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# ABRAHAM LINCOLN

## PERSONAL MEMORIES OF THE MAN

By Robert Brewster Stanton

ILLUSTRATION (FRONTISPIECE) FROM PHOTOGRAPH



**I**T is proper at the start to make clear how I, a comparatively young boy at the time, could know anything personally and intimately of so great a man as Abraham Lincoln.

My father, the Reverend Robert Livingston Stanton, D.D., a Connecticut Yankee, whose New England family dates back to 1635 and 1620, after his graduation from the College of Lane Seminary\*—having spent six years under the tutelage of Doctor Lyman Beecher and with Henry Ward Beecher as a classmate, and going through that period of wild anti-slavery agitation there which nearly broke up the seminary and finally led to the splitting of the Presbyterian Church into its North and South branches—took up his first pastoral work, in 1839, in the little church of Pine Ridge, Adams County, Miss., and in 1841 removed to Woodville, Miss.—at which place I was born, in 1846, my mother being also from the North—and he lived in Woodville as pastor there and in New Orleans, and as president of Oakland College, Miss., until 1853.

During all my father's life in the South he was a true abolitionist. He knew the institution of slavery from the inside. He condemned the position of the South, particularly the position of the Southern church on slavery,† but he knew the Southern people and he loved them too. He devoted all his efforts to furthering the aims of the American Colonization Society, of which he was an officer, and in which he earnestly labored up to the time

\* At that time Lane Seminary, at Cincinnati, Ohio, was a real college, with a theological department attached. Later the college proper was abandoned, and it became a theological seminary pure and simple. My father graduated from the college, but only spent two years there in his theological studies.

† "The Church and the Rebellion," by Robert L. Stanton, D.D., New York, 1864.

when war finally swept away all possibility of its success.

When the dark days of '61 came my father recognized that perhaps God, in his inscrutable knowledge, knew a better way, and he became a war parson and was one of the foremost in his calling to hold up the hands of the war President, and, unlike some other abolitionists of that day, he stayed by him to the end.

It has always been my belief that the reason why Abraham Lincoln and my father became such warm friends was because he brought to the President a certain inside knowledge of the South and its people, from an earnest and loyal follower, and Mr. Lincoln welcomed such direct information when they discussed together the perplexing problems of those days, as they so often did.

Thus it came about that I, even so young, going with my father, came to know Mr. Lincoln personally, and was able to sit with him for hours at a time, in his private office at the White House, and listen to those talks and discussions and observe him at close range, and study his every word and action at times when there was nothing to disturb, and when only one or two others were in the room.

The first time I saw Mr. Lincoln was in February, 1861, a few days before his inauguration, when, as President-elect, he was stopping at Willard's Hotel in Washington. A crowd was passing through his reception-room in a continual stream, so that I had only a few minutes to observe him, but I lingered as long as I could. At that time his countenance seemed to betray anxiety, or was it weariness from those continued handshakings? I could not determine which it was in the first and few moments of seeing his face. But as some friend would accompany the grasp of his hand with a word of cheer, or



*Original negative by Brady, 1863.*

ABRAHAM LINCOLN DURING THE DARKEST DAYS OF THE CIVIL WAR.

—Abraham Lincoln, page 32.

a "God bless you," the warm grasp was returned, the hearty "Thank you" accompanied with that sweet, gentle smile of his; and at other times, when some one seemed to strike a tender chord by what was said, his eye became moist by what appeared to be a starting tear.

The first time I heard Mr. Lincoln speak was at his first inauguration. I was then fifteen years of age, but I stood near to him and drank in every word he said. My mind had been prepared by the discussion of possible events since the election of the previous November, and startled by the President-elect coming to Washington in disguise (though against his wish) to save him from threatening enemies, so that I was in a frame of mind full of excitement and expectation as I stood listening to those gentle, yet firm and earnest, utterances in that first inaugural, surrounded as I was, so close to the platform on which he stood, by that band of determined Northern and Western men who, known to but a few and unrecognizable to the crowd, were armed to the teeth to protect him and repel the threatened attack upon his person.

