

By Major D. V. Derickson,  
(See note on p. 2.)

### THE PRESIDENT'S GUARD.

On the morning of the 6th of September <sup>1862</sup> my company was detailed as permanent guard for the President of the United States, and stationed at the Soldiers' Retreat, three miles north of the city, to replace two companies of regulars who were that day to rejoin their regiment, as it marched through the city on its way to Maryland.

# The next morning <sup>after my arrival in D.C.</sup> the President sent a messenger with a note to my quarters, stating that he would like to see the captain of the guard at his residence. I immediately reported. After an informal introduction and hand-shaking, he asked me if I would have any objection to riding with him to the city. I replied that it would give me much pleasure to do so, when he invited me to take a seat in the carriage. On our way to the city he made numerous inquiries, as to my name, where I came from, what regiment I belonged to, etc. ~~I told him my name and place of residence.~~ He replied, "Oh, I know all about you. We appointed you as one of the internal revenue assessors a few days ago." He inquired how I got into the military service, and I explained the situation to him. He told me how it came that my appointment as assessor was so long delayed.

When we entered the city Mr. Lincoln said he would call at General Halleck's headquarters and get what news had been received from the army during the night. I informed him that General Cullum, chief aid to General Halleck, was raised in Meadville, and that I knew him when I was a boy. He replied, "Then we must see both the gentlemen." When the carriage stopped, he requested me to remain seated, and he would bring the gentlemen down to see me, the office being on the second floor. In a short time the President came down, followed by the other gentlemen. When he introduced them to me General Cullum recognized and seemed pleased to see me. In General Halleck I thought I discovered a kind of quizzical look, as much as to say, "isn't this rather a big joke to ask the Commander in-chief of the army down to the street to be introduced to a country captain?"

On arriving at the White House the President invited me into the executive chamber, where I spent a half hour very pleasantly.

During that time he explained to me all the situation of both armies, and read the official telegrams that had been received during the night from the different headquarters of the army. I was much pleased with my interview with the President. I returned in the carriage to my camp quarters.

Supposing that the invitation to ride to the city with the President was as much to give him an opportunity to look over and interview the new captain as for any other purpose, I did not report the next morning. During the day I was informed that, if agreeable to me, it was the desire of the President that I should breakfast with him and accompany him to the White House every morning, and return with him in the evening. This duty I entered upon with much pleasure, and was on hand in good time next morning; and I continued to perform said duty until we moved to the White House in November. It was Mr. Lincoln's custom, on account of the pressure of business, to breakfast before the other members of the family were up; and I usually entered his room at half past six or seven o'clock in the morning, where I often found him reading the Bible or some work on the art of war. On my entering he would read aloud and offer comments of his own as he read.

I usually went down to the city at 4 o'clock and returned with the President at 5. He often carried a small portfolio, containing papers relating to the business of the day, and spent many hours on them in the evening. ~~Frequently, on our way home, he discussed points that seemed to trouble him.~~

I found Mr. Lincoln to be one of the most kind hearted and pleasant gentlemen that I had ever met. He never spoke unkindly of anyone, and always spoke of the rebels as "those Southern gentlemen." He was not a member of any church, but usually attended Dr. Paxton's (Presbyterian) church, where I frequently accompanied him. He was, I believe, a Christian, and acted as one in all his intercourse with his fellowmen. He was no respecter of persons, but acted upon the principle that all persons of respectable appearance were entitled to respect, no matter what their station in life. He would give respectful audience to the most humble citizen, as soon as to those in the higher stations of life.

\* My friend D. W. Derickson in the Centennial Edition of Wendell Phillips - Republican

## THE CABINET.

The President frequently requested me to remain in the executive chamber on the mornings of cabinet meeting, to be introduced to the members of his cabinet, as they usually dropped in one by one half an hour or so before the hour of meeting. I found them to be very pleasant gentlemen. All parties entered into conversation on general topics. I could not help but observe that Mr. Lincoln was the leading spirit among them and all appeared to recognize the fact. He towered up in intellect as he did in physical stature. I was never introduced to Secretary Stanton. He never came to the cabinet meetings until the last moment, and his entrance was the signal to proceed to business, when I withdrew. Not one of these gentlemen is now living.

A short time after the battle of Antietam, the President visited the battle fields of Harper's Ferry, Antietam and South Mountain, and invited me to accompany him, which I was pleased to do. President Garrett, of the B. & O. R. R., kindly furnished his official car for the excursion. The party consisted of President Lincoln, Mr. Garrett, Hon. Hatch, Secretary of State of Illinois, Mr. Lamon, Marshal of the District of Columbia, General McClernand and staff, and myself. The first night we quartered with General Sumner, at Harper's Ferry, in a small white cottage on the hilltop on the west side of the town.

