IN MR. LINCOLN'S TOWN

"What's the matter, Billy, something gone wrong?" I had dropped into Billy Brown's drug store on the Public Square of Springfield, hoping to find him free for what he loved as well as I did - a talk about Mr. Lincoln. ~~But~~ The prospect was not hopeful. Billy plainly was cross. He ~~put back~~ banged the big glass jar from which he'd been measuring ~~powders with a bang~~ quining back to its place on the shelf, he dusted the scales with an angry flourish and when he rinsed his hands in the wash basin at the back of the store, he did it with an impatient splash that sent the water flying and made him mutter something which sounded like "Gosh dang it."

But as I'd heard Billy himself say apologetically more than once, he "just couldn't stay mad". He didn't now. His face cleared with the drying of his hands and he came back to the front of the store, a welcoming if slightly sheepish smile on his face.

"Glad to see ye," he said. "Come in and take "The Chair" - "The Chair" being the sacred old Windsor in which, as Billy never failed to tell a visitor of whom he approved, Mr. Lincoln had "set" hours and hours back in the '40s and '50s."

"Yes, sir, I wuz out of temper-all right now. It wuz that feller you see goin' out as you kum along. Been in here ~~bellyachin' around~~ whinin' about bein' a failure - I'll have to admit he's havin' a hard time - had to give up a little business he'd started - too bad, but what's that? He's got his trade, ain't he? Started his business on that and nothin' can take that away. More'n that he's got a good wife and

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he owns his home and he ain't got any debts but what he can work out - and here he is tellin' what a hard time he's havin' and how he's lost his courage and that a man whose nearin' forty ain't got any chance and the country's goin' to the dogs - monopoly eatin' it up.

"Well, I finally bust right out and I said "See here, Jim, you ought to be ashamed of yourself - you born in this town where Abraham Lincoln lived and where his grave is talkin' about givin' up at forty. Think you're the only man who ever had to start over - thought he'd lost everything. You ain't as old as Abraham Lincoln wuz when he thought that. What did he do? He did just what you'd oughter do and would if you want a baby. He went to work at his old trade and that's what you got to do - went to work and he came out a bigger man than he'd ever been if he hadn't had all that trouble - Git out here and git a job."

"Well, Jim looked sorter scared, said somethin about not bein' any Abraham Lincoln which it wasn't necessary to tell me, and he went off . If he don't get some carpenter work right away, I'm goin' after him. Blamed if I'll see any man in Mr. Lincoln's town give up at forty if I can help it."

"Believe that - Billy. That Mr. Lincoln would never have been the great man he was if it hadn't been for his losing out in '49?

"Believe it - course I do, knew it - know it because I saw it - went on right under my eyes.

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"Queer aint it how a lot of men long about forty, for one reason or another, find out sudden-like that life aint quite so easy or quite so sure as they thought it would be - comes on a man that things don't taste so good, sorter flat - sometimes it's one thing and sometimes it another and sometimes it's several things comin' in a heap. There's growin' old - curious how a man will go on for forty or fifty years, never thinkin' he can git old. Sees everybody doin' it - losin' their hair, gettin' stiff in the joints, not gettin' any fun out of things, but he don't say to himself 'that's me' - anymore he says at a buryin' 'that's me they're puttin' in the grave there.' Goes on just as if he wuz different - and then one day he sees it. You'd be surprised at the times men come in here, lookin' scared and say surprised-like - 'Billy, I'm gettin' old.' Just like they come in and say, 'Billy, I've got the stummic ache'. I know what they're hopin' that I'll say, like I do when it's a stummic ache, 'Well, here's somethin' that'll stop it.' And I can't. It's sorter funny and it's sorter pityful.

"Twasn't gettin' old that worried Mr. Lincoln - No sir. I reckon he pretty much allus felt old - no 'twuz everybody goin' back on him - not wantin' him any longer in office - sorter shovin' him off the shelf. Yes, sir, there he wuz forty years old. and shut out a the kind of life he wanted most. No mistake about it he wuz what you might call a natural politician, liked politics betterin' anything else - right betterin' he did law and allus thought. Course he had to have a trade and in them times law seemed to

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be what you had to know if you wuz seekin' office - so he studied law but he wuz in politics before he took that up. Started almost as soon as he landed in old Sangamaw early in the 30's. I hear them historians sayin' sometimes that it wuz Mary Lindoln who pushed him into politics. Humph - He wuz seekin' office long before he ever saw her - Been at it ten years before he ever married her.

