

ESTERHAZY Grófne' (MIKSA)

[elöbbs Mrs. Charles Griffin
née Cattoll)

quarters.' President Lincoln immediately said, 'I wish to go in here alone!'

"I drew myself up into the corner as close as possible, and he bent under the flap and came in. He went at once to a bedside, and reverently leaned over almost double, so low were the cots, and stroked the soldier's head, and with tears streaming down his face he said in a sort of sweet anguish, 'Oh, my man, why did you do it?' The boy in gray said, or rather stammered weakly, almost in a whisper, 'I went because my State went.' On that ground floor, so quiet was the whole ward, a pin could almost have been heard to fall. President Lincoln went from one bed to another and touched each forehead gently, and with tears streaming asked again the question, and again heard the same reply. When he finally passed out from these boys, some gray and grizzled, but many of them children, there came as from one voice, 'Oh, we didn't know he was such a good man! We thought he was a beast!'"³

Mary Todd Lincoln was a tragic figure in these days, for she had never recovered, either physically or mentally, from the shock of Willie's death and from the effect of an accident when she had been thrown from her carriage and had struck her head. Her beauty, if she had ever possessed any, had long since vanished. Her eyes were hard and resentful, her stubborn mouth was dragged down at the corners by sorrow. She was consumed by a burning fire of jealousy both for her prerogatives as the wife of the President, and of any woman who made even the slightest claim to her husband's attention. Lincoln, saddened by her state and patient under the frequent lashings of her tongue, called her "Mother" and showed her unfailing gentleness, but her tempers and the public scenes she made were a severe trial to him.

Gossip about Mrs. Lincoln's eccentric behavior was rife in Washington, and it seems certain that the insanity for which her son Robert had her committed for some months in 1875, had already commenced. One day a party, consisting of the President, Adam Badeau, Mrs. Lincoln, Mrs. Grant and some others, was on the way to Fort Stedman. For part of the journey over the rough roads, the men, except Badeau, rode on horseback, and the two ladies, with Badeau as escort, rode in an ambulance.

"I chanced to mention," Badeau recalled, "that all the wives of officers at the army front had been ordered to the rear—a sure sign that active operations were in contemplation. I said not a lady had been allowed to remain, except Mrs. Griffin, the wife of General Charles Griffin, who had obtained a special permit from the Pres-

dent. At this Mrs. Lincoln was up in arms, "What you mean by that, sir?" she exclaimed. "Do you mean to say that she saw the President alone? Do you know that I never allow the President to see any woman alone?" She was absolutely jealous of poor, ugly Abraham Lincoln.

"I tried to pacify her and to palliate my remark, but she was fairly boiling with rage. 'That's a very equivocal smile, sir,' she exclaimed, 'Let me out of this carriage at once. I will ask the President if he saw that woman alone.' Mrs. Griffin, afterward the Countess Esterhazy, was one of the best known and most elegant women in Washington, a Carroll, and a personal acquaintance of Mrs. Grant, who strove to mollify the excited spouse, but all in vain. Mrs. Lincoln again bade me stop the driver, and when I hesitated to obey, she thrust her arms past me to the front of the carriage and held the driver fast. But Mrs. Grant finally prevailed upon her to wait till the whole party alighted, and then General Meade came up to pay his respects to the wife of the President. I had intended to offer Mrs. Lincoln my arm, and endeavor to prevent a scene, but Meade, of course, as my superior, had the right to escort her, and I had no chance to warn him. I saw them go off together, and remained in fear . . . for what might occur. . . . But General Meade was very adroit, and when they returned Mrs. Lincoln looked at me significantly and said: 'General Meade is a gentleman, sir. He says it was not the President who gave Mrs. Griffin a permit, but the Secretary of War.' Meade was the son of a diplomatist, and had evidently inherited some of his father's skill.

"At night, when we were back in camp, Mrs. Grant talked the matter over with me, and said the whole affair was so distressing and mortifying that neither of us must ever mention it; at least, I was to be absolutely silent, and she would disclose it only to the General."⁴

There was worse to come. At a review of the troops the President was to appear on horseback accompanied by the Generals Grant and Ord. Mrs. Lincoln and Mrs. Grant were to go in the ambulance, accompanied by Badeau, but Badeau, not caring to have the sole responsibility if another scene should occur, had arranged for General Horace Porter to accompany them.

The ladies were late and the President directed that the review was to begin without them. Mrs. Ord, on horseback, had meanwhile, asked if it would be proper for her to accompany the reviewing party and one of the officers present told her, "Of course! Come along!"

