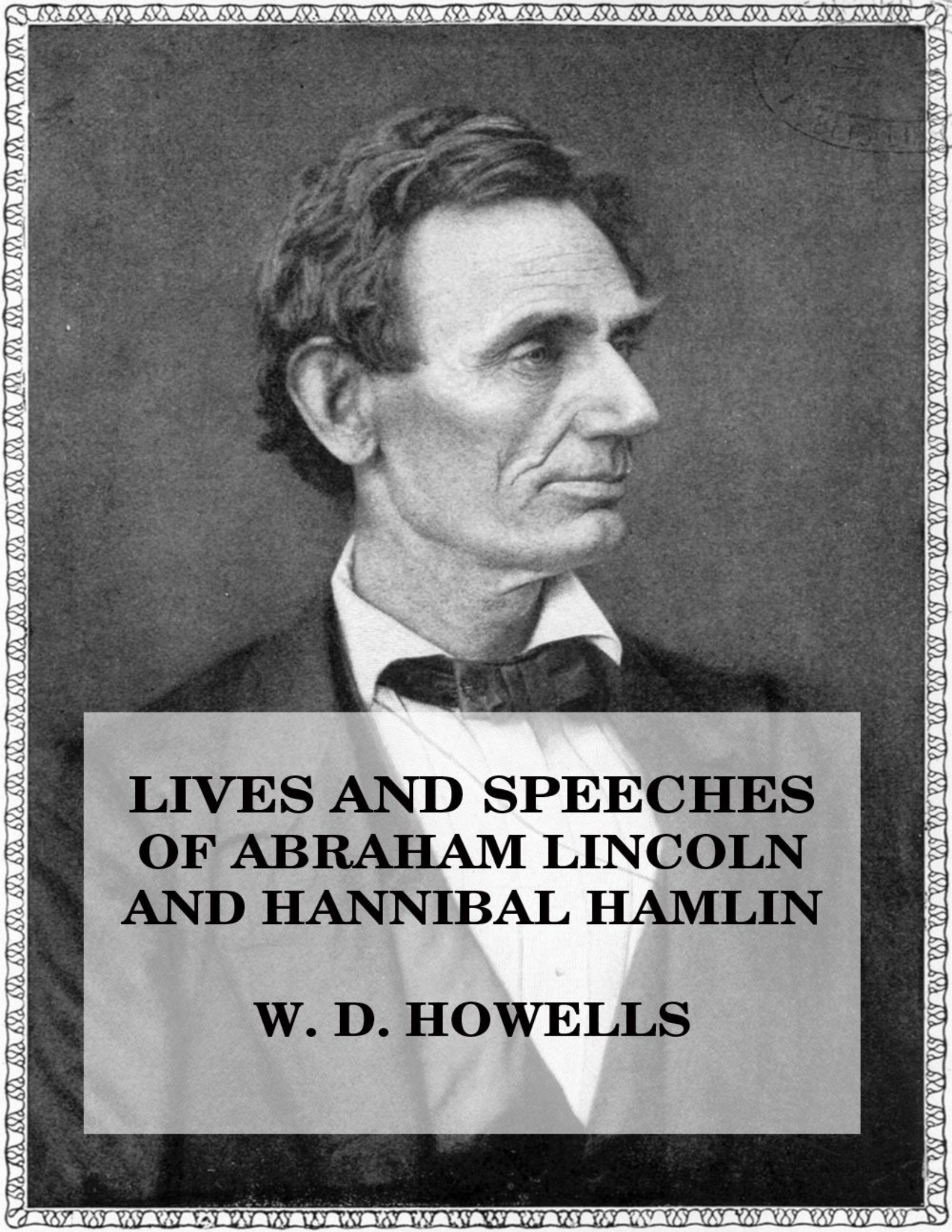

LIVES AND SPEECHES OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND HANNIBAL HAMLIN

W. D. HOWELLS

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Inhalt:

LIFE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

BY W. D. HOWELLS.

PREFACE.

WHEN one has written a hurried book, one likes to dwell upon the fact, that if the time had not been wanting one could have made it a great deal better.

This fact is of the greatest comfort to the author, and not of the slightest consequence to anybody else.

It is perfectly reasonable, therefore, that every writer should urge it.

A work which seeks only to acquaint people with the personal history of a man for whom they are asked to cast their votes-and whose past ceases to concern them in proportion as his present employs them-will not be numbered with those immortal books which survive the year of their publication.

It does not challenge criticism; it fulfills the end of its being if it presents facts and incidents in a manner not altogether barren of interest.

It is believed that the following biographical sketch of ABRAHAM LINCOLN will be found reliable. The information upon which the narrative is based, has been derived chiefly from the remembrance of MR. LINCOLN'S old friends, and may, therefore, be considered authentic. It is hardly necessary to add, that no one but the writer is responsible for his manner of treating events and men.

CHAPTER I.

IT is necessary that every American should have an indisputable grandfather, in order to be represented in the Revolutionary period by actual ancestral service, or connected with it by ancestral reminiscence. Further back than a grandfather few can go with satisfaction. Everything lies wrapped in colonial obscurity and confusion; and you have either to claim that the Smiths came over in the Mayflower, or that the Joneses were originally a Huguenot family of vast wealth and the gentlest blood; or that the Browns are descended from the race of Powhattan in the direct line; or you are left in an extremely embarrassing uncertainty as to the fact of great-grandparents.

