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Portland, Friday, February 12, 1915

LINCOLN THE TYPICAL AMERICAN.

An Eastern periodical tries to prove, editorially, in its current number that Lincoln was a typical American. Its reasons are interesting. It is more ambitious than most of his countrymen, less easily satisfied with conventional activities and aims, had a broader outlook upon life, was moved by profounder considerations, felt more deeply the spiritual truths of the world, and upon the whole, was of a finer nature than the "common man" whom he so often talked about. All this, it is argued, proves that he was exceptional rather than typical. Certainly Lincoln was exceptional. It would be daring, indeed, to say that he was an ordinary person. But might he not have been exceptional and typical at the same time? Are not all typical individuals exceptional? In a type we naturally expect the highest expression of all that it represents. We feel justified for instance, in expecting Plato and Immanuel Kant, typical philosophers because they not only possessed reflective powers in unusual degree, but also because philosophizing was the main, perhaps the only, business of their lives.

For similar reasons Archimedes and Newton are said to have been typical men of science, and John Wesley a typical evangelist. They are types, not in spite of being exceptional men, but because of the very fact that they were exceptional. On similar ground the figures in Greek sculpture are said to be typical expressions of the highest concepts of beauty the Greeks ever formed. Such concepts found full expression in no living person, but in the type they rose to perfection. Lincoln was, therefore, all the more a typical American from the supreme excellence of his gifts and habits of mind. He might be called a typical American because he was a typical American, but for all that the habits which laid the foundations of greatness in him are common enough among American boys. Many of them feel the same hunger for knowledge that made Lincoln rise from the narrow life of a poor boy to the heights of a noble station that he was born to be one of the most common traits of our National life.

It is a fact that most young men can hope to go, but they traveled the same road with them. In a way, too, his aims and activities were conventional. Most of his neighbors, of course, had no hope of anything but farm life with its usual comforts, but young Lincoln was not the only farmer boy of that region who looked higher. Others did the same and he differed from them only by achieving a more brilliant success. His choice of the law for a career was conventional, and the legal career was the only one which in that time and place promised to satisfy the ambitions of aspiring youth. Such vocations as engineering, medicine, the ministry were either unknown to them or else they promised little or nothing. The law was the only way that was accepted as the great man of his community. He might enter politics, go to the Legislature, pass on into the National House of Representatives or the Senate. All the opportunities of public life were open to him, and as a rule, that was the way Lincoln was therefore accurately typical of American life when he made the law his profession. Most ambitious boys of much promise did the same in his day. He was exceptional in the fame he won at the bar, but not in choosing the law for a career. When he did so he followed a common custom.

His broad outlook upon life was not so miraculous as it might at first appear. The ordinary American is not usually a bigot and our farmers have not always been in a modest way reading the Bible and the newspapers. Many religious sects originate in American rural communities, and the people are hospitable to new ways of thought. Unless he is narrowed by economic considerations, the American of the farm, or the city, either, is extremely likely to be tolerant. It is broad tolerance and liberal spirit, both in politics and religion. Such fanaticism as our public men exhibit is rarely taken seriously by their countrymen, who are apt to take for granted that it is assumed for effect. We do not believe that Lincoln was so typical, or representative, in any other respect as in his humorous hospitality to all shades of opinion. It is this National quality that enables our hundreds of sects to live together without quarreling. This does not mean that he had no rooted opinions. His philosophy of life grew out of deep reflection, though, of course, it was also partly temperamental, and he clung to it from boyhood to old age with inviolable tenacity. Tolerant as his faith was held, it was not held lightly, and we know that he was ready to make immense sacrifices rather than prove false to it. Its fundamental tenet was the soundness and justice of God's government of the universe. Not denying the prevalence of wrong, he still believed that right was destined to triumph, and he willingly gave his life to prove his faith. Because his nature was finer than that of common men he felt this

spiritual truth more deeply than they, but he was by no means singular in his belief. Most Americans think the same. Our National institutions are built upon our confidence in the ultimate justice of God which issues in the happiness of the common man. This was Lincoln's fixed ideal and inviolable hope.

WHO RUNS THE SCHOOLS?

School Director Sommer assumes a heavy responsibility when he undertakes to oust Mr. Alderman from the superintendency of the public schools. If any other Director joins him in that purely individual enterprise, the Oregonian will be greatly surprised. In any issue as to whether Director Sommer, who is a very good physician, shall run the schools, or the duly elected and well-qualified Superintendent of Schools, the Oregonian will be greatly surprised. In any issue as to whether Director Sommer, who is a very good physician, shall run the schools, or the duly elected and well-qualified Superintendent of Schools, the Oregonian will be greatly surprised.

Mr. Alderman has been Superintendent for two years. He came from the State School Superintendency with a fine record for achievement in a broad and fruitful field. He inherited a school organization and school methods built up through many years under another Superintendent, and the problem of adjusting old conditions to a new set of circumstances was not an easy one. But he has done well. The schools are just now the object of less general criticism than in many years. The morale of the teachers is excellent and the progress of the school body as a whole satisfactory. If the Superintendent should be re-elected, or should fall of re-election after a brief two years, for reasons not at all obvious, the general sense of fair play will be rudely shocked.

