

three cases that came before him in a summary manner. The first was a gentleman who wished to ship goods to Newbern on a man-of-war, and for private speculation. Mr. Lincoln said to him, "your petition cannot be granted; for our ships have other work to do besides carrying goods to the South for personal aggrandizement." The second applicant was an elderly lady, dressed in deep mourning, who held a petition in her hand, and weeping bitterly, presented it to Mr. Lincoln. He read it carefully, and said to her in great kindness, "my good woman, this petition signed by your neighbours vouches for your respectability and your loyalty, and in it you ask me to release your rebel son, now in prison. I regret it cannot be done consistently with the public welfare. During the first year of this rebellion, my heart was grieved when the sad stories were brought to me by relatives of prisoners ill in health, repentant and dying. I released many on account of these entreaties, and on promise of future good behaviour. Well, what was the result? When they reached their homes they threw away their paroles, forgot their honour, and once more took up arms against us, and were taken prisoners again. If your son is sick, he shall be cared for: if he is not fed the wholesome though plain food of a prisoner, in abundance, I shall see to it. You can visit your son at seasonable hours; but I cannot liberate any more on such pleas as you now present. I am sorry for you, but you have my answer." Sorrow was plainly printed on his countenance as she turned away. The third petitioner was a young lady from Kentucky, with a similar request on behalf of her brother. The President looked earnestly at the petition and then at her countenance, and said emphatically: "Were you not here Saturday on the same errand?" She answered, "I was." "Did I not consider this matter then?" She said, "you did." "What was my answer to you at that time? Did I not say I would not liberate him, as it was the third offence, either of which should have condemned him to death? Did you think I had changed my mind, or that you would torment me until I had granted your request?" "O, sir," she cried, as the tears rolled down her cheeks, "if you will only permit him to go home with me, he will *never, never* fight against you again: indeed, sir, he will not; I promise you that. He is dying where he is. Let me take him away,—let me take him away and nurse him until he dies." Duty and pity had a brief struggle, but the former won. "Your brother shall be cared for," he said; "but he cannot be liberated." She drew herself up to her full height in an instant, and in the most haughty manner; and after deigning to give the chief magistrate a fierce look of some significance, as much as to say "we meet at Phillipi," she withdrew. He was thus importuned day after day by all classes of the republic. He was a man of acute discrimination and keen observation,—one who had studied his countrymen well in all the multifarious phases of their erratic hero-worship, and to a great extent had humoured them in many of their demands, if these calls were not diametrically opposed to a settled policy or course of action. When the people thought him vacillating, the oak was only bending before the storm, soon to regain its former uprightness and elasticity when the tempest was overpast. He was an emancipator at heart when he read his first inaugural in doubt and sorrow from the steps of the Capitol; but "the better angel of his nature" told him that it was best to allow public opinion to precede and concur in his proclamation of freedom. The press, under his control, paved the way, and did it well. He struck the iron when it was hot, and moulded the plastic elements of national power with a willing hand, until the long-sought-for goal was reached. No siren song lured him; no threats