We do not find it profitable to travel far into the past in search of Abraham Lincoln's ancestry. There is a dim possibility that he is of the stock of the New England Lincolns, of Plymouth colony; but the noble science of heraldry is almost obsolete.in this country, none of Mr. Lincoln's family seems to have been aware of the preciousness of long pedigrees, so that the records are meagre. The first that is known of his forefathers is that they were Quakers, who may have assisted in those shrewd bargains which honest William Penn drove with the Indians, for we find them settled at an early day in the old county of Berks, in Pennsylvania, where doubtless some of their descendants yet remain.

Whether these have fallen away from the calm faith of their ancestors is not a matter of history, but it is certain that the family from which the present Abraham Lincoln derives his lineage, long ago ceased to be Quaker in everything but its devout Scriptural names. His

grandfather, (anterior to whom is incertitude, and absolute darkness of names and dates,) was born in Rockingham county, Virginia, whither part of the family had emigrated from Pennsylvania; and had four brothers, patriarchally and apostolically named Isaac, Jacob, John, and Thomas; himself heading the list as Abraham Lincoln.

The descendants of Jacob and John, if any survive, still reside in Virginia; Thomas settled in the Cumberland region, near the adjunction of North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia, and very probably his children's children may there be found. Late in the last century, Abraham, with his wife and five children, removed from Rockingham to Kentucky, at a time when the border was the scene of savage warfare between the Indians and the whites, and when frontier life was diversified by continual incursions, repulsions, and reprisals, on one side and on the other. In one of these frequent invasions, Abraham Lincoln was killed by the Indians, who stole upon him while he was at work and shot him. There is historical mention made of an Indian expedition to Hardin county, Kentucky, in 1781, which resulted in the massacre of some of the settlers; but the date of Lincoln's death is fixed some three years later, and there is no other account of it than family tradition.

His wife, his three sons and two daughters survived him; but the dispersion of his family soon took place; the daughters marrying, and the sons seeking their fortunes in different localities. Of the latter, Thomas Lincoln, the father of Abraham Lincoln of to-day, was the youngest, and doubtless felt more severely than the rest the loss which had befallen them. They were poor, even for that rude time and country; and as a child, Thomas made acquaintance only with hardship and privation. He was a wandering, homeless boy, working when he could find work, and enduring when he could not. He grew up without education; his sole accomplishment in chirography being his own clumsy signature. At twenty-eight he married Lucy

Hanks, and settled in Hardin county, where, on the 12th of February, 1809, ABRAHAM LINCOLN was born.

Lincoln's mother was, like his father, Virginian; but beyond this, little or nothing is known of her. From both his parents young Lincoln inherited an iron constitution and a decent poverty. From his father came that knack of story-telling, which has made him so delightful among acquaintances, and so irresistible in his stump and forensic drolleries. It is a matter of some regret that the information with regard to Thomas Lincoln and his wife is so meager. The information is, however, not altogether necessary to the present history, and the conjecture to which one is tempted would be as idle as impertinent. It is certain that Lincoln cherished, with just pride, a family repute for native ability, and alluded to it in after life, when he felt the first impulses of ambition, and began in earnest his struggle with the accidents of ignorance and poverty.

A younger brother of Abraham's died in infancy; and a sister, older than himself, married and died many years ago. With her he attended school during his early childhood in Kentucky, and acquired the alphabet, and other rudiments of education. The schooling which Abraham then received from the books and birch of Zachariah Riney and Caleb Hazel, (of pedagogic memory,) and afterward from Azel W. Dorsey, and one or two others in Indiana, amounted in time to nearly a year, and cannot be otherwise computed. It is certain, however, that this brief period limits his scholastic course. Outside of it, his education took place through the rough and wholesome experiences of border life, the promptings of a restless ambition, and a profound love of knowledge for its own sake. Under these influences, he has ripened into a hardy physical manhood, and acquired a wide and thorough intelligence, without the aid of schools or preceptors.

In the autumn of 1816, when Abraham was eight years old, his father determined to quit Kentucky. Already the evil

influences of slavery were beginning to be felt by the poor and the non-slaveholders. But the emigration of Thomas Lincoln is, we believe, to be chiefly attributed to the insecurity of the right by which he held his Kentucky land; for, in those days, land-titles were rather more uncertain than other human affairs. Abandoning his old home, and striking through the forests in a northwesterly direction, he fixed his new dwelling-place in the heart of the " forest primeval" of what is now Spencer county, Indiana. The dumb solitude there had never echoed to the ax, and the whole land was a wilderness.

The rude cabin of the settler was hastily erected, and then those struggles and hardships commenced which are the common trials of frontier life, and of which the story has been so often repeated. Abraham was a hardy boy, large for his years, and with his ax did manful service in clearing the land. Indeed, with that implement, he literally hewed out his path to manhood; for, until he was twenty-three, the ax was seldom out of his hand, except in the intervals of labor, or when it was exchanged for the plow, the hoe, or the sickle. His youthful experiences in this forest life did not differ from those familiar to many others. As an adventurous boy, no doubt the wood was full of delight and excitement to him.

