

A PRETTY LITTLE FICTION.

The Story that Lincoln Wrote His Gettysburg Speech on the Cars a Myth.

Rockford (Ill.) *Register*: A very interesting little episode in the life of Abraham Lincoln has received wide attention recently, additional interest being drawn to it by the recent Lincoln memorial and the unearthing of his hidden tomb and placing the coffin in the receptacle prepared for it.

Reference is made to the circumstances under which the famous Gettysburg address was prepared. On many different occasions and for many years the story has been repeated that while on his way to Gettysburg Mr. Lincoln was informed that a speech from him would be expected, whereupon he took some odd scraps of paper and improvising a desk on his knee hastily indicted the brief address which has since been cherished as one of the world's great masterpieces of oratory. This old story, so often repeated that its historical verity had ceased to be questioned, has recently been told to a reporter of the New York *Sun* by the Hon. Edward McPherson with an artistic grouping of details, and it has again the run of the newspapers in about this form:

President Lincoln while on the cars on his way from the White House to the battlefield of Gettysburg was notified for the first time that he would be expected to make some remarks. Asking for some paper, a rough sheet of foolscap was handed him, and, retiring to a seat by himself, with a pencil he wrote the address which has become so celebrated, an address which for appropriateness and eloquence, for pathos and beauty, for sublimity in sentiment and expression, has hardly its equal in English or American literature.

This is all very pretty and surprising and all that, but a straight fiction, and the *Daily Register* will have to be the first to dispel the illusion. In reading this statement Dr. Sutherland recalled a conversation he had held some years ago with Gen. James Speed, who was Lincoln's Attorney-General and one of his nearest advisers. In this conversation the Gettysburg oration was brought up, and Dr. Sutherland's recollection was entirely different from the published accounts. He thereupon wrote to the venerable ex-Attorney-General, who is still living in Louisville, Ky., engaged in the practice of law, and in response received the following letter, which clearly disputes the statement which is going the rounds:

LOUISVILLE, Ky., April 13, 1887. -*Dr. John R. Sutherland*-DEAR SIR: Yours of the 11th inst. to hand this morning. I was not in Washington at the time Mr. Lincoln made his Gettysburg speech, and only know what he told me of it. He said that he partially wrote it before he left Washington and finished it up after arriving at Gettysburg. I do not think the article from the *Sun* is true. . . . Yours truly,

JAMES SPEED.