Abraham Lincoln's one close and intimate personal friend was Joshua F. Speed of Kentucky. All of the biographers of Lincoln appear to agree as to this. The friendship began in 1837 and lasted through out Lincoln's life. Mr. Speed, who died in 1882, was a man of great reserve and though often asked to write about Lincoln always refused upon the ground that he had not the literary capacity to do justice to such a subject. He was however consulted by the biographers, careful enough to seek original sources of information, and usually gave to such inquirers what facts and documents he had in his possession. Once however, in 1874 I think, Mr. Speed prepared a lecture on Lincoln to be read before some of his friends and from this I shall make extracts and so let him tell the particulars of the friendship so far as possible. ~~He is not easy for himself for Mr. Speed though fond of his distinguished friend and of the friendship always shrunk from any seeming effort to attract to himself the distinction that friendship conferred.~~ Here is what he said of Lincoln before the friendship began:

"In the Spring of 1836," I first saw Abraham Lincoln. He had been a Lieutenant, a flat-boatman, a deputy surveyor, and for one term a member of

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

the legislature. I heard him spoken of by those who knew him as a wonderful character. They boasted that he could outwrestle any man in the county and could beat any lawyer in Springfield speaking. In 1836 he was a candidate for reelection to the legislature, and I believe I heard the first speech he ever made at the county seat. An unhappy effort to take young Abe Lincoln down.

"At the time there were but two parties, Whig and Democrat. Lincoln was a Whig and the leading man upon the ticket. I was then fresh from Kentucky, and had heard many of her great orators. It seemed to me then, as it seems to me now, that I never heard a more effective speaker. He carried the crowd with him and enraged them as he pleased. So deep an impression did he make that George Forquer, a man of much celebrity as a sarcastic speaker and with a great reputation throughout the State as an orator, rose and asked the people to hear him. He began his speech by saying that this young man would have to be taken down, and he was sorry that the task devolved upon him. He made what was called one of his slasher-gaff speeches, dealing much in ridicule and sarcasm. Lincoln stood near him with his arms folded, never interrupting him. When Forquer was done Lincoln walked to the stand and replied so fully and completely that his friends bore him from the court house on their shoulders.

"So deep an impression did this first speech make upon me that I remember its timbre even now after a lapse of thirty-eight years. Said he 'The gentleman commenced his speech by saying that this young man will have to be taken down, and he was sorry the task devolved upon him. I am not so young in years as I am in the tricks and trades of a politician; but live long or

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

die young, I would rather die now than, like the gentleman, change my politics, and simultaneously with the change receive an office worth $3000 a year, and then have to erect a lightning rod over my house to protect a guilty conscience from an offended God.'

"To understand the point of this it must be explained that Speed had been a Whig but had changed his politics and had been appointed Register of the Land Office and over his house was the only lightning rod in the town or county. Lincoln had seen the lightning rod for the first time in the day before. Not understanding its properties, he made it a study that night by aid of a book, bought for the purpose, till he knew all about it. The same quality of mind that made him look into and understand all he saw. No matter how ridiculous his ignorance upon any subject might make him appear he was never ashamed to acknowledge it; but he immediately addressed himself to the task of being ignorant no longer." Lincoln's First Lodging in Springfield

At the time of which Mr Speed speaks Lincoln did not live in Springfield nor had he yet been admitted to the Bar. He was studying law however at this humble time in the shanty of the Sangamon from books borrowed from John T. Stuart, who was afterwards his partner. "It was in the Spring of 1837," said Mr Speed, "and on the very day that he obtained his license that our intimate acquaintance began. He had ridden into town on a borrowed horse, with his earthly property save a pair of saddle-bags containing a few clothes. I was a merchant at Springfield, and kept a large country store, embracing dry-goods, groceries, hardware, books, medicines, bed-clothes, mattresses, in fact every thing

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

that the country needed. Lincoln came into the store with his saddle bags on his arm. He said he wanted to buy the furniture for a single bed. The mattress, blankets, sheets, coverlid and pillow according to the figures made by one Woods cost seventeen dollars. He said that perhaps was cheap enough; but small as the price was he was unable to pay it. But if I would credit him till Christmas, and his experiment as a lawyer was a success, he would pay then, saying, in the saddest tone, 'If I fail in this I do not know that I can ever pay you.' As I looked up at him I thought then, and I think now, that I never saw a sadder face.

