

Who Were the Greatest Americans?

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON



F SOMEONE asked you to name the 40 greatest Americans of the past, who would they be?

Furthermore, if you were requested to select from these 40 the five who were so outstanding among the others that there could be no question as to their right to be called "great," with all that that word implies, which five would you name?

There's not much doubt about your choice for the No. 1 American. Nearly a century and a half ago, Henry Lee of Virginia, in delivering his famous funeral oration in congress, called George Washington "First in War, first in Peace and First in the Hearts of His Countrymen" and successive generations of Americans have indorsed that characterization by elevating him to the highest place in their galaxy of the great.

Nor is there much doubt as to whom you would name as No. 2 American. Although separated, as to time, by nearly three-quarters of a century the names of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln are inseparably linked together in the vener-

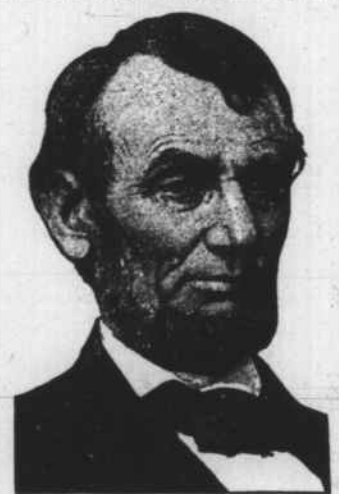
Ochs, the late publisher of the New York Times. It required only one short letter and one interview to persuade him to finance the undertaking and under the direction of Dr. Allen Johnson of Yale university the work was started.

A Monumental Work.

One of the editors who joined Dr. Johnson's staff in 1929 was Dr. Malone, a native of Mississippi and at that time a professor of history at the University of Virginia. When Dr. Johnson died two years later Dr. Malone was chosen as his successor and under his direction the Dictionary of American Biography was completed last year when the twentieth volume was issued. Characterized by competent critics as "the greatest work of historical scholarship yet produced in this country," the Dictionary contains the biographies of 13,633 Americans who, in the opinion of Dr. Dumas and the 2,000 biographers who aided him in the work, were important enough in the history of our country to entitle them to a place in this permanent record.

Since Dr. Dumas Malone has spent seven years of his life in compiling such a record and in that time has had an opportunity to ponder much on the question of "What is greatness?" it would seem that he can be safely regarded as an authority on the greatest Americans. So one of the first things he did after completing his editorship of the Dictionary of American Biography was to draw up a list of the 40 greatest Americans.

Then he wrote an article about it which was printed in the April issue of Harper's Magazine—and immediately a great number of Americans who have their



ABRAHAM LINCOLN

own ideas as to who were the greatest of their fellow-countrymen rose up to say their say!

"Look! There's not a woman on the list!" exclaimed some of them—and you can guess which of the sexes did that exclaiming!

"Why should there be 18 statesmen and soldiers, nine literary men, three painters and sculptors and only one business man? Doesn't he realize that this wouldn't be the country it is, if it weren't for the business men?" asked some.

"Where are the inventors in his list? What about Thomas Edison?" asked others.

"There certainly ought to be more than one clergyman and one educator, among the 40," declared still others.

"Aren't scientists who find out ways to save life just as important as soldiers who destroy life? Look there—three generals and only one scientist!"

Question of Ranking.

