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ILLUSTRATIONS

for

CHAPTER XVII

1) Fac-simile of two pages of record in the James Rutledge family Bible.

This Bible is now on exhibition in the Lincoln Museum of New Salem.

2) Rutledge Tavern at New Salem as reproduced for the Lincoln-New Salem Pageant in 1918.

This picture shows the relative position of Museum and Tavern. It shows, too, a typical Sunday and holiday crowd of visitors.

This photograph was taken by Grorg on May 19, 1921, at the dedication of the Museum, furnished by H. W. Fay, Custodian of Lincoln's Tomb.

3) Rear of Rutledge Tavern as reproduced for the Lincoln-Salem Pageant.

Notice the pump. This stands on the location of the old mill. When the excavators were at work restoring the locations of the cabins, the well was opened and in the bottom was found a windlass and bucket. As ~~the Committee was going to put a sweep in the well, the discovered prevented an anacronism.~~

Photographed by L. A. Warren.

4) Pewter Coffee Pot used by Mrs. James Rutledge in the Rutledge Tavern.

This coffee pot is now on exhibition in the Lincoln Museum at New Salem.

5) Mrs. James Rutledge and Daughter Ann at the door of Rutledge Tavern in the New Salem Pageant.

The costumes worn in the pageant were practically all of the period, and most of them owned by Menard County families.

6) Lincoln and Ann Rutledge - a scene from the Pageant.

7) Grave of Ann Rutledge in Oakland Cemetery, Petersburg, Ill.

Ann Rutledge was first buried in the Concord cemetery, several

miles from New Salem, but in May, 1890, the remains were removed to Oakland Cemetary. Here a small rough boulder bearing only her name was the only marking until 1921. Then the handsome granite block, bearing McMaster's immortal sonnet, was placed at the head of the grave.

(Miss Marshall: It seemed to me just as well to use no other Lincoln in this number than the one in the pageant presentation. This gives us but seven pictures, but it seems to me sufficient.)

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but corrected

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

CHAPTER XVII

Ann Rutledge

No episode in Abraham Lincoln's life has been more maltreated than that of the love and loss of Ann Rutledge. It was his first romance - his only real romance. It was cut short by the death of the girl, and there is no doubt that he was shaken to the very core by his grief - no doubt that his whole life was affected by the blow. But as the story has grown in repeated tellings, it has become largely a study in morbidity. On one side it pictures a young girl who knew her mind so poorly that she never gave Lincoln a full, free love, but after accepting him so tormented herself with thoughts of one to whom she had earlier pledged herself and who had not only deceived her as to his very name but had apparently deserted her, that she brought on the brain fever from which she died. On the other side, we have a young man so poorly balanced mentally that for weeks after his loss he walks on the edge of insanity - unfit to care for himself, wandering at night about the country, muttering incoherent laments.

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One cannot be too thankful that the work of recent Lincoln lovers has cleared this romance of the clouds of

and turgid sentiment that have enveloped it and brought out firmly and finally I hope its simple touching lines.

Thanks to those who are restoring the town of New Salem and getting together there a pioneer museum of which Lincoln and Ann Rutledge arethe centre, thanks to Jane Hamand of Iowa who has made a specialty of Rutledge history in her choice Lincoln collection now in the library at Decatur, Illinois, we have material for that authentic setting which always does so much to give reality - truth - naturalness to any human drama.

I hold, however, as most important in clearing the story of its morbid streaks, the chapter on Ann Rutledge in Henry B. Rankin's "Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln," published in 1916. No one who has written of the two young people had a better opportunity to know the truth of their relationship than Mr. Rankin - no one who by temperament, dignity of thought and feeling, carefulness of expression has been better prepared to tell what he knew. Mr. Rankin's mother, though some years older than Ann Rutledge, was not only her teacher and friend but her confidant at the time of her engagement to Mr. Lincoln. Henry Rankin, borning in 1837, thus knew first hand from an intelligent, cultivated woman, in whose father's family as later in her husband's family, Lincoln had always been a friend. Mr. Rankin himself grew up in Petersburg, played as a boy around the fast disappearing cabins of deserted New Salem, always went to the court house when Lincoln was there to see and hear him, and through all his youth heard his

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family and neighbors go over their recollections of the early days and Lincoln's part in them. When he was about twenty-one years of age he went into the office of Lincoln and Herndon in Springfield and for four years was more or less constantly associated with the firm.

