

## “MORD” LINCOLN, THE WOMAN-HATER

BY WILLIAM E. BARTON

THE lumbering stage that jolted its way across the rutted prairie from Carthage to Macomb, stopped for the exchange of mails at the little old village of Fountain Green, and a passenger descended. He was unusually tall, dark and lank, and wore a long, seedy black coat and a tall hat in need of brushing, and carried a cotton umbrella tied about the middle with a string. He also carried an old-fashioned carpet bag. Several of the men who were lounging about the store, waiting for the stage, identified him, for they had been at Carthage on the preceding day and had heard him speak. Carthage was the county-seat of Hancock County, a county that lay along the Mississippi River opposite the Keokuk Rapids. Boats ascending the river to Keokuk, or the Illinois shore opposite, often had to discharge their cargoes and take a new start. It had been these rapids that made a head of navigation in the early days, and that was what began the settlement of Fountain Green. That was a place, some miles in from the river, where the rank prairie grass gave way for grass of finer texture, growing around a many-mouthed spring. In this same county, but above the rapids, was the town of Nauvoo, where the Mormons settled. Joseph Smith had been taken from

<sup>1</sup> This article has interest as a story, and that interest is increased by the close relationship of its principal character to Abraham Lincoln. But it is not as a narrative, though evidently a truthful one, that the article has its chief value. It is the first attempt, so far as we are aware, to answer the question, To what extent was Abraham Lincoln a Lincoln? Did his personal traits and moods come to him chiefly through his mother, or were there important elements in his mind and character which he inherited through his father? It is known that Abraham Lincoln saw practically nothing during his life-time of his father's relatives; this article mentions his isolation from his own family. In some respects he was quite unlike his father, Thomas Lincoln, who was a man of medium height, solidly built, while Abraham Lincoln was very tall and loose-jointed. Mentally, they had some traits in common. Doctor Barton has now conducted an investigation among the Lincolns most closely related to Abraham. The President left no surviving brother or sister, and his father died before he did. But there were first cousins in Illinois, and this article tells the story of this family, with some very suggestive facts concerning their mental traits, and especially those of one cousin, whose life story as here told cannot fail of interest.—THE EDITOR.

there, and was in the jail at Carthage when the mob captured the jail and killed him. The old jail at Carthage is now a shrine for the Mormons who visit it from other places. Joseph Smith was killed June 27, 1844. The events which this story describes occurred fourteen years later.

There was a political meeting in Carthage on September 11, 1858. Stephen A. Douglas, then a candidate for re-election to the United States Senate, spoke before a great crowd. A tablet set in the wall of the court house commemorates the event. Eleven days later, on Wednesday, September 22, Abraham Lincoln spoke there. You will find a massive up-standing boulder in the court house yard telling you where he stood. And that boulder tells us the date of the stage ride, for Abraham Lincoln journeyed eastward from Carthage after his speech in that town, and stopped at Fountain Green. The joint debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas were seven in number, beginning at Ottawa on Saturday, August 21, and closing at Alton, October 15, 1858. The days intervening between the joint discussions were filled by the two candidates separately. Douglas said that in the 100 days, exclusive of Sundays, between July 9 and August 2, he spoke just 130 times. Lincoln spoke not so often but almost always once a day, on certain days he spoke twice. Douglas traveled from place to place in a special car, often on a special train with a flat car bearing a cannon to announce his arrival and to echo the applause with which his speeches were received. Abraham Lincoln rode in the day coach, or in the stage. Four of the seven joint debates had been held when Lincoln spoke at Carthage.

Why did he stop at Fountain Green?

He stopped to visit his cousin Mordecai Lincoln. When the two men met in front of the little store at Fountain Green, it was easy to see that they were close akin. Their eyes and hair and gait were all alike. Abraham was taller than Mordecai, but Mordecai was a tall man, and his two brothers, Abraham, who died in 1852, and James, who died in 1837, were also tall men of the Lincoln type.

So far as I am aware, this meeting of Abraham Lincoln and his cousin Mordecai, is the only meeting that ever occurred in the life of the President between him and a first cousin of the name of Lincoln.

