

SIMPLICITY

DRAWER

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Abraham Lincoln's Personality

Simplicity

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

LINCOLN'S SIMPLICITY OF CHARACTER.

The time has come when every scrap of information that tends in any way to illustrate the character and purpose of Abraham Lincoln in the most trying period of his life, should be known to the people that they may understand the history of that period itself. Gen. John M. Palmer, one of the soldiers of that war, and a leader among men for more than half a century, was one of the closest friends of the dead president. It was a peculiarity of Lincoln's character that the principles upon which he acted in that great emergency were more correctly disclosed by some of the simplest circumstances of his life, rather than by many of the great events in which he participated or shaped. Gen. Palmer relates an interview with President Lincoln which beautifully illustrates that. There is no reason in the world to doubt the veracity of Gen. Palmer, who is now the junior senator from Illinois. He says:

"The first time I met Mr. Lincoln was in 1839, when I went to Springfield to be admitted to the bar. He was already recognized as a whig leader. He wore, I remember, a suit of linsey woolsey, that could not have been worth more than \$8, even in those days. The last time I saw him was in February of 1865. I had come to Washington at the request of the governor, to complain that Illinois had been credited with 18,000 too few troops. I saw Mr. Lincoln one afternoon, and he asked me to come again in the morning.

"Next morning I sat in the ante-room while several officers were received. At length I was told to enter the president's room. Mr. Lincoln was in the hands of the barber.

"'Come in, Palmer,' he called out, 'come in. You're home folks. I can shave before you. I couldn't before those others, and I have to do it some time.'

"We chatted about various matters, and at length I said:

"'Well, Mr. Lincoln, if anybody had told me that in a great crisis like this the people were going out to a little one-horse town and pick out a one-horse lawyer for president, I wouldn't have believed it.'

"Mr. Lincoln whirled about in his chair, his face white with lather, a towel under his chin. At first I thought he was angry. Sweeping the barber away, he leaned forward, and, placing one hand on my knee, said:

"'Neither would I. But it was a time when a man with a policy would have been fatal to the country. I have never had a policy. I have simply tried to do what seemed best each day as each day came.'

Si Pa. Dispatch 2-15-1896

LINCOLN WAS NEAR THE PEOPLE

There never has been a President in such constant and active contact with the public opinion of the country, as there never has been a President who, while at the head of the Government, remained so near to the people. Beyond the circle of those who had long known him, the feeling steadily grew that the man in the White House was "honest Abe Lincoln" still, and that every citizen might approach him with complaint, expostulation or advice without danger of meeting a rebuff from powerful authority or humiliating condescension, and this privilege was used by so many and with such unsparing freedom that only superhuman patience could have endured it all. There are men now living who would read today with amazement, if not regret, what they then ventured to say or write to him. But Lincoln repelled no one whom he believed to speak to him in good faith and with patriotic purpose. No good advice would go unheeded. No candid criticism would offend him. No honest opposition, while it might pain him, would produce a lasting alienation of feeling between him and the opponent. It may truly be said that few men in power have ever been exposed to more daring attempts to direct their course, to severer censure of their acts and to more cruel misrepresentation of their motives. And all this he met with that good-natured humor peculiarly his own, and with untiring effort to see the right and to impress it upon those who differed from him. The conversations he had and the correspondence he carried on upon matters of public interest, not only with men of official position, but with private citizens, were almost unceasing, and in a large number of public letters, written ostensibly to meetings, or committees, or persons of importance, he addressed himself directly to the popular mind. Most of these letters stand among the finest monuments of our political literature. Thus he presented the singular spectacle of a President who in the midst of a great civil war, with unprecedented duties weighing upon him, was constantly in person debating the great features of his policy with the people.