No doubt he hunted the coon, trapped the turkey, and robbed the nest of the pheasant. As a hunter with the rifle, however, he did not acquire great skill, for he has never excelled an exploit of his eighth year, when he shot the leader of a flock of turkeys which ventured within sight of the cabin during his father's absence.

The family had hardly been two years in their new home when it was desolated by the death of Abraham's mother. This heavy loss was afterward partially repaired by the marriage of his father to Mrs. Sally Johnston, of Elizabethtown, Kentucky. She was the parent of three children by a former husband, and was always a good and

affectionate mother to Thomas Lincoln's motherless son. The Lincolns continued to live in Spencer county, until 1830, nothing interrupting the even tenor of Abraham's life, except in his nineteenth year, a flat-boat trip to New Orleans. He and a son of the owner composed the crew, and without other assistance, voyaged

"Down the beautiful river,
Past the Ohio shore, and past the mouth of the Wabash,
Into the golden stream of the broad and swift Mississippi,"

Trafficking here and there, in their course, with the inhabitants, and catching glimpses of the great world so long shut out by the woods. One night, having tied up their "cumbrous boat," near a solitary plantation on the sugar coast, they were attacked and boarded by seven stalwart negroes; but Lincoln and his comrade, after a severe contest in which both were hurt, succeeded in beating their assailants and driving them from the boat. After which they weighed what anchor they had, as speedily as possible, and gave themselves to the middle current again. With this sole adventure, Lincoln resumed his quiet backwoods life in Indiana.

Four years afterward, on the first of March, 1830, his father determined to emigrate once more, and the family abandoned the cabin which had been their home so long, and set out for Illinois. The emigrant company was made up of Thomas Lincoln's family, and the families of Mrs. Lincoln's two sons-in-law. Their means of progress and conveyance were ox-wagons, one of which Abraham Lincoln drove. Before the month was elapsed, they had arrived at Macon county, Illinois, where they remained a short time, and Lincoln's family " located" on some new land, about ten miles northwest of Decatur, on the north bank of the Sangamon river, at a junction of forest and prairie land.

Here the father and son built a log-cabin, and split rails enough to fence in their land. It is supposed that these are the rails which have since become historic; though they were by no means the only ones which the robust young backwoodsman made. Indeed, there are other particular rails* which dispute a celebrity somewhat indifferent to the sincere admirer of Mr. Lincoln. The work done was in the course of farm labor, and went to the development of Mr. Lincoln's muscle. Otherwise it is difficult to perceive how it has affected his career.

* *Mr. George Close, the partner of Lincoln in the rail-splitting business, says that Lincoln was, at this time, a farm laborer, working from day to day, for different people, chopping wood, mauling rails, or doing whatever was to be done. The country was poor, and hard work was the common lot; the heaviest share falling to young unmarried men, with whom it was a continual struggle to earn a livelihood. Lincoln and Mr. Close made about one thousand rails together, for James Hawks and William Miller, receiving their pay in homespun clothing. Lincoln's bargain with Miller's wife, was, that he should have one yard of brown jeans, (richly dyed with walnut bark,) for every four hundred rails made, until he should have enough for a pair of trowsers. As Lincoln was already of great altitude, the number of rails that went to the acquirement of his pantaloons was necessarily immense.*

CHAPTER II.

IN his time, Denton Offutt was a man of substance; an enterprising and adventurous merchant, trading between the up-river settlements and the city of New Orleans, and fitting out frequent fiat-boat expeditions to that cosmopolitan port, where the French voyageur and the rude hunter that trapped the beaver on the Osage and Missouri, met the polished old-world exile, and the tongues of France, Spain, and England made babel in the streets. In view of his experience, it is not too extravagant to picture Denton Offutt as a backwoods Ulysses, wise beyond the home-keeping pioneers about him"' Forever roaming with a hungry heart," bargaining with the Indians, and spoiling them, doubtless, as was the universal custom in those times; learning the life of the wild Mississippi towns, with their lawless frolics, deep potations, and reckless gambling; meeting under his own roof-tree the many-negroed planter of the sugar-coast, and the patriarchal creole of Louisiana; ruling the boatman who managed his craft, and defying the steamboat captain that swept by the slow broad-horn with his stately palace of paint and gilding; with his body inured to toil and privation, and with all his wits sharpened by traffic; such, no doubt, was Denton Offutt, who had seen —:

Cities of men,
And manners, climates, councils, governments,"

and such was one of Lincoln's earliest friends. He quickly discovered the sterling qualities of honesty and fidelity, and the higher qualities of intellect which lay hid under the young Kentuckian's awkward exterior, and he at once took

Lincoln into his employment. He was now about sending another fiat-boat to New Orleans, and he engaged Lincoln, and the husband of one of Lincoln's step-sisters, together with their comrade, John Hanks, to take charge of his craft for the voyage from Beardstown, in Illinois, to the Crescent City.

