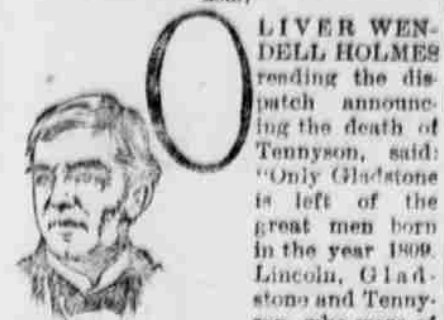


IT WAS A GREAT YEAR

LINCOLN, TENNYSON AND GLADSTONE WERE BORN IN 1809.

Interesting Reminiscences Told by Contemporaries of the Great Emancipator. Side Lights on Lincoln's Character—His Native Wit and Rugged Honesty.

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DAVID DAVIS.

These two cases as a part of his plan for obtaining the nomination and election. Judge Davis then went on to say that Lincoln realized what nobody else at that time seemed to understand—that a seat in the senate was an almost insuperable obstacle in the path of presidential ambition. Coming afterward expressed that idea in a speech in the senate, in which he said, "The senate breeds unhealthy candidates for the presidency."

An exciting political canvass took place in Illinois early in Lincoln's administration. It was understood that if the party of which Mr. Lincoln was a member carried the state legislature his friends would bring him forward as a candidate for the senate. He made the canvass with that understanding. An element in the party, perhaps the cultured and wealthier element, favored Lyman Trumbull.

The election so resulted that it was possible to choose as United States senator a member of the Republican party, and to the astonishment of Mr. Lincoln's friends he withdrew and urged the selection of Mr. Trumbull, who was chosen. Lincoln's friends were amazed. They wondered why he should thus lightly turn his face away from one of the most dazzling prizes of politics. But years afterward they had reason to suspect that Mr. Lincoln realized that with Lyman Trumbull in the senate his most formidable competitor for the presidential nomination, at least in Illinois, would be beyond the power of doing his own ambition injury.

"He Never Can Be President."

Two years later Mr. Lincoln again did something which seemed to his friends then a grievous mistake, but which they afterward perceived was a stroke of politics such as would be suggested only by pre-eminent genius. He was carrying on that debate with Stephen A. Douglas which is now one of the great traditions of politics. He prepared a series of questions which he proposed to ask Douglas on the stump. He permitted some of his friends to cast their eyes over these interrogations, and they said to him, "Don't ask him this question, Mr. Lincoln, because if you do he will answer it in such a way as to make his re-election to the senate certain."

"Ah!" replied Lincoln, with a twinkle in his eye. "Yes, that is true, but if he takes that shot he never can be president." The friends who heard this were amazed that Lincoln should be willing thus to let Douglas defeat him for the senate, but they perceived afterward that Lincoln was entirely willing to let Douglas resume his oratorical flights in the senate if thereby he would be able to defeat his presidential aspirations.

These anecdotes Judge Davis mentioned to illustrate that higher power as a politician which enabled Lincoln to win the greatest triumph of politics. It was a great game he played, so great that it was not understood by the ordinary politician until results were accomplished.

The "Skewed" Merchants.

Chauncey M. Depew tells a story of Lincoln which illustrates this quality which enabled him to appear at ease, and also to demonstrate his mastery when in the presence of great men. It was at the time that the ironclad Merrimack was being built. The story was that she should sail upon the ocean and into the harbor of New York or either bombard the city or exact enormous tribute. A committee of New York merchants appointed by the chamber of commerce was sent to Washington to implore Mr. Lincoln to do something to protect New York harbor. He received them courteously, but there was a very grave expression on his face as he listened to the spokesman. That man said: "Mr. Lincoln, we represent hundreds of millions of property. New York is practically defenseless. If the Merrimack comes into our harbor, it can ruin us, and we implore you at once to take measures to give us defense."

For a minute or two Mr. Lincoln did not reply. He knew the government was straining every nerve to prevent depredations by the Merrimack. It could do nothing more. It seemed for an instant as though there were a suggestion of anger in his glance, but if he had that impulse he subdued it. That faint smile which anticipated a humorous story came to his face, and he said: "Well, gentlemen, I think if I had as many millions at peril as you say you have, and I was as 'skewed' as you seem to be about the coming of the Merrimack, instead of coming down here and making speeches about it I would go home and spend some of those millions in making defenses myself." And that was all he said to them. The New York merchants were amazed, and yet as they went away they confessed that common sense was in his humorous advice, and they also confessed their sense of the mastery of this man.

His Simplicity at Great Moments.

Thurlow Weed in his old age was full of anecdotes which he was fond of telling to illustrate that simplicity of greatness which characterized Lincoln perhaps in a higher degree than any other man that estate politician, Weed, ever met. Weed was fond of telling one which suggested strikingly that quality of simplicity. On the day that the Chicago convention nominated Lincoln, he went to the office of the local newspaper in Springfield and

sat there with his friends, his long legs extended and supported by a chair, his manner cozier than that of any man in the room, while he chatted and told stories with such delicious abandon a would have suggested that he was the least concerned of any man in the United States in the mighty events at Chicago.

A telegraph operator while this chatting was going on wrote upon a slip of paper a message which had just been ticked over the wire. These were the words, "Mr. Lincoln, you have just been nominated for president." Lincoln took the slip, unfolded it, read it through slowly and then passed it to some of his friends. They arose to congratulate him, and after a moment he said, "There is a little woman down at my house who I think would be glad to hear this news, and I guess I'll go and tell her." And with that informality and strange simplicity he carried the message to his wife.

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"Seward tried it first," said Weed, "and no one else followed his example. He brought into the cabinet with him a paper in which he had set forth a certain policy which he thought Lincoln ought to pursue, and in which he in effect informed Lincoln that he would take it upon himself to see that policy carried out. It was a test moment. Had Lincoln yielded his cabinet would have been his master, but with a queer, mannerism—half humorous, half serious—he read the paper through, struck out Mr. Seward's recommendations, thanked him for his consideration, and in that moment and motion this assembly of great men realized that the obscure lawyer was to be president not only in name, but in fact. Never did a ruler so completely and yet so gently master his cabinet or council."

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