gal. 40.

war, and he argued that above all he must not be interfered with . It was at this time that he used his striking illustration of Blondin:

> Some gentlemen from the west called at the White House one day excited and troubled about some of the commissions or omissions of the Administration. The president heard them patiently and then replied: " Gentlemen, suppose all the property you were worth ~~you were~~ was in gold and you had put it in the hands of Blondin, to carry across the Niagara River on a rope. Would you shake the cable or keep shouting out to him, 'Blondin, stand up a little straighter- Blondin, stoop a little more- Go a little faster- - Lean a little more to the north- lean a little more to the south?' No, you would hold your breath as well as your tongue and keep your hands off until he was safe over. The government is carrying an enormous weight. Untold treasures are in their hands; they are doing the very best they can. Don't badger them. Keep silence and we will get you safe across. "

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One of the most insistent of the many bodies which beset him was the Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War appointed the December before the ~~Committee~~ was done. Aggressive and patriotic, these gentlemen were determined the army should go. But it was not until March that they became convinced that anything would be done. One day early in that month Senator Chandler of Michigan, a member of the committee, met George W. Julian. He was in high glee. "Old Abe is mad," he said to Julian, "and the war will now go on." It did now go on. McClellan, unable to resist any longer the pressure of President and War Department, had at last moved the Army of the Potomac towards Richmond.

A Personal Bereavement.

The burden of anxiety over the inaction of the army was lifted at last. In the west there had been victories at Fort Henry and Fort Donaldson. McClellan was moving, the war was going on. ~~But~~ But while the country was rejoicing over the new spirit in the conduct of the war, Mr. Lincoln was plunged in a bitter private sorrow . Early in January his two younger boys, Willie and Tad

Tad as they were familiarly known, fell sick. The President at the moment was harassed by McClellan's delay to obey his order of January 31, by the general's plan of campaign, which he did not believe wise, but which he did not feel justified in overruling, by the night and day pressure of the press, of Congress and of innumerable private delegations, all of which wanted the war to go on no more than he did. The illness of his children added a sharp personal pang grief to the burden he was carrying. In the tenderness of his nature he could not see suffering of any kind without a passionate desire to relieve it. Especially was he moved by the distress of a child. Indeed his love for children had already become familiar to the whole public by the touching little stories which visitors had brought away from the White House and which crept into the newspapers:

"At the reception Saturday afternoon, at the President's house," writes a correspondent of the 'Independent,' many persons noticed a little girls, poorly dressed, the children of some mechanic or laboring man, who had followed the visitors into the White House to gratify their curiosity. They passed around from room to room and were more hastening through the reception room, with some trepidation, when the President called to them, "Little girls, are you going to pass me without shaking hands?" Then he bent his tall, akward form down and shook each little girl warmly by the hand. Everybody in the apartment was spellbound by the incident, so simple in itself."

Many men and women now living who were children in Washington at this time recall the president's gentleness to them. Mr. Frank P. Blair of Chicago says:-

"During the war my grandfather, Francis P. Blair, Sr., lived at Silver Springs, north of Washington, seven miles from the White House. It was a magnificent place of four or five hundred acres, with an extensive lawn in the rear of the house. The grandchildren gathered there frequently. There were eight or ten of us, our ages ranging from eight to twelve years. Although I was but seven or eight years of age, Mr. Lincoln's visits were of such importance to us boys as to leave a clear impression on my memory. He drove out to the place quite frequently. We boys, for hours at a time, playedd "town ball" on the vast lawn, and Mr. Lincoln would join ardently in the sport. I remember vividly with the children; how long were his strides, and how far his coat-tails stuck out behind, and how we tried to hit him with the ball, as he ran the bases. He entered into the spirit of the play as completely as any of us, and we invariably hailed his coming with delight. *

Mr. James L. Blair of St. Louis, Mo., records a similar impression of Mr. Lincoln:-

"Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln were at grandfather's place very often. Frequently, however, Mr. Lincoln would come out alone. Out the Fourteenth street road, and up the North Hill to Silver Springs, was his customary drive. I have seen him often in an open landau, sometimes withMrs. Lincoln, more generally alone. Although he would romp with us children, yet even as a child I was struck by that sad expression upon his face.

We spent much time at the White House, and I came to know Mrs Lincoln well. She was always very kind to children. *

° Interview for McClure's Magazine by J. McCan Davis.

