Tarbell

Editor the Liberty--

We resent the false light in which you attempt to put the immortal Lincoln relative to the liquor he found in the stock of the Grocery store he and his partner, William J. Berry, purchased at New Salem, Illinois, in 1833. He was then only 24 years of age, and to get rid of this liquor a tavern license was taken out in the name of William F. Berry, and not Abraham Lincoln, and the required bond was signed by Berry and Bowling Green, and Lincoln's name was signed to it by some one other than himself. We have gathered these facts from the works of Ida M. Tarbell, one of your contributors.

Lincoln was appointed postmaster at this time, but with what he realized from this office he was unable to meet his expenses, and as a result he was obliged to help in other stores, split rails, and look after the running of a mill. To better his condition he and his partner sold their grocery business and he accepted the appointment of deputy county surveyor, being too poor at the time to purchase a chain.

This should convince any reasonable being that his liquor trade could not have been of any account and surely not any of it ever passed his lips.

Now we should measure the standard of right and wrong relative to the liquor traffic according to the century in which Lincoln lived which was that part of the 19th century when liquor was on every sideboard. When it was sold in every grocery, as well as in every shop and tavern. It was the regular table beverage in the family. The doctor in his calls, the minister in his rounds, partook of drink, and just before entering his pulpit it was customary to take a glass of manufactured spirits. It was ued at a chirstening, at a wedding,

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

a funeral, and at balls and parties, in barn and house raising, at the dedication of a meeting hous, and the ordination of a minister. It was believed, to be strong, one had to take strong drinks. At 11 A.M. and 4 P.M. the town bell tolled summoning working men to their daily ration of spirits. As late as 1834, one Deacon Ames Giles operated a distillery and kept Bibles for sale in one corner of his establishment.

In the face of these facts you published an account of the tavern license, herein above mentioned, in such a way as to have Lincoln judged in the connection he had with it according to the 20th century ideas of the drink traffic, which is most dihonorable and unfair.

Oppose prohibition if you will, but we protest against your trying to further the interests of the would-be liquor dealers by maligning the memory of Abraham Lincoln, the Savior of the Union, and most loyal prohibitionist.

Emmett D. Nichols

Emmett D. Nichols
1024 North Cushman Ave.
Tacoma, Washington

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library