In this winter of 1830-31, a deep snow, long remembered in Illinois, covered the whole land for many weeks, and did not disappear until the first of March, when the waters of the thaw inundated the country. Overland travel from Macon county to Beardstown was rendered impossible; Lincoln, and his relative, therefore, took a canoe and descended the Sangamon river to Springfield, where they found Offutt. He had not succeeded in getting a fiat-boat at Beardstown, as he expected; but with innumerable flat-boats growing up in their primal element of timber about him, he was not the man to be baffled by the trifling consideration that he had no flatboat built. He offered to Lincoln and each of his friends, twelve dollars a month for the time they should be occupied in getting out lumber, and making the boat. The offer was accepted. The ax did its work; the planks were sawed with a whip-saw; Denton's ark was put together, and the trip to New Orleans triumphantly and profitably made.

On his return to Illinois, Lincoln found that his father had (in pursuance of a previous intention) removed from Macon, and was now living in Coles county. His relative rejoined his family there; but New Salem, on the Sangamon river, became the home of Lincoln, whose "' location " there was accidental rather than otherwise. He was descending the river with another flat-boat for Offutt, and near New Salem grounded on a dam. An old friend and ardent admirer, who made his acquaintance on this occasion, says that Lincoln was standing in the water on the dam, when he first caught sight of him, devoting all his energies to the release of the boat. His dress at this time consisted of a

pair of blue jeans trousers indefinitely rolled up, a cotton shirt, striped white and blue, (of the sort known in song and tradition as hickory,) and a buckeye-chip hat for which a demand of twelve and a half cents would have been exorbitant.

The future president failed to dislodge his boat; though he did adopt the ingenious expedient of lightening it by boring a hole in the end that hung over the dam and letting out the water-an incident which Mr. Douglas humorously turned to account in one of his speeches. The boat stuck there stubborn, immovable.

Offutt, as has been seen, was a man of resource and decision. He came ashore from his flat-boat and resolutely rented the very mill of which the dam had caused his disaster, together with an old store-room, which he filled with a stock of goods, and gave in the clerkly charge of Abraham Lincoln, with the munificent salary of fifteen dollars a month.

Lincoln had already made his first speech. General W. L. D. Ewing, and a politician named Posey, who afterward achieved notoriety in the Black Hawk war, had addressed the freemen of Macon the year previous, " on the issues of the day." Mr. Posey had, however, in violation of venerable precedent and sacred etiquette, failed to invite the sovereigns to drink something. They were justly indignant, and persuaded Lincoln to reply, in the expectation that he would possibly make himself offensive to Posey. Lincoln, however, took the stump with characteristic modesty, and begging his friends not to laugh if he broke down, treated very courteously the two speakers who had preceded him, discussed questions of politics, and in his peroration eloquently pictured the future of Illinois. There was sense and reason in his arguments, and his imaginative flight tickled the State pride of the Illinoisans. It was declared that Lincoln had made the best speech of the day; and be, to his great astonishment, found himself a prophet among

those of his own household, while his titled fellow-orator cordially complimented his performance.

At New Salem, he now found the leisure and the opportunity to initiate a system of self-education. At last, he had struggled to a point, where he could not only take breath, but could stoop and drink from those springs of knowledge, which a hopeless poverty, incessant toil, and his roving, uncertain life, had, till then, forbidden to his lips.

There seems never to have been any doubt of his ability among Lincoln's acquaintances, any more than there was a doubt of his honesty, his generosity, and gentleheartedness. When, therefore, he began to make rapid progress in his intellectual pursuits, it surprised none of them-least of all, Lincoln's shrewd patron, Offutt, who had been known to declare, with pardonable enthusiasm., that Lincoln was the smartest man in the United States.

The first branch of learning which he took up, was English grammar, acquiring that science from the dry and meager treatise of Kirkham. The book was not to be had in the immediate vicinity, and Lincoln walked seven or eight miles to borrow a copy. He then devoted himself to the study with the whole strength of his resolute nature; and in three weeks he had gained a fair practical knowledge of the grammar. No doubt the thing was hard to the uncultivated mind, though that mind was of great depth and fertility. One of his friends relates that Lincoln used to take him aside, and require explanations of the sententious Kirkham, whenever he visited New Salem.

This young backwoodsman had the stubborn notion that because the Lincolns had always been people of excellent sense, he, a Lincoln, might become a person of distinction. He had talked, he said, with men who were regarded as great, and he did not see where they differed so much from others. He reasoned, probably, that the secret of their success lay in the fact of original capacity, and untiring industry. He was conscious of his own powers; he was a

logician, and could not resist logical conclusions. If he studied, why might not he achieve?

And Kirkham fell before him. One incident of his study was a dispute with the learned man of the place, -a very *savant* among the unlettered pioneers - in regard to a grammatical nicety, and the question being referred to competent authority, it was decided in Lincoln's favor, to his pride and exultation.

Concluding his grammatical studies with Kirkham, he next turned his attention to mathematics, and took up a work on surveying, with which he made himself thoroughly acquainted.

So great was his ardor in study, at this time, that shrewd suspicions with regard to Offutt's clerk got abroad; the honest neighbors began to question whether one who would voluntarily spend all his leisure in

"poring over miserable books,"

could be altogether right in his mind.

The peculiar manner in which he afterward pursued his law studies, was not calculated to allay popular feeling. He bought an old copy of Blackstone, one day, at auction, in Springfield, and on his return to New Salem, attacked the work with characteristic energy.

