

Pages 128-133, In the Footsteps of
the Lincoln

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF LINCOLN.

CHAPTER II.

In the meagre gallery of ~~the~~ Lincoln portraiture there is no picture of stronger appeal than that of the woman who in December 1819 Thomas Lincoln brought back to Indiana to be a second mother to his children. It is the face of a brave patient ~~enduring~~ ^{inwavering} woman. Her clear eyes-I think they must have been gray ~~and~~ ^{are} direct and ~~clear~~ with a look of pain in them-A woman who through a long life of labor and poverty had held to those things she believed to be good. Surely Thomas Lincoln must have been more of a man than he has usually been painted to have won and kept two women so worthy of respect as Nancy Hanks and Sarah Bush Johnston his second wife.

It was ~~in the fall of 1819~~ a year after Nancy's death that Tom went ~~back~~ ^{undoubtedly} to Kentucky ~~prepared~~ with the idea of ~~proposing~~ ^{many months} marriage to Mrs. Johnston, whose husband had been dead for a ~~year or more~~. It has always seemed probable to me that he made a ~~reconnoitering~~ ^{reconnoitering} trip. That is I see no reason why he should have gone prepared to bring her back!

Thomas Lincoln had known Sarah Bush as a girl in Elizabethtown, indeed he is said to have courted her before he did Nancy Hanks but as she was only eighteen years old when he and Nancy were married it seems a bit doubtful ~~that~~ ^{however} they were friends and when he came back to Elizabethtown a widower and found her husbandless and with three children it was natural enough that he should seek her. That she did not hesitate ~~to~~ ^{to} accept him those nearest to the pair all testify. ^{Perhaps} the best authority for believing this true comes from a nephew of Tom's, Mr. J. L. Hall. "Uncle Thomas" he says, "came back to Kentucky after the death of his first wife, Nancy Hanks, and purposed marriage to the widow Johnston. ^{She} told him that she would be perfectly willing to marry him as she had known him a long time, and felt that the marriage would be congenial and happy; but it would be impossible for her even to think of marrying and leaving the state

as she was considerably in debt. Uncle Thomas told her that need make no difference, as he had plenty of money, and would take care of her financial affairs; and when he had ascertained the amount of her indebtedness and the names of the parties to whom the money was due, he went around and redeemed all her paper and presented it to her, and told her, when she showed so much honor about debts, he was more fully satisfied than ever that she would make him a good wife. She said as he had displayed so much generosity in her behalf she was willing to marry and go with him to Spencer County Indiana"

I should like to think that Thomas when he had secured her promise went back to Indiana, told the children something of their new mother and then taking his wagon and horses went after her, her children, and her household furniture. Think of the days of eagerness-and dread-for Sarah and Abraham! Probably the talkative Dennis Hanks did little to quiet their alarms. Dennis now about nineteen was at an age when his talk on marital affairs was probably anything but fit for the ears of a boy of ten.

Any misgivings the children may have had about their new mother faded at the sight of her. Sarah Lincoln was a vigorous blooming woman of thirty one. All the traditions preserved of her harmonise with the story of ^{the portrait of} her ~~portrait~~ taken in her old age. ^{tells} She was what is called a good housekeeper-a good neighbor, ^a kindly resource-
^{enjoyable woman} ful. She came now bringing treasures, comforts such as the Indiana home of the Lincoln had never known. She brought companions for Sarah and Abraham, two girls and a boy about their own age. In a day the little family of four became eight. The cabin was filled to overflowing but never had life been so comfortable and orderly as now.

To the boy Abraham the new mother's coming was of special importance. Abraham Lincoln had that need of women, naturally to all strong masculine natures-need of their companionship, confidence, affection. Without it life for him at every stage would be incomplete.

to his childhood;

His mother had given completeness as ~~a child~~, his hunger for her must have been pitiful. The healthfulness of ~~his~~ the period of adolescence in which he was now entering was bound to depend upon the woman his father had brought home. I think he never had a doubt of her from the start. In his autobiography written in 1860 he speaks of her as "a good and kind mother" As for Mrs. Lincoln her tribute to her son made to Mr. Herndon *after* Lincoln's Assassination shows something of the relation between them. "He was a good boy and I can say what scarcely one woman-a mother- can say in a thousand, he never gave me a cross word or look. I never gave him a cross word in all my life, his mind and mine seemed to run together. I think he loved me truly. He was the best boy I ever saw."

It was real friendship between them, mutual understanding and mutual protection. He had the consideration for others that belongs to a big nature, ~~saw their needs~~, and in a hundred ways he no doubt from the start served his step-mother and she in return saw something of his growing ambitions and protected him in his efforts to learn.

