

had a quid in my mouth almost all the time. I was particular as to what brand of tobacco I used, and when a friend of mine from Virginia presented me with a lot of very fine plug tobacco, I took it with me to the House of Representatives and laid it away in my desk. I was, you know, then a member of Congress. There were a lot of other tobacco chewers sitting near me. Tom Marshall of Kentucky was on one side, Garrett Davis was on the other, and there were good fellows all around me. So I passed my titbit around. There was a good lot of tobacco, and I supplied the party. I noticed, however, that the plugs seemed to be going faster than was right, and it bothered me. For a short time I suspected the page boys, and accused them of stealing my tobacco. They denied it. At last one morning a page came to me and said: Mr. Thompson, I can tell you who is stealing your tobacco. It is Senator Mangum of North Carolina. I at once went to the Senate and found Henry Clay and Mangum sitting together, both chewing busily. I charged Mangum with the theft. He owned up to it, and told me that he did it for my good. Thereupon Henry Clay broke in, and the two gave me a lecture on the evil effects of tobacco chewing. They told me that I was chewing too much and that I would certainly ruin my nervous system if I did not stop. In short, they made such an impression upon me that after supper that night I did not take my usual chew. My wife noticed the omission, but said nothing. I thought the matter over after I went to bed that night and decided to stop. I gave away what tobacco I had left, and I have not chewed from that day to this.

"Tell me something about your habits, colonel."

"I don't know that I have any," was the reply. "While I was secretary of the navy at Washington I did not touch a glass of wine and do not now. I take about three teaspoonfuls of whisky a day by my doctor's advice. My best meal is my breakfast, and I enjoy good beefsteak and eat plenty of it. I drink one cup of coffee at this time."

"How about cakes?"

"I like cakes and waffles, and I eat them."

"How about he other meals?"

"I don't care much for them. I eat only plain food and very little of it."

"Do you take much sleep?"

"Yes; I have always slept a great deal, and I sleep late now. When I was in Washington I had to be up as late as 1 or 2 o'clock every night, but I usually remained in bed until late in the morning."

"Do you believe in cold baths?"

"No, I think one should bathe simply to keep clean. This I do. One thing which has done more for my health than anything else is the use of a pair of horse-hair mittens. With these I rub my skin until it glows from crown to sole night and morning. This keeps it in excellent condition. I have done this for more than forty years every night and every morning, and I doubt not it has saved me from ill-health. My skin is now as soft and rosy as that of a baby. I perspire easily and the rubbing keeps the pores of the skin open. The pores of the skin are, you know, the sewers of the human system, and I keep my thousands of sewers always open."

"You speak of not using wine at Washington. Colonel Thompson. Mrs. Hayes, I believe, set the example to the capital by not using wine on her table at the state dinners?"

"Yes, that was the case," replied the ex-secretary of the navy. "But my use of wine at Washington was not confined to the period while I was in the cabinet. I never drank a glass during all my public service, in Congress or elsewhere. I felt that I had the need of all my faculties and that

I could not afford to impair them by the use of wine. As to Mrs. Hayes, she insisted that no wine should be used at our cabinet and at her private dinners. She did not do so at the state dinners given at the White House to the diplomats. She refused to serve wine at the dinner given to the Grand Duke Alexis, although Secretary Evarts asked her to do so. The omission created such a decided sensation that she gave in to the state department thereafter on the basis, that the diplomatic dinners were national matters and not a private entertainment over which she had control."

"Mrs. Hayes, however, was a very strong-minded woman, was she not? You know it was charged by some that it was she and not her husband who ran the government during the Hayes administration?"

"That is not true," replied ex-Secretary Thompson. "Mrs. Hayes was a woman of strong character. She was a lovable woman in every respect, but not an ambitious one in the way some people thought. I don't think she bothered herself at all about the policy of the administration. She liked the social position which came with the Presidency. She was fond of being the lady of the White House. She was always present after each cabinet meeting to shake hands with us as we came out of the room and she seemed to delight in seeing people and making them happy. At one time, I remember, we considered the advisability of moving the business offices of the White House to the state, war and navy building, but Mrs. Hayes objected to this, saying she would not then be able to see so much of the cabinet and of the public men whom she so delighted to meet."

"How about Hayes, was he an honest President?"