Among the treasured possessions in Mr. Rankin's carefully chosen Lincoln library is a worn book, inscribed on its front cover "Autographs." The very first of the collection is that of Abraham Lincoln.

"Today, Feb. 23, 1858, the owner honored me with the privilege of writing the first name in this book.

"A. Lincoln."

Below these lines Mr. Herndon, Mr. Lincoln's partner, wrote at the same time the lines below. I do not know of any minor document which shows more clearly the difference in the two men:

"The struggles of this age and succeeding ages for God & Man - Religion - Humanity & Liberty with all their complex and grand relations - May they triumph and Conquer forever, is my ardent wish and most fervent soul-prayer

Feby 23d 1858 Wm H. Herndon"

Mr. Rankin later became a banker in Petersburg, and there, some forty years ago, was stricken with a paralysis which has kept him on his back all the years since. Of a cheerful and courageous spirit, he accepted his physical handicap and has led a life not only of remarkable business activity - I am told that he

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has more than doubled his fortune from his bed - but he - more important - led an active intellectual and amazingly beautiful spiritual life. Always a lover and a student of Lincoln, he resolved a few years ago to set down his personal recollections of the man. Among these is the chapter to which I referred above as contributing, in my mind, the most reliable, intelligent and sympathetic study that we have ever had of Ann Rutledge and Lincoln. With these materials adding to and clarifying what has been collected in other ways, chiefly by Wm. H. Herndon, the story comes out clearly and beautifully! The tragedy with which it ends is a natural tragedy, not one clouded by the introspection of a neurotic young girl or the abandonment of all controls of an equally neurotic young man.

When Lincoln came to New Salem in the summer of 1831, as a clerk in a store, hidden from the main part of the town by a bend in the road, a section which with its gander pulling, cock fighting and drinking was outside the pale of the more respectable portion of the community, there was at least one girl of unusual attractiveness in the little settlement; she was the daughter of one of the leading citizens, a half owner in the mill and the owner of the tavern, James Rutledge, a South Carolinian by birth, who had come into Illinois some years before from Kentucky, bringing with him a wife and three children, the youngest of them Ann. The one thing upon which all of those who have left personal recollections is that Ann Rutledge grew to be a healthy,

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attractive girl, of an unusually happy disposition, well trained, industrious, ambitious. And this we would expect for the Rutledges were of a fine type, with traditions of orderly living, ambitious for their children, and Ann particularly had responded to their anxiety that all of the nine children should somehow get an education. When Lincoln arrived in New Salem Ann was not only her mother's aid in the work of the four-room tavern, she was active at the spinning wheel and quilting frame, and studying regularly under Mentor Graham, the schoolmaster.

Naturally enough, Lincoln would not be long in finding out that this charming girl had a lover. Across the street from the Rutledge tavern - so near that one could call across - was the general store of Samuel Hill and John McNeill, both of whom had tried for Ann's favor. The latter had won, but as she was eager for more schooling, so Lincoln would early learn, had determined before she was married to spend one year at least in the academy at Jacksonville, some seventy-five miles away.