His favorite place of study was a wooded knoll near New Salem, where he threw himself under a wide-spreading oak, and expansively made a reading desk of the hillside. Here he would pore over Blackstone day after day, shifting his position as the sun rose and sank, so as to keep in the shade, and utterly unconscious of everything but the principles of common law. People went by, and he took no account of them; the salutations of acquaintances were returned with silence, or a vacant stare; and altogether the manner of the absorbed student was not unlike that of one distraught.

Since that day, his habits of study have changed somewhat, but his ardor remains unabated, and he is now regarded as one of the best informed, as he is certainly the ablest, man in Illinois.

When practicing law, before his election to Congress, a copy of Burns was his inseparable companion on the circuit; and this he perused so constantly, that it is said he has now by heart every line of his favorite poet. He is also a diligent student of Shakespeare, "to know whom is a liberal education."

The bent of his mind, however, is mathematical and metaphysical, and he is therefore pleased with the absolute and logical method of Poe's tales and sketches, in which the problem of mystery is given, and wrought out into every-day facts by processes of cunning analysis. It is said that he suffers no year to pass without the perusal of this author.

Books, of all sorts, the eager student devoured with an insatiable appetite; and newspapers were no less precious to him. The first publication for which he ever subscribed, was the Louisville Journal, which he paid for when he could secure the intellectual luxury only at the expense of physical comfort.

It was a day of great rejoicing with Lincoln, when President Jackson appointed him postmaster at New Salem. He was a Whig, but the office was of so little pecuniary significance, that it was bestowed irrespective of politics. Lincoln, indeed, was the only person in the community whose accomplishments were equal to the task of making out the mail returns for the Department.

An acquaintance says that the Presidency can never make our candidate happier than the post-office did then. He foresaw unlimited opportunities for reading newspapers, and of satisfying his appetite for knowledge.

But it was not through reading alone that Lincoln cultivated his intellect. The grave and practical American mind has always found entertainment and profit in

disputation, and the debating clubs are what every American youth is subject to. They are useful in many ways. They safely vent the mental exuberance of youth; those whom destiny intended for the bar and the Senate, they-assist; those who have a mistaken vocation to oratory, they mercifully extinguish.

Even in that day, and that rude country, where learning was a marvelous and fearful exception, the debating school flourished, in part as a literary institution, and in part as a rustic frolic.

Lincoln delighted in practicing polemics, as it was called, and used to walk six and seven miles through the woods to attend the disputations in his neighborhood. Of course, many of the debates were infinitely funny, for the disputants were, frequently, men without education. Here, no doubt, Lincoln stored his mind with anecdote and comic illustration, while he delighted his auditors with his own wit and reason, and added to his growing popularity.

This popularity had been early founded by a stroke of firmness and bravery on Lincoln's part, when he first came into Sangamon county.

He had returned from that famous voyage made with Offutt's impromptu -flat-boat to New Orleans, and descending the Sangamon river, had, as has been already related, fixed upon the little village of New Salem, by fortuity rather than intention, as his future home.

Nevertheless, he had first to undergo an ordeal to which every new comer was subjected, before his residence could be generally acknowledged. Then, when it was much more necessary to be equal parts of horse and alligator, and to be able to vanquish one's weight in wild cats, than now, there flourished, in the region of New Salem, a band of jolly, roistering blades, calling themselves " Clary's Grove Boys," who not only gave the law to the neighborhood, as Regulators, but united judicial to legislative functions, by

establishing themselves a tribunal to try the stuff of every one who came into that region. They were, at once, the protectors and the scourge of the whole country-side, and must have been some such company as that of Brom Bones, in Sleepy Hollow, upon whom the " neighbors all looked with a mixture of awe, admiration, and good-will." Their mode of receiving a stranger was to appoint someone of their number to wrestle with him, fight with him, or run a foot-race with him, according to their pleasure, and his appearance.

As soon as young Lincoln appeared, the "' Clary's Grove Boys" determined to signalize their prowess anew by a triumph over a stalwart fellow, who stood six feet three inches without stockings. The leader and champion of their band, (one Jack Armstrong, who seems himself to have been another Brom Bones,) challenged Lincoln to a wrestling-match. When the encounter took place, the "' Clary's Grove Boy" found that he had decidedly the worst half of the affair, and the bout would have ended in his ignominious defeat, had not all his fellow-boys come to his assistance. Lincoln then refused to continue the unequal struggle. He would wrestle with them fairly, or he would run a foot-race, or if any of them desired to fight, he generously offered to thrash that particular individual. He looked every word he said, and none of the Boys saw fit to accept his offer.

Jack Armstrong was willing to call the match drawn; and Lincoln's fearless conduct had already won the hearts of his enemies. He was invited to become one of their company. His popularity was assured. The Boys idolized him, and when the Black Hawk war broke out, he was chosen their captain, and remained at their head throughout the campaign. Their favor still pursued him, and, at the close of the war, he was elected to the Legislature, through the influence created by his famous wrestling-match.

Many of the Boys are now distinguished citizens of Illinois, and are among Lincoln's warmest friends; though they acknowledge that if he had shown signs of cowardice when they came to the rescue of their champion, it would have fared grievously with him.