Easy for him to git elected in them days. People liked him and I tell you he was a boy to every one almost from the first. You've heard how he piloted a steamboat down the Saugamaw from up near here - first one - and I reckon the only one ever got anywhere near this town. A pilot on a steamboat them days looked to a boy like a locomotive engineer does to one nowadays. Then he went to War - Indian War - and that made him Captain made him popular, and then he got the capitol for Springfield - at least he wuz one of them that got it, but somehow he seemed to get most of the credit. People wuz allus talkin about him - tellin' funny things he'd said - listen' to his opinion. There wasn't any doubt this district thought a sight of Mr. Lincoln and his party & wuz allus willin' to give him an office when it could.

They sent him to Congress in '47. He wuz tickled to death about goin' and so wuz Mary Lincoln. I don't wonder, she'd been pretty poor ever since she married Mr. Lincoln - couldn't have a lot of things she'd been used to and goin' to Washington just suited her. Reckon she expected to make quite a splurge down there - thought they'd make a lot of her because she was a Kentucky Todd.

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"Well as I wuz sayin' they went down the fall of '47 - you oughter seen Mr. Lincoln when he went off - so smilin' and happy, standin' up straight like he did when things were goin' to suit him or when he'd got a big fight on and had his mind clear. I never like to think of the difference between him then and the way he wuz lookin' after two years or so when he wuz back to stay. Greatest change.

"What wuz the matter? Well you know they didn't send him back to Congress, but 'tain't that. I reckon he didn't expect that much for he must a seen this District wuz goin' Democratic. The whigs - Mr. Lincoln waz a Whig - wuz goin' to pieces out here. I reckon he knew we'd elect our man like we did. No 'twarn't not goin' back to Congress, but he did think he'd get an office from the government. He'd worked hard to elect old Zack Taylor President, made speeches up in New England - out here - wrote letters - give all his time to it - and I reckon he expected something. Mary Lincoln did you better believe, but somehow he spiled the hull business of office gettin' - for himself and what wuz worse for his popularity out here - for his friends. Didn't git anything to speak of for anybody. They do say he could a been made governor out in Oregon, but Oregon didn't look like much in the '40s and then Mary Lincoln never a' done that after havin' been East and seen Washington and New York and got it into her head that she'd git to Europe some day. Least that's what the women said.

"What he wanted and tried hard to git wuz the Land

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Office down in Washington - that wuz a good job - paid well. He wanted it and tried hard to git it but trouble was he didn't go after it fer himself till after he'd tried to git it for one of his friends. He did his best ~~to get it~~ for this man,- name was Cyrus Edwards lived down to Edwardsville-and when he saw he couldn't he tried for himself.

"Well, sir, when Edwards found out Lincoln was tryin' to git that office he wuz that ~~make~~ mad - spite of fact he must 'a known he didn't have a chance - went around sayin' Lincoln was a traiter - That used Mr. Lincoln up a good deal more'n losin' the office. Talkin' in here one day, when there wasn't anybody around I asked him about it - "I lost that office that Edwards might have it, and then I lost his friendship. That's the worst thing there is, Billy, losin' a friend. Friends are the best part of a man's life. I couldn't stand it ef I didn't know what Idid wuz all fair and above board."

"Didn't I know it? No siree, Mr. Lincoln never in all the time I knew him, would done a low-down thing like goin' back on a friend to git something he wanted for himself and he didn't then. But there wuz people believed he did - Glad enough to believe it - even a lot of Whigs-office seekers mad because he hadn't got 'em what they wanted. But wasn't only his not bein' any great Shaker at gettin' offices that soured people on him out here. It was the way he went on in Congress about the Mexican War not bein' just and necessary, 'as the President was trying to get Congress to say it wuz. He didn't think so - wouldn't say so. Made speeches that were mighty unpopular out here with everybody. You got to remember there

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were a lot of our boys down there fightin'- boys from Whig homes as well as Democratic homes. We wuz in the war, our folks were gettin' wounded and killed and there wasn't anything to do but git through best we could - and here wuz Lincoln assertin' it wuz wrong - sorter pokin' fun at the President for gettin' us into it.

