3907 S. Main St.,
Wichita, Kansas, 7/17/29.

307 S. Main St.,
****

Dear Miss Tarbell:

Please find enclosed tge latest bid for fame - "A Jazz Age, Or Jazzlet Scribes?". I have been wanting for a good while to write something about the alleged "Lincoln" stories, and this miserable book, "Meet General Grant", furnishes the occasion. If you care to honor it with a place in your collection of Li ncolniana, you have my distinguished permission.

I have just missed what may have been a golden opportunity. A few weeks ago, I spent a couple of hours with my friend of many years, Dr. Holcomb, in his office one evening. Somehow the name of Lincoln came into the conversation, and he told me that a very old lady, 84, was living a few mile s from the town, Coldwater, Kans., who had known Mr. Lincoln in her youth. Her father was a very close friend of Mr. Lincoln's, a political helper in his campaigns, and she had seen a good deal of him in Springfield. I told the doctor that I would come out in the Fall for an interview with her. He cautioned me not to delay my coming long, as she was in very frail health. So a couple of weeks later I wrote the doctor that I would be with him on the 15th or 16rh, and asked him to arrange, in practicable, for the interviews. On my return home the 13rh, I found the emclosed letter which put an end to my fond hopes. As there is a reference to Mrs. Lincoln in the letter that may interest you, I am enclosing it. You need not return it.

I am sending the original of the enclosed article to the Atlantic Monthly, although the editor may be particularly careful, more so than uau

sually so since the disastrous experience of last winter, about accepting articles from unknowns. If the Atlantic should decline it, as ti probably will, I should appreciate a suggestion from you as to where it should be sent.

Very sincerely,

Walter Davis,

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Coldwater,Kansas.
July 9,1929.

Dr W.M.Graves,
Wichita,Kan.

My Dear Doctor: Your letter was received in due time and I should have rwitten you sooner than this.

In regards to seeing Mrs Estill, I am very sorry to tellyou that she passed away about two weeks ago.
She was very old and had a Mitral leak, with a complete Anuria at the last.
However, soon after talking with you, I asked her as follows:
I have heard it intimated that Mrs Lincoln had a bad temper and at time used language of a violent nature, etc.
Do you know anything about this?

Mrs Estill replied' I never knew Mrs Lincoln personally, although I did know Mr Lincoln well.
About the time the Lincoln's moved to Washington, I was staying with a Mrs Dubois, who was a very close friend of Mrs Lincoln.

Mrs Dubois had a little girl about three or four years of age at this time.

One day , this child became angry and threw herself on the floor tore her hair and shrieked and cried violently.

Mrs Dubois said'' When i was carrying this child, I was with Mrs Lincoln every day and I verily beleive that she marked this girl, For I have seen Mrs Lincoln have just such a fit of temper as this, many times. ''

I trust that this will be of interest to you, Doctor.
I regret that you did not have the opportunity of meeting Mrs Estill, for she was one of the most wonderful women that I have ever met, and I know she and yourself would have had a good talk.

If this little report will help you in your study of Lincoln, I am very glad.

With best regards and good wishes, I am,

Fraternally Yours

Fred L. Holcomb

Fred L. Holcomb,M.D.

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Submitted by

Walter Graves, M. D.

Wichita, Kansas.

Usual Rates.

2000 Words.

A JAZZ AGE or JAZZLET SCRIBES?

by

Walter Graves, M. D.

In a book recently published, "Meet General Grant," some statements are made of Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln that afford an opportunity for justice to Mrs. Lincoln, on the one hand, and on the other, the correction of a very prevalent though most erroneous view of Mr. Lincoln.

The writer says of Mrs. Lincoln that she addressed Mrs. Grant in language that was unprintable, accusing her of attempting to usurp her place in the White House, and that Mr. Lincoln was greatly distressed, and found the situation beyond his control. He says further, of Mr. Lincoln, that at this visit to General Grant at City Point, he refrained from telling obscene stories, probably because of the well-known almost maidenly modesty of General Grant.

That Mrs. Lincoln was habitually intemperate of speech and vixenish of manner is far from true. That she did sometimes indulge in expressions that would have to be rendered on the printed page by dashes is true. My older brother, Capt. C. H. Graves, of Mound City, Missouri, told me of an instance. Mr. Lincoln had summarily punished some children of the neighborhood, of whom my brother was one, for mishandling some dogs, and Mrs. Lincoln

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reproached her husband in language that made an ineffaceable impression on the mind of a child unused to such words from the lips of a woman.

