

Samuel Colecord;

Interview with S. C. at Arts Club. He was to tell me about the time when he heard Lincoln speak. Was disappointed in his appearance - a much less cantankerous person than I had expected.

He is emotional over the effect that the speech — described in the attached letter - he had written out what he had to tell me - had upon his future life. He said that he definately at the time he was twelve years of age ^{first} that he wanted to be publisher ^{and} and devote himself to great causes. Various things seem to have happened to him to hold back ^{him} ~~his~~ [?]. He had decided that he must make enough money to support him in his undertaking. He did not mean in his work ^{to take money} as a publisher ⁱⁿ. He thought that \$20,000 would be enough to take care of himself and his family, that is, he had the modest ideas of his time. As a matter of fact he says that later here in in New York in construction work he made several hundred thousand dollars but he seems to have dropped a good deal of that.

It was not until a few years ago that he saw his way clear to carry out his ambition and peace was ~~his~~ ^{the} cause ^{of} selection. What he does is almost entirely by correspondence and he places enormous importance to every letter that he receives in reply to his long communications.

I know my own answers to him have been meagre and so very occasional, only written because I deeply sympathize with his feeling, although sometime I was deeply irritated, too,

by his assumption that he was ^{very} eager of the world.
Possibly he is in the long run - who knows.

He had yesterday two letters from Senator King - one offering to propose his plan in the Senate.

He refused this as he did not think the time was ripe - not enough people committed to it. And King wrote him back very kindly and told him whenever he was ready to let him know.

He is much excited because he had from the Italian Consul General here in New York a request that he call upon him - a communication from the Italian government. It turns out that it is a communication from Mussolini, himself, and he was to get it today. He is going to let me know what is in it. Probably he has been bombarding Mussolini with his letters and has made a bet. *Dunt*

Now according to S. C. this activity of his all was the result of the tremendous impression Lincoln made upon him at this speech at Greenville.

He puts in such little details in talking, not to be found in the letter. One is that Greenville is the country seat of *Bond* County, named after an old governor of the state - named after his death - and ^{the country} ~~it~~ was known locally as the *widow Bond*

He says that his father was the first man to own a reaping and binding machine in Southern Illinois, that the farmers ~~tell~~ ^{ad} about jeering at him when he started out, but was so impressed that they practically forced him into the agricultural implement business. He became so busy at this that he finally

gave up his farm which S. C. claims was very successful.

He gives a good argument for Sunday *observance* - that is economic argument. Says that his father drove his cattle to the Chicago market and that he always got the highest price there because he rested his cattle over Sunday and they arrived in so much better condition than those that insisted on driving them straight through. *Hence* ~~His failure~~ to get pasture that he expected for Sunday rest, but he went ahead to Chicago and failed to get first place and first ~~prize~~ *price*.

SAMUEL COLCORD
305 WEST 113TH STREET
NEW YORK

July 21, 1932

Miss Ida M. Tarbell
120 East 19th Street
New York City

Dear Miss Tarbell

In an effort to fulfill the promise made by Mr. Geo. Gordon Battle I will seek to relate in this letter as best I can the story of Abraham Lincoln's appearance and speech in my native village, Greenville, Illinois.

I was nine years of age at the time but because of the tremendous surprise that the opening remarks of Mr. Lincoln gave me I distinctly remember the first part ~~of the~~ least important part of his speech, although I have forgotten all the rest excepting a general impression of its character and ~~success~~ *large success*

My father being what was then called in Illinois "a black abolitionist", was a great friend and ardent supporter of Lincoln and his cause. Although residing in so small a village, its population then being less than five hundred, my father had almost a monopoly of the agricultural implement business in Southern Illinois, having branches in three other towns. Naturally of a hospitable turn and receiving the daily visits of farmers and others interested in his business he seldom omitted inviting to dinner some of his callers, often an entire family. Upon these occasions politics, and particularly Lincoln and Douglas and the slavery question were the subjects of discussion. As a small boy observing silence as was the custom of children at that period, I listened to talks of Lincoln and Douglas at breakfast, dinner and supper. I heard extravagant praise of Lincoln and corresponding censure of Douglas.

No one knows better than you of the seven Lincoln-Douglas debates and what followed in that year, 1858. At the conclusion of the seven debates the Republican State Committee, well pleased with the result, proposed to the Democratic Committee a continuance of the joint debates. This proposal the Democratic Committee declined, saying that Douglas had already made the dates for his future addresses during the campaign. The Republicans then proposed that the debates between the two take place upon the dates and at the places as arranged by Mr. Douglas. This is what followed. Wherever Douglas spoke the town was placarded with this announcement: "In one week from today Abraham Lincoln will appear in this town to reply to the speech of Stephen A. Douglas". It was upon one of these occasions that Lincoln, from a rude platform in a hickory grove belonging to my uncle, Otis B. Colcord, replied to the speech made by Douglas from the same platform a week earlier.

Eager crowds came from fifty miles away from every direction, including St. Louis which was forty-eight miles distant, making

Players.
a crowd of many thousands. To my boys imagination the long procession of incoming people was very impressive and exciting. In fact I think that the older people were about as much excited as the small boys. Different communities came in separate groups nearly all preceded by some form of music, fife and drum, bugles, impromptu whistlers and bands of music. Interesting and often amusing floats were in the procession. I remember one that had on a large platform erected over the wagon a log cabin with fiddler playing in the doorway and two live racoons tied with ~~invisible~~ *thin* cords moving upon the roof. Upon another was a section of Virginia rail fence with a half split log with wedges partly driven in, and a huge mall and axe of great size resting against the log, reputed to be the same axe that the stalwart Lincoln used. Ox teams, mule teams and horse teams drew wagons with various floats and often with hay riggings *carpeted* ~~with straw~~ upon which sat a score or more of boys and girls and older people. Many came on horseback and for the sake of the comical expression a few came astride the backs of oxen. One of the most interesting to a boys imagination was a company of wide-awakes shouldering torches, carrying banners and ~~preceded by~~ *preceded by* a lively fife and drum. With the knowledge that it would be impossible for the small village to feed a tenth part of the crowd, all brought their lunches, ~~with them~~.

