

From "Life of Bishop Simpson, by Crooks , page 372.

At another time, under very different circumstances, I had an opportunity to witness the kind feeling which the president evidently cherished for the bishop. Simpson delivered his wonderful lecture on "Our Country" in one of our churches in Washington. Lincoln, without any mark of distinction, was in the great crowd of hearers. I happened to be near to him, and could see his every movement. I never saw a hearer who gave more marked evidence of a personal interest in a speaker than the president gave that evening. He joined most heartily in the frequent, and sometimes prolonged, applause.

At one time, as the bishop was speaking of the wonderful opportunity that our country affords to young men, he paused for a moment, and said, 'Why, it is commonly reported that a rail-splitter has been elected president of the United States. !' This, of course, brought down the house, and I was particularly pleased to see with what almost boyish enthusiasm the president joined in the tremendous applause. At the close of the lecture Mr. Lincoln stepped out into the aisle and strode down towards the ~~president's~~ pulpit. I followed, for I was anxious to hear what he would say. Taking the bishop warmly by the hand, he exclaimed in a voice that could be heard all around, "Bishop Simpson, that was a splendid lecture!" Then, in a low tone of voice, and with an expression of face which indicated a little surprise, a little curiosity, and a good deal of humor, he said "But you didn't strike the ile!" I did not see the point, but the bishop did. So he replied, 'Mr. President, I am surprised at myself to see that, while I have thought so much about the great resources of our country, I should have entirely overlooked our great oil interests. I shall not do so again .' The next time I heard the lecture the bishop 'struck the ile.'

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Early in 1862 Mr. Lincoln was meditating the issuing of an emancipation proclamation, though, in answer to public appeals, he declined to take the responsibility of such a measure. Bishop Simpson had said to him, as far back as 1861, that that would need to be done. He believed from the first that emancipation would come out of the war. In discussing Fremont's proclamation, he said he would have done the same thing.*

In the summer of this same year --1862-- after the seven days fighting, and McClellan's repulse, the bishop had another interview with Mr. Lincoln, confined to the point of the president's duty to issue a proclamation setting the slaves free in the rebellious states. Subsequently Mr. Lincoln showed him the proclamation; the bishop was delighted with it. When it was read in the cabinet meeting Mr. Chase suggested its last sentence. 'Why,' replied Mr. Lincoln, 'that is just what Bishop Simpson said.' In their interview prior to the meeting of the cabinet the bishop had suggested that there ought to be a recognition of God in that important paper."