

Written for this Paper.  
**LINCOLN AS A POLITICIAN.**

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WASHINGTON, D. C., May 3rd, 1897.

HAVE before me two autograph letters of Abraham Lincoln which have never been published. They were written six years before he was elected President of the United States, just after his first great campaign with Stephen A. Douglas, during which he made a national reputation as an anti-slavery leader. At this time Lincoln's great ambition was to be the next United States senator from Illinois. He

had the right to think that he would be chosen; for it was through his speeches that an anti-slavery legislature had been elected. The campaign had been made up of debates between Lincoln and Douglas, and Lincoln had routed Douglas at every point. In his joint debate at Chicago Lincoln made one of his great speeches. Douglas replied and said he would conclude his address in the evening. When evening came he failed to appear. The next debate was at Peoria, where Lincoln made the speech which he refers to in one of the letters which I quote below. This speech showed Douglas that he could not compete with Lincoln. After the meeting was over he came to him and asked him to give up the joint debates, and proposed that neither he nor Lincoln should speak more during the campaign. This Lincoln agreed to, and both retired from the stump. The result of Lincoln's speeches, however, was such and the feeling against the Nebraska bill for the admitting of slavery into the territories was such that an anti-slavery legislature was elected. Of the majority, however, five were Democrats and the remainder Whigs. The pro-slavery democrats were scheming to see if they could not tie the vote or in some way complicate matters so as to re-elect General Shields, the Democratic senator, whose term had just ended, and who was a candidate to succeed himself. It was in regard to this election that the following letters were written. They were addressed to General Henderson, who has for years been one of the leading members of Congress from Illinois, and who forty years ago was a member of the Illinois legislature. The first letter reads:

"SPRINGFIELD, November 27th, 1854.  
"T. J. Henderson, Esq.

"My Dear Sir—

"It has come round that a Whig may, by possibility, be elected to the U. S. Senate; and I want the chance of being the man— You are a member of the Legislature, and have a vote to give— Think it over, and see whether you can do better than to go for me—

"Write me, at all events; and let this be confidential—

"Yours truly,

"A. LINCOLN."

To this letter Mr. Henderson replied that he would like to vote for Lincoln, but that he was in doubt whether he ought to throw his strength to him or to another candidate, named Williams,

both Lincoln and Williams being friends of his father and himself.

In reply Mr. Lincoln wrote the letter which I here give. The ink with which it was penned is almost as black today as when Lincoln wrote it:

"SPRINGFIELD, December 15th, 1854.  
"Hon. T. J. Henderson:

"Dear Sir: Yours of the 11th was received last night and for which I thank you—Of course I prefer myself to all others yet it is neither in my heart nor my conscience to say I am any better man than Mr. Williams—We shall have a terrible struggle with our adversaries—They are desperate and bent on desperate deeds—I accidentally learned of one of the leaders here writing to a member south of here in about the following language:

"'We are beaten—They have a clear majority of at least nine on joint ballot—they outnumber us—but we must out-manage them—Douglas must be sustained—We must elect the Speaker; and we must elect a Nebraska U. S. Senator or elect none at all—'

"Similar letters no doubt are written to every Nebraska member—Be considering how we can best meet and fool and beat them—I send you by this mail a copy of my Peoria speech—You may have seen it before; or you may not think it worth seeing now.

"Do not speak of the Nebraska letter mentioned above. I do not wish it to become public that I have received such information. Yours truly

"A Lincoln."

It was nearly three months after this last letter that the election occurred. Henderson gave his vote for Lincoln and on the first ballot Lincoln had a plurality, having forty-five votes. General Shields, the Democratic candidate, had forty-one votes, and the five anti-slavery Democrats voted for Lyman Trumbull. These five stuck to Trumbull for seven ballots and then Lincoln, seeing that there was danger that they might go to Shields, advised his friends to vote for Trumbull, and so Lyman Trumbull was elected. Upon going to the Senate Trumbull opposed Douglas and the Democrats on the slavery question, and in 1861 was re-elected to the Senate as a Republican. He was one of the first members of the Senate to propose the amendment to the Constitution for the abolition of slavery, and he aided Lincoln materially during his administration as President. Lincoln, I am told, was much disappointed in not getting to the Senate. His fight, however, brought him to the front as an anti-slavery leader, and it may be called the beginning of the wave which rolled him into the presidential chair.

If all of Lincoln's letters could be gotten together they would make a most interesting collection. He was an excellent writer, and the late W. D. Kelley of Pennsylvania, who was known as "Pig-iron Kelley," used to tell me that Lincoln compared with Shakespeare in genius, and that he was great as a writer, a statesman and soldier. Lincoln never wasted words in his writings. Here is a copy of a series of indorsements of his of a man who wanted to be chaplain in the army. Lincoln was President at the time and Stanton Secretary of War. The indorsements cover the back of the application and run down below on a slip of paper which has been pasted there to receive them. They read as follows:

Dear Stanton: Appoint this man chaplain in the army.

(Signed)

A. LINCOLN.

Dear Mr. Lincoln: He is not a preacher.

(Signed)

E. M. STANTON.

The following indorsements are dated a few months later, but come just below:

Dear Stanton: He is now.

(Signed)

A. LINCOLN.

Dear Mr. Lincoln— But there is no vacancy.

(Signed)

E. M. STANTON.

Dear Stanton: Appoint him Chaplain-at large.

(Signed)

A. LINCOLN.

Dear Mr. Lincoln: There is no warrant of law for that.

(Signed)

E. M. STANTON.

Dear Stanton: Appoint him anyhow.

(Signed)

A. LINCOLN.

Dear Mr. Lincoln: I will not.

(Signed)

E. M. STANTON.

The result was that the appointment was not made, but the man was evidently told that his papers would be kept on file, for they are to be seen in the War Department now, testimonies to the nerve of Stanton and the friendship of Lincoln.

This brevity is found in all of Lincoln's letters, but in none more than that which he prepared when giving a sketch of himself for Charles Lanman's Dictionary of Congress. The congressman of today uses from three hundred to a thousand words in the sketch which he prepares of himself for the Congressional Directory. Lincoln got the story of his life into fifty words. Here is what he wrote:

"Born 1809, in Harding county, Kentucky. Education, defective. Profession, lawyer. Have been a captain of volunteers in Black Hawk war. Postmaster at a very small office. Five times a member of Illinois legislature, and was a member of the lower house of Congress.

Yours, etc.,

A. LINCOLN."

Many other incidents of Lincoln's modesty might be found in his correspondence. While he wanted to go to the United States Senate, he did not think he was fit to be President, and there is an autograph letter of his, now owned by a man in Nebraska, which states his views on this subject. This letter was written April 26, 1859, to Mr. T. J. Pickets of Rock Island, Illinois. Among other things, it included the following:

"As to the other matter you kindly mentioned, I must in candor say I do not think myself fit for the presidency. I certainly am flattered and gratified that some partial friends think of me in that connection, but I really think it best for our cause that no concerted effort such as you suggest may be made. Let this be considered confidential.

(Signed)

"A. LINCOLN."

A railroad man showed me a copy the other day of a letter of Lincoln's returning a railroad pass and asking for another. The original letter was found during the war in one of the offices of a leading railroad company, and the man who owns it now, I am told, paid fifty dollars for it. I have not seen the original, but here is the copy, leaving out the name:

SPRINGFIELD, Feb. 16, 1853.

"B. B. Blank, esq.:

"Dear Sir: Says Tom to John: 'Here's your old rotten wheelbarrow. I've broken it up on it, I wish you would