At this late day, I cannot recall a single sentence of that first address, nor shall I attempt to refresh my memory by reading it at this time. What impressed me then, and remains as clear to-day as ever, was the man and his character as they came to me not so much in what he said, but in the manner in which he spoke: gentle, loving, yet earnest, unafraid, determined, ready to take up any burden or any task and carry it through, as God gave him the strength.

Four years later, I stood on the same spot and listened to the President's second inaugural address.

During those four long, weary, suffering years, what burdens had he not borne? Burdens from the tragedies of the war itself, from the bickerings and slanders of those who should have been his staunchest friends, some almost within his own household, and from that deepest of personal sorrows when his beloved little son William died.

From the first time I met him, I saw gathering on his face, month by month, that sad, anxious, far-away expression that has so often been referred to and fre-

quently been so exaggerated. Therefore, at that second inauguration, I think I was well fitted to understand the depth, the earnestness, and the sincerity of those immortal words: "With malice toward none, with charity for all."

But how came I, a boy so young, to understand at all the man of whom I speak, and the questions of those trying days?

The winter before, I had sat in the gallery of the Senate and the gallery of the House and heard those ominous, foreboding speeches, from both sides of the chambers; and later I listened to the orations of the great leaders, Charles Sumner in the Senate and Thaddeus Stevens in the House, as well as many others; besides the vindictive utterances of the "fire-eaters" from the South. I saw delegation after delegation withdraw from the Congress as their several States seceded from the Union, and heard the defiant yet sorrowful and tearful farewells of those Southern men who really loved their country well, but loved their States and their beliefs better.

With this education in national affairs in those stirring times, and my father's instructive talks at home—we were chums during all of his life—together with my reading of the newspapers of the day, I felt that I was somewhat posted on the problems of the hour, and I longed to hear something of those same problems from the lips of the great man who was leading, and was destined to lead, the nation through the darkest and bitterest experiences of its life.

My opportunity came at last. My father took me to see the President when he called to discuss with him some of those problems of the country and the war. My father was his personal friend and I did not wonder at his reception. But is it possible that I ever can forget the way Abraham Lincoln received me—a mere lad? His cordial manner, the warm grasp of that large, kind, gentle hand, the fascinating though almost evasive smile, and the simple word or two of welcome, were so earnest and sincere that I thought he intended me to understand—and so I felt—that he received me not as a boy, but as a man, though very young. That first warm hand-clasp (though later I had many more) from

that good and great man is one of the most cherished memories of my life.

Of course, I did not enter into the conversation. I simply listened in admiration, drinking in every word he said with reverence, for I was not one of those who ever doubted him for a moment. My unbounded, youthful admiration had not lessened, but had expanded, from the first day I heard him speak—March 4, 1861.

At that very first meeting I heard Mr. Lincoln discuss and explain some of his perplexing problems and how he solved them. One in particular. It will be recalled that all through the war of the Rebellion, certain critical friends, as well as enemies, charged that in many of his acts the President went beyond his Constitutional and legal rights and exercised a power almost dictatorial.

On that, to me, memorable evening he discussed with my father this very phase of his administration of national and State affairs, for undoubtedly he had overstepped State rights. He freely acknowledged that some things he had done, and decisions he had made, were possibly beyond his constitutional right to do. Yet he knew the necessity, and with his bold, unafraid determination, and his clear and marvellous insight into the true nature of things, he, in those emergencies, did what he felt to be right, as God gave him the vision to see the right.

How did he explain his actions? In these few simple, and even humorous, words: "I am like the Irishman, I have to do some things 'unbeknownst to myself.'"

He never sought nor desired the opportunity to exercise his power, as is so clearly shown by his long, patient, yet sorrowful consideration before he performed his greatest act. This, also, he at other times discussed with my father. The one object he always kept in view was to save the Union of the States, and not simply to abolish slavery. And he continued unmoved by the howls of all abolitiondom and the arguments of those who thought they knew better than he; patiently waiting for the proper time to do the right thing. And when he found it, and not before, then it was that he used

his power and put his name to the Emancipation Proclamation.

