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BEHIND THE SEAMS ;

—BY—

A NIGGER WOMAN

WHO TOOK IN WORK FROM

Mrs. Lincoln and, Mrs. Davis.

—o—

PRICE TEN CENTS.

—o—

NEW YORK :

THE NATIONAL NEWS COMPANY, 21 & 23 ANN STREET.

—
1868.

Edition limited to 200
numbered copies.

This is No. 116

PREFATORY NOTE

In 1868 G. W. Carleton and Company of New York, N. Y., published a book called Behind The Scenes or Thirty Years A Slave, And Four Years In The White House. The supposed author was Elizabeth Keckley or Kickley, a negro seamstress who was "formerly a slave, but more recently modiste, and friend to Mrs. Abraham Lincoln."

The reading public was somewhat surprised that a negro dress-maker could write (not sew) in such an easy-flowing style, and at the same time they were greatly shocked at what had occurred "behind the scenes" in the White House.

The incredulous said that there was no such person as Lizzie (sometimes called Betsey) Keckley. Some readers claimed that the abolitionist sob-sister Jane Swisshelm invented her purely for literary purposes. At the same time Hamilton Busbey was said to be the ghost-writer of the Carleton publication, however, inquiring literary investigators laid the blame on one Jim Redpath.

Even Mr. D. Ottolengul, a gentleman in New York State literary circles questioned the authorship of the sensational book. A few months after the so-called Keckley study appeared Mr. Ottolengul published an odd little tract called Behind The Seams by Betsey Kickley (sometimes called Keckley). Immediately emotional and sentimental literary critics branded the modest essay to be a satirical parody ---- a lampoon edition of the more comprehensive work.

Poor Lizzie (sometimes called Betsey) who was actually a real person had her name Kickley (sometimes called Keckley) on the title pages of both publications, and she had to take the credit for everything contained between the "lids" (sic). Unfortunately these theses did not help Mrs. Lincoln to be better understood by the public, which was the original intention of the author (anonymous). The text of Behind the Scenes was not so obnoxious to Republicans and friends of the former White House mistress, but the appendix of the book pertaining largely to the sale of old clothes most certainly should have been removed. Its publication caused young Mr. Robert Lincoln to go on a book suppressing spree, which proved good practice for a similar task in 1889.

Behind The Scenes is to be found on the shelves of practically every Lincoln library, however, Mr. Ottolengul's pamphlet Behind The Seams is a much sought after i-t-e-m. I can

recall only one having been offered for sale in the last several decades. Even degreed scholars, who record the glories of Lincoln in general and their own glories in particular, have been deprived of this unique dissertation. Advanced collectors who boast of the selected works in their libraries (they do not have the patience to get everything on the subject) would give their upper dentures for an original copy. How gleefully they would display the item in the original (if they had one) to their collector friends. How the ownership of such a rarity would stimulate their possessive instincts. Likewise they would read Mr. Ottolengul's copyrighted essay (author unknown) with more than usual interest, because, Behind the Seams has a certain literary quality not found in the average mine run of printed tracts. Naturally, all conservative scholars might be expected to condemn the author (anonymous), but they would carefully preserve the fascinating little literary gem in their fire-proof vaults.

I do not feel that any apologies should be offered for the publication of this reprint. I truly believe that I have made a contribution as well as being one to follow a trend which at the present time seems to have been taken up by the literary-historical field - namely: bringing forth in a new format belle-lettres that were long ago printed and published, but at this late date practically obliterated. Within the last few years, since William Abbott's excesses (The Magazine of History) such fine items as Feek's Lincoln Catechism and the "reasonably priced" reprint of Heartman's Defense of a Lincoln Conspirator (Sam Arnold) have made their appearance. Just recently The Diary Of A Public Man (Only \$10.00 a copy) has been reprinted with a scholarly "foreword" and "prefatory" notes" by such worthies as C. Sandberg and L. Bullard. The reader will immediately note a similarity between the Diary and the Seams, because, in both cases the author is anonymous (unknown).

It is my belief that Lincoln collectors will welcome this publication as a significant addition (they will never get the original) to their libraries and will be grateful for this labor of love which has prompted me to bring this long sought for study to the attention of the literari, to say nothing of the task of writing this "prefatory note".

A. Lincoln Fann
April 1, 1945

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**Entered according to Act of Congress, in the Year 1868, by D. OTTOLENGUL, in the Clerk's
Office of the District Court of the United States, for the Southern
District of New York.**

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Lincoln Room

P R E F A C E .

MY name is BETSEY KICKLEY, and I am a most extraordinary nigger. As this is the case, and as a large number of people who know me have often requested me to write my life for the benefit of a larger number of people who do not know me, and also for my own benefit in a pecuniary point of view, as I am hard up, and the pension of eight dollars per month allowed me by ungrateful Uncle Sam, does not suffice to pay my board, even in the plain little room on the fourth floor of No. 14 Carroll Place, I am going to try an experiment and see if I can't make more money by writing a book than by taking in sewing. I had proposed to call my work—I don't mean my sewing work—I mean my book—"The Confessions of a Nigger," but, on second thoughts, I entitled it, "Behind the Seams," as I not only intend to speak of the dresses I made for my "bosom friend," Mrs. Lincoln, and my not quite so bosom friends, Mrs. Davis, Mrs. Douglas, and so forth, but of what took place behind the seams of those dresses, that is to say, of all they said and did together with a great deal that they did not say and did not do.

