

A Study of Character as Exemplified By
Two of Our Greatest Presidents.

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A question, that might interest the public of today is; Why Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt are among the best liked of our presidents? The writer in trying to answer this question has found it necessary to compare and contrast the different periods of their life.

Abraham Lincoln was born in a log cabin in Kentucky, February twelfth, of the year eighteen hundred and nine. This home was rude and uncomfortable. As his father was a poor western pioneer, they lived in a one-roomed cabin with a huge chimney on the outside, a single window, and a rude door. This poverty affected Abraham very little. For he grew to be robust and strong. When four years old, the family moved near Knob Creek, and here he began to go to school. This school depended upon the coming of some poor ambitious young man, who was willing to teach a few terms while he looked for an opening to

something better, for a teacher. The terms were irregular, their length depended on the time that the settlers felt able to board the master and pay his small salary. Abraham was an unusually bright boy at school, and made a good progress in his studies. He studied very hard and would gather spice-wood bushes, break them into small pieces and burn several together for the purpose of having a light by which he might pursue his studies.

Lincoln received his first ideas of public speaking from preachers and school-masters; and for years one of his delights was to gather his playmates about him and preach and thump until they were frightened into tears. Mr. Lincoln once said, "I went to school 'by littles' and in all it did not amount to more than a year."

As soon as the child was strong enough to follow his father in the fields, he was put to work at simple tasks. When seven years old the family moved to their new home in the wilderness of Indiana. An axe was put into the boy's hands.

and he set to work to aid in clearing a field for corn. He handled this most useful instrument till within his twenty-third year. During all of this living and hard work; he read books whenever he had the chance. His list of books was short but he knew them thoroughly and they were good books to know: the Bible, "Aesop's Fables," Bunyan's "Pilgrim Progress," "A History of the United States," Weems' "Life of Washington," and the "Statutes of Indiana". He borrowed these books from the neighbors to read. Later, Weems' "Life of Washington," became his own, and he could read it as he wished. And Washington became an exalted figure in his mind. When acting as a ferryman on the Ohio, in his nineteenth year, anxious to get through the books of the house where he boarded, before he left the place, he read, every night until midnight.

Men and boys often gathered in the evenings at the grocery store of their little town to discuss politics. Abraham became a favorite of the group and even argued slavery. He could read with effect all the poems and speeches in his var-

ious school readers and he could make a political speech so stirring that he drew a crowd about him every time he mounted a stump. He was becoming known as the backwoods orator. He wrote as well spoke and some of his production on temperance and politics appeared in the newspapers.

How differently will we see the boyhood and youth of our twenty-sixth president, Theodore Roosevelt. He was born in the great New York City; the twelfth of October, in the year of eighteen hundred and fifty-eight. His childhood home was happy and pleasant, with a beautiful mother; and a father, who rode and played with the children. The father and mother was chum and a companion as well as their just judge when occasioned - demanded. With such ties of love binding the home together, the whirlwind of anger and passion that swept over the country in the years of the Civil War, which our sixteenth president spent so much thoughtful time planning till he had grown old, had no power to break or embitter,

even though his mother was of the south. His father, though, not rich in the sense of today, had enough money to enable them all to live without working if they so chose.

Ted as perhaps his schoolfellows called him, attended for a short time the McMullen school, in New York City; but he was so frail in health that he was unable to continue and was placed under a private tutor at his home. The boy Theodore saw that to do anything he must first be strong. So he set about developing himself. He ran, he rode, he swam, he roamed through the hills of his Long Island home. What he did he made to a useful end. On his tramps through the woods he studied and classified the birds. He knew their song, their plumage, and their nests, so he learned something he wanted to know, and cultivated the habit of study, at the time when all boys are impatient to shirk, leaving every task unfinished. He soon grew strong and robust.

He was a delicate looking fellow

yet, not weighing over one-hundred and thirty pounds when he entered Harvard. Here he continued his exercise in the gymnasium, boxing, playing polo or at field play. Work was the larger part of his college life and he did not shirk it, and stood among the first twenty in his class. His specialties were the history of men, and animals included. He had a faculty of forgetting all else but the topic in hand, which is the faculty of getting things done.

His father had done good for so many; Theodore said, "I tried faithfully to do what father had, but I did it poorly." So he sought out a Sunday-school and a chance to teach as soon as he was settled in Harvard. Before Mr. Roosevelt finished college, he had started upon his literary career and finished his first book, "The Naval War of 1812," which took rank at once as an authority.

In March of the year, eighteen-hundred and thirty, the Lincolns moved to Illinois. Abraham drove one of the teams, and he succeeded

ed in doing a fair peddler's business on the route, had even succeeded in doubling his money.

After helping his father build a log cabin, he started out for himself, being a few months past twenty-one. He had nothing in the world not even a suit of respectable clothes; and one of his the first pieces of work he did was to split four-hundred rails for every yard of cloth to make a suit of clothes. Two things recommended him to his neighbors - he was strong, and he was a good fellow. His strength won him popularity; but his good nature, his skill in debate, his stories, were still more efficient in gaining him good will.