After breakfast we visited the ruins of buildings and fortifications which General Miles had been obliged to surrender a few days before. We also visited the ground on Loudon and Maryland heights, which the rebels occupied during the battle of seige of Harper's Ferry. In the afternoon we went to the headquarters of General McClellan at Antietam. The next two days were spent in reviewing the different army corps. In moving from one town or battle field to another, we all rode in carriages or ambulances; but when we went to review the soldiers, all took to horse and remained in the saddle most of the day, Mr. Lincoln side by side with General McClellan at the head of the reviewing officers, consisting of the president's escort and the different corps and brigade commanders. During our stay we visited the hospitale and saw many of those wounded in the recent battles. The president took the lead with General McClellan, and made many kind and pleasant re-

marks to the wounded soldiers. During our stay at Antietam we made our home at the headquarters of General McClellan. On our return we went in carriages to Frederick via South Mountain, where all took to horse again. We rode all over the battle field, visited the spot where General Reno fell, and returned to the road near the white house which General McClellan used as headquarters during the battle of South Mountain.

While at Frederick we called to see General Hooker, who had been wounded in the late battle. We then took the cars via Monocacy Junction and arrived in Washington about 12 at night, having had a very pleasant trip.

On our trip our larder was well supplied with wine and other liquors, but Mr. Lincoln refused them on all occasions, saying that he never drank anything stronger than tea or coffee.

In two or three days after our return Mr. Lincoln asked me if I had heard any improper remarks or suggestions made by him when visiting the hospitals at Antietam. I replied that I had not, and inquired why. He said that a correspondent in a Baltimore paper had stated that he had made very improper remarks to a wounded rebel soldier, asking him if he could sing a song, and suggesting that he sing "Jim Crow," or "Dandy Jim," or something of that kind. He felt very much hurt over the thing, and said it was positively untrue.

I can truly say that all the singing I heard or that was suggested on that (to me) memorable trip was while we were riding in the cars or in the ambulance going from one town or headquarters to another. Mr. Ward Lamon sang several sentimental songs, one of which, I remember well, was a great favorite of the President. It was entitled "Some Twenty Years Ago."

On one of these ambulance trips Mr. Lincoln said, "Ward, this is a very rough and tedious road, can't you give us something lively?" Mr. Lamon struck up some popular negro melody. Mr. Lincoln on the same trip repeated a favorite poem, the authorship of which is, I believe, in dispute, entitled, "Oh! Why Should the Spirit of Mortal be Proud?" It made quite an impression on me, as he was a very good

reader and the sentiment very sublime.

On Christmas, 1862, the President and Mrs. Lincoln visited our company while we were on dress parade. We saluted them, and the company was brought to parade rest. After shaking hands with the officers, and passing the compliments of the season, the President made a few remarks complimenting the men upon their fine soldierly bearing. He referred to the rapidity with which time was passing, and to the great events transpiring and said that he had come to regard us as a part of his family, and more than this, that we had never had any family jars.

With a very few exceptions, Co. K was recruited from among the sons of farmers, young mechanics, and school boys of the county, including five graduates of Allegheny College, who had graduated at the former commencement. Their discipline and deportment were such as to entitle them to the confidence and respect of the President, and they maintained their position until after his death.

#### LINCOLN'S FEARLESSNESS.

There was no fear or timidity in Mr. Lincoln's make up. In fact I thought him rather careless or thoughtless as to his personal safety. He frequently walked to the theater with no escort but myself and his little son, and it was not at his suggestion that a guard was stationed at his residence. In fact, he said so to the military authorities. But future events proved the wisdom of this action.

During the fall of '62 several efforts were made to supersede our company, by parties wanting the position, which became so annoying to the president that he issued the following order, which placed the matter at rest:

EXECUTIVE MANSION,  
Washington, November 1, 1862.

Whom it may concern.

Captain Derickson, with his company, has been for some time keeping guard at my residence, now at the soldiers' retreat. He and his company are very agreeable to me, and while it is deemed proper for any guard to remain, none would be more satisfactory to me than Captain Derickson and his company.

A. LINCOLN.

## MR. LINCOLN'S CALLERS.

Some time in April, '63, I noticed rather a plain looking lady, on several occasions, in earnest conversation with the doorkeeper at the White House. I learned afterward that she was seeking an interview with the President, but not succeeding she approached me one day as I entered the door and made known her wishes. After hearing and becoming interested in her case, I told her I would see that she had an interview with the President. I went to his room and told him there was a lady from the State of Indiana waiting in the east room, whose husband was sick in one of the hospitals somewhere in the front; that he had not been paid for nine months, and that she was poor and had a family to support. She had managed in some way to get money enough to come to Washington, to see if she could not get him paid off and discharged. Mr. Lincoln told me to invite the lady up, and, after hearing her story, said he would do what he could for her. He gave her a small card on which was written, as nearly as I can remember, the following: "Mr. Stanton, please see the bearer of this card, and assist her so far as you can consistently with your duty." He requested me to direct her to Secretary Stanton's office, which I did with pleasure. On her return from the front she informed me that she had accomplished the object of her mission; that her husband had been paid off, and that he would be discharged as soon as he was able to travel.