I am a romantic nigger, and, although I was a slave for thirty years, I do not blame the Southern people, nor hold them responsible. I only blame the God of nature and the fathers who framed the Constitution for the United States. I forgive them, too, however, as I am all right now, having been transformed from a nigger slave who took in sewing in the South, into a free nigger writing a book in the North that is destined to set on fire all of the big rivers and little streams in the United States.

People may blame me for going it rather strong in writing about the private affairs of my bosom friend, Mrs. Lincoln, but it is not my fault, she invited public criticism, and why shall not her bosom friend, though a nigger, criticise her actions and defend them at the same time? If I have betrayed confidence in anything I have published, I do it for Mrs. Lincoln's sake as well as my own. I desire it to be distinctly understood that I wish to defend my own character as well as that of my bosom friend. I am an independent nigger and its no body's business what I write, so I made up my mind that if I could find a publisher who would engineer my book, I'd try the thing on as I used to do with Mrs. Lincoln's dresses. As a MODISTE, I have always succeeded in dressing my bosom friend to her satisfaction, and now I modestly assert that in this work she is "dressed up" better than ever. It is a kind of low neck and short sleeve affair, like the dresses Mrs. Lincoln prefers, and if it shows a little too much I cannot help it.

her

BETSEY × KICKLEY, (nigger.)
mark.

14 CARROLL PLACE, New York, March 14, 1868.

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BEHIND THE SEAMS.

MY life has been an eventful one for a nigger, and an ex-slave. I was born a nigger and slave. My parents were slaves and niggers, and I came upon earth done up brown, that is to say a dark mulatto. I am a Virginia nigger and was born in Dinwiddie Court House. I distinctly remember the time when I was a baby, though I am now on the wrong side of forty. I live, as I have said in the preface, in a plain little room on the fourth floor of No. 14 Carroll Place, and as I have no money to pay for going to places of amusement, I have a panorama in my room, and whilst my brain is busy and I have no sewing nor book writing to do, I look at the panorama. It is a fine picture, drawn in my mind's eye, Horatio, painted from memory by a nigger artist. The nigger artist is myself, signed and sworn to by Betsey Kiekley, her mark.

I used to belong to Col. Brunell, who had a wife and baby; the baby was named Betsey, after me, and I used to wash and dress it and dry nurse it. I was a stupid nigger when young, though I have since turned out to be a great authoress, and one day when I had upset the baby on the floor, I picked it up with the fire-shovel, for which piece of stupidity I received my first lambasting, which made quite an impression on me in more senses than one. I was told when I was fourteen years old that I would never be worth my salt, and the thing did look rather probable at the time. My mother belonged to the Colonel who owned me. My father was some one else's nigger, and came to see us twice a year. The Colonel borrowed or hired my old man, however, and he came to live with us, but all of a sudden he was sent back to his master and shipped off to the West. My father kissed us all round several times, and then packed up his traps and vamoused. We never saw him any more, but entertain confident expectations of meeting "the old un" sooner or later on the other side of Jawdam. My mother cried a great deal when the "old un" (I'm quoting my bosom friend Dickens) cried a great deal, I say, when the "old un" left, whereupon my mistress told her not to make a fool of herself, quoted the song "a nigger is a nigger," added that one nigger man was as good as another if not better, and advised her to look out for a substitute. My father and mother wrote letters

to each other: the old man's letters particularly were very fine specimens of epistolary literature, except that there was a spell upon him and the spells were horrible. My father scorned to follow the book, but had a system of orthography of his own invention. When I was seven years old I attended the first nigger sale I have ever seen. A little nigger boy, whose mother was a cook, was put up and then knocked down to the highest bidder, and the cook got a warming up because she cried when her child was taken from her. My uncle, as fine a looking nigger man as was ever seen, hanged himself one day rather than run the risk of getting a paddling he had reason to expect. When I was eighteen years old and was a fine looking nigger girl and well developed, a school master named Bangham, came up to me one day and for no reason in the world remarked that he wanted to polish me off a little.

"Polish me off, Mr. Bangham! What for?"

"No matter," he replied, "just for a little exercise."

He then told me to take down my dress, which I blushinglly refused to do, for you must remember that I was no chicken, and was uncommonly well developed. I also remarked, that should he try to polish me off, I would show fight. As he was not my master, I would not let him whip me, and as I was not his mistress, I would not appear before him in low neck and short sleeves costume. I added that should he attempt force I would show fight. We fought. He was very strong and gained the victory. He bound my hands with a stout cord, tore my dress from my back, and tore my back with a cow-hide. He beat me most unmercifully, and I here pronounce him a cowardly good for nothing, mean, cruel villain. I appealed to my master, and showed him how Bangham had peeled the skin off my back. I asked him what I had done to be so punished, and he told me to go away and not bother him. I did bother him, however, and asked for satisfaction, which I got in a cheerful style, for his only reply was by knocking me down with a chair. I desire to be distinctly understood that this incident did really take place exactly as I have related it. Mr. Bangham, who was not my master, beat me thus cruelly, simply for exercise, or what is worse, for fun. These things happen often in the South. I am telling the truth and not drawing the long bow by any manner of means. I'm not lying at all. Bangham was not satisfied with this polishing off that he administered to me on Saturday; but, was so pleased with the performance, that on the Friday following he sent for me to come to his study and take another lesson. I went like a fool and found him ready with a cowhide and rope. We fought again,

and I beat him worse than David Copperfield beat Mr. Murdstone, but I caught it though, and went home bleeding and much cut up. On the following Thursday the third whipping *matinee* came off, and Mr. Bangham thrashed me again, and then, felt sorry, burst into tears, asked my forgiveness, declared that he regretted the last unkindest cut of all, and at once became my bosom friend. Bangham having thus withdrawn from the *matinee* performances, my master, who was a parson, was prevailed upon by my mistress, who was a tartar, to enact the nigger whipping role himself, and he made his *debut* armed with an oak broom handle. I fought him, but came out second best, and he performed on me with the broom handle in such an artistic style, that my mistress, herself, was moved to tears and very handsomely interceded in my behalf.