The isolation of Abraham Lincoln from his relatives of the Lincoln name was life-long and pathetic. His father, left an orphan at a tender age, became, as his distinguished son said, "a wandering

laboring boy," who from the time he left home saw almost nothing of his father's people. When Abraham was born, two of his mother's aunts were near at hand, and another was not very far away, and he grew up among the Hankses. In Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois, the Hankses were with the family of Thomas Lincoln; but there were no Lincolns near. To be sure, the aged mother of Thomas Lincoln, Bathsehba by name, remembered by her grand-children as "Granny Basheby," lived in the same county in which Abraham Lincoln was born, but so far away that if she ever saw him in the cradle we do not know it, and if he ever saw her he appears not to have remembered it. It is said, though not on very good authority, that John Hanks was invited to Abraham Lincoln's wedding; perhaps so, but no Lincoln was there. And when Abraham Lincoln lay dead in the White House, and three weeks later was buried in Springfield, there was no Lincoln present on either occasion, except the President's widow and her two sons. Nicolay and Hay comment upon the fact that even the great fame and conspicuousness of the President did not call forth his kin of the Lincoln name. We do not know that he ever met any of his first cousins named Lincoln, except on that day in Fountain Green, and there was only one of them left.

I wish greatly that I could produce a kodak picture of Abraham and Mordecai Lincoln sitting together on that occasion, and that I might give a short-hand account of their conversation. I do not have it. But I have something almost as good, and in some respects better. I have a package of old letters and other documents of Mordecai, and some of the writings of his closest kindred.

They could all write. The Hankses could not write, except Dennis and a few others. But I have yet to learn of a wholly illiterate Lincoln. Even Thomas Lincoln, the President's father, could "bunglingly sign his own name" as the President said, and also could read his Bible. Most of them could do more, and Mordecai had the pen of a ready writer. So had his two brothers, while they lived. Both were Justices of the Peace. Abraham Lincoln, the President, knew very well that there was an Abraham Lincoln, Justice of the Peace, in Hancock County; he was familiar with certain documents prepared by him. He also knew of certain land records signed by James B. Lincoln. Both these men were his cousins, sons of his father's oldest brother, Mordecai. But both were dead in 1858, and the only one remaining was Mordecai, the youngest of the three sons of old Mordecai.

In the very year, 1830, in which Thomas Lincoln moved with his family into Macon County, Illinois, two of his cousins who in the year 1829 had removed from Kentucky, came into Hancock County, and there made their home. There lies before me a letter of the younger Mordecai, dated Leitchfield, Kentucky, January 19, 1831, in answer to one which he had just received from James B. Lincoln, dated November 4, 1830. The letter had been between two and three months on the way. At the time of writing, these two brothers, James and Abraham, and a brother-in-law, Ben Mudd, were living in "State of Illinois, Hancock County, the head of the rapids," as the address reads. The letter of Mordecai was really addressed to all three families, and also to his father, the older Mordecai, who had ridden through on horseback to visit his Illinois children, and see about making a home there. But that was the "winter of the deep snow." The older Mordecai was out on horseback on the day when the snow began to come down, not in flakes but by bucketsful, if the old settlers are to be believed. He had taken a good deal of liquor to keep out the cold, and the cold and the liquor together were too much for him. His sons Abraham and James, both carpenters and good ones, hewed a coffin out of puncheons, and as soon as the storm permitted they buried their father in a grave which cannot now be identified. He had been dead more than six weeks when the younger Mordecai wrote, but the news of his death had not reached Kentucky.

Before very long, Mary Mudd Lincoln, the widow of the older Mordecai, removed from Kentucky, and came to live with her Illinois children. She brought with her two unmarried daughters, Mary Rowena and Martha, both of whom found husbands in Illinois.

In 1836, the younger Mordecai left Grayson County, Kentucky, and thereafter lived in Illinois. He made his home with his mother, who was an aged woman at the time of Abraham Lincoln's visit, and died the following year. Mordecai lived until June 15, 1867, and voted twice for his cousin, Abraham. So far as is known, no Hanks ever voted for him except old John Hanks, who was transformed into a republican by the episode of the fence rails at the Decatur convention in 1860. Dennis Hanks, Lincoln's boyhood bed-fellow, voted against him both in 1860 and in 1864. Some of the Hancock County Lincolns, also, were democrats, but not Mordecai. He voted for his cousin Abraham.

