

Lincoln Portraits

My old notion of a series of portraits which might be called, "Lincoln's Gamut of Emotions," has been revived by this comment of Lewis Gannett on a recent Lincoln book. "Whenever he sat for a photograph," says Gannett, "his face relapsed into melancholy."

It just isn't so. Take for illustrations:

1. The first portrait, which is that of a poet and philosopher, and recall Woodrow Wilson and Edward Everett Hale.

2. The photograph that drips with melancholy, complete collapse, complete sinking into the depths.

3. The arrogant, determined photograph when he took his political life in his hands and answered Douglas, while all his advisers howled that he was killing himself -- as proud and determined a face as you see.

4. The Snyder picture, more or less the politician.

5. The gay one, debonair. A woman's man. Looking like that, few women would have resisted him.

6. The Cooper Union, which, as he said, made him President -- one which ought to dispel the notion that he was slovenly. When he appeared in Cooper Union, awkward, yes, but correct certainly.

7. His first whiskers, and the stories. Use Vaillard for authority on when he first began to grow them. See notes.

8. The war photograph, not sad, but ponderous^{ing}, thoughtful. Use the one in which he so obviously said, "I have just a minute" -- and, with his hand to his cheek, sits thinking of things.

9. With Tad, reading the book. Probably his moments with Tad were his most perfect release.

10. The last, smiling. The ravages of war in his face, but ~~first~~^{peace} in his heart.

Thus, you have run pretty nearly, here in these photographs, the gamut of the emotions which a struggling human being goes through if he takes his handicaps and always follows a definite aim.

Memo - Lincoln Photographs:

What kind of a man would you suppose this Abraham Lincoln to be if you knew nothing about him excepting what you could learn from a study of his photographs. There are very many of them.

Forty years ago I attempted to make a collection larger than any that had ever been offered to the public and succeeded in that, but I have by no means collected everything. However, in the ^{articles} ~~little book~~ which I was publishing on Lincoln ^{in McClure Magazine} ~~different~~ ² ~~photographs~~ ^{of these} were published and to the word "unpublished" was attached. I believe that it was rightly attached. ~~in all instances~~ ^{perhaps} Certainly we believed so at the time.

Since that day Mr. Meserve of New York City has made the most complete collection of photographs ever brought together. There are numbers of these. That is, there is in existence ample material for a study of the man, Lincoln, purely from ~~the~~ photographs. You may challenge the photographs as the revelation of a man, but ² ~~much~~ ^{man} less inclined to challenge them after a study of the set of documents such as I brought together and such as Meserve has brought together.

What was this man then, remembering that we know nothing about him? The first picture here given and which

so far as I know is the earliest one.

(Note here what Sandburg says - tell story of
his securing the picture from Robert Lincoln)

The portraits of Abraham Lincoln cover a period of 17 years. The earliest known being a daguerreotype supposed to have been taken in 1848. No picture of him exists which can be located with certainty in the first half of the 50's, but in the latter half of that decade many ~~xx~~ were taken, particularly after his debates with Douglas made him so prominent a figure. After his election to the presidency the number of portraits multiplied for he seems to have yielded with the greatest good-nature to the applications of photographers and artists for sittings. From this large number of portraits a series of 8 are published in the present number. Representing Mr. Lincoln at intervals in the 17 last and most fruitful years of his life they give trustworthy and interesting data for a study, both of the man's appearance and his character.

The earliest portrait (page I was taken when Lincoln was about 40 years old, that is when he was serving his first term in Congress. Indeed it is not impossible that this daguerreotype was made in Washington since at that time one of the rooms of the capitol was set aside for a daguerreotypist, and most of the members of Congress had their portraits made by the process which was still new and regarded with great curiosity. The Lincoln of this daguerreotype is a curious contradiction to the Lincoln in the popular mind. His dress instead of being "uncouth" as tradition represents it is almost elegant, his frame ^{is} stiff and evidently braced by the archaic head rest is neither ungainly nor awkward while his face is interesting and winning. Far from being the face of a rough and uncultivated backwoodsman that 12 years later a portion of the United States was trying to prove he had always been it is the face of a man of a gentle nature, modest, humorous, and serene. One would call it the face of a poet rather than that of a statesman and more than one person when he has first examined it has pronounced it to be ~~xx~~ Emerson.

The second portrait in the series was taken ten years later in 1858. The contrast is almost violent. The gentleness of the expression has given away to one of cold intelligence, the almost diffident pose of the head is replaced by one of determination which is positively regal. Instead of careful brushing and dressing the hair is bristling, the neck-tie awry. When the history of the portrait is known the contrast is explained. It was taken at one of the most difficult and daring moments of Lincoln's career. At an hour when he had decided to take a step in his debates with Douglas, against which all his friends and political associates advised him and which he himself knew would probably cost him the election to the senatorship of the United States, for which he was contending. His reason for following this course was that he believed it would expose the essential weakness of Douglas's position and in the long run would help the cause. Two days before the debate at which he proposed to put the dangerous question to Douglas he was at Macomb, Ill., and there this portrait was taken. It reflects as no other portrait we have of Lincoln, the unbending determination of which he was capable, the force he had for doing that which seemed to him right though he had to do it alone and in the face of his strongest supporters.