I come now to a little transaction that, had I been a white woman, I might have blushed to chronicle, but being a nigger, I can not get up a blush to suit, and so shall relate it without any *mauvaise honte*. I was, as I have before remarked, a handsome nigger, and well developed. My beauty and my developments attracted the attention of a white man, who fell in love with me at first sight and asked me—that is to say, did *not* ask me to marry him. He vowed that he adored me, and would marry me without ceremony were I not a nigger, but as I *was* a nigger, though a fascinating one, he proposed still to marry me without any ceremony, or in other words without any marriage ceremony being performed. I was virtuous and modest, like Caesar's wife, and refused him, but he bothered me with his attentions for four years, when I struck my colors, and capitulated. The result of the capitulation was that I — I — I — I — I — became a mother. A fine mulatto baby was the result of my surrender at indiscretion. I have never had any other child but this mulatto boy.

The years passed and brought me many changes, but not many changes of clothes, and I went to St. Louis with Mr. Garland and his wife, "Miss Ann," one of my old master's daughters. Mr. Garland was so poor that there was a letter advertised for him once and he could not raise three cents to pay the postage with. It was proposed to put my old mother out to work and make her pay wages. I said, "No! no! no! a thousand million times no!" and agreed to do sewing enough to support the family. I began to sew, and I did more than so-so, for with my needle I kept bread and biscuits in the mouths of seventeen persons, for two years and five months. Thus it was that I became a *modiste*, though I could hardly be called modest any longer, on account of that *sans ceremonie* marriage, and

e little nigger baby who was not acquainted with its paternal progenitor. Whilst I was feeding those seventeen white people, I thought of the remark about the salt making, and laughed. My lips curled with a bitter sneer, and I showed my teeth and gums, and snickered in a sardine ie—I mean sardonic manner. Whilst I was snickering, a nigger man, named Kickley, came into the room and fell in love with me immediately. He asked me to marry him, did not mind the *sans ceremonie* affair, nor the baby, and was ready to give me his hand and heart. I refused him at first, on the ground that when people get married there is a possibility of there being some result of the manoeuvre, as my bosom friend, Tony Weller says, and I did not care to have nigger children who would not be born free and equal, constitutionally speaking. It was bad enough to have one son already who was a half nigger and whole slave. But I married Kickley, nevertheless, after a while, and determined to take the chances. Having lived in the South so long, and becoming imbued with the idea that nigger property would pay handsomely, I proposed to become a slave owner and so wanted to buy a couple of niggers from Mr. Garland. I offered him twelve hundred dollars for my son and myself, and felt that I then would have a legal right to call the former my own. My master, Mr. Garland, who afterwards sold me to myself, gave me away to Kickley—so I was given away and Kickley was sold. My nigger husband, finding himself badly sold in his second-hand wife, took to drinking liquor and playing seven-up, and turned out to be a humbug, and a good for nothing. He was a liar besides, for he had told me he was a free nigger, and I found out, in short order, that he was a slave to a white man, besides being a slave to forty-yard whiskey. I lived with him eight years, and then became so horribly disgusted with the nigger, that I—but “a wink is as good as a horse to a blind nod,” so let charity wrap him up warm in an overcoat of silence. When I separated from Kickley, after putting the overcoat upon him, I planked up the twelve hundred for my boy and self and became a nigger owner. I did not have the spondulix myself, and proposed to go on to New York to raise it; but Mrs. Le Bourgois, a nice, good lady, for whom I used to sew, told me that I'd get it in New York in four extra sized brass French horns, and very kindly forked over a large amount herself, and made up the balance among the ladies in St. Louis, from whom I took in work.

It was all right. I was A FREE NIGGER!! My son and myself were free.

A FREE NIGGER!!! What a big thing on a skating pond.

A FREE NIGGER! The earth wore a brighter look, and the stars sang Yankee Doodle.

A FREE NIGGER!!! Bully for me, and bully for you, and thrice bully for the dear good lady who made me so.

Heaven bless this good Southern lady. I love her, and I love the South for her sake; and so I shall not be ungrateful, and I never shall write a book full of no-such-things about the Southern people, and how they used to whip us poor slaves only for exercise, like Bangham did, as I have before related.

I took in work from the best ladies in St. Louis, and they were all pleased with the dresses that I put upon them, though some objected to the airs I put upon myself. I'll take the overcoat off my husband, for a moment, just to state that he used to spree so much on some of the money I made in St. Louis, that I determined to leave the drunken nigger and St. Louis at the same time, and I carried out my resolution and carried off myself. I went to Baltimore in a nigger car, and then on to Washington. In Washington I was at once called on by Mrs. Jefferson Davis, who had heard that I was a dress-maker, and modest. Old Jeff was a senator at the time, but he and his wife could appreciate genius and intellect, even in a nigger woman, and so I not only did Mrs. Davis' sewing, but took tea with herself and Jeff, and they told me in advance all about secession and the coming war, and so forth. Mrs. Davis wanted to give Jeff a night gown as a Christmas present, and got me to make it for her and for him. Mr. Davis found me sitting up late one night, hard at work on the night-shirt, and very kindly told me to turn in and go to bed. But I finished the night-shirt exactly as the clock struck twelve, and consequently there is not the slightest shadow of a doubt that the President of the Confederate States wore this night-gown many a time at the same hour. Mrs. Davis told me, behind the seams, that she would rather be kicked about in Washington than go South to be Mrs. President. Was it not curious that she should make this remark so long before the war, and don't it look very much like lying on my part when I say that she did? But I am not drawing it strong at all; it's all the blessed truth. Mrs. Davis told me, behind the seams, that a war was coming, and asked me to go South with her, forgetting, it seems, the remark about the kicking.