While in this manner he exercised an ever-increasing influence upon the popular understanding, his sympathetic nature endeared him more and more to the popular heart. In vain did journals and speakers of the opposition represent him as a light-minded trifler, who amused himself with frivolous story-telling and coarse jokes while the blood of the people was flowing in streams. The people knew that the man at the head of affairs, on whose haggard face the twinkle of humor so frequently changed into an expression of profoundest sadness, was more than any other deeply distressed by the suffering that he witnessed; that he felt the pain of every wound that was inflicted on the battlefield, and the anguish of every woman or child who had lost husband or father; that whenever he could he was eager to alleviate sorrow, and that his mercy was never implored in vain. They looked to him as one who was with them and of them in all their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows, who laughed with them and wept with them, and as his heart was theirs, so their hearts turned to him. His popularity was far different from that of Washington, who was revered with awe, or that of Jackson, the unconquerable hero, for whom party enthusiasm never grew weary of shouting. To Abraham Lincoln the people became bound by a genuine sentimental attachment. It was not a matter of respect, or confidence, or party pride, for this feeling spread far beyond the boundary lines of his party; it was an affair of the heart, independent of mere reasoning. When the soldiers in the field or their folks at home spoke of "Father Abraham," there was no cant in it. They felt that their President was really caring for them as a father would, and that they could go to him, every one of them, as they would go to a father, and talk to him of what troubled them, sure to find a willing ear and tender sympathy. Thus their President, and his cause and his endeavors, and his success, became to them almost matters of family concern. And this popularity carried him triumphantly through the presidential election of 1864, in spite of an opposition within his own party which at first seemed very formidable. [From an essay by Hon. Carl Schurz. *Salm-Hausen* p. 18-99.]

WHAT MADE LINCOLN GREAT

SIMPLICITY OF NATURE AND FIRMNESS OF CHARACTER.

What made Lincoln great? He was ever actuated by a desire to do just right, leaving the consequences to God. He had, in a very remarkable degree, that "hard common sense" by means of which he could detect the most subtle sophistry and penetrate the deepest disguise. He was called upon to meet the greatest issues ever presented to the American people, but he grappled with national questions of the gravest concern. It required the exercise of more wisdom and the test of greater courage than ever before in the history of our nation.

His youth, spent in the solitude of the forest, had much to do with making Abraham Lincoln great. It was a rude school, but it was there that his sturdy, bold and independent character was formed, and it was there that he acquired his wonderful insight into the great heart of the common people which made him their chosen leader. He was placed in that rude hut only to be called in future years to guide the American people through a dark and bloody war.

Abraham Lincoln was great because he was good. From his boyhood he had endeavored to be faithful to every duty of the hour. He tried to discover what was really right and to hold fast to it. He was eager for truth in every instance, and what, in justice, should be done concerning every matter. In every doubtful instance he became the advocate of that cause which his conscience and his principles told him should prevail.

He was humble in spirit; willing to profit by the advice of others; ready to atone for a fault or error if he had committed one, and, above all, he was plous enough and brave enough to acknowledge his dependence on the mer-

ciful and mighty God, whose goodness many men are only too apt to forget when they become prosperous and powerful.

The chief attribute of Lincoln's greatness was, perhaps, the readiness with which he could see and grasp the right, coupled with his heroic sturdiness to go forward in the pathway of duty. When once fixed in his mind what that duty was, no power on earth could make him deviate one jot or tittle from his line of policy; yet he was too honest to have an atom of self-esteem or to think that he was infallible. Upon any question he was ever open to conviction by argument, and, if the views presented by others were obviously better than his own, he was quick to acknowledge the fact and equally quick to commend. Abraham Lincoln did not believe in the frequent assertion that "might makes right." He was firm as a rock, and possessed of unequalled moral courage, which enabled him to perform conscientiously every duty devolving upon him, although many times his great heart was troubled; yet his life was greatly sweetened with that gentle, tender, yearning sympathy for others which was characteristic of the man and which guided all his movements through life.

SIMPLE AND TENDER.

Possessing the simplicity of a child and the tenderness of a woman, he combined in his nature all the sterner qualities of the perfect man. He was a close observer of men, measures and events, and to a discriminating mind, which led to a correct judgment, was added a consciousness of the right, and a moral courage to perform it, which enabled him to execute his honest convictions. Some men at his very side chided him for slowness, but this apparently did not quicken his action, while others, equally near him in influence, rebuked him for haste, but this availed nothing toward checking his onward progress.

Veronique (Is) ...
2/7/01

Elements of Greatness

Boston Transcript 2-13-09

The Occasion Calls the Man—The Person and the Circumstance Never Meet but Once—Each Great Man in a Class by Himself—No Duplicates

[Rev. Clarence Lathbury, in *Christian Register*]

Greatness, like goodness, is unmindful of its quality, and occurs, when at all, fortuitously. To attempt greatness, to follow a vocation for the purpose of attaining it, to cast about continually for some means of achieving greatness or attracting admiration, is the surest way of ending in total oblivion. One of the vital tests of greatness is humility. Not feebleness of conviction or hesitation to act, but a proper comprehension of the relation between what a man can do and say and the rest of the world's doings and sayings, Lincoln did not mistrust his power, he felt its quickening breath, and yet he realized limitation. When the nation called him, he said in all sincerity, "I am not fit to be President." Great men sense their destiny, they hear still voices calling them, and they feel that they cannot do or be anything else than what God has made them. They know that their power is not in them, but through them, and there is a total absence of affectation or conscious supremacy. The slightest jealousy or self-complacency is enough to defeat real greatness. The gem lacks purity and unity.

