

In 1857, when his mind was completely absorbed with the arguments that he was working out against the extension of slavery in this country, with fostering the new Republican party which was opposed to this extension and with several important lawsuits, he learned one day that Duff Armstrong, the son of Jack Armstrong, the bully of the Cleary's Grove gang whom, you will remember, he had thrashed in New Salem back in 1831, had been arrested for murder.

Now, the threshing that Lincoln had given Jack Armstrong had done him good and had made him Lincoln's friend. It had made Hannah Armstrong, his wife, Lincoln's friend, too, and she had played almost the part of a mother to him - doing his mending, washing his clothes, and looking after him in many ways. When Lincoln heard of the sorrow that had come to Hannah Armstrong, he immediately wrote her the following letter:

"Dear Mrs. Armstrong: I have just heard of your deep affliction, and the arrest of your son for murder. I can hardly believe that he can be capable of the crime alleged against him. It does not seem possible. I am anxious that he should be given a fair trial at any rate; and gratitude for your long continued kindness to me in adverse circumstances prompts me to offer my humble services gratuitously in his behalf.

"It will afford me an opportunity to requite, in a small degree, the favors I received at your hand, and that of your lamented husband, when your roof afforded me a grateful shelter, without money and without price.

"Yours truly,

A. Lincoln."