1809—The Lincoln Centenary—1909

Courtships of Lincoln

Death of Ann Rutledge.
The Mary Owens Affair.
Lincoln and Douglas as Rivals In Love

By James A. Edgerton

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MOST men have several affairs of the heart, and little or nothing is said about them. With Lincoln it is different. His courtships are magnified, torn to pieces, paraded before the world, his tenderest emotions being dissected and laid bare in a manner the most callous. His despair over the death of one sweetheart, his letters to another, his misunderstandings with a third, who finally became Mrs. Lincoln—all are set forth to the last detail. They are only such experiences as occur to most men, with variations, of course, to fit each individual case. With others they are considered sacred, however, and if mentioned at all it is with a delicacy which one would wish shown to his own love affairs. It seems to be the price of greatness that nothing is sacred. If the future immortal whispers tender nothings in a corner they are afterward bawled from the housetops. If he so much as casts a melting glance at some fair one it is photographed for the inspection of future ages.

There are three affairs in the life of the martyr president, and a fourth is hinted at by at least one biographer. The average man can remember an equal number and perhaps several more. The beauty with Lincoln is that all his heart attacks came before marriage, which is not invariably the case in these days of affinities and divorce courts.

There must be no mistake made in one regard. Abraham Lincoln was a society man. In Springfield his name was on most of the committees that got up functions, and he was a welcome guest at all houses. The same was true in Washington the two years he served in congress. While he was not exactly a ladies' man for the reason that he was forever telling stories and so got all the men around him, he was not insensible to feminine charms and was as ready to fall in love as any young man with strong passions and an eye for beauty.

This seems so much a matter of course that it is strange Mr. Lincoln's biographers should dwell on it at such length. It is on a par with referring so constantly to his height, to his homeliness and to the fact that he told broad stories. It is as though we should say that Abraham Lincoln is chiefly noted for his ugliness, his love affairs, his risque anecdotes and his great length and not that he is celebrated for liberating a race, for saving a nation, for being merciful, democratic, truth loving and white of soul. In other words, we put forward his nonessentials at the expense of his essentials. We emphasize those things in which he was not distinguished from his kind to the exclusion of those things in which he was so distinguished. Other men have had love affairs not essentially different from those of Lincoln; others have been as ugly or as tall, and others have told as many stories, but nobody else ever issued an emancipation proclamation; no one else ever held together the world's greatest republic in the hour of her supreme trial; no one else, with one exception, ever combined such meekness and greatness, and few others have been more tender hearted, benevolent, honest and truthful. He was the very incarnation of the thing we call Americanism, of the democratic spirit. He was the glorified type of the common man, the voice and leader of the plain people. It is these things that have made him "the gentlest memory of our world." Presumably he had ten fingers, two ears and the usual number of bones found in the human body. But why obtrude these facts? Tom Smith and Jim Jenkins are equally endowed in this regard. There are a billion and a half of human entities now living, nearly all with ten fingers, two ears and the full complement of bones. Most of them likewise have had love affairs or will have them when they arrive at the susceptible age; most of them old enough to talk at all have told stories or have tried to do so; most of them are plain of face, especially if they are of the male gender, and all of them have linear dimensions of some sort or other. Yet there is not a single Abraham Lincoln in the whole billion and a half. Why spend so much time on describing a man's hair and eyebrows when he has a soul, or, rather, is a soul, so supremely worth study?

Not that I would minimize Mr. Lincoln's love affairs. These things in the life of any man are beautiful and are cherished according to the degree of his development. With a man of Lincoln's tender heart and sensibilities such things would be sacred and holy, not to be profaned by light references or prying eyes. A man's public life belongs to the public. His private and domestic affairs are his own. The mere fact that one is prominent does not make him the legitimate prey of the merely curious. Many great men have had unhappy home lives. Poor Lincoln was none too fortunate in this regard. But he is at least entitled to respect, even though he was denied his full measure of happiness. Such respect would shield him from a prying scrutiny after death that would never have been given his affairs during life. With all due respect to Messrs. Lamon and Herndon, who, having been his law partners, should have been his devoted friends, it must be said that they have dragged his purely private affairs to light in a very tactless if not an indelicate manner. Moreover, many of their conclusions reflecting on his parents and some regarding his wife have been shown by thorough investigation to be untrue. For example, Herndon says that Lincoln absented himself on his wedding night. As careful a biographer as Ida M. Tarbell denies this and gives the word of numerous personal friends of both Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln to prove her statement. In the same manner several of Herndon's allegations concerning Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln have been proved untrue by the actual records brought to light.