Mr. Lincoln made several on a ferry boat - down the Mississippi River carrying goods. On one of these he was offered a position in a store, at New Salem. He accepted this position - and when well settled, again took up his study. Before the winter was over he had become the most popular man there. Encouraged by his great popularity among his immediate neighbors, he decided to announce himself as a candidate for

General Assembly of the state.

Black Hawk War broke out now and Mr. Lincoln became enlisted in the militia. And was elected captain of the company from Sangamon County; but war did not last long. On his return home he began electioneering and was defeated the first and nearly only time, merely because of the democrats.

After this Mr. Lincoln went in partnership in a store. During his spare time he studied law and surveying. At twenty-six years of age he was in an encouraging position as a lawyer earning good fees, hopeful of being admitted to the bar in a few months. Also a member of the State Assembly, for which position several years later he declined a renomination and became a candidate for Congress. Mr. Lincoln was disappointed, when he discovered that two of his near friends were already candidates; but these friends decided to take turn in the three next nominations to Congress. So Lincoln was not elected to Congress till later. In his candidacy to Congress

he frankly announced his desire and managed his own canvass. Lincoln said to his friend, "The way for a young man to rise is to improve himself every way he can, never suspecting that anybody wishes to hinder him. Suspicion and jealousy never did help any man in any position".

Mr. Lincoln's sincere friendliness and his quaint humor soon won him a sure, if quiet, social position in Washington as it had done elsewhere. Mr. Lincoln was fond of bowling and often joined in other games during his idle minutes for exercise and amusement. He accepted success and defeat with like good nature and left the field at the conclusion of the game without a sorrow or a disappointment.

Between sessions of Congress during the summer, it happened that a boat by which he made part of the trip stranded in shallow water. No doubt it recalled the earlier days spent on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Anyway the devices of the boat interested him, and when he returned to Washington he took a model of a device with him, for

getting boats over shoals. His improvement was new and patentable and the model can now be seen in the United States patent office. When Mr. Lincoln's term was ended, he decided to abandon politics and to devote himself to law. So he located in Springfield, Illinois. His life here among many of his old friends was quiet and pleasant, where he could devote more of his time to his family. The pranks of his two boys seemed to be an endless delight to him.

The Republican party met June of eighteen-hundred and fifty-six to nominate candidates for the presidency and Lincoln entered the campaign with intense earnestness; but democrats again succeed him in the election.

Theodore Roosevelt like Mr. Lincoln held his first party office as a republican member of the State Assembly; only he was four years younger than Mr. Lincoln when he was elected. When twenty-six years old he was sent as a delegate to the Republican state convention. In this same year he purchased Elk Home and Chimney Butte Ranches in

North Dakota, where he lived two years - almost in the fresh open air, gaining strength and health, experiencing some of Mr. Lincoln's western life excluding the hardships. When he was called east to serve as mayor of his native state, he little resembled the weak young man of two years before. As a supporter of civil service reform, he introduced bills that became laws, affecting the government of New York City. He left this office of dignity and great importance ~~to~~ go to the war he had championed as just and right; he left his family of little children to expose his life daily and hourly in the very forefront of battle. Every friend blamed and warned him that he was wrecking a promising career; but he knew it was his just duty. So he went as colonel of the Rough Riders. They were fine looking men as they left; composed of his friends from the west and his college chums who had practised riding and shooting as much as their opportunities allowed. The campaign was hard; but the army came home suc-

cessful, famished, ragged, sore, enfeebled, with yawning-gaps in the ranks; to tell of his courage and unwearied patience.

He now became governor of his native state till the Republicans nominated him for vice-president. He met delegation after delegation with the frank avowal that he could serve the party and country as Governor of New York. And that was his ambition. But his countrymen thrust the dignity of this new office upon him and he was swept into it.

One brief year after this, and the nation wept at the bier of President McKinley. Mr. Roosevelt was spending his vacation with his family at their Long Island home, when he was called to Washington to take his place among the rulers of the earth.

Mr. Lincoln was fifty-one years old, in the year of eighteen-hundred and sixty. When a committee from Chicago brought to Springfield his nomination for the presidency. As this committee filed into Mr. Lincoln's home there was

a sore misgiving in their hearts. And as the chairman presented to him the letter notifying him of his nomination, they eyed their candidate with critical keenness. He made them think of a very humble man. His shoulders drooped as he stood, giving his form a look of irresolution. His eyes were downcast as he listened to the chairman's speech. His face gave an impression of a sad impenetrable man. As Mr. Lincoln began to reply to the speech of the chairman, He lifted his bent head - and the men were surprised to see his drooping form become erect and firm. The eyes beamed with fire and intelligence. His voice was calm and clear, his bearing frank and sure. His auditors saw that he was strong, dignified and self-possessed. And that here was a man who was master of himself. One of the delegates said later, "We might have done a more daring thing but we certainly could not have done a better thing."

Mr. Lincoln took no active part in the campaign. Whenever called upon to speak, all he

would consent to do was to appear and in a few words excuse himself. He replied to a friend once, "I have already done this many, many times; and it is in print and open to all who will read. Those who will not read or heed what I have already publicly said would not heed or read a repetition of it." But Lincoln was elected president, receiving one-half of a million popular votes more than any other candidate.

