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Abraham Lincoln

EDITED by ROY EDGAR APPLEMAN
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A MAN'S NEED OF HUMOR

Some of Mr. Lincoln's intimate friends once called his attention to a certain member of his Cabinet who was quietly working to secure a nomination for the Presidency, although knowing that Mr. Lincoln was to be a candidate for re-election. His friends insisted that the Cabinet officer ought to be made to give up his Presidential aspirations or be removed from office. The situation reminded Mr. Lincoln of a story.

"My brother and I," he said, "were once plowing corn, I driving the horse and he holding the plow. The horse was lazy, but on one occasion he rushed across the field so that I, with my long legs, could scarcely keep pace with him. On reaching the end of the furrow, I found an enormous chin-fly fastened upon him, and knocked him off. My brother asked me what I did that for. I told him I didn't want the old horse bitten in that way. 'Why,' said my brother, 'that's all that made him go.'

"Now," said Mr. Lincoln, "if Mr. ——— has a Presidential chin-fly biting him, I'm not going to knock him off, if it will only make his department go."

HENRY J. RAYMOND IN *Lincoln Talks*, EDITED
BY EMANUEL HERTZ.

Judge Holt expected, of course, that he would write "approved" on the paper; but the President, running his long fingers through his hair, as he so often used to do when in anxious thought, replied, "Well, after all, Judge, I think I must put this with my leg cases."

"Leg cases," said Judge Holt, with a frown at this supposed levity of the President, in a case of life and death. "What do you mean by *leg cases*, sir?"

"Why, why," replied Mr. Lincoln, "do you see those papers crowded into those pigeon-holes? They are the cases that you call by that long title, 'cowardice in the face of the enemy,' but I call them, for short, my 'leg cases.' But I put it to you, and I leave it for you to decide for yourself: if Almighty God gives a man a cowardly pair of legs how can he help their running away with him?"

SCHUYLER COLFAX, IN *Lincoln Talks*,
EDITED BY EMANUEL HERTZ.

Mr. Seward said: "Gentlemen, I will tell you one thing, Mr. Lincoln never tells a joke for the joke's sake, they are like the parables of old-lessons of wisdom. When he first came to Washington he was inundated with office-seekers. One day he was particularly afflicted; about twenty place-hunters from all parts of the Union had taken possession of his room with bales of credentials and self-recommendations ten miles long. The President said:

"Gentlemen, I must tell you a little story I read one day when I was minding a mudscow in one of the bayous near the Yazoo.

"Once there was a certain king," he said, "who kept an astrologer to forewarn him of coming events and especially to tell him whether it was going to rain when he wanted to go on hunting expeditions. One day he had started off for the forest with his train of ladies and lords for a grand hunt, when the cavalcade met a farmer, riding a donkey, on the road. "Good morning, Farmer," said the king. "Good morning, King," said the farmer. "Where are you folks going?" "Hunting," said the king. "Lord, you'll get wet," said the farmer. The king trusted his astrologer, of course, and went to the forest, but by midday there came on a terrific storm that drenched and buffeted the whole party. When the king returned to his palace he had the astrologer decapitated and sent for the farmer to take his place. "Law's sake," says the farmer when he arrived, "it ain't me that knows when it's goin' to rain, it's my donkey. When it's goin' to be fair weather that donkey always carries his ears forward so." "Make the donkey the court astrologer!" shouted the king. It was done. But the king always declared that that appointment was the greatest mistake he ever made in his life."

"Lincoln stopped there. 'Why did he say it was a mistake?' we asked him. 'Didn't the donkey do his duty?' 'Yes,' said the President, 'but after that time every donkey in the country assembled in front of the palace and wanted an office.'"

LESLIE'S WEEKLY, 1863, IN *Lincoln Talks*,
EDITED BY EMANUEL HERTZ.