The simple facts are that Lincoln's parents, his early life, his education, his courtships and his domestic life were about such as fall to the lot of the average man born, reared and living his adult life in a similar environment. His stories were about such as were told by other frontiersmen, lawyers and politicians in his day, except that Lincoln's were better and more to the point. He might have been a little taller and more homely than most, but if so what of it? There was nothing about all these circumstances to differentiate him from his kind or to explain him. They were the shell of the oyster, but gave no indications of the pearl inside.

Yet there are beautiful things and such as can be spoken of with all propriety and respect in the love affairs and the home life of Abraham Lincoln. His despair at the death of Ann Rutledge, his agony over the "snows beating on her grave," the fears of his friends for his sanity, which went to the length of their taking precautions against his possible suicide—all this presents a touching and pathetic picture.

As for the affair with Mary Owens, there is nothing in it worthy a passing notice except that it showed a fine sense of honor on the part of Lincoln and an unselfish thoughtfulness for the happiness of his future wife.

About the courtship with the woman he finally married and about his home life with her there has been more or less dispute. Herndon's exploded story that Lincoln ran away on his marriage night has already been mentioned. With quite as much particularity Lamon states that at this time Mr. Lincoln was really in love with a Miss Edwards, who lived in the same house with his fiancee, and that this fact accounts for his dejection, which was then more pronounced than usual, and also for the long delay in his marriage to Miss Todd. So far as the writer is aware no other biographer mentions the alleged infatuation for Miss Edwards.

That Mr. Lincoln was to some extent unhappy in his married life is a fact disputed by none. The degree of this unhappiness has probably been exaggerated. Moreover, there have been so many slighting references to Mrs. Lincoln that I feel like taking up the cudgels in her behalf. That she had a temper is probably true. A temper is not necessarily a bad thing. Mr. Lincoln himself had a prodigious temper when it was aroused. So had Washington. So has every man or woman that amounts to anything.

But there is this much to be said for the wife of Abraham Lincoln. She loved him, as was shown by the fact that she married him despite his long delay. While Herndon's story about the marriage night dereliction is probably untrue, there was some kindred happening at about that time. Another thing that can be said in Mrs. Lincoln's behalf is that she showed enough discrimination to prefer Abraham Lincoln to Stephen A. Douglas. Under the circumstances this required true insight into character. Douglas when he paid court to her was already a great man, which was not so apparent in Lincoln's case. Douglas was brilliant, polished and had a most winning manner, while Lincoln was more or less uncouth and shy in feminine society. Miss Todd was the daughter of a leading man of Kentucky, and thus Douglas belonged to her own social class in those outward things which make up class distinctions, while Lincoln did not. Nevertheless she chose Lincoln. She is entitled to honor for both her vision and her heart.

Miss Todd always said that she would marry a president of the United States. No ordinary woman would have had the courage to say that in the face of the ridicule it would occasion, and no one but a very extraordinary woman would have had the ability to pick the winner.

Is it not just possible that some of Lincoln's biographers have overdrawn his unhappiness at home just as they have unduly emphasized his poverty and have done positive injustice to his father? Is it not possible that there was some resentment due to the fact that Miss Todd belonged to an aristocratic family and did not share her husband's views on slavery? And is it not more than possible that there has been an undue prying into the private affairs of both Mr. Lincoln and his wife?