I had seen Mr. Lincoln many times before I first met him, but this was the first time that I had had the privilege and honor of sitting close to him and studying him at leisure.

Through the whole of the campaign of 1860, while recognizing his ability, he had been characterized as "Old Abe," the long, lank, gawky rail-splitter. On coming to Washington he had been ridiculed for the manner in which he had entered the city, and spoken of as that rough, uncouth Westerner from the prairies of Illinois who had dared to come among the exclusive, high-born, generally Southern people of the capital. I, as a boy, knew many of the families of those old, exclusive, pre-war Washingtonians, for I had lived there with my grandmother on my mother's side, an English woman who went to Washington about 1800, and I had heard, more particularly from the dames of society, those bitter, cutting remarks about Mr. Lincoln's uncouth mannerisms and uncivilized behavior.

What was my surprise, then, when I saw him and heard him at that first inauguration! There I saw a tall, square-shouldered man with long arms and legs, but, as he came down the east steps of the Capitol and onto the platform from which he spoke, he walked with such a dignified carriage and seeming perfect ease, that there was dispelled forever from my mind the idea that he was in any way uncouth or at a loss to know the proper thing to do or how to do it.

When he began to speak I was again surprised, on account of what I had heard of him. He spoke so naturally, without any attempted oratorical effect, but with such an earnest simplicity and firmness, that he seemed to me to have but one desire as shown in his manner of speaking—to draw that crowd close to him and talk to them as man to man.

His manner was that of perfect self-possession. He seemed to me to fully appreciate his new and unexpected surroundings, to understand perfectly the enormous responsibilities he was undertaking, but at the same time to have perfect confidence in himself that, with

God's help, which he always invoked, he could and would carry them through to a successful conclusion.

As Colonel Henry Watterson has so clearly expressed his own impressions on hearing the same inaugural, "He delivered that inaugural address as if he had been delivering inaugural addresses all his life."

It was, however, when sitting close to him in his office, listening to those animated and earnest discussions, as well as on other occasions, that I learned to know him and understand, as I thought, his almost every movement.

When sitting in his chair in quiet repose, leaning back listening to others; when he was preparing to reply, as he straightened up and even leaned forward; or while pacing the floor listening or speaking, I never saw him once when, as was so often said, he seemed in the least at a loss to know what to do with his hands or how to carry his large feet. His every movement, his every gesture, seemed so natural, so simple, so unconscious, and yet so suited to the matter in hand and the circumstances at the time, that they impressed me as singularly graceful. Graceful may seem to some a rather strong word to use.

It is true that his figure was tall, lean, possibly lank, and in a sense "ungainly." Yet with all this he had that dignity of bearing, that purposeful, self-possessed, and natural pose which, to me, not only demanded admiration but inspired reverence on almost every occasion. In intimate association, the movements of his body and the gestures of his arms and hands were so pleasing that all impressions of ungainliness were swept away. So I say, Mr. Lincoln was singularly graceful.

Is it any wonder then that when some years ago I stood before that statue of some imagined Lincoln which Barnard had brought forth, and patiently studied it, the result was to produce in me a feeling of profound sorrow that such a grotesque caricature should ever have been made of the man whom I knew personally and loved so well?

Mr. Lincoln's hands and feet were large, but not unduly so in proportion to the size of his body. And many large

things, even though not symmetrically beautiful in themselves, can be graceful both in repose and in the delicate curves and the sensitiveness of their movements.

Mr. Lincoln's walk, whether while quietly moving about his office, on the street, or on more stately occasions, was most dignified, easy, natural, and pleasing. His head was usually bent a trifle forward but not bowed, except on special occasions. There was, to me at least, no evidence of loose joints, jerky movement, or clumsiness. At one time I saw him under circumstances which, if any could bring out those reputed defects in his carriage, should have done so. It was at a meeting of the Houses of Congress, gathered in the House of Representatives to celebrate some victory of the war. The chamber was packed, and the galleries overflowed with men and women. I sat in a front-row seat. The door opened on the opposite side, and as the Marine Band played "Hail to the Chief," Mr. Lincoln entered. The whole audience rose and cheered. He glanced up at the throng and there appeared on his countenance a bright, beautiful, but gentle smile of thanks, nothing more. In a moment this was gone, and holding himself perfectly erect, with an expression of unconcern and self-possession, he walked across the hall up to the speaker's desk with a simple grandeur and profound dignity that would be difficult for any one to surpass.