Nor have the disagreements with Dr. Malone's list been confined to the scarcity of representatives in the various professions. There have also been demurrers against the order of rank within the group of statesmen, soldiers and jurists. Why did he rank Ulysses S. Grant ahead of Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis ahead of Theodore Roosevelt, Stephen A. Douglas ahead of Daniel Webster and Henry Clay, they ask. They also question his judgment in including William Jennings Bryan in a list that included only a third of our Presidents. They wonder why John Quincy Adams rates a

THE "BIG FIVE"

GEORGE WASHINGTON THOMAS JEFFERSON
ABRAHAM LINCOLN BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
WOODROW WILSON

Statesmen, Soldiers and Jurists

(In Order of Their Rank)

James Madison
John Marshall
Alexander Hamilton
Ulysses S. Grant
Robert E. Lee
Andrew Jackson
John C. Calhoun
John Adams
John Quincy Adams
Jefferson Davis
Theodore Roosevelt
Stephen A. Douglas
Daniel Webster
Henry Clay
Grover Cleveland
William Jennings Bryan
Gen. Winfield Scott
Joseph Story

Business

Andrew Carnegie

Literary Men

(In Order of Their Rank)

Ralph Waldo Emerson
Nathaniel Hawthorne
Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain)
Walt Whitman
Edgar Allan Poe
Henry David Thoreau
Henry James
James Fenimore Cooper
Horace Greeley

Arts

James Abbott MacNeil Whistler
Augustus Saint-Gaudens
John La Farge

Clergy

Jonathan Edwards

Philosophy

William James

Science

Louis Agassiz

Education

Charles W. Eliot

place in the list but James Monroe doesn't and they wonder why Gen. Winfield Scott is there and "Stonewall" Jackson isn't.

Dr. Malone is not surprised that his selection has caused controversy, for he expected it when he wrote his article. He is quoted as saying that his list might easily be revised by substitutions and changing the order in which he has placed the 40. But there is one part of his list which he says he "would defend with his life." They are the first five names—Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson, Franklin and Wilson.

There has been no disagreement as to Washington and Lincoln, and only a little as to the relative positions of those two versatile Americans—Jefferson and Franklin. But there has been strong objection to selecting Woodrow Wilson as the only American since Lincoln to stand among the five greatest. Many have declared that that position belongs to Theodore Roosevelt—who is tenth on Dr. Malone's list. In answer to the admirers of the Strenuous American, the Harvard professor says:

Roosevelt Vs. Wilson.

"Roosevelt thought of himself as a man of action and of Wilson as a man of words. But the record shows that Wilson was the man of action and Roosevelt the man of words. T. R. talked a great deal, but he couldn't put things through. Wilson's first two years are comparable to George Washington's administration. At no time after the beginning of the republic did any administration ever get things done as Wilson did. He assumed a new role in the Presidency, comparable to that of prime minister, leader of his party.

"As a war President, Wilson was a better administrator than Lincoln. The World War was better conducted than any other we ever fought. When the Republicans went back in 1920, there was practically nothing they could stir up out of the conduct of the war. But the most important thing about Wilson was that he was the first American in history who was the most important man in the world. That just never happened before."

Just as Dr. Malone expected his selection of Wilson to cause dispute, so did he expect to draw fire by the absence of women in his list. "But it is actually no reflection on them at all," he says. "Until recently there has been no chance for women to achieve prominence in America. Until the Civil War, their only chance for distinction was as a hostess, like Dolly Madison, or as writers. There weren't many writers. Harriet Beecher Stowe is the best known but she falls short of the nine men on my list of writers. Frances Perkins was the first woman in public life and she is still alive."

It will be noted that no living American is included in the list, since Dr. Malone applied the same limitation to this list as was applied to the Dictionary of American Biography. (Incidentally that's the reason for the use of the word "were" in the title of this article.)

A Forgotten Hero.

Dr. Malone is not surprised that there is disagreement over his inclusion of Gen. Winfield Scott as one of the three great soldiers which America has produced. But he defends his choice of "Old Fuss and Feathers" by declaring that Scott "taught Lee his generalship and he embodies the military genius of America from the War of 1812 to the Civil

war." He says, however, that anyone "who wishes to do so may substitute for his name that of David G. Farragut, the greatest American naval hero." In fact, throughout his article in Harper's the Harvard professor, who refuses to be dogmatic in his selections except in the case of the first five, offers the reader suggestions for other substitutions.

