

A RECEPTION BY PRESIDENT LINCOLN.

In an old memorandum book, written during the war, I have some notes of an interview between President Lincoln and several visitors which occurred in the winter of 1862-63, when I had several opportunities, in company with a former college-mate, Dr. P. D. Gurley, then Mr. Lincoln's pastor, of meeting the President. About twice a week, after the official and other privileged visitors had taken their departure, the doors of the President's reception room would be thrown open to whomsoever might be waiting without. Happening to be there on one of these occasions, I entered with about a score of these expectants; and curious to observe the character and process of this informal audience given to the people, I stationed myself in a corner near the President, where I could see and hear all that was going on. The notes referred to were jotted down soon after the interview.

President Lincoln's appearance is too well known to need particular description. The tall, thin, wiry form, which no burdens seemed able to bend, and no amount of labor to deprive of elasticity; the calm, rugged, honest face, grave and deeply melancholy when in repose, yet wont to be lighted up under the influence of some humorous sally — these are familiar to the world. He was clad plainly, but becomingly, in a black broad-cloth suit, nothing in all his dress betokening disregard of conventionality, save, perhaps, his neat cloth slippers, which were doubtless worn for comfort. He was seated beside a plain, cloth-covered table, in a commodious arm-chair.

The first to get the President's eye and ear was a dapper, smooth-faced, boyish-looking little person, intent apparently on obtaining a clerkship in one of the departments. Encouraged by a friendly nod and smile and a "Well, what can I do for you?" which seemed to show that he was not quite unknown, nor seen there for the first time, the youth approached the President, and spoke *sotto voce*, as if afraid that some one else would hear a syllable he had to say.

"Well," said Mr. Lincoln, "I will consider the matter and see what can be done," with a manner that implied that nothing further need be said and that this closed the interview. The applicant, however, did not seem to understand it so, but continued to press the matter in earnest half whispers until inter-

rupted by the President with an emphatic "Yes, yes, I know all about it, and will give it proper attention." This ended the colloquy. The young man vanished, and was succeeded by an older man in military dress, wearing lieutenant's shoulder-straps, who desired to be appointed colonel of a colored regiment. The experiment of employing colored troops had not yet been fully tested, was, in fact, hardly begun, and its success may have been doubted, at this time, by Mr. Lincoln, as by many others. In answer to the request he said, "The whole thing amounts only to a colonelcy for the applicant, as, should a regiment be raised, in six months there would be a colonel without a negro left in the command."

"But my purpose is not that," said the lieutenant, "it is to serve the 'cause, not myself."

"That may be your purpose," said the President, "but the certain *effect* none the less will be what I have described." And as further argument seemed unnecessary the would-be colonel took his leave, with a countenance indicating anything but satisfaction at the result of his patriotic overture.

He was followed by a sturdy, honest-looking German soldier, minus a leg, who hobbled up to the President on crutches. In consideration of his disabled condition, he wanted some situation about Washington, the duties of which he might be able to discharge, and he had come to the President, hoping that he would provide the desired situation for him. On being interrogated as to how he had lost his leg, he answered that it was the effect of a wound received in battle, mentioning the time and the place.

"Let me look at your papers," said Mr. Lincoln.

The man replied that he had none, and that he supposed his word would be sufficient.

"What!" exclaimed the President, "no papers, no credentials, nothing to show how you lost your leg! How am I to know that you lost it in battle, or did not lose it by a trap after getting into somebody's orchard?" This was spoken with a droll expression which amused the bystanders, all except the applicant, who, with a very solemn visage, earnestly protested the truth of his statement, muttering something about the reasons for not being able to produce his papers. "Well, well," said the President, "it is dangerous

for an army man to be wandering around without papers to show where he belongs and what he is, but I will see what can be done for you." And taking a blank card from a little pile of similar blanks on the table, he wrote some lines upon it, addressed it, and handing it to the man bade him deliver it to a certain Quartermaster, who would attend to his case.

Then a striking scene occurred. A person apparently of sixty years of age, with dress and manner which showed that he was acquainted with the usages of good society, whose whole exterior, indeed, would have impressed people who form opinions from appearances, approached the president, asking his aid in some commission project, for the success of which Mr. Lincoln's favor was regarded as essential. The President heard him patiently, but demurred against being connected with or countenancing the affair, suggesting mildly that the applicant would better set up an office of the kind described, and run it in his own way and at his own risk. The man plead his advanced years and obscurity as a reason for not attempting this, but said that if the President would only let him use his name to advertise and recommend the enterprise, he would then, he thought, need nothing more. At this the eyes of the President flashed with sudden indignation, and his whole aspect and manner underwent a portentous change. "No!" he broke forth, with startling vehemence, springing from his seat under the impulse of his emotion. "No! I'll have nothing to do with this business, nor with any man who comes to me with such degrading propositions. What! Do you take the President of the United States to be a commission broker? You have come to the wrong place, and for you and every one who comes for such purposes, there is the door!" The man's face blanched as he cowered and slunk away confounded, without uttering a word. The President's wrath subsided as speedily as it had risen.