Indeed, this seems to have been one of the most significant incidents of his early life. It gave him reputation for courage necessary in a new country, and opened a career to him which his great qualities have enabled him to pursue with brilliance and success. (*Jack Armstrong, in particular, became a fast friend of Lincoln. It is related that he bestowed a terrible pummeling on a person who once ventured to speak slightingly of Lincoln in his presence. Afterward, Lincoln had an opportunity to make a full return to Armstrong for his friendship. A man had been killed in a riot at camp-meeting, in Menard county, and suspicion fell upon a son of Jack Armstrong-a wild young scapegrace, who was known to have taken part in the affair. He was arrested, and brought to trial for murder. Lincoln, who seems to have believed firmly in the young man's innocence, volunteered in his defense, and throwing aside the well-connected links of circumstantial evidence against him, made a most touching and eloquent appeal to the sympathies of the jury. There was that confidence in Lincoln, that absolute faith, that he would never say anything but the truth, to achieve any end, that the jury listened and were convinced. Young Armstrong was acquitted; and Lincoln refused to accept any reward for his defense.)*

CHAPTER III.

IN 1832, Black Hawk's war broke out. In the light of history, this war seems to have been a struggle involuntarily commenced by the Indians against the white settlers. A treaty had been made by the Sacs and Foxes, ceding to the United States all the land east of the Mississippi-a treaty which the Sac chief, Black Hawk, declared to be illegal. A war with the Sacs ensued, which was terminated by treaty in 1825. Meanwhile Illinois had been admitted to the Union, and the country had filled up with whites, who extended the lines of their settlements around the country of the Indians, and pressed closer and closer upon them. Outrages, on one part and on the other, were of constant occurrence; and in revenge for some wrong, a party of Chippewa Indians fired upon a keel-boat conveying stores to Fort Snelling. Through mistake or injustice, Black Hawk was arrested for this, and lay imprisoned a whole year before he could be brought to trial and acquitted. After his release, it was believed that he engaged in negotiations to unite all the Indians, from Rock River to the Gulf of Mexico, in a general war upon the whites. The alarm, of course, was very great, and active preparations for hostilities were made. Regular forces were marched against the Indians at Rock Island, and large bodies of militia were called into the field. It appears that Black Hawk never succeeded in rallying about him more than two or three hundred warriors of his tribe; the Indians being desirous of peace, and willing to abide by the treaty of the chief Keokuk, who favored the cession of land. Indeed, Black Hawk himself attempted to treat with the

whites several times when he met them, and only fought after his flags of truce had been fired upon. The war was brought to a close by the battle of Bad-Ax, in which glorious action a great number of squaws and papooses, not to mention several warriors, were killed. The Indians then retreated beyond the Mississippi, and Black Hawk was brought a prisoner into the camp of the whites. He made the grand tour of the Atlantic cities, where he received the usual attentions bestowed upon lions of every tribe, and returning to the West a sadder and a wiser Indian, passed into oblivion.

There cannot be any doubt that the war was a very serious matter to the people who were engaged in it; and there is as little doubt that their panic exaggerated their danger, and rendered them merciless in their determination to expel the Indians.

Offutt's business had long been failing, and at the time the war broke out, Lincoln had the leisure, as well as the patriotism, to join one of the volunteer companies which was formed in the neighborhood of New Salem. To his unbounded surprise and satisfaction, he was chosen captain by his fellow-soldiers. The place of rendezvous was at Richland, and as soon as the members of the company met, the election took place. It was expected that the captaincy would be conferred on a man of much wealth and consequence among the people, for whom Lincoln had once worked. He was a harsh and exacting employer, and had treated the young man, whom everybody else loved and esteemed, with the greatest rigor; a course which had not increased his popularity. The method of election was for the candidates to step out of the ranks, when the electors advanced and joined the man whom they chose to lead them. Three-fourths of the company at once went to Lincoln; and when it was seen how strongly the tide was set in his favor, the friends of the rival candidate deserted him, one after another, until he was left standing almost

alone. He was unspeakably mortified and disappointed, while Lincoln's joy was proportionably great.

The latter served three months in the Black Hawk war, and made acquaintance with the usual campaigning experiences, but was in no battle. He still owns the lands in Iowa that he located with warrants for service performed in the war.

An incident of the campaign, in which Lincoln is concerned, illustrates a trait of his character no less prominent than his qualities of integrity and truth. One day an old Indian wandered into Lincoln's camp, and was instantly seized by his men. The general opinion was that he ought to be put to death. They were in the field for the purpose of killing Indians, and to spare the slaughter of one that Providence had delivered into their hands was something of which these honest pioneers could not abide the thought. It was to little purpose that the wretched aborigine showed a letter signed by General Cass, and certifying him to be not only a model of all the savage virtues, but a sincere friend of the whites. He was about to be sacrificed, when Lincoln boldly declared that the sacrifice should not take place. He was at once accused of cowardice, and of a desire to conciliate the Indians. Nevertheless, he stood firm, proclaiming that even barbarians would not kill a helpless prisoner. If anyone thought him a coward, let him step out and be satisfied of his mistake, in any way he chose. As to this poor old Indian, he had no doubt he was all that the letter of General Cass affirmed; he declared that they should kill hint before they touched the prisoner. His argument, in fine, was so convincing, and his manner so determined, that the copper-colored ally of the whites was suffered to go his ways, and departed out of the hostile camp of his friends unhurt.