"I said to him: 'You seem to be so much pained at contracting so small a debt, I think I can suggest a plan by which you can avoid the debt and at the same time attain your end. I have a large room with a double bed up-stairs which you are very welcome to share with me.'

"'Where is your room?' said he

"'Up stairs,' said I, pointing to a pair of winding stairs which led from the store to my room.

"He took his saddle bags on his arm, went up stairs, set them down on the floor and came down with the most changed expression of countenance. Beaming with pleasure he ~~said~~ exclaimed:

'Well, Speed, I am moved'"

#

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

At that time Mr Lincoln was twenty seven years old, "a lawyer without a client, no money, and all his earthly wealth consisting of the clothes he wore and the contents of his saddle bags."

Mr Speed was Lincoln's junior by four years, a man of some inherited means and a merchant with a prospering business. They lived thus intimately and together for four years during which time Lincoln's affairs were a little mended though not much. During this time there existed an intimate friendship singular in the lives of both men, for neither of them ever unreservedly in after life was ever intimate with any other man. They appear to have had no concealments from one another and to have discussed affairs of the most sacredly personal nature. To no other person did Mr Lincoln ever unburden himself with such unreserve. They confessed to each other their sentimental perplexities and of these, as is well known, Lincoln had more than a full share.

[redacted]

To return to Mr Speed's narrative of the early years in Springfield.

"As a lawyer," he says, "after his first year he was acknowledged among the best in the State. His analytical powers were marvellous. He always resolved every question into its primary elements and gave up every point in his own side that did not seem invulnerable. One would think, to hear him argue a case in the court

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

he was giving his case away. He would concede point after point to his adversary until it would seem his case was conceded entirely away. But he always reserved a point upon which he claimed a decision in his favor and his concessions magnified the strength of his claim. He rarely failed in gaining his cases in court.

"Mr Lincoln was a social man, though he did not seek company; it sought him. Often he made his home with me, in every winter's night at my store, by a big wood fire, no matter how inclement the weather, Eight or ten choice spirits assembled, without distinction of party. It was a sort of social club without organization. They came there because they were sure to find Lincoln. His habit was to engage in conversation upon any and all subjects except politics.

A Reminiscence of Lincoln and Douglas Debate.

"One evening a political argument sprung up between Lincoln and Douglas, which for a time ran high. Douglas sprang to his feet and said, 'Gentlemen there is no place to talk politics; we will discuss the questions publicly with you.'

"A few days afterward the Whigs held a meeting and challenged the Democrats to a joint debate. The challenge was accepted and Douglas, Lamborn, Calhoun, and Jesse Thomas were selected by the Democrats;

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

our hearts we never faltered in defending.

This speech was considered at the time to be the best of the series and some even doubted according to Herndon and Lamon, two of Lincoln's biographers, that Lincoln ever have prepared it without assistance. Lamon says in his book written in 1872, "To this day, there are some who believe he had assistance in the preparation of it. Even Mr. Herndon accused Speed of having had a hand in it, and got a flat denial for his answer. At all events the speech was a popular success."

Here is an incident related by Mr. Speed: "An Illustration of Lincoln's tenderness of heart:

"Lincoln had the tenderest heart for any one in distress, whether man beast or bird. Many of the gentle and touching sympathies of his nature which flowered so frequently and beautifully in the humble citizen at home fruited in the sunlight of the world when he had power and peace. He carried from his home in the prairies to Washington the same gentleness of disposition and kindness of heart. Six gentlemen, Herndon, Lincoln, Baker, Hardin and two others whose names I do not now recall, were riding along a country road. We were strung along the road two and two together. We were passing through a thicket of wild plums and crab apple trees. A violent wind storm had just occurred. Lincoln and Hardin were behind. These were two

Logan, Baker, Browning and Lincoln were selected by the Whigs. Such intellectual giants of course drew a crowded house. The debate took place in the Presbyterian church and lasted for eight nights, each speaker taking one night. Like true knights they came to fight in intellectual armor clad. They all stood high and each had his followers, adherents and admirers. This was in January 1840. The conclusion of that speech, as an evidence of his style at that early day is I think worth repeating here:

"If ever I feel the God within me elevate and expand to those dimensions not wholly unworthy of its Divine Architect, it is when I contemplate the cause of my country, deserted by all the world beside, and I standing up boldly and alone, hurling defiance at her vile-tenous oppressors. Here, without contemplating consequences, before Heaven and in the face of the world, I swear eternal fealty to the just cause, as I deem it, of the land of my life, my liberty - and my love. And who, that thinks with me, will not fearlessly adopt the motto I take! Let none falter who thinks he is right, and we may succeed. But if, after all, we shall fail, be it so; we will still have the proud consolation of saying to our consciences, and to the departed shade of your country's freedom, that the cause approved of our judgments and adored of

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

young birds by the roadside too young to fly. They had been blown from the nest by the storm. The old bird was fluttering about and wailing as a mother does for her babes. Lincoln stopped, hitched his horse, caught the birds, mounted the nest and placed them in it. The rest of us rode on to a creek, and while our horses were drinking Hardin rode up. 'Where is Lincoln?' asked one. 'Oh, when I saw him last he had two little birds in his hand hunting for their nest. He (perhaps) am soon' he came. They laughed at him. He said with much emphasis: 'Gentlemen you may laugh, but I could not have slept well to night, if I had not saved those birds. Their cries would have rung in my ears.'"

The sentimental perplexities before referred to have been dwelt upon at much length and with considerable fulness by Lincoln's various biographers. Some have said that he was actually made and likely at any time to take his own life. Mr. Speed who knew all about the doubts which troubled his friend never went very deeply into the particulars in his disclosures for those who sought from him material for Lincoln's biography. In the lecture from which so many quotations have been

made he said not more than this of this painful Episode in the life of his close friend:

"In the winter of 1841 a gloom came over him like the friends were alarmed for his life. Though a member of the legislature he rarely attended its sessions. In his deepest gloom and when I told him he owned the unless he pulled, he said, 'I am not afraid, and owned he more than willing, but I have an irrepressible desire to live till I can be assured that the world is a little better for my having lived in it.' Noble and commendable ambition. It is for posterity to say whether his ambition was gratified. In the Early summer of 1841 Mrs Lincoln came to Kentucky and spent several months at Farming ton the home of my mother near this city. (Louisville). On his return to Illinois, thinking that some recognition of the kindness shown him was due he wrote a letter to my sister Miss Mary Speed, in which he gives among other things an account of his

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

trip on a steamboat from Louisville to St Louis. The scene he describes bears so intimate a relation to his after life that it may be considered as concentrating his opposition to slavery. He says: "A fine example was

presented on board the boat for contemplating the effect of custom upon human happiness. A gentleman had purchased twelve negroes in different parts of Kentucky and was taking them to a farm in the South. They were chained six and six together, a small iron clevis was around the left wrist of each, and this was fastened to the main chain by a shorter at a convenience distance from the others; so that the negroes were strung together precisely like so many fish on a trot-line. In this condition they were being separated for ever from the scenes of their childhood, their friends, their

fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters, and many of them from their wives and children and going into perpetual slavery, where the lash of the master is proverbially more ruthless than any where else; and yet amid all these distressing circumstances, as we would think them, they were the most cheerful and apparently happy people on board. One, whose offence for which he was sold was an over fondness for his wife, played the fiddle almost continually and others danced, sang, cracked jokes, and played various games with cards from day to day. How true it is that 'God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb' or, in other words, that he renders the worst of human conditions tolerable, while he permits the best to be nothing better than tolerable".

The Speeds, like very many other Kentuckians of the better class, did not believe that slavery was right and favored its extinction but some of them were provoked into opposition to Emancipation by the intemperate methods of the abolitionists

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

abolitionists. Among these was Mr. Lincoln's friend Joshua F. Speed. During the Kansas troubles Mr. Speed wrote a letter in which he spoke with unusual heat of the methods alluded to. To this Mr. Lincoln made this reply:

Springfield August 24th 1855

Dear Speed: You know what a poor correspondent I am. Ever since I received your very agreeable letter of the 22nd of July I have been intending to write you an answer to it. You suggest that in political action, now, you and I would differ. I suppose we would; not quite as much, however, as you may think. You know I dislike slavery, and you fully admit the abstract wrong of it. So far there is no cause of difference. But you say sooner than yield your legal right to the slave, Especially at the bidding of those who are not themselves interested, you would see the Union dissolved. I am not aware that anyone is bidding you yield that right; very certainly I am not. I leave that matter entirely to yourself. I also

