Coachman for Lincoln Tells of Experiences

Emancipator's Wife Walks Rather Than Ride After Horse Runs Wild—Driver Also Serves as President's Barber.

Joseph Christian was Abraham Lincoln's coachman and occasional barber during the last year or more of the civil war. He was little more than a boy then. In his later years he came to live in Madison, Ind., and in his old age was persuaded by Test Dalton and E. Albert Apple to tell some of his experiences while he was an attache of the White House and the story is told for McClure's magazine. He related a number of interesting anecdotes, among them the following:

One day I was driving the President and Mrs. Lincoln. One of the horses got the blind staggers, and began to toss its head and run wild. It took me several minutes to get it reined up against its mate and bring it to a standstill.

Mrs. Lincoln grew frightened and jumped right out of the carriage. Lincoln sat back calmly, without moving.

"The horse will probably be all right in a moment, madam," I assured her. "It just has blind staggers. It's a queer disease. Sometimes it lasts just a few minutes, and never happens again. But it may have another attack in a few minutes or a few hours, or a few days."

Lincoln Comes to Rescue.

But my explanation failed to reassure her, and Lincoln came to the rescue.

"Now, ma," he argued, gently, "you know I don't want you to walk. You'll be too tired. Get back in and we'll drive slowly."

"No, I'm going to walk," she insisted, still frightened at the horse's antics.

"All right," said Lincoln.

So I turned the horses and started back, at a clipping gait.

Looking back, I saw Mrs. Lincoln waving her arms for us to stop, but I pretended I didn't see her.

It was some time after our return that Mrs. Lincoln came in, tired and dusty.

"Hello, ma," said the President, "did you have a nice walk?"

She was wrathy, but Lincoln just smiled and that was the end of the affair.

I had been in Lincoln's service about three or four weeks when I first shaved him. He had an engagement at a hotel with some high official at 1 o'clock, and he asked me to be ready at that time.

Had Shaved Lee.

Toward noon I had the carriage cleaned up and ready. So I drove to the house and went up to Lincoln's room.

"Are you ready, Joe?" he asked, in his quiet, gentle voice. I said yes. "I don't know what to do," he said, in a worried tone. "I need a shave badly and my barber hasn't come yet."

A great idea came to me.

"Why not let me shave you, Mr. President?" I asked.

"Are you a barber, Joe?" He seemed somewhat astonished.

"No," I answered, "but I shaved some in the army. I used to shave Robert E. Lee. I've got his razor down in my trunk."

"Get the razor," decided Lincoln. "We'll try it."

I got the razor and returned to the President's room. The barber had a regular barber's chair of the old-fashioned kind right in the room. Lincoln took off his hat and collar. I shaved his upper lip and cheeks and under lip, but I left the beard on his neck from the chin line down, for he never shaved there.

"Joe," he said, when I got through, "you'll always be on hand when I need you, so you can expect to shave me two or three times a week from now on."

His beard was coarse, though there were but few hairs. It was the hardest beard I ever shaved—and I shaved for fifty-seven years. He shaved twice a week, sometimes three times, and generally he'd joke quite a bit while being shaved.

Washed Off Lather.

Since he was always considerate of others and willing to go out of his way to help any one, if I was in a hurry he'd say, "Never mind, Joe, I'll wash the lather off myself."

He gave me about $5 in tips every month. You see he'd been paying the barber $1 every time he was shaved.

In those days we had no regular harness grease. I had to use lamp black and then soap it down. I told Lincoln he might send for me when my hands and clothes were in bad condition and not be clean enough.

"That's all right, Joe, you come along just as you are," he said. There were no frills about Lincoln, he was very plain—one of the common people.

On the occasion of the levees, or weekly receptions to the public, I would help John, the footman, open the hack doors in front of the White House. Afterward I'd have to go through the reception halls to get back to the stables, or else go around the house; so I'd follow the crowd in and Lincoln would shake hands with me and jerk my arm a little and laugh in an undertone, and say, "Go on through, Joe, go on through."

Never Gets Tired.

Afterward he'd say, "Joe, don't you see me enough without coming to my receptions?"

"Yes," I'd answer, "but I never get tired."

Then he'd be pleased and laugh.

