

MARY TODD LINCOLN: A TRAGIC PORTRAIT

BY PHILIP D. SANG

I

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.

—Robert Frost

MARY LINCOLN did not choose to take “the one less travelled by,” and that has made all the difference. Yet could she have done otherwise? Mary was Molly and Molly was Mary. In Mary’s appearance, in her wit, her *savoir faire* and exquisite manner Mrs. Todd took pardonable pride, for since Mary was a romping “tomboy” of eight years she had trained her in all the social graces.¹ “Mary could make a bishop forget his prayers,” chuckled Ninian Edwards one day when Mary mimicked the mannerisms of some of her beaux with unflattering fidelity, although her imitating of Lincoln was never so full of spice.²

Lincoln’s gray eyes lighted with interest as he watched Mary’s animated, piquant face and caught snatching glimpses of satin slipper straps and gleaming silk-clad ankles under billowing masses of lace and organdy as her hoops swayed in rhythm to the waltz music. Although he cared little for dancing, preferring to look on or talk to some of the older members of an assemblage, he could not resist this bewitching creature and on being presented to her, he said: “Miss Todd, I want to dance with you the worst way,” and Mary, with a roguish smile and twinkle in her eyes, added after the party in recounting the incident to her cousin Elizabeth Todd, “and he certainly did.”³

But Mary in her day was an unusual member of her sex. Her interest in the world about her was real; it was no affectation calculated to impress the male. Approaching nineteen she might well

¹ Katherine Helm, *The True Story of Mary, Wife of Lincoln* (N.Y., 1928), p. 55.

² *Ibid.*, p. 81.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

have married; instead she went back to Kentucky to continue her education. Her tutor, Dr. Ward, was a cultured gentleman with much to give an eager student who delighted in poetry and literature. Mary Todd's period of study far exceeded that of most gentlewomen of her day, a fact which accounts for the rich literary allusions and quotations in her truly fine letters. There were probably those who thought of her as "highbrow" or "blue-stocking."⁴

Mary and Lincoln had a world of things to talk about, and some of these topics had significance in the years ahead of them. As fellow Whigs they loved politics and they had the same political idol, always a strong bond. Lincoln had admired that greatest of all Whigs, Henry Clay, at a distance, but Mary had known and loved him as a personal friend in Lexington. She was always ready to listen to talk of politics and when it came to that subject the young lawyer was in his element.⁵

II

In the pages that follow, I believe that we are reproducing for the first time in full, from the originals, three letters written by Mary Todd before she was married, the earliest known of her letters. Over a quarter of a century ago, they received scholarly treatment from Carl Sandburg and Paul M. Angle in *Mary Lincoln, Wife and Widow*, and more recently, from Ruth Painter Randall in *Mary Lincoln, Biography of a Marriage* and in *The Courtship of Mr. Lincoln*. My comments would certainly be redundant.

In this era of the full 168 hour week, the enjoyment that comes from the art of letter writing has been all but eliminated as an emotional experience. Thankful are we that there was a time when the pace was more leisurely, the social graces more eagerly practiced, when telling a friend what was going on inside of us didn't mean a half-hour telephone call, when a congratulatory message was not a singing telegram. Because letter writing hasn't always been a lost art, we glean something of the emotions, the experiences, the personality of the correspondent. We recapture and re-live in some small measure the span of time covered in a particular piece of correspondence—the mood, the anxieties, the exchange of news.

⁴ Ruth Painter Randall, *Mary Lincoln; Biography of a Marriage* (Boston, 1953), p. 28.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 28 and 29.

Mary's and Lincoln's correspondence are authentic records—letters written without any thought of future readers.⁶

A letter, heretofore unpublished, from Springfield dated June 13th [1860] to Mrs. Judd⁷ was written a day after Mary's sister, Ann Todd Smith, lost a young son who had been sick with typhoid fever. Although little Eddie had died on February 1, 1850, some ten years earlier, one may see in this letter evidence of Mary's bitter memories of personal loss. She wrote:

Mrs. C. M. Smith, whom you perhaps remember, lost a son of ten years of age, on yesterday, [*sic*] has been sick some weeks with typhoid fever. I trust never to witness *such suffering ever* again. He is to be buried this afternoon. The family are almost inconsolable; and for the last week I have spent the greater portion of my time, with them.

Mrs. Lincoln then declines an invitation to join Mrs. Judd in an excursion to Minnesota for a reason mentioned later in this paper.

From internal evidence, Clyde C. Walton, Illinois State Historian, was able to assign a tentative date of September 9, 1861, to the next letter.⁸ It is reproduced in Sandburg and Angle, *Mary Lincoln*. "My Dear Lizzie" letter of September 29, '61, is also reprinted in full in Sandburg and Angle, *Mary Lincoln*.⁹ In it one finds Mary concerned with her personal health; talking of intrigues; describing family jealousies; projecting herself into political appointments; indulging in scathing denunciations of Ann Todd; relating the loss of a lad in battle; talking about the weather; praying for peace; referring to the vast changes in the furnishing of the White House rooms and closing with an affectionate—"Your attached cousin, Mary Lincoln."

III

The letters here reproduced are limited to some acquired by my wife and me during the past several years and obviously leave many gaps. The genesis of this article is really the collection of eight letters of Mary Lincoln to Simon P. Cameron which are here published in their entirety for the first time. They were acquired early in 1960

⁶ Carl Sandburg and Paul M. Angle, *Mary Lincoln, Wife and Widow* (N.Y., 1932), p. 73.

⁷ Wife of Norman B. Judd who nominated Lincoln for the Presidency.

⁸ Seward MSS., University of Rochester, entry in the diary of Frances A. Seward, September 9, 1861. See also Randall, *op.cit.*, pp. 264, 485, 525.

⁹ It was also privately printed by H. E. Barker, Springfield, Illinois, 1917, and quoted in part in Randall, *op.cit.*, 229-30.

by King V. Hostick, Springfield, Illinois, collector of historical documents, from the descendants of Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania, Lincoln's first Secretary of War.

In an article in the Chicago *Sunday Tribune* of February 7, 1960, by Percy Ward, the first letter of April 6, 1866, is extensively quoted; excerpts follow from a second letter of the same day; the April 17th letter is not mentioned; that of April 21st is briefly quoted; the May 4th letter goes without notice; the May 19th letter is quoted while that of May 26th is not; the last letter of June 16th is described in part. There is a ninth letter in this group in the hand of an unknown person which may have been dictated to an amanuensis and is partially quoted. It may well have been a form letter sent out by Cameron to prospective donors.

King Hostick wrote an article—"The Lincolns and Chicago"—which appeared in the July, 1960, issue of *F-F Saver* (published by First Federal Savings and Loan Association of Chicago) in which he quotes from both letters of April 6, 1866, and from the letter of May 19th. The article carries a reproduction of the postscript in the second letter of April 6th.