I refused to go with Mrs. Davis, so bade her good-bye; first making her a chintz wrapper, which I afterwards saw done in

wax on a figure of Jeff that I saw in 1865, at a nigger fair in Chicago. I believe it now is pretty well established that Mr. Davis had on a water-proof ebak instead of a dress, as at first reported, when he was captured; yet, on the honor of a nigger, I assure you I don't lie about that wrapper, which I suppose somebody must have bagged out of Mrs. Davis' trunk. This will do for the Davis family. I come now to my first introduction to my bosom friend, Mrs. Abraham Lincoln, wife of the President of the United States, and the dearest friend of Betsey Kickley, \times her mark.

I became acquainted with Mrs. Lincoln as follows:

One day she had upset a cup of coffee on her dress, and so had nothing to wear on the evening of the reception after her husband's inauguration. Mrs. McClean, for whom I worked, was asked the name of her dress-maker, and, of course, replied, "Betsey Kickley."

"Betsey Kickley?" said Mrs. L., "Betsey who used to hang out in St. Louis?"

"The same," said Mrs. McC.

"Enough said," replied Mrs. L., "send her to me, I think I shall engage her."

So I went to the White House and became acquainted with the distinguished lady, who, when all the world and its wife abandoned her, found a true and only friend in Betsey Kickley, nigger, \times her mark.

It was on Tuesday morning, after breakfast, that four mantua-makers crossed the threshold of the White House, and were shown into a waiting room, where they awaited the summons of Mrs. Lincoln. I, Betsey Kickley, nigger, was one of those four. The three other applicants were sent for, one by one, and each one was dismissed with a flea in her ear. I was then sent for, and went. Mrs. Lincoln at once took a fancy to me, embraced me, and kissed me affectionately.

"Mrs. Kickley, who have you worked for in the city," said Mrs. L. in bad grammar.

"I have done work for Mrs. Jeff Davis," said I.

"Good egg, then," replied Mrs. Lincoln, "I engage you, provided, however, you don't charge too much."

"I work for nigger pay," said I.

"Enough said," rejoined Mrs. Lincoln, "I engage you to make up my moire-antique for the reception, but be sure you have it done in time."

I had it done in plenty time, but Mrs. Lincoln, when I took the dress to her, kicked up a big fuss, and declared she would not have time to fix herself up. I told her that a nigger could

do it, and that I would dress her, which I did at once. Mr. Lincoln then came in and complimented both myself and his wife, who then took his arm and walked down stairs like a queen of trumps. From this time I became a regularly modest nigger, and did all Mrs. Lincoln's sewing. I also worked for Mrs. Senator Douglas, one of the loveliest ladies that I ever met, not even excepting myself.

I soon became a bosom friend of Mrs. Lincoln, and everybody knew that I was her *confidante*. One day a woman, who was not a lady, came to me to order a dress, and the following conversation took place:—

Woman who was not a lady.—Mrs. Kiekley, do you know Mrs. Lincoln?

Nigger who was.—I do.

Woman.—Are you modest?

Nigger.—You may bet your pile.

Woman.—Are you intimate with Mrs. L.?

Nigger.—I'm with her all the time.

Woman.—Have you any influence with her?

Nigger.—That's none of your business.

The woman, who was not a lady, then proposed that I should smuggle her into the White House, which I indignantly refused to do. She was a theatre actress, and wanted to get a look behind the seams, for the purpose of learning the secrets of the White House and publishing a scandal to the world. This, however, being a game that I wanted to play myself should I ever be hard up for board money, I euchred her on a lone hand, and the queen of spades was the highest trump.

It was at this eventful period of my life that Mrs. Lincoln began to call me Betsey. "Betsey," said she, "these are war times, and we must cut down our house-keeping expenses. State dinners cost too much money; how would it do to give tea fights instead?"

I replied that I was in favor of the tea fights, as being less expensive and more fashionable. Mr. Lincoln then came in and spoke in favor of the dinners.

"Mother," said he, "I don't think the tea fights will work."

"Father," said she, "yes they will."

We all argued the point, and Mrs. Lincoln and myself carried the day.

At the first tea fight, Mrs. Lincoln, who had a great partiality for low neck and short sleeves, had on a dress that was very low indeed, which Mr. Lincoln observing and noticing her long trail at the same time, he playfully compared her to a long-tailed

cat, and remarked that if some of the cat's tail was nearer to the cat's head the dress would not be quite so low.

In the summer of 1862 a large number of runaway niggers came to Washington in search of liberty, and money or work—and found rather too much of the first commodity and too little of the others. Where they received one kind word they were “cussed” a dozen times. They soon became so hard up, that I got some nigger societies to raise the wind for them. We raised the wind a little, but it did not blow a regular greenback gale.

