It has been said that a cat may look at a king.

It might be said that a citizen may stand with Abraham Lincoln any time. It is not necessary to climb upon a pedestal. It can be done anywhere, any time. It costs so little in time and effort. It requires no money.

There is a jet flight suited to our age which is within the reach of all. I refer to the transport of fancy. You might call it the transport of imagination. It requires no travel card, no airline ticket. All you need do is walk up the ramp and come aboard.

I call your attention to the stewardess. Notice how wraithlike and unreal she seems. She has a lovely name. Her name is History.

Listen as History begins in a soft, eerie voice.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, our first stop is New Salem, Illinois."

I remind you that the year is 1832. Quick as a jiffy we are there, and History speaks again.

"There is a young man. Let's stand with him and listen. They are talking about the Election returns. We are standing with Lincoln. He looks so young, so well, and he is only twenty-three. Wouldn't you think he might look glum. After all, he was defeated today. But he is not glum. Listen to his comment. 'The only time I have been beaten by the people.' But he is so undismayed."
Let's get aboard. The next stop is Vandalia, and we are already there. Yes, that is the state capital. And look at the crowd. How noisy and tense they are. There must be something exciting. And there is Abraham Lincoln again. How strange. Once more they are counting votes. He was a candidate for Speaker of the Assembly. He has been defeated again. This is the second time he has been defeated for the speakership. Isn't it odd that he doesn't look very sad.

We are returning to Springfield. Look, there is the city already. This is 1846. Perhaps we ought to go to the law office of Lincoln and Meredon. No, it is not much of an office, but there is one thing about the simplicity and severity of the office. It stimulates one to thinking. This is truly astonishing. They are talking about an election again. Notice Lincoln smiling. He is the winner for a seat in Congress. He is just thirty-seven. How that smile becomes him.

Come aboard now, because we are enroute to Bloomington, Illinois. Perhaps I should refresh you that this is May 29, 1856. Behold, there is Lincoln again. He is ten years older than when we saw him in the law office. He is forty-seven. But look at the intense expression on his face, and look at the excited people. I forgot to tell you. It is a Republican Convention. See. Lincoln is about to make a speech. I think it is all right if we go up on the stage, be right near him and stand with him. Note the tremor in his voice, and note how fervent he seems. He is making the point that slavery is a moral issue. This is the first time he put it on that ground in quite that way. He says this is a conflict between right and wrong.
He seems a little different than before. This looks like a new Lincoln. It seems as if there is a new glow in his face and a new fire in his soul.

But let's go back to Springfield now. I am sure you remember that since we visited the Capital in Vandalia it has been moved to Springfield. That is the Capital building right over there. Listen to the people on the lawn who are shouting. Do you hear it? "Lincoln for senator. Lincoln for senator." And there is Lincoln. We are just in time. My calendar shows that this is June 16, 1858. Haven't you noticed the deeper lines in Lincoln's face? He is forty-nine now. He seems so determined. There is that ringing statement. I am sure that it will be remembered. "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave, half free." I am sure that statement will endure.

But let's go to Ottawa now, up on the Illinois River. Note the placid river. It is never lovelier than in the late summer or early fall. The river seems so peaceful, but have you noticed the dust, and that huge crowd in the middle of town. There must be some excitement, and it is frightfully warm. The day is August 21, 1858. And there is Lincoln again. And there is Stephen Douglas -- that short, stout man -- that is Stephen Douglas. They are having a debate. Lincoln is pursuing that moral theme again in earnest. Slavery is wrong. It is wrong. It is wrong.

I believe now, ladies and gentlemen, we will take a longer journey, so you can relax a bit. We are off to New York City, but we will be there in a twinkie.
This happens to be February 27, 1860. That massive old building you see is truly one of the sights of New York. That is Cooper Union Institute. It was built and endowed by Peter Cooper, the inventor, who has always been interested in inventions and arts and crafts, and in young people. The place is fairly filled. I would think there must be fifteen hundred. How do you think they could ever get here in such a snow storm and such a traffic snarl. But I suppose weather is no deterrent. Look at the ladies in all their finery, and men in top hats. Way, there is Lincoln. He is moving up to that little table. He is ready to speak. We are just in time.

"Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it."

You can relax again. The weather is no obstacle, as you know, for the transport of fancy. But I suggest you relax. Our next stop is Chicago.

"What is there?" you ask.

The Republican National Convention. This is May 16, 1860. What tumult and noise. Look at the signs. The rail splitter for President. Again we are in time. They are balloting in the Convention Hall. Did you hear that cannon shot? It must be a signal. It is a signal. It was the third ballot. Abraham Lincoln has been nominated for the presidency on the Republican ticket. But where is he? Oh, they say he is in Springfield. So we must go to Springfield.
And here we are in Springfield. Perhaps I should ask a passer-by where he lives. Oh, his house is on Jackson Street, and here it is. It has been remodelled since I saw it last. They said it cost all of thirteen hundred dollars. But it is an impressive house. And there is Lincoln. He is sitting in that old rocking chair with his legs stretched out. That is his favorite chair and that is his favorite posture.

