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LINCOLN LETTERS

Published by The Bibliophile Society

NOTE

The letters herein by Lincoln are so thoroughly characteristic of the man, and are in themselves so completely self-explanatory, that it requires no comment to enable the reader fully to understand and appreciate them. It will be observed that the philosophical admonitions in the letter to his brother, Johnston, were written on the same sheet with the letter to his father.

The promptness and decision with which Lincoln despatched the multitudinous affairs of his office during the most turbulent scenes of the Civil War are exemplified in his unequivocal order to the Attorney-General, indorsed on the back of the letter of Hon. Austin A. King, requesting a pardon for John B. Corner. The indorsement bears even date with the letter itself, and Corner was pardoned on the following day.

THE ORIGINALS FROM WHICH THE WITHIN FACSIMILES WERE MADE ARE IN THE COLLECTION OF MR. WILLIAM K. BIXBY, AND THROUGH HIS COURTESY THEY ARE REPRODUCED FOR MEMBERS OF THE BIBLIOPHILE SOCIETY

[Transcriber's Note: The following letters, to Lincoln's father and brother, make up files linc01.jpg, linc02.jpg, and linc03.jpg]

Washington, Dec. 24th, 1848.

My dear father:--

Your letter of the 7th was received night before last. I very cheerfully send you the twenty dollars, which sum you say is necessary to save your land from sale. It is singular that you should have forgotten a judgment against you; and it is more singular that the plaintiff should have let you forget it so long, particularly as I suppose you have always had property enough to satisfy a judgment of that amount. Before you pay it, it would be well to be sure you have not paid it; or, at least, that you can not prove you have paid it. Give my love to Mother, and all the connections.

Affectionately your son,

A. LINCOLN.

[Written on same page with above.]

Dear Johnston:--

Your request for eighty dollars, I do not think it best to comply with now. At the various times when I have helped you a little, you

have said to me, "We can get along very well now," but in a very short time I find you in the same difficulty again. Now this can only happen by some defect in your conduct. What that defect is, I think I know. You are not lazy, and still you are an idler. I doubt whether since I saw you, you have done a good whole day's work, in any one day. You do not very much dislike to work, and still you do not work much, merely because it does not seem to you that you could get much for it. This habit of uselessly wasting time, is the whole difficulty; and it is vastly important to you, and still more so to your children, that you should break this habit. It is more important to them, because they have longer to live, and can keep out of an idle habit before they are in it easier than they can get out after they are in.

You are now in need of some ready money; and what I propose is, that you shall go to work, "tooth and nail," for somebody who will give you money for it. Let father and your boys take charge of things at home--prepare for a crop, and make the crop; and you go to work for the best money wages, or in discharge of any debt you owe, that you can get. And to secure you a fair reward for your labor, I now promise you that for every dollar you will, between this and the first of next May, get for your own labor either in money or in your own indebtedness, I will then give you one other dollar. By this, if you hire yourself at ten dollars a month, from me you will get ten more, making twenty dollars a month for your work. In this, I do not mean you shall go off to St. Louis, or the lead mines, or the gold mines, in California, but I mean for you to go at it for the best wages you can get close to home, in Coles County. Now if you will do this, you will soon be out of debt, and what is better, you will have a habit that will keep you from getting in debt again. But if I should now clear you out, next year you will be just as deep in as ever. You say you would almost give your place in Heaven for \$70 or \$80. Then you value your place in Heaven very cheaply, for I am sure you can with the offer I make you get the seventy or eighty dollars for four or five months' work. You say if I furnish you the money you will deed me the land, and if you don't pay the money back, you will deliver possession--Nonsense! If you can't now live with the land, how will you then live without it? You have always been kind to me, and I do not now mean to be unkind to you. On the contrary, if you will but follow my advice, you will find it worth more than eight times eighty dollars to you.

Affectionately your brother,

A. LINCOLN.

[Transcriber's Note: The following letter to General Grant is contained in file linc04.jpg]

Executive Mansion,
Washington, April 30, 1864.

Lieutenant-General Grant,--

Not expecting to see you again before the spring campaign opens, I wish to express, in this way, my entire satisfaction with what you have done up to this time, so far as I understand it. The particulars of your plans I neither know, or seek to know. You are vigilant and self reliant; and, pleased with this, I wish not to obtrude any constraints or restraints upon you. While I am very anxious that any great disaster, or the capture of our men in great numbers, shall be avoided, I know these points are less likely to escape your attention than they would be mine. If there is anything wanting which is within my power to give, do not fail to let me know it.

And now with a brave Army, and a just cause, may God sustain you.

Yours very truly,

A. LINCOLN.

[Transcriber's Note: The letter from Austin A. King, requesting a pardon for John B. Corner is contained in files linc005.jpg and linc006.jpg. Lincoln's note approving the pardon is contained in file linc007.jpg. As these letters were not transcribed in the print book, I have not transcribed them here.]

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