

Recollection of 1895

Thomas J. Henderson's "Recollections of Lincoln"

ALLEN C. GUELZO

Thomas Jefferson Henderson was born in Brownsville, Tennessee, on November 29, 1824, and moved with his family to Illinois as a teenager. His father, William Henderson, served in the Illinois legislature "where he associated with Lincoln, [Ninian] Edwards, and other notable men." The elder Henderson was "an old-line Whig and quite intimate with Henry Clay, John Bell, and the noted politicians of that school," and the son followed in his footsteps, opening a law practice in Toulon, Illinois, in 1852 and gaining election to the Illinois legislature in 1855. In September of 1862, he recruited a company for the 112th Illinois Volunteers, and was commissioned colonel of the regiment, fighting in many of the western campaigns and winning a brigadier general's star in 1864. He later served in the U.S. Congress for 20 years, from 1875 to 1895. He died on February 5, 1911, as he was preparing an address for a Lincoln's Birthday dinner, and was buried near his home in Princeton, Illinois.

Two letters of Lincoln to Henderson are incorporated into his recollections, from November 27 and December 15, 1854 (and in Roy P. Basler et al., eds., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 2:288, 293). A third letter, written to Henderson's father on February 21, 1855, describes Thomas Henderson as having "kindly and firmly stood by me from first to last; and for which he has my everlasting gratitude" (*Collected Works* 2:306).

Henderson's "Recollections" were originally dictated to Ida M. Tarbell at Henderson's home in Princeton on July 13, 1895, for a new biography of Lincoln which Samuel S. McClure had commissioned Tarbell to write for *McClure's Magazine*. It was then recast as a typescript which was submitted to Henderson for his editing, and finally copyrighted and syndicated by McClure in newspapers around the

country.¹ Henderson's "Recollections," sometimes edited for length, appeared in numerous newspapers in 1896, including the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (February 9), the *Salt Lake Herald* (February 9), the *Nashville American* (February 9), the *Atlanta Constitution* (February 9), the *Los Angeles Times* (February 9), the *Indianapolis News* (February 12), and the *Lewisburg [Pa.] Journal* (February 14).

On Henderson, see J. W. Templeton, "Life and Services of General Thomas J. Henderson," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 4 (April 1911), 67–81; *History of Hardin County, Iowa* (Springfield, Ill.: Union Publishing, 1883), 1:277; and the entry on Henderson in *The Biographical Dictionary of Congress, 1774–2005* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2005), 1:236. The following text is from the *Omaha Bee* of February 9, 1896.

Recollections of Lincoln

Characteristic Incidents in the Life of a Great President
Breathing Life Into Republicanism
Stirring Features of State, Senatorial and Presidential Campaigns
Related by ex-Congressman Henderson, a Participant

The first time I remember to have seen Abraham Lincoln was during the memorable campaign of 1840, when I was a boy 15 years of age. It was at an immense whig mass meeting, held at Springfield, Ill., in the month of that year.²

There were a number of able and distinguished speakers of the whig party of the state of Illinois present.³ And while I was too young to be a judge of their speeches, yet I thought them all great men, and none of them greater than Abraham Lincoln.

Although Mr. Lincoln was then but 31 years of age, still he had already taken a prominent position among the leading men of the State of Illinois. He was, at that time, serving his third term as a

1. Tarbell's notes of her interview with Henderson are in the Ida Tarbell Papers, Special Collections, Allegheny College, Meadville, Pennsylvania. The typescript is part of Henderson's papers in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois. See Tarbell, "Abraham Lincoln," *McClure's Magazine* 6 (March 1896), p. 315.

2. Illinois Whigs held their "Young Men's Convention" on June 2–4, 1840. See "The Great Federal Abolition Humbug at Springfield," *Springfield State Register* (June 5, 1840) and Paul M. Angle, "Here I Have Lived": *A History of Lincoln's Springfield, 1821–1865* (Springfield: Abraham Lincoln Assn., 1935; rpt., 1971), 112–14.

3. In Tarbell's notes, Henderson says, "There must have been 50,000 people in the town."

representative in the state legislature, having been first elected in 1834, when but 25 years of age. He was re-elected for a fourth term in 1840.