At another time I saw what at first surprised me greatly. It was at the great review of General McClellan's Army of the Potomac, that army that had been getting ready so long. Seventy-five thousand men of all arms were gathered on the Virginia plain, and a throng had come out from the capital to see them. In a little carriage my father, mother, and I were among the spectators. We were placed within twenty feet of where the President's carriage stood. The military spectacle was of course inspiring, but what interested me more was observing Mr. Lincoln's part in the grand review.

Only lately I was asked, here in New York, whether it was true that Mr. Lincoln went to that review dressed in an old, yellowish linen suit. It was not. He was dressed in his accustomed black

broadcloth, long frock coat, and usual high silk hat, this time a new one.

I was close enough to him to clearly note his every movement and see the expression of his face. As the commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the United States rode down that long line, mounted on a magnificent charger, followed by the general and his staff, he sat and rode his horse as if it were the one thing in the world he knew how to do. He sat perfectly erect, not stiffly, but at perfect ease, and in all that throng of trained military men there was not a general who bore himself with more, no, not as much, dignity, and rode with more true military bearing than the President.

This was one time when I saw him, as he rode down the line, when his face seemed never to change. His eyes then were not listless, his whole countenance beamed with one expression—that of pride in the thoroughly organized army that he believed would bring victory.

After the review was over the single road leading from where we were was filled with carriages bound for Washington. My father whipped his horse in line immediately behind the carriage of the President. It has always been a wonder to me that after that military pageant the commander-in-chief of the army was not provided with a cavalry escort to clear the way and protect him from possible accident. His carriage was merely one in a long line of similar carriages hurrying home as best they could. John Hay sat on the back seat with the President. As the procession ahead slowed up or halted, Mr. Hay turned round and raised his hand in warning to us not to run over them.

I have said that Mr. Lincoln's movements were graceful. What is it that compels me to declare that his face, to me at least, was beautiful? Again, beautiful may be a strong word to use, but I do not mean "pretty." No! not anything so common.

I know his cheekbones were too prominent, his cheeks somewhat sunken, his mouth large and at times "ungainly," his chin, especially with the whiskers he wore, appeared too far out from his mouth, his whole face furrowed (but not nearly so deep as generally supposed), and his eyes

"half listless." This latter, however, not always so even when inactive, but only on special occasions.

I saw him when he was cheerful, gay, convulsed in hilarious laughter; saw him when he was being twitted by a friend, when he was humorously acknowledging the justice of that twitting; saw him when he was sad and sorrowful, sad from his own sorrows, sad for the sorrows of others, sad and at the same time cheerful for his sick and wounded boys in blue, sad and worried over the suffering of his country. I saw all these moods at various times; and each and every feature of his face exactly as it was, but there was a something that came out from behind them, and spoke not in words, but shone and spoke through them by means of them, and turned them all into real beauty. And in all these moods, first or last, that spirit of beauty which I saw spread over his whole countenance and drew one to him as by the power of magic.

It was when sitting perfectly quiet, listening to some important statement or argument, studying some complex problem, that those features which have been called ungainly showed more plainly. At such times the furrows of his face seemed deeper, the eyes more listless, and the large mouth looked larger and more illy formed, but as he gathered the meaning of what was being said and seemed to be formulating his reply, the eyes began to open and you first saw the twinkle of stars, then the furrows in his cheeks almost disappeared, the mouth seemed to be completely re-formed, a light broke out, spreading all over his face. In important cases of discussion his eyes flashed veritable fire as he spoke, and, as has been said by another, there came from that mouth "flashes of genius and burning words, revelations as it were from the unknown." Then it was that the beauty which I saw was sublime.