Now, one of the acquaintances that Lincoln made at the start in New Salem was the school master, Mentor Graham, and to him he went constantly for help in his studies. The schoolhouse did not stand on the ridge with the little group of dwellings but on a hillside to the south, not far from the road which led out to Springfield. It was natural enough that the two young people should be drawn together over their books under Mentor

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Graham's tuition; that they should walk back and forth together to consult him. The tradition is that when Lincoln was studying grammar, Ann Rutledge worked with him, and that it was to her he gave the book when he was through with it. The inscription on the flyleaf "Ann Rutledge is now studying grammar," is believed to have been written in Lincoln's hand. At least the book went down in the family, and it was treasuredfor years by a cousin of Ann's, W. W. Rutledge, who again and again refused offers of large sums of money for the book, but finally placed it in the hands of Miss Hamand for her Decatur collection, only because he knew that there it would have the care that it deserved.

One cannot go through the streets of the little town and see the relation of the houses and shops in which the people were living and working without realizing how thw two young people - grammar aside - would be thrown constantly into each other's company. There were all the local merry-makings - quiltings, corn-huskings, picnics, and there werelong horse-back rides (in the museum at New Salem now Ann Rutledge's side saddle holds a place of honor). There were the nightly gatherings in cold and wet weather around the fireplace in the living room of the Rutledge Inn. It was a pleasant room, I have no doubt. The few possessions that we have dating back to that time show that there was refinement, interest in good things, in the family. There is a fine old pewter coffee pot in the New Salem museum,

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out of which Mrs. Rutledge poured coffee for her family. There is the family Bible with its carefully filled out lists of births and deaths. There is the copy of the hymn and song books from which night after night they sang together - The Watt's Psalm Book - The Missouri Harmony. It was from the latter that Lincoln himself used to try to sing, it is said, though by all accounts he had little either of ear or voice. "Legacy" was a song in The Missouri Harmony with which he used to tease Ann's little sister Jane, who tells of having run out of the room blushing whenever he sang it to her - a modest little girl certainly, for the verses are harmless enough.

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Another meeting place for Ann and Lincoln was ~~in~~ the home of Mr. Rankin's mother, the daughter of Col. Matthew Rogers, an early settler in the "Sangamon Country," living some four miles to the east of New Salem. Lincoln had been first drawn to the Rogers home by the books the Colonel had brought from the East, books of which he became a borrower. Not only did the Rogers have books, they had newspapers that could not be found elsewhere. Then, too, there were in the family three or four young men near Lincoln's age, who had had excellent schooling, one or two of whom were ~~not~~ carrying on medical studies. These were attractions enough, but it is not unfair to say that Lincoln may have found another in the fact that Ann Rutledge also went regularly to the Rogers home, where Mr. Rankin's mother, a teacher, was tutoring her for the Jacksonville Academy.

And so the acquaintance went on, quite naturally and intimately, based on mutual ambitions and the mutual activities necessary to realize these ambitions. There is not a hint, so far as I find in any of the recollections that McNeill himself resented in any way this intimacy. He did disapprove, it is said, of Ann's spending a year in Jacksonville Academy. He wanted to be married. He was, for the time, a rich man. ~~She~~ does not see it in the restoration of the little store of which he was part owner, across the street from the Rutledge tavern, but he had a farm

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outside, and was a clever trader - evidently a natural money-maker, though all agree a man of cold and reserved nature.

So things went on for a couple of years after Lincoln arrived in New Salem. He moved nearer to the Rutledge tavern. When he and Berry acquired their store in was directly facing the front door of Ann's home. There used to be a big tree in front of this store, the roots of which the New Salem restorers told me were recently unearthed. Under this tree Lincoln stretched with his books in idle hours and when Ann sat at her spinning wheel in the shadow of the cabin in the afternoon or sewed or studied there, he could call across to her, run across and visit, and no doubt did many a time.

But the store petered out in 1833, and the Rutledges moved to their farm, seven miles to the north-west. Lincoln staid on, I have often wondered how much Ann Rutledge had to do with his holding on in New Salem in those months of uncertain occupation. He was too keen eyed, too understanding of people, not to realize that McNeill was moody and restless. He had decided that he must go East, so he told his friends. He was going to get his father and mother and bring them back and put them on his farm. Finally, he sold his interest in the store, and early in the spring of 1834, he left. Lincoln, now postmaster of New Salem, must have realized that weeks and weeks went on and no letter came back from McNeill. He must have realized Ann's anxiety almost as soon as her parents did; but he did not know

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outside, and was a clever trader - evidently a natural money-maker, though all agree a man of cold and reserved nature.