In November 1840, my father, being a member of the state legislature, took me with him to Springfield, and there I saw Mr. Lincoln when the House of Representatives was in session, almost every day for several weeks, and heard him speak a number of times. And while there were many able men in the house such as John J. Hardin,⁴ afterward a member of congress, Thomas Drummond,⁵ afterward and for many years judge of the United States district court for the northern district of Illinois, and then a judge of the United States circuit court, and Lyman Trumbull,⁶ afterward a judge of the supreme court of Illinois, and then for many years a United States senator, yet the impression made upon my mind at that time was that Abraham Lincoln was one of the ablest members of the house. He certainly was one of the leading members, and I think was regarded as the equal of any member of the house in debate and in ability. He was awkward in manner when speaking. He had a swaying motion of body and a swinging of his long arms that were somewhat ungraceful. And I remember to have heard some of the members laughing and talking about appointing a committee to hold his coat-tails when he was speaking, and keep him still.⁷

Filibustering Balked.

When I went with my father to Springfield in November 1840, the governor had called an extra session of the legislature to meet some two weeks or more prior to the meeting of the regular session, which at that time under the constitution of the state, met on the first Monday of December, biennially. I do not now remember for what purpose this extra session of the legislature was convened. But I do remember that at that time the State Bank of Illinois had suspended specie payments, and that under the law, unless it resumed such payments before the

4. Hardin (1810–1847) served, like Lincoln, in the Black Hawk War and was a member of the Illinois legislature until his election to Congress in 1843. He was killed at the battle of Buena Vista while serving as colonel of the 1st Illinois Volunteers.

5. Drummond (1809–1890) was a member of the Illinois legislature in 1840–41 and served as a federal judge from 1850 to 1884.

6. Trumbull (1813–1896) moved to Illinois in 1837, and was elected to the Illinois legislature in 1840. In 1855, he was elected to the U.S. Senate. Lincoln had led the vote for the Senate as an anti-Nebraska Whig, but when it became clear a Whig could not get a majority of the votes in the legislature, Lincoln directed his supporters to vote for Trumbull, as an anti-Nebraska Democrat. Trumbull served in the Senate until 1873.

7. See Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, 2 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 1:165–66.

adjournment *sine die* [without setting a date to reassemble] of the next session of the legislature, following the suspension, it would forfeit its charter.⁸ And a controversy arose between the democratic and whig members of the house over the question of adjourning the extra session *sine die*. The whigs, being friendly to the bank, opposed such adjournment, while the democrats favored it, desiring to compel the bank to resume specie payments or forfeit its charter. The democrats were in a majority in the house, but not all were present, and the whigs undertook to prevent an adjournment, *sine die*, by absenting themselves from the house and thereby leave it without a quorum. Abraham Lincoln and Joseph Gillespie were left in the House to watch the proceedings and to raise the question of “no quorum” whenever an attempt should be made by the democrats to adjourn the house *sine die*, and all the rest of the whig members absented themselves. There was great excitement, while the doorkeeper of the house and a posse were running around the city hunting for delinquent members so as to compel their attendance.

A quorum was finally obtained [on December 5, 1840] and the extra session was adjourned *sine die*.⁹ Wherefore Lincoln and Gillespie, disgusted at the result, went immediately to the door to retire. But, as the door was locked and no order had been given to unlock it, the officer in charge refused to let them out, and therefore they went to a window of the church¹⁰ in which the house was holding its sessions,

8. The governor, Thomas Carlin, called a special session of the legislature on October 15 to review “our system of internal improvements, adopted by improvident legislation,” and the “vast debt” which had been incurred by the state to fund the system. The session convened on November 23, 1840. See “Governor’s Message,” *Springfield State Register* (November 27, 1840) and *Journal of the Senate of the Twelfth General Assembly of the State of Illinois* (Springfield: Wm. Walters, 1840), 9.