This hitherto unknown collection of letters tells an incredible story. Consider, for a moment, the drama on May 24, 1865. A tired widow in her weeds accompanied by her two sons and colored dress-maker-friend, Elizabeth Keckley, stood bewildered in a Chicago railroad station. The one boy was tall, of twenty-two years, who for all of the fact that he had been a Captain on Grant's staff and possessed a degree from Harvard College, looked young and immature. The other was a slight lad of twelve years, with a twinkle in his eye and a lisp on his tongue, one who had been the "pet of the White House" and the apple of his father's eye. No great crowds of people were on hand to bid Mrs. Lincoln welcome, and this in spite of the fact that Mrs. Lincoln was to be the first wife of a President to move to Chicago. Newspapers that had always gone out of their way to give every attention to Lincoln were now strangely silent on the arrival of his widow. The hen and her brood were to be left to themselves. Perhaps they preferred it so.¹⁰

Their destination was the Tremont House. Seeking further quiet, on May 31st, the little family moved to the Hyde Park Hotel,

¹⁰ Blaine Brooks Gernon, *The Lincolns in Chicago* (Chicago, 1934), p. 47.

then operated by John Alston in that little suburb on the southern fringe of Chicago.¹¹

Save for one sudden flare, the newspapers of Chicago decidedly ignored Mrs. Lincoln's presence. On June 14, 1865, the *Chicago Journal* carried a small item relating that she had lately threatened to whip Tad for "cutting up his copper toed shoes," which Mrs. Lincoln later claimed he never had, in denying the story. With that bit of venom out of its spleen, the *Journal* joined the *Tribune* in a campaign of silence.¹²

From that tragic night of April 14 to April 6, 1866, Mary Lincoln's transformation was calamitous. From the White House to boarding house in a span of less than one year was, to say the least, a traumatic experience. "Living in a boarding house, is most revolting to my sons and myself— and certainly the thought that *his* family— would have had to come to this— would have been a most aggravating sorrow to *One* so devoted to his family, as my husband *was*— and *still is*, in his Heavenly home."¹³

That Judge Davis, the executor of the estate, wanted her to return to Springfield to live aroused every ounce of opposition Mary could muster and brings to light a hitherto unknown promise of Lincoln:

After the many years of happiness there, with my idolized husband—to place me in the home, deprived of *his* presence and the darling boy, we lost in Washington, it would not require a day, for me to lose my entire reason—I am distracted enough, as it is, with remembrances, but I will spare myself and my poor sons, this additional grief. After the death of my little Willie, my loving and indulgent husband told me, that he would never carry me back, to a place, which would remind us both, of so great a loss—There-fore, in settling in C- I am only carrying out the intentions of my lamented husband.¹⁴

The letters bring into sharp focus the financial straits of the Lincoln family. Lincoln left an estate of more than \$83,000.00 which, under the expert handling of David Davis as administrator, increased to over \$110,000.00 by the time his final report was filed in 1868. In the three years before the estate was settled, cash (as often happens) was scarce and prices after the war were soaring. With her constant feeling that the foundations of her life had crumbled, leaving her broken and unprotected in the ruins, and with

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹³ Second letter of April 6th [1866].

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁴ First letter of April 6th [1866].

her inability to think rationally about money, Mary lay awake at night wondering how she would provide for herself and her two sons.¹⁵

It is almost inconceivable that the wife of the Martyred President should have written to Cameron requesting that he raise money for a house for the Lincoln family:

I am sure you will use every exertion to raise the sum you named \$20,000—yet if I make a suggestion, will you kindly pardon it. I wish to live plainly—yet very genteely—Plain two story frame houses here, cost the sum you have named 20,000—and if, from an other quarter—you can *outside* of that have it increased to \$25 or 30,000 I am sure you will—to be enabled to procure *the house* I wish, *this month*.¹⁶

Similarly inconceivable is her final plea, at the conclusion of the last letter:

If you can secure the \$5000—*now* for me—in settlement—I would be pleased—Judge D - - - has all I have in the world—which is little—not a cent, *in any bank* I am sorry to say.

On May 22, 1866, Mary purchased a home at 375 West Washington Street (old number) between Willard (later Ann) and Elizabeth Streets—a stately stone front of New York style where she lived until May 1, 1867. The purchase was made for \$17,000 from the \$22,000 she received as Lincoln's remaining salary.

IV

The image of her husband filled Mary's heart and mind. There was no past for her in which he did not figure; the present was overflowing with horror at his tragic death; the future loomed a dreary interminable waste without his dear companionship. Broken-hearted, bewildered, she was like a traveler lost in the desert. She did not know where to turn, where to find an oasis of comfort. She hungered and thirsted for sympathy and friendship. Restless and unhappy, she wandered from one lonely spot to another seeking what she could never hope to find, peace, health, surcease from her overwhelming sorrow. Pursued by ignorant gossip, she became extremely sensitive and avoided notoriety by living in the most unostentatious and quiet way possible.¹⁷

In 1868 her plans to go abroad crystallized. After Robert's wed-

¹⁵ Randall, *op.cit.*, pp. 391-92.

¹⁶ Second letter of April 6 [1866].

¹⁷ Helm, *op.cit.*, p. 269.

ding in September, she sailed with Tad on October 1st on the *City of Baltimore* and eventually arrived in Frankfurt-am-Main. There followed several years in which Mary Lincoln attempted a flight into obscurity and isolation, if not anonymity.

Two letters of that migratory period are here published, reference to which I was unable to find in any of the standard works. A letter of March 16, 1869, from Nice, France, to Mrs. White¹⁸ on black-bordered stationery is a pathetic outpouring of grief after almost four years of widowhood:

For sorrow, such as ours, there is no balm, the grave and Heaven, with reunion with our loved ones, can alone heal, bleeding, broken hearts. Wherever I am, feeling so sadly, I lead a life of isolation and retirement, although I have been here several weeks I am sure few or none are aware of it.

She complains of the loud-voiced, overdressed Americans found everywhere. And, in a melancholy vein of utter despondency, continues: "To me—everything looks so desolate. I often wonder, why, I was spared, when my darling husband was taken, and to suffer so much too!"

On June 30, 1870, she writes to Mrs. Hurst,¹⁹ again on mourning stationery:

I am leaving town tomorrow for some weeks, the noise and crowd of a city, are very distasteful to me in summer—You can scarcely imagine what a delight it was to receive a call from that great and noble man, Bishop Simpson!²⁰ Oh that he could have remained in town longer—I felt as if I had so much to say to him.

Some sixty days after this letter was written, Benjamin Moran of the American legation in London recorded in his journal²¹ that he was agreeably surprised when meeting the wife of ex-President Lincoln "to find her an unpretending woman of excellent manners, much intelligence and very lady like appearance." He records his having a long talk with her and concludes: "I am prepared to believe that all the attacks upon her in the newspapers were sheer scandal and falsehoods."

The most tragic letter of this loving mother here reproduced is

¹⁸ Wife of Albert S. White, Member of Congress and later a Lincoln appointee to a Federal judgeship.

¹⁹ Wife of Bishop John Fletcher Hurst, founder of the American University, Washington, D.C.

²⁰ Bishop Matthew Simpson delivered the eulogy at Lincoln's burial in Springfield, Illinois.

²¹ Manuscript in the Library of Congress, entry under September 4, 1870.

the one of June 19, 1876, to her son Robert. It contains the violent outpouring of resentment built up during the almost thirteen months she was legally declared insane. The salutation, "Robert T. Lincoln," is followed by a somewhat detailed demand for the return of goods which she charges had been appropriated by Robert and his wife. "Two prominent clergymen, have written me, since I saw you—and mention in their letters, that they think it advisable to offer up prayers for you in Church on account of your wickedness against me—Send me all that I have written for, you have tried your game of robbery long enough." The letter is signed "Mrs. A. Lincoln."

Compare this letter with a quotation from her note of June 13, 1860, to Mrs. Judd. Apologizing for not accepting Mrs. Judd's invitation to join her in a journey to Minnesota, Mary Lincoln writes: "Our oldest boy has been absent almost *a year, a long year* and at times I feel *wild* to see him, if I went any where within the next few weeks, I should visit him." This on June 13, 1860, and sixteen years later, almost to the day, writing to Robert, "Send me all that I have written for, you have tried your game of robbery long enough——"

History has been unjustly harsh to some. It remained for the Swisshelms, the Sandburgs, the Angles, the Randalls, and others to re-create the true image of Mary, of Molly, of Mother. Jane Swisshelm started to write a tribute to Lincoln's widow but for once her vigorous pen faltered: "I want to write of her as a historical character—as one to whom the people of this country owe a great reparation," were her words, "but can only think of her as a most affectionate, faithful friend."²²

On January 31st my wife and I stood in a fine drizzling rain under the Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile in silent tribute to France's unknown Soldier.