He is talking to Mrs. Lincoln. Did you hear what he said? He said, "Mary, we have been nominated." We might just as well stay in Springfield until the election is over.

This is November 6, 1860.

There is a spirit in the air. Never have people seemed so conscious of the importance of Election day. So let's wander over to Lincoln's house again and see whether there are enough returns. He is smiling. He is talking with Mrs. Lincoln again. He is saying "Mary, we are elected." What a gentle person and gracious person he really is.

It is time to go to Washington now. The day seems so gray and dreary. It looks a bit stormy also. But note the patches of blue in the sky. That is a good augury. There seems to be so many soldiers, and have you noticed the cavalry prancing about. How odd the Capitol looks. The dome seems saved off. It hasn't been finished.

The Senate Chamber looks impressive. That is Hannibal Hamlin, the Senator from Maine, taking the oath as Vice President. Pull your coats about you because we shall be going out on the East Plaza now.
There is Lincoln. He is about to deliver the First Inaugural Address. How clearly and how firmly he speaks.

"Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people. Is there any better or equal hope in the world?"

It is a responsive crowd. How they applauded that statement. But, listen, as he continues.

"In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in mine is the momentous issue of civil war."

People seem solemn now. But Mr. Lincoln continues in that same firm, clear voice.

"Though passion may have strained, it must not break the bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory stretched from every battlefield and every patriot's grave to every living heart and hearth-stone all over this broad land will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angles of our natures."

There is a trembling old man administering the oath to Mr. Lincoln. That is Chief Justice Taney of the Supreme Court. The exalted rail splitter from Illinois is the President of the United States.

This is August 22, 1862. We can take a carriage to the White House. Notice how uneasy people on the street here in Washington seem to be. So many of them seem to be looking at a newspaper. Perhaps we should stop and get one. But wait a moment. Why, this is an old paper.
It is dated August 19, 1862. That is three days ago. I see now what captivates their interest. It is a long article by Horace Greeley, the publisher of this paper -- the New York Tribune. Note the title of Mr. Greeley's article. It is called, "The Prayer of 20 Millions." How truculent Mr. Greeley writes. He is positively caustic in the things he says about the President. But, no matter, we will continue on to the White House. This is truly a great day. There is Mr. Lincoln at his desk. Let's make no noise and not disturb him. We can peak over his shoulder. He is writing a letter in long-hand to Mr. Greeley.

"I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored the nearer the Union will be to the Union as it was."

What courage.

We can go back to the White House now. Yes, I know we were here only a month ago. This is September 22, 1862. This is indeed a privilege. Look. There is Lincoln with his entire Cabinet. He is reading something. How solemn is his voice. No wonder. This is a solemn and important day.

"That on the first day of January in the year of our Lord 1863 all persons held as slaves within any state or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, free and forever free."

That seems unbelievable. Think of all those people we saw with dark skins as we journeyed down the years and over the country.
All these people shall be forever free. By one proclamation the shackles fell away.

For you who are aboard I am so glad it is a lovely day. In a moment we will set down right on the rolling battlefield of Gettysburg. We must hurry, but I am sure we shall be in time. That looks like a small crowd to hear the President and the orator of the day.

But look at the program. The President is only to make a "few remarks". So Edward Everett is to make the speech of the day. Have you noticed the crosses? To think of the carnage that took place here, but it was the turning point. It is a little chilly. But the sky is so bright, and what a wonderful day in the rolling Pennsylvania countryside. Mr. Everett is finishing. I presume Mr. Lincoln will speak now. Yes, they are ready for him. Let's really stand with him now.

"Now we are engaged in a great Civil War testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure.......that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not cherish from the earth."

Mr. Lincoln sat down. Is that all of the speech? There were only ten sentences. He only spoke two and one-half minutes. But it was deathless.
Here we are back in the Nation's Capital again. I remind you all that this is March 4, 1865. Will Inaugural days ever be pleasant? It seems so cold and drizzly. And look at the mud. But look at the multitude who don't seem to mind the mud. Hear that ovation. Who would have believed it. It seems inconceivable that this awful war is still in progress. Who would believe that such unkind and vindictive things can be said about the President. Certainly the people would not do here. Listen to this man from Illinois.

"The Almighty has his own purposes. Woe unto the world because of offenses. . . . With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in." Yes, there is a God. There is a conscience. There is an inexorable justice.

And now the oath. That man who is administering the oath is Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase. Look, Lincoln is stooping to kiss the Bible. Do you wonder what book and what verse? I can tell you. It was the Fifth Chapter of Isaiah.

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"
We are back in Springfield again. This is not a happy day.

It is May 4, 1865. Yes, this is Oak Ridge cemetery. There is the
tomb, and look at that vast crowd. He is home. The rail splitter,
the Salem postmaster, the country lawyer, the congressman, the sixteenth
President is back home.

You see what I mean. Anyone can stand with Abraham Lincoln.