

A DAY WITH ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

The writer came to Bloomington in the Spring of 1856 drawn here by a pressing invitation from the Hon. Leonard Swett, then the leading lawyer here, who was a native of Turner, Me., my native town. I soon heard of Abraham Lincoln and looked forward to meeting him as some unique specimen of humanity.

One May morning as we were in Mr. Swett's office then on the West side of the Square, No. 214 N. Center St., Mr. Quigg, Mr. Swett's brother-in-law, called me to the window, "Prince, come quick, here is Mr. Lincoln." I looked out and on the opposite walk was Mr. Lincoln's striking figure. So strongly did it impress me that it is as vivid to my mind to day as it was that May morning, thirty-seven years ago; a tall, gaunt man, sallow complexion, coarse dark hair, an old battered "stove pipe" hat set on the back of his head, coarse rough boots, innocent of blacking, baggy pants much too short for his long legs, and a rusty old bombazine coat that hung loosely about his frame. Afterwards I became well acquainted with him, as did everyone who attended our circuit Court upon which he was a regular attendant until he was nominated for the presidency in 1860.

His entrance into the court room was as disturbing as a brass band or circus outside. Everyone, unengaged, gathered around him for the story and laugh that never failed to come. Judge David Davis, who then held our Circuit Court, himself a noted , who always exceedingly enjoyed Mr. Lincoln, was as uneasy as a fish out of water to hear what was going on in Mr. Lincoln's corner.

In the Fremont Campaign, Sept. 16th, the Democrats held a "Grand Rally" in Hinshaw's Grove in what is now Hinshaw's Grove

Addition to Bloomington. It was not a large meeting, being composed principally of Bloomington people many of whom were republicans. Among them Mr. Lincoln and Lenoard, Stephen A. Douglass was the principal speaker. He was a master of the rough and tumble denuntiatory style then not uncommon on the stump. Judge Douglass was especially severe on what he termed the Black republicans under which term he included everyone opposed to the pro-slavery properganda, lumping all together and attributing to Lincoln and the conservative republicans the extreme opinions of Garrison and Phillips. John Brown was then just being heard of in Kansas, and in the course of his speech Judge Douglass paid his respect to old Ossawatamie. Exclaiming "Who is this man Brown? I can tell you who he is. John Brown was one Murrier's gang of counterfeiters and cut throats in Tennessee. When they were broken up he came to Southern Illinois and was one of the Massac County rioters, and when these troubles broke out in Kansas he turned up there and was a fit trader for the Black Republican party." He also gave a harrowing account of the murders and other crimes Brown was said to have committed.

Bloomington was then a little village. It had no daily paper. The Weekly Pantograph and democratic Weekly, the Flagg, had a limited local circulation. Meetings of this kind were dismissed with a paragraph, there was no associated press reports spreading the orator's utterances over the whole country in the twinkling of an eye. There was a thousand chances to one that there was no one present who knew anything to the contrary about Brown and Douglass was apparently perfectly safe in making the remarks he did. The writer left the meeting in company with Mr. Swett and on our way to the city we overtook William M. Richardson,

then a leading dry goods merchant here, a gentleman of the highest veracity and character. As came up to him Mr. Swett said: "Well, Mr. Richardson, what do you think of Old John Brown now."

"Think," exclaimed Richardson, "I think it is all a damned lie. John Brown is a cousin of mine. I know him perfectly well. He was never in Tennessee at all and never in Illinois except as he passed through it on his way to Kansas. He is a deacon in the Presbyterian church, one of the most conscientious men I ever knew. For years he was engaged in buying stock when the owner offered cattle for less than Brown thought it was worth he would say it is worth more than that and instead of taking advantage of the man's ignorance would give him its full value."

An account of this incident will be found in the Weekly Pantograph of Sept. 24, 1856.