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UN SOLDAT
FRANCAIS
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POUR LA PATRIE

1914 . 1918

²² Jane Grey Swisshelm, letter to the editor, Chicago *Tribune*, July 20, 1882.

Perhaps the free rendering of such a simple epitaph, had history permitted, would have sufficed for Mary:

HERE LIES MARY LINCOLN WHO DIED
FOR HER COUNTRY
1818 . 1882

The Rev. James A. Reed said in his funeral sermon: "They had virtually been killed at the same time. With the one that lingered it was slow death from the same cause. So it seems to me today, that we are looking at death placing his seal upon the lingering victim of a past calamity."

Perhaps the following really has no place in a sheaf of Mary Lincoln correspondence, but I have the intuitive feeling that it is appropriate. A hitherto unpublished letter by Oliver Wendell Holmes, who wrote as a witness of the dedication at Gettysburg on November 19, 1863, to an old medical friend, Dr. F. Peyre Percher of Charlestown, South Carolina, includes within it a copy of the Gettysburg Address written by Holmes. Its discovery was reported in the *New York Times* of February 12, 1954. Its highlight is the statement of Dr. Holmes, who said of the address: "I will give it a page to itself, for my words are not worthy to stand by it." May we, to the maligners, to the gossip-mongers, to the irrationally prejudiced slanderers of Mary Lincoln, say in paraphrasing the words of Dr. Holmes: Your works are not worthy to stand by the side of the Lincoln family saga.

I

Columbia July 23d 1840

Many thanks Dearest Merce for your kind letter yet in spite of the pleasure of hearing from you it brought many feelings of sorrow and regret, to know that you were as near as St. Louis, & was debarred the happiness of seeing one I love so well, a few days before receiving yours, Elizabeth wrote to me & spoke of the possibility of seeing you again as you did not quit these western wilds until August & then you would accompany your Brother home, in spite of the *agreeable visitation* I have already made, I had determined to forego all, once more to see you, and shorten my visit here—You will readily credit me Dearest when I tell you my time has been most delightfully spent, this portion of the state is certainly most beautiful, and in my wanderings I never encountered more kindness & hospitality, as my visit was particularly to my re-

lations & did not expect to remain for any length of time. I was not anxious to mingle with the strange crowd, and form new associations so soon to be severed, yet every lady almost that called extended an invitation to us to spend an evening with them, so I have necessarily seen more society than I had anticipated, on yesterday we returned from a most agreeable excursion to Boonville, situated immediately on the river and a charming place, we remained a week, attended four parties, during the time, once was *particularly* distinguished for its brilliancy & *city like* doings, the house was very commodious, four rooms & two halls, thrown open for the reception of the guests, in two, dancing was carried on with *untiring vigor*, kept up until 3 o'clock, however, Cousin & myself were more genteel left rather earlier *Your risibles* would have undergone a *considerable state of excitement*, were you to have seen the "poetry of motion" exercised in the dance, had our grandfathers been present in the festive halls of mirth, they would undoubtedly have recognised the familiar airs of their youthful days, all the old Virginia reels that have been handed down to us by *tradition*, were played, your Cousin Sep methinks would have enjoyed the dance, no insinuations meant, save his extreme fondness for this fascinating amusement, and the rapid manner they hurried through the figures, at the end of each cotillion. I felt exhausted after such *desperate exertions* to keep pace with the music. Were Missouri my home, with the exception of St Louis, Boonville would certainly in my estimation have the preference a life on the river to me has always had a charm, so much excitement, and this *you* have deemed necessary to my well-being: every day experience impresses me more fully with the belief. I would such were not my nature, for mine I fancy is to be a quiet lot, and happy indeed will I be, if it is, only cast near those, I so *dearly love*, my feelings & hopes are all so sanguine that in this dull world of reality tis best to dispel our delusive day dreams so soon as possible Would it were in my power to follow your kind advice, my ever dear Merce and turn my thoughts from earthly vanities, to one higher than us all, every day proves the fallacy of our enjoyments, & that we are living for pleasures that do not recompense us for the pursuit—I wrote you a lengthy document, soon after reaching this place, as you did not mention having received it, I feared it had not reached you. The mail comes in today, and I am on the wing of expectation, hoping to hear from my dear sister Fanny. Dr Wallace I hear has been sick, & Fanny I fear is unable to play the part of devoted nurse at *this time*, to both child & husband—Every week since I left Springfield, have had the felicity of receiving various numbers of their interesting papers, Old Soldiers, Journals & even the *Hickory club*, has crossed my vision. This latter, rather astonished your friend, *then* I had deemed myself forgotten—When I mention *some letters*, I have received since leaving S—you will be somewhat surprised, as I *must confess* they were entirely *unlooked for*. this is *between ourselves*, my dearest, but of this more anon; every day I am convinced this is a stranger world We live in, the *past* as the future is to me a mystery, how much I wish you were near ever have I found yours a congenial heart, in your presence I have almost *thought aloud*, and the

thought that paineth most is that such may never be again, yet, I trust that a happier day will dawn, near you, I would be most happy to sojourn in our earthly pilgrimage, to me it has ever appeared that those whose presence was the sunlight of my heart have departed-separated far and wide, to meet when? In Boonville I met with two or three former schoolmates, endeared to me by ties of early memories, also several young gentlemen. I [had known] [MS torn] well in Kentucky. I need not speak to you of the pleasures of such an agreeable meeting, Cousin Anne & myself did not *know* [one] whilst there, this, at all times, I have deemed a hard lesson, yet in this instance, the task was still severer, to have so many beaux "dancing attendance" on us at one time, and the little throng were hosts within themselves, our Sucker friends would have opened their orbs, at such strange doings, I there met with a young Cousin, by my Mother's side, who has but a few weeks since, wended his way westward, a young lawyer, and gives hopes of bright promise, already the old lawyer's, have extended a *patronising* smile & I trust & feel that he may one day, ere long weave a bright chaplet of fame, for his youthful brow—Were you to see him, I almost fancy & hope that *others* in your eye would be forgotten, no other Cousin save *him* would I deem worthy your acceptance—and he has that Dear Merce which I have heard you say would be *indispensable*, good morals & Religion and the most affectionate heart in the world, yet I much fear yours is a *gone case*, though far separated, do not deem your confidence misplaced, tell me all—every thing, you know the deep interest I feel for you, time can never banish your remembrance, how desolate I shall feel on returning to Springfield without you, your mind & cheering presence has beguiled many a lonely hour of its length. Mrs. L—must feel lost, and little Anne too, has lost a play mate. Martha Jane I am told seldom wanders on the hill, still blest with her *little friend's* society, be it so "I care not though she be dearer," Merce she can now have an opportunity of making *dead sets* at the youngsters. I can answer for the security of your claims, tell me, were my suspicions unfounded? To change our subject to one of a *still warmer* nature, did you ever feel such oppressive weather as we have had of late, though you perhaps did not experience the intensity of the heat, at this time, no doubt, you are sailing o'er the waters blue, what an agreeable trip will be yours dearest, & I trust every happiness may attend you. I shall expect a lengthy account of your journeyings, crossed & re-crossed. I feel exacting, yet bear with me, my great desire to hear from you is a sufficient palliation for my fault, so at least I deem it. Cousin & myself take the world easy, as usual, with me you know, allow but few of its cares, to mar *our Serenity*, we regularly take our afternoon *siestas*, and soon find our spirits wafted [to the] land of dreams—Then will I think of thee—Still [it does] not require so mighty of effort, to bring you [to] mind, for the brightest associations of the [past year] are connected with thee