Mr. Lincoln got bad news once from the army and read the book of Job, and very properly did not see the necessity of letting his son Robert enter the service and perhaps lose his life. Mrs. Lincoln, who was rather a poor Job's comforter, suggested that other people had lost their sons, and in short it was agreed upon that Robert should go to the front and take his chances. When General Tom Thumb was entertained at the White House, Robert thought it a nonsensical affair, and so went out and played billiards.

Mrs. Lincoln was jealous of Mrs. D. and Miss C. and did not wish good honest old Abe to pay them any attentions. So Mr. Lincoln, who was a man of sense as well as a good husband, obeyed her directions, rather than subject himself to the unpleasant ordeal of a curtain lecture.

Mrs. Lincoln was down on Mr. Salmon P. Chase and was jealous of his daughter, who was a belle in Washington.

The President and his wife knew that I was an extraordinary nigger, and so did not mind talking secrets in my presence.

“Father,” said Mrs. L., “drat Chase, I don't like him, you had better keep your eye upon him.”

“Mother,” said good old Abe, “you don't know what you are saying. Chase is a patriot, and one of my best friends, so chase that sorrow from your brow.”

“He is your best friend in a horn,” said Mrs. L., “he's a humbug, and only looks out for number one.”

“You are prejudiced, Mother,” said good old Abe.

“You are blind, Father,” rejoined his wife.

Mrs. Lincoln was also down on Seward, and remarked that she would not trust him with three cents' worth of peanuts.

Honest old Abe replied that should he take her advice, he would be without a Cabinet.

“No matter,” said Mrs. L., “make a new cabinet—be a cabinet maker; or, even do without any, rather than have Chase and Seward—drat them both!!”

The President's wife liked McClellan, and pronounced him a

patriot and an able soldier, but she was by no means a Grant man.

“Grant is a butcher,” she used to remark to myself and Mr. Lincoln, “and ought to keep a meat stall—he is not fit to head an army.”

I remarked that he was fit, and had fit well in the field. Mrs. Lincoln requested me to dry up.

“Grant has been very successful in the field,” said good old Abe.

“I’m very much obliged to him,” said Mrs. L., “he wins a victory by giving two men for one, as we do in the losing game of draughts; if he goes on long in this style, there will be no men left. He is an obstinate fool, a butcher and a humbug!! There, now!!!”

Honest Old Abe laughed, and suggested that Mrs. Lincoln should take Grant’s place, try the thing on for a while, and see if it was such an easy matter to checkmate old Bob Lee without swapping the pieces down a little. This put a stop to Mrs. Lincoln’s argument. Old Abe came out ahead, and so did Grant.

When Mrs. Lincoln’s brother, Captain Alexander Todd, who was in the Confederate Army, was killed, she did not mourn his death at all, which was very patriotic in her, and proves that she was loyal and all right on the goose. She was, tooth and nail and flat-footedly, down on the South, and always objected to being thought Southern in feeling.

Good Old Abe admired Lee and Stonewall Jackson, and Joe Johnson. He called Jackson “a brave, honest Presbyterian soldier,” and said, “what a pity that we should have to fight such a gallant fellow.” He also remarked, one day, to his son Robert, whilst they were looking at a portrait of Lee, “It is a good face; it is the face of a noble, noble, brave man. I am glad the war is over at last.” Mr. Lincoln was, truly, a great and good man, and I almost feel ashamed of myself when I think of what I have still before me to write in this book, in relation to his widow; especially when I reflect that in order to make my book pay, both myself and the publisher, I shall be compelled, at times, to draw the long bow a little, even in speaking of my dear, bosom friend, Mrs. Lincoln.

When Andrew Johnson was proposed as military governor of Tennessee, Mrs. Lincoln raised the greatest kind of a row, insisting that he was a demagogue and that should he ever be placed in power, he would stand up for his rights and stick to them like death to a dead nigger.

When the runaway niggers came to Washington in search of

liberty, which they found too much of, and money, which they did not find too much of. I met an old *maumer*, who assured me that she had come to Washington entertaining confident expectations of inheriting at least a couple of Mrs. Lincoln's *chemises*, but not having received them, had found to her sorrow, that she had to make shift for herself. The old nigger's idea of freedom was two shifts per year, and she found that even this was too high an estimate. As a slave, she used to get the shifts from her old missus; as a freed nigger she had, as I have before remarked, to find the material and make shift for herself as best she could.

In 1864, Mrs. Lincoln being rather doubtful as to the chances in favor of her husband's re-election, told me that she intended to shinney around for him, as Old Abe was too honest a man to stock the cards, even in such a big game. She proposed to boot-lick all the politicians, promise them all sorts of fat places, and fool them all in the end.

When I asked if Mr. Lincoln knew of this little turn-up-a-jack-from-the-bottom arrangement, she said, "God; no," which was a favorite expression of hers. She added, again, that Old Abe was too honest, and implied that she was not. The reason that Mrs. Lincoln was so anxious as to the result of the election, was that she had been buying goods "on tick" at Stewart's and elsewhere, and owed out the snug little amount of twenty seven thousand dollars. "Betsey," said she, "my dear friend, although you are a nigger, you know how much money it takes to buy a wardrobe with in these war times, but Mr. Lincoln don't, and he thinks that one or two hundred dollars will do, but they will not do, and so I must shop on credit."