At this meeting small bills were distributed announcing that Mr. Lincoln would reply to Mr. Douglass that evening at Major's Hall. At an early hour the Hall was filled to overflowing with excited republicans. When Mr. Lincoln accompanied by Mr. Swett appeared the audience burst out into impressible applause which continued several minutes and when Mr. Lincoln got up to speak the audience instinctively arose to their feet and cheered their beloved leader until they exhausted themselves. Mr. Lincoln caught their enthusiasm and spoke in his happiest view. He commenced by telling a little story. He said Judge Douglass' squattler sovereignly plan reminded him of the man who went into a restaurant and called a ginger cake which was handed to him but spying the sign "Swett Cider for sale" he handed the cake back and said he would take a glass of cider in its place. He drank the cider but was about to leave the place when the keeper called to

him to come back and pay for his cider. Cider said the customer why I gave you the cake for the cider. Well then was the reply pay me for the cake. "Pay you for the cake. I didn't have the cake." "Well," replied the keeper scratching his head, "that is so but it seems to me I am cheated some way in the deal." "And so said Mr. Lincoln somebody, the North or South, is bound to be cheated by Mr. Douglass' theory of Squatter sovereignty."

Mr. Lincoln enjoyed his own stories as much as any one else. And as he came to the point his face would break out into the broadest smiles and end with the heartiest of laughter, his long fore lock of hair bobbing up and down as the speaker shook with merriment.

It must not be supposed, however, that Mr. Lincoln's speeches was composed mainly of stories. He had an unfailing supply of them most of which were, I have no doubt, of his own invention. They were of the most varied character, all was fish that came to his net. But they were always fitting the work in hand and were never lugged in to help out a lame case. I never heard him tell one that was not appropos and suggestive.

When he had no serious business demanding his attention he would tell the funniest of funny stories by the hour, but when he had real work to do whether in the Court or on the stump no one mistook him for the professional wit whose most serious are apt to be taken for witticisms. If on such occasions he told a story it was because it illustrated some point he was making or to bring himself in support with his audience. His speeches in Court and on the stump were remarkable examples of plain, simple statement and inexorable logic, fitted to explain to his hearers his own ~~ideas~~ ideas and if necessary to fill them with moral

courage and enthusiasm sufficient to adopt his views. Occasionally, however, he made his wit as the main vehicle to carry him to success. Shortly before his nomination for the presidency he did that at Clinton where he was called to defend a young man for rape. Mr. Lincoln insisted that it was a case of rapes, the accused quite as much sinned against as sinning, and he showered upon the jury story after story until he fairly laughed the case out of court. But with these rare exceptions the warp and worf of his addresses was plain, simple argument pervaded through and through with a moral earnestness that had secured for him the soubriquet of "Honest Old Abe" long before he was thought of for the presidency. The story of the ginger cake and cider was the text of his speech at Major's Hall, the essential dishonesty of the dogma of "Squatter-Sovereignty." He paid no attention to the personal part of Douglass Speech to his denunciations of Brown, the abolitionists, or Black Republicans, he lifted the discussion into the higher regions of constitutional law the economical and moral evils of slavery, and the essential dishonesty of any attempted evasion of the difficulty as he claimed Douglass position to be.

About a month after this meeting Mr. Lincoln came to Bloomington on his way to Fremont in Tazavue County to make a speech. There was then no railroad nearer than Bloomington and he hired a team here and the writer took him over to Bloomington and brought him back the next day. We started from Bloomington a little after noon. It was one of our perfect October days, warm yet with a tonic hint of the braceing coolness to come, the ripening of the year, the foliage browning in the autumn sun, the scarlet ivy on the trees and worm fences, the yellow corn

hanging its head, just the time to make a trip with an entertaining companion and Mr. Lincoln was so entertaining. It was in the height of the Kansas emigration and we were on the Peoria road so called, for many years the great line through Central Illinois for Western emigrants. The road was lined with emigrant wagons, "Prairie Schooners," "Bound to Kansas or Burst." They jogged alone on a walk. We rode past them with our lighter train. It was a good natured crowd but all were politicians, and as we passed they sang out their choice, Fremont and Dayton or Buckannon and Breckenridge. Not more than one in ten being for Buck and Breck. We responded with Fremont and Dayton. I have many times since wondered whether Mr. Lincoln had any idea then that in four years from that time people would be cheering his name for the presidency as we were then that of Fremont. If he did he gave no signs of it.

