THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION DIVISION
MADISON

DEPARTMENT OF DEBATING AND PUBLIC DISCUSSION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

July 29, 1931

Miss Ida M. Tarbell
120 East 19th Street
New York, N. Y.

My dear Miss Tarbell:

Thank you so much for your willingness to cooperate with us in supplying selections that are especially worth while to our young people. We shall submit to you the cutting that is made by Professor Borchers of the Speech Department before we mimeograph it.

We have not paid a royalty for the cutting of any of these selections nor will we find it possible to do so. The members of the University faculty are paid by the Forensic Association to make the cutting, and since the funds of the Forensic Association are limited it will be impossible for them to attempt to pay any royalty.

We are sending you a copy of a selection so that you may know the form we are using. "Adapted" implies of course that it has been cut. If you prefer to have us say "Cut and adapted" we shall be very willing to do so in regard to this particular selection. Please note also the manner in which we have given credit to the magazine. If you have any suggestions to make in regard to a change we shall be very glad to follow your suggestions. We shall of course change Colliers Magazine to Collier's Weekly.

Very truly yours,

Almere L. Scott

Almere L. Scott, Director
Dept. Debating and Public Discussion

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THE WISCONSIN HIGH SCHOOL FORENSIC ASSOCIATION

THE KEY TO JIM'S HEART

The story of a boy, a dog--and Abraham Lincoln

T. Morris Longstreth

(Adapted by Gladys Borchers, Assistant Professor of Speech, University of Wisconsin.)

Severn sat looking into the fire for a moment.

"There is one Lincoln story that's never been told. It began about nine years ago, when Judge Shrader and I used to golf up at Lake Placid. We had a caddy up there who was one of the worst little liars I ever saw. But for some reason Shrader had taken a perverse interest in the fellow, whom I may as well call 'Jim.'

"We were on the course at the time and the judge had been reminded of a dog story. Jim had come up, and the judge had seen his eyes at the mention of dogs. The judge fancied he had found a key to Jim at last. He had. The secret of Jim was dog.

"At that time there was a Mrs. Adolph Berengren living up on the Hill during the summer. She was a sporty sort with lots of money and a vast quantity of meanness. She herself was common enough, but her meanness was of the very finest quality.

"Somebody in England had sent Mrs. Berengren a couple of hound pups from one of the famous kennels. You can imagine how the lady raged when one died and the other was stolen. Nobody remembered that Jim had seen them in their box when they were delivered at the station. Nobody knew that love at first sight had come to him while he was looking between the slats into those hound eyes. So nobody suspected that Jim was the thief. That explains how he came to be living down in the woods.

"It must have been rather beautiful — Jim's homecoming. He had built a little brush leanto in a desolate reach of unfrequented forest, had made a bed of balsam, and every evening thither he went with the edibles he had been able to earn or otherwise procure. You can imagine the lonely dog's delight at the coming of the one friend and feeder he had; and I hope you can imagine the one-centered love that the lonely boy had for the dog.

"None of us has known a love like that, for none of us has been so lonely. It was after Shrader had told his momentous story that the dog's full name became Abraham Blood.

"Shrader had been worrying a long time about Jim's petty lies and thefts, and took an occasion to tell that well-known story of Lincoln's overcharging some poor widow six cents, and then walking nobody knows how many miles at night to deliver the correct change.

"Jim drank it in. He pawed the teeing-off place with a ragged toe. 'What'd you say his name was?'

"'Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln. Didn't you ever know about him, Jim?' asked Shrader. 'The point is that the slightest fleck of injustice irritated Lincoln's soul like a cinder. Most of us common men would have let it go, of course. Maybe that's what keeps us common. But he couldn't rest, not a night.'

"I did not realize then that that one minute of talk had set Jim thinking a new thought. Now that I know all, I can see that he began to be different from that day. He began to stop lying, to stop swiping balls. Shrader got closer and closer to him, and repeated to me the incidents that meant so much to the kid: Blood did this, and Blood did that, and he was worried lest Blood should do the other thing.

"Late in August the judge was called home. But the night before he left, he came into my room in a great state of excitement.

"'Severn,' he said, 'Jim took me down to his place and I've seen something a man doesn't often witness — perfect love. Abraham Blood is a wonderful fox hound. Jim couldn't tell me where he came from, just said he 'came acrost' him. Calls him his brother. And the dog fairly assaulted him, he was so glad to see the boy when we arrived. There's a fineness in Jim I never dreamed of. You know how a hound's eyes look? Well, there was something like that in Jim's — a beautiful, strong tenderness underlaid with sorrow. There's something going on in Jim's soul we don't know about.

"'He'd read the Lincoln book I gave him, for he'd come back to it and quote and ask questions, some of them queer ones. He asked me what Lincoln would have done if he'd ever stolen a baby by mistake.

"'In answer to that I said that I supposed Lincoln would have jolly well trotted the youngster back as soon as he saw the mistake, as he did with the widow's pennies. 'But what if the kid had grown up and he loved it more than he loved himself and he couldn't give it back?' asked Jim. And the only thing I could keep on saying was that Lincoln would have been honest with himself, no matter how it hurt or what came of it.'