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The protecting sympathy and tenderness he extended to all children became a passionate affection for his own. Willie and Tad had always been privileged beings at the White House, and their pranks and companionship undoubtedly did much to relieve the tremendous strain the president was suffering. They were allowed free access to his office, and it was a common sight to see him walking with one or both of them to and from the War Department or General McClellan's headquarters. Many of his visitors who saw him with his boys at this period have recorded their impressions; how keenly he enjoyed the children, how indulgent and affectionate he was with them. Again and again he related their sayings, sometimes even to grave delegations. Thus Moncure Conway tells of going to see the president with a commission which wanted to "talk over the situation." The president met them, laughing like a boy. The White House was in a state of feverish excitement, he said; one of his boys had come in that morning to tell him that the cat had kittens, and now the other had just announced that the dog had puppies..

When both the children fell ill, when he saw them suffering, and when it became evident, as it shortly did, that Willie, the younger of the two, would die, the President's anguish was intense. He would slip away from visitors and Cabinet at every opportunity, to go to the sick room, and during the last four or five days of the child's life, when the child was suffering terribly and lay in an unbroken delirium, Mr. Lincoln shared with the nurse the nightly vigils at the bedside. When Willie finally died, on February 20th, the president was completely prostrated.

"It was generally believed by many of Lincoln's friends at this time, says Mr. Z. C. Robbins of Washington," that he would secumb entirely to his grief. He saw no one that he could avoid and seemed to be unable to rally to the public demands made upon him. I believe myself that it was only the counsels and prayers of his pastor, the Rev. Gurley, that helped Mr. Lincoln recover his balance at this period."*

If one consults the records of the day it is evident that Mr. Lincoln did attend to public duties even in the worst of this trial. Only two days after the funeral, on February 23rd, he held a cabinet meeting, and the day following that a correspondent wrote to the New York Evening Post:

"Mr. Lincoln seems to have entirely recovered his health and is again at his ordinary duties spending, not infrequently eighteen out of the twenty-four hours upon the affairs of the nation.

* Interview for this magazine.

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He is frequently called up three and four times in a night to receive important messages from the west. Since his late bereavement he looks sad and care-worn, but is in very good health again.

Many things however he evidently did neglect. Indeed, a month after Willie's death we find him apologizing for delay to answer a letter because of a "domestic affliction."

There is ample evidence that in this crushing grief the president sought earnestly to find what help the Chrisitian religion might have for him. Up to this point in his presidential career he had given frequent evidence of his belief that the affairs of men are in the keeping of a Divine Being, who hears and answers prayer and who is to be trusted to bring about the final triumph of the right. He had publicly acknowledged such a faith when he bade his Springfield friends goodby in February, 1861. In his first Inaugural Address he had told the country that the difficulty between north and south would be adjusted in "the best way," by "intelligence, patriotism, Christianity and a firm reliance on him who has never yet forsaken this favored land." When he was obliged to summon a Congress to provide means for a civil war, he started them forth in their duties with the words, "Let us renew our faith in God, and go forward without fear and with manly hearts." In August, 1861, he issued a Proclamation for a National Fast Day, which is most impressive for its reverential spirit.

"Whereas it is fit and becoming in all people, at all times, to acknowledge and revere the supreme government of God; to bow in humble submission to his chastisements, to confess and deplore their sins and transgressions, in the full conviction that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to pray with all fervency and contrition for the pardon of their past offences, and for a blessing upon their present and prospective action:

And whereas when our own beloved country, once, by the blessing of God, united, prosperous, and happy, is now afflicted with faction and civil war, it is peculiarly fit for us to recognize the hand of God in this terrible visitation, and in sorrowful remembrance of our own sins, faults and crimes as a nation, and as individuals, to humble ourselves before him and to pray for his mercy- to pray that we may be spared further punishment, though most justly deserved; that our arms may be blessed and made effectual for the reestablishment of law, order, and peace throughout the wide extent of our country; and that the inestimable boon of civil and religious liberty, earned under his guidance and blessing by the labors and sufferings of our fathers, may be restored in all its original excellence."

But it is not until after the death of his son that we begin to find evidence that Mr. Lincoln was making a personal test of

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Chrisitanity. Broken by [redacted] anxiety for the country, wounded nigh to death by his loss, he felt that he must have a support outside of himself, that from some source he must draw new courage and new hopefulness. Could he find the help he needed in the Christian faith? From this time on he was seen often with the Bible in his hand. He is known to have prayed frequently. His personal relation with God occupied his mind much. He was deeply concerned to know, as he told a visiting delegation once, no t whether ~~God~~ the Lord was on ~~their~~ his side but whether he was on ~~God's~~ the Lord's side. Henceforth one of the most real influences in Abraham's Lincoln's life and conduct is his dependance upon a Personal God.

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