If the matter in hand was of a lighter vein, the same awakening came, but the brighter light of his face turned into that charming smile, gentle, evasive, or sparkling and humorous, which always appeared to me so bewitching. So, whenever I happened to be near him and at first saw that sorrowful, depressed, far-away expression we have heard so much

about and which under the burdens he was bearing did darken his face frequently, I had only to wait, sometimes only moments, until the real spirit of the man, his hopefulness, his trustfulness, his cheerfulness, returned and each feature regained its share of that real beauty of soul that shone through them, which held me and every one who knew him so firmly and drew me to him by some very natural yet magical power that swept away every impression and memory of his appearance except that of beauty.

I was once asked to examine a collection of more than one hundred original photographs of Mr. Lincoln and pick out the one I thought the best likeness of the man as I had known him. In many of them I could see a perfect picture of his face as I had seen him (*at times*), but none of these was my Lincoln nor was it the Lincoln as the other men of those days knew him.

The picture I was looking for was one that showed something of the spirit of the man as I have feebly attempted to describe it. At last I found it. It was the same one I had had in my collection—so unfortunately burned—and which I had cherished since 1861.

It is true that this photograph was taken before the burdens of the Civil War had pressed so heavily upon him, but all the earnestness of his character is there, some of the sadness, and much of the brightness and joyfulness of his spirit (although it does seem suppressed), and some little, also, of that light which I have spoken of as coming out through those rugged features. This picture comes nearer than any photograph of which I know in portraying something of that startling magical power which drew all men to him and held them enchanted when in his presence, even though the "beauty," which I saw, of sparkling eye and smile, may be lacking.

Every one remembers the account given of the night in November, 1864, when the returns were coming in from the election, and how it seemed to others, especially to the secretary of war, that Mr. Lincoln gave so little heed to the momentous occasion as he sat reading a humorous story. But that Mr. Lincoln

from the very first was most deeply interested in the prospects and outcome of that second election, the following incident, in my father's intercourse with the President, will show.

Calling one day at the White House, in May, 1864, about eleven o'clock, he found the anteroom and passages filled. Men and women, well dressed and not so well, from all parts of the country, with not a few officials in civil stations and some with shoulder-straps and brass buttons, were among the eager multitude. Many had sent in their cards or letters, and others were sending them. This privilege was denied to no one, but it was not "First come, first served." The President received those whom he wished to see, regardless of who might be waiting, however exalted their positions may have been; so my father decided to try a little "strategy."

Each winter throughout the war, he had been living in Kentucky, associated with some of the political and ministerial leaders of that State. He knew that Mr. Lincoln was looking forward to a nomination for re-election, at the coming Baltimore Convention, and only a few days before my father had received in Washington a letter from a distinguished citizen of Kentucky giving his views on the prospects of the approaching political campaign there. The Kentucky State elections occurred in August. The writer of that letter was the Reverend Robert J. Breckinridge, D.D., who afterward became temporary chairman of the Baltimore Convention which nominated Mr. Lincoln for his second term. My father's little strategy was simply sending in his card, with this inscription: "*With a letter from Doctor R. J. Breckinridge on the political situation in Kentucky.*"

In a very few minutes the messenger returned and called aloud for "Doctor Stanton," and he was admitted at once. A delegation from Arkansas was just retiring. When they had gone, the President welcomed him in the most cordial manner. The position of Doctor Breckinridge, a Southern man, upon the war had become well known throughout the country by means of his vigorous articles appearing in the *Danville Quarterly Review* in favor of the Union cause. He

differed from the President touching the policy of his Emancipation Proclamation and had published his dissenting views, but he remained his firm friend notwithstanding this difference, and was heartily in favor of his renomination at Baltimore. All this the President well knew and hence, apparently, his eagerness to see the letter which my father had. As he was more familiar with the handwriting and as the letter was addressed to him, he proposed to read it. "No," said the President, "let me take it; I have never seen a letter from the old Kentucky patriarch, and I wish to see how he writes." He read the letter with great earnestness. It called the President's attention to what the writer in several particulars deemed essential to the political welfare of Kentucky. The President conversed for some time with my father on his views of the same questions, and with great interest on the affairs of what he said he was proud to call his native State, declaring that its course had often embarrassed and sometimes puzzled him, and added: "Tell the old doctor that each of his suggestions shall be remembered and complied with as far as possible; and especially tell him that when he comes to the Convention he must call and see me." They had never met up to that time.

