Lincoln City - Pa - 5/13 - 96

Miss Tarbell, your kind letter of 5/4-96, came duly to hand, and I answer it with pleasure.

As to the Decatur convention of May 1860, I will say that the account given in Holland's "Life of Abraham Lincoln (pp. 198-9) is founded on truth, but the author had such an itching for something sensational that he was unable to state the plain facts as they occurred.

Down to the middle of page of 198, there is little to correct, except that Mr. Lincoln's appearance in the Wigwam (temporary building for that convention, specially) is over drawn, as to the enthusiasm; and, at that time there was no "Governor" Oglesby. His title then was Col. Oglesby. After that he became General, Governor and U.S. Senator. The audience was not excited before the appearance of the banner. The people were collecting into the Wigwam after the noon Recess. The seats were gradually filling, and the presence of Mr. Lincoln on the platform was scarcely noticed prior to the appearance of the banner.

When the banner was brought in there

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was a sensation with applause, lasting, perhaps, about half a minute. But there was no immense excitement, "prolonged for fifteen minutes, until the strength of the enthusiastic assembly was exhausted." Such a statement is absurd. An applause of "fifteen minutes" at that time would have indicated a crowd of thoughtless yelpers; whereas, it was an audience of quiet earnest thinkers.

As the applause ceased, some persons called out, "Lincoln!" "Lincoln!" Mr. Lincoln, in his usual quiet manner, arose, and, with eyes and gesture indicating the direction of the banner (which was supported by a part of the wigwam, about twenty feet in front of him) said: ¶ "I suppose I am expected to reply to that. I cannot say whether I made those rails or not, but I am quite sure that I have made a great many just as good." ¶ That is all he said. It was enough. It hit the mark. It covered the case. It was Laconic. It was truly Linconic! It was approved by hearty applause. Compare those two or three dozen words with the Lincoln's Speeches, writings and con-

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versations about the time when they were uttered. There is a similarity. Yet how different from the demagogical harangue described by Holland! The writer seems to be ashamed of his burlesque picture after he has drawn it, and spends half a page apologizing for the necessity that appeals must be made to the "groundlings." Mr. Lincoln made no such appeal. He never did. And no such appeals were ever necessary in his behalf, except in the imaginations of men less sensible than Mr. Lincoln. No such appeals were made in behalf of Mr. Lincoln when he beat Cartwright for Congress in 1846. Nor when he led Douglass in the popular vote of 1858, for the U.S. Senate. But in both cases such appeals were made on the other side in behalf of his opponents.

During the proceedings with the banner I sat in the audience, about twenty feet from Mr. Lincoln, a little to the right of his front. His supremely sensible speech impressed me so profoundly, and pleased me so much that I remember

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it well. And, I now have on my table as I write, a copy of it, written out and published by myself in 1878, in reply to some discussions of the rail episode in Scribner's Magazine of that year.

As to Peter Cartwright, his name was a household word in Central Illinois for more than half a century. I heard him preach in my earliest childhood and in my later manhood.

His Auto-biography is, perhaps, the best source of information respecting him. Doubtless a copy of it can be found in Springfield, Illinois. He was a rougher and more excentric man than the average western preacher. But he was considered strictly upright and just.

I remember hearing him preach on Sunday at a Methodist Quarterly Meeting, in the latter part of the forties. He was the Presiding Elder, and his was the principal sermon of the occasion. After preaching an hour or more he complained of being "unwell" and tired out. But, before closing, he said he must ask the people for some

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money in support of the good cause which all had so much at heart.

He then began to preach for money. He gave a history of his conversion and ministry; of his many fights with "devils in human form"; how he had defended himself and others against rabbis; how he had protected his meetings from "roundies"; how he had compelled young ladies (5th) to quit standing on the benches (seats) in time of meeting by telling them that "the boys behind them were laughing at the holes in the heels of their stockings"; how he had often held the best and holiest of meetings in the log cabins of the settlers with only two or three present besides the preacher, &c, &c. After thus keeping the audience in the alternate states of extreme hilarity and earnest seriousness, for an hour-and-a-half; never ceasing to remind them that he was "preaching for their money"; he closed, and hats were passed around for the ready contributions. It will be difficult to duplicate Peter Cartwright.

Cordially yours- John Davis-

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