We stopped that night at Mickens west of Danvers. There was a saw mill there, a favorite camping ground for the emigrants, with plenty of wood, water and shade and that night hundreds of teams camped there. Mr. Lincoln and I visited them. They were a stalwart set of men, full of hope and enthusiasm, good comradeship and sheer. It made a pretty picture the many camp-fires, the women preparing the supper, the men taking care of their teams, smoking and chaffing one another.

The accommodations at Mickens were primitive and poor even for a wayside tavern of that time. Mr. Lincoln and I slept in the same bed up stairs under the shingled roof, and he was never heard to complain of his food, once making his dinner once as Judge Davis says, making his dinner at Barnetts at Clinton out of bouled cabbage alone when everything else on the table seemed uneatable vile, but the bill was not extravagant, only

seventy five cents. As we were driving off Mr. Lincoln said to me, "pretty cheap for supper, breakfast and lodging and horse keep," then apparently remembering the muddy coffee and yellow biscuit for breakfast he said with a laugh "but perhaps considering what we got it was enough." In the early morning we sped on to Fremont where I left Mr. Lincoln and returned with the train to Bloomington.

Mr. Lincoln was an ideal travelling companion. If you wanted silence you could have it, if conversation you could have it and on your own ground. To me Lincoln was himself the most interesting topic of conversation and he was perfectly ready to satisfy my Yankee curiosity. It is only an incident here and there of our talk that I now recollect. At Schooling he said he had almost nothing. When quite a lad a private school was started in their neighborhood. There were then no public schools in the state. His father sent him to this school with the avowed determination of giving him a thorough education and what says Mr. Lincoln do you think my father's idea of a thorough education was, and on my saying I supposed to have him go through college, Mr. Lincoln laughed. No said he, it was to have me cipher through the rule of three. But soon after starting to school his father was called on to pay a security debt, \$60., I think, and young Abraham was taken out of school to help earn the money, and so ended his school days.

Naturally our conversation turned upon the campaign and especially upon Judge Douglass, the great democratic leader. There was an irrepressible conflict between the North and South, the Slave and Free States, but between Northern and Southern Illinois, Northern Illinois was settled mainly by emigrants from the Free States. Eli Washburn, a strong anti-slavery man, a

native of the State of Maine, was elected to Congress in that Campaign by a majority of 11843, while S. S. Marshall, a life-long democrat, a native of was elected from the Cairo district by a majority of 12549. He was an exceedingly shrewd politician who could time sails so as to offend no one. No politician perhaps were ever more adroit in this than Judge Douglass. His method of dealing with slavery in the territories evaded the issue instead of settling it. From early manhood he had lived in Illinois, had often stumped the state from Cairo to Chicago. His manners were cordial and winning. His was loyal to his old friends and never lost an opportunity to make new ones. Judge David Davis told the writer an incident illustrating the characters of Judge Trumbull and Judge Douglass in this respect. Just before the war Judge Davis went to Washington on some business connected with the General Land Office. He was then merely a state circuit Judge and to the Washington official who measures every one by official position an unknown man. He naturally went to Judge Trumbull for assistance, Trumbull gave him a little of introduction to the commissioner "only that and nothing more," but the business dragged he could not get it attended to. One morning Judge Douglass met him and on ascertaining his trouble said, "Why, Judge Davis, I will go with you to the Land Office and have your business attended to," called a hack and took Davis to the Land office. Introduced him to the Commissioner as his "old friend, Judge Davis of Illinois who had some business with the office which he wanted attended to at once. So he could return to Illinois." The Commissioner said he would look it up and if Judge Davis would call on the morrow he would report progress. But says Judge Douglass he wants to go home to-morrow and it won't take any longer to do the business to-day than it will next day or next

week and by insisting upon it prevailed upon the Commissioner to attend to it immediately. The consequence of this kindness of heart was that Douglass had in every hamlet of the state many friends and no personal enemies. So he was a very formidable opponent. But public opinion was rising high and party affiliation was fast being determined by loyalty to principle rather than loyalty to leaders.