It thus seems that even Mr. Lincoln was politically human, and that he attended to the repair of his political fences while distinguished visitors waited, however impatiently, in the anteroom.

One small incident in the life of Mr. Lincoln has always been a great comfort to me. I was not present at the time it occurred, so I will give it in the words of my father, written soon after and found among his papers:

On one occasion the President gave me what he was pleased to call an account of his "progress in spelling." The incident reveals the remarkable simplicity of Mr. Lincoln, and the open-heartedness of the man. It shows, moreover, his freedom of intercourse with a private citizen, divested of that stateliness of which some of his predecessors who have held his high office might have found it more difficult to relieve themselves.

Having some business at the War Department, and knowing that my success depended on the President's favor, and not being personally acquainted with the Secretary of War [Edwin M. Stanton and Dr. Stanton were not relatives], I

called on the President for his aid. At this interview no visitor was present but myself. After stating my case and finding the President favorably disposed, I asked him if he would speak to the Secretary in my behalf. "Certainly I will," said he. Pausing a moment, he added: "Or, what is better, I will write him a note. Sit down and I will write it now."

He went to his desk and began writing, and in a few moments turned to me, looking up over his spectacles, and without my having the least premonition of what was coming, said:

"Ob-sta-cle: is that the way you spell obstacle?"

I was so disconcerted at this sudden and unexpected question that for the instant I was silent. Noticing my confusion, he laid down his pen and turned his revolving chair so as to face me, when, having recovered myself, I said: "I believe that is right, Mr. President."

He then said: "When I write an official letter, I want to be sure it is correct, and I find I am sometimes puzzled to know how to spell the most common word."

On my stating that this was not an unusual experience with many persons, he said: "I found about twenty years ago, that I had been spelling one word wrong all my life up to that time."

"What word is that, Mr. President?" I inquired. "It is *very*," he said. "I used always to spell it with two r's—v-e-r-r-y. And then there was another word which I found I had been spelling wrong until I came here to the White House."

On my inquiry for the word, he said:

"It is *opportunity*. I had always spelled it *op-per-tunity*."

In relating each of these instances of his "progress in spelling," as he called it, the President laughed heartily, spoke of the importance of giving attention to orthography, and then finished his letter to the Secretary of War, and handed it to me with a warm expression of hope that my mission might be successful. It was.

The last time I met Mr. Lincoln in his private office at the White House, and spent some time with him, was in June, 1864, though I saw him and met him many times afterward.

We called in company with the Honorable Jesse L. Williams, of Indiana, a few days previous to the time of the meeting of the Baltimore Convention, at which Mr. Lincoln was nominated for a second term. Judge Williams was an old-time personal friend of the President. He had been a member of the Chicago Convention when Mr. Lincoln was first nominated, and was now earnestly working to the end that he might be the nominee at Baltimore. Judge Williams held the office, under Mr. Lincoln's appointment, of government director of the Union Pacific Railway. He was on the most intimate

and familiar terms with the President, and their social intercourse was always of the most free and cordial character.

When he arrived at the White House we were admitted at once into the President's room. When we entered there were two other gentlemen present, one a Mr. Ferry of Illinois, a delegate to the Baltimore Convention. Who the other was I have forgotten, but they soon departed, leaving us alone with Mr. Lincoln.

This particular call by Judge Williams and my father was for the purpose of discussing two special features of the then political and military situation, of deep interest to them at that time: the coming Baltimore Convention, and certain matters connected with the military government of the border States, particularly Kentucky and Missouri, as to the acts and preaching of some ministers of the church in those States.

My father was a clergyman of the Presbyterian Church, and at that time was professor of pastoral theology and church government in the Danville Theological Seminary, Kentucky, and was in the midst of, and directly connected with, much of the troubles and discussions in those border States. Judge Williams was an elder in the same church.