Bein' a Democrat that made me mad. It was our war and we wasn't goin' to stand any Whig even if it wuz Mr.Lincoln standin' up in Congress and making fun of it like he did. Seemed to me fer a fact, he sorter did drive the President into a corner but I wouldn't say so then. People felt so strong about it, some of Mr. Lincoln's friends got scared at what he wuz doin'. Billy Herndon - that wuz his law partner - tried to call him off. Herndon told me Mr. Lincoln just skinned him when he answered.

"What would you have me do? Skulk the vote? Lie when I vote? Well I won't do it and neither would you?"

"Well" said Herndon. 'He thinks he's right and when he thinks he's right, you never can stop him, but he's hurtin' the party and he's hurtin himself, and so he wuz and so he found out when he got home. 'Stead of crowds of people pushin' up to shake hands like he'd been used to, Lots of 'em kinda hung off - wasn't hearty like they used to be. Young men in the party didn't hang around askin' advice like they used to. I reckon it looked to him a little mite as if the time had come when the youngsters he'd known wuz goin' to try to edge him off the shelf. Quite a puzzlin' and a discouragin' thing for a man. It's a good deal like discoverin' you're growin'

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old. Well Mr. Lincoln had that to face. when he got back from Congress. All comin' together as it did he wuz pretty blue,- went around quiet-like, his head down, didn't come in here like he used to, when he did didn't tell so many stories. 'Mr. Lincoln's got the blues,' boys used to say. The Democrats were tickled. I wasn't. I felt plumb bad seein' him like that.

I reckon he didn't get much help home either. Mary Lincoln had got it into her head she was goin' to live in Washington - she'd talked a lot about it - sort of set up - so the women said. Natural enough - she didn't like comin' back here any too well, didn't like his bein' set aside any better than he did. I reckon she took it out on him at home sometimes. Mighty uncertain in her temper. But when she'd had a cross spell she allus did her best to make up for it - 'specially if 'twas the children. Call 'em over next day - mebbe that night - give 'em pop-corn, make 'em candy.

Out our way it got to be so everybody kept out of sight when she had a tantrum. You couldn't help knowin' it. scold so you could hear her down the street. They say she used to chase Mr. Lincoln out of the house sometimes with a broomstick. I asked Ma about that onct and she said: 'William I don't want you to listen to all the things they say about Mrs. Lincoln. Taint right to spread 'em, only makes it harder for him if he knows we're talkin. Of course Mrs. Lincoln's got a temper, but don't you blame her too much. He ain't so easy forever to live with. He's careless about things. She wants things nice and wants them proper. He don't know when things they're nice and when they aint. He's too natural to be

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proper like she understands it - then he's allus kind to all kinds and she don't like riff raff around. His folks bothered Mrs. Lincoln. No wonder. Most of 'em warn't much account. Still your folks are your folks and Mr. Lincoln wuz allus fer doin' what he could - that is as much as Mary Lincoln would let him so I thought. Tom Lincoln, that's his father - had a little place over in Coles County - Mr. Lincoln used to go over there when he could. Thought a heap of his step-mother. Tried to help his step brother - no use - too shiftless. But there wuz a chanct of doin' something fer some of the children. He'd liked to have had 'em over here - put 'em in school - let 'em help around the house but she wouldn't hear to it - so they said.

There's folks that say he neglected his father, didn't ask him over when he wuz married, didn't go to see him when he wuz dyin'. Well, they didn't have to live with Mary Lincoln that's all I can say. She'd just been havin' a baby when Tom Lincoln took his last sickness and when she had a baby, Mr. Lincoln had to be around fer weeks - wouldn't let him out of her sight if she could help it, so the women said. Not but what he wuz willin' to do all he could - awful tender-hearted and tickled to death every time he got a baby - They wuz allus boys.

I reckon this time he wuz more than usual careful not to git Mary Lincoln to fussin'. They'd lost a little feller awhile before - went awful hard on her - seemed as if she couldn't get over it - seemed to me sometimes when Ma told me how she wuz takin' on as if she thought she wuz the only one concerned - and never feelin' bad. I reckon the only way Mr. Lincoln helped

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wuz when he got in the minister and the two of 'em got her to join the church. Mr. Lincoln didn't join, never did - but he took a pew and went steady after the little feller's death. Pew's still there. We put a plate on it. Ought to drop in some day and see it.

"Well you kin understand how all this made him gloomy. Party gone back on him - losin' friends and the everlastin' naggin' and complainin' at home. He began to look bad - awful bad.

("Feelin' a little out of sorts ain't you Mr. Lincoln') I sez to him one day in here when I couldn't keep still any longer.