Simplicity is the handmaid of greatness, and men are great like nature, like the stars that shine impartially with a singleness that embraces mankind and touches dearly all hearts.

The great are near, we know them by intuition. They are of the people, home-

ly and human, like the ocean and the mountains, satisfying expectation, are felt to be a portion of the elemental world. They reveal greatness because they are ever themselves. Great men know their business and know that they know it, only they do not think much of themselves on that account. Certain persons seem rich in possibilities, crowded with gifts that we look to flower into illustrious deeds; but they turn out helpless to their times, do not speak or act to the human want, appear to reserve their endowments by a fault of indirection or unreadiness. Great men cut Gordian knots, solve difficulties with almost child-like simplicity, gaze immediately into the face of truth and claim her as their own. They frequently transcend reason and affront logic. Yet, though simple, humble, and reverent, they are equipped with mighty ardors. A man is great in proportion to the strength of his passions and his power to hold them in restraint, to train them on the critical position. Where passion is not, there cannot be strength; without it none ever rise to greatness; world-leaders catch flame.

Greatness is incommunicable, though in a sense it is contagious. For the moment it lifts others to its level. They do not, however, stand of themselves, and, the event over, sink back, leaving the great man again alone. Greatness takes his mantle with him, his particular work is done by him forever in the best way. This person and circumstance will never again meet. Everlasting difference is set between one man's capacity and another's. God-given ascendancy is a priceless thing, always just as rare in the world at one time as at another. What we can manufacture or confer we can govern, set its price, give or withhold; but human supremacy is incommunicable and goes whither it will. Great men are therefore lonely, like high mountains that belt the continent, widely sep-

arated, virgin, majestic, their white peaks resting in the blue holiness of the sky. All first-rate men are isolated, like one who said, "I am alone, and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." They stand with God; and yet, paradoxical as it may seem, they are at the same time more closely related than others to common men. They are alone in height, like giant trees overtopping others, with roots in the same soil, bathed by the same morning and evening dews.

Lincoln rises steadily above all his contemporaries, and above most of the great men of history, his star still ascendant. Surrounded by those who in his day were called great, and were so according to common standards, he is seen now far toward the zenith, while they yet hover on the horizon. A great man is one who lives naturally and easily in a sphere which other men reach with difficulty; he seems to play where others struggle; appears not to try—like the singer who touches lofty notes with the impression of abundant reserve. And, when he goes we look in vain for another to take his place. No one ever comes; his class is extinguished with him. The hour has come, has met its man, and the record is written. In some other way and in a quite different field will the next great man appear. The lyre of greatness is never touched by the same fingers in the same way. Lincoln was and is Lincoln; he cannot be repeated; he was the noblest type of the American character, a composite in a land where all races of the world are fused in one manhood.

It has been asked whether Lincoln was intellectually great, whether his power lay in his head or heart? It is enough to say that he was a man. In some men reason stands out clearly and seems to predominate, in others the emotions are first. In Lincoln there was a remarkable blending of powers. In the greatest natures the line between the mental and emotional is vague, each penetrating the other, like morning twilight, the mingling of light and darkness, breaking at last into the full-orbed day. There is no place where we can say that one faculty ends and another begins; each contributes to the whole in such a way that each is lost in the whole, not as in the rainbow where the hues are distinguishable, but as in the sun where all colors are engulfed in a single unit of splendor. Emerson says, "He is greatest who is what he is from nature, and who never reminds us of others." And it might be added, "He is greatest who is least describable." Like Jesus, Lincoln becomes more mystical and beautiful as the years pass.

LINCOLN'S "PROGRESS IN
SPELLING" 2-11 21

POOR spellers may find comfort in the following anecdote that Mr. R. B. Stanton tells in the reminiscences of Lincoln that he gives in Scribner's Magazine. The experience was not Mr. Stanton's but his father's.

On one occasion, said the senior Mr. Stanton, the President gave me what he was pleased to call an account of his "progress in spelling." The incident reveals Mr. Lincoln's remarkable simplicity and open-heartedness. It shows, moreover, the ease and friendliness with which he could talk to a private citizen.