Lincoln's daring venture into the mercantile field, described in a previous chapter, finally brought him from the northern end of the settlement into a store side by side with that of McNeill and directly facing the front door of Ann's home. There used to be a big tree in front of this store, the roots of which the New Salem restorers told me were recently unearthed. Under this tree, Lincoln stretched with his books in idle hours and when Ann sat at her spinning wheel in the shadow of the cabin in the afternoon or sewed or studied there, he could call across to her, run across and visit, and no doubt did many a time.

The store petered out in 1833, but Lincoln staid on. I have often wondered how much Ann Rutledge had to do with his holding on in New Salem in those months of uncertain occupation. Did he realize there might be a chance for him later? He was too keen eyed, too understanding of people, not to see that McNeill was moody and restless. He had decided that he must go East, so he told his friends. He was going to bring back his father and mother and put them on his farm. Finally he sold his interest in the store and, early in the spring of 1834, left. Lincoln, now postmaster of New Salem, must have noticed that weeks and weeks went on and no letter came back from McNeill. He must have realized Ann's anxiety almost as soon as her parents did; but he did not know

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that the girl, not hearing from her lover, had confided to them that just before saying good-bye, McNeill had told her a strange story, that he had thought it best to change his name, because that his real name was McNamara, that the family fortunes had been low in the East and that he had come West to redeem them

The girl could not but have doubted the explanation. Her family and friends, when they learned the truth, doubted him still more, and that, joined with his long silence - a silence later explained by the fact that he had been ill - led them to believe that the man was unworthy of her trust. Certain it is that as time went on and nothing was heard of McNeill, the girl's feelings changed. ~~She finally made up her mind that he was not going to return.~~

Lincoln was on the ground, and making his way fast. He was not only deputy surveyor of Sangamon county, but in 1854 he had been elected to the Assembly. He had begun to study law. He was respected and backed by the best people in the vicinity. The whole community began to realize before he went to Vandalia for his first term in the Assembly that he was thoroughly in love with Ann; but it was not until the spring of 1835, when McNeill or McNamara, had now been gone over a year, that the two young people came together. There seems no doubt at all that Ann was as happy as Lincoln in this engagement. They were going to be very sensible; Ann was to have her year in Jacksonville, Lincoln was to finish his law studies and be admitted to the bar in 1836; then he would settle in Springfield and they would be married.

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Mr. Rankin says that his mother told him that it was in the early summer of 1835 that Ann first confided to her that she had become engaged to Mr. Lincoln. She talked freely to Mrs. Rankin then of the absence and neglect of McNamar., acknowledging that her own judgment and heart at length approved the advice of both her own family and the few friends to whom she had confided the perplexities through whichshe had for months been passing. "My mother said," Mr. Rankin goes on, "that in the conversation with her she manifested no regret or wavering in the choice she had made. On the contrary, there was a decided spirit of offended maidenly dignity manifested in all the references she made to McNamar, - such, my mother said, as could be expected of a well-bred southern girl under circumstances showing such unaccountable neglect."

The year after Mr. Lincoln's death, in November of 1866, Mr. Herndon gave a lecture in Springfield, Ill, which he called "Abraham Lincoln, Ann Rutledge, New Salem, Pioneering, and the Poem," - the poem was "Why Should the Spirit of Mortal be Proud." It was the second of a series of three lectures which he proposed to give on Mr. Lincoln's life. In opening his lecture, Mr. Herndon emphasized his desire for facts and truth, but a more rambling story than he told and a slimpsier foundation of facts for his conclusion, it is hard to find in all Lincolniana. It is

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The story Mr. Herndon told in this lecture of Ann Rutledge's attitude of mind after her engagement to Mr. Lincoln is a direct contradiction to that of Mrs. Rankin.