"I ain't sleepin' so good, Billy' he said. I knew it. Not long before I'd heard one of the boys who'd been on the circuit with him worryin' about the way he acted. Said one night he waked up - you know in them old taverns those days they all slept together in one big room - Well he waked up and there wuz Mr. Lincoln settin' up in bed mutterin' to himself, pretty soom he got up and set by the fire lookin' as if he wished he wuz dead - Probably did wuz. Lots of men goin' through a discouragin' spell such as he wuz havin' would be glad enuff to die-easiest way out.

"He was havin' black nights. Curious how a man's mind jumps from one thing to another when he's lying awake worryin'. Can't keep it settled on anything. If he aint well, he sees himself dyin' of consumption or somethin' and then he goes to wonderin' what his wife will do - how she's goin' to get along without any more'n he'll leave and then he remembers some

(11)

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money he ain't paid and thinks he'll never git far enuff ahead to pay it and he sees his children growin' up without the education he meant to give 'em - the boys turnin' out bad and the girls marryin' no-account men. And then he gits to thinkin' how if he done this or hadn't done that, everything would have been different and he gets to pulyin' himself and wonderin' how 'twould be if he'd take something and git out of trouble onct for all. I tell you things kin look mighty queer nights when you can't sleep and you git to worryin'.

"I reckon Mary Lincoln waren't exactly soothin' when he got to tossin' about. Now Ma's different. She allus was real understandin', allus suggestin' something she thinks might help. "Count yourself to sleep William' she sez to me the other night when I got to worryin'. Humph, I'd been tryin' that fer an hour or more and every time I'd got to about ten may'd go my mind chasin' down some new kind of tribulation

"Well, somehow Ma allus soothes me down no matter what she says and I like to tease her. Ma's lots of fun. So what I'd do but begin to count out loud - top of my voice - 'one - two - three' - but before I got to ten we wuz both laffin' and then next thing I knew it was mornin'. I'd had a good sleep.

But Mary Lincoln waren't like Ma. When he wan't sleepin' good like as not she'd scold. There wuz those who said it wuz on account of her scoldin' so much that he didn't come home regular over Sunday when he wuz ridin' the Circuit. You know how the lawyers did them days - went from town to

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town follerin' the judge who wuz holdin' Court - started out in March and got back in June - then out again in September and back first of December. Most everybody from here got back home Sundays, but Mr. Lincoln stayed away a lot - Boys used to speak about it pitying' like.

" What wuz Savin' " him wuz the way he went to work at the law. As soon as he saw he wasn't goin' to get an office, he buckled down to work in a way that everybody noticed. You see he had never been what you might call larned in law, that is he never had burnt no midnight oil over books - too all-fired interested in folks doings and the way they go on - sorter tried his cases on what he knew about human nature and then too he'd been so takin' up with politics and away in Washington two years, that all told he hadn't made much out of law. But - I tell you 'twuz different now. Here he wuz forty years old, practice all gone and understandin' a big sight bettern' he did when he went to Congress that he didn't really know much, what he'd do? So around like Jim is sayin' he wuz a failure and everybody wuz agin him? Nothin' of the sort. He went to work to ~~learn all about law~~ - went to readin' nights - would come downtown after supper and 'stead of joining the boys over in the Court House or comin' in here would go to his office and read and read. I've heard Herndon tell how when they wuz off on the Circuit, while the rest of 'em wuz sleepin' he'd prop himself up in bed and read and study 'til one or two o'clock in the mornin'. He'd make up his mind he wuz

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goin' to know what he wuz about - wuz goin' to be as good a lawyer as the best of 'em.

"They all said he took a lot of care with his cases - more'n he ever thought a doin' before. Every now and then somebody comes in with a piece of his writin' showin' how he'd figured out a case on paper, before he went into court. His handwritin' was small and careful - took pains with it allus - used to surprise me to see how neat it wuz. I reckon he argued writin' wuz meant to be read and it ought to be done so you wouldn't have trouble with it. Anyway he wrote plain and small. These pieces of on his cases showed how he worked to get the thing clear in his mind. He put down the points just as he'd worked 'em out - and tickled me to see how they all fitted together - no screws loose - and there were never no words used I didn't know - nuthin' a jury couldn't understand and then sometimes he'd set down one his unexpected sayin's - make you laugh - sounded so like him. "There's a piece that's been passed around often here - showin' how he tried a case for a poor old woman-widder of a soldier that had died in the Revolution - He had put down all the things on which he wuz goin' to argue and then he ended up Skin Dept. just like that" and Billy stopped his monologue long enough to print the words on a piece of paper. "Skin Dept." and I tell you they said he did it - made the man that was tryin' to skin her curl up in his chair." Of course he got her off and Herndon allus claimed he didn't charge her a cent - beside payin' her hotel bill and buyin' her ticket back home.