Lincoln's great love for his children, which caused him to err, if at all, on the side of too great indulgence, would not indicate a wholly unhappy home life. The fact that Mrs. Lincoln was loyal to her husband and his ambition, that she shared his great life, that she bore double sorrows in the death of her sons and his own assassination and that she endured so much abuse from biographers without murmur entitle her to our charity and respect. She was a woman, a wife and mother. She is dead. Common chivalry and common humanity would at least dictate that nothing should be said of her now except in loving tenderness; if not that, silence.

For one I am tired of much of the utterly trivial stuff written about Abraham Lincoln. He was a great enough man to be treated in a great manner. He had an innate dignity and fineness that call for respect from those who would show his true spirit to the world.

His domestic life was utterly white. The same high honor, the same thoughtfulness for the happiness of others, the same patience and forbearance, the same great love nature, are found in his courtships and his home that appear in all his other relations and deeds. He was so much greater than his early environment and associates that there is little gained by dwelling upon them.

Abraham Lincoln as we have come to know him appeals to all men because he is so like what all men want to be. He appeals to all boys because he shows them their possibilities. He appeals to all women because he is so much the lover and because he proves that the strongest manhood may be as tender as the gentlest womanhood.

He was not insensible to feminine charms.

STORIES OF COQUELIN

How France's Famous Comedian Developed From a Baker.

LOVED TO PLAY DEATH ROLES.

Novel Climax of a Trying Experience That Greatly Amused an Audience. How He Became a Member of a Famous Club Through His Wit.

By common consent Benoit Constant Coquelin, the French actor who recently died at his home in Port-aux-Dames, near Paris, was the foremost comedian of France. Many of his own countrymen regarded him as the artistic heir of Moliere, whose characters he represented better than any other French actor and in whose house, the Theatre Francais, he made his start and won many of his greatest early successes.

Coquelin, the son of a baker at Boulogne-sur-Mer, was born Jan. 23, 1841. It was intended that he should continue in his father's business, but remarkable aptitude for the stage manifested itself in him when he was still a small boy.

When the little Coquelins, Constant and Cadet, were boys their father kept a boulangerie, and as a good baker and good pere de famille he sent his boys to learn the rudiments to "le pere Taverne," who kept an exceedingly elementary school. He considered his further duty done by them when he had clothed them in white drilling, put little white bakers' caps on them and set them respectively to watching the oven or trotting through the streets with baskets of cakes on their heads or long meters of French bread under their arms.

It was soon to be observed, however, that Constant, the elder, was a youth of most unfortunate proclivities for one destined for the baker's profession. Like Rostand's cuisinier poete, he let the bread burn for verses, but in declaiming, not composing, them. The boys would not have been boys if they had not organized some sort of "barn circus," in their case amateur theatricals played in an old abandoned theater.

"I am organizing for this week a grand representation extraordinaire," said the elder Coquelin one day to his admiring little brother.

"What role shall you play?" asked Cadet, awestruck.

"I shall play all the roles," was the answer, and that might almost be taken as the watchword of Coquelin's career.

He had not boasted over his "representation extraordinaire." He played the leading character in four roles, one tragic, one bouffe, one serious, one sentimental, and so worked himself up in the last that he fainted away as he left the stage.

Cadet, pale and excited, conducted his brother home, and the father, evidently feeling that the hand of destiny was too strong for him, a sentiment somewhat assisted by a general complaint of burned brioches among the bakery's buyers, yielded to these signs of vocation and sent his son off to Paris with an income of 1,200 francs a year.

Coquelin was a natural mimic and uncommonly apt in recitation.

In the days of his youth M. Coquelin was ambitious, and the parts he loved best to play were those in which he died, in full view of an appreciative audience, for his art. He had one of these roles one evening at the Boulogne theater and played it splendidly, getting a ringing round of applause as he fell dead upon the stage. Then his troubles started.

The audience's applause woke up a mosquito, which applied itself to M. Coquelin with so much assiduity that the corpse felt it must either scream or scratch. Another actor, who played a general in the corps of which the dead M. Coquelin was a young ensign, was standing near the body and had to say: "See, then, how sad a thing is war! But now this youth was living. Now he is dead—motionless for all time! Nothing save a miracle can give him life again."