9. The Democratic leadership in the House had achieved the quorum by calling in its “sick Democratic members . . . some of them from their beds.” Lincoln “came under great excitement” and “very unceremoniously raised the window and jumped out, followed by one or two other members.” See “Conspiracy of the Federal Members of the Legislature to revolutionize the State Government,” *Springfield State Register* (December 11, 1840).

10. The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency historical marker at E. Monroe Street and South 5th Street in Springfield identifies the building formerly on that spot as the Springfield Methodist Church. See also Sunderine and Wayne C. Temple, *Illinois’s Fifth Capitol* (Springfield: Phillips Brothers, 1988), 41–44, and Roger L. Stevens, *Prairie Justice: A History of Illinois Courts under French, English, and American Law*, ed. John Lupton (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2015), 229. Gillespie’s account of the “jumping scrape” is in Douglas L. Wilson & Rodney O. Davis, eds., *Herndon’s Informants: Letters, Interviews, and Statements about Abraham Lincoln* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 187–88.

and raising it jumped out.¹¹ I was near by and saw them when they went out at the window.

The democrats, however, as I remember, failed to accomplish their purpose, for the bank, keeping close watch of the proceedings, resumed specie payments before the adjournment, *sine die*, and then after the legislature met, on the following Monday [December 7], in regular session, again suspended.

While in Springfield, during that session of the legislature, I had nothing else to do, and spent much of my time in the gallery of the house, watching the proceedings and listening to the debates. And I saw Mr. Lincoln and heard him speak often. He was always an interesting speaker, and my recollection is that when he spoke he commanded the attention of the house as closely as any other member.

An Early Boom.

A very interesting and spicy debate occurred at one time during the session between Alfred Kitchell,¹² who was an old lawyer, and had been attorney general of the state, and Mr. Lincoln. In 1836–37, I believe it was, the legislature entered upon an extravagant scheme of internal improvements. Railroads were to be constructed in various parts of the state; rivers were to be improved for navigation; the Illinois and Michigan canal was to be constructed; and if any county in the state was so unfortunate as not to share in any of these improvements, a bonus was to be paid to such county. In carrying out these schemes an immense public debt had been contracted, and the state was compelled to borrow money to meet its obligations and maintain its credit. Some of the members of the legislature, Alfred Kitchell among the number, were opposed to issuing or hypothecating [collateralizing] state bonds, for that purpose. In fact, I think they favored the repudiation of the public debt. Mr. Lincoln, however, in the honesty of his nature, was opposed to repudiation and he strongly favored meeting the legal obligations of the state, and for that purpose, I think, he had introduced a bill providing for the hypothecation of State bonds. If not, he was, at least, advocating such a bill, and had made an able speech in favor of hypothecating bonds and maintaining the public credit.

11. Henderson spoke to Tarbell of Lincoln and Gillespie "lifting the windows out."

12. Alfred Kitchell (1820–1876) was a lawyer, and also a circuit judge from 1859 to 1861, and lived in Olney, Illinois; a street in Olney is named for him. He "was widely known as one of the fairest and most upright men who ever dignified the bench and bar of Illinois." T. G. Frost & E. L. Frost, *Frost Family in England and America, with Special Reference to Edmund Frost* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Russell Printing, 1909), 134–35. His brother, Wickliffe Kitchell, was state attorney general in 1839–40.

Mr. Kitchell opposed the hypothecation of bonds and made a speech against it, and, replying to Mr. Lincoln, said that he reminded him of a man who had drunk brandy until he had an attack of *delirium tremens* and, was supposed to be dying.¹³ A physician was sent for, and, after trying several remedies without relief, he finally suggested that the patient should be given some brandy. At the mention of brandy the drunken man revived at once, and said, "Brandy, yes, brandy; brandy is the thing; give me some brandy." And so, Mr. Kitchell said, it was with Mr. Lincoln. The state had been ruined by the hypothecation of bonds. It had hypothecated bonds until it was hopelessly bankrupt. And still Mr. Lincoln was crying for more hypothecation of more bonds. As the drunkard cried for "more brandy," so Mr. Lincoln cried for "more hypothecation of bonds."