TO MARRY OR NOT TO MARRY.

Miss Marsh had a right to get married if she wanted to. We feel inclined to go farther and observe that Miss Marsh had a duty to get married, which she neglected, or not provided, of course, a suitable husband could be found. Suitable husbands are more scarce than suitable wives, to be sure, but that is not the question.

But had Miss Marsh, a teacher in the Portland public schools, a right to marry while in her contract? By which she agreed not to marry, provided, of course, a suitable husband could be found. Suitable husbands are more scarce than suitable wives, to be sure, but that is not the question.

FROM THE WASTE-BASKET.

The Honorable William Jennings Bryan, erstwhile Commoner, and now Secretary of State at Washington, was a member of the committee on platform in the National Democratic platform at Baltimore, in 1912. According to common report, Mr. Bryan had a potential voice in framing the platform, and it is known that some of the planks are in his exact phrasing. The Oregonian respectfully solicits from the surviving Oregon supporters and admirers of Mr. Bryan, including the Oregonian and the Oregonian newspaper, an opinion as to whether or not the following emphatic declaration, bodily enunciated in the 1912 platform, is from the eloquent pen of the present Secretary of State:

GOOD CAUSE FOR PROTEST.

President Wilson's protest against violation of the rights of neutrals, and his refusal to go to the aid of the helpless millions, is an evidence of impartiality, which neither nation can gainsay. The sea is the world's highway and two travelers on that highway have no right to conduct their quarrel in such manner as to obstruct the traffic of the world.

STORMY TIMES FOR WILSON.

President Wilson's persistence in forcing any kind of a ship-purchase bill through Congress gives stronger evidence of obstinacy than of good sense. Seeing no hope for the Fletcher bill, he now falls back upon the Gore bill, which has passed the Senate. Falling to have his way through the Senate, he tries the House, though the battle would have to be fought out in the Senate, even if the House passed the Gore bill, for the filibuster would be renewed in discussion of the conference report.

REPEATING A BOOK.

There is no need to repeat the book "The Spell of the New West" which has already been published abroad and the author at present resides abroad.

THE SPELL OF THE NEW WEST.

Oh golden, glorious, tragic West, Land where a man feels free, Oh wicket, winsome, mystic West, What is the spell that draws us there, Your rivers wild and canyons vast, Your mountains' majesty, Your peerless forests' magic spell, Your sunsets glowing in the West, Old ocean's boom upon your shore, Your cryptic caverns' witchery, Your sunsets flung in flaunting gold, Your cataclysms' thunderous reality, Your pioneer, your Indians hold, Your past's weird history, Your home of big, broad-minded men, Of women strong and of men true, The Old World's art and charm are lost, Beside the spell of you.

TRIP IN AN AIRCROPLANE.

Lady Passmore, an airplane and nervous—hadn't we better descend now, something might go wrong with the engine? Aviator—Don't worry, I'm a flying co-pilot and I'm making good time as the return trip.

CLATSkanie, Or., Feb. 10.—(To the Editor.)

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Do You Keep It?

When people begin coming into a retailer's store and asking for a certain "article," it does not take long to convince him that it is something worth selling.

Compulsory Vaccination.

Timber, Or., Feb. 9.—(To the Editor.)—Please let me know through The Oregonian if vaccination is compulsory in the State of Oregon.

More on Sabbath Observance.

Portland, Feb. 9.—(To the Editor.)—Referring to inquiry from "Old Subscriber" (of Salem), whose letter appeared in your columns, permit me to cite in addition to the standard works mentioned which treat briefly on Sabbath observance, the book, "History of the Sabbath," by Andrews, which treats very fully on this subject. If this work is of any assistance, I am willing to lend copy to "Old Subscriber" who may address me at 92 East Sixty-third street, N. Y. C.

Address of O. M. Clark.

MILICAN, Or., Feb. 10.—(To the Editor.)—Will you please give me the address of O. M. Clark, chairman of the Oregon Commission to the Panama-Pacific Exposition?

Senator Barrett dropped a few shells.

Kunz sf hai toy!

Wheat is coming down, and perhaps the poultryman would better not sell his fowls.

The diligent housewife will today wash the porch and scrub the sidewalk.

The New York teacher who laid off for a twilight nap is back on the job.

A Texan has been sent to Mexico and what John Lind missed.

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foolishly fling away his opportunity by endeavoring to impose his personal will upon Congress. The insurrection in his second Congress promises to be the more serious because his first Congress was outwardly so meekly submissive.

Oral examinations by the Civil Service Board are sensible and practicable.

An applicant can often tell more about his qualifications in ten minutes than he can write in a week. Voice, hand gauge and gesture are sure indexes to character. The fear that oral tests will open the way to favoritism is probably groundless. With an honest board nothing of the sort will happen. With a dishonest board favoritism will creep in no matter how the examinations are conducted.

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