But such incidents were the exception. She loved her husband and her family. And many were the candy-pullings in the Lincoln home, to which neighboring children were invited. Mr. Henry M. Rankin, in his "Reminiscences," tells of her charming courtesy to young people.

A year or two before the World War, I met a gentleman, Mr. Maxwell, in Salt Lake City, who lived near the Lincolns in Springfield. I had read Hay and Nicolay's "History," and having in mind the almost brutal severity with which those authors speak of Mrs. Lincoln, I referred, I fear with unbecoming levity, to the lady's temper. Mr. Maxwell was very indignant, and came loyally to Mrs. Lincoln's defense. He told me that as a boy he had furnished the family with milk, carrying it himself to the door, and delivering it to Mrs. Lincoln. Morning and evening for years he had done this, and had never seen or heard anything of the kind described as "unprintable." On the contrary, Mrs. Lincoln was always most cordial and kind, frequently inviting him into the house, and giving him something particularly good to eat that she happened to have on hand.

Mary Todd was a victim of a nervous, emotional , unbalance. Mr. Weiks tells, in his little book,"The Real Lincoln," of her dancing with Mr. Herndon, and says that Herndon complimented her, or meant to compliment her, on the ease and smoothness of her movements in the waltz, comparing them to the sinuous grace of a serpent's glide. Miss Todd did not accept the compliment

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as intended. Drawing herself away from her partner, she cried, her eyes flashing: "Compare me to a snake?"

She was born into a wealthy Kentucky family, in a social order that set woman on a pedestal, and all-but worshipped her. Her training did not contribute to her sense of responsibility, or the repression of her emotions. She contracted a marriage which estranged her family, and endured a life of comparative poverty. No doubt she felt the truth of Mary Owens' observation, though she may not have known of it. Mr. Lincoln had previously made a proposal of marriage to Miss Owens, who rejected him for the reason that he did not possess the art of giving to a woman those delicate attentions which she so highly prizes, the lack of which Miss Owens feared would mar her happiness. While Mary Todd may not have foreseen this, there can be little doubt that a woman of her temperament and training must have felt the lack that the other Mary had observed, and it is not at all improbable that her somewhat erratic nature was irritated by it.

With all this background of tempermental unbalance, she was suddenly elevated to the highest position in the land. Her husband was President of the United States. Three of her brothers were in arms against the government of which he was the head. She was in the midst of cabals and treasons. She had lost one of her children since coming to Washington, and she was harrassed by fears for her husband's health and for his life; for Mr. Lincolh was simply reckless of exposure, often dodged the guards provided for his protection, and went about the streets alone. A short time after the City Point incident, as she

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sat at his side in the theatre, she saw his head sink to his chest, as the assassin's bullet entered his brain. Is it any wonder that this unstable equilibrium became more and more uncertain until it vanished utterly under these accumulated strains and woes?

Shortly after Mrs. Lincoln was taken to a sanitarium, I was talking with a gentleman who had known the family well in Springfield. "This," he said, referring to the removal to the sanitarium, "explains many things that used to puzzle the neighbors in Springfield."

Is not it time to draw a veil over the poor lady's woes, or at least to refrain from unsympathetic discussions of her frailties?

Now to the so-called "Lincoln" stories. The paragraph above referred to is the only reference I have seen in book or magazine article which indicates that the writer believed that the nauseous putrescences that pass from mouth to ear as "Lincoln" stories ever passed Mr. Lincoln's lips. That he told stories that ought not to be told in mixed company, is doubtless true. There are stories which may properly be told by men among men which would be very improper in the presence of women. Mr. Lincoln did not tell them in mixed company. Moreover, such as he told like all his stories, had a point to them. They were characterized by the quintessence of wit or humor or logic that went to the heart of the subject under discussion, and fitted into place so exactly that many of his friends believed that he invented them. This was the opinion of Dr. Stevenson, his family physician, who is

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quoted hereafter. But these stupid, filthy concoctions of a diseased imagination, which no man of intelligence and taste would bring into his conversation any more than he would bring the scrapings of the barnyard to his dinner-table, were of a kind that was impossible of composition by a man of Mr. Lincoln's mind and spirit.

What was the character of that mind and spirit?

This may best be indicated by a reference to some of his accomplishments.