Mr. Lincoln replied to Kitchell in an able speech, and, alluding to his (Kitchell's) propensity to speak on any and all occasions and often without any apparent object in view, said that Mr. Kitchell reminded him very much of a story he had heard of two bachelor brothers, who lived together. And one day one of them went out into the woods to shoot squirrels, and after he had been out some time his brother heard him firing his gun back of their field, and he kept firing, one shot after another, until his brother concluded he would go out and see what he could be shooting at. The brother found him firing up into a tree. And he kept loading and firing away until his brother, not being able to see anything, asked him what in the world he was shooting at. "At a squirrel," he replied. "Don't you see him on that limb?" And he banged away again. The brother walked all around the tree and looked in every direction, but could see no squirrel. Thinking the other was laboring under some optical illusion, he examined his person and discovered a big louse on one of his eyebrows; and this was what he had fancied was a squirrel, and had been firing at for several hours. And so Mr. Lincoln said it was with his friend Kitchell.¹⁴

The story, told only as Mr. Lincoln could tell such a story, created much merriment, and had a quieting effect upon Mr. Kitchell's disposition to talk for the balance of the session.

13. Henderson told Tarbell that Kitchell "made a great deal of sport of Mr. L."

14. This exchange took place on February 26, 1841, and was reported in the *Sangamo Journal* on March 5, 1841. See "Debate in Illinois Legislature Concerning Sale of State Bonds" (February 15, 1841) and "Remarks in Illinois Legislature Concerning a Bill for Completion of the Illinois and Michigan Canal" (February 24, 1841), in *Collected Works*, 1:238, 243–44. See Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, 1:164–65.

Capital Removal.

Before I had ever seen him I heard my father, who served with him in the legislatures of 1838–39 and of 1840–41, relate an incident in Mr. Lincoln's life which illustrates his character for integrity and his firmness in maintaining what he regarded as right in his public acts in a marked manner. At the time the incident occurred the capital of Illinois was located at Vandalia, in the southern part of the state and far south of not only the geographical center, but, I believe, south of the center of the population of the state. At all events the people of Springfield and of the central and northern portions of the state were anxious to have the capital removed from Vandalia to Springfield. And Mr. Lincoln and his colleagues from Sangamon county had been elected with special reference to the removal of the capital. I do not now remember whether this incident occurred during the session of the legislature in 1836–37 or in 1838–39, but I think it was in that of 1836–37, and when, it was said, there was a great deal of log rolling going on among the members.¹⁵ But however that may be, according to the story related by my father, an effort was made to unite the friends of capital removal with the friends of some measure with which Mr. Lincoln, for some reason, did not approve. But those who desired the removal of the capital to Springfield were very anxious to effect the proposed combination, and a meeting was held to see if it could be accomplished. The meeting continued in session nearly all night, when it adjourned without accomplishing anything, Mr. Lincoln refusing to yield his objections and support the obnoxious measure. Another meeting was called, and at this second meeting a number of citizens, not members of the legislature, from the central and northern parts of the state, among them my father, were present by invitation. The meeting was long, protracted and earnest in its deliberations. Every argument was used that could be to induce Mr. Lincoln to yield his objections and unite with his friends and thus secure the removal of the capital, to his own city, but without effect. Finally, after midnight, when everybody seemed exhausted with the discussion and when the candles were burning low in the room, Mr. Lincoln arose amid the silence and solemnity which prevailed and, my father said, made one of the most eloquent and powerful

15. The Illinois legislature voted to move the state capital from Vandalia on February 24, 1837. See *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Tenth General Assembly of the State of Illinois* (Vandalia: William Walters, 1836/7), 1:702–3.

speeches to which he had ever listened, and he concluded his remarks by saying:

“You may burn my body to ashes and scatter them to the winds of heaven; you may drag my soul down to the regions of darkness and despair to be tormented by friends of the damned forever, but you will never get me to support a measure which I believe to be wrong, although by so doing I may accomplish that which I believe to be right.”¹⁶

And the meeting adjourned.

Looking for the Senatorship.