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in this lecture that he lays down as a fact his theory of the cause of Ann Rutledge's death: "Her word of promise was out to two men at the same time, both of whom she dearly loved, the consciousness of this and the conflict of duties, love's promises and womanly engagements, made her think, grow sad, become restless and nervous. She suffered, pined, ate not and slept not. Time and struggle, as supposed and believed by many, caused her to have a raging fever, of which she died on the twenty-fifth of August, A.D. 1835."

So faras the actual personal recollections quoted by Mr. Herndon in this lecture go, there is only the flimsiest basis for this interpretation; and yet biographers generally, myself included, have accepted more or less at face value this morbid explanation. It is Mr. Rankin who has cleared the matter up, giving us a natural reason for the girl's death.

It seems that the spring and summer of 1835 was hot and wet through all of the Sangamon country, and that after several months of this weather, there was an outbreak of what was called "bilious fever." There was hardly a household for miles around New Salem in which there was not some one ill. At the Rutledges there were several laid low, Ann being among the last. During this outbreak, as is the custom always in pioneer communities, those who had been spared became nurses. Lincoln was very active among his friends who were suffering, and, naturally, particularly attentive to the Rutledges. When Ann fell ill, he was already seriously worn out. Indeed, Mr. Rankin believes, from his mother's

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first-vision of

In the picture Mr H.

In it he said down his thing of Real-

A. R. Mixed

The picture turned out as reading

as the title - but in it Mr H. [illegible] first-vision

Mr H. set-down for the first time

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statement, that for nearly a month before the girl's death, he had himself been suffering from chills and fever, only keeping himself going by heroic doses of the favorite remedies of the time. As long as there was a hope of saving Ann, he persisted in fighting his own illness, but when finally, on August 25, 1835, the girl died, Lincoln went completely to pieces.

The girl's death came to him as a supreme tragedy - the failure of the most beautiful hopes that he had ever entertained. It is little wonder that, ill as he was in body, stricken as he was in mind and heart, he should have gone through a period of terrible despair. Fortunately for him there were understanding friends at hand to give him both the sympathy and the care he needed. One gets a high idea of the quality of neighborly kindness current in New Salem in 1835 from the way everybody rallied to Lincoln's help at this moment of distress. Among the strongest and wisest of the town's citizens was good Dr. John Allen - a physician of hearts and souls as well as bodies all agree in calling him. Dr. Allen had cared for Ann Rutledge to the last and now that she was gone he took charge of Lincoln, bringing him to the home of his old friends the Bowling Greens. Here Lincoln had long been like one of the family. Both Squire Green and Aunt Nancy were of that kind we call the "salt of the earth", and they nursed Lincoln as if he had been a son.

It was not long before he had thrown off his fever and was at work - surveying, reading his law books, preparing for the extra session of the Assembly called for December.

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That he should have had during his illness and for weeks after he was about hours of uncontrollable grief seems to me to be expected. That he should have gone again and again to Ann's grave and wept over it is what any man so stricken would have done. To cry out that he could not bear the thought of rain and snow upon her grave was what those who have loved and lost through all time have done. It was the bitter grief of a man who had loved much and lost all.

But this was not insanity, as Mr. Herndon insinuated in the lecture I have mentioned above. It was not even the "partial dethronement" he declares. I have gone over carefully the various interviews and letters from which Herndon quotes in this lecture and later in his "Life" and cannot find in them any substantial basis for the incoherent utterance which he puts into Lincoln's mouth to give, as he says, "a fair idea" of his "mental state and condition" after Ann Rutledge's death:

> "Who am I and what, 'mid nature's profoundest uncertainties, that come and go like chance, whither, no one knows. There, the cocks crow. Did I not read - but, stay, did I not read law beneath the shade of this tree, grinding 'round the sun? I love her. Oh! immensities above me, below me, and around me.
>
> "The dogs, the very dogs bark at me. These limbs and legs, feet and hands, are mine; yet 'tis strange! and ah! thou mysterious state of things. Isn't fate, chance, Providence, God - that so unwinds the world's and all their life? Grief! What's that? I'm tired and weary. The clothes I've hot on and wear, I know are mine, and yet they seem not to be. . . . . .
>
> "What's that in the mill pond, going splash, splash? 'Twas a fish, I guess. Let's go and feed it, and make it joy, and be happy. I love her, and shall marry her on tomorrow's

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eve. So soul be content, and endless joy shall come. Heart of mine be still, for remember sweet tomorrow eve. Oh! thou calmest, most boisterous profoundest uncertainties of things, hold off, or take another path not coming here. What! did I dream? Think; what did I say? It cannot be. No, it cannot be. She's dead and gone - gone forever. Fare thee well, sweet girl! We'll meet again."

Mr. Herndon protests - over-protests - in setting out to write his story of Ann Rutledge and Abraham Lincoln that "truth in history" is his "sole and only motive" but this morbid and ludicrous soliloquy in no way serves the truth - it obscures and disterts it.

But if we have no authority for saying that Lincoln "went insane" after Ann Rutledge's death, we have every reason to believe that he had received a blow which changed his outlook on life. Many and various interpretations have been given of the effect the death of Ann Rutledge had on him. One of his legal associates in Illinois once declared that after he recovered enough to go about his business, he "leaped wildly" into public life. This of course is pure fiction; Lincoln was already in public life, serving his first term in the Assembly when Ann Rutledge died. If he ever "leaped wildly" into politics, he did it in 1832 when, on as little apparent backing as ever a young man had, he offered himself for the Assembly. Another has told in great detail how in his last interviews with Ann Rutledge, she obtained a promise from him to become a Christian, in her sense. There seems to be no

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basis at all for this statement. Others have seen in this the dawning of his first devotion to freedom, to the nation. Edgar Lee Masters has made the noblest contribution to these speculations in the sonnet which in recent years has been engraved on a bronze tablet and set into the great boulder which marks the grave of Ann in the cemetery of Petersburg:

"Out of me unworthy and unknown
The vibrations of deathless music;
'With malice toward none, with charity for all'.
Out of me the forgiveness of millions toward millions,
And the beneficent face of a nation
Shining with justice and truth.
I am Ann Rutledge who sleep beneath these weeds,
Beloved in life of Abraham Lincoln,
Wedded to him, not through union,
But through separation.
Bloom forever, O Republic,
From the dust of my bosom!"

What the death of Ann Rutledge did to Abraham Lincoln was to open wide the vein of melancholy in his nature. His mind must have gone back again and again to the summer of 1818 when Pigeon Creek valley of Indiana had been swept by a scourge of disease not unlike that from which he had just suffered in the Sangamon country. Then it was his mother who had been taken from him - now it was his love.

Was he always to lose those he loved best?

Mr. Herndon believes that it was in this period of desolation that Lincoln first came upon those verses on the transientness of life which men heard him quote at intervals as long as he lived:

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"Oh! why should the spirit of mortal be proud? -
Like a swift-fleeing meteor, a fast-flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
He passeth from life to his rest in the grave."

Again and again he repeated to friends the entire fourteen melancholy stanzas. Death was everywhere.

It seems probable that it was in this period, too, that Volney's "Ruins" took a deep hold on his imagination. I cannot but believe that Volney's picture of the passing away of civilizations, one people building on the tombs of another, one city growing on the ruins of another, became vastly more vivid in the light of the sweeping out of love and romance from his life. But whatever he suffered, whatever light went out of life for good and all, he did not lose his grip on realities. On the contrary, he seems to have taken hold harder than ever, for the next four or five years work fixed Lincoln permanently as a factor in the life of Illinois. It is to his first period of actual notable achievement that we now turn.

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