On another occasion Mr. Jesse Winans, of this county, called on me at my camp, and informed me that he had six sons in the army that averaged six feet in height, and that he had been at the front to visit them. He had a great desire to see Mr. Lincoln before his return home. I requested him to wait until I could see whether Mr. Lincoln was at leisure. When I entered the executive chamber, I found him alone. I told him a gentleman from Crawford county was visiting me, who had thirty-six feet of sons in the army, and that he had just made them a visit at the front, and would like to see the President before returning home. His reply was: "Invite him up, Captain, I want to see him just as much as he wants to see me." They spent half an hour very pleasantly together.

Again, a gentleman from Erie county was visiting me, who had been frequently told, and was rather proud of the fact, that he looked like the President. At his request I went with him to the White House and introduced him. During the conversation I said, "Mr. President, my friend has often been told that he resembles you very much." Mr. Lincoln looked at him for a moment, and said: "I don't see just where that compliment comes in, as either of us would make a good subject for a comic almanac."

The Marine Band, of Washington, frequently serenaded the president in the evening in front of the White House. On one of these occasions, the band having played several tunes, the president, who stood in an upper window, requested them to play "Dixie," when some one below said, "No, no! that is a rebel tune." Mr. Lincoln replied, "That tune fairly belongs to us. We captured it at the battle of Antietam." The band at once struck up "Dixie" in fine style, when a shout went up from below, giving three cheers for President Lincoln.

#### LINCOLN AS A RAIL-SPLITTER.

I said to him one day, "Mr. Lincoln, when you were a candidate for President in 1860, your friends made much of the fact that you were a rail-splitter. How many rails did you ever split in a day?" His reply was, that when he was a lad about twelve years old, his step-father moved the family from Kentucky to the state of Indiana, where he bought a farm of fifty acres. On it there was a field of five acres cleared and partly fenced, and enough rail timber cut to enclose the lot. He said that he and his step-father had split rails enough to complete the fence, and that this was all the rail-splitting he had ever done.

Mr. Lincoln made no effort to conceal his humble origin, but rather delighted to dwell upon the incidents and trials of his early life. He often interested me by rehearsing many of the stories and incidents of his youth, most of which have been published time and again, so I will not repeat them. But I will give one as he related it to me, that I have never seen in print.



as to state that she had brothers in the rebel army, and was in sympathy with the South. I know this charge against Mrs. Lincoln to have been a very great mistake. Although she had two brothers in the rebel army, Mrs. Lincoln was a hearty loyal woman, and one of the best rebel haters that I met during my stay in Washington. She appealed to me, on more than one occasion, to urge the President to arrest and confine a certain official connected with a government institution in Washington, whom she believed to be a rebel sympathizer. I spoke to Mr. Lincoln about it one day, when he replied that Mrs. Lincoln had mentioned the matter to him several times, but that if he were to arrest and imprison all within our lines known to be in sympathy with the rebel cause, to say nothing about those who were suspected, it would keep the quartermaster's department employed most of the time in building new prisons.

In the spring of 1863, Congress passed what was known as the Enrollment Act, establishing the Provost Marshal's Bureau. Finding my duties very light, I told the President that I thought my lieutenants could take care of him and the company and suggested that he appoint me provost marshal of our district. His reply was that if he had the appointment he would give it to me at once; "but," said he, "the members of Congress think these appointments all belong to them." He asked me if I knew our member of congress and whether he was my friend. I replied that I knew him very well, but that he was not a citizen of our county, and I had not spoken to him on the subject. He said, "Well, you had better write him, anyway." I did so, and in a short time received a reply, stating that before receiving my letter, he had received fifteen other applications; and that among so many good men, it was hard for him to make a choice. I handed the reply to the president, who, after reading it, said, "Very well; if he cannot make a choice, we will have to make one for him."

On the 17th of April the president sent me a note saying that Secretary Seward and himself would be pleased to inspect my company at 3 o'clock p.m. At the hour appointed Mr. Lincoln's son, Tad, then about 12 years old, came to where I had the company in charge and informed me that the president and the governor were in waiting at the

lawn on the south-side of the White House. I immediately marched up and saluted the inspecting officers, and after maneuvering the company for a short time, I put it in charge of Lieutenant Getchel, who marched the company to their quarters. After a handshaking and a few words complimentary to the company, Mr. Lincoln said to me quietly, "Captain, I was over to the war department, yesterday, and that little matter of ours is all right." I thanked him for his kindness, when we separated. The next day, I received my appointment, and made my arrangements to leave for home. I bid a final farewell to the president and his family, feeling conscious and proud of the fact that I had for a friend and acquaintance one of the kindest and greatest men this country has ever produced.