I asked her if Mr. Lincoln knew that she was running up such tall bills, and she replied, "God, no!!" I understood her to say "God knows," but she had only said "God, no!!" the favorite style in which she used to smash the third commandment. One day when Mrs. L. was in a passion, she remarked that she hoped she might be rammed in to a shot-gun, and shot off at a nigger riot, if she would not work things so that the Black Republican politicians should settle up her debts. She said that they all made piles of green-backs by boot-licking good Old Abe, and she would make them come down with the needful or break several traces in the attempt. A few days after this, Mrs. L. came to my room to try on a dress, which I think was rather undignified on her part, and I should have gone to her room, for though I was her bosom friend, 'tis true, yet I am only a nigger woman after all. It was on this occasion that I asked her to give me one of Mr. Lincoln's dirty

gloves, provided it should get filthy in the shakings it would get on the occasion of the first public reception after his second inaugural. She promised me the dirty glove, gave it to me when the time came, and I have it now. The glove was even dirtier than I had hoped it would be, for it had the honor of being grasped by the paw of Frederick Douglass, nigger.

When Richmond fell, I gave all of my sewing girls a holiday, and they all got highly elevated, not to say gloriously drunk. All of the clerks in the various departments got drunk likewise, even to the nigger waiters, and there was a gay old time, generally speaking.

Mrs. Lincoln and myself went to Richmond, and by a curious coincidence, when I got into the Capitol, I picked up a paper containing a resolution prohibiting free niggers from entering the State of Virginia. I thought this a capital joke, and sat in Jeff Davis' chair, also in Alexander H. Stevens' chair, and laughed long and feelingly. Whilst we were on board the River Queen, a Yankee Officer joked with Mrs. Lincoln about the manner in which the ladies had kissed their hands to good Old Abe, but she dried him up in a minute and he felt small to be so shut up in the presence of a nigger. On this trip I learned some Latin. A little nigger proposed to "tote" Mr. Lincoln's carpet bag, and Senator Sumner explained that the word is derived from the Latin word *totum* or tote-em.

After the assassination of Mr. Lincoln, the first words uttered by Mrs. L., when she recovered from her swoon, were "Send for Betsey Kickley immediately." There were a couple of William goats that Mrs. L. was very fond of—she gave them to Mrs. Blair.

Mrs. Lincoln has always thought, and still thinks, that Andy Johnson had a hand in the assassination of President Lincoln. I don't say whether I agree with her or not. It is true, however, on the honor of a nigger, that Andy did not call on Mrs. L., nor even write her a line of condolence. If this is a lie, it don't matter. Mr. Johnson can deny it in the *Herald*. should he choose to do so.

When Mrs. Lincoln left the White House, a great deal of furniture was missing—she did not take it, however—it was stolen by the niggers.

Mrs. Lincoln wanted me to go West with her, but I told her it would break Mrs. Senator Douglas' heart. Mrs. Douglas, however, said no it wouldn't, and so I went with Mrs. Lincoln, who remarked that Congress ought to provide for me.

Little Tad Lincoln wasn't very smart in his books, though a bright child out of them.

One day he was spelling in a picture book and came to A-p-e.

"What does A-p-e spell?" said his ma.

"Monkey," said Tad, looking at the picture.

"Nonsense," said his ma.

"Nigger, then," said Tad.

"No it isn't."

"It is certainly either a monkey or a nigger," said Tad, studying the picture.

"No it isn't, A-p-e spells ape."

"Tain't an ape," said Tad, "it's either a large monkey or a small nigger, I can't tell exactly, because one is so much like both, I can't tell tother from which."

When I think of this incident, I always show my teeth. I can't help grinning when I think that had Tad been a nigger boy, people would have said his skull was thick. I am acquainted with a number of nigger children, younger than Tad, who can write French exercises—I don't mean to reflect on Tad, he is a bright boy and is destined to be a genius.

When I returned to Washington, I took in sewing from Mrs. Patterson and Mrs. Stover, daughters of President Johnson, but I snubbed the former, who asked me to come to her house to cut and fit a dress for her. I expected her to come to my work shop, as she was not a President's wife, but only a President's daughter. She refused to come, and got another dress-maker who was more modest.

When Mrs. Lincoln was single, her name was Mary Todd, and she was quite a belle in Springfield. She was courted by Mr. Stephen A. Douglas, but kicked him. She had always said that she would be a Mrs. President; so Douglas remarked to her, "the surest way to be Mrs. President in the future, is to become Mrs. Me at once." She knew a trick worth several of that, however, and so preferred to take her chances with good Old Abe. She refused Mr. Lincoln, too, at first, just for fun, but accepted him afterwards, and was glad to get him. There are two circumstances that I may as well relate here before I forget them.

One is, that my son kicked the bucket; the other, that Mr. Lovejoy succeeded in getting the government to allow me eight dollars per month for my board and washing. But this isn't enough, and so I am obliged not only to take in work in New York, but to go on with my work, "Behind the Seams."

It was at about this period that Mrs. General Longstreet came to Washington and took tea with me one evening. She recognized me at once as Betsy Kickley—nigger, and told me that she was Bettie Garland, and that my old young mistress, Miss

Ann, was well, was living in Lynchburg, had married General Meem, and wanted me to go and see them all. I went, and found that they had kept tallow candles burning for me for two weeks. The first one of the family who saw me was little Spot, a nice boy, who, when my skirtycoat tripped me up and I fell down, picked me up on the spot. I was well treated by "Miss Ann," but found fault with her for not having sent me to a nigger school, when I was young. I am very smart now, 'tis true, and, considering that I did not learn to read till I was thingy, I think I write very well, indeed. Miss Ann wrote me several very affectionate letters after I left her, but I'll let them alone just now, as I am coming to the biggest thing in my book, viz :

THE BEHIND THE SEAMS HISTORY

— OF —

MRS. LINCOLN'S OLD CLOTHES ADVENTURE IN NEW YORK.