Will Todd has been here some part of the time, is now here, and sends his best respects, if not *love*, you will pardon the familiarity of the youth as in times past, he is agreeable surprised to find himself "not too young to enter society" here, that slight ever haunts him, he is uncertain as to whether he will

locate himself in Missouri, tis difficult at this time, to get any where into business, and perhaps he will yet again return homeward. There is a very lovely & interesting young lady, residing here whom rumor says will one day be a cousin of ours & *John Todd* is the happy man, surprised at her taste, he is certainly very clever, yet he did not shew off to the same advantage whilst with us as here he was a general beau [~~“in Columbia”~~ crossed out]—Cousin Ann, is betraying her womanly curiosity wonders what I am scribbling so much about—I soon close without having said half enough—Though I can fancy you pale and exhausted—So in mercy will spare you—Ann says you cannot fail being pleased with Missouri, she is so much attached to her native state, that I fear nothing will ever draw her hence, not even *the leader in Israel*, though that will never be methinks—she hopes one day not far distant with some faithful swain, you may pitch your tent here and then she will have the happiness of seeing you, & with this wish she sends much love—Uncle has just returned from Court, and insists upon our taking another jaunt as travelling is absolutely necessary to Cousin’s health, I know not how this will be, ere long I must quit this land, your letter if you please direct to Springfield as I am confident I shall be there ere you have time to receive & answer this, and do my dearest girl, write very soon, you know not the happiness one of your letters affords—If you conclude to settle in Missouri, *I will do so too*, [there] is *one* being here, who cannot brook the mention of my return, an agreeable lawyer & grandson of *Patrick Henry—what an honor!* Shall never survive it—I wish you could see him, the most perfect original I had ever met, my beaux have *always* been *hard bargains* at any rate, Uncle and others think, he surpasses his *noble ancestor in talents*, yet Merce I love him not, & my hand will never be given when my heart is not—Cousin A has a most devoted hero who watches her every look, with a *lover’s eye*, and I have long told her she was a coquette in a *quiet way*—and they are said to be the most dangerous ever—Be as *unrese[r]ved* as you find me, I forget myself writing to you, pass my imperfections lightly by, and excuse so miserable a production from your most attached friend

Mary

II

Springfield Dec 1840—

Many, very many weary days have passed my ever dear Merce, since mine has been the pleasure of hearing from you, some weeks since I received your kind, soul cheering epistle & had I been *then* told such a length of time would have intervened ere I had availed myself of an opportunity of replying to it, I would not have given credence to the tale, yet such has been the case & I feel that I owe you many apologies & sincerely trust our future correspondence may be more punctual, my time has been much occupied of late, you will be surprised to learn, I have scarce a leisure moment to call my own, for several weeks this fall, a formidable supply of *sewing*, necessary to winter comfort, engaged our constant attention, now the scene is changed, Mr Edwards has

a cousin from Alton spending the winter with us, a most interesting young lady, her fascinations, have drawn a concourse of beaux & company round us, occasionally, I *feel as Miss Whitney*, we have too much of such useless commodities, you know it takes some time for habit to render us familiar with what we are not greatly accustomed to—Could you step in upon us some evenings in these “western wilds,” you would be astonished at the change, *time* has wrought on the hills, I would my Dearest, you now were with us, be assured your name is most frequently mentioned in our circle, *words of mine* are not necessary to assure you of the loss I have sustained in your society, on my return from Missouri, my time passed most heavily, I feel quite made up, in my present companion, a congenial spirit I assure you. I know you would be pleased with Matilda Edwards, a lovelier girl I never saw. *Mr. Speed's* ever-changing heart I suspect is about offering *its young* affections at her shrine, with some others, there is considerable acquisition in our society of *marriagable gentlemen*, unfortunately only “birds of passage.” *Mr Webb*, a widower of modest merit, last winter, is our *principal lion*, dances attendance very frequently, we expect a very gay winter, evening before last my sister gave a most agreeable party, upwards of a hundred graced the festive scene. I trust the period is not very distant when your presence will be among us to cheer us & moreover I trust *our homes* may be near, that as in times past, so may it *ever be*, that our hearts will acknowledge the same kindred ties, memory oftentimes reverts to bygone days, & with the past your memory is intimately blended, well did you say “time has borne changes on its wing,” Speed’s “*grey suit*” has gone the way of *all flesh*, an interesting suit of *Harrison blues* have replaced his *sober livery*, *Lincoln's*, *lincoln green* have gone to dust, Mr Webb sports a *mourning pin* [?] by way of reminding us *damsels*, that we “*cannot come it*,” of the new recruits I need not mention, some few are gifted & all in our humble estimation interesting, *Mr C*—seems to have *given up* all, when deprived of his “own particular star,” I have not met him, to have a chat since Martha Jane’s marriage, I have often wished for the sake of his society & your *dear self* he would be more social. Harriet Campbell appears to be enjoying all the sweets of married life, *Mrs. Abell*, came down to or three weeks since, have seen but very little of her, her *silver tones*, the other evening were not quite so captain like as was their want in former times, why is it that married folks always become so serious?

Miss Lamb, report says is to be married, next week, *Mr Beauman* I caught a *glimpse of a few days since*, looked *becomingly* happy at the prospect of the change, that is about to await him. I am pleased she is about perpetrating the *crime of matrimony*, like some of our friends in *this place*. *MJL* for instance, I think she will be much happier. I suppose like the rest of us *Whigs* though you seem rather to doubt my *faith* you have been rejoicing in the recent election of Gen Harrison, a cause that has excited such deep interest in the nation and one of such vital importance to our prosperity—This fall I became quite a *politican*, rather an unladylike profession, yet at such a *crisis*, whose heart could remain untouched while the energies of all were called in question?—

You bid me pause, in your last, on the banks of "*Lionel*" & then glean a needful lesson, by marking the changes, the destroying hand of time had written on all, a moments thought, would suffice to assure me that all *is not*, as it then was, the icy hand of winter has set its seal upon the waters, the winds of Heaven visit the spot but roughly, the same stars shine down, yet not with the same liquid, mellow light as in the olden time, some forms & memories that enhanced the place, have passed by, many weary miles are you dear Merce removed from us, the star of hope, must be our guiding *star*, and we must revel in the happy anticipations of a reunion, may the day be not far distant—Once more, allow me my dear friend to wish you were with us, we have a pleasant jaunt in contemplation, to Jacksonville, next week there to spend a day or two, Mr Hardin & Browning are our leaders the van brought up by Miss E. my humble self, Webb, Lincoln & two or three others whom you know not, we are watching the clouds most anxiously trusting it may snow, so we may have a sleigh ride—Will it not be pleasant?

Your Brother's family, are well, and all speak of you most frequently, & wonder when you expect to wander *westward*, we cannot do much longer without you, *your mate*, misses you too much from her nest, not to marvel at the delay, do trust a friend & be more communicative in your next, feeling as you must do the great interest I take in you, would deny me the consolation of being a sharer in your joys & sorrows, may the latter be never known to you—The State House is not quite completed, yet sufficiently so to allow the Legislature to meet within its walls. Springfield has improved astonishingly, has the addition of another *bell* to the Second Church, it rings so long & loud, that as in days past we cannot mistake the trysting hour—I trust you do not allow your sister to sing you any more such melancholy dirges, I know by *sad experience that such dolorous ditties* only excite one's anxiety to see a beloved object, therefore tell her for the sympathetic feel I entertain towards you dearest, bid her cease the strain—The weather is miserably cold, & my stump of a pen keeps pace with the times, pass my imperfections lightly by, as usual, I throw myself on your amiable nature, knowing that my shortcomings will be forgiven—Fanny Wallace sends much love to you, her little urchin, is almost a young lady in size. Elizabeth has not been well of late, suffering with a cold, I still am the same ruddy *pineknot*, only not quite as great an exuberance of flesh, as it once was my lot to contend with, although quite a sufficiency—I must close, write very, very soon if you love me—ever your attached friend