The two cousins had a good visit. Abraham Lincoln was interested in his own family history. When he was in Congress in 1848

he made inquiry concerning relatives who were descended from his father's Uncle Isaac. He did not know very much about his ancestry but the extent of his interest is suggested in the rather full account which he gave of the Lincolns, as compared with the very meager data he gave concerning the Hankses, in the two biographical sketches he prepared.

This story, which is getting under way more slowly than I could wish, yet which needs this background of accurate information, relates to the younger Mordecai, the one cousin whom Abraham Lincoln is known to have visited.

Like most of the Lincolns, Mordecai was skilled in the use of tools. Some mechanical aptitude characterized nearly all members of this family. Several of them were carpenters. They were good joiners, and could do mortising and beveling and mitering and dovetailing. I have seen specimens of their work, and it is good. Mordecai kept books. I have one of his account books now before me. He charged six dollars for a coffin, full size, and three dollars for a coffin for a child.

Mordecai was a shoemaker and also a tailor and a carpenter. He worked for high wages as they were then esteemed. Two dollars a day was what he reckoned his time to be worth. He was adept at the turning lathe. Two dollars paid him for making a large spinning wheel, and four dollars rewarded him for a set of six chairs. He made doors and windows, fitting the sash together and glazing them. Twenty-five cents paid him for turning out two large spools. He made a lathe for \$4.50.

Mordecai Lincoln was a woman-hater. Every one said so.

He left Kentucky because a girl there was determined to marry him, and he was determined not to be married. Her name was Patsy, and we know, but need not here record, her other name. I have a letter from her father, written from Kentucky, January 29, 1837, to James Lincoln, and one still earlier, dated September 4, 1836, to Abraham Lincoln, the other brother of Mordecai. He tells of "the painful circumstances of Mordecai's departure," and the effect which that departure has had on Patsy. "What makes it the more strange," he says, "is that I cannot learn that anything happened, nor can I conjecture anything, without it was a little pecuniary embarrassment that he could have got through in six months had he stuck to the noble resolution he took six or seven months previous." Like his father, and like most men of the period, Mordecai sometimes drank rather too much, and I have a letter of his about



that. But he had made a "noble resolution" not to do so, and his financial embarrassments would not have been of long standing had he kept that resolution and married Patsy and remained in Kentucky, or taken her with him to Illinois.

He visited Patsy one night, as these letters show, and she never saw him again. That was the night of his "elopement" as his expectant father-in-law calls it.

These are dignified letters, from a man of standing and official position, and they disclose a father's sorrow for a daughter's disappointment. Why did Mordecai run away when he was to be married?

Some first-hand information exists concerning the younger Mordecai during his life in Leitchfield, Grayson County, Kentucky. Rev. John W. Cunningham, who was born in that town in 1824, and lived there until he was nearly fifteen years of age, was a lad between twelve and thirteen when Mordecai left, and he remembered the details with distinctness when at the age of seventy-nine, he wrote some of his reminiscences for the *Elizabethtown (Kentucky) News*, in September, 1903. Insofar as his recollections related to the Lincoln family, they were chiefly located in Hardin County, where Abraham Lincoln was born, and where Mr. Cunningham later preached. He related, however, that in his home in Leitchfield, there lived a Lincoln family, children of a brother of Abraham Lincoln's father. He wrote:

"I am not sure of the first name of Thomas Lincoln's brother in my native town. . . . (It was Mordecai, the older). He had a married daughter and a bachelor son in our village. The daughter's husband was George Washington Neighbors, who was for several years the acting sheriff of the county. . . . Mrs. Neighbor's brother was Mordecai Lincoln, first cousin of Abraham. He was commonly known as 'Old Mord,' though I did not think of him as an old man. He was the village shoemaker, and occupied a house of his own, with an upper story, where he slept, a lower room, that he used for his shoe shop. All of the little boys liked him because of the bits of thread and wax that he gave them. The house, I presume, is standing, and is one of the oldest in the village. Mordecai was a fiddler, and he had a fiddle that had been made by a Revolutionary soldier from pieces of sugar-tree wood with a shoe-knife as his only implement for making it. Of pleasant nights he would sit on an upper or lower porch to the house, and make sweet music for the town, and would sometimes call forth responsive wild-wolf howls in a neighboring wood.