His article starts off with the suggestion that "for the diversion of her guests after dinner, when conversation lags and the



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

radio program is unpromising, a perplexed hostess might have recourse to the following game . . . let each member of the party write on a slip of paper the names of the five greatest Americans in history. It will be well to vote only for persons who are safely dead, though enlivening jokes about contemporaries need not be discouraged."

His article ends with this statement: "It is interesting to speculate about an additional list of immortals which might be drawn up a generation hence. But I do not propose any such speculation to hostesses and their dinner guests. In fact, I do not even propose to them the making of lists of forty names. Five, or perhaps ten will be enough to



THOMAS JEFFERSON

provoke lively disagreement—as lively, almost, as will be stirred up by my tentative and highly unofficial roster."

His prophecy as to that "lively disagreement" has come true. Perhaps YOU are one of those who would disagree, not only with his first five, but many others in his list of 40. That being the case, why don't YOU draw up your own list? You'll find it just as stimulating—and perhaps even more educational than working crossword puzzles!

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IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL Lesson

By REV. HAROLD L. LUNDQUIST,
Dean of the Moody Bible Institute
of Chicago.
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Lesson for May 16

THE FORBEARANCE OF ISAAC

LESSON TEXT—Genesis 26: 12-25.
GOLDEN TEXT—Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Matthew 5:9.

PRIMARY TOPIC—A Man Who Wouldn't Quarrel.

JUNIOR TOPIC—Was Isaac a Hero?
INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—How to Prevent Quarrels.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—Promoting Peace.

In a world largely dominated by the philosophy that might is right, and in which men are urged to assert themselves and demand their rights, exacting them even by lawless and violent methods, it is increasingly difficult to proclaim the truth that meekness is not weakness and that the Christian virtues of patience and long-suffering are not simply outmoded theories which do not fit our modern world.

The story of Isaac, the second of the patriarchs, is instructive from beginning to end. The five chapters preceding our lesson merit careful reading. Isaac had come through many blessed experiences and had also sadly tasted the defeat of unbelief and sin before we reach the time of our lesson. Fearing a famine, and evidently not being certain that God would care for him, he had gone down from the promised land, and was dwelling in the land of the Philistines. But God had not forsaken him, and even there he blessed him.

I. Peace, Prosperity, and Envy (vv. 12-17).

Isaac was at peace although he was in the enemy's territory. God had given him great prosperity with the result that the Philistines hated him. Times have changed, but men are the same. Many are they who will not have the Lord Jesus Christ to rule over them, but who cast envious glances toward those who because they have honored God have been honored by him with peace of heart and have prospered in whatever they do. (Read Psalm 1.)

Note that Isaac's testimony is strengthened by his willingness to yield even what was his right, rather than cause contention. Undoubtedly there are times when one must defend his name and his possessions, but all too often those who "stand up for their rights" have wrecked homes, churches, and nations, and have gained nothing but an empty victory.

II. Peace in the World Is Temporary (vv. 18-21).

Isaac moved on and digged more wells, and for a time he was again at peace, but not for long. He was still in the land of the Philistines. We are in the world. We long for peace, we would throw all our influence on the side of peace. But let us not be misled, for as long as sin is in the world there will be strife and war.

Many noble Christian men and women have permitted their God-given hatred of war and killing to mislead them into support of unscriptural and impossible peace programs, often to the loss of their interest in the preaching of the gospel and the winning of souls to Christ.

But is there then never to be "peace on earth"?

III. Perfect Peace in the Presence of God (vv. 22-25).

When Isaac came up into Canaan the land which God had promised him, he found permanent peace and renewed fellowship with God. Even so, the Christian man and woman who will step out of a spirituality-destroying fellowship with the world and will come wholly over into the spiritual Canaan will find true peace and intimate communion with God.