Knoch Emery then the Editor of the Peoria Transcript, one of the brightest newspaper men of the West, had published in his paper some questions he proposed to ask Judge Douglass at a Democratic meeting then about to be held at Peoria. If answered by Douglass one way they would injure him in the Northern part of the State and if in another in the Southern. It was Scylla on one side and Caribdis on the other and he would be a wise Mysser ~~wh~~ who should escape peril. I asked Mr. Lincoln if he thought Douglass would answer the questions. Mr. Lincoln said no and as a matter of fact Mr. Douglass paid no attention to them. Lincoln then told the following anecdote, illustrating Douglass' skill or nerve in escaping from an embarrassing situation.

It was the custom said Mr. Lincoln, in the early days, during court week of political campaigns to hold a meeting at the court-house every night the Whigs and Democrats alternating in its use. In the campaign of 1840 Douglass was speaking at one of these meetings and after eulogizing Gen. Jackson as the ideal of democracy he denounced Gen. Harrison for voting while in Congress to censure Jackson for some of his acts in Florida, and now said Douglass, "Where is the man who ever voted for Old Hickory. Who will vote for his defamer William Henry Harrison." One of the audience got up and said he was the man. Thereupon Douglass commenced abusing the man for denying Harrison had voted to censure

Jackson. The man again and again attempted to correct Douglass who persisted in denouncing the man for denying denying Harrison had voted to censure Jackson.

In answer to an inquiry as to Douglass ability, Mr. Lincoln said that he was a very strong logician that he had very little humor or imagination, but where he had right on his side very few could make a stronger argument, that he was an exceedingly good judge of human nature, knew the people of the state thoroughly and just how to appeal to the prejudices and was a very powerful opponent both on and off the stump.

Once when I was speaking of Mr. Lincoln Gov. Fifer asked me if Mr. Lincoln then impressed me as a "great man." I replied I did not think of that one way or another, but rather as an exceedingly interesting man, interesting not only in the quality of his humor, but in every respect as a unique man, an original man, one you wanted to know more about. He was so unassuming, so kind, so gentle you thought nothing of the dignity that doth hedge in a King, but of a humanity that drew you instinctively to him, not only for amusement, but for instruction and inspiration.

Akin to this question is one I once asked Leonard Swett who was a very intimate friend of Mr. Lincoln and was a very frequent guest of his at the White House. "How," I asked, "did Mr. Lincoln impress the great men that he, as President, met at Washington." "When he went to Washington," replied Mr. Swett, "it was taken for granted that someone would run Mr. Lincoln and it was only a question whether it would be Mr. Seward or Mr. Chase and his friends, but Mr. Lincoln had not been in Washington long before everyone recognized that the Master was at the helm, that he was the great man of his administration and of his party and time and this impression deepened from the day of his

inauguration to the day of his death, Sept. 13th, 1862."

Another incident told by Mr. Swett: "The evening after the Chicago Protestant Clergyman visited Mr. Lincoln and urged him to issue an emancipation proclamation. I was at the White House. The office had been closed for the day and Mr. Lincoln told Swett of the visit and the conversation, the clergyman insisting on the President's issuing a proclamation emancipating the slaves and Mr. Lincoln arguing against it or rather stating the grounds urged against it by the conservative republicans. Mr. Lincoln was roundly abused by the radical anti-slavery men for his remarks on that occasion. During their conversation Mr. Lincoln drew out of a drawer the draft of an emancipation proclamation Robert Dale Owen had sent him, after reading parts of it to Mr. Swett, Mr. Lincoln said, 'I believe I could write a better emancipation proclamation than that myself.' After I went to my hotel that night" said Mr. Swett, "I began to think about the emancipation proclamation and the more I thought of it the more I was satisfied that Mr. Lincoln was even then writing the emancipation proclamation, and what he said to the minister's was not really his sentiments on the subject but he put them forth to see how the clergyman would or could answer the objections that had been or would be made to the proclamation he himself had determined to issue. So strong was this impression that the next day I called on the President and recurring to the conversation of the evening before, I said Mr. Lincoln, I wish you would let me see the emancipation proclamation you are writing, but Mr. Lincoln laughed and turned the conversation to some other subject and nothing more was said about it.

A few days after, Sept. 22nd, the proclamation was issued.

Before the reception of the 13th he had fully determined to issue such a proclamation awaiting only a favorable opportunity to do so which was given by the successful issue of the battle of Antietam.

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