AN ESTIMATE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

The Man.

It has been often said that Lincoln was a very remarkable man, but we might almost say that he was an impossible man. What he accomplished, and the changes wrought by him in the Government of the United States are amazing, considering his very low origin and the environment of his childhood, youth and early manhood. Other great men have risen from very humble origins, but what great man has come from such base and sordid surroundings as Lincoln?

See what Lamon and Herndon, life-long friends and admirers, say of his early life. Says Herndon: "Lincoln's highest delight was to be in the midst of a crowd of rowdy men, engaged in a fist fight with some man, while the crowd batted on the result. Money, whiskey, knives, tobacco, all sorts of small properties were at stake. Lincoln was uncommonly muscular. It is related that he could lift a barrel of whiskey and drink out of its bung-hole. Lincoln's next highest delight was in talking over these fist fights."

Says Lamon: "When Lincoln went to church, he went to mock, and come away to mimic. When he went to New Salem, he consorted with free-thinkers, and joined with them in deriding the Gospel story of Jesus. He wrote a labored book on the subject, which his friend, Hill, put in the stove and burned up. Not until after Mr. Lincoln's death were these facts denied."

As to the social and moral tone of his home-surroundings in Gentryville. See "The First Chronicle of Reuben", written by Lincoln when he was about twenty-one. It is much too indecent for publication.

Stranger still is the fact that though these and other life-
long friends assert positively that Lincoln lived and died a "deep-grounded infidel", (and Dr. Holland says that twenty out of twenty-three ministers of the different denominations of Christians, and a very large majority of the prominent members of the Churches in his home, Springfield, Ill., opposed him for President), yet it has been possible for his admirers, after his death, to convince the world that he was a Christian.

What his intimate friend, Lamon says, throws some light on this: "While it is clear", says he, "that Mr. Lincoln was at all times an infidel, it is also very clear that he was not at all times equally willing that everybody should know it. He never offered to purge or recant; he was a wily politician, and did not disdain to regulate his religious manifestations with reference to his political interest. He saw the immense and augmenting power of the churches, and in times past had felt it. The charge of infidelity had seriously injured him in several of his earlier political campaigns. Aspiring to lead religious communities, he saw he must not appear an enemy within their gates. He saw no reason for changing his convictions, but he saw many great and cogent reasons for not making them public."

Much has been said of Lincoln's tenderness of heart. Yet, says Gen. Donn Piatt (an ardent admirer of Lincoln): "There is a popular belief that Lincoln was of so kind and forgiving a nature that his gentler impulses interfered with his duty. The belief is erroneous. I doubt whether Mr. Lincoln had at all a kind, forgiving nature."

And we may well doubt it, when we read his telegram to Sheridan congratulating him on his "month's operation in Shenandoah Valley, especially for his splendid work", of devastation and burning. When suffering came in his way, he was kind and sympathetic; but it needed
to be seen to be felt. Lincoln was a man of the Charles II type, easily moved by visible pain and suffering, but entirely callous to it otherwise; for he could let his soldiers die by thousands in military prisons in the South, refusing exchanges, refusing to send medicines and food to the sick by his own surgeons, and even refusing to accept the sick, when offered without exchange by the Confederate authorities, on account of inability to care for them.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

The Politician.

One must fully endorse Lamon's words above: "Wily politician", as applied to Lincoln. Lincoln was one of the shrewdest politicians that ever lived. Seward said of him: "He (Lincoln) had a cunning that was genius." The Union leaders, who controlled the Virginia Convention in /½l, were kept completely in the dark as to his purpose of coercion, up to the last moment, and so the State was kept in the Union, subservient to his purpose, till he was ready to strike at the seceded states. The commissioners, Messrs. Preston, Stuart and Randolph, returned to Richmond after their interview with Lincoln, in which he assured them of his peaceful intentions, on the very train that carried Lincoln's proclamation for 75,000 men to wage a war of coercion! Certainly a master-stroke of policy, whatever we may think of its morality.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

The Lawyer.

