

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 733

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

April 26, 1943

NEW LINCOLN LITERATURE

Six new cloth-bound Lincoln books coming from the press at about the same time implies that interest in the life of the Civil War President is not on the wane. A noticeable fact about these new books is the variety of titles which are displayed. Here are the subjects discussed: family, finance, politics, theology, tragedy and travel. Another interesting fact is the various methods used in the contexture of the books. One author calls her book a novel, another, without comment, prints a manuscript of a man long since dead, still another visualizes the Lincoln story with over 300 pictures, one book is a compilation of statements made about Lincoln, and the remaining two following the historical method with facts well documented. Even the formats are as varied as the contents.

***The Personal Finances of Abraham Lincoln* by Harry E. Pratt.** (The Abraham Lincoln Association, 1943, pp. 198, \$3.50).

One may consider any contribution in the field of Lincolniana which is made by Dr. Harry E. Pratt, secretary of the Abraham Lincoln Association, a thorough and careful discussion. Fortunately the author has selected a much neglected field of research for observation in *The Personal Finances of Abraham Lincoln*. The dust cover for the book does not exaggerate, when it claims that it is "the first detailed, completely authentic account of Lincoln's personal finances."

Dr. Pratt's familiarity with the life and works of Judge Davis, who was the executor of Abraham Lincoln's estate, especially qualified him for the task. One of the chief contributions which will accrue from a general reading of the book is the dispelling of the "poverty myth." Mr. Pratt discusses in a very sensible way the subject of Mr. Lincoln and usury to which some of the President's critiques have had a tendency to give a wrong emphasis.

One fact is now clear, in money matters as in other personal contacts, Lincoln was scrupulously honest. There is something refreshing in the old fashioned ideas he had about handling his own money and money held in his care that belonged to others. The chapter on "Income from the Law" should settle a lot of controversy which has sprung up with reference to Lincoln's alleged impoverishment of the Illinois Bar.

***The Faith of Abraham Lincoln* by D. Raymond Taggart.** (The Service Print Shop, 1943, pp. 411, \$2.00.)

There has been so many books on Lincoln's religion that this one by D. Raymond Taggart, D.D., comes as sort of a surprise. Of the former authors in this field, John Wesley Hill, Dr. William E. Barton and William J. Johnson, all have passed on. Dr. Taggart is an editor of a religious periodical and many of the chapters have already appeared in *The Covenanter Witness*. There is no attempt on the part of the author to prepare a historical record on the evolution of Lincoln's religious experiences, but the subject matter is developed in a series of monographs, arranged in more or less of a chronological order. The author makes no claim to any new discoveries and admits, "We are not venturing on any unexplored field."

***Mr. Lincoln's Wife* by Anne Colver.** (Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1943, pp. 406, \$2.50.)

Although Anne Colver calls her book "a novel of marriage," she has come closer to a correct interpretation of the real Mary Todd Lincoln than have many of the historians. She should ever be praised for ignoring the untenable Ann Rutledge traditions which make Mary a sort of a second-choice wife. Such a human-interest fable, as the supposed marriage ceremonies of January 1, 1841, this writer of fiction passes up while the historians usually feature it. She even gets Lincoln and Miss Todd married

without having the services interrupted by Judge Brown with his "God Almighty" statement about what the law fixes.

While there may be some inaccuracies in the historical background on which the author has drawn, she does not violate the basic facts of the Mary Todd story. It does appear as if her interpretation of Mrs. Lincoln in the White House is somewhat severe and not enough allowance is given the fact of Mrs. Lincoln's mental collapse in 1862, which should make one pity instead of censure her for many of the episodes where she behaves unwisely.

***Following Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1865* by Bernhardt Wall.** (The Wise-Parslow Co., 1943, pp. 415, \$3.75.)

There have been some excellent books featuring the portrait life of Lincoln, but this is the first attempt to compile under one cover an exhaustive collection of illustrative material that portrays the buildings in which he lived, visited, worked and talked. Wall's book not only becomes the outstanding source book in this field, but the artistic ability of the author has allowed him to present a very attractive volume as well. Leafing through the volume of over four hundred pages you seldom turn a page without observing from one to four examples of Mr. Wall's skill as an etcher.

It is to be greatly regretted that the historical notes in the book are not so authentic as the drawings seem to be. A great many of the pieces of the folklore long discarded by most of the modern historians creep into the book. Possibly some kind of artistic license might allow us to excuse the author for the liberties taken here. All in all it is the most for your money that you will be able to find in a new book in a dozen years, and each book is autographed.

***Lincoln and the Patronage* by Harry J. Carman and Reinhard H. Luthin.** (Columbia University Press, 1943, pp. 375, \$4.50.)

Patronage has come to have an odious inference in this day of civil service requirements, but in Lincoln's day it was "a horse of a different color," and one of the apparent necessary requirements of a two-party political system. The scholarly approach of the authors to Lincoln's attitude toward patronage is apparent from the documentation references which overwhelms one and indicates intensive and exhaustive research.

Several *Lincoln Lore*s might be consumed in a proper review of this monumental work in the field of political patronage, but this brief appraisal of the book by Professor J. G. Randall, of the University of Illinois, will have to suffice. "An amazingly thorough investigation into scattered and obscure sources. . . a volume that combines scholarly competence with smooth reading interest."

***Defense and Prison Experiences of a Lincoln Conspirator* by Samuel Bland Arnold.** (The Book Farm, 1943, pp. 133, \$12.00.)

Charles F. Heartman, who is well known to Lincoln collectors, recently acquired a manuscript written by Samuel Bland Arnold, one of the Lincoln conspirators. The reminiscences of Arnold are printed in a limited edition of 199 copies. Mr. Heartman states that "The apparent high price of the book (\$12.00) may be explained by the cost of the original manuscript."

There are two parts to the book, the first section is a deposition made in December 1867 by Arnold at Dry Tortugas, and has primarily to do with the evidence bearing on the assassination. The second part, and by far the larger section of the book, was written over thirty-five years later after he had been released from Dry Tortugas prison. It is largely a rehearsal of his treatment there. Couched in words of bitter resentment toward all persons in authority, and especially Stanton.