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

acknowledge your rights and my obligations
under the Constitution in regard to your
slaves. I confess that I hate to see the
poor creatures hunted down and caught
and carried back to their stripes and
unrequited toil; but I bite my lips
and keep quiet. In 1841 you and I had
together a tedious low water trip on a
steamboat from Louisville to St Louis.
You may remember, as I well do, that
from Louisville to the mouth of the
Ohio there were on board ten or
a dozen slaves shackled together
with irons. That sight was a con-
tinued torment to me, and I see
something like it every time I touch
the Ohio or any other slave border.
It is not fair for you to assume
that I have no interest in a thing
which has, and continually exercises,
the power of making me miserable.
You ought rather to appreciate how
much the great body of the Northern
people do crucify their feelings, in

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

ades to maintain their loyalty to the
Constitution and the Union. I do oppose the
Extension of slavery because my judgment
and feeling so prompt me, and I am under
no obligations to the contrary. If for this
you and I must differ, differ we must.
You say, if you were President, you would
send an army and hang the leaders of the
Missouri outrages upon the Kansas elections;
still, if Kansas fairly votes herself a
slave state she must be admitted, or
the Union must be dissolved. But how if
she votes herself a slave state unfairly, that is, by the very means
for which you say you would hang men?
Must she still be admitted or the Union
dissolved? That would be the phase of
the question when it first becomes a
practical one. In your assumption that
there may be a fair decision of the
slavery question in Kansas, I plainly
see you and I would differ about the
Nebraska law. I look upon that
Enactment not as a law, but as a
violence from the beginning. It was
conceived in violence, is maintained

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

in violence and is being executed in violence.
I say it was executed in violence, because
the destruction of the Missouri compro-
mise, under the circumstances was
nothing less than violence. It was passed
in violence, because it could not have
passed at all but for the votes of
many members in violence of the known
will of their constituents. It is main-
tained in violence because the electors
since clearly demand its repeal; and
the demand is openly disregarded.

You say men ought to be hung for
the way they are executing the law; I
say the way it is being executed
is quite as good as any of its ante-
cedents. It is being executed in the
precise way which was intended
from the first, else why does no
Democratic man express astonishment
or condemnation? Poor Reeder is the only
public man who has been silly enough
to believe that any thing like fairness
was ever intended, and he has been bravely
undeceived.

That Kansas will form a slave

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

constitution, and with it will ask to be admitted into the Union, I take to be already a settled Question, and so settled by the very means you so fruitedly condemn. By every principle of Law ever held by any court North or South, Every negro taken to Kansas is free; Yet in utter disregard of this, — in the spirit of violence merely, — that beautiful legislature gravely passes a law to hang any man who shall venture to inform a negro of his legal rights. This is the subject and real object of the law. If, like Haman they shall hang upon the gallows of their own building, I shall not be among the mourners for their fate. In my humble sphere, I shall advocate the restoration of the Missouri Compromise so long as Kansas remains a Territory, and when by all these foul means it seeks to come into the Union as a Slave State I shall oppose it. I am very loath in any case to withhold my assent to the Enjoyment of property — acquired or located in good faith; but I do not admit that Good faith in taking a negro to Kansas to be held in slavery is a probability with any man. Every man who has sense

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

enough to be the controller of his own property- has too much sense to misunderstand the outrageous character of the whole Nebraska business. But I digress. In my opposition to the admission of Kansas I shall have some company but we may be beaten. If we are, I shall not on that account attempt to dissolve the Union. I think it probable, however, we shall be beaten. Standing as a unit among yourselves, you can, directly and indirectly, bribe enough of our men to carry the day, as you could in the open proposition to establish a monarchy. Get hold of some man in the North whose position and ability- is such that he can make the support of your measure, whatever it may be, a Democratic party necessity; and the thing is done. Apropos of this let me tell you an anecdote. Douglas introduced the Nebraska bill in January. In February afterwards there was a called session of the Illinois legislature. Of the one hundred members composing the two branches of that body, about seventy were Democrats. These latter held a caucus, in which the Nebraska bill was backed up, if not formally

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

discussed.. It was thereby discovered that just three, and no more, were in favor of the measure. In a day or two Douglas's orders came on to have resolutions passed approving the bill; and they were passed by large majorities!!! The truth of this is vouched for by a bolting Democratic member. The masses, top, Democratic as well as Whig, were even nearer unanimous against it; but as soon as the party-necessity of supporting it became apparent, the way the Democrats began to see the wisdom and justice of it was perfectly astonishing.