Though "The New York World" as late as June 19, 1864, called Lincoln "an ignorant, boorish, third-rate back-woods lawyer", it appears that he must have had some qualities that made him very successful at the bar. Herndon, his law-partner for twenty years, and faithful
biographer, had a great admiration for Lincoln, both as a man and a
lawyer, and as able a man as Edwin M. Stanton, Lincoln's great war-
secretary, seems to have dreaded Lincoln as a legal adversary; for he
once said of him that he had "met him at the bar, and found him a low,
cunning clown."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN,
The Orator.

Lincoln's reputation as an orator must rest mainly on his Gettys-
burg oration, for there is little else to judge by. His only speeches
in Congress, that seem to have attracted any attention at all, were
those on the so called "Spot Resolutions", and they, according to Morse,
seem to have been only sufficiently good to keep him from being reckoned
as "one of the nobodies" of that Congress.

The Gettysburg oration attracted very little notice at the time
of its delivery, and like most of Lincoln's acts and words, seems to
shine with a light thrown back upon it after his "departure to the
Gods", or apotheosis, in 1865. Certainly as an orator, Lincoln was not
distinguished, tho' he was an effective pleader at the bar.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN
The Statesman and President.

These two characters may well be considered together, and perhaps
the best way to get an estimate of Lincoln in these characters,
is to compare him with Washington, to whom many have likened him.

The one may be said to have created the republic; the other to
have changed it to a Nation. As the Washington Post said (Aug.14/06),
"Let us be frank about it. The day the people of the North responded
to Abraham Lincoln's call for troops to coerce sovereign states, the republic died, and the Nation was born."

Lincoln showed remarkable ability in guiding the state thus transformed; but his statesmanship was of the Napoleon, not the Washington order. No king or emperor, in modern times, ever ruled more absolutely. Rhodes (an ardent eulogist of Lincoln) refers to the comparison constantly made in England between the coup d'État of Louis Napoleon, and the coup d'État of Abraham Lincoln, and, excusing the use of such power, adds: "The County Attorney of Illinois had assumed the power of a dictator." And speaks of "the enormity of the acts done under his (Lincoln's) authority", and says: "He stands responsible for the casting into prison of citizens of the U.S. to be counted by thousands, on orders as arbitrary as Lettres de Cachet of Louis XIV", when the mode of procedure might have been, "as in Great Britain in her crisis between 1793 and 1802, on legal warrants."

Lincoln was a "wily politician" as Lamon calls him, a character inconsistent with statesmanship of a high order. Had Lincoln been a man of the Washington type, he would never have given up the great principle of the Declaration, and sought to coerce sovereign states. True statesmanship would have led him to keep faith with the Virginia Convention, and repudiate the coercion measures urged upon him by Ben. Wade, and other war-men in the North. Then Virginia and the other border states would have remained in the Union, and Lincoln's great talents might well have so guided the Republic as to win back in time the seceded states, with, or more probably, without slavery, for slavery was already doomed; it was passing away even in South America, and must have come to an end in due time, under the pressure of a healthy public opinion, had the
slave states been left untrammelled and free from the fanatical threat-
enings, which had done so much to perpetuate slavery.

The Union thus restored and preserved would indeed have been
a triumph of statesmanship, such as would have made Lincoln worthy
to be placed among the world's greatest and best statesmen, with, or
even above, Washington.

What might not Lincoln have accomplished had his childhood
and youth been under such home and social influences as would have
given due development to the moral and religious side of his character!
The avoidance of that dreadful four years of carnage, and the perpetua-
tion of the Union of our fathers, a brotherhood of equal sovereign
states, instead of this present Union based upon force, where the weak
have no rights except what the strong allow them.

Berkley Minor,

Sometime private in Rockbridge Artillery, Stonewall
Brigade, Army of Northern Virginia.

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