— O —

IN March, 1867, I received a letter from Mrs. Lincoln, stating that she was hard up for money, could not keep house any more, and wanted to find a cheap place to board at. "I have hardly any cash," said she, "and so can't even go into a first class boarding house in Chicago; therefore, I'm going to New York to sell my old clothes to the Chatham street Israelites or anybody who will buy them. If the Government thinks," added she, "that seventeen hundred dollars per annum is enough to support me and my family with, the Government is a bigger fool than Tom Thumb. I want you to push for New York and meet me at the St. Denis Hotel. Ask for Mrs. Clarke and keep mum.

Your bosom friend,

MARY."

Here was a nice kettle of fish—a very pretty state of affairs. I could not understand why Mrs. Lincoln could not find any white person to travel with her, and how it was that she was compelled to rely solely upon her nigger friend. Besides this, I did not like the idea of putting up in New York at anything short of the Fifth Avenue or some first class hotel. I went to New York, however, and rode to the hotel in a Broadway stage, this being, I believe, the first appearance of any nigger *in* the Broadway stage.

I inquired for Mrs. Clarke, and soon found myself clasped in the fond embrace of my bosom friend.

The clerk introduced me into Mrs. Lincoln's room, and then Mrs. Lincoln, *alias* Clarke, introduced me to the clerk—when the following interesting conversation took place:

Mrs. L.—This is the nigger woman I told you about.

Clerk.—We don't board niggers, madam.

Mrs. L.—But she is my bosom friend.

Clerk.—Sorry to hear it, but it can't be helped; this isn't a nigger boarding house by a long shot.

Mrs. L.—I tell you she's a friend of mine, she's no ordinary

nigger ; moreover, she is very romantic and knows Latin and French. You must give her a room next to mine.

Clerk.—There's no room for her on your floor, at any rate. She can roost up in the fifth story if you choose.

Mrs. L.—All right. Move my trunks. I'll roost up there too.

My bosom friend and myself then went up stairs, where we found rooms not large enough to swing a dead cat in without killing the defunct feline quadruped eight more times. The rooms are not fit for a nigger, much less for an Ex-President's widow. We were both disgusted, and I was hungry besides, as I had not eaten any thing for dinner except some peanuts and green apples I had bought in the nigger car. Mrs. Lincoln wanted me to eat something ; so she pulled a bell rope, which rang the bell and brought a waiter. The waiter trotted me down the stairs, led me into the dining room, gave me a seat at a table in the corner and told me to fire away and walk into the victuals. I did not see any victuals to walk into, and was just giving him my order, informing him which of the things we feed upon, I would like to attack and conquer, when the steward, a man with a scowl on his face, a wart on his nose and as sneaking a looking "buckra" man as I have ever seen, came into the dining room and "ordered me up," taking me for the queen of spades, I suppose, and himself for the right bower. We conversed as follows :

Right Bower.—Git out of here, you nigger.

Queen of Spades.—For why.

Right Bower.—White people's room.

Queen of Spades.—Waiter fatched me here.

Right Bower.—Can't help it ; he hadn't ought to should—so cut stick and travel immediately, if not a trifle earlier.

I told him that it was a shame, but he saw the thing in "different lamps," and told me to go to the nigger's hall, where I could get a bite of something. Hunger made me go. I found the door locked ; the waiter went to call an obsequious clerk, who came and addressed me thus, to wit : as follows in this manner :

Well Fed Clerk.—Where did you come from, who do you belong to, and which way you gwine to. Nigger in de pit—hustle him out. What do you want, nigger ?

Hungry African Female.—Dinner, if you please.

Clerk.—I don't please ; the nigger dinner is over ; get out of this, or I'll scowl at you.

Female.—(To Clerk who scowls)—I'll mention to Mrs. Clarke that I have not taken my feed.

Clerk.—Mrs. Clarke—oh, my—Lord gracious. Don't put on

airs, nigger. Who is Mrs. Clarke, and who are you. I have no idea how it is ; oh no, not at all ; how should I. Of course I haven't, I'm from the country ; I'm green, Mrs. Clarke ; indeed, Oh my. Travel, nigger.

[Exit nigger.]

I said nothing, but I indulged in some extensive thinking. I burst into Mrs. Lincoln's room, then burst into tears ; whereupon, she burst into a passion, and proposed that we should go out on Broadway and eat something. Although I was a nigger, I knew that this sort of thing would not pay a dividend, so I told Mrs. L. that though as Mrs. Lincoln she could be her own Fourth of July, yet as Mrs. Clarke, Caesar's wife would not bow to her ; were she (Mrs. Caesar) to meet her walking on Broadway in the night in search of a nigger restaurant. Besides this, I told her that the Clerk had hinted that he suspected that there was something rotten in the Danish dominions.