But M. Coquelin could hold out no longer. The mosquito was still biting busily, and Coquelin had to sit up and slap his leg. "The miracle has happened!" cried the general, while the audience laughed until it cried at this too lively corpse.

One of the most famous of the Latin quarter clubs in Paris is the Sub Rosa. Coquelin was present one night at the club's weekly late supper, and, having heard that there was a vacancy in the role, the great actor applied for membership. Now, the only rules of the Sub Rosa men are: "Think much. Write little. Be as silent as you can." The presiding officer, with this last rule in mind, answered the applicant by placing before him a tumbler filled so full of water that another drop would have caused it to run over. Coquelin understood. He had evidently been misinformed about a vacancy; the club membership was obviously full.

Over the table was suspended a rose, the club emblem. While the glass still stood before him Coquelin broke a petal from the flower and laid it so gently on the water that not a single drop escaped. A silent man could join and make no trouble. Around the table ran a ripple of smiles and little hand claps and nods of approval, and then, as if of one accord, all began making bread balls. Then a cup was passed from hand to hand, and each deposited his "ballot" in it, and all were found to be round. Not one had been pressed flat in sign of disapproval. So Coquelin joined the Sub Rosa club.

ESKIMO TO HUNT POLE

How Mene Keeshoo Hopes to Find Arctic Explorers' Goal.

WILL STUDY SURVEYING FIRST

Only Survivor of Family Peary Brought From Greenland to America Thinks He Can Lead Successful Eskimo Expedition.

Pleased beyond measure with his success in obtaining a scholarship at Manhattan college, New York, Mene Keeshoo, the only north Greenland Eskimo living in a civilized country and the sole survivor of the first Eskimos brought to the United States by Commander Peary in 1895, was contending the other night at the Grand Union hotel, in New York, with a number of conflicting emotions. First, and perhaps foremost, is his ardent desire to return to his native country and with an expedition composed entirely of Eskimos to reach the north pole.

Mene, who is eighteen years old, is a typical Eskimo, with a decidedly yellow skin, almond shaped eyes and jet black hair. With all that Mene is a handsome boy.

Asked what was his idea in taking a college course and how such an education could be utilized in Greenland, Mene's face brightened at the mention of the icebound continent.

"I would like to return to my people and see if I could help them. I have never forgotten my people, although I have not seen them since I was taken from my playmates when I was six years old and brought by Commander Peary to New York."

When it was pointed out to him that there would appear to be little or no demand for the activities of a civil engineer in Greenland he said:

"My people—they always have tried to help the white man reach the pole. White men have not reached it principally because the Eskimos will never tell the white man all they know. The Eskimos don't know today what Commander Peary is looking for. He isn't able to explain it to the Eskimos. They have no knowledge of geography. They see his ship and think it from some fairyland filled with crackers and coffee.

"Now, I think I can find the pole after I get my civil engineering knowledge. First I will go back to Greenland and learn my language again. My people would tell me things they would tell to no white man about the best way to reach the north pole. They don't know how great a thing it would be to find it, but I can tell them all that and make them understand that the only way to reach the pole is to hunt for it until we find it. Too much time is spent now by explorers coming back to the United States to tell people how cold it is up there and how they had to buck the ice. The Eskimo knows it is cold up there, but he is used to it, and he doesn't know anything about writing books about the north. The only way to find it is to go as far as possible one season, make a permanent camp there instead of coming back to write a book or magazine article, and push farther the next season. That's what I want to do, and I believe with an expedition of my own people I can do it. The Eskimo doesn't know how to lecture. I can learn how to read instruments so that I can know when I have found the pole, and the Eskimos will stick to me until I do find it. There is a lot of time lost in coming back to the United States to talk about the ice.

"Not only do I want to be the one to discover the pole, but I also want to explore the vast unknown tracts of Greenland, which has more country unexplored by man than any other land. I also want to write a history of my people and of Greenland and believe I can get much from them in the way of folklore and ancient customs."

