



Behind the Scenes: Or, Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House

Elizabeth Keckley

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The remarkable story of the former slave who became Mary Todd Lincoln's dressmaker and closest confidante

Born into slavery in Virginia, Elizabeth Keckley was whipped, sexually abused, and separated from her mother for long stretches of time. When her master eventually settled in St. Louis, Missouri, Keckley resolved to buy her freedom. She put to use her talents as a seamstress and found patrons among the wives of the city's elite, eventually earning enough money to move with her young son to Washington, DC.

In the nation's capital, Keckley started her own business and soon had commissions from the wives of Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis, Stephen A. Douglas, and Edwin Stanton. Hired by Mary Todd Lincoln to be her personal modiste, Keckley formed a close friendship with the first lady, a relationship strengthened by the tragedies they endured together, including the deaths of their sons and the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln.

Published to great controversy in 1868, *Behind the Scenes* offers an intimate and revealing portrait of life inside the White House as well as the stirring story of one woman's fight to rise above the horrors of slavery. Frequently cited in studies of the Civil War and biographies of the Lincolns, it is a must read for students of American history.

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