After his return from the wars, Lincoln determined to test the strength of his popularity, by offering himself as a candidate for the Legislature. Added to the goodwill which

had carried him into the captaincy, he had achieved a warmer place in the hearts of those who had followed his fortunes during the war, by his bravery, social qualities, and uprightness. He was warm-hearted and good-natured, and told his stories, of which he had numbers, in better style than any other man in the camp. No one was so fleet of foot; and in those wrestlings which daily enlivened the tedium of camp life, he was never thrown but once, and then by a man of superior science who was not his equal in strength. These were qualities which commended him to the people, and made him the favorite officer of the battalion.

Parties, at this time, were distinguished as Adams parties and Jackson parties, and in Lincoln's county the Jackson men were vastly in the ascendant. He was a stanch Adams man, and, being comparatively unknown in the remoter parts of the county, was defeated. In his own neighborhood the vote was almost unanimous in his favor; though he had only arrived from the war and announced himself as a candidate ten days before the election. Indeed, he received, at this election, one more vote in his precinct than both of the rival candidates for Congress together. (*The following is the vote taken from the poll-book in Springfield: For Congress-Jonathan H. Pugh, 179, and Joseph Duncan, 97. For Legislature-Lincoln, 277.*)

Defeated, but far from dismayed, Lincoln once more turned his attention to business. He was still poor, for though thrifty enough, he never could withstand the appeals of distress, nor sometimes refuse to become security for those who asked the use of his name. His first surveying had been done with a grape-vine instead of a chain, and having indorsed a note which was not paid, his compass was seized and sold. One James Short bought it and returned it to Lincoln. The surveyor of Sangamon county, John Calhoun, (since notorious for his candle-box concealment of the election returns for Kansas,) deputed to

Lincoln that part of the county in which he resided, and he now assumed the active practice of surveying, and continued to live upon the slender fees of his office until 1834, when he was elected to the Legislature by the largest vote cast for any candidate.

Before this election Lincoln had engaged and failed in merchandising on his own account. It is supposed that it was at New Salem that Lincoln, while a " clerk' in Offutt's store, first saw Stephen A. Douglas, and, probably, the acquaintance was renewed during Lincoln's proprietorship of the store which he afterward bought in the same place. (*Lincoln expressly stated, in reply to some badinage of Douglas, during the debates of 1858, that he never kept a grocery anywhere. Out West, a grocery is understood to be a place where the chief article of commerce is whisky. Lincoln's establishment was, in the Western sense, a store; that is, he sold tea, coffee, sugar, powder, lead, and other luxuries and necessaries of pioneer existence. Very possibly his store was not without the " elixir of life," with which nearly everybody renewed the flower of youth in those days; though this is not a matter of absolute history, nor perhaps of vital consequence.)*

One Reuben Radford was Lincoln's predecessor. He had fallen, by some means, into disfavor with Clary's Grove Boys, who, one evening, took occasion to break in the windows of his establishment. Reuben was discouraged. Perhaps it would not be going too far to allude to his situation as discouraging. At any rate, he told a young farmer, who came to trade with him the next day, that he was going to close out his business. What would Mr. Green give him for his stock? Mr. Green looked about him and replied, only half in earnest, Four hundred dollars. The offer was instantly accepted, and the business transferred to Mr. Green. On the following day Lincoln chanced to come in, and being informed of the transaction, proposed

that he and Green should invoice the stock, and see how much he had made. They found that it was worth about six hundred dollars, and Lincoln gave Mr. Green a hundred and twenty-five dollars for his bargain, while Green indorsed the notes of Lincoln and one Berry, to Radford for the remaining four hundred. Berry was a thriftless soul, it seems, and after a while the store fell into a chronic decay, and, in the idiom of the region, finally winked out.

Lincoln was moneyless, having previously invested his whole fortune in a surveyor's compass and books, and Berry was uncertain. Young Green was compelled to pay the notes given to Radford. He afterward removed to Tennessee, where he married, and was living in forgetfulness of his transaction with Lincoln, when he one day received a letter from that person, stating he was now able to pay back to Green the amount for which he had indorsed. Lincoln was by this time in the practice of the law, and it was with the first earnings of his profession, that he discharged this debt, principal and interest.

The moral need not be insisted on, and this instance is not out of the order of Abraham Lincoln's whole life. That the old neighbors and friends of such a man should regard him with an affection and faith little short of man-worship, is the logical result of a life singularly pure, and an integrity without flaw.

CHAPTER IV.

IT is seen that Abraham Lincoln was first elected to a seat in the Legislature, in 1834, in the face of the unpopularity of his political principles, by a larger vote than that given to any other candidate. As a legislator he served his constituents so well that he was three times afterward returned to his place; in 1836, in 1838, and in 1840. He then terminated his legislative career by a positive refusal to be again a candidate.

