

FRONTALITY

DRAWER 3A

PERSONALITY

712009 085 03492

Abraham Lincoln's Personality

Profanity

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

Lincoln's Vocabulary And His Violence ^{Boston}

To the Editor of The Herald:

Many of your readers were deeply startled and grieved to read in one of your editorials on Feb. 13 that Abraham Lincoln often used profane language and that he was accustomed to throw people out of his office by physical force when they appealed to him for favors.

If you have any evidence supporting either of these statements, you owe it to your readers to let them know what such evidence is. Such statements cannot be based upon personal recollections, in all probability, for Lincoln died 75 years ago, and it is not probable that any of the present editors of The Herald were then living.

John G. Nicolay and John Hay, his secretaries, in their elaborate reminiscences of Lincoln, make no mention of Lincoln's doing any such thing. Neither does the Rev. William E. Barton, who has written several books on Lincoln.

Nobody ever had any greater reverence for the Master of the Universe than Abraham Lincoln. In a notable address he referred to his steadfast reliance upon Divine Providence, "without which I cannot succeed and with which I cannot fail." To suppose that such a man as Lincoln would "swear" seems to me unthinkable.

As for throwing people out of his office, it seems preposterous that Lincoln should ever have descended down to the level of a bar-room fighter or loafer.

"INTERESTED IN LINCOLN,"

West Newbury.

There is no doubt about the correctness of the statements in The Herald editorial. Lincoln's faith in the Master of the Universe was not mentioned. He was deeply reverential, but we would remind our correspondent that even the profane and the violent may be good and godly.—Ed. Feb. 1991

MEN AND THINGS.



A Long Look Ahead. Carl remarked one day after speaking of Whittier's writings:
"I should think all the words would get used up by and by, so that there wouldn't be anything fresh written. There must be an end to the ways in which words can be arranged."

E. P.

Mr. Lincoln and "the Swearing Boys." A good old man in Virginia whose home was near the army of the Potomac where for so long "all was quiet," came to Washington to see Mr. Lincoln. Secretary Stanton met him at the office door and strongly protested; but the kind-hearted tired President said, "He is an old man, I will see him."

Hat in hand, the old Virginian stood before Mr. Lincoln with the dignity of a Chief Justice:

"Mr. President, your boys over there" (pointing to the Potomac), "do swear most terrible! I don't mind the stealin', nor the cuttin' things to pieces, if they wouldn't hang round the place and call on God Almighty so flippant!"

"Well," said Mr. Lincoln, "can't you talk to them yourself, or speak to Colonel B—— about them? Let me — see" — he shook the old man's hand and added, "I'm going over there to-morrow; we'll see what can be done."

Next day the Secretary with Mr. Lincoln and Tad drove through the camp across the river. They met Chaplain Grey, who was stationed near Fairfax, and whose duties lay in Colonel B——'s regiment.

"Well, Mr. Grey, what success did you have with the Colonel after my suggestions to you a month ago? More complaints have reached me of the younger boys and their outrageous profanity," said the President.

"What can a man do, Mr. Lincoln," replied the Chaplain, "when Colonels, Generals and Brigadier-Generals swear worse than the boys? I called on Colonel B—— approaching, as I felt, the subject wisely. I said to him, 'You have a fine regiment, Colonel, one of the finest in the whole army, we hear.' 'Yes, chaplain,' he replied, 'a — fine regiment. Excuse me, Chaplain, pray be seated.' I went on without noticing the extra words: 'Colonel, do you pay close attention to the religious condition and instruction of your men?' 'Well, yes, I think so, but they are a — wild lot — — —, and greatly given to profanity!' 'It seems terrible, Colonel,' I went on, 'to see young boys so given to oaths! Just across the river from you there has been a series of meetings held in Colonel Davis's regiment and twenty young soldiers have been baptized. The greatest interest prevails in the entire section!' 'Twenty, did you say?' asked Colonel B——, 'I had no idea such a thing was going on! — — —! Sergeant Major! have twenty-five men detailed immediately for baptism! I'll — — —"

excuse me, Mr. Grey!' Now, Mr. Lincoln, there is little hope for our boys!"

The President leaned against the old tree near the tents, and with his eyes fixed on the blue coats of the soldier boys in the camp, he said tenderly and soberly: "The boys — yes, our boys! Chaplain, I have one far removed from temptation — in Paradise. My other two, I would rather see them die to-day than to have them grow up profane men."

M. S.

*

The type of modern historical fiction, ^{which is} saturated with propaganda, and written with a moral abandon that leaves nothing secret, institutes a real menace for the historian who is trying to reconstruct the Lincoln story on an objective basis. It was hoped that ~~these~~ commercially minded writers, ^{of mass novels} would not be bold enough to enter the Lincoln field which for many Americans has become hallowed ground of an immortal man. Yet, when our pilgrim fathers are held up to ^{the} admiration as pious and sacrificial behavior, ^{by reputable historians} it is not to be expected that Lincoln would be spotted ~~with~~ ignominious abuse at the hands of novelists and script writers.

Tolstoy referred to Lincoln as "a
Christ in miniature." ~~and after~~ After reading
the tributes appearing in last weeks ~~papers~~
bulletin, one becomes desirous to find the
^{now} receipt of these testimonials placed in a
social background which would produce
anything but the noble character which ~~emerged~~
^{emerged} ~~out~~ of his pioneer environment. The attempt
to make the ~~level~~ ^{level} of our ^{present} social strata
retroactive so as to coincide with the habits
of our forefathers is a vicious thrust at the
very foundations of the republic.

A new menace in the form of modern literature
saturated with paragraphs.

just at the time ^{when} some progress ~~seems~~ ^{and understandable}
to have been made in creating a genuine ^{and understandable} historical
environment for Abraham Lincoln as an
impressionable youth, ~~which may be a contribution~~
~~to his advancement~~ ~~of~~ ~~fiction points a forward~~ ~~and which~~
~~gives~~ there appear books of so called realistic
fiction which, ^{with} public approval, accord a wide
acceptance, thereby ^{disorienting} the
more commonplace ^{but} objective episodes of
Lincoln's home ^{life} and community experiences.

About one phase of Abraham Lincoln's
character there has never been any
question, he never used profanity.

~~And to surround him in honor and~~

~~The~~ So attempt to write a story of Lincoln
although it be recognized as fiction.

Profanity.

Swol used as pun "by jings!"

"your gutters rebuke me for swearing before
you." "By jings is swearing, for my good old
mother thought me that anything that had a
"by" before it was swearing," (Samm jinstro)

Boles Jc p 202



