



BOOKS AT BROWN

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Executive Mansion
May, 15. 1862.

Hon. Henry Wilson
My dear Sir:-

I would gladly say
a word for the two establish-
ments at Philadelphia, one
called the "Union Volunteer Ref-
reshment Saloon" and the other the
"Cooper Shop" if I could do so
with propriety and good taste-

But I know nothing of the facts
myself, and could only say hyp-
othetically, that if they have dealt
so generously with our volunteers, as
I have frequently heard, and be-
lieve, they are indeed worthy of
all praise-

Yours very truly,

A. Lincoln.

(Cut through the courtesy of a FRIEND)

A new and important acquisition for the
McLellan Lincoln Collection

LETTER TO MRS. BIXBY, NOVEMBER 21, 1864

THE ILLUSTRATION in this article is by way of reporting work done in our McLellan Lincoln Collection, on the question, "Who wrote the Bixby letter?" Competent authorities have satisfactorily defended Lincoln's authorship of the letter, but the question of who penned it is quite another matter. Boston newspapers published the text of the letter a day or two after its receipt in Boston; the original manuscript has been lost, and the falsity of the so-called facsimiles has been often asserted but never scientifically proven. It is hoped that Dr. Albert S. Osborn will publish a statement on the subject.

The John Hay Library has been particularly concerned with the discussion following Nicholas Murray Butler's story that John Hay wrote the letter and "was able to imitate Lincoln's handwriting and signature in well-nigh perfect fashion," as well as with Easton Loutitt's query, "Do I now have to collect the Bixby Letter as a John Hay item?" Our McLellan collection possesses a telegram written by John Hay and signed with Lincoln's name in Hay's imitation of Lincoln's handwriting.* Comparison of just the first stroke of the first letter *A* with that in an authentic Lincoln signature and with that in the Bixby letter facsimiles should be enough to show how far from "perfect" Hay's imitation was and how unlikely it is that Hay could have written the original from which the Bixby letter facsimile was made.

However, our John Hay Professor of Bibliography has compared not only the shading of the letter strokes but also many other factors, following the system of Lee and Abbey's *Classification and Identification of Handwriting* and the suggestions in Osborn's *Questioned Documents*—form, skill, movement, speed, slant, embellishment, connections, proportions, etc. If a dozen such factors be described respectively in three classes or degrees (e. g. shading may be light, medium or heavy), the three handwritings may be numerically classified and filed thus:

Lincoln: 2 1 2 3 2 2 1 2 2 1 2 1

Bixby

Letter 3 2 1 3 1 1 1 2 2 2 1 3

Facsimile:

Hay: 1 3 1 2 3 3 2 1 1 2 3 2





*There follows a note: "Please send above and oblige the President.
John Hay A. P. S."

Dr. Osborn's tests will show even more striking differences.

There is no reason to doubt that Lincoln is the author of the Letter to Mrs. Bixby. The scribe or penman of it cannot be identified unless or until the original manuscript is found, although it is safe to assume that Lincoln at least signed it. The handwriting represented in the alleged facsimiles of the letter is neither Lincoln's nor Hay's.

Henry B. Van Hoesen

LIBRARIAN

OUT OF THE STACKS

THE OLD HOMESTEAD

One of the best loved of the Yankee plays was Denman Thompson's *Old Homestead*. Its beginnings are obscure, but it seems fairly certain today that it started in the early 1870's as an off-color vaudeville skit, *The Female Bathers*. The comic Yankee from the country, however, assumed the title role in 1875. Two years later, the skit was expanded to a three-act play; then in 1885, *Joshua Whitcombe* was superseded by its sequel, *The Old Homestead*, in which the long forgotten bathers were reduced to a Venus de Medici in a New York parlor. Thompson continued acting in this play until his death in 1911, when special trains were run to the funeral.

The Old Homestead was perhaps the first of the Yankee plays to show the country man not only bewildered by the ways of the big city, according to stage tradition, but also in his true colors at home. The lovable Joshua was no longer a clown but a warmhearted and shrewd observer of life. Although he might do ridiculous things, he never lost the respect and the affection of the audience. It was his character that gave the play unity, for the play, which always kept traces of its vaudeville origin, consisted chiefly of comic or sentimental scenes interspersed with songs and dances. Anything appropriate might be introduced; anything demoded could be replaced.

Consequently the Harris Collection has been fortunate in acquiring recently two stages of the text with the actors' sides, a scrapbook of programs, a manuscript biography of the author, and other material.

S. Foster Damon

LINCOLN DESIDERATA

Egan, Joseph Burke

Mathew Brady, Pioneer Photographer of the Civil War. 1939 \$3.00

Lincoln, Abraham

Letter to the Missouri Radicals . . . October 17, 1863. \$27.50

(Relating to a demand for removal of General Schofield)

Ranch, F. W.

Lincoln Grand March. Cincinnati. 1860. \$4.50

Soldier's Power of Attorney. Troy, N. Y. \$7.50

(To be used in 1864 election)

Who endorsed the Helper Book! Who were the inciters to Bloodshed!
1861(ca) \$17.50.

WITH APPRECIATION

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