

# BOOK SECTION

# Boston Evening Transcript

## Dr. William E. Barton and Lincoln

An Interview in the Library of His Museum at Foxboro

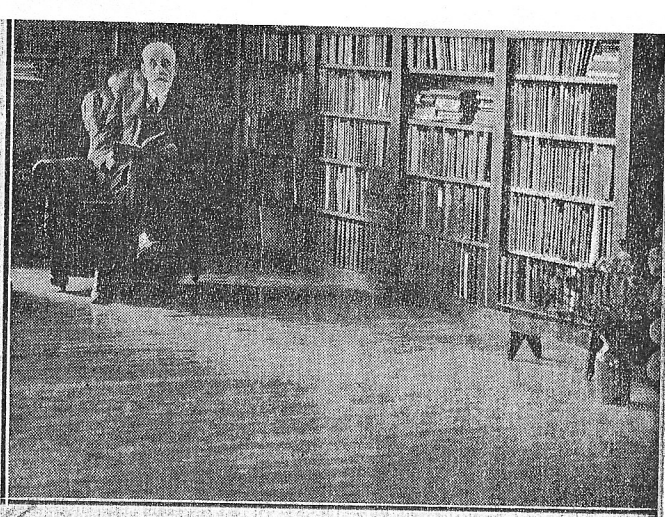
By Louise H. Guyol



The Interior of the Lincoln Room in Dr. Barton's Museum at Foxboro

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The Interior of the Lincoln Room in Dr. Barton's Museum at Foxboro

# In the Heart of Olden Scandinavia

Sigrid Undset

## Sigrid Undset Completes Her Historical Chronicle of Life and Scenes in the Middle Ages

By Dorothy Lawrence Mann

THE awarding of prizes has diverse effects. It is almost as certain to arouse discontent with the winners as to call attention to their excellence. We have seen that there is such universal satisfaction concerning a prize winner as there has continued to be with the idea that Sigrid Undset was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. She holds a pre-eminent place as one of the few great creators among modern writers. It is impossible to think of her work belonging to the time alone. She is concerned with the universal elements in human nature, those elements which belong to all time. It is even possible that her selection of the Middle Ages as the period for most of her writing is itself a gesture of this meaning. It is as though she would not have you mistake any of her findings for the trivialities of a contemporary observation. She has made medieval Norway incredibly real to us, and by that very token we read we are prone to forget that we are dealing with the past, so real and so essentially of today seem the problems of these people of whom she writes. Yet in convincing us of the universal elements in human beings she has not sacrificed her understanding of the characteristic elements in the period. By innumerable small and large details she convinces us that these are medieval men and women. We are not merely looking at the Middle Ages. We are genuinely a part of them as we follow the fortunes of the Master of Hestviken and his children.

This is the final volume of this four-volume novel, "Kristin Lavransdatter." It is the story of a medieval woman, "The Master of Hestviken" is the story of a medieval man. Yet because no story convinces us that it concerns itself with one sex alone, we follow the life of Cecilia with exactly as much interest as that of Olav or Erik. And we see that even back in the Middle Ages a woman could come to an understanding of her own nature and could become the strongest of the family group. Cecilia must on many occasions yield to the will of the men of the family, but she has an increasingly large place in all that happens, and it is convincing when she finally chooses her husband. We have the man of her own choice as any modern girl who remarks to her parents, "I'm not asking you, I'm telling you." In this story of the last days of Olav Audunson are more fully concerned than in the earlier volumes with religion as it plays its part in the life of the medieval man. To the novelist, religion must always stand as one of the great motivating forces in human nature, but in the Middle Ages we know that it held a place quite different from that which it held either before or after that time. The fear of an avenging God and of eternal punishment was the sickness of the Middle Ages. Olav Audunson is a man with a great conflict in his soul. He has never made life easy for himself. There were the days when time seemed to move more swiftly than it does at present and a man was thought old whom now we would think was scarcely more than in middle life. This youth, for these two girls, Cecilia and Erik, who rule Olav's household at the beginning of the story, to our mind

men minds are scarcely more than children. Before Erik comes home there is a brief period of peace at Hestviken. In these days Olav dreams that Erik, the father, will never return and that he may be able to claim a future which does not take from Cecilia the inheritance which is rightfully hers. It is the life of a self-contained household. The two girls never went away from their home except to the annual feasts of Olav's own circle of friends. Otherwise they never stirred abroad save to go to mass every Sunday on holy days. And then they were so handsomely dressed and admired that no other woman had better clothes or better silver belts and brooches than Olav's girls—both were called so among the folk. And they rode one on each of their father, on good, well-groomed horses with newly clipped hog-manses.