"Some time after I left home for Elizabethtown, Mordecai went away to Illinois, leaving everything behind him. There were claims on his possessions which the law disposed of. On one of my visits home I found Mord's fiddle there and took it home to Elizabethtown with me. There, for two or three years, I scraped the strings of Old Mord's Revolutionary fiddle, but I never equaled the performances of the clever village shoemaker. I finally gave the fiddle to my brother, from whom it was stolen by a wandering clock-peddler. . . . I have heard Theodore Thomas' forty fiddlers, and many others of note in concerts, but the memory of Old Mord's long-meter fiddling is sweeter to me than any of them."

Mr. Cunningham contributed a later article to the *Louisville Times*, March 29, 1909, in which he gave some added details:

"Mordecai was a charming fiddler. In cold weather, he made music for his own entertainment in his own bedroom or shoe shop. In summer weather he made music for all who could hear his performance as he sat on the second floor of his two story front porch. He ate his meals wherever he made arrangements for them. All the small boys were his friends, and older people were kindly disposed to him. I remember him as a man not more than forty-five years old, but he was commonly called 'Old Mord.' One night he left his home, his possessions and the town, and went away to Indiana and never returned. There was no complaint of wrong-doing against him."

These two articles by a competent and truthful man assure us that Mordecai had no known occasion to leave Leitchfield and Kentucky, and it is but fair to say that nothing in the letters from Patsy's father, and nothing that has been learned from any other source, indicates that he had betrayed Patsy's confidence. Evidently the people of Leitchfield did not know that he had run away to get rid of Patsy and the prospect of matrimony. But he left from her home, and in the night, not returning to his house to take away his precious fiddle.

And he never owned a fiddle afterward, though he often visited at homes where there were violins, and when he did so, would take up the fiddle, tune it, and walk the floor playing it, the tears coursing down his cheeks. When he ran away from Patsy, he ran away from his fiddle.

All of Mordecai's near relatives wished he would marry. His mother was glad to have a son for whom to keep house, but Mordecai was not always a comfort to his mother. Mary Mudd Lincoln

was a devout Catholic, and she made Catholics, not all of them very devout ones, of that branch of the Lincoln family. But some of them revolted. Mordecai was almost violent in his opposition to his mother's religion. He uttered some harsh words about it while he was yet in Kentucky, and on the Sunday following one of these diatribes he heard the priest quote his words, and say that no man who uttered such words could prosper in this life or the next. Mordecai said that after that, and after some things which he said about the priest, the priest would never look him in the eye, either on the street or in the pulpit.

One of Mordecai's sisters went to a convent for a year. He tells the story in a manuscript before me. He says that when she went to the convent, it was promised that she should be educated; but she was not taught but was kept at hard work, weaving, and forgot much of what she had known before she went to the convent, and, moreover, came home weakened by the hard labor. He said that a new ecclesiastical name was given her, and the priest "slapped a veil on her." Mordecai tells how he went to the convent and brought her away. She later married, but did not live very long, and he said that her convent experience shortened her life.

We have no way of checking up these bitter affirmations. But we see that Mordecai had a passion for writing out his convictions. And all this denunciation of the nuns and the priests and the people of the church must have been hard for Mary Mudd Lincoln to hear.

His mother made efforts to change his mind concerning these matters, and she persuaded her other children; but Mordecai wrote a letter to "The Widow Lincoln and Her Family" declaring his independence.

But except for these matters, Mordecai Lincoln was a good son, and his mother loved him. And she saw that he did not care for women, and knew that she was likely to have him as her support as long as she lived.

