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THE PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

One of the enduring relics of the presidential campaign of 1860 is the popular impression that Abraham Lincoln's personal appearance bordered on the grotesque. The feeling over the issues at stake in that year were intensely bitter. Long before the nominations were made it was clear that whoever the candidates a free exchange of damaging personalities was inevitable. When it was known that the Republican party had nominated a Westerner of obscure birth and narrow experience with neither the training of the scholar nor the polish of the man of the world the opposition seized its opportunity. Paragraphs deriding Lincoln's manners and appearance were published almost daily in the newspapers. The most extravagant caricatures were scattered in every town. "Uncouth," "ill-clad," "shambling," "grotesque" were the adjectives commonly used to describe him. The popular imagination was quick to lay hold of these details and an impression was formed of Lincoln as something monstrous and ridiculous shapes. The Republicans did their utmost to eradicate the notion, but they never succeeded. In a somewhat modified form it exists to-day.

It is not difficult to know how much of truth there is in this idea, for a great number of Lincoln's contemporaries have described in detail his appearance and there are many excellent portraits in existence. The most authentic description we have of Mr. Lincoln he wrote himself.

"I am in height six feet, 4 inches, nearly; lean in flesh, weighing on an average 160 pounds, dark complexion, with coarse black hair and gray eyes. No other marks or brands recollected."

His great height ("extent" they called it in Illinois in the campaign) was the more conspicuous because his frame was lank, his arms, his hands and feet large. Many of his contemporaries say that their first impression was that he was exceeding awkward. For the most part these impressions seem to be due to the fact that the persons first saw Mr. Lincoln when he had dropped into careless positions it was his

habit to take when he was talking or thinking. Often he sat with one leg thrown over the arm of his chair. "Sitting on his shoulder blades," "seeking his legs up as high as his head," stretching his legs out straight in front of him, laying his feet on the table were all favorite positions of his. When he walked he had a long, rather loose, swing of the arm and when he played games he would often throw himself purposely into the droolest position seeming to get a boyish kind of fun out of his own comic attitudes. It is not strange that these habits in a man of his peculiar frame gave an impression of ungainliness. But it is obvious that Lincoln could not have spent much of his time "sitting on his shoulder blades" or swinging along the street. He led altogether too busy a life for that. What he looked like when he sat at work at a table, stood to speak or to receive men is of far more importance and luckily we have a great number of portraits of $\frac{3}{4}$ a full length which give us a faithful idea of him as well as descriptions of him when he was actively engaged in the duties of his daily life. A careful examination of these portraits must convince any one that in spite of length and leanness of him Abraham Lincoln was far from ungainly. Indeed there is not one of these portraits which is not characterized by a fine strong feeling of dignity, force and kindness. Mr. T. H. Bartlett, the sculptor, who has studied Lincoln's physical characteristics as shown in his portraits more profoundly than any one else, says on this point: "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."

This opinion of Mr. Bartlett is fully corroborated by Mr. Jno. Nicolay who says: "There was neither oddity, excentricity, awkwardness or grotesqueness in his face, figure or movement; that on the

contrary he was prepossessing in appearance when the entire man was fairly considered, mentally and physically, unusual height and proportion, and general movement of body and mind." He also states that "Lincoln's walk was elastic, vigorous, rather quick, firm and dignified; no shuffling or hesitating. Had a large swing in his movement, and when enunciating a great thought that he wished to impress upon his hearers he would straighten up to an height."

Contrast the descriptions of Mr. Lincoln at his ease with those we have of him when he was speaking. His shoulders inclined to droop good-naturedly when he talked, were thrown well back, his great frame was drawn to its full height, his gestures were free and unconscious. The transformation brought in his appearance in certain of his great speeches was so amazing that men who saw him still describe the scene with something like awe. He seemed to grow before their eyes so marvellously was his frame expanded and ennobled under the force of his emotions. At the time of his remarkable speech at Bloomington, Illinois, in 1856, when he first went over to the Republican party, his appearance made the profoundest impression on his hearers and men who heard him still declare that there was moments of the speech when Lincoln was the handsomest man they ever saw.

The peculiarities of Lincoln's physique were emphasized by his indifference to dress. In the days when he traveled the circuit and made political speeches this was conspicuous. Oblivious himself to the niceties of the toilet, with little money to spend on clothes, forced by his profession to hard travel on horse back or by carriage, it was ~~not~~ not astonishing that trousers were often too short, his boots dusty, his high hat rusty, his umbrella clumsily rolled, his necktie awry. But it is quite as great a mistake to suppose that Lincoln habitually appeared even in his earlier days in this unkept way with his hair uncombed as to suppose his position was invariably awkward. His portraits are his best defense in both particulars.

In the ~~most~~ earliest portrait we have of him he is dressed with scrupulous care even a kind of elegance. There is not in fact a photograph of him in existence in which his clothes are conspicuously poor.

As a rule he seems to have worn a long broadcloth coat over a satin vest. His shirt fronts are invariably neat and although his stock of neckties is oftentwisted and his collar too large neither are particularly untidy. From a study of his portraits early and late, one cannot find a suggestion of the grotesque dress which his contemporaries so often describe. Nor was this because he "dressed" for the sitting. Most of his photographs were taken almost by accident. He stopped at the gallery in passing at a friend's request or a photographer went out and brought him in.