"I think he was," replied ex-Secretary Thompson. "I will not say he was the purest man I have ever known, but that he was among the purest of men. I think he did what he thought was right, and that this was his sole aim. I don't believe he was much actuated by desires for self-aggrandizement."

"When did you first meet Lincoln?" I asked.

"Lincoln and I grew up together about the same time," replied Col. Thompson. "He was on one side of the Wabash river, in Illinois, and I was on the other side, in Indiana. We had known about each other for years before we came together. I knew, of course, of his election, and when at the first of the session I saw a tall ungainly man coming across the hall of the House of Representatives, with a smile on his face. I knew that it must be he. He apparently knew me in the same way, for as he reached me he held out his hand, saying, 'How are you, Dick.'"

"How are you, Abe?" I replied, as I took it, and then began a friendship which lasted until Lincoln died.

"I was very fond of Lincoln," Mr. Thompson went on. "We were much together during the first term of Congress, and I believe he made his first entrance into fashionable society with me. A most accomplished lady from Virginia, a friend of mine, gave a reception early in the season. About fifty distinguished men were invited, but Lincoln was not among the number. I concluded he should go and I went to my friend and told her that I wanted an invitation for him, as I was anxious that she should meet him. She gave me the invitation. I remember how Lincoln looked as he sat among the company that night. He was, you know, tall, angular and awkward. Some time after his presentation he became engaged in conversation with my friend, taking a seat in a very low rocking chair at her feet. As he grew interested in talking he kept edging

closer to his hostess. He was so low that his knees almost came to his chin, and to get rid of his legs he wrapped them one around the other. As he grew more interested he came so close that his knees touched the lady's dress, and as I looked I thought he must finally end in her lap. The next day I met my lady friend and asked her what she thought of Lincoln. She replied at once: 'That man has elements of greatness in him. Of all those at my house last night I think he has the best chance of being President of the United States.' This was about ten years before he was thought of as a presidential candidate."

The conversation here turned to Lincoln as a story teller, when Mr. Thompson said:

"President Lincoln did not originate the best of his stories. He had a very receptive memory and stored away every anecdote he heard. His mind was such that he was able to use such things in the way of illustration. His favorite way of conveying an idea was by a story. For instance, take an incident which occurred one night when I was at the White House. I had been spending the evening there with President Lincoln. I was lying on my back upon a lounge. Lincoln was sitting in a chair with his feet propped up beside me. We had chatted for an hour or so, when the clock struck half-past ten. I then got up and said that I must go home. I told the President that he must be tired and that he ought to go to bed and get the rest which he needed to fortify him for the worries and troubles of the morrow."

"No," replied President Lincoln, "don't go yet. Stay half hour longer. I have an appointment at 11 o'clock with a man from Boston, who has a claim of something like \$200,000 against the government. I have told him he could bring his papers here at 11, and he will surely call on the minute."

"All-right," said I. 'I will stay.'

"Well, the man was announced as the clock struck 11. As he came in President Lincoln took his papers and said: 'I can't look over this matter now, but if you will leave the papers I will attend to it as soon as I can find time.'

"There were a number of parties opposing the claim, and I could see that the man wanted to get some idea as to what his chances were before he left. He volunteered a question, hoping to draw the President out. Lincoln appreciated his feeling and told the following:

"You make me think of a lawyer out in Illinois who wanted to turn merchant. He had not succeeded at the law, and he decided to close his office and open a store. He wrote to New York for a stock of goods and offered his fellow-attorneys as references. The wholesale house wrote to one of these as to the responsibility of the would-be storekeeper, whom we will call Tom Jones. The reply which was received was about as follows:

"I think Tom Jones is good. I know he is rich. His assets, I should say, amount to at least \$200,000. He has, in the first place, a wife, a beautiful, dark-haired brunette, who is worth to him or to any man \$100,000. I am sure he would not sell her for that. I know I should not if she belonged to me. He has also two children, a boy and a girl. The boy is perfectly sound. He is eleven years old, and is bright, energetic and smart. I don't think he could be bought at any price. I know Jones would not sell him for \$50,000. I think that \$49,950 would be a low estimate for the girl, as she has the making of a good woman in her. In addition to these items, Jones has a table in his office worth \$2, two chairs worth 50 cents each, an inkstand worth 15 cents and a double-