For the great service she undoubtedly rendered Abraham Lincoln in those difficult years, when as one *wise* educator has said "every boy is a little mad," *Sarah Lincoln* ~~she~~ *recognizing* has received scant public recognition, so far as I know it was not until the fall of 1922, that there was ever placed anywhere in her honor so much as a single tablet. It is fitting that Elizabethtown, Kentucky, from which Thomas Lincoln took her has been the first to *remember her* ~~honor her memory~~. In the fall of last year the woman's club of the town conducted the ceremony *of the placing* ~~of~~ *in position* in the court house of a bronze tablet to Sarah Lincoln, presented by a native of the town, Dr. W.A. Pusey of Chicago. In connection with this ceremony the club published a pamphlet giving some details of Mrs. Lincoln's life. This work is in line with other excellent local historical work which the club had already done, ~~The~~ most important of which has been the publication of the diary and notes of Samuel

Haycroft, for many years the county clerk- the man whose name appears on the license issued on December 2, 1819, permitting "any authorized Minister of the Gospel or authorized Magistrate," "to join together in the ~~Honorable~~ State of Matrimony" Mr. Thomas Lincoln and Miss. Sarah Johnston."

It now remains for others to mark Sarah Johnston Lincoln's ^{today} grave, the one unremembered grave among the women known to have ~~played a part~~ ^{been dear} to Abraham Lincoln's ~~life~~.

Outwardly Abraham ~~Lincoln~~ ^{the boy} life from now on until he was man grown was that of the day laborer, he was a farm hand, a carpenter's assistant, a ferryman, a hired man, these were his jobs, what part did they play in his making? What was their "educational content" Considerable I have always believed. In the first place they clearly proved to him and to others that he was not meant for manual labor. If he had been born for the farm here was his chance with his ambition and intelligence he might have gone far in farming in southwestern Indiana-given the business the touch of genius in that locality which it seems always to have lacked. There were those of his friends who did take to the farm, it was there natural bent, but not his, strong, good natured, ^{eyes} eager to excel, whatever the task he would go to any exertion to outstrip those beside him. He seemed ^{too} naturally to have conscience about his work. Self respect made it necessary for him to keep up his end, these qualities made him a valuable farm laborer, but the laborer never won, he ~~seems~~ never to have had an idea of making ^{farmer} it a permanent occupation.

It was the same with carpentry and cabinet making. He was Tom Lincoln's assistant and Tom Lincoln was good at his trade. How skillful a cabinet maker he was I never realized until last fall I examined a piece of his work exhibited in the relic room of the fine court house in Rockport, county seat of Spencer county Indiana, the town where the Lincolns used to go to pay taxes and attend to court business. This cabinet is perfectly authenticated, but in addition to the testimony tacked ^{on one} onto ~~one~~ of its front panels I had "It stood in the very room where as a guide a man who could tell no truthfully I was born in the

very room where it stood and many is the time that as a child I have gone to the cupboard for something to eat"

The guide was Mr. W. F. Adams of Rockport, a grandson of Josiah and Elizabeth Crawford, the neighbors of the Lincoln's who figure most largely in their life in Indiana. Josiah Crawford was a Wheelwright, making not only wagons, but big and little spinning wheels. Tom Lincoln did all the carpenter work for their comfortable frame house—window frames—doors—cupboards. Abraham had worked with him, moreover he had frequently served Josiah Crawford as a hired man, indeed he had completely the heart and respect of Josiah Crawford—not an easy man to win if tradition is to be believed that Mr. Adams declares that Lincoln's assassination literally killed him. "He began to go down from the day he heard of it." Now this cupboard so well authenticated is important as a proof of a considerable degree of craftsmanship on the part of Tom Lincoln. I have seen other pieces of his handiwork but together with wooden pegs but he had used nails on this piece, which is thoroughly well made. And carries a rather elaborate cornice, but what interested me most was an inlaid decoration in white ash running down the door jambs on each side and the inlaid initials E.W. on the left hand door panel. The design is crude to be sure, but it shows a sense of decoration and patriotism combined for the curving streamer falls from a star and at each end there arises a tiny flag! The inlaying is so well done that in spite of fully ninety years of scrubbing and scouring it remains intact.

What this amounts to is that if Abraham Lincoln had had any strong craft sense he had his chance. Furniture at that day was largely made on the premises, indeed at this very moment back in the Shenandoah Valley Tom's own cousin Abraham Lincoln, son of his Uncle Jacob was having made in the garret over his kitchen high pieces of Mahogany furniture—a ~~crude~~ swelled front corner cabinet, a tall clock, an elaborate desk, the wood so the tradition goes in the family he had brought by ox teams from New York City!