

# LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor.  
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, of Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Number 394

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

October 26, 1936

## HUMOROUS LINES FROM LINCOLN

One who has a sense of humor approaches the Halloween season in the spirit of pleasantry. Lincoln's drollery which found expression in both his speeches and writings can be reviewed with interest during this period of gaiety.

### *Long Black Fellow*

Lincoln often drew caricature word portraits of himself and was not in the least bit sensitive about his homely appearance. He had occasion once, in writing to a former acquaintance, to identify himself and used this interesting description: "Don't you remember a long black fellow who rode on horseback with you from Tremont to Springfield nearly ten years ago, swimming our horses over the Mackinaw on the trip? Well, I am that same one fellow yet."

### *Changing Coats*

In attempting to show that the two major political parties have completely changed their opinions on some of the major political issues of the day, Lincoln wrote to a group of Boston citizens in charge of the Jefferson celebration in Boston as follows: "I remember being once much amused at seeing two partially intoxicated men engaged in a fight with their great-coats on, which fight, after a long and rather harmless contest, ended in each having fought himself out of his own coat and into that of the other. If the two leading parties of this day are really identical with the two in the days of Jefferson and Adams, they have performed the same feat as the two drunken men."

### *Accomplishing the Impossible*

While delivering a speech in Congress on internal improvements, Lincoln illustrated the absurdity of a project by calling attention to the predicament of Patrick, who remarked about his new boots, "I shall never get 'em on, 'til I wear 'em a day or two, and stretch 'em a little."

### *All Things to All Men*

On Lincoln's first visit to New England, he had occasion to mention the lack of specific statements in a newly organized political party's platform. He likened their position to a pair of pantaloons the Yankee peddler offered for sale, "Large enough for any man, small enough for any boy."

### *Second Fiddle*

Baker, a Whig contemporary of Lincoln's, secured an appointment, which Lincoln wanted for himself and when he was chosen a delegate to work for Baker's election, Lincoln wrote to his friend Speed, "In getting Baker the nomination, I shall be fixed a good deal like a fellow who is made a groomsman to a man that has cut him out and is marrying his own dear 'gal'."

### *Delayed Judgment*

A temperance address gave Lincoln an opportunity to illustrate the subject of threats and promises with this

typical Irish story: "Better lay down that spade you are stealing, Paddy, if you don't you'll pay for it at the day of judgment." Paddy, "By the power, if ye'll credit me so long I'll jist take another."

### *Itching Heels*

In his sub-treasury speech made in Springfield in 1839, Lincoln felt that some of his political opponents were running away with the public funds. Although they claimed to be "sound in the head and the heart, but vulnerable in the heel," Lincoln admitted that the last claim was literally true and that, "this malady of 'running itch' in the heel, operated very much like the cork leg in the comic song did on its owner, which when he had once got started on it, the more he tried to stop it, the more it would run away."

### *Safety in Distance*

A young man anxious to enter the military academy to which there was some family objection, received this written advice from Lincoln: "I think perhaps it might be wise to hand this letter from me, in to your good uncle through his room window after he has had a comfortable dinner, and watch its effect from the top of the pigeon house."

### *A Russian Bear*

The Lincoln-Douglas Debates resulted in some interesting illustrations of repartee, one of which follows: "Just to think of it! Right at the outset of his canvass, I, a poor, kind, amiable, intelligent gentleman—I am to be slain in this way. Why, my friend the judge, is not only, as it turns out, not a dead lion, nor even a living one—he is the rugged Russian bear."

### *Wicked Chicago*

In reply to a Chicago clergyman who came to Mr. Lincoln, stating that a message had come from his Divine Master commanding the President to free the slaves at once, Lincoln replied, "Well, now that's queer, I have been waiting a long time for that message. Don't you think it is rather strange that the Divine Master should have sent it around by way of wicked Chicago?"

### *Presidential Timber*

The address which Abraham Lincoln made in the House of Representatives on July 27, 1848, contains more ludicrous similes and comparisons, than any other speech he ever delivered. In attempting to show that his political opponents had attempted to make all their presidential aspirants after the pattern of one of their early champions, he tells this story:

"A fellow once advertised that he had made a discovery by which he could make a new man out of an old one, and have enough of the stuff left to make a little yellow dog. Just such a discovery has General Jackson's popularity been to you. You not only twice made President of him out of it, but you have had enough of the stuff left to make Presidents of several comparatively small men since."