

Lincoln's Farewell Address at Springfield, Illinois [1]

February 11, 1861

[A. Version]

My friends---No one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe every thing. Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born, and one is buried. I now [2] leave, not knowing when, or whether ever, I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being, who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him, who can go with me, and remain with you and be every where for good, [3] let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell.

[B. Version] [4]

My Friends:

No one not in my position can appreciate the sadness I feel at this parting. To this people I owe all that I am. Here I have lived more than a quarter of a century; here my children were born, and here one of them lies buried. I know not how soon I shall see you again. A duty devolves upon me which is, perhaps, greater than that which has devolved upon any other man since the days of Washington. He never would have succeeded except for the aid of Divine Providence, upon which he at all times relied. I feel that I cannot succeed without the same Divine aid which sustained him, and on the same Almighty Being I place my reliance for support, and I hope you, my friends, will all pray that I may receive that Divine assistance without which I cannot succeed, but with which success is certain. Again I bid you an affectionate farewell.

[C. Version] [5]

Friends,

No one who has never been placed in a like position, can understand my feelings at this hour, nor the oppressive sadness I feel at this parting. For more than a quarter of a century I have lived among you, and during all that time I have received nothing but kindness at your hands. Here I have lived from my youth until now I am an old man. Here the most sacred ties of earth were assumed; here all my children were born; and here one of them lies buried. To you, dear friends, I owe all that I have, all that I am.

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Annotation

[1] AD, DLC-RTL. Written down in pencil after the event, as the train was leaving Springfield, the manuscript begins in Lincoln's handwriting and concludes in Nicolay's. Both Lincoln's and Nicolay's portions are, though cramped and irregular, very legibly and deliberately written. Henry Villard's story that he at one time had the pencilled manuscript and lost it, may or may not be true. His statement that John Hay took notes and that a stenographer was present, may also be true, but these documents have not been found. The other versions given below may stem from these sources. For Villard's account see *Lincoln on the Eve of '61, A Journalist's Story*, edited by Harold G. and Oswald Garrison Villard (1941) and *Memoirs of Henry Villard* (1904).

[2] Lincoln's handwriting ends and Nicolay's begins.

[3] The remainder of this sentence is in Lincoln's handwriting.

[4] This version is from a broadside distributed in April, 1865, by The American News Company of New York (PHi; IHi). It is in all but a few marks of punctuation identical with that which appeared in Harper's Weekly and various eastern newspapers on February 12, 1861.

[5] Illinois State Journal, February 12, 1861. Some authorities, beginning with Herndon, regard this text as the most accurate one. If this version was taken down as Lincoln spoke, this may be so. Unfortunately, however, no verification of this possibility, earlier than Villard's, exists, and his account contains too many discrepancies to be accepted verbatim.

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