You say that if Kansas fairly votes herself a free State, as a Christian you will rejoice at it. All decent Slaveholders talk that way and I do not doubt their candor. But they never vote that way. Although in a private letter or conversation you will express your preference that Kansas shall be free, you would vote for no man for Congress who would say the same thing publicly. No such man could be elected from any district in a slave State. You think String fellow and Company ought to be hung and yet at the next Presidential Election you will vote for the exact type and representative

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

of strong feelings. The slave breeders and slave traders are a small, odious, and detested class among you; and yet in politics they dictate the course of all of you, and are as completely your masters as you are the masters of your own negroes. You enquire where I now stand. That is a disputed point. I think I am a Whig; but others say there are no Whigs, and that I am an Abolitionist. When I was at Washington I voted for the Wilmot Proviso as good as forty times; and I never heard of any one attempting to read me for that. I now do no more than oppose the Extension of slavery. I am not a Know-nothing; that is certain. How could I be? How can any one who abhors the oppression of negroes be in favor of degrading classes of white people? Our progress in degeneracy appears to me to be pretty rapid. As a nation we started out ~~declared~~ by declaring that "all men are created Equal." We now practically read it "all men are created Equal except negroes." When the Know-nothings

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

get control, it will read "all men are created Equal Except Negroes and foreigners and Catholics." When it comes to this, I shall prefer Emigrating to some country where they make no pretence of loving liberty, - to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, and without the base alloy of hypocrisy.

Mary will probably pass a day or two in Louisville in October. My kindest regards to Mrs Speed. On the leading subject of this letter I have more of her sympathy than I have of yours; and yet let me say I am

Your friend forever,
A. Lincoln.

During the next few years and until Lincoln was seeking the nomination for the Presidency there was but little correspondence between the friends. In that time however Mr Speed had learned to take a much calmer view of the great public questions and the friends were very much more nearly together than when the above letter was written. When the war actually began Mr Speed did not hesitate one a moment but declared unequivocally for the Union, as did also

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

~~one of~~ his brothers, all of whom were men of position and consideration in Kentucky. Naturally Mr Speed let Mr Lincoln know of his sentiments and thereafter during the whole war the President called upon his old friend for confidential services of the most delicate nature and in the performance of these duties the old intimacy became even closer than it had been twenty-years before. It was a most trying time in Kentucky at the beginning of the war as it was necessary for each man to decide which way he was to go and for none was this a matter of course, a question which decided itself or which was decided by others. Even those who like Mr Speed were for the Union under all circumstances and without conditions recognized the force and the power of Kentucky's geographical position and social and commercial connection with the South ~~and also of the prejudices~~ They also took note of the prejudices which grew out of these. To attempt to coerce these people at that moment would have forced them by a great majority to the Southern side. Instead of that he advocated ~~the most rigorous~~ as a tentative policy an attempt to establish an impossible neutrality ~~which~~ This would give time and the real designs of the Southern leaders ~~should~~ would be disclosed and the people of Kentucky in sober second

would
thought see whither the Secessionists were
going. To this end he worked most earnestly
and the election in August 1861 resulted
in the return of an overwhelming majority
of Union men to the General Assembly. Reso-
lutions taking a firm stand for the Union
were passed and others adopted directing the
raising and Equipment of troops for the Federal
Service.

The gentleman who was Adjutant General
of Kentucky during the war has said this of
Mr Speed's services at that time, services
which he was able to render because he
had the absolute confidence of the Executive
Head of the Federal Government. "In the
organization of our Kentucky Volunteer
Soldiers," says General Finnell, "and in
the general conduct of our State affairs, par-
ticularly during 1861-2 there were questions
of interest and difficulty- very frequently
arising between the General Government and
that of the State, and between the Federal
and State military officials. There were wants
to be supplied, arms for recruits, munitions
of war, etc, for our Volunteers; and besides
'the want of confidence in the loyalty
of the Border States' which manifested
itself almost daily among some of the
Federal officials at Washington,

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

there was real difficulty in procuring the much needed arms and supplies, etc, because it often happened the Government did not have them and could not get them. In all these and kindred difficulties and troubles, the State Military Board and officials had recourse to Mr Speed. He was at all times prompt to respond to any call made upon him, and ready to go to Washington when his services were deemed of value or importance to the State. His influence with Mr Lincoln was potent. He knew that Mr Lincoln loved Kentucky and had confidence in the truth and loyalty of her people who had declared for the Union. His measures were uniformly successful. All these things he did so quietly and so modestly that one scarce knew it was doing until it was done.