Skin Dept

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"He wuz funny about chargin' - seemed allus to be seein' the other side - wonderin' how much he'd earned - I've known of his sendin' back part of the money some one had sent him - 'What I done wazn't worth as much as you've sent - and why I'm sending back part? His bein' queer about money wuz all a part of something he seemed to be tryin' to work out after he went back to studyin' and practicin' and that wuz how you could be a good lawyer and a good man at one and the same time. I reckon there's trades outside of law where 'twould hurt to figger on that proposition. Mr. Lincoln seemed to me to be tryin' to work out some rules - things he oughtn't to do ever. One wuz never to let people go to law if he could help it - Try to get 'em to settle.

"I recollect how one night when we got to talkin' in here while he wuz waitin' for my closin' time, so we could walk up street together, that he got to tellin' me about some trouble he'd been havin' tryin' to settle a case a loud-mouthed preacher who lived out in the country wanted him to bring against a man, that Mr. Lincoln knew real well knew he wuz fair and honest. 'You'd think a preacher would want to settle, wouldn't you Billy. I think the last thing he'd ever try to do would be to go to law - but here's this feller bellowin' and threatenin' and I don't believe what he sez can be true. At any rate I've been workin' at him all day tryin' to get him to settle - told him that if he would, I wouldn't charge him a cent and would thank him to boot. Hope he does.

"I've made up my mind, Billy, now that I'm goin'

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back to law for good and all that I ain't goin' to drag folks into court if I can help it. That's a place a lawyer has one chance to be a good man. The boys say I'm wrong, that I'm going to hurt business, but there'll be enuff real trouble left to keep us busy. This world's full of meanness and it's full of things nobody has worked out yet. What lawyers ought to be workin' on is puttin' an end to meanness and gettin' things that ain't clear straightened out so everybody'll know next time how it is. Leastwise I'm goin to put an end to as much disputin' as I can before it ever gets to Court. I ain't afraid there won't be enough woh left.

"Well, his workin' so hard and these curious ways of his-bein' so generous and fair and bein' so kind-took hold all over the Circuit. It wasn't more'n three or four years before everybody wuz wantin' Mr. Lincoln and he wuz beginnin' to git big cases - Illinois Railroad - big patent cases. I've allus thought you might hev seen him going down to New York and Washington and mebbe Boston tryin' cases if it hadn't happened sudden like that he went back to politics.

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"You know that hymn they sing in church?" and to the old tune of Bedford Billy intoned in what-was left of a once deep and mellow bass the stately phrase

'God works in a mysterious way
his wonders to perform' Well that wuz sure so in Mr.Lincoln's
case. You'd never thought seein' him goin' about so gloomy
and so hard workin' that the Lord was gettin' him ready for
the biggest job any man has had to handle in this country
since we started. But there ain't no other way to explain
it. Of course you know what brought him back was the

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slavery question. Their tryin' to get it into a part of the country that everybody had agreed for thirty years and more wuz allus to be free. Settled just as settled as Constitution, if there'd been a lot of excitement and talkin' and fussin' all the time Mr. Lincoln was in Congress about lettin' slavery into the land we took from Mexico when we settled after the War. Trouble wa'n't over when he left. 'Twant over 'till sometime in 1850. Of course everybody hoped they'd stop arguin' then- South be satisfied with what she'd got - North be satisfied with what she'd got. I asked Mr. Lincoln in here one night what he thought about the way 'twas fixt up. He looked at me kinda queer, if, Well, Billy, he said, it aint what I'd liked to hev seen. They're let slavery into a big slice of that new territory, ~~I wanted it all free - voted about forty times down in Congress to make it free but North lost on that.~~ Then I don't like to see slavery, life, in the District - right under the nose of the government. ~~I had a bill against that in when~~

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... of the government. I had a bill against that in when I left but it never got reported - they left slavery there.

