

M E M

In Rankin's new volume he quotes what Weik has to say on Lincoln's attitude towards Herndon's drunkenness. It seems to me this is of importance in connection with Lincoln's rather characteristic toleration with various reprobates that served him more or less in the War. He had a deep dislike to censuring other people's habits. He might hate them but his feeling towards the inviolability of individual rights was so strong that he was loath to criticise - evidently felt that if he could help at all, he could do it, as in the case of Herndon's drunkenness, so hateful and disgusting to him as we know, by unvarying kindness and toleration.

Rankin quotes a letter from a correspondent, whose names he does not give, dated July 9, 1923, who says: "Fifty years ago this month at Petersburg, in the shade of the trees then standing in the court house yard, I had a number of conversations with Wm.H.Herndon, the subject of which was Abraham Lincoln." The writer of the letter says that he expressed surprise to Herndon that he never had an appointment from Mr. Lincoln, and that he replied, "Sonny, I could have had any place for which I was fitted, but I thought too much of Lincoln to disgrace him. No, I wanted to be free, drink whiskey when I pleased."

There is what seems to me a very important report of a conversation with Herndon in regard to the legitimacy. If this man reports Herndon correctly and he told the truth to him then what he wrote in regard to Mr. Lincoln's telling him that his mother was an illegitimate child must have been a lie.