The period embraced by the eight years in which Lincoln represented Sangamon county, was one of the greatest material activity in Illinois. So early as 1820, the young State was seized with the "generous rage" for public internal improvements, then prevalent in New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, and in its sessions for a score of succeeding years, the Legislature was occupied by the discussion of various schemes for enhancing the prosperity of the State. The large canal uniting the waters of Lake Michigan and the Illinois river was completed at a cost of more than eight million. By a Board of Commissioners of Public Works, specially created, provisions were made for expensive improvements of the rivers Wabash, Illinois, Rock, Kaskaskia, and Little Wabash, and the great Western mail route from Vincennes to St. Louis. Under the charge of the same Board, six railroads connecting principal points were projected, and appropriations made for their completion at an immense outlay.

One effect of a policy so wild and extravagant was to sink the State in debt. Another was to attract vast emigration, and fill up her broad prairies with settlers. Individuals were

ruined; the corporate State became embarrassed; but benefits have resulted in a far greater degree than could have been hoped when the crash first came. It is not yet time to estimate the ultimate good to be derived from these improvements, though the immediate evil has been tangible enough.

The name of Abraham Lincoln is not found recorded in favor of the more visionary of these schemes; but he has always favored public improvements, and his voice was for whatever project seemed feasible and practical. During his first term of service, he was a member of the Committee on Public Accounts and Expenditures. He voted for a bill to incorporate agricultural societies; for the improvement of public roads; for the incorporation of various institutions of learning; for the construction of the Illinois and Michigan Canal; he always fostered the interests of public education, and favored low salaries for public officials. In whatever pertained to the local benefit of his own county, he was active and careful; but his record on this subject is of little interest to the general reader.

Lincoln's voice was ever for measures that relieved the struggling poor man from pecuniary or political difficulties; he had himself experienced these difficulties. He therefore supported resolutions for the removal of the property qualification in franchise, and for the granting of pre-emption rights to settlers on the public lands. He was the author of a measure permitting Revolutionary pensioners to loan their pension money without taxation. He advocated a bill exempting from execution Bibles, school-books, and mechanics' tools.

His first recorded vote against Stephen A. Douglas, was on the election of that politician to the Attorney-Generalship by the Legislature.

He twice voted for the Whig candidates for the United States Senate. Otherwise than in the election of Senators, State Legislatures were not then occupied with national

affairs, and it is difficult to find anything in Mr. Lincoln's legislative history which is of great national interest. There were no exciting questions, and Mr. Lincoln's speeches were few and brief.(*A protest from Mr. Lincoln appears on the journal of the House, in regard to some resolutions which had passed. In this protest he pronounces distinctly against slavery, and takes the first public step toward what is now Republican doctrine.*) He was twice the candidate (in 1838 and 1840) of the Whig minority for Speaker of the House.

In 1836, when Lincoln was first re-elected to the Legislature, Sangamon county, then of greater geographical importance than now, was represented by nine members, no one of whom was less than six feet in height-several of them considerably exceeding that altitude. This immensity of stature attracted attention, and the Sangamon members were at once nicknamed The Long-Nine, They were genial, hearty-humored fellows, famous whittlers, and distinguished spinners of yarns. They all boarded at the same place, and being of gregarious habits, spent their evenings together. Lincoln was the favorite of the circle; admired for his gift of storytelling, and highly, esteemed for his excellent qualities of head and heart, his intellectual shrewdness, his reliability, his good-nature, and generosity. The Illinois Legislature then held its sessions at Vandalia, and Lincoln used to perform his journeys between New Salem and the seat of government on foot, though the remaining eight of the Long-Nine traveled on horseback.

A pleasant story connected with this part of his political career is related by Hon. John D. Stuart. Lincoln and Stuart were both candidates for the Legislature in 1834. Stuart's election was conceded, while that of Lincoln was thought to be comparatively uncertain. The two candidates happened to be present together at a backwoods frolic, when some disaffected of Stuart's party took Lincoln aside, and offered to withdraw votes enough from Stuart to elect him. He

rejected the proposal, and at once disclosed the scheme to Stuart, declaring that he would not make such a bargain for any office.

It is by such manly and generous acts that Lincoln has endeared himself to all his old neighbors. It may be said of him without extravagance that he is beloved of all-even by those against whose interests he has conscientiously acted. When in the practice of the law he was never known to undertake a cause which he believed founded in wrong and injustice. "You are not strictly in the right," he said to a person who once wished him to bring a certain suit, and who now tells the story with profound admiration. "II might give the other parties considerable trouble, and perhaps beat them at law, but there would be no justice in it. I am sorry-I cannot undertake your case." "I never knew Lincoln to do a mean act in his life," said Stuart, the veteran lawyer, who first encouraged Lincoln to adopt his profession. "God never made a finer man," exclaimed the old backwoods-man, Close, when applied to for reminiscences of Lincoln. So by the testimony of all, and in the memory of everyone who has known him, Lincoln is a pure, candid, and upright man, unblemished by those vices which so often disfigure greatness, utterly incapable of falsehood, and without one base or sordid trait.

During the Legislative canvass of 1834, John D. Stuart advised Lincoln to study law, and after the election he borrowed some of Stuart's books, and began to read. Other warm and influential friends, (Wm. Butler, the present Treasurer of State in Illinois, was one of these,) came to Lincoln's material aid and encouragement, and assisted him to retrieve his early errors of generosity. With the support of these friends-for Lincoln is a man who could receive benefits as nobly as he conferred them-and the slender revenues of his surveyorship, he struggled through the term of his law studies, and was admitted to the bar in