It was a hard task which Mary Mudd undertook when, marrying the older Mordecai Lincoln, she endeavored to make good Catholics out of a stock that for generations had been Baptist. The measure of her success should have rewarded her in part for her difficulties. While none of the Lincolns who married Catholic wives became very ardent Catholics, and some of the younger generations revolted, there remains a strong Catholic strain in this branch of the family, and Mary Mudd introduced it.

But she had a hard time with her son Mordecai. He sat by the



fire and wrote long treatises against the Jesuits, and at times he burst forth into violent invective. Some things that he wrote would not look well in this article. And yet, Mordecai had a strain of reverence, and once, not having acknowledged any other religion, and being pressed for a definition of his own position, he said that judged by his own standards, and not by those of the priests whom he hated, he was still a Catholic. It would have gladdened Mary Mudd to know that after all the evil things he said about her religion, he would be buried, as he was, beside her, in consecrated ground. There is a forlorn little old cemetery, a half mile back through fields, where the little Catholic church once stood. Not one stone now stands erect. But in that cemetery Mary Mudd Lincoln and her vehemently protesting son Mordecai lie side by side.

Mordecai was a man of moods. So were nearly all the Lincolns. After the death of his mother, he lived like a hermit. He had a dog and a cat and his books—all the Lincolns managed to have some books, and Mordecai, if not a diligent reader, was a student. He had a great memory. A neighbor loaned him Victor Hugo's great story, and he read it so intently that the characters all became real to him, and he could relate the story almost verbatim.

At times, Mordecai worked with great industry, but he was a Lincoln in the matter of hard work. He was strong, and capable of working, and at times he showed steady industry. But his moods as to labor varied. He did not enjoy labor for its own sake, and there were days when he forsook his work and loafed and told stories, or engaged in acrimonious controversy. His cousin Abraham had a dangerous gift of sarcasm, and at times used it mercilessly; but he learned how to curb it. Mordecai never learned, and he was always ready to stop work and say harsh things about the people and institutions he hated. He liked his lathe, and did his work well. He made wagons and coffins and clothes presses and many other articles. But at times he stopped work and brooded, or went to the woods and was gone for a whole day, hardly speaking to any one he met, but returning in his normal frame of mind.

By fits and starts he visited his neighbors. No one knew when or why he was coming and seldom knew just why he had come. Sometimes he sat and talked politics or religion or neighborhood news. Sometimes he came to curse a neighbor or a relative or to tell his opinion of the priests. Sometimes he would enter a house and take up the violin, and play it, walking the floor, with tears streaming down his cheeks.

Crazy? Not at all. All the Lincolns were odd. No one of them ever went insane. But there ran through the entire family an unstable equilibrium of intellectuality and emotion.

Mordecai Lincoln cultivated flowers, and in that regard was most unlike his cousin Abraham, who said that in such matters, something appeared to have been left out of his nature. Hancock County still has its "Uncle Mord roses" which he propagated. He was fond of fruit, and the Lincoln farms have excellent fruit trees to this day. He had a trick which he liked to play at the Joe Duncan school. He would go there with a bag of big red apples, open the door, and roll an apple to every boy and every girl, carefully saving the biggest and reddest one for the teacher.

With all his cantankerousness, he was a likable man, and had many traits that endeared him to people. And, spite of all his crabbedness toward his mother on account of her religion, he was a good son.

In some of his dark moods, he drank so heavily that his friends were troubled about him. Some of them came to him and advised him to stop drinking. I have a letter written by him August 16, 1853, and it is rather more than possible that it was written to a Protestant minister, but the name is not given. In it Mordecai says:

"As for your hopes or wishes with regard to me, they don't interrupt my mind at all. I clame it as my rite to drink anything I please to drink and by the same rule I clame it as my wright if I think it best for my self to let it alone."

It will be noted that his spelling sometimes was erratic, but this was true of most letters of the period, and his handwriting was good.

Although he drank, and sometimes drank too much, he was not as heavy a drinker as his father, and was not accounted a drunkard.

