October 19, 1931

My dear Mrs. Benton:

Pray forgive me for having been so slow in replying to your letter of September 8th. It reached me at a moment when I was rather over-loaded and just on the point of making a little trip, so that along with many other letters it was neglected.

I appreciated your writing me. Everything that concerns Lincoln - any question that is raised in anybody's mind - I am always glad to consider.

I remember this reference of Lord Lyong relating Lincoln's anedcotes. I think there is no doubt that Lincoln often shocked the conventional, particularly the gentleman in diplomatic circles, as well as the more stately of our Senators.

Lincoln was a natural man, unaccustomed to the restraints of the society in which these gentlemen were reared. All his life he had heard the hearty, often gross, talk of men and boys. If there was a point to be made by a story he told it regardless of the "indecorous," as Lord Lyon calls it, words and references.

I think there is plenty of evidence of this but that he was ever obsene, that he ever told a story for any other reason than it emphasized what he was trying to say, I doubt. The "indecorous" of Lord Lyon does not disturb me. It is a part of the man, his associates and his time. Many a man who would cut out his point before he would say an "indecorous thing" would not compare in clean-mindedness with Lincoln. I cannot find that he was ever anything but clean-minded.

Pardon this long letter. It will show you at least that I was interested in what you wrote even if I was slow in acknowledging.

Very truly yours

Mrs. Elma H. Benton
Hosmer Hall
Saint Louis, Mo.

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