

LINCOLN LORE

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THE DEMING PAMPHLET

A pamphlet recording the speech made by Hon. Henry Champion Deming at Hartford, Conn. on June 8, 1865 has been recognized by many Lincoln students as a dependable source of important information about the President. Several statements made about the more personal aspects of Lincoln's life find their origin in this pamphlet published less than two months after the assassination.

The speaker was introduced by the governor of Connecticut, His Excellency William A. Buckingham, who stated in part: "No one can draw his (Lincoln's) character in lines of more distinctness and accuracy or present it in more attractive and life-like colors, or show more clearly the precise influence which he exerted over public affairs during this period of danger than the orator of the evening whom I now introduced—the Honorable Henry C. Deming."

Mr. Deming was a graduate of Yale and also the Harvard Law School. He was elected to Congress from the first district of Connecticut in 1863 and was assigned to the Committee on Military Affairs and in this department was appointed chairman of the Committee on Expenditures. His close connection with the War Department may have been responsible for his having been invited to be present as he recalls: "During a voyage of three days on the Potomac, when this party consisted only of the President and his family, the Secretary of War and his aid and myself."

After the usual eulogistic introductory remarks Mr. Deming suggests that one descends with difficulty from the "impassionate outbursts of a world wide grief to cool analysis and historic delineation." Yet he states that it is his purpose to present an estimate of Lincoln's character that "solicits unvarnished statement instead of rhetorical flourish, and records its own judgment in the composed style of fact and argument."

Many of the biographical incidents related refer to fields of interest which have been, and still are, of a highly controversial nature. Mr. Deming's testimony having been presented, much of it from the President himself, submitted so closely after the assassination should be given careful consideration.

Appearance

"Let us at all events place on record the image which he really wore that he may not descend the ages according to malicious caricature. . . . Conceive a tall and gaunt figure, more than six feet in height unencumbered by superfluous flesh . . . with legs and arms long attenuated . . . in posture and carriage not ungraceful but with the grace of unstudied and careless ease.

"The face that surmounts this figure is half Roman and half Indian, bronzed by climate, furrowed by life struggles, seamed with humor, the head is massive and covered with dark, thick and unmanageable hair, the brow is wide and well developed, the nose large and fleshy, the lips full, cheeks thin, and drawn down in strong corded lines, which, but for the wiry whiskers, would disclose the machinery which moves the broad jaw. The eyes are dark gray, sunk in deep sockets, but bright, soft and beautiful in expression, and sometimes lost and half abstracted, as if their glance was reversed and turned inward, or as if the soul which lighted them was far away."

(p. 13, 14)

Manners

"They were frank, cordial, and dignified, without rudeness, without offense and without any violation of the

properties and etiquettes of his high position, as fastidious and keen a master of such nice matters as Mr. Everett has said, 'On the only social occasion on which I ever had the honor to be in his company—(dinner at Wells home in Gettysburg with distinguished foreigners and Americans present)—in gentlemanly appearance, manners and conversation the President was the peer of any man at the table.'"

(p. 14)

Sociability

"He was what Dr. Johnson calls a thoroughly 'clubbable' man, eminently social and familiar; in private interviews and sometime in public, overflowing with illustrations of every theme, always apt and racy, and frequently humorous. . . . It is the weak invention of false friends and open enemies, to lay at his door all the prurient jokes which their foul imaginations conceived . . ."

(p. 15, 16)

Intelligence

"The President's mind was so original and self dependent so unwilling to borrow knowledge and opinion, that he fairly scorned all adventitious support and external auxiliaries. . . . It is a marvelous fact that no sentence is to be found in any of his state papers, which suggests the suspicion of any other impress but that of his own mind.

"The chief mental equipments which he brought to the mighty task before him were the downright uncompromising common sense . . . an intimate acquaintance with the spasmodic movements of the American mind, a natural aptitude, improved by professional discipline, in chaining premise to conclusion, . . . great contour in forming opinions, honesty and sincerity of purpose, inflexible persistence in what he regarded as public duty, and a conscientious sense of his responsibility to the country and to mankind."

(p. 17, 20)

Religion

"I am here reminded of an impressive remark which he made to me upon another occasion and which I shall never forget. He said he had never united himself to any church because he found difficulty in giving his assent, without mental reservations, to the long complicated statements of Christian doctrine, which characterize their Articles of Belief and Confessions of Faith. 'When any church,' he continued, 'will inscribe over its altar, as its sole qualification for membership the Saviour's condensed statement of the substance of both law and Gospel, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself,' that church will I join with all my heart and all my soul.'"

(p. 42)

"His greatness is the most original and *bizarre* in the world's history, shaped after no model . . . a greatness which admits of no exact analysis and can only be loosely described as composed of great simplicity, great naturalness, great bonhomie, great shrewdness, great strength, great devotion, great equanimity, and great success on the greatest theatre ever offered to such qualities for exhibition."

(p. 17, 18)