A broader application of the same truth brings before us the teaching of Scripture that when the One who has a right to reign, the Lord Jesus Christ, returns to take his throne, then and not before, will peace cover the earth. In the meantime those who bear the beautiful name Christian, who are true followers of the Prince of Peace, will give themselves to such patient, loving, and long-suffering testimony to Him that their personal influence will be toward peace in the home, in the church, in the community, in the earth.

Always remember that God's Word, the Bible, is our guide. Let us read it diligently, intelligently, prayerfully. To help the reader to do this, the writer of these notes will be glad to supply without cost or obligation a Bible-reading calendar with a workable plan for reading the blessed Book through in a year. If possible enclose a stamped and self-addressed envelope with your request.

Faults Showing Up

The good often sigh more over little faults than the wicked over great. Hence an old proverb, that the stain appears greater according to the brilliancy of what it touches. —Palmieri.

Sin of Not Doing

Doing nothing at all is often the worst kind of wrong doing. Simply failing to do what we ought to do may be more inexcusable than any mistake in our best methods of doing.

UNCOMMON AMERICANS

By Elmo Scott Watson

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Father of the Dime Novel

A FEW years before the opening of the Civil war a printer in Buffalo, N. Y., began issuing a magazine called the Youth's Casket and a little later another, called the Home Monthly. Neither was much of a success. More successful was his brother who ran a newsstand and began selling songs on single pages in much the same fashion as the ballad-hawkers of an earlier day. Then the printer brother published a number of these songs in a pamphlet called "The Dime Song Book" and it sold so well that they decided to move to New York city and publish other books for ten cents.

Thus it was that a great American institution was born, for these brothers were Erastus F. and Irwin P. Beadle and they were the "Fathers of the Dime Novel." They took into partnership another native of Buffalo, Robert Adams, and for the next three decades there came from the presses of Beadle and Company and Beadle and Adams a perfect flood of little books (the Pocket Library, the Half-Dime Library and the Dime Library) to thrill the souls of American boys and to fill the hearts of American parents with fear that their sons were being corrupted beyond all hope by these "yellow-backs."

How groundless that fear was is shown by the fact that some of the most distinguished Americans of today grew up on a reading diet of Beadle's dime novels. Exciting and thrilling those stories may have been (opening, as so many of them did, with "Bang! Bang! Bang! Three shots rang out and another redskin bit the dust") but they were also highly moral. For the Villain was always foiled, Virtue always triumphed and it is doubtful if a single boy ever was ruined by reading one of them.

Irwin Beadle retired from the firm in 1862, Robert Adams died in 1866, and his two younger brothers, William and David, succeeded him. With them as partners Erastus Beadle carried the dime novel to the heights of its success. He continued in the business until 1899. Then he retired with a fortune built up by the dimes and nickels of Young America. He died in 1894—too early to realize that certain of the little "yellow backs" which he sold for a dime would later sell for hundreds of dollars because they are "Americana" and "collectors' items!"

She Wanted to Be President

SHE wanted to be President of the United States but if ever there was a forlorn hope it was that ambition of Victoria Clafin Woodhull.

She started under the handicap of being born in Ohio to a family that was not only poor but disreputable. And neither she nor her sister, Tennessee Clafin (or "Tennie C." as she wrote it) ever tried to retrieve the family reputation. Instead, both of them added several shocking items to Puritanical America's low estimate of the Clafins. For one thing they went in for spiritualism and, what was worse, they became free love advocates.

Victoria first married Dr. Canning Woodhull but soon discarded him for Col. James H. Blood, a handsome and distinguished Civil war veteran and a kindred spirit, whom she later married. Tennessee went to New York and won the admiration of Commodore Vanderbilt who set her and her sister up as brokers. Having thus entered the business world, the sisters set out to prove that women were just as capable as men in other lines of activity.

They began publishing Woodhull and Clafin's Weekly and with it Victoria started her own "boom" for President. She ran for that high office on a platform of women's rights—and kept right on running for many years. She went to Washington and appeared before the judiciary committee of the house of representatives to demand the right to vote. Of course, she failed to win that right just as she failed to get anyone to take her Presidential candidacy seriously.

