No 405 Gordon St. Atlanta Ga Nov 20th 1895.

Editor of McClure's Magazine.

Dear Sir:

You ask me to give some of my recollections of Mr A. Lincoln. I fear those recollections will hardly be readable by the busy Multitude of today who demand the sensational and the light — and shrink back from any thing tinged with the sad realities of the past — Nor can I furnish you the light and gay for there is a thread of melancholy running through the memories of Lincoln as held by me that I cannot dismiss if I would: not so much because of Lincoln's public life and sad death, but because of the revolutionary age in which my earthly sojourn has been cast; in which it has been mine to foreshadow coming national trouble and try to discover the remedy — to use an humble figure my life reminds

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of the petrel cradled in the gale, whose
warning cry rises above the fitful gusts of the coming storm
– but such as those reminiscences are
I am free to give them, and now a word
to introduce you correspondent.

In 1848 I become an agent of the American
Colonization Society, for the state of Indiana,
my predecessor in that office and field
was Dr Ravenaugh – brother of Hubbard Ravenaugh
the Bishop, wished to leave the North and go
south to Texas – the M. E. Church having
divided in 1844-5 he went with the south, and in
looking around for a successor his choice
settled on me, I presume because of my
zeal in his work and cause when in 1846-7
he visited my pastoral field of labor, for
I was then in the fifth year of my Ministry.

I sought not this office it was thrust
upon me, the Commission came to me
unasked and over frequent protests and
would have been finally declined but
for the wish and will of my Presiding Elder
and Bishop Morris, who advised me
to enter the field and do what I

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could for the Negro race.

Coming in this way I regarded it as a Providential call to that kind of duty:— and said to my Brethren— I will not propose to empty the ocean with a spoon; if relief must come to the Negro race through this plan, the States and Federal Government must take hold of the question— They smiled at the boldness of the program, and thought it the outgiving of a sanguin Irish mind, but a few years removed from Ulster training, and strongly infected with the spirit and liberties of Londonderry my native city, a fire that would soon be ~~quenched and~~ cooled and quenched by contact with "the peculiar institution".

I addressed myself to the organiza-
= tion of my own State first, and as Providence ordered it— a Constitutional Convention was called to revise the State Constitution :— the men of Indiana kindly granted me the 13th ~~Amendment~~ Article

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which empowered the Legislature to vote money for Colonization and the deportation of their own Colored people— but loading it with exclusion provisions I did not approve, this article when submitted to the people in separate form was adopted by 93,000 majority

The Legislature created a Board for Colonization, consisting of the Governor, Secretary of State, and Auditor —this board made me their Secretary, thus giving me vantage ground for wider work— It required ~~five~~ four years to perfect this organization.

Mr Lincoln had been elected in Illinois a member of the 30th Congress— and took his seat therein on the 6th of Dec 1847 I believe the only Whig from that State, he was a close student of the Negro question in all its phases— and not unacquainted with our ~~five~~ four years struggle over the question in Indiana his neighboring State, as I subsequently learned.

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On Jan 20th 1853 I was made General Agent of our society for the North western states, with the understanding that I should attempt the organization as in Indiana, & in the early summer of that year I took Indiana state reports, and letters from our Governor, and in the month of June started westward from Indianapolis for Springfield the Capital of Illinois.

Such journies in those days were not made in Pulman sleepers — the old Concord four horse stage Coach was the means of conveyance — it was a long rough ride, which tried nerve and endurance.

I sought out the Secretary of the Illinois Colonization Society, on reaching that City, Rev Mr Dodge, Pastor of the second Presbyterian Church and let him know my business and the object of my visit; he gladly lent his aid — I informed him how

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the statesmen of Indiana had aided me, especially Joseph A. Wright the Governor — and asked him if Illinois had any liberal and able statesman who could be depended on to aid us in the organization of Illinois? He answered Yes — we have a man in this city who will aid us — Abraham Lincoln who was lately a Congressman from this district — Be so kind as to give me an introduction (said) — So we started out to find him; as we jounced over the rough and poorly kept side walks of that straggling town as it was then, we reached the public square with its state house in the center, nor was the square fully and compactly built up all round — The impression made by the view was not imposing, but I made no remark in regard to it.

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We had walked about one fourth of the length of one side — when Mr Dodge slowed his pace — and said There is Mr Lincoln seated on that dry goods box — I looked forward and about the middle of the row of houses and stores, which flanked that side of the square, I saw a tall gaunt man seated alone on a dry goods box at the door of one of the stores — we lost no time but then pressed on to join him. Mr Dodge had spoken in the highest term of him as Illinois' Coming man "both good and great" — I glanced at him from head to foot, as he sat there with eyes fixed on the ground, in listless meditation, as I supposed, and quickly reached the wrong conviction judging from externals, that if that was Illinois' great man Illinois was not much. I was introduced, and as soon as I stated the object of my visit to his state; he began to ask questions

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about our work in Indiana and in Liberia, and our movements on the Federal Government. ~~But~~ which disclosed his full and perfect knowledge of the whole scope, aims, and ends of Colonization ~~But~~ so I at once changed my mind and opinion as to his ability, and settled on him as a great leader.

I remained in Springfield some time, lectured on Colonization, and preached in, Mr Dodges Church, (now and then again in the latter church) having Mr Lincoln in the audience, & I did not know that he had ever been troubled with unbelief in Divine Revelation at that time, no nor for many years afterwards, but I find by looking at the record of my sermons which includes every sermon I have preached in ~~any~~ life that is worth recording (simply place and text) that my text the first sermon was a defence of Divine truth, on the rule a measure of correct opinion, inasmuch as opinions

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rules the world, both in civil and religious things, hence the need of a correct standard; the text would be 1 Cor 9-20.
In all my subsequent conversations with him he made no remark that led me to suspect his want of faith in God's word, and the statements made in Lamon's history of his early unbelief, took me by surprise, and all the more so as several of my private chats on the designs of Rome, and European Imperialism, as represented by Napoleon III & on this Protestant Republic, were founded on the Sacred Books.

Our conversations were frequent and full about the dangers of disunion, the need of direct and quick action on the negro question — but he had nothing new to learn from me thereon for he had studied it before; My mission was to ask direct and quick action on old theories.

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I think the sabbath I refer to above when I had the privelege of preaching to Mr Lincoln was July 5th 1853 — we took a collection to constitute the Pastor, Mr Lincoln a Life Member of our Society, and on the following week we made Rev J. Smith D.D. Mr Lincolns Pastor a life member — The following are amongst the names who contributed thereto Hon A Lincoln $5 — Mr Lewis $5. Mr Williams $5, Mr Bennett $5. &c &c see African Repository Collections reported Aug 1853 —

I cannot give you the exact words used in Conversation, for I attached no great importance to my own acts or words, or the acts or words of others at that time, except as they subserved the ends of my mission state action, and aid on the Negro questions. If I had the ground to go over again I would be more careful

Yours &c James Mitchell

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