Whatever suggestion of the unkept there is in Lincoln's appearance in this picture is partly explained if we remember the difficulty of the life he lead during his debates with Douglas. For weeks he was traveling from place to place, now on horseback or carriage, now by rail. He was exposed to heat and cold, rain and ~~much~~ dust.

now by rail. He was exposed to heat and cold, rain and ~~much~~ dust. A man fastidious as to his appearance would have found it difficult to have kept himself trim under these circumstances and it is not surprising that Lincoln, indifferent as he always was to the niceties of the toilet and with little money to spend on himself should have frequently appeared in trousers which were too short, with his boots dusty, his high hat rusty, his umbrella clumsily rolled. It is worth noticing, however, that in all of the other portraits here given there is not a hint of that uncouthness of dress so often charged upon Lincoln. His stock to be sure is sometimes awry. He may sit down for his photograph

without removing his "arctics" but these are the inattentions of a pre-occupied man to whom his dress providing it were clean, comfortable and suitable was always a matter of indifference.

The polk life mask (page) is the only portrait we have of Lincoln which compares in the loftiness and resolution of its expression with the Macomb picture. This mask Mr. V. made in 1860, only a few months before Mr. Lincoln's nomination to the presidency and it must be considered the most perfectly characteristic portrait we have of Lincoln when first elected president of the United States. Although it gives with perfect truthfulness the rugged features which ^{people} when considered separately led to call his face "ugly" these features are not what strike one in the mask. He sees rather the kindliness of its lines, the splendid truthfulness of the brow, the finer yet sweet curve of the lips and particularly its fine expression of dignity and power. It is in fact a face of ^{the truest} ~~the~~ distinction and the profoundest interest. The portrait which follows the mask was taken in August, 1860, for Mr. J. Henry Brown, a miniature artist of Philadelphia, who had gone to Springfield to paint Mr. Lincoln. It has never been reproduced before. It is particularly interesting because it shows an expression not common in Lincoln's portraits, although one frequent to his face -- a look of patient melancholy which overtook him

quent to his face -- a look of patient melancholy which overtook him when weary, dismayed or even uninterested. This sadness of expression vanished at once when his thoughts or emotions were aroused. Numbers of the persons who have recorded this expression of Mr. Lincoln's appearance have described such transformation.

The portrait on page was taken probably early in February, 1861. It is the first portrait known in which Lincoln wears a beard -- a change which he made in part, at least, because of a little girl who, interested in his election, found his appearance a stumbling block and so wrote him, suggesting that he grow a beard to see if he wouldn't look better. The beard certainly softened the ruggedness of his face somewhat and hid slightly the deep hollow of his cheeks, but it is not that which gives the charm to this particular portrait, it

is instead the gentleness of the expression, and the steady kindness of his deep set eyes. There is not perhaps another portrait of Mr. Lincoln in existence in which the tenderness of his nature is so perfectly expressed.

After Mr. Lincoln's inauguration he was photographed frequently as the new portraits of him which are constantly coming to light show. One of the finest of the presidential photographs made public in recent years is that on page . It is ~~an~~ practically unpublished, its only previous reproduction having been in a newspaper. We owe the picture to General Charles Hamlin, to whom Mr. Lincoln gave it himself.

"Mr. Lincoln gave me this photograph one day, in the spring of 1864. The picture with several others stood up in sight on his desk, in the room where he received visitors, apparently for the purpose of examination and comparison. During the conversation over our busi-

of examination and comparison. During the conversation over our business matters, my eye was resting continually on these pictures, struck with the differences that existed between them. As I was about to retire, I remarked to Mr. Lincoln that of all the portraits of him that I had seen, this one gave me the best impression -- as being the best likeness. Without making any reply he handed it to me saying, 'You are welcome to it.'

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The last two portraits in the series were made by Brady in Washington, probably in 1864. They are especially interesting because they show clearly that the popular notion of Lincoln as ungainly even to the point of grotesqueness is false. As a matter of fact there is not one of Lincoln's three-quarter or full length portraits sitting or standing which is not characterized by the same fine strong feeling of dignity, force and kindness which we have in these two of Brady's. In sitting he holds his body erect, his attitude is always unconscious, the pose of his head firm and confident. In standing his appearance is equally impressive. As Mr. T. H. Bartlett, the sculptor, who has studied Lincoln's physical characteristics as shown in his portraits more closely than any one else, says: "Lincoln sat down with great dignity and sitting down is a very extreme test of the character of physical construction. Lincoln sat well, superbly. . . . He stood well and above all, unassumingly and naturally. In nearly all of his full length portraits there is seen a physical and mental concentration very rare; that is his body, hips and arms kept together. Whenever there is an articulation in action like the bend of the wrist, ankle or arm there is inevitably grace and strength, effects never produced by mean joints or uncouth physical construction. Lincoln's joints were elastic easy and strong in make and movements."