Mary

III

Springfield June 1841

When I reflect my own dear Merce, that months of change have passed by since I last wrote you, and that your letters during that time have been far, very far more unfrequent than I could have desired, these circumstances would lead an *unknowing one* to imagine that time had wrought its changes upon us, and lessened the love which I feel has ever been ours towards each other, time

and absence only serve to deepen the interest with which I have always regarded you & my greatest regret is that so many long & weary miles divide us—My late silence would doubtless lead you to imagine that you were only occasionally remembered, I have been much alone of late and my thoughts have oft been with thee, why I have not written oftener appears strange even to *me*, who should best know *myself*. that most difficult of all problems to solve, my evil genius Procrastination has whispered me to tarry til a more convenient season & spare you the infliction of a letter which daily experience convinces me would be “flat, stale & unprofitable,” yet henceforth I trust it may not be thus with us, were you aware of the delight given by hearing from you, dearest Merce, surely you would more frequently cheer my sad spirit—the last two or three months have been of *interminable* length, after my gay companions of last winter departed, I was left much to the solitude of my own thoughts, and some *lingering regrets* over the past, which time can alone overshadow with its healing balm, thus has my *spring time* been passed, summer in all its beauty has again come, the prairie land looks as beautiful as it did in the olden time, when we strolled together & derived so much of happiness from each other’s society—this is past & more than this I can scarcely realise that a year of change has gone by since we parted, may it not be that another has rolled on, and we still remain separated, the thought of meeting solaces many a lonely hour—I have much much to tell you, of all that is daily occurring around us, that I scarcely know where the narrative should commence, at present a cousin of Mr Edward’s from Alton, is on a visit to us, the June Court is in Session & many distinguished strangers grace the gay capitol, we have an unusual number of agreeable visitors, some pleasant acquaintances of last winter, but in their midst the *winning widower is not*, *rumor* says he with some others will attend the Supreme Court next month, in your last, you appeared impressed with the prevalent idea that we were *dearer* to each other than friends, the idea was neither new nor strange, dear Merce, the knowing world have coupled our names together for months past, merely through the folly & belief of *another*, who strangely imagined we were attached to each other, in your friendly & confiding ear allow me to whisper that my *heart can never be his*, I have deeply *regretted that his constant visits, attentions* & [c] should have given room for remarks, which were to me unpleasant, there being a slight difference of some eighteen or twenty summers in our years, would preclude the possibility of congeniality of feeling, without which I should never feel justifiable in resigning my happiness into the safe keeping of another, even should that other be far too worthy for me, with his two *sweet little objections*—We had such a continual round of company, gayety &c last winter, that after their departure the monotony of the place was almost unbearable, now that I have become habituated to quiet, I have resumed my frequent & social visits to Mrs Levering, and if your ears do not oftentimes burn, there can be no truth in the old adage, all, all reminds me so much of your dear, kind self, a few evenings since I was most forcibly re-

mind of you, by seeing *Jacob Faithful*, we spent the evening at Mrs Lamb's, and in one quiet, sequestered nook in the room he was seated sad & lonely, no doubt his thoughts were busy with you & the past, to me he has proved most *untrue* as I never see him, e'en for your loved sake, he *comes not*. Mr Speed, our former most constant guest has been in Kentucky for some weeks past, will be here next month, on a visit *perhaps*, as he has some idea of deserting Illinois, his mother is anxious he should superintend her affairs, he takes a friend's privilege, of occasionally favouring me with a letter, in his last he spoke of his great desire of once more inhabiting this region & of his possibility of soon returning—*His* worthy friend, deems me unworthy of notice, as I have not met *him* in the gay world for months, with the usual comfort of misery, imagine that others were as seldom gladdened by his presence as my humble self, yet I would that the case were different, that he would once more resume his Station in Society, that "Richard should be himself again," much, much happiness would it afford me—My Sister Fanny returned some weeks since from her visit east, her health & spirits much improved, regretted much that the hurry of business prevented the Dr. visiting Baltimore, as she was very desirous of seeing you. Mrs *Beauman*, Miss Lamb, that was is now on a visit to Mrs Mather, looks very well, says she is very happy, and much pleased with her new home—Mrs Abell, has been here, for a great while, owing to the warm weather, or something, sports loose wrappers, & looks quite *dignified*.—Our agreeable friend Mrs Anderson was in town a few days since spoke of having received a letter from you, and was about doing herself the pleasure of replying to it, I have never paid her a visit, since the time we went out together with William Anderson, who is soon to be married to a lady of Louisville—strange perversity of taste—Think you not so? The interesting gentleman, whom Mrs Roberts gave you for a beau is now a resident of this place, Mr Trumbull, is Secretary of State, in lieu of *Judge Douglass*, who has been rapidly promoted to office—Now that your fortune is made, I feel much disposed in your absence, to lay in my *claims*, as he is talented & agreeable & sometimes *countenances* me—I regret to see that my paper is so rapidly disappearing, miserable scrawl as this has been, I feel much disposed to continue it—As with you, I always have so much to communicate, E. sends you much love & *desires you would hasten your movements westward as your friends continue* to remember you with the same unchanging affection—Miss Whitney whom I have not visited since you left & for some time before, called up today & requested me to accompany her as far as Peoria, on her bridal tour as she is to be married in a few days to a widower of some *ten months* standing, residing in the northern part of the state—

Miss Rodney is also to be an attendant, as you may imagine I declined the honour and being strangers, was somewhat surprised at the request—Your brother's family are all well, write very, very soon to your ever attached friend

Mary—

IV

My Dear Mrs. Judd,

Springfield June 13th [1860]

Your very acceptable letter was received some days since & under *other* circumstances, than those by which we are, at present surrounded, my silence would be inexcusable. Mrs. C. M Smith, whom you perhaps remember, lost a son of ten years of age, on yesterday, has been sick some weeks with *typhoid* fever. I trust never to witness *such suffering ever* again. He is to be buried this afternoon. The family are almost inconsolable, & for the last week, I have spent the greater portion of my time, with them.

Nothing would give me more pleasure, than to join you in your excursion to Minnesota, I am quite *unnerved* just now, and we have so much company, that I could scarcely leave home, if it was in September or later, perhaps I might do so, it has always been one of the *many* anticipations of "my future", to visit *Minnehaha*—Our oldest boy, has been absent, almost a *year, a long year*, & at times I feel *wild* to see him, if I went any where, within the next few weeks, I should wish to visit him. If any thing, should prevent your trip, at the present time, and you would ever conclude to take the same excursion, I would be very happy to accompany you, if I could gain courage, feeling much depressed, from recent occurrences, I know well, that nothing would benefit me more, than such an *excursion*. Hoping, you will accompany your Husband, in some of his visits to Springfield, I remain yours very truly

Mary Lincoln.

I am too well aware of your goodness, not to feel assured, that you will excuse *this note*. Mr L— joins me in kind regards to your Sister & Mr Judd.

M.

V

[September 9, 1861?]