"The judge left, and I promised to keep an eye on Jim. He caddied for me and caddied well. He never mentioned Abraham Blood, however, or invited me to see him, and I might have forgotten the

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dog if it hadn't been for overhearing that Berengren woman discussing the theft one morning. Her voice, coarse and shrill, would have carried a mile, and both Jim and I heard her plainly say that now, if the thief ever crawled back to her with the dog and begged forgiveness, she'd have him drawn and quartered, or at least jailed for life, she was that upset over it. I looked at Jim. He was fumbling with the clubs and handed me a putter when it should have been a mid-iron.

"'The guilty angel,' I thought; 'I hope he keeps the dog.'

"September came and I left the club for a few days. When I said good-by to Jim I alluded to a possible job with the hunt, and said I'd be glad to help. He didn't brighten a bit.

"'Thank you, Mr. Severn,' he said; 'it's awful good of you - but I guess I'll be goin' somewhere else by that time.'

"The arrival of Abraham Lincoln in his life through that storekeeper story marked the opening gun in the great battle of his life. There had been no conflict before. He had followed the easiest way. But all summer he had lived with the image of Lincoln.

"Finally Jim arrived at his decision, and with tears that Abraham Blood could hardly understand. 'Yes sir, old boy,' I imagine him saying to the hound, 'if he could walk back twelve miles to give back six pennies, I reckon I ought to tote you around the lake. I reckon I ought, old brother, but I just can't.' Then he'd turn in and sleep on that old balsam-pile bed.

Severn paused a moment. "It was one of those cold, rainy days. I was walking around the lake, when I met Jim, carrying a big and beautiful hound in his arms. He didn't even nod.

"'Why don't you let him carry you for a change?' I said, and was immediately sorry, for I saw that it wasn't rain but tears running down his cheeks. He tried to smile. "Where are you going with your dog?'

"'It isn't a dog, it's six cents,' he said.

"'Six cents,' thought I. Then I remembered that Lincoln story on the tee.

"'I'm keeping friends with Mr. Lincoln,' he said very low, and fresh tears welled up in his eyes.

"Abraham Blood, sensing fate, looked up and licked his nose. A man doesn't stare at a naked heart, bleeding, if he can help it. I hope Jim understood the grip I gave him. I swear I couldn't speak.

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"He went up on the Hill, up that little Calvary he'd made for himself, or rather Lincoln had made for him. There are two conversations that will never be recorded. One you can imagine - the one the broken-hearted boy had with his dog when he explained to him that they must part. The other conversation you can't imagine, but I can tell you what happened:

"The boy walks into Mrs. Berengren's with the dog in his arms, insists on delivering it to the lady in person, does deliver it and confesses, when asked, that he stole it. What does she do? Thank him? Give him back the hound? Or even offer to let him share it with her? Any of the things a normal woman with any mother in her would have done? By thunder, no! She arrests him. Shades of Lincoln's mercy! She arrests him, locks him up, and in due time, for he hasn't a friend at hand, he is brought up before the Circuit Court.

"Of course it sounds ridiculous to us. But the boy, sensitive, was stabbed in the very act of doing what he thought was the right thing.

"I was called on the telephone. The court was already sitting: meaning that a few officials and Mrs. Berengren and Jim were seated rather intimately round a table in the big room. I had been told nothing. The sight of Jim there was a shock. I did not know that Judge Shrader, lover of dogs and men and all things genial, could assume so terrible a look. It thrilled me. I looked from him to Jim, pale, lean, worn with a sort of hopelessness.

Then Shrader told the whole story to Mrs. Berengren as I have told it to you. The heavens began to open above Jim as he came to realize that Shrader was praising him before us all. A wonderful look came over his face while he listened, a strikingly fine look.

"I wish you could have seen the look in his dark eyes as the judge said to Mrs. Berengren, 'You blind woman, couldn't you recognize sacrifice when you saw it before you? Couldn't you share it when it was offered you? There was the spirit of the great Lincoln working, and you never saw it! I tell you Lincoln would have loved this lad! He tried to keep friends with Lincoln though it cost him his heart! And he succeeded! I tell you, Lincoln and he are friends! . . . Jim, I could not pass sentence on a friend of Lincoln's! You're acquitted!'

"It was a beautiful moment. The stony officials were all choked up, and Mrs. Berengren, under the judge's fearful lashing, had begun to wilt.

"Jim walked around the table to her, his eyes shining, his face transfigured.

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"'You're goin' to give Blood back to me, ain't you?' he asked pitifully.

"The woman burst into a passion of weeping. 'Oh, I wish. . . I wish. . .' She choked for a moment, then turned and flung out her hands.

"'Blood's dead!' she wailed. . .

"The hound had cried and cried for Jim until it got on her nerves, and she'd had it killed!

I suppose by now you've all guessed who he is - Jim Lossen.

Severn had finished. A moment later, before anyone had left the room, the outer door slammed and Lossen himself came in with a covered basket.

Dripping wet, the man strode up to the fire; and his face shone with rain and also with happiness. "I just had to show you all the prize package," he said, and opened the basket, displaying six of the cutest little hound puppies that were ever going to worry a fox.

"Whose are they?" asked someone.

"Mine," he answered. "Their mother is the old one that Mrs. Berengren brought me from England last year." And then in a low tone that swept our hearts, he added, "I had another pup of the same mother . . . once."

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