In 1854 the anti-Nebraska party carried the legislature of Illinois and secured a majority on joint ballot, and Mr. Lincoln became a candidate for the United States senate. And as I had been elected a member of the legislature, he addressed the following letter to me:

Springfield, Nov. 27, 1854.—T. J. Henderson, Esq.—My Dear Sir: It has come round that a whig may possibly be elected to the United States senate, and I want the chance of being the man. You are a member of the legislature and have a vote to give. Think over it and see whether you can do better than to go for me. Write me, at all events, and let this be confidential. Yours truly, A. LINCOLN.¹⁷

To this letter I replied, but have no copy of my reply. But from recollection and from his reply to my letter I undoubtedly said to him that I had also seen the name of Archibald Williams,¹⁸ a distinguished whig and one of the ablest lawyers in Illinois, mentioned as a candidate, and that between two such old friends of my father, as well as of myself, it was hard for me to choose. And to my letter I received the following reply:

Springfield, Dec. 15, 1854.—Hon. T. J. Henderson—Dear Sir: Yours of the 11th was received last night, and for which I thank you. Of course I prefer myself to all others, yet it is neither in my heart

16. Tarbell quoted these words in *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, McClure, 1900; and subsequent editions), 1:139.

17. See Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, 1:392.

18. Williams (1801–1863) was a member of the Illinois legislature and the 1847 Illinois constitutional convention, and a U.S. district attorney from 1849 to 1853. Lincoln appointed him to a federal judgeship in Kansas in 1861. Usher F. Linder remembered him “over six feet high, and as angular and ungainly in his form as Mr. Lincoln himself; and for homeliness of face and feature surpassed Mr. Lincoln.” See Linder, *Reminiscences of the Early Bench and Bar of Illinois* (Chicago: Legal News Co., 1879), 238.

nor my conscience to say I am any better man than Mr. Williams. We shall have a terrible struggle with our adversaries. They are desperate, and bent on desperate deeds. I accidentally learned of one of the members here writing to one of the members south of here, in about the following language:

“We are beaten; they have a clear majority of at least nine on joint ballot. They *outnumber* us, but we must *outmanage* them. Douglas must be sustained; and we must elect a Nebraska United States Senator, or elect none at all.”

Similar letters, no doubt, were written to Nebraska members. Be considering how we can best meet, and foil, and beat them.

I send you, by this mail, a copy of my Peoria speech.¹⁹ You may have seen it before; or you may not think it worth seeing now.

Do not speak of the Nebraska letters mentioned above; I do not wish it to become public, that I received such information. Yours truly, A. LINCOLN.

A Great Speech.

I was a member of the state convention held at Bloomington, Ill., in 1856, when the republican party was organized in the state, and I heard the great speech of Mr. Lincoln addressed to the convention.²⁰ It was a masterly speech, and seemed to be an inspiration. It was undoubtedly the greatest speech of Mr. Lincoln's life, and it is to be lamented that no report was made of it. I have never heard a greater speech made by any man on any occasion, nor one which had a greater effect on those who heard it. It created the republican party in the state of Illinois, and breathed into it, not only the breath of life, but a living soul, if I may so speak. Often during the delivery of this speech the applause was so great and so prolonged that Mr. Lincoln was compelled to suspend speaking for some minutes. One part of his speech, it seems to me, no one who heard it can ever forget. He referred to the charge made against those who opposed the repeal of the Missouri compromise, and the further extension of human slavery, that they were “disunionists,” and as he concluded that portion of his remarks he rose to his full height, and with wonderful power and effect, said, addressing those who preferred the charge: “We do

19. Lincoln's Peoria speech was delivered on October 16, 1854.

20. The Bloomington convention speech, known as Lincoln's “Lost Speech” because no transcript of it was made, was delivered on May 29, 1856.

not intend to dissolve the union, nor do we intend to permit you to dissolve it."²¹

At this conclusion every person in the convention, I think, rose to their feet, and for some minutes I never heard such applause and never saw such emotion as prevailed throughout the convention.

In 1858, Mr. Lincoln was nominated by the republican state convention of Illinois, as a candidate for the United States senate, and upon his nomination he made the speech in which he quoted the words, "A house divided against itself cannot stand," and then expressed his belief that the government could not endure permanently half slave and half free.²² This speech I heard delivered by Mr. Lincoln. It was a very carefully prepared speech, and the only one I ever heard him read from manuscript.