I fancy the "blue room," will look dreary this evening, so if you & the Gov are disengaged, wander up & see us — I want to become accustomed to *vast solitude* by degrees The paper is ready for your notice — Bring the Gov — with you —

Truly your friend
Mary Lincoln

VI

Sep 29th '61

My Dear Lizzie:

Executive Mansion

I have been intending writing you for some days. I have been quite sick with *chills* for some days, this is *my day of rest*, so I am sitting up— I am beginning to feel very weak. If they cannot be broken in a few days, Mr. Lincoln wants me to go North, & remain until cold weather— Where so much is demanded

of me—I cannot afford to be delicate, if a different climate will restore my health— If at the close of this week, I am still sick, I expect I will go up to Boston, take quarters at the *Revere House* for two or three weeks—& return here in November. I trust however, I may not be under the necessity, yet I am feeling *very far* from well— September & early in Oct—are always considered unhealthy months here—my racked frame certainly bears evidence to the fact— Have just received a note from Willis—with all his weaknesses—he is kind hearted. Gov. Newell & Halstead are frequently here—as *who is not?* I presume you are aware, your brother is elected to Congress. I received a letter from *Elizabeth E.* the other day— very kind & aff yet very *characteristic*— said if *rents* and means permitted, she would like to make us a visit I believe for a season— I am weary of *intrigue*, when she is by herself she can be very agreeable, especially when her mind is not dwelling on the merits of fair daughters & a talented son in law. such personages always *speak for themselves*. I often regret E.P.E.— little *weaknesses*, after all, since my the *election* she is the only one of my sisters who has appeared to be pleased with our advancement—you know this to be so— Notwithstanding Dr W— has received his portion, in life, from the Administration, yet Frances always remains *quiet*. E. in her letter said—Frances often spoke of *Mr. L's* kindness— in giving him his place. She little knows, what a hard battle, *I* had for it— and how near, he came getting *nothing*. Poor *unfortunate* Ann, inasmuch as she possesses such a miserable disposition & so false a tongue— How far dear Lizzie, are we removed, from such a person. Even if Smith, succeeds in being a rich man, what advantage will it be to him, who has gained it in *some cases* most unjustly, and with such a woman, whom no one respects, whose tongue for so many years, has been considered “no slander”— and as a child & young girl, could not be outdone in falsehood— “Truly the Leopard cannot change his spots”— *She* is so seldom in my thoughts. I have so much more, that is attractive, both in *bodily* presence, & my mind's eye, to interest me. I grieve for those, who have to come in contact with her malice, yet even *that*, is so well understood, the object of *her wrath*, generally rises, with good people, in proportion to her *vindictiveness*. What *will you name*, the *hill* on which *I* must be placed. *Her*, putting it on *that* ground with Mrs. Brown, was only to hide her envious feeling toward you. Tell Ann for me, to quote her own expression, *She* is becoming still further removed from “Queen Victoria's Court”——— How foolish between us to be discussing, such a person. Yet really it is amusing, in how many forms, human nature can appear before us— *Nicolay* told me, that Caleb Smith, said to him, a few days since that he had just received a letter from Kellogg— of Cin— that he did not know why he had *not* received his appointment as *Consul*— Is not the idea preposterous? Did I tell you that “*Hollis*” has been here, came to see me frequently, and always enquired with much interest, after you— The “*Cap*” also dined here, a few days since, still as refined and elegant as ever— I have so much to tell you, I do not know, what first to write about. *Wykoff*, the “*Chevalier*,” enlightened me about Baker's & Julia's proceedings in New York in Feb— Looked a little quizzical, about

her not remaining in W— as she had expected a long stay and much gayety— Did you say, she only numbered *5 months*— I thought she had *gently insinuated*, when she was here— Hill Lamon, I believe is now in *Ill.* mustering recruits— I know you will be sorry to hear, that our colored Mantuamaker, Elizabeth, lost her only son & child in the battle of Lex— Mo— She is heart broken. She is a very remarkable woman herself— The weather is so beautiful, why is it, that we cannot feel well. The air feels very much like the *early days*—when I used to have chills in *Ill*— those days have passed, & I know I have no cause to grieve over my lot— If the country, was only peaceful, all would be well. If I thought, sending your Father, a pass, would bring him here, I would do so with pleasure. Give my best love to them both. Mrs. Don Piatt, calls here in an hour's time. I must mount my white Cachemere & receive her— We now occupy the stately guest room— She spoke last winter of the miserably furnished rooms. I think she will be astonished at the change— I am not well enough to go down— Write very soon — very often to—

your attached Cousin—
Mary Lincoln

William has given me \$3.00 to hand you — I will have it in bill shape, to send you in a few days, when I write next — Strange he called upon you.

VII

Confidential

Chicago, April, 6 [1866]

Hon Simon Cameron

My dear Sir:

Your very kind letter was received last evening and presuming you may require the *enclosed* one, I return it to you. There is no other person, in the world I believe, to whom I would have written, as I did to you, I was too well aware, of your great kindness & nobleness of heart, not to know that you would sympathize with us, as a deeply bereaved family, in *every phase* of our afflictions. You will of course exercise your own good judgment, in your action of the case suggested — Only allow me, to be perfectly frank with you — as regards Judge Davis. So far as pecuniary matters are concerned, he is perfectly honorable, yet there is no warmth in his nature — and cares only for himself — Notwithstanding, *he* became known and distinguished, through my noble husband & received an office for *life* at his hands — in *Wash*, last winter, I am informed by *reliable* persons — he said — the first year's salary was sufficient for us & *we should* return to Springfield to live — After the many years of happiness there, with my idolized husband — to place me in the home, deprived of *his* presence and the darling boy, we lost in Washington, it would not require a day, for me to lose my entire reason — I am distracted enough, as it is, with remembrances, but I will spare myself & my poor sons, this additional grief. After the death of my little Willie, my loving and indulgent husband told me, that he would never carry me back, to a place, which would

remind us both, of so great a loss – Therefore, in settling in C – I am only carrying out the intentions of my lamented husband – Judge Davis – said to me, last fall, on leaving for Wash. – *very coolly* – “If Congress only gives you \$22,000 – you will be unable ever to have a home.” I replied, “it rests with *you*, to see that justice is done us –” “*Judd*, who blamed *me*, for having *no* place, in the Cabinet – went to Wash – and diligently joined with Trumbull & worked against, the 4 years salary – Gov. *Oglesby* whose *ostentatious* plans, I thwarted, as regards the monument in Springfield, *he*, after I had decided to have my husband’s remains, placed in the cemetery, in the suburbs – insisted the *monument*, *itself* should be placed *away* from it – in the center of S – as I *had* it *arranged* otherwise – *he* assisted Judge D – Judd & others – in depriving us, of a home, with only *sufficient* for me quietly & without the knowledge of our *warm hearted* friend Judge D to liquidate every debt, against the estate – Therefore, you may suppose, that with whatever is kindly bestowed upon us for a home – I trust no communication will be made to Judge D – He would like to force us back to S – but I would eat the *bread of poverty* first *here* – Property is very high – & with very little prospects of it lowering. There is a place here, to be disposed of this month – very much to my taste, it is plain, yet elegant brick house, very much like the one *you* occupied in Wash – whose occupant goes to Europe, the first of May – it will cost – more than \$20,000 yet that sum, will be gratefully received in part payment – As he closes his offer for sale, by the 20th of this month I am sure, you will advise me, when you receive any news – as to what prospects, there may be, that I can purchase it. Every cent, that is given, shall be *sacredly* applied for the purpose and my sons, ever after me – shall certify – that they will never part with it & retain it as a home – Any communication made, as soon as you are informed yourself, will be most gratefully received. Please erase the sentence about Judge D & believe me always truly & gratefully

Mary Lincoln

Let *all* I have written be most confidential & private –

VIII

Hon Simon Cameron

Chicago April 6th [1866]

My dear Sir:

In my letter of *this* morning, I neglected to request you, not to mention, about my speaking, as I did of Judge D– I can *substantiate*, all I say. Like his cousin “Winter Davis, he loves to rule, cannot appreciate how others, unblest by his “hundred thousands,” *feel deprived of their all* – in every sense, of the word – My beloved husband, was my life & if it were not for my boys, I would rather *die* than live. For life, is a torture, a misery to me – without my husband – Living in a boarding house, is most revolting to my sons & myself – and certainly the thought that *his* family – would have had to come to this – would have been a most aggravating sorrow to *One* so devoted to his family, as my husband *was* – and *still is*, in his Heavenly home.