Two members of the House, two from the Senate, and two of the Cabinet came one morning during the war, while I was shaving Lincoln. I had lathered him and was stropping the razor. He said to send them right up to his room.

"Just take a seat, gentlemen," he said, "I'll be ready in a few minutes."

They began to talk to him about the negro question while I shaved him. Finally Lincoln could stand it no longer.

He got right out of his chair with his face covered with lather and began to talk and no one smiled.

I guess it takes a great man to do that.

Christian's explanation of the way he came into possession of his razor, as related in another part of the story, is that just before the outbreak of the civil war he enlisted in the 2d United States dragoons, of which Lee was lieutenant colonel.

When I was his bugler, and before I was regularly enlisted, they fed and clothed me, but couldn't put me on the pay roll. So one day while I was shaving him Lee told me I could take his razor and shave the boys in the company, to pick up all the money I could in place of a salary. The razor was his father's father's and had come down in the family. It was made in Sheffield in 1694. This razor I kept. Afterward it was my most cherished possession, for with it I shaved Lincoln. I still have the razor, and it is good for a second shave over the face, but not for the first. When they finally enlisted me I was one of the youngest soldiers carrying a gun in the United States Army.

That Lincoln once was arrested in Washington is revealed by Christian. This episode occurred while Christian was driving the President home from a trip to the arsenal and the navy yard.

Arrested While President.

The coachman recalls the incident as follows:

"We came up past the old Capitol. It was filled with rebel prisoners. A guard was pacing up and down in front of it. The rules and regulations of this improvised prison were that no carriages should pass unless they went fast. I didn't know about the rule, so I let the horses walk.

"The guard saw us and yelled: 'Trot along there; trot along there!' I didn't like the way he spoke to us so I paid no attention to him. He glared at me for a second, then yelled for the corporal of the guard, who came out from the doorway, ran in front of the horses, held up his gun and stopped us.

" 'Don't you know the rules and regulations of this prison?' he asked. I told him no.

" 'Well,' he snapped—for he was a young corporal and very important—'the rules are to drive by fast. I place you people under arrest.'

Lincoln Commends Corporal.

" 'Young man,' I asked, 'do you know whom you have arrested?'

" 'No, and I don't care,' he snapped.

" 'You have arrested the President of the United States.'

"In an instant the corporal reversed his gun, straightened up and stood at present arms, looking pale and scared.

"The President had been leaning out of the side of the carriage, watching us. He spoke now for the first time.

" 'Corporal,' he called kindly, 'come here.' The corporal obeyed. 'I'm very sorry we broke the rules,' said Lincoln apologetically, 'but neither my coachman nor I knew about them. I assure you it won't happen again.'

"The corporal was too scared to speak.

" 'Corporal,' continued Lincoln, 'come closer.' He did so. 'I wish we had more men at the head of the army like you. I wish all our soldiers were as good and accurate and obedient to orders as you are. Good day, corporal.' "

Interesting stories concerning the efforts of famous men to obtain foot comfort were told by Dr. Peter Kahler, footwear expert, who has come to Indianapolis to supervise the opening of his shoe store in the Claypool hotel building. Dr. Kahler's family has fitted shoes for Presidents of the United States from Lincoln to Harding.

Literature and biographical sketches are full of interesting anecdotes about our Presidents—their hobbies, peculiarities and physical qualities—but nowhere in the vast and multitudinous pages and books written does one find reference to presidential feet. To historians and writers, apparently, a President's feet are either too inconsequential or too lacking in individuality to capture the imagination, and hence have been ignored. But Dr. Kahler, known as the presidential bootmaker, tells some highly interesting facts about our chief executives' feet that historians, present and future, might well copy.

Has Interesting Diagrams.

Dr. Kahler's collection of diagrams of the Presidents' feet, made by himself and his father, is perhaps the most unique and rare collection in the country. Large sums have been offered for it—particularly for the diagram of Abraham Lincoln's footprints.

Lincoln's grave face is known to every school child in the country. But fewer than 100 people have ever seen a diagram of Lincoln's feet or know the story that revolves around its making.

While Dr. Kahler's experience with Presidents is confined to recent years, that of his father dated back to Lincoln,