Again I, of course, did not enter into the conversation or discussions of the interview, but I sat within five feet of the President, and again had the opportunity to study at close range his manner, the expression of his face, and every movement of his body while sitting and also while pacing the floor. The whole scene was indelibly stamped on my memory, and I clearly remember not only everything directly connected with the President but also many of the details of the conversation. Besides this, I have other notes of my father's and the exact words quoted here from Mr. Lincoln are taken from those old notes.

On the way up from Willard's Hotel Judge Williams said to my father that he had no doubt of Mr. Lincoln's nomination at Baltimore, either by acclamation or on the first ballot, notwithstanding the alienation of some prominent Republicans in Congress and elsewhere. He said, however, he thought he would have a little

amusement and "rally the President" on the subject.

As soon as we were seated he inquired of him as to his prospects before the coming convention. The President replied in his quiet, undisturbed manner that he was not at all anxious about the result; that he wanted the people to be satisfied, but as he "had his hand in," he should like to keep his place until the war was finished; and yet, if the people wished a change in the presidency, he had no complaint to make.

"But," said the judge, with a smile and a peculiar twinkle of his eye, "the Convention may be in doubt about your policy on some important matters as to conducting the war; and if so, what then?"

"What do you mean, judge?" said the President.

"Well, Mr. President, I will be frank with you," said the judge, in a half-serious tone: "I have just been attending a very dignified and earnest convention where your opinions on the conduct of the war have been somewhat canvassed, and I found the body seriously divided in sentiment as to your position on one important question."

"Indeed," said the President, "you surprise me. But out with it. Tell us all about it."

"I will. I have been attending the meeting of the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church, in Newark, New Jersey, which has just adjourned; and while there a very animated discussion took place about your views on a certain matter concerning the conduct of the war, and the body seemed unable to agree as to where you stood."

"That is strange! But how came they to concern themselves on the subject?"

"You know," said the judge, "you wrote a letter to General Curtis, when he was in command at St. Louis, in reply to his inquiry about how he should deal with certain disloyal preachers who were troubling Missouri."

Some time before, it will be remembered, Doctor McPheeters, a Presbyterian clergyman of St. Louis, had been ordered out of Missouri by General Curtis for alleged acts of disloyalty to the United States Government. The general

then wrote to the President for instructions in similar cases. The letter of Mr. Lincoln in reply was the one in which he had used the phrase—which afterward became famous by its frequent quotation—that “the government could not afford to run the churches.” The Presbytery of St. Louis had taken some action in regard to Doctor McPheeters and his case had gone up to the general assembly, which met in Newark in May, 1864. The President’s letter to General Curtis was read there, on the trial of Doctor McPheeters, and this was the letter to which Judge Williams alluded.

“Yes, I remember that letter,” said the President.

“Well,” said the judge, “on the trial of Doctor McPheeters by the general assembly, your letter to General Curtis was read. But the curious part of the affair was this: One party read one portion of your letter and claimed that the President was on their side, and the other party read another portion of the same letter and claimed that the President was on their side. So it seems, Mr. President, that it is not so easy to tell where you stand.”

At this Mr. Lincoln joined in a hearty laugh, not one of his vivid, comprehensive smiles, but a real outspoken hearty laugh, and then told the following story:

“That reminds me forcibly,” he said, “of what occurred many years ago in Illinois. A farmer and his son were out in the woods one day, hunting a sow. At length, after a long and fruitless search, they came to what they call ‘a branch’ out there, where they found hog tracks and rootings-out for some distance on both sides of the branch. ‘Now, John,’ said the old man, ‘you take up on this side of the branch and I’ll go up t’other, for I believe the old critter is on both sides.’”

Of course, the rest of us laughed heartily, but Mr. Lincoln, as I distinctly recall it, only smiled. As his story was drawing to a close, his face lit up and a faint smile began to appear which increased at the end and broadened as the others laughed.

