

LINCOLN LORE

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In 1846 he was elected to Congress, and served out his term; and would have been re-elected had he not declined to be a candidate. As to the character of his services in that body, my information does not enable me to speak particularly. In the National Convention of 1848, of which he was a member,* he advocated the nomination of General Taylor, and sustained the nomination by an active canvass of his own State. In 1852 he was equally efficient in his efforts for General Scott, and was considered by the Whigs of Illinois and of the Northwest as one of their ablest and wisest leaders.

From 1849 to 1854, Mr. Lincoln was engaged assiduously in the practice of his profession, and being deeply immersed in business, was beginning to lose his interest in politics, when the scheming ambition and groveling selfishness of an unscrupulous aspirant to the Presidency brought about the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. That act of baseness and perfidy aroused the sleeping lion, and he prepared for new efforts. He threw himself at once into the contest that followed, and fought the battle of freedom on the ground of his former conflicts in Illinois with more than his accustomed energy and zeal. He fully appreciated the importance of the slavery issue, and felt the force of the moral causes that must influence the question, and he never failed to appeal to the moral sentiment of the people in aid of the argument drawn from political sources, and to illuminate his theme with the lofty inspirations of an eloquence, pleading for the rights of humanity. A revolution swept the State. For the first time a majority of the Legislature of Illinois was opposed to the Democratic administration of the Federal Government. A United States Senator was to be elected in place of General Shields, who had yielded to the influence of his less scrupulous colleague, and, against his own better judgment, had voted for the Kansas-Nebraska act. The election came on, and a number of ballots were taken, the almost united opposition voting steadily for Lincoln, but the anti-Nebraska Democrats for Trumbull. Mr. Lincoln became apprehensive that those men would vote for and elect Matteson; to prevent such a consummation, he went personally to his friends, and by strong persuasion, induced them to vote for Trumbull. He thus secured, by an act of generous self-sacrifice, a triumph for the cause of right, and an advocate of it on the floor of the Senate, not inferior in earnest zeal for the principles of Republicanism to any member of that body. It was not without difficulty, however, that this object was accomplished. The opposition throughout the State had with great unanimity looked to Mr. Lincoln to represent Illinois in the Senate, and it was with great reluctance that their representatives in the legislature could be induced to disappoint their constituents by giving their votes to another.

From his thorough conviction of the growing magnitude of the slave question and of the need of a strong effort to preserve the Territories to freedom, Mr. Lincoln was among the first to join in the formation of the Republican party, although the public opinion around him was strongly adverse to that movement. He exerted himself for the organization of the Republican forces in Illinois, and attended the first Republican Convention held in the State. This was in Bloomington in May, 1856. His speech in that Convention was of surprising power and eloquence, and produced great effect. In the contest of that year, Mr. Lincoln was at the head of the Illinois electoral ticket, and labored earnestly, though vainly, to wrest that State from the grasp of the pro-slavery Democracy, with the "walking magazine of mischief," as Douglas has been appropriately called, at its head.

When the campaign of 1858 was about to open, the voice of the Republican party of Illinois was so unanimous and enthusiastic in his favor as the successor of Judge

Douglas, that in a full State Convention of over five hundred delegates the unusual step was taken of nominating him for that office by acclamation. The enthusiasm of the delegates in Convention extended to their constituents. The party went into the contest with the name of Lincoln on all their banners, instituted Lincoln clubs, wore Lincoln badges, and held Lincoln meetings at almost every school house in the State. The respective parties were marshaled under leaders, who were fitting representatives of the principles of each. Lincoln, the consistent advocate of constitutional government, cognizant of indefeasible rights, and animated and controlled by a sense of human responsibility independent of conventional rules, placed himself upon the battlements of the Constitution, and summoned to his side the friends of law, order and humanity. Douglas, in the spirit of a system which assigns all power to a majority, and flatters the people in the concrete, while it cheats the individual of all security for his personal rights, appealed to popular prejudice and to the antipathies of race. The one held slavery to be an institution in conflict with the principles of free government, wholly dependent upon positive law, and never to be extended where it could be legitimately prohibited; while the other averred that the despotic will of any majority, though of a community existing only in a state of pupillage under the guardianship of federal authority "ought to be competent to establish it without question by that authority" without regard to moral considerations.—The contest excited intense interest and was maintained with infinite spirit. Lincoln, after vainly attempting to draw his opponent into a joint canvass of an entire State, met him in seven great debates in as many Congressional districts, and in the opinion of every candid judge, fairly overthrew him in argument on all controverted points. The result was, that though a majority of the popular vote was obtained by Lincoln, Douglas obtained by the instrumentality of an old and grossly unequal apportionment of the districts a majority of the Representatives, and thus secured his re-election to the U. S. Senate.

Since that great contest, Mr. Lincoln has repeatedly given his powerful aid in support of the Republican cause in other States, as in Ohio, Wisconsin and Kansas, during the present year, and in every instance he has been received with enthusiasm by the people, evincive of the hold he has on the popular heart. Wherever he speaks he draws together large crowds of interested listeners, upon whom he never fails to make a marked impression. Though a ready and fluent speaker, he avoids declamation, and is never betrayed into mere word-painting, which his good taste habitually rejects. He abhors emptiness as heartily as did the great Webster in his prime, and employs as the vehicle of his thoughts a style of singular clearness and simplicity. In his statements of facts he is scrupulously accurate, and to every opponent he exhibits the utmost fairness, candor and liberality, retorting no abuse, but preserving an unflinching courtesy even under the severest provocation. His manner is earnest, his arguments close and logical, and he reaches his conclusions by a process that seems to render those conclusions inevitable. Whether you agree with him or not, you cannot listen to him without being satisfied of his sincerity, and that his object is not victory, but truth.

In private life Mr. Lincoln is a strictly moral and temperate man of frank and engaging manners, of kind and genial nature, unaffectedly modest, social in disposition, ready in conversation, and passing easily from grave to gay and from gay to grave, according to the humor of the hour or the requirements of the occasion, a firm friend and yet not implacable to an enemy, a consistent politician, a good citizen, and an honest patriot.

*Note—Mr. Lincoln was not a member of the Convention, though in attendance as a citizen.