Having some business at the War Department and knowing that my success depended on the President's favor, I called to ask the President for his aid. At the interview no other visitor was present. After stating my case, I asked him if he would speak to the Secretary in my behalf.

"Certainly I will," said he. Pausing a moment, he added, "Or what is better, I will write him a note. Sit down, and I will write it now."

He went to his desk and began writing, but in a few moments turned to me and, looking up over his spectacles, said:

"Ob-sta-cle: is that the way you spell obstacle?"

I was so disconcerted at the sudden, unexpected question that for the moment I was silent. Noticing my confusion, he laid down his pen and turned his revolving chair so as to face me.

When I had recovered myself I said, "I believe that is right, Mr. President."

He then said, "When I write an official letter, I want to be sure it is correct, and I find I am sometimes puzzled to know how to spell the most common word."

When I remarked that that was not an unusual experience with many persons he said, "I found about twenty years ago that I had been spelling one word wrong all my life up to that time."

"What word is that, Mr. President?" I inquired.

"It is very," he said. "I used always to spell it with two r's—v-e-r-r-y. And then there was another word that I found I had been spelling wrong until I came here to the White House. It is opportunity. I had always spelled it op-per-tunity."

In relating those instances of his "progress in spelling," as he called it, the President laughed heartily and added some words on the importance of giving attention to orthography. Then he finished his letter to the Secretary of War and handed it to me, with a warm expression of hope that my mission might be successful. It was

TALKED IN SHORT WORDS

LINCOLN'S ORATORY EXPLAINED BY
MR. BEARDSLEY.

Address by Member of Sons of Veterans Was Feature of Memorial Service Last Night by Maj. William Warner Camp.

Yonkers City, June 2-8-22

A Lincoln memorial program was held last night in connection with a meeting of the Major William Warner camp No. 36, Sons of Veterans, at 912 Grand avenue. In addition to other testimonials to the greatness of the martyred President, Henry M. Beardsley, who is a member of the camp, spoke on Abraham Lincoln's life.

To hear Mr. Beardsley talk on the subject, one could almost imagine that he had been interested enough to have studied Lincoln's life from every possible angle. He related little incidents in the life of the man, which, he said, he had heard while a boy living in Illinois near Lincoln's former home. The inspirations he had gained from his life and what were to him the high lights of that existence, Mr. Beardsley also dwelt upon.

"NO BOOKS CRITICIZING LINCOLN."

"So much has been said," Mr. Beardsley began, "concerning the life of Lincoln and so much has been written that it is hard to know what to add. But one of the things that has impressed me most about him is that, while books have been written criticizing other great men of America, Lincoln has been left unscathed.

"Born in a wilderness, Lincoln set an example for the world by the manner in which he gleaned his education in his few spare moments. His books were few and yet they were a wonderful library. Included in them were the St. James edition of the Bible, in itself a master of English, a dictionary and a copy of 'Pilgrims' Progress.'

"That he must have spent many hours reading seems to be evidenced from the wonderfully simple, yet adequate, English which he later used in his speeches. It has been said that he was not eloquent, but such was not the case. In the very simplicity of his language lay his eloquence."

FORCE OF ORATORY WAS SHORT WORDS.

The other members of the camp were then introduced to a fact by Mr. Beardsley, who used it to illustrate the simplicity yet forcefulness of Lincoln's manner of speech, of which many of them seemed previously unaware.

"His address at Gettysburg is known throughout the world as one of the most wonderfully constructed speeches ever known," Mr. Beardsley said. "But did you ever know that, of the 266 words in the address nearly two hundred of them are words of one syllable?"

"Indeed," concluded Mr. Beardsley, "it requires only a little work to convince ourselves that he was not only the saviour of our country, but of the entire world, for, had not the North and the South remained united, what would have happened to the world powers in the World War?"

*Astonished at Lincoln's
Friendly Manner*

TARBELL
1923

MR. MEYER was overwhelmed with the honor and rather troubled about the etiquette of the occasion. Mr. Schurz assured him that there would be no etiquette at all. He was much more astonished when Mr. Lincoln shook him by the hand as if he were an old acquaintance; and "Mary" being absent, chatted as informally with him as if he had known him all his life, asking many questions, telling him many stories.