The exact age of Mordecai I do not have. His parents were married in 1792, and his two older brothers appear to have been born before 1800. They both, and his sister Elizabeth, who married her cousin Ben Mudd, were married before they left Kentucky in 1829, but his two younger sisters were young and unmarried at that time. He was of age, and capable of attending to legal business in 1830, but probably was not much past 21 in that year in which Abraham Lincoln, the future President, came of age. Practically, he was of the age of the President, and in many respects much like him in his mental make-up.

All the Lincolns in Hancock County were men of ability, and their abilities were of the same general kind as those of Abraham

Lincoln. They were capable of close thought and sound logic. They were men given to wit, and like Abraham, had a merciless gift of satire, which he possessed but learned to control. They were men of moods, all of them, the men more than the women, though the women were not free from them.

It is in the matter of these moods we are especially interested. Abraham Lincoln had them. He went from boisterous merriment to depths of gloom, and often without any reason which his associates could assign.

Sentimental writers have no difficulty in accounting for these moods. Lincoln loved Ann Rutledge, so they say, and he almost went insane when she died. After that, he was a changed man. There is good reason to believe that Abraham Lincoln did indeed display great sorrow on the death of Ann Rutledge; but have we any reason to suppose that his grief on her account was the first outbreak of his melancholy? William H. Herndon affirmed that Lincoln was a sad man because he was unhappy in his domestic relations. That Abraham and Mary Lincoln sometimes made each other unhappy is undeniable, but is there any reason to believe that each would not have been more unhappy without the other?

Suppose we undertake to do what no one yet has undertaken, to discover whether Abraham Lincoln was a Lincoln in his mental equipment, and whether these moods were such as other members of his family had? We shall not discover the answer without some labor, but we shall find that not Mordecai only but others of Abraham Lincoln's first cousins and close kin had similar moods. The Mudd family, that by intermarriage descended from Ben Mudd and Elizabeth Lincoln, daughter of the older Mordecai, had "the Lincoln horrors" and called them by that name. "The Lincoln hypo" was a term well understood in the family and by the neighbors. We shall find, if we explore far enough, that we do not need either Ann Rutledge or Mary Todd to account for Lincoln's gloom. Many of the pioneers had it, in greater or less degree, but the Lincoln family as a family were peculiarly addicted to it.

Did Abraham Lincoln know this?

I doubt it. So far as I am aware, Thomas Lincoln was not particularly subject to these fits of depression. Abraham Lincoln was accustomed to think of himself as inheriting more, intellectually, from his mother than his father. He had his father's gray eyes and coarse dark hair, and his father's love of stories and other well-marked traits. But he and Thomas were not wholly alike in their

mental characteristics and he can hardly have been expected to realize how much or little he inherited from the Lincoln side, for practically, he saw no Lincolns. As for the Hankses, he lived among them the entire first half of his life; and his mother seemed to him, as he remembered her dimly from his tenth year, to have been nobly superior to other members of her family, it is little wonder he told Herndon, in 1850, that from her he inherited his ability to think and reason. Would Lincoln have been quite so sure of this if he had known more Lincolns? Would he have said it after he had spent a night with Mord Lincoln, and found in him the keen wit, the capacity for satire, the love of argument, the power of reason, which he found in himself?

That Abraham Lincoln was mentally and physically a Lincoln only those have denied who did not know the Lincolns. John Hay lived not far from them, but did not know them. After the Civil War, Hay retired for a time to his old home in Illinois, and went from it to be Secretary of the Legation at Vienna. He left his home in Warsaw, and he made this record in his diary:

"Rode to Carthage in the same seat with Robert Lincoln, a second cousin of the late President. He is forty-one years old, looks much older. The same eyes and hair the President had—the same tall stature and shambling gait, less exaggerated. Drinks hard, chews ravenously. A rather rough, farmer-looking man. He says the family is about run out. 'We are not a very marrying set.' He is dying of consumption, he said very coolly. There was something startling in the resemblance of the straight thicket of hair, and the grey, cavernous eyes framed in black brows and lashes, to the features of the great dead man."

This Robert was a son of Abraham Lincoln's first cousin, Abraham. He died in Carthage, September 5, 1868, after making a campaign speech for General Grant. He did resemble the great dead man, and so did his brother Hezekiah, and a number of other cousins.