Having heard Douglas and particularly his treatment of Lincoln described in the most disparaging terms I was almost prepared to believe that he had horns growing under his hair. I sat on the next to the front row throwing my head ~~back~~ *high and* to see the six foot four form of Lincoln towering above the ~~stage~~ *platform* directly before me. The only use he made of the semi-pulpit intended for the notes of ~~the speaker~~ was to assist him in rising with left hand taking hold of it while the right hand was extended with an awkward gesture when he was little more than half way up. But he lost his awkwardness the moment he began to speak. I was prepared to be delighted with the abuse I expected him to pour upon Douglas for his unfair treatment in the first of the joint debates and at other times.

What was my surprise when he alluded to Douglas as his friend. Because of the tremendous shock to me I remember distinctly every word of his first few sentences. He said, "I understand my friend Judge Douglas was here the other day." He then went on to praise Douglas, saying that he was a great lawyer and jurist, a great debater and "a statesman who has done honor to his state and his country." I think that was perhaps the greatest lesson that I have ever received in my lifetime. Many years after when my friends charged me with treating an opponent with too much tolerance, I realized that I got that from that speech of Abraham Lincoln, *which has been a very valuable possession.*

He then went on to say, "I understand my friend Judge Douglas said" so and so. To this he added, "That seems very plausible," and looked over the audience to see Republicans and Democrats alike nodding assent, for he had put the best point in the speech of Douglas more strongly, if possible, than Douglas himself had put it. He then repeated, "That seems very plausible--but", *and* ~~then~~ went on to show that the thunder of Douglas was made of nothing but tin pans, that would be somewhat plausible if it only had a

foundation of facts, but the facts were lacking. With much humor and compelling arguments he exploded every one of the greater points in the speech of his opponent. As I remember it now, he seemed to have the various points of Douglas on slips of paper in his left hand and with his right hand ~~threw~~ them out one by one over the audience as scraps of worthless paper.

A quaint old man of the village after the speech said that you could tell whether a man in the audience was a Republican or a Democrat by the shape of his mouth. If he was a Republican the mouth seemed widened and turned up at both ends. If he was a Democrat the mouth was contracted and the ends turned down. If he was on the fence one corner was turned up and the other down. The village though small, was the county seat in which the Court House still stands, quite a respectable building in the centre of the town square although the population of the town has grown to nearly four thousand. Judge Joseph Gillespie, the Supreme Court judge, ~~held~~ ^{held} supreme court sessions in the town, which was in his circuit, twice every year. It was one of my favorite pastimes at that period in my life to attend the court and hear the lawyers on both sides ridicule and cover with odium the attorney on the other side and walk out arm and arm in cheerful conversation when the court adjourned. But I expected no such treatment of Douglas by Lincoln after the constant berating of him I had heard in my home. *The lawyer's berating of each other was, for I knew a part of their profession, as between Lincoln and Douglas it would be a serious fight*

Three years later at the age of twelve I had made up my mind that I was to be a publicist, ^{although I did not have that in my mind} unlike Lincoln, it was ^{my intention} to make a fortune, estimating that twenty thousand dollars would be ample since there were many safe investments in the state at ten per cent interest, which I thought would never change, and two thousand dollars would be all the support necessary to live decently in town like Greenville or even a small city, and bring up a family and educate the children. I would then devote myself to the advocacy of great causes entirely without compensation and at my own expence.

Strangely enough it was not until many years after when I delivered a lecture on Lincoln, that I began to realize that to Lincoln, to his great speech in my native village and his after history, was due my making that great decision which I have tried to carry out in many years of my life. I made the fortune, not twenty thousand but some hundreds of thousands which seemed necessary in the city of New York of which I had become an inhabitant, to support my family in the style that seemed necessary, educate my children, buy a respectable home for my daughter in the event of her marriage and establish my son in successful business or professional life.

This had taken a number of years and I was preparing to enter upon the work of publicity which I had planned when twelve years of age, when misfortune, or perhaps good fortune, caused me to lose my fortune and be incumbered with a crushing debt that it took me twenty years to pay. After the twenty years I made another but comparatively small fortune and then came suddenly the opportunity to devote myself and expend my best energies and all my time which I have given to it without a dollar of compensation to the greatest cause in the world, the cause of world peace, the insurance of the

*intelligent of Lincoln to
when Lincoln made it
for I was a young man
I thought to be
plainly states
will support
my house*

*which I really
think it was,*

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permanence of peace and prevention of another world war. I cannot but believe that God in his providence put obstacles in the way of my entering the field of publicity until this greatest of all causes presented the opportunity and demanded the effort..

Very sincerely yours,

Samuel Colcord

SC:PT

Postscript:--

An incident that I overlooked in this narrative, was that when Lincoln left the platform, having apparently noticed the enthusiasm of his small auditor, bent his tall form to pat me on the head and said, "Sonny, somewhere in this country is a boy of about your age who fifty years from now will be the President of the United States." The boy has never had a desire to be president or become a candidate for any office. But that kind word probably instilled in his mind the idea to follow the great man in other ways. From that day to this Lincoln has been the idol of his heart and his ideal of manhood.

S. C.