A white-haired, gentlemanly-looking person, in company with his daughter, who seemed quite young and was certainly very pretty and prepossessing, though she had a shy, bashful, and even frightened look, met with a most courteous and friendly reception. The gentleman said he had no business to transact and would not trespass on the President's time, that he had come simply to see and salute him, and to present his daughter, who had longed to have this honor before returning to their distant home. Mr. Lincoln greeted them very cordially, rising and shaking hands with them, and with the frank, bland, and familiar manner which made strangers feel

unconstrained and at ease in his presence, he chatted pleasantly, even playfully, with them for some minutes, to the evident delight of both visitors. When they were about to go away, he politely escorted them to a door opening into the hall, and different from that through which the visitors entered, and dismissed them with charming courtesy.

Going back to his chair, he found a gentleman from the "land o' cakes and brither Scots," with letter of introduction in hand, awaiting an audience. Being pleasantly received, the visitor, after some preliminaries, proceeded to say that he had but recently come from Scotland, and had called to present, in the name of numbers of his Scotch friends (mentioning Dr. Guthrie in particular), congratulations and greetings on the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation. He said that the great act met with warmest sympathy among his countrymen, and all trusted and prayed that the President would stand firm in maintaining the principles it promulgated. "Well," replied the President, "I am inclined to remain firm, but do not say I will, certainly, though all others should fail, as Peter once said and repeated with so much confidence, and only saw his folly and weakness as the cock crew—yet, God helping me, I trust to prove true to a principle which I feel to be right, of which the public sentiment approves, and which the country is prepared to support and maintain. Tell this to your friends at home with my acknowledgments for their sympathy and good wishes."

When this visitor had withdrawn, an immense specimen of a man presented himself. Broad-shouldered, robust, with thews and sinews to match his great height, and withal an honest, good-natured countenance—all seemed to mark him as belonging to the hardy yeomanry of the West. He sidled up awkwardly to the President, seeming almost afraid to accost him, but after some hesitation contrived to say, that being on a visit to Washington, he simply wanted before leaving to see the President, and have the honor of shaking hands with him. He found a kindly reception, and after some introductory civilities, Mr. Lincoln ran his eye curiously over his huge caller, surveying him from head to foot, and then saying with a humorous look and accent it would be hard to describe, "I rather think you have a little the advantage of me in height; you are a taller man than I am."

"I guess not, Mr. President," replied the visitor, with the self-abnegating air of one who seemed to regard any claim on his part, of possessing an *advantage* over the Chief Magistrate, as an offense little short of treason—"the advantage cannot be on my side."

"Yes, it is," was the rejoinder, "I have a pretty good eye for distances, and I think I can't be mistaken in the fact of the advantage being slightly with you. I measure six feet three and a half inches in my stockings, and you go, I think, a little beyond that."

The man still demurred, insisting very respectfully that the precedence in the matter lay on the President's side.

"It is very easily tested," said the President, and rising briskly from his chair and taking a book from the table, he placed it edgewise against the wall, just higher than his head. Then, turning to his doubting competitor for the nonce, he bade him "Come under." This the man did not do at once, pausing, with flushed face and irresolute look, as if not certain how far he might venture to trust the lion in his playful mood,—his countenance the while wearing a bewildered, half-frightened, and yet half-smiling expression that was really comical to see.

"Come under, I say," repeated the President, in a more peremptory tone, and then the visitor slowly complied. "Now straighten yourself up, and move your head in this way,"—suiting the action to the word. This being done, Mr. Lincoln added, "Now you hold the book, and be sure not to let it slip down a hair-breadth, and I will try." Planting himself accordingly underneath the book, and moving his head from right to left, it was found that he fell a trifle short of the other's measurement. "There," said he, "it is as I told you. I knew I couldn't be mistaken. I

rarely fail in taking a man's true altitude by the eye."

"Yes, but Mr. President," said the man, his courage, amid the merriment of the company, beginning to return, "you have slippers on and I boots, and that makes a difference."

"Not enough, to amount to anything in *this* reckoning," was the reply. You ought at least to be satisfied, my honest friend, with the proof given that you actually *stand higher* to-day than your President."

With this scene the reception, which had lasted about an hour, came to an end.

This brief interview, medley that it was, and stripped of ceremony, served the better to reveal the man in his true character, and to set forth the salient traits that fitted him for his great position and work, and endeared him so greatly to the popular heart. It showed how easily accessible he was to all classes of citizens, how readily he could adapt himself to people of whatever station or degree, how deep and true his human sympathies were, how quickly and keenly he could discriminate character, and how heartily he detested meanness and all unworthy arts and appliances to compass a selfish or sordid end. It showed the playful vein, whose ebullitions were as spontaneous as water bubbling from a fountain, and finally it showed the strong confidence he reposed in the convictions and heart of the people, with a trust that never faltered in the truth and ultimate triumph of the great principles he was bravely advocating.

C. Van Santvoord.

TO-DAY.

"O HEART, tired out with pain to-day,
A thousand years to come
Thy pain will all have passed away,
Thy crying shall be dumb:
As gayly bird-wings o'er the river
Shall gleam with life that once was thine,
As if this pulse, with pain a-quiver,
Still leaped, with gladness half-divine:
To thee, to all, it is as one
When once thy restless years are done."

Oh, vain to turn upon your heart,
And think to still it so!
It cries back unto all your art,
With pleading, "Ah, no, no!
For gladness dies as well as sorrow;
Then let me live, since I must die.
Ah, quick, for death will come to-morrow—
Quick, ere my years in vain go by!
Because to-morrow I am clay,
Give me my happiness to-day!"

Millicent Washburn Shinn.