"His position was peculiar; without at any time an office, civil or military, he was the trusted confidant, adviser and counselor of both the civil and military authorities of the State and nation all through the rebellion. He was a man of few words, often painfully reticent, never in a hurry, never discomposed; he seemed intuitively to know the right thing to

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

do, and the right time he do it. His commendation was found alone in the consciousness of duty performed. He uniformly declined to receive pay for any time or effort he was asked to give to the cause of his country."

General Sherman some time after the war said this to Colonel Kniffin who was on General Thomas's staff:

"Some time after I had superseded General Anderson in command of the Department, I one day confided to Hon Joshua F Speed, a true-hearted Union man of Louisville, the embarrassments under which I labored, formerly by the War Department which had placed me in command while it withheld the means to make my force effective. 'What do you want?' said old Mr Speed. 'Every thing,' said I, 'arms, wagons, tents, bread and meat, money and a competent staff!' 'Name what you want on paper,' said old Mr Speed, 'and give it to me.' I did as requested and handed it over. Nothing more was seen of old Mr Speed for several days when he entered my room and handed me copies of orders breaking Colonel Thomas's swords, assistant Quarter master General ~~to report to me~~ and Captains

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

I H.C. Symmes, Commissary of Subsistence, to report to me for duty. The order directed Captain Colonel Swords to draw for present needs $100 000. He also had an order drawn by President Lincoln himself upon the ordnance department for 10,000 Springfield rifles of the latest design. 'How is this', I exclaimed, 'that more attention is paid to the requests of you a citizen, than to me, a general in the army? You had better take command here.'

Mr Speed then explained to General Sherman the intimate nature of his acquaintance with Mr Lincoln and the General thereafter understood that Mr Speed's Endorsement carried weight in Washington and never hesitated to ask for it when it was needed. The success Mr Speed had had in his semi-official affairs in Kentucky must have caused him very high in Mr Lincoln's Estimation as an administrator for when it was decided that Mr Chase was to be appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court the President put the office of Secretary of the Treasury

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

at his old friend's disposal. Mr Speed however declined this as he had declined all other offices through life save that of member of the Kentucky legislature for one term in 1848. Joshua Speed having declined this cabinet position Mr Lincoln a few weeks later appointed his brother James Speed, Attorney General, to succeed Mr Bates, and as is well known Mr Chase could not be induced into his new and exalted position until the Senate confirmed Mr Speed, for the Attorney General's Signature was needed to complete the Chief Justice's Commission. The Senate delayed this confirmation for several days because as one of the Committee said they wanted "to convey to a mild insinuation to the President that they did not know who James Speed of Kentucky was."

In the paper that Mr Speed prepared for his friends' entertainment in 1874 he told of some of the things he witnessed in Washington during the war. Here is one of these. "On one occasion, when Kentucky was overrun, Nelson had been beaten in battle near Richmond and lay wounded at Cincinnati. Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois were alarmed and Kentucky armed. A Self constituted

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

committee of distinguished gentlemen determined to go and advise with the President as to what was best to be done. I happened to be present at the interview. The committee was composed of able and distinguished men. Senator Lane opened for Indiana, Garret Davis followed for Kentucky and other gentlemen for Ohio and Illinois. They all had complaints to make of the conduct of the war in the West. Like the expression in the Prayer Book, the Government was 'doing every thing it ought not to do, and leaving undone every thing it ought to do.'