In many different ways one gets the religious mood of the day, but nowhere more than when Erik has been stricken with leprosy—the wasting sickness of the period, and is slowly dying, cared for by Cecilia and her father. The girl has the hopefulness which always has been a characteristic symptom of the disease and when everything about her realizes that she has but a short time to live, still plans for the future as hopefully as a well-gifted child would do. It is then that Olav feels that he must prepare for her the end which she so heavily has out of his own sins, speaks with genuine feeling as he tells her, "you are young and good—why need you fear death? God's holy angels will meet you and lead you before God's high throne. To join the blessed virgins to whom it is given to follow the Lamb of God eternally. . . . It is better to dwell in Heaven and follow Mary as the least of her handmaids, than to possess 'the whole round hall of earth and had command of all that is in it. . . . Easterday, I know you ought to be glad to die now, ere you have acquired a greater share of guilt." In our Lord's death and burial. The Christmas feast is better kept in Heaven than on earth.

All this is certainly of the Middle Ages, for it is not so that even the more religious of the moderns look upon the death of a young girl. Similarly we find this same overwhelming distrust of life in Erik's questioning of Cecilia before her marriage when he asks her if she has never thought of entering a convent and escaping the sins of the world. Talk about the story we have to a startling degree that conflict between a fierce desire for life and an overwhelming sense of its sinfulness. Olav is a man who has lived fiercely in his time and so intensely on the things he has done and can so ardently counsel young Erik that it is better to die before you have had opportunity for sin. Erik has been filled with a zest for life and the very heat with which he has thrown himself into the religious life is evidence of his feeling that only in the religious life can he be kept from sinning.

In her other novels Sigrid Undset has revealed her interest in women and her belief in the hidden strength of women which custom and their training has prevented their using. In this final volume of Olav Audunson's story we see again the way in which it is the woman who possesses the clarity of vision to look at life face to face as neither her father nor her brother can bear to do. It is Cecilia who is not betrayed by false emotions nor by a sense of sin. Like a heretic, we know, in her father's house and as Bethild reminds him when she is dying that Cecilia would have preferred to marry Aslak, the young outlaw whom Olav has protected in the earlier part of the story. The men of her family have willed otherwise. Even fifteen-year-old Cecilia knows enough of life to realize that a medieval woman has little choice. If they will that she marry, she must marry him. Only by straying from the way in which she has accepted her fate. It is not till just before her second son is born that she is able to come back to Hestviken.

In their way, both Olav and Erik care for Cecilia, but they belong to a time which assigned woman a definite place in existence. When we come to Olav's death it is Erik who turns sentimental and extols all the good deeds which Olav has done. Erik cannot

It is notable of William E. Barton that he has a way of making phrases that cut like a shaft of light through one's consciousness. One such phrase he spoke to me, in the Lincoln Room on Pine Knoll, at Foxboro. "The audacity of our ignorance, in youth, is just sublime" is what he said, speaking—not of modern youth as is, or used to be the fashion—but of himself, when just from college. He had great plans, as is the way of all youth just graduated, especially (I believe he said) to dash off biographies about important personages. I know he will forgive me if that was not the exact objective of his youthful audacity. I have quoted his words verbatim, and, because biography is his outstanding achievement, I have made the connection. For Dr. Barton was to learn that biographies are not dashed off by young men; and that sometimes one may give immeasurable time to the study of only one individual, and then feel that one's work is incomplete. This he has done with Abraham Lincoln.

Just what is it that makes a man travel from cabin to cabin, from court house to court house, cross and recross the ocean, wander the country over—to check up a date, or uncover a fact, in order that such dates and such facts may become part of the ages to which their subject belongs? Various reasons inspire various people to hunt down data and write about other people. And when the person about whom they chose to write has been written of more, perhaps, than any other, one must, says Dr. Barton, "give a reason for the faith that is within him."