It has been said that Mr. Lincoln was so depressed by the actuality of the war that he never really laughed outright. That is a mistake. I saw him and heard

him laugh heartily and loudly more than once during those darkest days. To me he had three distinct smiles. The first was when speaking he seemed to wish to impress you with the interest he had in you. This smile was very faint, but beautiful and bewitching. The second was much more open and broad, and when listening to another speak. The laughter came when that other turned a humorous point, and particularly when that point was turned against the President. Of the third smile I shall speak in a moment.

It was not my pleasure to know Mrs. Lincoln personally, but I saw her many times under varied circumstances. She was a much maligned and misunderstood woman.

For many months, during the war, I acted as a volunteer visiting day nurse in the hospitals in Washington and Georgetown. I assisted the regular nurses, and occasionally helped the surgeons, and did my little bit to cheer the sick and wounded. So that I saw some things that the public could not see. Many times I saw Mrs. Lincoln come to those hospitals, go through the wards distributing flowers, little gifts, kind words, smiles, and sympathy to the suffering heroes. And these little acts were done in a manner that, it would seem to me, they could not have been done except by one whose whole heart was in the cause and in the same way as that of her husband, and whose love and active help were given freely and sincerely to those suffering boys in blue.

It was on similar occasions that I was enabled to note that third smile on Mr. Lincoln’s face, of which I have spoken. He also came to the hospitals frequently, sometimes with his wife, but usually alone, when I saw him.

As he alighted from his carriage and entered the building, particularly toward the end of the war, I was impressed by the sadness of his countenance. It seemed as though all the suffering in that hospital had come out to meet him and had entered into his face. As he went along the rows of cots, pausing here and there and leaning over some especially suffering lad to speak a kind word or two, the sadness of his face did not entirely dis-

appear, but over it came a light and such a bright, cheering, though gentle smile that his whole countenance was illumined by something more than human interest, as sympathy and love came out to the boy, from his very soul. Those were some of the times when I felt that no one could see in that charming face anything except beauty.

On the night of April 14, 1865, I was nowhere near Ford's Theatre. We were living then in the old home on North B Street, Capitol Hill. Everything was so quiet there that we did not hear of the tragedy of the night until the next morning. As soon as possible I went down to the neighborhood of the theatre. What surprised me most was the smallness of the crowd gathered there at that time. I had no difficulty in moving about close to the steps of the house opposite, where the remains of the President still lay. I stood very close to those steps until finally there came out that little band of mourners and gently placed the body of the murdered President in the hearse.

What surprised me most, as I think of that day, was the small number of followers that accompanied that sad little procession. There were so few people that followed, I was able to walk close to the carriages and at times I was so near that I could have laid my hand on the wheel of the hearse. I followed all the way to the White House grounds. Nor did the crowd increase to any great proportions, as we neared the end.

At the east gate of the White House, there were soldiers and no one was admitted to the grounds. I had gone a

little ahead and stood on the pavement close to the gate. This absence of a great crowd on such an occasion was not due to any want of interest or sympathy, but was rather caused, as it seemed to me, by the terrible shock that had passed over the city, and because every one was so depressed that but few had the desire to rush forward to form or join a crowd. Those on the sidewalks stopped and with bowed and uncovered heads stood still in silence and grief. That there were so few gathered at the gate of the White House grounds, this little incident will show.

I had pushed forward and taken my place on the sidewalk close to the carriage-way, and turning to look at the little funeral cortège approaching, I saw an old negro woman, a typical Southern cook, her head wrapped in a red-and-yellow bandanna, and her large blue-and-white kitchen apron still on, come running across the street. She passed in front of the hearse and had no difficulty in taking her place beside me within two feet of where it would pass.

Even at that early hour the negroes of the capital had been stunned, then driven to almost frenzy, by the rumor that now Mr. Lincoln was dead they would all be put back into slavery.

As the little procession passed in, great tears rolled down the cheeks of that old negress, and she gathered her big apron over her face and sobbed aloud. Then there seemed to come to her soul a great light and a great courage. She dropped her apron and said in a firm though broken voice: "They needn't to crow yet. God ain't dead!"