Still there ain't no manner of doubt - but it's a good thing that there ain't a foot of soil left in the Union now that ain't covered by law - we know what's free and we know what's slave. That ought to end a right of discussin'. I'm a little afraid the new law dealin' with runaway slaves will make trouble - too harsh. Be all right if the North will live up to it.

"Lookin' at it - all around I reckon this compromise's the best we could get -

- - Clay thought so. Webster thought so and they're the biggest men ~~the North~~ WE'VE got. Better to trade even if you don't git all you want than to ~~make~~ break up the country - or go to war.' And he went off, head down, lookin' worried.

"Leonard ~~He looked~~ fer a long time as if 'twas goin' to be

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that law about sendin' back runaways that would keep up the trouble & couldn't get it obeyed. Why, we wuz railroadin' slaves through to Canada right here in Illinois and plenty of people who talked about the duty of obeying the laws shut their eyes. I'm a Democrat - allus wuz - believed we oughtn't to do anything to excite the South which wuz getting bitterer and bitterer over the way the abolitionists talked and acted. But I never took no pains to locate an underground railroad station & spite of all the talk and hard feelin's over the Fugitive Slave law as they called it. 'twant that that made real trouble again. It was something nobody ever would have thought of happenin'. It wuz the South tryin' to get slave into the land that had been made free in 1830 - Might as well hev tried to git 'em into Illinois or Wisconsin or Iowa and worst of all fer us out here wuz that one of our own senators Stephen Douglas - 'bout the smartest and most popular man in the country, if I do say it - fixt it up for them. Came about this way.

Douglas had allus been interested in gettin' territories opened up - wanted to see all the West country, what's now Kansas and Nebraska brought in - wanted a railroad to the Pacific - and he had a bill fixin' it - all right enuff - good thing - people wanted it - but along early in '54 he found out his bill warn't like to git through if he didn't change it so that slaves could be taken in in case the settlers wanted 'em. Well you'd never thought Steve Douglas would hev listened to that talk - Why he himself had said more'n onct that the

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Missouri Compromise-that's what they called the law makin' Nebraska free,- wuz 'sacred' - Yes sir, that's the word he used 'sacred', 'sacred as the Constitution.'

'And then he puts in a bill that repeals it and Congress passes it.

'That Repeal certainly did something to Mr. Lincoln. From the minute he knew about it he wuz for fightin' it. "Nuthin' else would ever hev brought me back into politics" he said - 'but we've got to fight this or else we're going to hev slavery all over this country. If you can take it into territory made free the way Nebraska wuz you can take it into Illinois - and if they git it into Nebraska - like as not - we'll live to see 'em get it into Illinois.

'Twant til the fall after the Bill went through that I heard him speak. I knew he'd been doin' a lot of talkin' around on the Circuit but he hadn't been here yet. First time wuz when Little Douglas came. He'd been havin' a pretty tough time explaining his Repeal to the people. Whole North was made - fightin' mad - lots of Democrats talkin' about leavin' the party. They tolled the bells when he came to Chicago - put crape on the door - First time he tried to talk up here they hooted and hissed him 'til he got mad and told 'em to go to Hell, he wuz goin' to bed.

When he went to a new town to speak he was likely to see himself hangin' to a lamp post and when he rode across country to see himself bein' burned alive, they called him all sorts of names - "Traitor", Judas Iscariot, said he wuz

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workin' fer the Catholics.

But you couldn't scare Douglas ~~mure~~ Move'n that he loved a fight - loved to bring people over to his side - and he wuz doin' it too. He talked his way down from Chicago to Springfield gittin' stronger every day so they said. He'd got an argument nobody could answer - the party claimed main point wuz that the people of a state ought to hev the right to vote slavery up or down - ~~that Congress hadn't any right to influence~~ - that ~~the law~~ Congress ~~had made in '50 wasn't constitutional~~ could'd - interfered with people's right to manage property like they thought fit - sounded all right to me - that is 'til I heard Mr. Lincoln.

It wuz Fair time when ~~Douglas~~ he came here. Ever been to one of our State fairs? Well, you've missed something. Still they ain't what they were back in the '50s. Mebbe I'm gettin' old but some way I don't seem to enjoy 'em as I did then. One thing's sure they don't have no such speakin' as we did then. Take the time Douglas came - seemed as if hul state wuz here - he spoke three hours and they'd listened three hours more I reckon. I know I would - and we came away sayin' that can't be answered Douglas' right ~~of course people ought to hev the right to say what kind of property went into a state. Douglas' right.~~

¶ "I wan't til The next afternoon ~~Lincoln~~ he answered. I went feelin' a little sorry for him. Didn't expect much. Good many like me. What could you expect of a man who'd failed like Lincoln, answering a big man like Douglas - a man likely to be President

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of the United States before he died, so we all thought.

