

March 7, 8,

TEN CENTS

THE LADIES' HOME JOURNAL

MARCH 1897

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D.P. No. 100
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No. 100



Frank J. DuMont
196

THE CURTIS PUBLISHING COMPANY, PHILADELPHIA

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MR. AND MRS. LINCOLN'S INTRODUCTION TO WASHINGTON SOCIETY THE LONG AND SHORT OF THE PRESIDENCY

WHEN LINCOLN WAS FIRST INAUGURATED*

By Stephen Fiske

THE country was in a condition that the present generation cannot realize when Abraham Lincoln, President-elect, started from his little wooden cottage at Springfield, Illinois, to occupy the White House at Washington. Six of the Southern States had seceded from the Union, had organized a Provisional Government at Montgomery, Alabama, and had elected Jefferson Davis President and Alexander H. Stephens Vice-President. Commissioners from South Carolina were demanding from the Government the surrender of Fort Sumter. A Peace Congress, composed of representatives of most of the States, and presided over by ex-President Tyler, was framing abortive compromises, and keeping several doubtful States, such as Virginia and Texas, from seceding immediately. The United States Mint and Custom House at New Orleans had been seized by the secessionists. Rhode Island had voted in the Peace Conference for the eternal preservation of negro slavery south of latitude 36° 30', and for compensation for slaves that might be freed by violence. Business men in Philadelphia and New York were calculating whether they could better afford to lose their Southern or their Northern trade. The Democratic party was divided and distracted. The new Republican party was more ravenous about its responsibilities than triumphant over its first success. The whole nation was in disorder and confusion.

LINCOLN, who concealed a very serious mind under the drooleries of a comic story-teller, was not without experience in National affairs. After serving for several terms in the Legislature of Illinois he had been elected to Congress; had won a reputation as a humorist; had been introduced by Senator Seward to many prominent people; had lectured in New York and Boston, and had been denounced by Senator Sumner to the injustice of slavery and the imminence of the irrepressible conflict between patriotism and property in man. It was with a sad heart and a distracted mind that he left his home where he had been "Honest old Abe," since boyhood, to tour through Indiana, Ohio, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania on his way to his inauguration, but he assumed a smiling face and a jovial manner, and his stock of stories never failed him from Springfield to Harrisburg.

Most of the journeys were exceedingly monotonous. At every station a party of local politicians came on the train. Several political leaders of National reputation and a few newspaper reporters came through in the special car. There was no privacy for Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln, except when they went into their sleeping compartment. Everybody walked in or out, and talked or listened as he pleased. There was no ceremony, and Mr. Lincoln did not seem to care to inspire any personal respect.

He told stories to the delegations that boarded the car, and

the delegates told stories to him. Occasionally, when the train stopped at a city or large town, he would go out on the back platform and begin a speech, which was soon interrupted by the engineer, who thought more of the timetable than of the intonances of the President-elect.

THERE was one characteristic story that Mr. Lincoln began to relate at several stations, but it was always interrupted by the engineer, who thought more of the timetable than of the intonances of the President-elect.

"Well," he said, "these continual stoppages remind me of a drove I once took to attend a convention at which I was to be nominated for the Legislature. The horse I hired was said to be a good horse, but the driver I hired drove the slower it went, and when I reached my destination I found that the convention had nominated my opponent and adjourned. All the way back I kept thinking what such a horse could be good for, and when I drove up to the stable I asked his owner the question. He sort of chuckled and said: "'Why, good horse for a funeral, I reckon.'"

"No, my friend," I replied, "never hire that horse for a burying party!"

"Why not?" says he.

"Because," says I, "as serious as a Judge, if that horse pulls the hearse, the Day of Judgment will get here before the corpse strikes the grave-yard."

"Now, you see, it's the same way with this train. If they keep on stopping at every station for me to make a speech, this funeral will never reach Washington!"

AS I FIRST saw them, Mr. Lincoln was a tall, lank, gaudy, ugly, comely lawyer, his ill-proportioned, lantern-jawed face relieved by a fine forehead, and by large, solemn, heavy-lidded eyes that did not smile with his wide mouth, and Mrs. Lincoln was a small, plump, motherly woman, who had done her own housework and was not ashamed to talk about it. Long years afterwards I found that Mr. Lincoln had grown with the great events of the Civil War, and that he had attained the dignity and impassiveness of a demigod. But at first sight he justified the exclamations of Senator Douglas, who had been his friend from boyhood, though opposed to him in politics, and who used to snutter in his sleep, when somewhat overcome by the hospitalities on the train: "Oh, Lord! Abe Lincoln the President of the United States! Oh, Lord! Abe Lincoln the President! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

When we arrived at New York City, by the Hudson River Railroad—the station was then on Fourth Street—there was a consultation about what was to be said in reply to Mayor Fernando Wood, who already had a reputation as a Democratic orator.

"I haven't any speech ready," said Mr. Lincoln. "I shall have to say just what comes into my head at the time."

This shows that the breaking off of the back-platform speeches along the route had probably been prearranged. Mr. Lincoln had nothing to say to the American people until his inaugural address.



OWNED BY GEORGE LORRAINE "FRANK" MR. LINCOLN TO MEET "CITY FOLKS"

THE train stopped; through the windows immense crowds could be seen; the cheering drowned the blowing of steam of the locomotive. Then Mrs. Lincoln opened her hand bag and said:

"Abraham, I must fix you a bit for these city folks."

Mr. Lincoln gently lifted her upon the seat before him; she parted, combed and brushed his hair and arranged his black necktie.

"Do I look nice now, mother?" he affectionately asked.

"Well, you'd do, Abraham," replied Mrs. Lincoln critically. So he kissed her and lifted her down from the seat, and turned to meet Mayor Wood, comely and suave, and to have his hand shaken by the other New York officials.

The next day the journey was resumed at Jersey City, and