"The President sat in a revolving chair looking at every one till they all were done. I never saw him exhibit more tact or talent than he did on this occasion. He said: 'Now Gentlemen I am going to make you a curious kind of speech. I announce to you that I am not going to do one single thing that any one of you has asked me to do. But it is due to you and to myself that I should give my reasons.' He then from his seat answered each man, taking them in the order in which they spoke never forgetting a point that any one of them had made. When he was done he rose from his chair and said: 'Judge Wade, this reminds me of an anecdote

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Turbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

which I heard a son of yours tell in Burlington in Iowa. He was trying to enforce upon his hearers the truth of the old adage that three moves is worse than a fire. As an illustration he gave an account of a family who started from Western Pennsylvania pretty well off in this world's goods when they started. But they moved and moved, having less and less every time they moved, till after a while they could carry every thing they had in one wagon. He said that the children of the family got so used to being moved, that whenever they saw the wagon sheets brought out they laid themselves on their backs and crossed their hoe legs, ready to be tied. "Now gentlemen if I were to listen to every committee that comes into that door, I had just as well cross my hands and let you tie me. Nevertheless I am glad to see you." The committee left the President in good humor and all were satisfied."

"Lincoln was fond of anecdotes," Mr. Speed continues, "and told them well. It was a great mental relief to him. All great thinkers must have mental relaxation. He did not know one card from another, therefore could not play. He never drank and hated loose company. Jacob has

Print

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

been found by some fastidious persons with his habit of story telling – in other words with his method of illustration by means of anecdote. It is said this was unbecoming. A fable, a parable, or an anecdote, is nothing more than illustrating a real case by an imaginary one. A positive statement Embraces but one case, while a fable, a parable, or an anecdote may covers a whole class of cases. Take, for instance, his conversation with W.C. Rives of Virginia, whom he greatly admired. Rives? Rives came with other gentlemen from Richmond soon after the inauguration. A convention was in session in Richmond to decide whether Virginia would go out or stay in the Union. Mr. Rives was a Union man and proceeded to advise the President. His advice was to surrender Forts Pickens and Sumpter and all the property of the Government in the Southern States. Mr. Lincoln asked him if he remembered the fable of the Lion and the Woodsman's Daughter. Mr. Reeves said that he did not. Aesop, said the President, reports that a lion was very much in love with a woodsmen's daughter. The fair maid, afraid to say no, referred him to her father. The lion applied for the girl. The father replied, Your

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

teeth are too long. The lion went to a dentist (10)
and had them extracted, Returning he asked
for his bride. etc, said the woodsman, your
claws are too long. Going back to the dentist
he had them drawn. Then returning to claim
his bride the woodsman, seeing that the lion
was unarmed beat out his brains. "May it not
be so", said Mr Lincoln, "with me if I give
up all that is asked". said Mr. Reed further,
"I have often been asked" "what were Mr
Lincoln's religious opinions. When I knew him, in
Early life, he was a Skeptic. He had tried hard to
be a believer but his reason could not grasp and
solve the great problem of redemption as taught.
He was very cautious never to give expression
to any thought or sentiment that would grate
harshly upon a Christian's ear. To a sincere
Christian he had great respect. He often
said that the most ambitious man might
live to see many hope fail, but, no Christian
comes live to see his fail, because fulfel-
ment comes only come when life ended. But
this was a subject we never discussed. The
only evidence I have of any change, was in
the summer before he was killed. I was in-
vited out to the Soldier's Home to spend
the night. etc I entered the room, near
night, he was sitting near a window in-
tently reading his bible, approaching him
I said, I am glad to see you so

Mr Reed's lecture.

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

probably engaged." "Yes," said he, "I am probably engaged." "Well," said I, "if you have recovered from your shepherdess I am sorry to say that I have not." "Looking me earnestly in the face, and placing his hand on my shoulder, he said, "You are wrong. Speed. Take all of this book upon reason that you can, and the balance on faith, and you will live and die a happier man."

I am indebted to the following to Judge Gillespie, one of Mr Lincoln's most trusted and intimate friends, who occasionally went to Washing him to see him. Wanting no office, he was always welcome. The Judge says, "Mr Lincoln once said to me that he could never reconcile the presence of the Deity - with the uncertainty of Events. But he thought it would be "profitless to teach his views."

The Judge adds, I asked him once what was to be done with the South after the rebellion was put down. He said some thought their heads ought

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

to come off; but, said he, if it was left to me I would not here where to draw the line between those whose heads should come off and those whose heads should stay in. He said that he had recently been reading the history of the rebellion of Absalom, and that he inclined to adopt the views of David. Said he, 'When David was fleeing from Jerusalem Shimei cursed him. After the rebellion was put down Shimei craved a pardon. Abishai, David's nephew, the son of Zeruiah, David's sister, said 'This man ought not to be pardoned, because he cursed the Lord's anointed.' David said, 'What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that you should this day be adversaries unto me. Know ye that not a man shall be put to death in Israel.'"

