

For use hm. 10

Two Good Stories of Lincoln

Mr Lincoln spent a whole summer day
getting a hearing at the
President LINCOLN'S GENTLER SIDE
Pension Office.

By Rufus R. Wilson.

~~His unfailing kindness of heart was, perhaps, the most beautiful
a minister whom Lincoln had known years
before saved from execution - Reminiscences of
and winning trait in the character of President Lincoln. The stories
General Hamilton and Senator Voorhies,~~

~~of those in sorrow and distress found in him ^{an such} very willing and~~

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~~patient listener and one prompt to offer aid where aid was possible~~

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~~Officers of the army often complained bitterly that he would not permit~~

~~an execution of ^{the} sentence of a ^{martial} court marshal in a capital case until~~

~~he had examined all the facts with care and read every page of the~~

~~evidence, and that then in a majority of cases, he never failed to~~

~~commute the sentence, while other proofs of his kind and gentle~~

~~heart were offered almost daily during the war. As the mighty strug-~~

~~gle for the preservation of the union advanced the demands upon the~~

~~time of ~~the~~ members of the cabinet and of other leading government~~

~~officials became ^a so heavy and incessant that certain hours were as-~~

~~signed on ~~in~~ a single day of each week when personal applications~~

~~could be made to them; but this rule never applied to Mr. Lincoln, and~~

~~no man or woman, if their case or request was one that deserved ~~the~~~~

~~attention, ever failed to secure prompt access to the President.~~

~~Stories of ^{Lincoln's} his gentle, generous deeds are therefore countless, but the~~

~~the following ^{incidents} incidents, related ^{by persons who were parties to them} by an eye witnesses of, or partici-~~

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(2)

~~pants therein, especially merit preservation, and it is for that~~
~~reason that I have retold them here.~~

Told by General Schuyler Hamilton. *HP*

It was a blistering day in ^{the} hot mid-summer of 1861, a fortnight before the first shock of ^{arms} the armies at Bull-Run, ^{The} Washington streets, ankle-deep in dust, resounded with the tramp of arriving regiments and batteries hurried forward by ^{the} loyal governors for the coming conflict, and over all hung a palpable, ominous foreboding, ~~felt~~ no where more keenly than at the headquarters of the army, where I then held ^{the} position of military secretary to General Scott with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. About three o'clock in the afternoon of the day in question, the door-way was darkened by the shadow of ~~at~~ a tall, gaunt form, and President Lincoln entered the office of ^{the} General-in-chief. He wore a long linen duster soiled by dust and stained with sweat, his vest was unbuttoned, his pantaloons hung limp about his ^{long, angular} ~~long~~ angrier legs, and ^a ~~the~~ thick coating of dust covered his shoes. All in all, he looked the very picture of weariness and disgust.

Without waiting for General Scott to rise to welcome him, he sank wearily into the first chair to which he came, and, taking off ~~the~~ his battered slouch hat, ~~which he wore~~, began wiping his face with a huge bandanna hankerchief. General Scott, ~~had~~ meanwhile had gained his feet and bowed ^{as} courteously to the Chief Magistrate, but his fine old

face showed plainly his surprise if not dismay at the President's unexpected appearance.

"Sit down General, sit down", said President Lincoln kindly as he wiped the dust and moisture from his face. "It is too hot to stand on ceremony. I have only dropped in to tell you that I have learned something new to-day."

"What is that Mr. President?" asked General Scott, his composure gradually returning.

Lincoln Replied an Audience in the Pension Office,

"That it is a great thing to be an office-holder," President Lincoln went on. "Since nine o'clock this morning, I have been trying my best to get an audience with some clerk in the pension office, but without success. I have been up stairs ^{and out} down stairs, from the ground floor to the attic half a dozen times, and I am completely fagged out."

"Pardon me, Mr. President," General Scott broke in with a gentle wave of the hand, "but it is rather an uncommon thing for the President of the United States to become a solicitor of pensions. When you have any business of that kind demanding attention send it to me, and Colonel Hamilton here will be glad to attend to it without delay."