It occurs to me here that people may think I am lying, and ask why it was that Mrs. Lincoln did not order some dinner to be brought up to her room for me. I am not lying, however ; we did not think of it ; we forgot it entirely. I went to bed that night with a full heart and an empty stomach. The next morning, we took breakfast together in a nigger restaurant on Broadway, between 609 and the St. Denis Hotel. After breakfast, we walked Broadway, went into Union Square Park, took a seat on a bench, and talked business. Mrs. Lincoln informed me that she had selected W. H. Brady & Co., No. 609, as the best firm to dispose of the old clothes and jewelry. She had called there, had given her name as Mrs. Clarke, and tried to sell a lot of jewelry to a nice man named Judd. Judd was all right, but Brady was all wrong, and said that she was crazy to ask such tall prices. Then Mr. Keyes, a silent partner, came in silently, and tried to read Mrs. Lincoln's name that was on one of the rings—so Mrs. L. grabbed the ring from Keyes and pushed for the St. Denis. Keyes called at the hotel on the next day, when Mrs. Lincoln acknowledged the corn, and introduced herself to him, and also presented me, Betsey Kickley, nigger. Keyes advised us to move, and we did so, and put up at the Union Place Hotel. The firm at 609 were Black Republicans, (at least Keyes was,) and proposed to engineer the old clothes off in such a manner as to raise a cool hundred thousand on them for my bosom friend. They raised it in several horns.

On Monday Mrs. Lincoln stood treat to a carriage, and we took a ride in the Central Park. On Tuesday I went drum-

ming among the old clothes men and brought several of them to the hotel. On Thursday Mrs. Lincoln and myself went on a peddling expedition on Seventh avenue and in Chatham street, but had no luck. So we were disgusted and went back to the Union Place Hotel to dinner.

Mrs. Lincoln had accidentally (on purpose) allowed her real name to remain on one of her trunks, which a smart newspaper man saw and read and wrote about. Messrs. Keyes and Brady, agreed that the Black Republican party would never permit it to be said that the wife of Abraham Lincoln was in want. The Black Republican party, however, did permit it to be said, Messrs. Keyes and Brady to the contrary, notwithstanding, nevertheless. The Messrs. 609 advised Mrs. Lincoln to write letters that would be so disgraceful that the Black Republican leaders would come down with the rhino, rather than let them be published. But they were mistaken again, the leaders did not care about the disgrace, and refused to come up to time. Whilst Mrs. L. was writing these raise-the-wind letters, I sat at her elbow and advised her not to lay it on so strong, but she replied, "Never mind, Betsey, anything to raise a breeze, one might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb." This and the famous "God, no," were favorite expressions of Mrs. Lincoln. The lay-it-on-strong letters did not work well, and Messrs. Brady and Keyes were forced to acknowledge that their scheme was a dead failure. Only about thirty-seven and a half cents worth of the old clothes and jewelry were sold, and the commissions of Messrs. 609 had to be deducted from this. Mrs. Lincoln grew desperate, determined to go the whole sheep, and to have no more lamb business, so she told Messrs. 609 to place her old clothes on exhibition, admittance nothing, niggers and children half price, and to publish her lay-it-on-strong letters in the *New York World*. She then packed up her traps and pushed for Chicago. I saw her off at the depot and kissed her affectionately. Arriving at Chicago, my bosom friend wrote me as follows, thus, so to speak, in this style, or words to that effect:

CHICAGO, October 6th.

My Dear Betsey:

My ink is like myself, played out, so I write you with a lead pencil. I had a mean time coming here, and as Mrs. Clarke, I had to eat humble tart in the cars. I was thinking all the time of you and No. 609; also, of number One. Sitting in front of me in the cars was an old codger who had been reading the *New York World* the whole morning. This was the paper in

which my sheep letters were published. A very fat man came into the ear and sat by the *World* man. The fat man was a Black Republican, who had stolen thousands of dollars during the war from widows and orphans, and so forth.

They conversed thus :

World Democrat—What a shame it is for Mrs. Lincoln to be compelled to raise the wind by selling her old clothes and jewelry.

Fat Republican—Let her sell her old clothes if she wants to—I hope she'll raise enough money on them to pay her funeral expenses when she gives up the ghost.

World Man—(In a haughty manner)—That woman ain't dead yet!

This was extremely true, for I was alive at the time, and was eating the humble tart and listening. Say to Brady & Keyes that I am not dead yet, though dead broke, and tell them to push things. Please, dear Betsey, attend to this. I see by the papers that Stewart has returned. What a pity it is that I can't get tick at his store any more. How much I miss you, Betsey, tongue cannot tell, nor lead pencil write. I consider you my best living friend, and I am struggling to be enabled to repay you.

God bless you.

M. L.

To Betsey Kickley, Nigger :

As Messrs. 609 did not succeed in getting rid of many of Mrs. Lincoln's old dresses, the niggers began to move in the matter; Fred Douglass and Mr. Garnet heading the movement. Douglass is a black diamond, and Garnet is a precious stone, and they both moved well, but it didn't pay much. I called on old Horace Greeley with Garnet, and asked his (Horace's) advice about getting up a subscription. Old Greeley did not like the idea of having the thing engineered by Messrs. 609, and said so. When I told this to Messrs. 609, they said that Horace was a fool. The enterprise was nipped in the bud; fate mashed on the bud as soon as it was nipped, and everything went to ruin. Messrs. 609 sent some of the things to be placed on exhibition at Providence, but Providence was against us and it didn't pay. If the thing had succeeded, Messrs. Brady & Keyes would have had a general old clothes show all over the country. But it did not succeed, as the authorities in Providence wouldn't grant a license.

This was the end of Mrs. Mincoln's old clothes adventure. The thing didn't pay at all. It lost money. It was a failure.

Mrs. Lincoln has gone to her home and writes to me regularly. I live in a plain little room on the fourth floor of No. 14 Carroll Place, New York. It is a garret-room and I love it. I am fond of garret rooms. I write books and I take in sewing. I write in the night, and sew in the day. Publishers and ladies please take notice. Terms moderate.

BETSEY KICKLEY, (Nigger,)

X

Her mark.

THE END.



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