This was like his anecdotes, and was illustrative of what he thought would come about. He would be pressed to put men to death because they

Digital Images, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

had rebelled. But like David, he intended to say "Know ye that not a man shall be put to death in Israel."

87

One of Lincolns deeds of mercy.

The last time I saw him was about two weeks before his assassination. He sent me word by my brother James, then in his cabinet, that he desired to see me before I went home. I went into his office about Eleven oclock. He looked jaded and weary. I stayed in the room until his hand for callers was over; he ordered the door closed, and looking over to where I was sitting, asked me to draw up my chair. But instead of being alone, as he supposed, in the opposite direction from where I sat, and across the fire place from him, sat two humble-looking women. Seeing them there seemed to provoke him, and he said, "Well, Ladies, what can I do for you?" One was an old woman, the other young. They both commenced talking at once. The President soon comprehended them. "I suppose" said he, "that your son and your husband are in prison for resisting the draft in Western Pennsylvania. Where is your petition?" The old lady replied, "Mr Lincoln, I have

Digital Image 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

I no petition; I went to a lawyer to get me drawn, and I had not the money to pay him and come here too; so I thought I would just come and ask you to let me have my boy." "And it is your husband you want," said he, turning to the young woman. "Yes," said she.

"The king has been and called his servants and bade him to go and tell General Dana to bring him the list of prisoners for resisting the draft in Western Pennsylvania.

"The General soon came, bringing a package of papers. The President opened it, and, counting the names, said, 'General, there are twenty-seven of these men. Is there any difference in the degree of their guilt?' "'No,' said the General, 'it is a bad case and a sorrowful finding.' "'Well,' said the President, looking out of the window and seemingly talking to himself, 'these poor fellows have, I think, suffered enough; they have been in prison fifteen months. I have been thinking

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

of So for some time and have said so to Stanton, and he always threatened to resign if they were released. But he has said so about other matters and never did, so now while I have the paper in my hand I will turn out the flock." So he wrote "Let the prisoners named in the within paper be discharged," and signed it. The General made his bow and left. Then turning to the ladies he said, "Now ladies, you can go. Your son, madam, and your husband, madam is free."

¶ "The young woman came across to him and began to kneel. He took her by the elbow and said impatiently, "Get up, get up; none of this." But the old woman walked to him, wiping with her apron the tears that were coursing down her cheeks. She gave him her hand and looking into his face said, "Good bye, Mr Lincoln, we will never meet again here we must in Heaven." A change came over his sad and weary face. He clasped her hand in both of his and followed her to the

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

door, saying as he went, "With all I have to cross me here, I am afraid I will never get there; but your wish that you will meet me there has fully paid me for all I have done for you." #

"We were then alone. She drew his chair to the fire and said, "Speed, I am a little alarmed about myself; just feel my hand." It was cold and clammy. She pulled off his boots and putting his feet to the fire the heat made them steam. I said overwork was producing nervousness. "No," said he, "I am not tired." I said, "Such a scene as I have just witnessed is enough to make you nervous." "How much you are mistaken," said he; "I have made two people happy to day; I have given a mother her son and a wife her husband. That young woman is a counterfeit, but the old woman is a true mother."

When Mr Speed left the White House after the trial just described he returned to Kentucky and the friends never met

again. The writer recalls having met Mr. Speed some days after the assassination of the President at the house of Mr. Speed's mother. In the parlor hung a photograph of the President with this inscription beneath it: "To Mrs Lucy Gilmer Speed, from whose pious hand I received an Offord Bible twenty years ago." Mr Speed looked at the picture and turning away habitually Sat down and shook with sobs. He was a man of intense reserve and great self restraint, so those who saw him that Sunday morning are never likely to forget how grief for his friend moved him to a most unaccustomed exhibition of his inner most feelings.

Mr Speed lived in Louisville till his death in 1882. He was a very successful man of affairs and was enterprising in ventures for the development of the natural resources of his State and the building up of her industries. Long before his death he abandoned his early skepticisms for a simple faith and became a member of the Methodist Church. The lady, who became his wife through Lincoln's Encouragement, still lives and occupies the Evening of her days ~~among~~ in ministering to the wants of the needy and among the flowers which she has always loved.

#