As early as his service in congress, '47 to '49, he entertained a suspicion that a movement was under way to dismember the Union. Miss Tarbell, in her book "He Knew Lincoln and Other Billy Brown Stories," tells us that the news of the repeal of the Missouri Compromise came to him one evening in "Billy Brown's" drug store, where he was wont to foregather with some of his friends. Billy, who was a Democrat, shouted "hooray." The others did not seem seriously concerned. But Mr. Lincoln, after assuring himself of the truth of the report, grew stern of face, and went out without a word. He was thought by some of his friends to be verging upon insanity. He would sometimes separate himself from a noisy company, to whose hilarity he had contributed, and go off by himself, moody, taciturn. One night, while occupying the same room with his brother lawyers "riding the circuit," he was observed sitting on the side of the bed, his head buried in his hands. On being asked what was the matter, he gave his belief in this threatened dismemberment as the reason for his sleeplessness.

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He delivered the "House Divided Against Itself" speech at the meeting of the Illinois State Republican Convention in 1858, and aroused the intense interest of the whole country as no other speaker had done, and throughout the compaign with Sen. Douglas, his speeches, published in the metropolitan papers, made him an intellectual and political power that no man rivalled. In January, 1860, he delivered the Cooper Institute speech, which showed an acquaintance with the ideals of the framers of the Constitution as to Federal control of Federal territory, that was possessed by no other man, and crumbled into dust the decision of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott case. His first inaugural is so strong, so pure, so appealing, that one wonders, as one reads it today, why it did not succeed in averting the war. His Gettysburg address is a priceless gem of the loftiest patriotism, and appreciation of a measureless devotion, couched in noble diction, unsurpassed as a model of pure English. His Emancipation Proclamation breathes a spirit of devotion to humanity and to God that any Christian might well emulate, while the concluding paragraph of the Second Inaugural might well be called inspired, and challenges comparison, as to loftiness and purity of aspiration, with any utterances of Prophet in the Old Testament, or Apostle in the New.

Can anyone with a clean mind and in possession of his reason think that the soul that conceived these lofty sentiments and the mind that framed them in faultless language; that the man who for four years with scarcely a moment of relaxation labored to save the Union, and did save it, and did it so well that the best minds of the South looked on him as their best friend;

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that the man who wrote that tender, heartful letter to the mother who lost five sons; that he could compose these verbal pollutions misnamed "Lincoln" stories? The man who thinks knows better.

This is powerful but negative evidence. Positive evidence is not wanting.

It is, of course, too late to get first-hand testimony directly from Mr. Lincoln's contemporaries. They are all dead. The nearest approach I can make to this is to quote the words of Col. Stevenson, who was chief surgeon to one of the divisions before Vicksburg.

The late Dr. Fabrique, of Wichita, told me the story many times. I loved to hear it, and often led up to the subject craftily, letting him think I might have forgotten, just to hear him tell it again.

Dr. Fabrique was Captain of Volunteers during the seige of Vicksburg, and there made the acquaintance of Col. Stevenson. The Colonel, he said, was wont to grow wroth whenever he heard any of these concoctions, and said that he had been Mr. Lincoln's family physician from the time he was married until he left Springfield to assume the office of President; that he had been with him at the birth of his four children, and the death of one; that he was in almost constant touch with Mr. Lincoln, and probably knew him better than any other man in Springfield; and that he had never heard him tell a filthy story, utter a profane oath, or say a disparaging word of any woman.

We are going through a strange epoch. In three quarters of a century I have never known such a period of detraction of our national heroes, and in all my reading I have never seen anything to compare with it. One writer

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would have us believe that the man, who more than any other man won the war of the American Revolution, and received the proud title bestowed by a grateful people -- "The Father of His Country," was a gambler, and habitually profane of speech. Another would have us believe that the man, who more than any other, saved the Union, and so cemented together the hearts of men that such an attempt at dismemberment can never again be made, was an habitual teller of obscene stories; and that the man who, more than any other in the field, crushed the attempt to destroy the Union, and who in appreciation of his genius, received honors from the whole world to an extent never before given to any man, was a drunkard. And all this without any worth while appreciation of the great deeds of these men, and the virtues which they exhibited.

Is this detraction evidence of a Jazz Age, or is it simply the work of a notoriety seeking group of Jazzlet scribes, a part of the muck thrown up in the eruption of recent years?

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