"We are not a very marrying set," said Robert Lincoln to John Hay. He spoke truly. The Lincolns, the men especially, were not highly matrimonial. A very considerable fraction of them did not marry.

"What kind of men were the unmarried Lincolns?" I asked different members of the family and their neighbors. "Were they dissolute men?"

No, they were not dissolute.

"Where they woman-haters?"

"No, except for Uncle Mord. He hated women. The others did not. Indeed, it seemed as if it was because they cared so much for women they were overwhelmed with the thought of marriage."

"That does not sound like a very good reason."

"It may not have been a good reason, but it is more nearly the reason of the Lincolns than any disinclination to marry or any lack of appreciation of the charm of women. They were great admirers of women, but they stopped short of matrimony. But Uncle Mord did not care for women."

"It was no physical disability that kept them from marriage?"

"Not at all. Those who married were generally happy in their married life. There was not a single divorce among them. Most of them had good-sized families. But they had some strange feeling of the solemnity of marriage that held them back."

I have too many friends in Springfield, Illinois, to raise at this point the question whether Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd set more than one date for their wedding, and whether Abraham Lincoln ran away from his own wedding. But Abraham Lincoln, who, as I believe, sincerely loved and greatly admired Mary Todd, and had loved several women before he met her, shrank from marriage. There was no physical disability in his case. His first son was born within a year, and after that there was a new baby once in two years until there were four children. Why did the Lincoln men shrink from marriage?

I think the disabilities were wholly mental. They grew out of the caution, the contemplative nature, the moodiness of the family, concerning which I have collected a good deal of information, all of it new to students.

This study opens doors for a number of interesting inquiries. For the first time we are in position to make a study of the mind of Abraham Lincoln as a Lincoln. We have some material, a good deal of it, indeed, toward a comparative analysis of Lincoln's temperament in the light of his inheritance. And some one, possibly the present writer, will go further toward such a study. It will stop a vast quantity of cheap sentimentality which has no scientific basis, and some alleged scientific study which is futile and misleading because we have not had the facts.

But now I must tell you a secret, and I do it under seal of confidence. This is the secret:

Mordecai Lincoln was not a woman-hater



I think he really cared for Patsy, the girl in Kentucky whom he kissed good-bye one night and never saw again, but he was afraid of marriage. He was never afraid of anything else, man, woman, pope or devil—he defied them all: but he was afraid of marriage. And from that time on they said he was a woman-hater. Read this:

"My Favorite Girl, Elizabeth:

"I can call you by no other name in my heart but My Favorite Girl. The first time I ever saw you in my life, my mind was filled with the site of your person, but such was the circumstances in my life that I thought it better for me never to see you or any other girl that there was any likelihood of my becoming so greatly attached too. But by that means I have added fuel to the flame that is burning in my bosom. . . . I believe that I now see a fairer prospect before me than I have beheld for 7 or 8 years; and if you could be as willing to risk me as I am to undertake, the time would not be far ahead till a great portion of all my time in business would be employed in trying to render you as happy as possible in this life. Elizabeth, I naturally hone for your company here with me, but when I look around you are not here. All that I can do is to nourish and cherish my strongest wishes for the welfare and happiness of the object of my affections.

"Affectionately yours,

"MORDECAI LINCOLN."

He went to Nauvoo or Carthage and bought tinted paper for this letter. It must have been a rarity: the shade is robin's egg blue. He wrote out his love in this fashion.

And he lost courage, and did not send the letter.

He continued to be known as Mord Lincoln, the woman-hater.

The years passed by. His mother died, and he was alone in the house with his dog and cat and books and lathe and his paper and ink. He was more than fifty years of age, a sour, moody and at times very angry man, and a confirmed woman-hater. So they all said. But on November 2, 1862, he wrote a letter which began "Dear Catherine." She was a school teacher, and had been slandered, and Mord had risen to defend her good name. He did it, if his letter is to be trusted, like a knight rushing in to smite down the hand that would be lifted to stain the name of a lady. And when he had done all this, he offered her his hand.

