

## 40. WALT WHITMAN SUMS UP LINCOLN

*Walt Whitman recorded in his Notebook for 1864 that he saw Lincoln almost daily as he lived at a place the President passed in going to and from his lodgings at the Soldiers' Home outside Washington during the hot and humid season of midsummer. Whitman then goes on to remark, "we have got so that we always exchange bows, and very cordial ones." Fortunately, this great American poet has left us his appraisal of Lincoln's character and personality.*

I should say the invisible foundations and vertebra of his character, more than any man's in history, were mystical, abstract, moral and spiritual—while upon all of them was built, and out of all of them radiated, under the control of the average of circumstances, what the vulgar call *horse-sense*, and a life often bent by temporary but most urgent materialistic and political reasons.

He seems to have been a man of indomitable firmness (even obstinacy) on rare occasions, involving great points; but he was generally very easy, flexible, tolerant, respecting minor matters. I note that even those reports and anecdotes intended to level him down, all leave the tinge of a favorable impression of him. As to his religious nature, it seems to me to have certainly been of the amplest, deepest-rooted kind.

WALT WHITMAN, IN *Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln by Distinguished Men of His Time*,  
EDITED BY ALLEN THORNDIKE RICE.