They had ridden halfway down the line, bands playing, soldiers at



"present arms" when the ambulance came in sight. Mrs. Ord at once left the reviewing party and, accompanied by the officer whom she had questioned, galloped across the field to join Mrs. Lincoln and Mrs. Grant. It was evident that something unpleasant had occurred. They were received coldly by Mrs. Lincoln, Mrs. Grant was silent and obviously embarrassed and the two men appeared to be unhappy. There seemed to be no course open to Mrs. Ord and her companion but to retire. Moreover, the ambulance was full, and Mrs. Ord, remaining on horseback, rode for a time beside the President.

Badeau recalled that:

"As soon as Mrs. Lincoln discovered this her rage was beyond all bounds. 'What does the woman mean,' she exclaimed, 'by riding by the side of the President? and ahead of me? Does she suppose that *he* wants *her* by the side of *him*?' She was in a frenzy of excitement, and language and action both became more extravagant every moment. Mrs. Grant again endeavored to pacify her, but then Mrs. Lincoln got angry with Mrs. Grant; and all that Porter and I could do was to see nothing worse than words occurred. We feared she might jump out of the vehicle and shout to the cavalcade. Once she said to Mrs. Grant in her transports: 'I suppose you think you'll get to the White House yourself, don't you?' Mrs. Grant was very calm and dignified, and merely replied that she was quite satisfied with her present position; it was far greater than she had ever expected to attain. But Mrs. Lincoln exclaimed: 'Oh! you had better take it if you can get it. 'Tis very nice.' Then she reverted to Mrs. Ord, while Mrs. Grant defended her friend at the risk of arousing greater vehemence.

"When there was a halt, Major Seward, a nephew of the Secretary of State, and an officer of General Ord's staff, rode up, and tried to say something jocular. 'The President's horse is very gallant, Mrs. Lincoln,' he remarked; 'he insists on riding by the side of Mrs. Ord.' This of course added fuel to the flame. 'What do you mean by that, sir?' she cried. Seward discovered that he had made a huge mistake, and his horse at once developed a peculiarity that compelled him to ride behind, to get out of the way of the storm.

"Finally the party arrived at its destination and Mrs. Ord came up to the ambulance. Then Mrs. Lincoln positively insulted her, called her vile names in the presence of a crowd of officers, and asked her what she meant by following up the President. The poor woman burst into tears and inquired what she had done, but Mrs. Lincoln refused to be appeased, and stormed till she was tired. Mrs. Grant still tried to stand by her friend, and everybody was shocked and

horrified. But all things come to an end, and after a while we returned to City Point."

Scenes such as these were bitterly hard for the President to bear, and someone noted at this time that when he talked his face was often alight with animation, but when he was silent, it fell once more into the deeply graven lines of sadness. But in the midst of grief and care he never lost his humor and seemed always to be ready for one of his gentle jokes.

General Collis who, with his pretty, fashionable wife Septima, was quartered in a little farmhouse at City Point, recalled on an occasion. Prisoners were coming into City Point that spring in such numbers that they overflowed the famous prison stockade called the Bull Pen, and they were allowed to stay outside since, discouraged and half-starved as they were, there was no danger that they would try to escape. The Bull Pen was for men in the ranks, but there were some high officers among the prisoners and they received quite different treatment.

One of them was General Barringer of North Carolina. Collis recalled:

"Mr. Lincoln was at City Point, [and] the General one day begged me to give him an opportunity to see him as he walked or rode through the camp, and happening to spend that evening with the President in the tent of Colonel Bowers, Grant's Adjutant-General, who had remained behind to keep up communication with the armies operating across the James River, I incidentally referred to the request of General Barringer. Mr. Lincoln immediately asked me to present his compliments to the General, and to say he would like very much to see him, whispering to me in his quaint and jocose way: 'Do you know I have never seen a live Rebel general in full uniform.'

"At once communicating the President's wish to General Barringer, I found that officer much embarrassed. He feared I had overstepped the bounds of propriety in mentioning his curiosity to see the Northern President, and that Mr. Lincoln would think him a very impertinent fellow, besides which he was muddy, and tattered, and torn, and not at all presentable.

"Reassuring him as best I could, he at last sought out those embellishments which a whisk, a blacking brush, and a comb provided, and we walked over to headquarters, where we found the President in high feather, listening to the cheerful messages from Grant at the front.

"I formally presented General Barringer, of North Carolina, to the President of the United States, and Mr. Lincoln extended his

