

A historic document revealing what the South thought about Lincoln.

King Linkum: The First!

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King Linkum

The First!

by

John Hill Hewitt

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY

John Hill Hewitt (1801-1890) is known as the “Bard of the Confederacy.”¹ A prolific and skilled writer, poet, publisher, playwright, actor, theatre manager, composer, musician, essayist, and entrepreneur, this devoted Southerner left those who love the South a rich legacy. Long before I knew of Hewitt, I was acquainted with two of his most famous songs: “All Quiet Along the Potomac Tonight” and “Somebody’s Darling.”

King Linkum, the First! is one of Hewitt’s wartime plays. This play is a vicious satire of Lincoln, his cabinet, and his generals.² The play depicts Lincoln as a warmonger, a power-hungry leader, who, as history reveals, had an “inborn talent in the Machiavellian arrangement of power.”³ However, the play evaluates Lincoln personally as well as politically. The text mercilessly portrays Lincoln as a “henpecked husband.”⁴ These depictions may come as a shock to any who do not know the truth concerning the real Lincoln and are aware only of the sanitized, saintly Lincoln created by the politically correct illusionists of our present century. This is the play to read if one wants to know what Southerners truly thought and said about Lincoln during the war.

Hewitt composed the play in 1863. The play is an illustration of how theatre (especially in Charleston, Richmond, and Augusta) served as a source of entertainment for Southerners during the tumult and trauma of war. The play also vents popular Southern opinion regarding Lincoln, and to some degree the text reflects an optimism that most Southerners still held in 1863.

In the typing and reproduction of the text, certain format changes had to be made to conform to modern printing practice; however, the editor made every effort to retain the original play form as he found it and as Hewitt first produced it.

Rickey E. Pittman
Deo Vindici

¹ E. Lawrence Abel, “Dixie’s Original One-Man Band.” *Civil War Times*, October 2003. 31-35.

² Charles Hamm. “Songs of the Civil War.” *New World Records*, 6 March 2003.

<<http://www.composersrecordings.com/linernotes/80202.pdf>> (29 Dec. 2003).

³ Kevin Fields, “Biography of Abraham Lincoln.” *From Revolution to Reconstruction.*, 24 March 2003.

<<http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/al16/about/lincoln.htm>> (25 Dec. 2003).

⁴ E. Lawrence Abel, 35.

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