Camping on the Douglas Trail.

During the campaign of 1858, both Douglas and Lincoln made speeches in Toulon, Stark county, where I then resided.²³ It was arranged for

21. Tarbell's notes at this point read: "We (the Republicans) do not favor disunion. We do not intend to dissolve the Union—nor do we intend that anybody else shall dissolve the Union." This is a slightly more restrained version of the wording reconstructed by Henry Clay Whitney, whose version of the "Lost Speech" at Bloomington has Lincoln warning, "We will say to the Southern disunionists, we won't go out of the Union, and you shan't!!!" Whitney interpolated the observation, "This was the climax: the audience rose to its feet *en masse*, applauded, stamped, waved handkerchiefs, threw hats in the air, and ran riot for several minutes." Whitney's reconstruction was published in *McClure's Magazine* in September 1896 (pp. 322–31), and is usually discounted as an accurate rendering of the speech. Tarbell appears to have shown Henderson an advance copy of Whitney's reconstruction, and Henderson firmly rejected it as "so inaccurate, or imperfect, as to be unworthy of publication." Henderson particularly objected to the "shan't" quotation: "that would have been a declaration of war, if I may so speak made by Mr. Lincoln against Slavery in the States, and that was not Mr. Lincoln's position at that time." (Henderson to Tarbell, September 12, 1895, in *Ida Tarbell Papers*). Whitney's "shan't" quotation also appears in his *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln* (p. 124), which was published in 1892. See Elwell Crissey, *Lincoln's Lost Speech* (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1967), pp. 180, 190; Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, 1:419–20; and Tarbell, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, 2:320.

22. The "House Divided" speech was delivered on the evening of June 16, 1858.

23. Douglas spoke in Toulon on October 26, 1858. Henderson met Lincoln in Kewanee the next day and drove him to the Virginia Hotel in Toulon; Lincoln spoke that afternoon in the town square. Lincoln was originally scheduled to speak in Vermont, in Fulton County, on October 27th, but the *Chicago Press & Tribune* announced the change in Lincoln's plans for Toulon on October 19th. See "Mr. Lincoln's Appointments," *Illinois State Journal* (October 19, 1858), "Mr. Lincoln in Fulton and Stark Counties," *Chicago Press & Tribune* (October 19, 1858), and *The Lincoln Log* at <http://thelincolnlog.org/Results.aspx?type=CalendarDay&day=1858-10-27>, which revises the 1961 printed *Lincoln Day by Day*, ed. by E. S. Miers, for these dates.

Lincoln to speak on the next day after the Douglas meeting. Being acquainted with Mr. Lincoln, it devolved upon me to arrange for the meeting, and also to meet him at Kewanee, the nearest railroad station, fourteen miles distant, with a carriage and accompany him to Toulon. This I did; and as we drove to Toulon, I reported to him what Douglas had said in his speech the day before, as fully as I could remember it. Among other things, I told him that Mr. Douglas, to catch the old whig vote of the county, had charged him with having always been unfriendly to Henry Clay. Mr. Lincoln said it was a strange charge for Mr. Douglas to make against him, for he knew it was untrue.²⁴

On the road to Toulon, I said to Mr. Lincoln, that I had been chosen to preside at the meeting and to introduce him, and that it was rather a new experience for me. And I asked him, if on introducing him, he desired me to say anything personal or complimentary as to himself. He replied: "Well, Tom, if you have any pretty little speech prepared that you would like to get off, do it. But if you have not I would a great deal rather have the time." And he had the time, for I had no speech prepared.

We were met on the prairie some two miles north of Toulon by an immense procession of men and women, with music and banners, who had come out to meet Mr. Lincoln and escort him into the town. They formed on the open prairie a sort of circle, where Mr. Lincoln was received and where a delegation of women crowned him with a wreath of the most beautiful flowers. He seemed to be somewhat embarrassed by the demonstration, and especially by the act of the women. He said to me he did not like so much nonsense, but he supposed he had to submit to it. But the event of that reception of Abraham Lincoln is still talked about by those who were present on the occasion as one of the most interesting of their lives.