I am sure you will use every exertion to raise the sum you named \$20,000 – yet if I make a suggestion, will you kindly pardon it. I wish to live plainly – yet very genteely – Plain two story frame houses here, cost the sum you have named \$20,000 – and if, from an other quarter – you can *outside* of that have it increased to \$25 or 30,000 I am sure you will – to be enabled to procure *the house* I wish, *this month* – as my opportunity will pass away after *that*. Confidentially, I will inform you of a circumstance that came within my knowledge 2 weeks ago – *so* recently – A gentleman friend, from Wash – sent me a letter received by him from Mr. M. O. Roberts, N.Y.–saying, that he had been informed, that *we* were without a home, in Chicago – and *when-ever means were* being raised, to secure us one, he would desire & expect to be called upon – If you of *your own* accord, without mentioning *my* name in it, if you write to him, *when* you receive this, say next week, you will doubtless be gratified by his *response*. The letter of *Mr. R's* I returned to the gentleman in *Wash* – With many apologies for again troubling you, I remain most gratefully

M. L.

May I request, my dear Genl. as a great favor to me, to burn *these & my former letter* – and do not speak of them, to anyone. I am almost humiliated, that I have written as I have done – but *you will kindly* excuse me

IX

Private –

Chicago April 17th [1866]

Genl Cameron

My dear Sir:

Knowing full well you will excuse, my writing so soon again – as I am anxious, to have some idea, of the result, of the work you have so kindly undertaken, in my behalf – We have to make a change by the 1st of May and I have to give an answer to a party, in a few days & very naturally I should like to have an idea, of what is to be done – I do not wish to trouble you, yet if you have any news, when you receive this, please apprise me – and oblige always truly

Mary Lincoln.

X

Private

Chicago April 21st [1866]

Hon Simon Cameron

My dear Sir:

As I am compelled to return an answer, on Thursday next – about the purchase of a house – may I trouble you – if you are prepared to give me an answer – to telegraph me – when you receive this – either “yes or no” – addressed to Clifton House – so that I may form an idea – as to what I shall do – Before warm weather – I am anxious – to be removed – into a house of

our own – even if it is small – even if you have *not*, been able to secure *all* the sum, you desired to raise, a portion or half of it – at this time – would be most gratefully received – of course all of it would be very acceptable – as we are without a home – and we are most unpleasantly situated, at a boarding house – Little did my beloved husband – ever suppose that those so very very dear to him – would be left thus. I wish to trouble you, no farther than to request you to telegraph me, when you receive this – in a few words – so that I may know – what to do – With great respect, I remain always truly

Confidential –

Mary Lincoln

XI

Private –

Chicago May 4th 66.

Hon Simon Cameron

My dear Sir:

I am in receipt of a letter from Judge Davis, who, in a most friendly manner informed me, that you had written him, mentioning your interest in our having a home &c His expressions, would instantly put to flight, any impressions, that had been made upon my mind, by persons, in Wash – that *he* had considered *the small* appropriation sufficient for us. I am sure, as *we* are naturally, more interested, than he could possibly be, so soon, as you have any success, you will apprise me. I am so anxious to be settled before warm weather. Hoping to hear from you, when you receive this.

I remain very truly

Mary Lincoln.

XII

Hon. Simon Cameron

Chicago, May 19th 66.

My dear Sir:

Your very kind note, was received two days since, and appreciating the interest you feel, that *as a family* we shall be more pleasantly & *becomingly* situated, I have concluded to write you a frank letter, well knowing your great nobleness of nature & feeling assured, you will sympathise and I trust endorse, the course I have pursued. It is unnecessary to dwell upon my own and my son's great unhappiness of mind and our desolate condition, no wife, no children, ever had *such cause* for grief & despair – and notwithstanding the great services of my beloved husband to his country & his friends – we have been forced, by our embarrassed circumstances, to remain without a home – and consigned to a boarding house. Such a fearful life, has injured my health, to such an extent, that at least 3 days, of each week, I am unable to sit up, with my severe headaches – My eldest son is pained & mortified continually & my little Taddie – the idol, of his darling father, is hourly thrown with persons & hears expressions – in the place, *where we now are* (considered the most genteel boarding place) in the city – bringing up this tender

child *thus*, has only added, another pang, to my already broken heart. The remembrance of your kind promise to exert yourself to secure us, a plain, unpretending home & the knowledge, that your great influence, can effect *so much* – has caused me, to effect an arrangement, which, I am sure, you will see, that I am assisted through – Ten days since a gentleman, building some houses – came to me & made me an offer – which under *all* the circumstances we are laboring, I accepted – and now, my dear General, will you not with your kind affectionate heart, and indefatigable energy, see me assisted, through this difficulty? The house, is in a retired situation – & being one of a row (and consequently much cheaper) *he* the builder, offered it to me – at first cost, in consideration of my living in the row & he deducted – six thousand from the price, he charges the others. He has shown me his books, where it becomes very manifest – that he is truthful – He has the reputation, of being a very honest man. Each of the houses, they are of stone, I am assured, cost him \$18,000 – & with the stables, to be added, will be \$2,000 – more) – making the sum, you are so generously trying to raise for a home, for us – The builder, however, made a provision, that \$12,000 – should be paid down, the 1st of June – and the remaining \$8,000 – the 1st of July – and how I am to accomplish this, it remains for you to say. In consideration of the painful circumstances, in which we are placed & fully understanding, that those, who so nobly subscribed their names, for our benefit – would not be particular to wait, until the whole \$20,000 – was raised – as of course, when their names were given – they meant it all – as they wrote – Could you not manage to gather the \$5,000 – you mention as *certain* & the “*promised* \$5,000,” in Phil. & other sums: you may since, have added – to the list – so that the payment to be positively made by 1st of June next – may not harrass me, with my sorely troubled mind, quite so much. In continuing to raise the remaining sum – I can but trust, you would meet with no difficulty. The thanks of a bereaved widow and orphans, will be yours *forever* & *forever* – if you can grant *this* request of mine, made with a trembling and *most* anxious heart. Hoping that I may hear from you, when you receive this – *the day*, I remain always respectfully & gratefully,

M. L. –

XIII

Genl Cameron

Chicago – May 26th [1866]

My dear Sir:

The papers, announced that you have been in Wash – but as you have doubtless returned home, ere this, I take the liberty to direct your attention, to the letter, I wrote you a week since, to which, your kind heart, I am sure, will immediately, respond. I should not have written you, except in *this extremely* urgent case – the 1st of June is so near & I am so troubled about this pecuniary business. Pray relieve my anxiety, *when* you receive this & oblige

Yrs truly

Mary Lincoln

XIV

Hon. Simon Cameron

Chicago June 16th [1866]

My dear Sir:

Your kind note, also accompanying letters, were received by me, this morning. It is painful for me to reflect from the *heartless* specimen, of Jay Cook's letter, what an ordeal, *you* must have passed through – Let misfortune visit an individual in this blessed land, even if it be an innocent yet unfortunate woman – and still more, the cherished wife of the man, to whom the nation, owes so deep a debt of gratitude, after *power*, has passed away, as *you* are aware, all claims are ignored – and every act – denounced. I am personally unacquainted with Mr. Cooke – and as my conscience acquits me of any flagrant transgression, save obeying the mandate of *such* sordid persons, as himself, in returning to *our shell*, of a house, in Springfield from whence – as we were leaving its doors, en route to W – my dear husband – told me, he would not carry me back there again – Robert, prefers a larger field than S. and as it is most natural – we should all be together – and moreover dear Gen^l *my feelings* must be allowed, to have something to do with my actions – occupying the same rooms, breathing the air, where so many happy years were passed – the contrast without my husband, would simply deprive me of my reason. It is such men as Cooke & a few others and indeed many, who owe everything to my husband – their wealth, station – & their all – these are the *especial* persons, who would most willingly, see Wife & sons – of their benefactor, eating the bread of poverty & *humiliation* – if they could – *We* have plenty of them in *this* State, as you are aware – and *they* have influenced – others, elsewhere – to their own base way of thinking. As to Mr. Cooke – so unheard of, before the war – and who has made his millions by it – As *I* did not bow in reverence – to two of his Gods, *Chase & daughter*, and did not do violence to my feelings, by returning to a place – where my husband, positively assured me – he would not return – *his denunciation*, does not trouble me – I am endeavoring in every act – to carry out, what I believe, would have been, my idolized husband's wishes – Since I have been in C – I have led a most secluded life – scarcely seeing my best friends – It is very well – for such men as Cooke – to have *such a subterfuge* – as *prejudice* – to resort to – Thank Heaven! I have some warm good friends, who, if not *so* wealthy as the renowned – Mr C. are better & greater men – Anticipating, some favorable result & having the offer of a most excellent new house, reduced to the sum of \$17,000 – I purchased it – time, being extended me to pay for it – by 1st of July. Certainly, those, who subscribed the \$5,000 – in good faith – will advance it – to assist in meeting the demand at that time – If I am not assisted, I shall have to dispose of it – which I scarcely think some generous hearts – would like to see me do – I propose – to dispose of many personal effects – to purchase furniture – Judge D's – letter, is very just & truthful – How cruel, *those persons*, who misrepresent our straitened means! – Please write me on receipt of this, about the sum already subscribed,

if it would not, be *now* allowed to assist in payment – Your friends, are anticipating yr return to the U.S. Senate – which I anticipate as truly & fervently as any one, possibly could do – My gratitude, will be unbounded, if you see me assisted, in the matter, I request.

I remain very gratefully

Mary Lincoln

Please send Judge Davis' letter to Col. Frank E. Howe – New York – so soon as you receive this – Will explain hereafter – Please *do not* mention to him (Col Howe) about money being subscribed (*condition of payment, being when \$20,000 is raised – This, will be unnecessary with him & others there – If you can secure the \$5,000 – now for me – in settlement – I would be pleased – Judge – D – has all I have in the world – which is little – not a cent, in any bank I am sorry to say.*

M. L.

XV

My dear sir.

I am in possession of confidential information that the family of our late martyred President are now living in Lodgings, and are penniless. I cannot doubt that this fact will shock you, as it has me, and inspire you with sorrow that the wife and children of the good President should be living in dread of poverty.

Profoundly impressed with a belief that these orphans and this widowed Lady have claims upon every patriotic man in the land, I have conceived the idea of providing for their pressing necessities by raising twenty thousand dollars soon, and placing that sum at the disposal of Mrs Lincoln for the support of these afflicted ones.

To this end I give one thousand dollars, and in thinking over the the subject have felt that I might submit this case to you, and so secure a generous subscription from you for the cause named. I suggest that such a sum as I have named shall be subscribed, and placed in the hands of whomever a majority of the subscribers shall designate, and the same either handed to Mrs L or so invested as to give her a certain income, and relieve her from the dreary future which she is now forced to contemplate as a probability.

With sincere devotion to this woman on account of the great services of her husband, and a desire to ward off the shame which will attach to every man in our land I write this note in the strictest confidence, and trust your favorable response will reach me soon.

I initiate this project, because my warm personal acquaintance with Mrs L. has been the cause of bringing to my Knowledge the facts of the case as stated above.

[End]

XVI

Nice, France March 16th-'69

My Dear Mrs. White:

Your letter

recently received, has afforded me much pleasure & believe me, in this far distant land, you are frequently remembered, both in my thought & prayers. Past friendship, through the trying years of the war—and the fearful loss, we both have sustained—in our dearly beloved husbands, are ties, too strong for time or distance to sever.

Ill health, rendered it absolutely necessary that I should come South, & by degrees, I find myself regaining strength. *For sorrow*, such as ours, there is no balm, the grave and Heaven, with reunion with our loved ones, can alone heal, bleeding, broken hearts. *Wherever I am, feeling so sadly*, I lead a life of isolation & retirement, although I have been here several weeks, I am sure few or none are aware of it. I am not feeling sufficiently well in mind or body, to undertake Italy *this* winter. Next winter, I will try to come down in Nov— The season is already so far advanced & nothing I could see now could interest me in the terrible month of April— I feel that in a few days, I must make the effort & return to my young son, who is now in Frankfort. When I visit Italy some months hence, it would be such a pleasure to have you as a companion. We could visit places of interest without being recognized. Of course, Americans abound everywhere — & in my morning walks in the sunshine, you can always recognize them, very often, by their loud voices, so *early* as ten or eleven in the morning, *VELVET COSTUMES &&— Full dress*, when one is sight seeing or in quest of *health & change*, must certainly be a trial. After we have suffered heavy afflictions, life is at best, a fearful endurance. To me—everything looks so desolate. I often wonder, why, I was spared, when my darling husband was taken, and to suffer so much too! I hope, my dear friend, you will write to me often— Please direct to, Phillip, Nicoll, Schmidt, bankers Frankfort à Maine—Germany. With apologies, for so hurried a letter & with remembrances to your amiable family, I remain always truly yours

Mary Lincoln

XVII

Frankfurt a Maine

My Dear Mrs. Hurst:

June 30th 1870

I had hoped to have been able to make you a call, before I left for the country, but I find that I am unable to do so. I am leaving town tomorrow for some weeks, the noise and crowd of a city, are very distasteful to me in summer. I hope you will greatly enjoy your visit to England & Scotland, and return with improved health. You can scarcely imagine what a delight it was to receive a call from that great and noble man, Bishop Simpson! Oh that he

could have remained in town longer – I felt as if I had so much to say to him. On my return to Frankfurt, I shall do myself the pleasure of calling to see you. With kind regards to Mr. Hurst and great esteem for yourself, I remain dear Mrs. Hurst, yours,

very truly
Mary Lincoln.

XVIII

Springfield, Ill.

June 19th–1876.

Robert T. Lincoln

Do not fail to send me without *the least* delay, *all* my paintings, Moses in the bullrushes included – also the fruit picture, which hung in your dining room – my silver set with large silver waiter presented me by New York friends, my silver tête-à-tête set also other articles your wife appropriated & which are *well known* to you, must be sent, without a day's delay. Two lawyers and myself, have just been together and their list, coincides with my own & will be published in a few days. Trust not to the belief, that Mrs. Edward's tongue, has not been *rancorous* against you all winter & she has maintained to the very last, that you dared not venture into her house & our presence. Send me my laces, my diamonds, my jewelry – My unmade silks, white lace dress— double lace shawl & flounce, lace scarf – 2 blk lace shawls – one blk lace deep flounce, white lace sets $\frac{1}{2}$ yd in width & eleven yards in length. I am now in constant receipt of letters from my friends denouncing you in the bitterest terms, six letters from prominent, *respectable*, Chicago people such as you do not associate with. No John Forsythe's & such scamps, including Scamman. As to Mr. Harlan – you are not worthy to wipe the dust, from his feet. Two prominent clergy men, have written me, since I saw you – and mention in their letters, that they think it advisable to offer up prayers for you in Church and High Heaven on account of your wickedness against me. In reference to Chicago you have the enemies, & I chance to have the friends there. Send me all that I have written for, you have tried your game of robbery long enough. On yesterday, I received two telegrams from prominent Eastern lawyers. You have injured yourself, not me, by your wicked conduct.

Mrs A. Lincoln

My engravings too send me. M.L. Send me Whittier Pope, Agnes Strickland's Queens of England, other books, you have of mine—