An "ugly" face it has always been supposed crowned Mr. Lincoln's "awkward" body. If one studies his face and head in detail there is much to sustain the impression. His head was large, the forehead high and broad, the ears out-standing, the cheek bones prominent, the nose thick, the mouth large with a slight droop of the lower lip. His cheeks were sunken and on the right side of his face was a large wart. His dark complexion was seamed and gnarled as if beaten by wind and rain. His eyes were gray and deep set. The whole was surmounted by coarse black hair through which he had the habit of running his fingers when excited, until it stood up in every direction. When in repose his eyes were dull, his expression lifeless. In spite of this unpromising list of features the head of Lincoln in his portraits is always interesting. As his form under conditions expanded until it became of extraordinary nobility, so his face under the stimulating influence of thought became a new thing. Numbers of those who have recorded their impressions of Lincoln's appearance speak of this transformation. In 1860 some two months before the election, Mr. A. J. Conant, the artist, went to Springfield to paint a portrait of the Republican presidential candidate. The first time he saw him Lincoln was standing in a group of friends all in animated conversation, his face was beaming with good nature, its sharp angles had melted into graceful curves and his expression was charming. Mr. Conant immediately decided that this was the Mr. Lincoln he must paint. But when he went back for the first sitting there was another man before him, one with a melancholy expression sat before the artist with martyr-like resignation. Now all

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the irregularity and angularity of his face came out. Mr. Conant saw now that the line of the nose was straight on one side and slightly curved on the other, the lower lip on the right side was fuller than on the left, as if swollen from a blow or the sting of an insect, the under lid of the eye drooped, showing the white below the iris and intensifying the sadness of his expression. Mr. Conant turned all his resources to calling forth the expressions he had first seen on Mr. Lincoln's face. He succeeded in interesting him in making him talk and at once he had the missing, bright, almost youthful face he had first seen.

An "Edmund Kirke" M Gillmore, records in his reminiscences an experience not dissimilar to that of Mr. Conant. The first Mr. Gillmore saw Mr. Lincoln was in Washington.

"He was exceedingly tall," writes Mr. Gillmore, "and so gaunt that he seemed even above his reputed height of six feet four inches; but he was not--as very tall men often are--ungainly in either manner or attitude. As he leaned back in his chair, he had an air of unstudied ease, a kind of careless dignity, that well became his station; and yet there was not a trace of self-consciousness about him. He seemed altogether forgetful of himself and his position; and entirely engrossed in the subject that was under discussion. He had a large head, covered with coarse dark hair that was thrown carelessly back from a spacious forehead. His features were also large and prominent--the nose heavy and somewhat Roman, the cheeks thin and furrowed, the skin bronzed, the lips full, the mouth wide, but played about by a smile that was very winning. At my first glance he impressed me as a very homely man, for his features were ill-assorted and none of them was perfect, but this was before I had seen him smile, or met the glance of his deep-set, dark gray eye--the deepest, saddest, and yet kindest eye I had ever seen in a human being. I had been prejudiced against him, but with the first words he addressed to me, the prejudice vanished, and left me feeling perfectly at my ease."

The third time Mr. Gillmore saw the president he wrote: "On neither of the two previous occasions when I had met Mr. Lincoln had

he been so attractive as now, both in manner and appearance. His deep sunk, dark gray eye had a soft, beautiful expression, and I never saw a smile so positively captivating. It transfigured his whole face, making his plain features actually good-looking, so that I could agree with Mrs. Kirkland who, not long before, had told me that he was the handsomest man she had ever known."

This winning expression which made people sometimes call him "handsome" is well described by an Englishman who met Lincoln early in 1862 and wrote his impression of the president to MacMillan's Magazine:

"There is a softness about his smile and a sparkle of dry humor about his eye which redeem the expression of his face and remind me more of the late Dr. Arnold, as a child's recollections recalls him, than of any face I can call to mind."

These rapid ~~transformation~~ transformations prove that in spite of the apparent coarseness of Lincoln's body his frame was really fine and elastic, his features mobile and sensitive. As a matter of fact ~~there~~ there was never a body which reflected more perfectly the emotions of a soul than Lincoln. In every one of his portraits we have a new man. There are portraits of Lincoln in which he has the face of a poet. In two or three the pose of his head is regal in its determined purpose and there are others in which the ineffable melancholy of his eyes overshadows every other characteristic. Any careful study of these portraits show that whatever the gauntness of his frame, the irregularity of his features, the oddity of his dress, there was something in his face and bearing which caused all these considerations to be forgotten: dignity of carriage which careless position could not conceal; a feeling of force which the jocular democratic fashion in which he met people could not down; a beauty of expression which hollow eyes and sunken cheeks emphasized; a nobility of features which a wrinkled bronzed skin could not stiffen. The very contrast between these sore and distinguished personal characteristics and the roughness of his frame had its power on his associates. It made him the more wonderful to a world grown used to judging by outward appearances. Here they saw what was a man who easily ruled his fellows by force of brain and will and heart and in spite of an exterior of which even none of the

best of his followers were half-ashamed. The lesson was wholesome and needed in 1860 and it is no less wholesome and needed to-day.

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