March, fourth of the year eighteen-hundred and sixty-one, at noon Mr. Buchanan met Lincoln, his successor, and escorted him to the capitol. The route of the procession was the historic one over which almost every president since Jefferson had traveled to take his oath of office; but the scene that Mr. Lincoln looked upon as his carriage rolled up the avenue was very different from that which one looks to-day. No great blocks lined the streets; instead the buildings were low, and there were numerous vacant spaces. Instead of asphalt, the car-

riage passed over cobble stones. Nor did the stately and beautiful approach to the capitol exist. The west front rose abrupt and stiff from an unkempt lawn. The great building itself was still uncompleted.

The inaugural address was simple and answered many of the questions before the people then. After hearing his address the question which most deeply stirred the country was, "Does Mr. Lincoln mean what he says?" "Will he really use the power confided to him to hold, occupy and possess the property and places belonging to the government?"

The president was called upon for an answer sooner than he had expected. War was the first and last problem for his solving. He considered all plans and actions slowly and thoughtfully before he allowed them to be enacted upon. His more impulsive people would become dissatisfied with his patient, thoughtful precaution. And so many complaints were made that there was doubt whether Mr. Lincoln would

be re-elected. Just then war began to be more successful for the unionists. So Lincoln was then the only man for the presidency. And as Grant said, "It would be impossible for anyone to think of the presidency as long as there was a possibility of Mr. Lincoln retaining it."

Six weeks after the inauguration, war was closed. There was a marked change in President Lincoln, his thin face had grown more haggard, its lines had deepened. His eyes were always sad as if in deep thought. His face wore an ~~expression~~ expression of serene joy as if conscious that the great purpose of his life had been achieved.

Several days later President Lincoln and wife with their guests were attending the theatre. The president was smiling at a scene that pleased him. When a man, who had entered the box unseen, aimed ~~at~~ at the president's head and fired, the bullet passed through his ~~head~~ head embedding itself in his skull. The next morning President Lincoln was dead. Men forgot that they had despised him, doubted him. They forgot his mistakes, his plodding

caution and his homely ways. They saw the vision of an awful and sudden disaster. They realized how he had worked to prevent the extension of slavery, to save the union. They saw how slowly, but surely, he had educated them to feel the importance of a moral struggle. The wisdom of his words, the sincerity of his acts, the steadfastness of his life were clear to them at last. But it too late now and their mourning for him was sincere.

Roosevelt was nominated for his second term of office in 1904. He received the largest popular vote cast in three-fourths of a century for any presidential candidate. His inaugural address was brief and general; but not vague. Questions of state were not considered in it. He declared that our prosperity should inspire us with gratitude toward God and not with a spirit of boastfulness. The president entered upon his new term with the best wishes of the entire nation and with the political support, in his outlined plans and purposes.

President Roosevelt thinks rapidly and his acts are result of good judgement instead

tial chair.

President Roosevelt has striven to do the just and right thing. He has represented the mass of Americans, and seems his service to speak their desires valiantly and fearlessly. This is what the people have elected him for and may ex- of him for it is his wish to act justly and right- ly. He wrote in a letter, "Whatever I do, old friend, be- it will be because after painful groping I see my duty in some given path."

We can now see the resemblances of our sixteenth and twenty-sixth presidents. By their pictures, we see that neither was a handsome man. Mr. Lincoln's face always has an ex- pression of deep thought; Mr. Roosevelt's is stern and fierce looking. So one would not think of their being in merriment, but they could enjoy a joke on themselves as well as on somebody else.

Many of their decisions were similar and perhaps it is because Mr. Lincoln was Mr. Roosevelt's hero. He once said to a friend, "I have asked myself, what in such a case would Lincoln have

of an impulse. He thinks first and acts afterward. In the Panama Case, which was an important question at the beginning of his administration. The end to be sought was the canal; the duties to be fulfilled were the preservation of the railroad and the keeping of peace; President Roosevelt foresaw that the consequences of allowing Columbian soldiers to land on the isthmus would be fighting in Panama, and a necessity of landing United States soldiers to guard the railroad. And he acted in this manner. Saving the lives of Americans, Panamanians and Columbians.

President Roosevelt had a desire to be of real and permanent service to the former slave states. Unlike other republican presidents, he appointed to office in the South fewer colored men, and in doing so, has not only decreased the quantity but improved the quality. President Roosevelt also appointed colored men living in the north to important positions in that section. These last acts caused the south believe, that it never had a warmer or better friend in the presiden-

done." President Lincoln would study a long time upon any plan, and when he acted, it was slowly and deliberately and he reached success. But our president of today is a rapid thinker, a good reasoner, - anxious to reach just conclusions; then acts as he thinks best for the country. Both of these presidents were strong, resolute and self-possessed; acting formal or informal as the occasion demanded with all people. They had simplicity, insight, conscience and common sense. But their best desire won them the good-will of all men. Their supreme ambitions were to find out the truth of the questions which confronted them in life, and their highest satisfaction was in following the truth discovered.