So she finally gave up the attempt, discarded Colonel Blood and went to England where she acquired another husband, as did her sister. Then both of them disowned free love, won their way into English society and for many years published a magazine devoted to advanced views on many subjects. Eventually Victoria settled down into a placid existence as the Lady Bountiful of a small town in Worcestershire and became known as "a social reformer who suffered for views now generally accepted." When she died in 1897 at the age of ninety, the vicar who preached her funeral sermon told his hearers, "We have been privileged to have had one of the world's greatest personalities among us!"

Ask Me Another

A General Quiz

© Bell Syndicate—WNU Service.

- How many languages and systems of writing are there?
- What state has contributed the most Supreme court justices?
- In what year was a performance of "Aida" given at the foot of the Pyramids in Egypt?
- Who guards the White House?
- Who wrote the "Comedie Humaine"?
- What was a bireme?
- Of what musical instrument was the clavichord a forerunner?
- Who were the Jacobites?
- Of what country was Catherine de Medici queen?
- In what country is Mecca?
- In what war was James Clinton a noted American general?
- How many sovereigns have been crowned in Westminster Abbey?

Answers

- Dr. Frank H. Vizetelly says that there are six thousand seven hundred and sixty named tongues and systems of writing in the world.
- New York has contributed the most United States Supreme court justices, 10.
- In 1912 an impressive open-air production of the opera was given there.
- The White House has its own police force of 48 men. This includes a captain, a lieutenant, three sergeants and 43 policemen. There are also 10 Secret Service men.
- This is the title of an uncompleted series of nearly a hundred novels by Balzac, designed to give a panoramic picture of the manners and morals of the time. He began the work in 1829, adopting the general title in 1842.
- An ancient galley having two banks of oars.
- The piano.
- Adherents of James II or his line.
- France.
- Arabia.
- The Revolution.
- Thirty-seven sovereigns have been crowned in the abbey, and 25 queens consort—all of the kings and queens since William the Conqueror. Eighteen sovereigns and 14 queens are buried there.

Little Red Schoolhouses

There are 138,542 little red schoolhouses dotting the nation's countryside. One - room affairs, they represent 57 per cent of all American school buildings and for the most part teach good old-fashioned American education with the three R's as the basis.—Literary Digest.

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DOAN'S PILLS

GEORGE WASHINGTON

ation of their countrymen and if Washington is No. 1 American then Lincoln is inevitably No. 2.

As for No. 3, two names are pretty certain to come to your mind and you'll find it difficult to choose between them for this honor. But it's not likely that anyone will seriously dispute your choice if you give that place to either Benjamin Franklin or Thomas Jefferson and assign No. 4 place to the other.

No. 5? Ah, here's where you're going to have difficulty in deciding and even after you do, how many people do you think you can find who will agree with you? If, from the other 36 possibilities you should decide to name the man who guided this nation through the greatest war in history, your choice will have the support of a man who is regarded as something of an authority on American greatness.

He is Dr. Dumas Malone, director of the Harvard University Press, and among the reasons for calling him an authority are these facts:

Back in 1922, at the suggestion of Dr. Frederick Jackson Turner, one of the leading historians of the country, the newly-organized American Council of Learned Societies, composed of members from various colleges and universities, decided to sponsor the compilation and publication of a number of volumes of American biography which would be the "last word" in this field. To accomplish this meant at least 10



WOODROW WILSON

years work by hundreds of writers who were recognized as authorities in all fields of American history.

More than that, it meant the expenditure of more than half a million dollars and the council, while "long" in vision and ambition, was unfortunately "short" in funds. In fact, when it first took up the project it didn't even have the \$500 necessary for traveling expenses for members attending committee meetings. But it found an "angel" in Adolph S.