His faith grew from a boyhood recollection of stories of Abraham Lincoln. He was born in Illinois, at Sublette, the first year of the Civil War. And he says that his most vivid memories are his first—he could not have been more than three or four at the time, when the volunteers de-

parted from his home town, en route to the field of battle. Later he saw freight cars come back, with bearded men in faded blue; saw the wounded; saw the soldiers' funerals—and, in some respects most vivid of all, (he states in his introduction to one of his many books) "the death and funeral of Abraham Lincoln." William E. Barton's father was a physician, he had a large library of books, not only medical, but legal and religious. He had interests, as the old time physicians did, in many things—there was a drug-store, a printing establishment, the church and the Sunday-school, in all of which the boy had a share, so that his memory of Lincoln was pieced about, and is, with rich and assorted memories of the normal boy. From the schools of Sublette he entered Berea College and, being graduated from there, he entered Oberlin Theological Seminary, having already been ordained to the Congregational ministry.

Dr. Barton's life, since that time has been devoted to his work as author and as a minister. For some years he was pastor of the Shawmut Congregational Church in Boston, and he recently returned from the International Council of Congregational churches in Bourne-mouth, England "where I gave," he writes me, "an address on church unity, and I am now up to my neck in a new two-volume book."

The book is being written where Dr. Barton does most of his writing, in the Wigwam, a house built on his Foxboro estate, in which he has housed all of his Lincoln collection. The museum is open to the public as visitors, and there one may find one of the most comprehensive collections of Lincolniana in the world. The building itself is inspiring, from the moment one sights it among the straight trunks of the pines, as one goes along the walk leading to the entrance; faces an old stone fireplace in the entry—one

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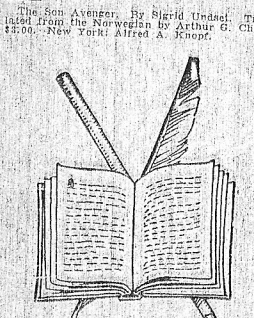
The Rev. Wm. E. Barton

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His articles and published addresses far too many to list, and include "Lincoln" (delivered at Illinois College, the reasons why Lincoln, after one's not to study there). "The Lincoln's Lucky Home" (delivered at the Filson Society, Lincoln and the American Lincoln address ever delivered over next day a thousand miles away). "Dr. Barton is now at work on a new two volumes on a period of Lincoln has been too little studied by the exact title not yet determined." His first book, published while he was at the theological seminary, was a story of mountains named "The Wind-Up-on-No-Busness," and was followed by a larger work called "Life in the Mountains of Kentucky" (in the first series of studies in Church History, included later). "The Early Ecclesiastical History of Kentucky." His most noted mouth address on Homespun; a Tale of It and "The Knot; a Tale of the Auld Some works of historical fiction for still in print, including, "The Story of the Black Hawk War," and "Braved the King; a Story of the Boy." A juvenile entitled "The Story of the Psalms and Their Story." His little popular philosophy have extended to the Fables of Sacred the Sage, on appeared every week for sixteen weeks and published addresses and sermons to list. His latest important theology is entitled, "My Faith in an address on Church Unity," delivered July, 1920, to be published in Tom



The Son Avenger, by Sigrid Undset. Translated from the Norwegian by Arthur G. Chater. \$2.00. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

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of an immense stone. There are things of interest even out here, and an embarrassment of riches in the main room.

Here the bookshelves that line the wall are broken only to make room for another great epoch in literature. There are busts and medallions and various bits of furniture, and some large pieces, and guns and swords, and everything one can possibly think of or desire to see, and always there are the books. Many of these volumes are the only ones known, to date, to be in existence—among them some eighty volumes of Lincoln's own law library, a copy of a Webster's dictionary that Lincoln left one night in a drug store into which he had gone to get some candy for his wife and the boys. Here is a collection of the sermons preached at the time of the President's assassination—more than three hundred of them.

And, in a safe, are the more valuable things of the collection, which Dr. Barton takes out and lets one handle, with a reverence that brings the Great Good Man very near. That is the title—"The Great Good Man"—of a book about Lincoln which was published in 1927, and which Dr. Barton has dedicated

To  
The Boys and Girls of America  
Nine of Them (Especially)

Some of these nine, if not all of them, are grand-children, and most of them live nearby. Some of them are the children of Bruce Barton, worthy son of a worthy father, head of one of the biggest advertising companies in the country, and author of "The Book Nobody Knows," "The Man Nobody Knows," and magazine articles all with the touch of the spiritual and the common sense that makes such spirituality practical, that the son inherited from his father.

The father, Dr. William E. Barton, spends his year in divided, delightful interests some of his time abroad; his

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Dr. Barton is now at work on an important work in two volumes on a period of Lincoln's career which has been too little studied by the biographers. The exact title not yet determined.