"I am sure that ^{the} claim is a just one" the President continued without noticing the General's interruption, "for I have gone over the papers in the case with care." Here he drew a bulky package of papers from one of his pockets and adjusting his steel-rimmed spectacles,

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(4)

went over them one by one. "You see, General, the applicant is the widow of a Corporal of ~~the~~ Infantry who was killed by the Indians some twenty-five years ago. She should have had her money long ago, but nobody seems to have taken any interest in the case. She has been haunting the White House almost daily for weeks, until, between you and ~~me~~, I am afraid that Mrs. Lincoln is getting a trifle jealous. I am resolved to wind the matter up one way or another to-day, and I have promised the poor woman an answer at 4 o'clock. She is waiting over at the White House now. Between the two of them, I am afraid to go home without having finished the job," And the President's eyes twinkled merrily.

P I had been an interested listener to this conversation, and when General Scott called, "Colonel Hamilton" I was instantly at his elbow.

P "How long do you think it would take you, Colonel, to get this case through the pension office?" asked the President.

P "It should be done in half hour Mr. President," I replied, as I glanced over the papers to see if they were in proper form. "Wait here", I added, and I will return in twenty minutes, or, if you wish, it, I will take the certificate to you at the White House, and save you that much time."

P "No, no my son" Mr. Lincoln broke in. "Bring them back here and I will wait for you."

P At that time the pension office was located in Seventeenth Street a little way from the war department, and five minutes after leaving

the President I ^(was) ~~went~~ in the office of the commissioner. I had not arrived a moment too soon, for the officials and clerks were cleaning their desks and preparing to quit work for the day. The commissioner ^{politely} ~~courteously~~ asked what he could do for me.

P "Did you see a tall, dark complexioned gentleman here to-day?" I answered. "He wore a linen duster and slouch hat, and was interested in the pension of a woman who lost her husband in the Seminole War."

P "Oh, yes, I remember the man," the commissioner replied carelessly. "He said he was a lawyer from the West, and has been bothering us all day." P "Well," said I dryly, "you have got yourself in a pretty fix."

That man is President Lincoln, ^{and} I have just promised him that I would bring him an answer from you inside of half an hour. He is waiting for it now in General Scott's office."

P The change worked in the pension office by this brief announcement was ^{nothing} less than marvelous. Bells were rung, ^{heads} ~~members~~ of ~~the~~ division sent for, and desks hastily unlocked, while clerks and messengers ran here and there at the peril of life and limb. A dozen times, while giving orders to his subordinates, ^{his} the commissioner passed to apologize for the shabby treatment the President had received, and to beg me to explain to him that it was all a mistake. Within twenty minutes ^{all the} ~~my~~ statements and affidavits had been verified and the case certified

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for payment. Before the promised half hour had expired, everything had been properly signed and executed and I had placed the final papers in the hands of the President. He looked them over carefully to make sure that they were right, and then while a quizzical smile spread over his face, asked: "Can you tell me, Colonel Hamilton, how it is that I was so long and failed, and you ^{were} ~~was~~ so short and succeeded?"

"To speak frankly, Mr. President, I said, I very promptly informed the commissioner of pensions that it was the President who had made himself the champion of this poor woman's case. You could not do that, of course, and they did not know you there, sir." The president laughed heartily, put the papers in his pocket and, turning to General Scott, said:

"I ^{am told,} understand General, that it is one of your standing rules, that when the President or a member of the Cabinet comes to see you a member of your staff shall keep him company on his return home. I should be glad to have Colonel Hamilton go back with me to-day."

Accordingly I walked with the President to the White House, and on the portico ^{we} found an old Irish woman waiting for Mr. Lincoln. He went up to her and, handing her the papers, said:

"Here you are, my good woman. Your pension is all right, and all you need do now is to go tomorrow morning at nine o'clock and get

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your money. But from my own experience to-day, I would advise you not to go before ten o'clock. If you do you won't find the officers there."

The poor creature caught the President's hand and covering it with kisses, at the same time showering a thousand blessings on her benefactor's head. "Don't thank me," he answered kindly as he gently freed himself from her grasp. "This young man here is the one who did the business for you, and who deserves all the thanks." And he stepped aside and seemed to keenly enjoy the fervency with which the old woman poured her store of benedictions upon me. Then remarking that he must go and tell Mrs. Lincoln that it was all right, he bade me good day and hurried away.

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17