He was not sure that she would accept him. He wanted her "the worst of anything" and he made one small request. If she could

not accept him, let her think now and then of him; for he thought always of her.

Apparently he mailed this letter, giving it to his niece, Emily Lincoln, to take to the post office at Fountain Green, and what I have is his penciled first copy. Doubtless he copied it in ink.

This is where the story stops, and you may supply the rest of it as you like. I find no answering letter from Catherine, nor any record that indicates that she returned his love.

No wonder. By that time he was counted an old man, and was crotchety and moody and his habits were planted and grown. Catherine was a school teacher, and could do better, and probably did. But this old letter serves to show that even Mord Lincoln, the Woman Hater, was not as consistent in that hatred as some people thought him to be. It is easy to be a woman-hater, but few men are able to do it consistently. Mordecai Lincoln was thought to be one of the few; and you know more about it now than did his neighbors. Most men, it may be believed, at some period in life, have renounced women and all their works; but this world is not so constituted as to make it easy for a man to maintain that attitude forever. With a procession of attractive women forever passing down the pike, it is hard for a man to live very long in this world and maintain a steady and unswerving hatred for women.

I was not born when Abraham and Mordecai Lincoln had their one visit at Fountain Green, and therefore was not present. I greatly regret this delinquency on my own part, for I should like to tell what these men said to each other about women. Although I was not there, I have some ideas with regard to the matter, and I give them for whatever they are worth.

Both Abraham and Mordecai were reticent men. They did not talk lightly of the things that were closest to their hearts. But they were interested in each other, and in each other's affairs, and in their common heritage as representative of the Lincoln family. They told each other, I think, about the migration of the Lincoln family from Virginia to Kentucky, and Abraham was eager to learn what Mordecai had heard from his father, who was a lad of fifteen at the time while Abraham's father Thomas was only six. They rehearsed the story of the murder of their grandfather, Abraham Lincoln, by an Indian, and how Mordecai's father, Mordecai, took deliberate aim through one of the cracks in the cabin wall and shot the Indian dead. They talked of their cousins, the children of Josiah, who had removed to Indiana, and of the children of their

aunts, some of them in Kentucky and others in Missouri. And they surely talked a little about their own family life. Abraham was married and the father of four sons, three of them living and dearly beloved by him. Mordecai was, as we know, a bachelor, with no prospect of being anything else.

I wonder if Abraham asked Mordecai why he had lived his lonely life unmarried, and whether Mordecai told him that he had once come near to marrying a girl in Kentucky, but when the time approached his courage failed. And I wonder if Abraham said, "I, too, experienced a strange and unreasonable timidity as I saw my wedding-day approaching. I did not marry until I was thirty-three, and sometimes think it was almost a miracle that I married when I did."

I wonder if Mordecai, with his habit of doing the unexpected, said to Abraham, "But don't you find it a constant annoyance? Women are such unreasonable creatures; is it not a bother to have to live with one of them?"

And Abraham might have answered, "Women have their weak points, Cousin, and so have we men. Mary and I have our ups and downs, and our occasional disagreements. She has a hot temper, and I am an awkward fellow and often do things that are annoying. Still, we love each other, and we have our common hopes and ambitions, and we have our boys. I am glad I found courage to get married, though for a long time it was matter of profound wonder to me that it ever could have happened."

Some such conversation as this might have happened between the two men, and I do not think anyone can prove that words like these were not actually spoken by these two cousins to each other.

Abraham Lincoln went on his way, speaking practically every day, and meeting his three remaining appointments for joint discussion with Douglas. Mordecai went back to his bench, and made his spinning wheels and coffins. But as he worked, I wonder if he did not say to himself:

"My cousin Abraham and I are much alike in many respects. We look alike: we think and write and speak alike. And both of us admire women, and each of us had his strange shrinking from marriage. But Abraham found courage to go forward, and now he has something to live for, a wife and three boys; and I am lonely Mord Lincoln with no one to care. I wish I had married Patsy and not made such a fool of myself. For, in spite of what the neighbors think of me, I am a very unsuccessful woman-hater."