His first book, published while he was still in the theological seminary, was a story of the Kentucky mountains named "The Wind-Up of the Big Meeting on No-Business," and was followed by and included in a larger work called "Life in the Hills of Kentucky." Stories of Kentucky mountain life alternated with studies in Church History, including among the latter, "The Early Ecclesiastical History of the Western Reserve." His most noted mountain stories were, "A Hero in Homespun; a Tale of the Loyal South," and "Pine Knot; a Tale of the Anti-Slavery South." Some works of historical fiction for young people are still in print, including, "The Prairie Schooner, a Story of the Black Hawk War," and "When Boston Braved the King, a Story of the Boston Tea Party." A juvenile entitled "The Story of a Pumpkin Pie" appeared simultaneously with two volumes on "The Psalms and Their Story." His little treatments on popular philosophy have extended to five volumes of the Parables of Sated the Sage, one of which has appeared every week for sixteen years. His articles and published addresses and sermons are too numerous to list. His latest important book in the field of theology is entitled "My Faith in Immortality." His address on Church Unity, delivered in England in July, 1930, is to be published in London.

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to his departure.  
His successor as pastor of the Colleside church is Jason Noble Pierce, formerly pastor of the church which President Coolidge attended in Washington.

**Once Circuit Rider.**

Dr. Barton began his career as a circuit rider in Southern states and progressed until he had carved his name on the tablets of three fields—ministry, writing and lecturing.

As pastor of the First Congregational church of Oak Park, Ill., for 25 years, he established a reputation as a clergyman possessed of humorous understanding, and one who dealt in realism and abhorred sham.

As an author he was most widely known for his works on Abraham Lincoln, gaining an international reputation as an authority on the Great Emancipator. His researches brought to light much material on the martyred President that hitherto had been unknown; they served, too, to tear away the veil of mystery and fabrication which had surrounded the rail-splitter's origin and personal life.

As a lecturer he was known as an able, interesting and convincing speaker whose platform philosophy and epigrams delighted his audience.

Although revering Lincoln devotedly, Dr. Barton followed facts wheresoever they might lead. One consequence was that his "True Story of Lincoln's Letter to Mrs. Bixby," published in 1926, showed that this famous epistle to the mother of five supposed war heroes was "a beautiful blunder," Lincoln having been hoaxed into writing it. Carl Sandburg, Chicago, poet and himself an authority on Lincoln, said of one of the other Barton books, "The Fraternity of Abraham Lincoln:"

"It provides a bullwark of facts that is a resource to anybody who prefers to have what is known rather than what is guessed at and wagged lazily on careless tongues."

**Dissipated Rumors.**

Dr. Barton was credited, in this book with having dissipated much of the gossip and rumors concerning Lincoln's forebears and in another, "The Women Lincoln Loved" with having made lucid and understandable the martyr's own love affairs and his general attitude toward womanhood.

Determined to have a college education, he worked in the wheat fields, saved his wages and in 1881 enrolled in Berea College, Kentucky. There was born his desire to enter the ministry and immediately after his graduation in 1895 with the degree of B.S., he was ordained to the Congregational ministry. Immediately too he married Esther Treat Bushnell, of Johnsonville, Ohio, a teacher in Berea, departing with his bride for his first charge at Robbins, Tenn.

Two years' experience there determined him to return to school, and he landed on the campus of the theological seminary at Oberlin, Ohio, with his wife, infant son, Bruce, two negro waifs whom he had taken in charge, and a horse and a cow. He worked his way through Oberlin, getting considerable help from a pastorate at Litchfield, Ohio, which lasted until his winning of the degree of bachelor of divinity in 1899.

**Pulpit Orator**

Next he was pastor of a church at Wellin, an Ohio, for three years, going thence to the Shawmut Congregational church of Boston. Six years' service at Boston ended in 1899 when he accepted the call to Oak Park. His work there lasted a quarter of a century, established him as one of the denomination's leading ministers and pulpit orators and gained him wider recognition when he was named one of the

He will represent Vanderbilt University, the Colleside Congregational church which Dr. Barton organized and was pastor for two years, and also the Atlanta Theological Seminary Foundation with which Dr. Barton was associated while here, and of which Dr. Campbell is president.

While Dr. Barton was in Nashville, he returned to Robbins, Tenn., where he served his first pastorate, and dedicated a new church on the site where he first preached. It was at Robbins also that his noted son, Bruce Barton, was born.