I'll never get over bein' surprised at that speech - Right away I saw this wasn't Mr. Lincoln as I'd been figgerin' him - this warn't the Mr. Lincoln I'd heard speak time and time again at political meetin's. This wuz a big man - a man I didn't know. He'd got an argument that right away made Douglas look small - thought I would 'a died before I said so then - the thing I couldn't get around wuz when he said answering Douglas about a state's right to make any laws he'd pleased about property - that's all right when you legislate about oyster beds or hogs or cranbery bogs but it aint when you talkin' about men. If the negro is a man you can't - treat him like you do hogs. If he's an man he ought to have a voice in running himself - There aint no man good enough to govern another man without his consent."

Of course there wuz a lot more - He'd worked out an argument where the pints fitted together just like they did in the law cases I told you about - and curious it was the way he passed over a lot Douglas said - gave you an idea he want goin' to waste any time on what he didn't think necessary to what he wuz drivin' at - and I saw clear as day that what he wuz drivin' at in that speech wuz that unless we stopped slavery spreadin' right then it was goin' to be all over the country and that mustn't be because slavery wuz wrong. ~~He talked as long as Douglas did and people cheered and cheered. He'd got 'em, and some of 'em wuz like me - saw him different from what they ever had before - a new man - a big man - him~~

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20-A.

"He didn't make no bones about sayin' it
my wrong. That my something nobody
but abolitionists said out loud sheeps
days - that is around here. But Mr
Lincoln came right out flat footed that
day about slavery. ~~It~~ 'I hate it' he
said its a 'monstrous injustice' allus
remembered them words, 'monstrous
injustice' 'It makes us look like
hypocrites to the rest of the world.
It sets us criticising the Declaration
of Independence. It gets us to
thinkin' that ~~[illegible]~~ nothing but
self-interest ought to count."

"Well Sir, that hit me and I knew it.
Sorter convicted me of sin. I knew slavery
was wrong but I'd a died before I said
so cause of the way I hated abolitionists,
and just as Mr Lincoln said I me

comin' to think anything that paid must be all right.

"I wasn't the only one that went home from that speech bothered in his mind. Day before I'd been that ~~to~~ proud of Little Doug ~~proud of the party~~ all set up because he was my candidate, but after hearin' Mr Lincoln - well as I say I was bothered. - So was Little Doug they said - Twant long before he was trying to get rid of debatin' with Mr Lincoln. Trouble was Mr Lincoln was taking

Drivin' the question where Douglas didn't want to see it go - makin' it question of right - and wrong. He didn't feel at home there - too much of a politician

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they'd been lookin' at as a failure.

Puzzled me a lot about what had happened to him - What made him all of a sudden seem something more'n Douglas - It's clear as day to me now that these five years or so when he wuz goin' around, workin' at the law give him a big advantage over Douglas. He didn't see it then - reckon he felt bitter and jealous sometimes seein' Douglas goin' ahead so fast and he set aside. But bein' out of politics give him time to think and study over things. He'd been followin' that slavery discussion down in Congress and natural enuff he read everything that went on after he got out. Studied it hard, so Billy Herndon said - never got excited about it - never said anything - just studied it - makin' up his mind what the country ought to do - how fur it ought to go to stop secession - whether it ought ever to risk a war - He'd got it thought out far 's he wuz concerned - Slavery mustn't go any further - and when they tried to push it further he had to come back and do what he could to stop it.

If Douglas had had a chance to do any thinkin' in Washington he'd never tried to repeal that Compromise of 1830 - seen it wuz too dangerous, but when a man's set his mind on gettin' a bill through, thinks his next election depends on that, he's apt to give his time to contrivin' and tradin' instead of to thinkin' - No, the Lord fixt it to give Mr. Lincoln a big advantage over Little Doug, when He sent him back to work - took him out of politics - He'd never bin a big man if he'd stayed in office -

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bin a good politician - of course - but not the new man who started over in '54. It's all how a man takes a failure that counts. It kin be the makin' of him if he don't give in. I seen that in Abraham Lincoln's case, that's why I'm so hard on Jim and everybody I know that I see givin' up in Mr. Lincoln's town.

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