

MRS. LINCOLN'S INSANITY.

The saddest story of the week has been the disclosure to the public of Mrs. Lincoln's mental aberration. Long known to her immediate friends, the unhappy fact was hardly surmised by the people who often passed harsh judgment upon her eccentric actions, as, from time to time, during the last decade, rumors of them furnished gossip for the social circle. The report of the legal steps reluctantly taken to adjudge her insane, the testimony conclusively showing a disordered mind, the finding of the jury, the attempt to end forever the troubles gathering more darkly about a life already far spent, the final removal to a private asylum for the insane, have made a story of melancholy interest, on which it is not pleasant to linger. It is gratifying, however, to know that at a time when her own faculties were playing her false, the friends of her brighter days did not wholly desert her, and that, trying as was the position of the only one of her name left to counsel and protect her, he discharged his delicate and unhappy task with filial thoughtfulness. That she is happily housed, safe from danger, and in the care of physicians who, if it lies within the skill of the medicines, may successfully minister to a mind diseased, is due to the consummate tact, courage, and discretion of a gentleman who has nobly discharged a duty to the memory of the illustrious man who was his friend long before the nation called him to the highest trust within its gift.

We do not advert to the case now to prolong a morbid interest in its melancholy developments, nor specially to commend the firm yet delicate friendship which was shown in the conduct of its legal aspect. We wish only to instance it for the lesson it contains; a lesson inculcating as powerfully as any may the duty which rests upon all men and women to speak their brother and their sister fair in life, as Antonio begged that he be spoken in death. The murdered husband of the unhappy woman now an inmate of the insane asylum, gave utterance to no sentiment more widely quoted, more generally remembered, than that spoken from his own gentle heart in the phrase, "with charity for all, with 'malice toward none.'" Scarcely had the grave closed over his bleeding remains than the country, noticing something peculiar and eccentric in the conduct of the widow, forgot that she had suffered as few women are called upon to suffer, forgot the charity which her husband had begged for all, most ineffectually for her, and sneered, jested, laughed at her waywardness, without doing her the justice to inquire into its cause. The party to which her husband belonged had no kindly shield to throw over her infirmities; they would have withheld a pension if the more chivalrous opposition had not urged the measure as one no less just than graceful; they professed to believe that as the wife of the head and front of the union cause she was in sympathy with the rebellion, and, after she had left the white house, spoke of her as one of those rebels of the Todd family. As time passed on, and she behaved yet more oddly, the sneer deepened, the jest broadened, the smile grew more satirical, and the words heard in her defense were few and feeble. Yet all the while she was mad. By no code, human or divine, was she responsible for her conduct; and they who laughed and jested at her might as well have laughed and jested at the sick fancies of a daft Ophelia. Who is there now to breathe one unkind word of the woman whom the law consigns to the restraints of a mad-house?

The world needs such a lesson to give it pause. It handles too lightly the reputation

of its people. Gossip has too wide and thoughtless a range; slander too free a course. Over how many a fair and spotless character may Hero's epitaph be written, "Done to death by slanderous tongues." And over the grave the very tongues that gave the fatal stab lament the deadly work as that of some heedless tale-bearer. The world needs to think how easily as a soap bubble in the summer sun a good name may be blasted, and how impossible to restore its rounded beauty. It needs a lesson in charity of thought and kindliness of speech that shall bring enforcement. It needs that healthier moral tone which would lead to the rebuke of idle gossip.

The lesson in Mrs. Lincoln's case should be taken to heart. The safest rule is never to pass judgment upon the testimony offered by appearances which may be explained, or suspicions which reflection will suggest are unreasonable. The better way is to pass no judgment at all. From out the tomb of Abraham Lincoln at Springfield, as from out the cell of Abraham Lincoln's widow at Batavia, comes to the whole world the lesson of "charity for all, malice toward none."