

Mather

Edward Stratton

#1

Chicago, Ills July 1st 1876

Hon. N. H. Edwards

Springfield, Ills.

Dear Sir

Your two letters of the 22nd and 24th ult
mo, in regard to Mrs Lincoln's pictures and silver
ware in the possession of Robert, have been received
and considered by us. I should have answered soon
but for the press of professional business, which has given
me scarcely a moment of time.

Robert has no pictures and no silver
ware, that he is aware of, belonging to his mother in
time at his house or elsewhere. I will relate the fact
and you will then see the difficulty which your request
presents. In yours of the 22nd you say: "She asks Robert
to return to her some paintings she left in his
house for safe keeping, and her case of silver ware;"

and in yours of the 24th you say: "If he will send
her the pictures and the silver, engraved with her name
and which was presented to her, he may keep every
thing else."

A few evenings since Robert came to
my house bringing a package of letters, received man-
ly by Mrs Robert Lincoln, and I took time in a genera-
way to go through them. The silver, which possibly yo
refer to, is covered by these letters.

Before Mrs Lincoln went to Europe she
placed in the vault of Solomon Smith the bank, a box
of silverware. While in Europe she wrote repeatedly in
regard to it, presenting it to Mrs Robert Lincoln, and
urging that it should be taken by them and used. It
described this in these letters as being merely at Mr. Smith's
bank near the Trenton House. There was a difficulty
at first; from the indefinite description, in finding

for at Mr Smith's bank they at first thought they had no such package. It was finally discovered in their vault they having forgotten to whom it belonged. This was in fact the consummation of a wedding present to Mrs Robert Lincoln, and the letters of Mrs Lincoln cover it explicitly, and press it upon them in affectionate terms and urge them to accept the present.

As to the pictures the following are in substance the facts, as shown by Mrs Lincoln's letters. I previously stated to you that Mrs Lincoln in breaking up house keeping in 1866 stored her house hold ornaments. While in Europe she wrote to Mrs Robert Lincoln repeatedly, asking her and Robert to go where these were stored, and get them, and not to buy anything they could find there. She said that the things were going to decay and soon would be of little value, and that she had no use for them, as she did not ex-

pect to keep house again. She therefore urged in the most affectionate terms that Robert and his wife should go there and take whatever they might desire, and specified many things to which she particularly called their attention. Among these were a portion of the pictures Robert has in his house now.

At the time of Mrs Robert Lincoln's marriage, Mrs Lincoln sent to her at Washington a wedding presents, among other things several engravings and pictures; these are also at Robert's house.

When Mrs Lincoln came home from Europe she brought with her a great variety of personal ornaments and pictures. Some of these she brought to Robert's house and presented them to Robert and his wife. These were not framed, and upon this basis he had them framed, and they have been in his house now for two years.

Most of the pictures which Mrs Lincoln
brought from Europe, were asked for in the first
letter which she wrote to Robert; and were boxed up
and sent to her last winter. Several however are
left and are still in her house.

From the above you will see that Robert
cannot comply with the general and indefinite
request to send "my pictures" and to send "my art
ware."

There is another reason why this
request in its present form cannot be complied with.
Robert is in receipt of letters from Mrs Lincoln, such
as none but an insane mother would write to her
son, accusing him and his wife of having obtained
pictures, clothing and household ornaments improper-
ly. This surprised and pained them and he began
to consider whether he had evidence which to offer

persons would refute these charges. Affection between child and parent makes each party careless of natural rights, and at first he doubted whether, in the lavish and affectionate manner in which his mother for years had been presenting to him and his wife the tokens of her regard, he could produce such evidence as would show the real facts involved.

Nothing could show so plainly the utter wreck of Mrs Lincoln's mind as the reading of letters in which one time and another she sends these things, and pairing them with the recent letters demanding their return. For instance take any specific article which Mrs Lincoln directed to be brought from where the things were stored in Chicago. The original letter, directing the act and presenting the article is in the most affectionate terms. She seems gratified that she has children worthy of her affection, in

To gratify her desire to be constantly bestowing gifts upon them. She therefore sends a gift, describing it; and then asks if it is acceptable; and finally in substance accuses her children of stealing it.

While of course, owing to her condition of mind, this unkindness is to be forgiven and forgotten, the fear of being misunderstood by strangers has induced Robert — and I think wisely — in reference to the things referred to in your letter, not to return them, demanded as a matter of right, accompanied with the assertion that they were obtained improperly. Therefore if Mrs Lincoln shall desire these things under the terms named in my first letter, she must ask for them, recognizing the fact that they were given to her children, and that they are rightly in their possession.

By reference to my first letter whic

was deliberately written, you will see that I am
not repeating what I then said. I do not desire to
change the terms of that letter, and if Mrs. de
Colm wants anything under it - she must - con-
tend with its conditions.