Humor: Lincoln

J. S. P. suggests a library of humor. I take it he means not what people have laughed at in the past but what they can laugh at today. Now what do people laugh at today? The radio gives us a fine example and it would be possible to get from Aylesworth the numbers that probably listen in to Amos and Andy, Hiram and his ~~wife~~, Clara, Lou and Em, and What is interesting about all three of these is the complete naturalness, the interest in life. Here is the Lincoln kind of humor, I take it.

I don't know about the horse play variety on the radio. That could be discovered. I would like to talk to Harry Hansen about what he finds funny. I wonder if Darnell finds anything funny. Chamberlain seems to be a little more human.

As for candidates for the society to prevent gloom, this morning's paper brings Johnson with the attached verse. There is a real feeling around the place that it would be healthy and contributive to the success of the NRA if we could come to the point where we would laugh a little more at ourselves. Laugh at the almost exclusive place we are giving to the material side of the thing. There must be scores of people who have not succumbed to the materialistic gloom, who have gone out and found in things that cost no money pleasures, consolation.

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

Of course I am not speaking here of those who have been unable to ajust themselves materially on any terms, that are the victims of completely down and out, though I should not wonder if a canvass of them would find valiant effort to be amused. Take my old couple of last year - that story could be retold. I really think there is a possible article here.

Perhaps what I should have done with the Lincoln and what I still can do is to show how humor helped him in his personal tragedy, how nobody suffered more, but how he was able to pull himself through and up.

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Ida L. Sloan

"To laugh, if but for an instant only, has never been granted to man before the fortieth day from his birth, and then it is looked upon as a miracle of precocity." *

(Natural History. Book VII. Sect. 2.)

* This term of forty days is mentioned by Aristotle in his Natural History, as also by some modern physiologists.

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Memo:

In the Lincoln Fox story there should be a beginning, something like this -

One of the revealing things about Abraham Lincoln was his power to draw to him real, salty, people whether they agreed with him or not. There is the case of the father of Fontaine Fox, familiar in the publishing world today. Judge Fox was a Kentuckian, an unrestricted and unconstituted rebel. He was one of Lincoln's greatest admirers. *Miss Fox description of her father are priceless. See letter.

* See letter of Frances Fox, Nov. 13, 1939.

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Lincoln's Humor:

This story of Frances Fox about Lincoln and her father is a priceless contribution to Lincoln's humor, What is humor is the question? It is something which makes you laugh, you say; it is something which makes you weep, too. The perfume that rises from the feeling for the combined human tragedy and comedy which makes up life, sets one to laughing while he reads or weeping while he laughs.

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Lincoln's Humor:

While at Fort Wayne I looked over the collection of joke books in the museum. There are not many.

1) Old Abes Jokes or Mirth at the White House (Reprint)

2) Legacy of Fun. A London book of 1865.

The Library number being F.505. One of the points that I note in looking over the first pages is that they make much on the play of words. How deeply was Lincoln to this form of wit. Not much I think, but worth looking up. There is a point for article.

They had one interesting classification at Fort Wayne and that is what they call Anti-Lincoln. Under this head there are certain jokes.

The Magazine of History published at Tarrytown, New York carries certain Lincoln anecdotes. (See if we can get hold of these.) Also compare with numbers in Oakleaf to see if we have them in our catalogue, on attached notes.

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Lincoln Stories:

See Halpine's Poetical Works

"Ancient Abe" - Page 300

Also Page 279 - "A Song for White Men."

Also Page 299 - "The Night Ride of Ancient Abe."

for L-Humor

Lincoln - Mark Twain Association

Its Quotation Contest, its efforts to cultivate humor.

I am not sure but the most humorous thing of which I have heard for some time is the University of Florida's course for developing humor. This however does not contradict ~~that~~ these quotations of Mark Twain's ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ nor Rachel Crothers' comment:

"Serious things can be said better through comedy than any other way."

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