The speech of Mr. Lincoln at Toulon was a masterly one, and the meeting was, in every way, a great success, I never heard a speech in my life that was listened to more attentively. Mr. Lincoln was, I think, very anxious to be nominated for the presidency. I saw him some time before the convention met and had a conversation with him, in which I said to him that I had seen his name mentioned in a number of papers for the vice presidency and I asked him, in case of his failure to become the nominee for president, whether he would accept a

24. In Tarbell's notes, Henderson remembered Lincoln's reaction even more strongly: "'Well, Tom,' he said, 'the truth is Douglas is a liar.' If there was a truthful man and particularly exact it was A.L. he never said I know unless he was sure and he qualified every statement-'I wont assent if it is so'- he would say 'but to the best of my knowledge it is so.'"

nomination for vice president. He replied: "No, Tom; the truth is my name has been mentioned rather too prominently for the first place on the ticket for me to think of accepting the second."²⁵

Illuminated by a Story.

I saw Mr. Lincoln in Springfield sometimes after his election as president and was present when a number of people were calling on him from various parts of the country.²⁶ I remember that a gentleman from New England asked him if he felt any alarm over the situation in the south. He replied, "No, I do not know that I do. At least," he said, "it has not reached my nerves as yet. In that respect I am like an old preacher I once heard of, who was a passenger in a stage coach with a number of other persons. They were approaching a river somewhat dangerous to cross, and all of the passengers, as they drew near the river, were worrying and fretting about crossing it and dreading the danger except the old preacher, who sat in one corner of the stage very quietly and saying nothing. Finally one of the passengers, addressing him, said: 'Sir, you do not seem to be troubling yourself about crossing this river. Are you not afraid?' 'Oh, no,' replied the old preacher, 'I have been in the habit for a great many years of never crossing a river till I got to it.'"²⁷

The last time I ever saw Abraham Lincoln to have any conversation with him was at his home in Springfield, but a short time before he left for Washington City to be inaugurated president of the United States. I called at his home to pay my respects to him, and to say good-by. I found him alone and we had a very interesting and pleasant conversation, during which two other gentlemen called. I do not now remember their names, but they were old friends of Mr. Lincoln, at least, and when we were about to take our leave, he suddenly said: "Hold on and sit down a minute longer. I want to say a few words

25. Tarbell did not include an anecdote Henderson told her (but which appears in her notes), that Henderson "believes he was the first man in [the 1860 Republican] Convention to know that L was elected. He added the numbers as they came, adding each to the forgoing sum. When the last number came he cried out 'That gives it to Lincoln'—'Not by a damn sight' cried a Seward man next to H. but in another minute it was certain that it did." Henderson may have attended the Convention but he was not a delegate.

26. Henderson described "a number of people" to Tarbell as "a party of twelve."

27. This was a favorite story of Lincoln's. George Templeton Strong recorded Lincoln delivering a version of it on January 29, 1862, when Strong and Henry Bellows of the U.S. Sanitary Commission visited Lincoln. In his diary, Strong had Lincoln say, "Brethren, this here talk ain't no use. I never cross a river until I come to it." See Strong, *Diary of the Civil War*, ed. Allan Nevins (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 204-5.

more before we part. We have been friends a long time and have fought many political battles together. And now I want to say to you that we are going to have a severe struggle, and I may not survive it. But I do not believe the contest in which we are engaged is to be settled after all by a conflict of arms. It will be settled by the ballot. We polled at the Presidential election, 1,857,610 votes; and now if I shall fall in the conflict we are going to have I want you, as old friends, to pledge me here that you will carry on the contest and that you will strive to double that vote at the next election."

With a feeling of solemnity inspired by his earnest and impressive manner we bade him goodby, and as it turned out, it was to me a goodby forever.²⁸

THOMAS J. HENDERSON

28. Tarbell recorded one additional comment from Henderson: "Gen'l H. was in active service & once received [a] letter from Lincoln when he asked permission to go home to see [a] sick relative. This letter Gen'l H. cannot find."