

NEARER VIEW OF DOUGLAS  
SON'S ESTIMATE OF CHARACTER

Interesting Letter Written by Hon. Robert M. Douglas in Connection with the Recent Celebration of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates Held in Illinois—The Differences Existing between the President and the Senator—Two Instances Cited That Go to Show the Character of Stephen A. Douglas.

Observer Bureau.  
The Hevill Building,  
Greensboro, March 20.

In view of the interest aroused by the celebration last October of the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates in Illinois prior to the civil war, when the slavery question was a burning issue, the following letter written by Hon. Robert M. Douglas, of this city, the eldest son of the illustrious Stephen A. Douglas, is of historical interest.

The letter, which was addressed to Hon. E. M. Bowman, of Alton, Ill., chairman of the executive committee of the Lincoln-Douglas celebration, follows:

My dear Sir: Your very kind letter inviting me to attend the semi-centennial celebration of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, has been received. It is deeply appreciated, not only for the invitation itself, but for the cordial and appreciative tone of your letter.

As the elder, and now the only surviving son of Senator Douglas, it would give me very great pleasure to attend the celebration and show my respect not only for my father's memory, but also for that of his great rival, whom subsequent events perhaps beginning with these debates have placed among the greatest men in the west.

Denied the pleasure of a personal attendance, it seems to me that one of two instances illustrating my father's character would not be out of place. Judge Taft, in his address at Greensboro, has tersely and correctly stated the real issues then discussed by Mr. Lincoln and Judge Douglas. He rightly says that neither speaker represented the extreme view of some of his party. The controversy related to the status of slavery in the territories of the United States, and its bearing on the status of the States to be formed out of that territory.

He further says, "Mr. Lincoln, therefore, while he supported the existence of slavery, believed that as a warm legislator it was his duty to vote to provide a fugitive slave law, and each other profit from the property as was required by the constitution."

To this extent Mr. Lincoln and Judge Douglas agreed. But Judge Douglas insisted that the question of slavery in the Territories and future States should be settled by the people themselves in making each Territory and State. In his opinion, this would reduce the question of slavery from a national to a local issue, and would thus not only recognize the great doctrine of home rule, but would prevent future legislation which he thought was an undangerous compromise of the constitution. I am, therefore, stating his position, but seem to find justice to Judge Douglas's position, to recall the fact that he was personally opposed to slavery. He showed the strength of his convictions by refusing a gift of slaves property offered by his father in law in the following paragraph: "In giving to my dear daughter full and complete control over my slaves in Mississippi (the slaves in North Carolina having been left to his wife in the simple), I make to her one dying request, instead of endeavoring to retain the same in this will. That is, that if she leaves me children, to make provision before she dies to have all these negroes, as well as their increase, sent to Liberia or some other colony in Africa. By giving them the not proceeds of the last crop she makes would fit them out for the trip, and I probably leave a large surplus to aid them in commencing planting in that country. In this request I would remind my dear daughter that her husband does not desire to own this kind of property, and most of our collateral connections already have more of this kind of property than is of advantage to them. I trust in providence, however, she will have children, and if so, I wish these negroes to belong to them, as nearly every head of a family among them have expressed to me a desire to belong to Africa, and you children rather than go to Africa, and to set them free where they would sell on their own, a greater sum, far greater in my opinion, as well as most of the intelligent among themselves, than to send a humane master whose duty it would be to see that they were properly protected in such rights as they belong to them, and have them properly provided for in such cases as well as in health."

Under his oath as executor of Stephen A. Douglas, it was the duty of Robert Douglas to protect the property belonging to his children, but it is evident from the above provision that he was never willing to own personally a slave or the proceeds of a slave.

There is another phase of my father's character, which, in the absorbing question of slavery with its possible results, does not seem to have been sufficiently recognized. It is admirably expressed in the following quotation from a letter to me from Chief Justice Fuller. The Chief Justice says: "I knew your lamented father very well. Popular as he was, it has nevertheless seemed to me that the extraordinary abilities he possessed have never been fully appreciated. The slavery question compelled his attention, and the comprehensive grasp of his mind did not get the opportunity for expression in other directions. But as time goes on I think the impression of his real greatness deepens."

His constant care for the individual welfare of his own State and its intellectual and material advancement should not be overlooked. His establishment of the University of Chicago, not only by the use of his influence, but by a donation large for a man of his limited means, attests his interest in the higher education of the people. On the other hand, the building of the Illinois Central Railroad and his early efforts to place all charters under legislative control show his regard for the material interest of his State and his prophetic view of the necessity of corporate control.

In 1836, although only 23 years of age, Judge Douglas, then a member of the legislature of Illinois, moved to insert in each charter granted a clause "reserving the right to alter, amend or repeal this act whenever the public good shall require it." Again in 1851, while in the Senate of the United States, he insisted that the grant of lands that secured the building of the Illinois Central Railroad should be made directly to the State of Illinois. He then had them given by the State to the Illinois Central Railroad upon condition that the road should pay forever to the State seven percent of its gross receipts, in lieu of taxes upon its original line. I am informed that under this agreement the company has for several years paid to the State of Illinois an average of over one million dollars a year, or more ending April 30th, 1908, it paid \$1,143,097.48.

With kindest regards to all who feel an interest in the name and blood, I leave, and with best wishes for the success of your celebration, I remain, Sincerely yours,

ROBERT M. DOUGLAS.

Tidewater Power Company to Make  
Spectacular Improvements.

Wilmington, March 20.—Extensive improvements are contemplated by the Tidewater Power Company to its city and beach properties in view of the approach of the summer season. Three new suburbs, or what the company have been ordered for the beach line and four for the city line, these to be delivered at once. Limited, the splendid pavilion at the beach terminal of the Atlantic coast line, is to be enlarged by a 50-foot addition on the north side with an entirely new ball room on the second floor, the approach to the station from the pavilion is to be covered for the protection of travelers during bad weather and the place is to be generally overhauled and furnished with new fixtures. New machinery is being installed at the power house in this city to double the generating power of the plant, and the steam main of the complex area to be enlarged where needed and extended to cover a much larger area of the city.

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When you insure you want PROTECTION  
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Freezing does not hurt it. Natural shrinkage will not crack it. Water does not make it fall off. Manufactured exclusively by  
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United States Bonds	252,250.00
Securities	8,800.00
Furniture and Fixtures	4,895.00
Cash in Vault and other Banks	251,538.47
	\$1,658,367.07

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Capital	\$ 250,000.00
Surplus and Profits	79,253.32
National Bank Notes	180,000.00
U. S. Bond Account	30,000.00
Bills Payable	70,000.00
Reserved for Interest	5,504.08
Deposits	1,043,829.67
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