forty-six years ago, is to be perpetuated in enduring bronze and iron in the principal national cemeteries in the United States, seventy-six in number.

Orders to that effect have been issued by Assistant Secretary Oliver. They will be executed under the supervision of Quartermaster General Aleshire.

The act of Congress, approved February 11, 1895, providing for the establishment of a national military park at Gettysburg, Pa., directed the Secretary of War "to cause a suitable bronze tablet, containing on it the address delivered by Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, at Gettysburg November 19, 1863, on the occasion of the dedication of the national cemetery at that place, and such tablet, having on it besides the address a medallion likeness of President Lincoln, to be erected on the most suitable site within the limits of said park."

The act appropriated $5,000 to pay the cost of the tablet, medallian and pedestal.

The sundry civil act approved May 27, 1908, made an appropriation of $3,000 for placing iron tablets containing the Gettysburg address of President Lincoln in the other seventy-five national cemeteries.

Controversy Over Versions.

Although the original act was passed more than fourteen years ago and the subsequent act about a year ago, it was only in the past few days that arrangements were completed for carrying their provisions into effect. The delay was almost entirely due to difficulty in determining the text of the Gettysburg address.

That has been a matter of friendly controversy among interested parties almost from the day of its delivery. Among those who took part in this discussion were John Hay, former Secretary of State, and John G. Nicolay, both of whom were secretaries to President Lincoln; Robert T. Lincoln, his surviving son; J. P. Nicholson, chairman of the Gettysburg national military park commission; Gen. Aleshire, quartermaster general; Gen. Oliver, assistant secretary of war, and many others.

From the mass of correspondence on the subject it appears that there are three sources of authority for Lincoln's Gettysburg address, or rather three versions of it. They are all identical in thought, but differ slightly in expression.

Nicolay Describes Versions.

The versions are described by Mr. Nicolay in a letter on the subject, as follows:

"1. The original autograph MS. draft, written by Mr. Lincoln partly at Washington and partly at Gettysburg.

"2. The version made by the shorthand reporter on the stand at Gettysburg when the President delivered it, which was telegraphed and was printed in the leading newspapers of the country on the following morning.

"3. The revised copy made by the President a few days after his return to Washington, upon a careful comparison of his original draft and the printed newspaper version, with his own recollection of the exact form in which he delivered it."

"The last of these," said Mr. Nicolay, "is the regular outgrowth of the two which preceded it, and is the perfected product of the President's rhetorical and literary mastery."

Gen. Aleshire's Summary.

Quartermaster General Aleshire, to whom the matter was submitted for report, summarized the three versions as follows:

"1. The final revision published in 'Autograph Leaves of Our Country's Authors,' prepared by President Lincoln five months after the address for the soldiers and sailors' fair at Baltimore. This is the version desired by both Col. Nicholson and Robert T. Lincoln. The latter regarded it as representing his father's last and best thought as to the address.

"2. The version stipulated to be used by the act of February 11, 1895, appropriating $5,000 for the bronze tablet containing the address to be erected in the Gettysburg National Park. This differs slightly from the Baltimore version.

"3. The John Hay version, from a photographic facsimile of the original manuscript as written and corrected by President Lincoln four days after he had delivered the address and presented it to John Hay. This differs in several particulars from either of the above versions."

"In view of the discrepancies which appear in the several versions of this address," says Gen. Aleshire, "the matter is resubmitted with the request for a decision as to the one which shall be used for the tablets in the national cemeteries."

G. P. O. Amendments.

In a letter to the quartermaster general, Col. J. P. Nicholson, chairman of the Gettysburg National Park commission, said:

"We are not aware of the source from which the address was obtained in the act creating the National Park, but, word for word, it follows the Baltimore version. The punctuation, however, is the work of the public printer, and is in accordance with the rules of punctuation followed in his office.

"Col. Lincoln is undoubtedly correct in his contention of the manner in which the address should be printed, and the Baltimore version as given in the 'Autograph Leaves' should be used and none other.

"As no tablet has been cast for the Gettysburg National Park there is none to change. When it is cast for the park it will follow, with the approval of the Secretary of War, the Baltimore version."

View of President's Son.

In a recent letter to Quartermaster General Aleshire on the subject Robert T. Lincoln said in part:

"As I wrote you before, the Baltimore fair version represents my father's last and best thought as to the address, and the corrections in it were legitimate for an author, and I think there is no doubt they improve the version as written out for Col. Hay. And, as I said to you before, I earnestly hope that the Baltimore fair version will be used.

"It differs, as you indicate, very slightly from your exhibit A, which, as you say, is given in the statutes-at-large, making an appropriation for the tablet at the Gettysburg National cemetery. But the statute version was not made, of course, by any responsible person, and I think its incorrections should not be perpetuated when we have, as I have indicated, an exact thing to go by.

"I am quite sure as a lawyer that there is no obligation upon you, in the new tablets you are making, to follow the errors in the text in this old statute, and I trust that you will not do so. I have before me as I write, the book published by the Baltimore sanitary fair, which contains a full-sized lithographic reproduction of the address as my father sent it to the fair to be sold for its benefit."

Controversy Is Settled.

After thorough consideration of all the correspondence, Assistant Secretary Oliver, who was given final jurisdiction in the matter, notified the quartermaster general that the Baltimore fair version had been adopted by the War Department as the "standard version of the Lincoln Gettysburg address" for use on all the tablets to be erected in the national cemeteries as well as for the proposed memorial at Gettysburg. It is proposed to place the latter tablet as near as possible to the exact spot where the martyred President stood when he delivered the address.

Acting Secretary Oliver has written a letter to Robert T. Lincoln of Chicago informing him of the adoption of the so-called Baltimore version.

"The consideration given this matter," says Gen. Oliver, "has been very painstaking. I sincerely hope that the department's action will meet with public approval, as it appears undoubtedly to be in accord with the best historical advices that we could obtain."

Version Adopted.

The version adopted, including phraseology, punctuation, paragraphing and capitalization, is as follows:

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.