"As we left the White House," writes Mr. Schurz in his reminiscences, "my companion could hardly find words to express his puzzled admiration for the man who, having risen from the bottom of the social ladder to one of the most exalted stations in the world, had remained so perfectly natural, so absolutely unconscious of how he appeared to others—a man to whom it did not occur for a single minute that a person in his position might put on a certain dignity to be always maintained, and who bore himself with such genial sincerity and kindness that the dignity was not missed, and that one would have regretted to see him different."

It is this life in the White House that brings out most perfectly Lincoln's universality of human sympathy. The daily round, with its interminable procession of mankind, suffering, intriguing, just, wicked, foolish, wise, shows most perfectly the response he made to all men. Indeed, Lincoln seems, in the White House, to have come as near to him whom Whitman had in mind when he wrote "The Song of the Answer" as any human being in the American gallery:

"He has the pass-key of hearts, to him the response of the prying of hands on the knobs,

His welcome is universal, the flow of beauty is not more welcome or universal than he is."

In the next chapter we shall take up Mr. Lincoln and the common soldier.

A study of Mr. Lincoln's public life in the White House throws into high relief certain of his greatest qualities; his simplicity, his helpfulness, his unconsciousness of himself and his surroundings. He seems never to have been so burdened there that he was unconscious of others and their needs. His intimates noticed that he was the one who, whatever the cares of the moment, always returned the salutes of the guards in and about the place.

TARBELL 1923

It was he who if there was some disturbance—a woman's sob, the cries of a child—in the motley-mass of humanity that crowded the halls of the place, seeking an audience of him, who would come out to inquire and who insisted again and again on doing something.

Lincoln's unconsciousness of position and surroundings, of everything except the great business in hand, was often irritating to people, conscious above everything else of the proprieties. Charles Francis Adams was disturbed by Lincoln's wool socks and pungent humor. Others had suffered the same annoyance.

Men trained in formalism could not understand his indifference to exterior, nor could they understand his modesty. To assume, to dominate, whether you know the thing or not, is part of the business of the man in position, as many hold—not Lincoln. He was quite unwilling to pass for anything he was not. Certain gentlemen calling on him one day and greatly impressed with the earnestness with which he talked, repeated to one another a Latin quotation, "which I suppose you are both aware," Mr. Lincoln said, nodding at them smilingly, "I do not understand."

All this simplicity, this unconsciousness, this friendliness, carried with it a curious sense of power. A man must be very great indeed inside, wise men reflected, to be so careless of exterior. The lack of any ceremony at the White House, so irritating to some, had a value to others which the formal did not understand. Carl Schurz tells a story in point. He had a German brother-in-law with him in Washington, Henry Meyer, eager to pay his respects to the President, and he asked Mr. Lincoln if he could bring him. "Certainly," Mr. Lincoln replied, "bring him tomorrow about lunch-time and lunch with me. I guess Mary will have something for us to eat."

Pasqua Urges Imitation Of Simplicity of Lincoln

"The best way for us to honor the memory of Abraham Lincoln is by seeking to imitate him in simplicity without bigotry and without ostentation," Thomas F. Pasqua, attorney, told 300 members of the Lincoln Republican club at the Onondaga last night. The meeting was held to observe the 25th anniversary of the club.

"There is great power in simplicity. Individuals should, like Lincoln, have moral courage to be what they are and not pretend to be what they are not," Pasqua added.

"Among traits we should attempt to imitate are those of patience and courage, which Lincoln possessed to the highest degree," the speaker declared.

Prior to Pasqua's talk, Berard W.

Sarno, historian, outlined the history and development of the club and paid tribute to departed members.

"We can only say," he said, "that the men who now hold or have held elective and appointive offices and in every city and county department have been and are a credit to themselves, the Republican organization, the Lincoln Republican club and the community in general."

Among honored guests were several of the original founders of the club. Also present were Mayor Frank J. Costello, Charles A. McNett, Republican county chairman, and Mrs. Gertrude S. Brooks, GOP vice-chairman. The Rev. Angelo Strazzoni gave the invocation and Angelo Petrone acted as toastmaster.

Syracuse, N.Y.

THE POST-STANDARD 27
Sunday, February 13, 1949

Lincoln Hailed as Thinker

*Ad Men, City Club
Hear Speakers*

Abraham Lincoln was pictured in two separate talks here as a man who thought for himself and was not content with easy and traditional answers to things.

"If he were facing today's problems I believe he would be guided by his maxim, 'Our case is new so we must think anew and act anew,'" said Ralph G. Newman, bookseller and Lincoln authority.

He talked Monday to Advertising Men's Post No. 38, American Legion, Henrici's restaurant.