It was this realization of the fact that he must take a course in surveying to enable him to ascertain his exact position on the earth which decided him in the matter of accepting the scholarship obtained for him by Harry V. Radford, an arctic explorer.

Mr. Radford said: "I have known Mene only a few days, but have every confidence in him. I do not think it is too much to say that he may be a veritable Moses among his people—or should we say a Peary?"

"Just let it rest at Mene," said Mene, with a grin.

Football Men In Starvation Class.

A starvation class has been organized in the department of physiological chemistry of the University of Missouri for the purpose of scientific investigation. A diet of liver, bacon and sweetbreads is being tried by some, while others are living on cereals, eggs and fruit. The different diets are tried for periods of two days each, and then the effect upon the members of the class is noted. Eighteen members of the class are on diet, among them being E. L. Miller, captain of the football team, and "Tubby" Graves, right tackle.

Remarkable Burglar Proof Safe.

The most remarkable burglar proof safe in the world was recently placed in a bank at Newburg, N. Y. At night the safe is lowered by cables into an impregnable metallic lined subvault of masonry and concrete.

Bill Limiting Hatpin's Length.

A bill has been introduced in the Oregon legislature, according to a Portland dispatch, prohibiting the use of hatpins longer than ten inches.

Pastor as a Baseball Umpire.

If the Rev. H. L. Otis fulfills his part of the contract he will don the mask and chest pad in the Cotton States league baseball games the coming summer as an umpire. President Merrill has received the parson's application, and, his recommendations being satisfactory, he was immediately appointed to the staff. He lives in Greensboro, Ala., and was a college star at baseball.

Flying Machine Race.

Conditions for the international aviation race of 1909 in France have been arranged. The distance will be a circle of twenty kilometers, not confined to continuous flight in heavier than air machines. If more than one machine should cover the distance the $5,000 will be awarded to the one making the greatest speed and the $2,500 cup to the club represented by the winner.

LEGAL ADVERTISEMENTS.

SUMMONS.

State of Minnesota, County of Brown. } ss

District Court
Ninth Judicial District.

Henry N. Somsen,.... Plaintiff
vs.
John Lundin, also all other persons or parties unknown claiming any right, title, estate, lien, or interest in the real estate described in the complaint herein,.....
.....Defendants.

The State of Minnesota, to the above named Defendants:

You are hereby summoned and required to answer the complaint of the plaintiff in the above entitled action, which is filed in the office of the Clerk of the District Court of the Ninth Judicial District in and for the County of Brown and State of Minnesota, and to serve a copy of your answer to the said complaint on the subscribers, at their office in the city of New Ulm in said County, within twenty days after the service of this summons upon you, exclusive of the day of such service; and if you fail to answer the said complaint within the time aforesaid, the plaintiff in this action will apply to the Court for the relief demanded in the complaint.

Dated February 2, 1909.

HENRY N. SOMSEN,
Plaintiff's Attorney,
New Ulm, Minnesota.

NOTICE OF LIS PENDENS.

State of Minnesota, County of Brown. } ss

District Court
Ninth Judicial District

Henry N. Somsen,.... Plaintiff
vs.
John Lundin, also all other persons or parties unknown claiming any right, title, estate, lien, or interest in the real estate described in the complaint herein.....
.....Defendants.

Notice is hereby given that an action has been commenced in this court by the above named plaintiff against the above named defendants in which said action the plaintiff demands judgment against said defendants adjudging that the plaintiff is the owner in fee simple and entitled to the possession of the real property in the complaint and hereinafter described, and that the defendants have no right, title, estate, lien or interest in or to the same or any part thereof;

The premises affected by said action are situated in the County of Brown and State of Minnesota, and are described as follows:

West half of Northeast quarter of Southeast quarter of Southwest quarter of Section Eight (8), in Township One hundred and eleven (111), North of Range Thirty-two (32).

Dated February 2, 1909.

HENRY N. SOMSEN,
Plaintiff's Attorney,
New Ulm, Minnesota.

5-10

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