* * *
LINCOLN tried lawsuits without "glitter" but with care and ingenuity, and his writing and speaking were clear but also "unusual," said Willard King, lawyer and biographer, at the City Club forum luncheon Monday in the YMCA's Farwell Hall.

If Lincoln were President in the age of sputnik, Newman suggested, he probably would do as he did as Civil War president.

* * *
"WHEN he encountered opposition of tradition-bound military officers he never hesitated to cut through the red tape," said Newman.

"He became his own chief of research and development of weapons. He would go out and test weapons himself or watch the tests."

"I think he would encourage face-to-face negotiations with the Russians."

KING SAID that as a lawyer Lincoln "never shot from the hip" but was "thorough and exhaustive in his investigations of the facts and the law."

"He had a passion for clarity combined with an accurate sense of the rhythm of language.

"His ordinary routine letters are clearly but unusually phrased."

King quoted an Urbana Newspaper of Lincoln's time as saying his addresses to the jury had no "glitter" but showed "an ingenuity really astonishing."

Lincoln's Informality.

President Lincoln's occasional unconventionality of manner sometimes astonished, and perhaps shocked a little, those who were accustomed to formal methods of procedure in all official things. It is on record that Charles Sumner, who had very little sense of humor, was really grieved when, during the darkest days of the war, Lincoln suddenly asked him to try his favorite game of "putting up backs." The recent volume of memoirs of Francis W. Bird of Massachusetts borrows a narration of the Hon. Peleg W. Chandler's relating Mr. Bird's experience in presenting to Mr. Lincoln some resolutions of the Massachusetts Legislature on the subject of emancipation.

Arrived in Washington, says the story, the messenger, by appointment, met the President at 11 o'clock the next morning to present his resolve of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The chief magistrate sat in an armchair while the emissary presented the document with a little speech. The President took the document, slowly unrolled it, and remarked:

"Well, it isn't long enough to scare a fellow!"

The Massachusetts official said, as he left the room:

"That is certainly a most extraordinary person to be President of the United States!"

Whatever unfavorable impression Mr. Bird gained of Mr. Lincoln on this occasion was modified afterward, and he was an ardent supporter and admirer of him. His biographer remarks that the appreciation of Lincoln as a far-seeing statesman was a matter of slow growth. Nearly all the public men of the early days of the war agreed in a lower estimate of him than they soon came to hold. It has been said that probably not one fairly estimated him at the beginning of the war.

Abraham Lincoln, 'Our Way of Life'

By Elsie Robinson

He was so simple—that tall man we once called President. He was not simple through fastidious training or deliberate choice. Simplicity was in his very warp and woof—as deeply bedded in him as his bones.

He did not fight for his democracy. It came as naturally as his breathing.

He was no fool. He could as quickly scent a rogue or quash a pompous ass as any man. No man had better knowledge of the seamy side of life, the poor makeshifts of poverty, the grinding rasp of drudgery, the nasty ulcers which frustration often breeds in human hearts.

Had One Rule

He knew these things. And yet he had not let them penetrate his soul. His lot was cast amidst life's roughest fields. But he was like some solitary tree that rises straight and tall above all rocks and trash, unmarred by all the pettiness around.

He was in every way a true American. That to him meant more than some mere fancy phrase. It meant a way of life from which he never faltered, never tried to change. Americanism meant just one straight clean rule to Lincoln: to be honest, to be kind, generous, cheerful and faithful, and to love others regardless of their place or creed or circumstances.

These principles he held without doubt or debate. They were the basis of his life, the framework of the man.

He loved all lusty joys. He liked a joke, to spin tall yarns and grin at sham. But there's no record that he ever thought or did one mean or unfair thing. He saw, as tall trees always see, another land whose clean, wide frontier stretched beyond all petty fears.

And for him there was just one constant wish—that all might share that land.

The Nation's Symbol

I think that women bothered him a bit. He could not understand their need for little schemes, their restless, fretful minds. But every pup and youngster in the land adored him and followed at his awkward, striding heels.

He was, in all his essence, and his dealings with the human herd, the symbol which our nation saw from its first day—the thing for which we fought and lived and died. He was the beating heart of all that is truly American.

He was our way of life. And we betray him by our petty brawls, our lust for luxury, our snobbishness, our constant concentration on all trivial things.

He knew such fussing did not matter. He had no wish for trivialities or pomp or show. He'd found in his own self the only thing that makes a man the master of his life—he'd found simplicity.

