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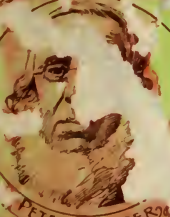


ABRAHAM LINCOLN



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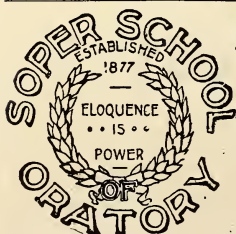
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SELF CULTURE

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JUNE, 1897

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THE EARLY YEARS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

BY GOLDWIN SMITH, D.C.L. (OXON), PROFESSOR OF CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY, CORNELL UNIVERSITY, N. Y.



OUR readers need not be afraid that we are going to bore them with the Slavery Question or the Civil War. We deal here not with the Martyr President, but with Lincoln in embryo, leaving the great man at the entrance of the grand scene.

After the murder, criticism, of course, was for a time impossible. Martyrdom was followed by canonization, and the popular heart could not be blamed for overflowing in hyperbole. The fallen chief "was Washington, he was Moses, and there were not wanting even those who likened him to the God and Redeemer of all the earth. These latter thought they discovered in his early origin, his kindly nature, his benevolent precepts, and the homely anecdotes in which he taught the people, strong points of resemblance between him and the Divine Son of Mary." A halo of myth naturally gathered round the cradle of this new Moses. Among other fables, it was believed that the President's family had fled from Kentucky to Indiana to escape the taint of Slavery. Thomas Lincoln, the father of Abraham, was migratory enough, but the course of his migrations was not determined by high moral motives, and we may safely affirm that had he ever found himself among the flesh-pots of Egypt, he would have stayed there, however deep the moral darkness might have been. He was a thriftless "ne'er do weel," who had very commonplace reasons for wandering away from

the miserable, solitary farm in Kentucky, on which his child first formed a sad acquaintance with life and nature, and which, as it happened, was not in the slave-owning region of the State. His decision appears to have been hastened by a "difficulty" he got into, which is set forth in one of the biographies of his son, to which we are indebted for many of the facts in this paper.*

Lincoln senior drifted to Indiana, and in a spot which was then an almost untrodden wilderness, built a *casa santa*, which his connection, Dennis Hanks, calls "that darned little half-faced camp" — a dwelling enclosed on three sides and open on the fourth, without a floor, and called a camp, it seems, because it was made of poles, not of logs. He afterwards exchanged the "camp" for the more ambitious "cabin;" but his cabin was "a rough, rough log one," made of unhewn timber, and without floor, door or window. In this "rough, rough" abode, his lanky, lean-visaged, awkward and somewhat pensive, though strong, hearty and patient son Abraham had a "rough, rough" life, and underwent experiences which, if they were not calculated to form a Pitt or a Turgot, were calculated to season a politician, and make him a winner in the tough struggle for existence, as well as to identify him with the people, faithful representation of whose aims, sentiments, tastes, pas-

* "The Life of Abraham Lincoln from his Birth to his Inauguration as President." By Ward H. Lamon.

sions and prejudices was the one thing needful to qualify him for obtaining the prize of his ambition.

"For two years Lincoln (the father) continued to live alone in the old way. He did not like to farm, and he never got much of his land under cultivation. His principal crop was corn; and this, with the game which a rifleman so expert would easily take from the woods around him, supplied his table." It does not appear that he employed any of his mechanical skill in completing and furnishing his own cabin. It has already been stated that the latter had no window, door or floor. The son slept in the loft, "to which he ascended by means of pins driven into holes in the wall."

Of his father's disposition, Abraham seems to have inherited at all events the dislike to labor, though his sounder moral nature prevented him from being an idler. His tendency to politics came from the same element of character as his father's preference for the rifle. In after-life, we are told, his mind "was filled with gloomy forebodings and strong apprehensions of impending evil, mingled with extravagant visions of personal grandeur and power." His melancholy, characterized by all his friends as "terrible," was closely connected with the cravings of his demagogic ambition, and the root of both was in him from a boy.

In the Indiana cabin Abraham's mother, whose maiden name was Nancy Hanks, died, far from medical aid, of the epidemic called milk sickness. She was preceded in death by her relatives, the Sparrows, who had succeeded the Lincolns in the "camp," and by many neighbors, whose coffins Thomas Lincoln made out of "green lumber cut with a whipsaw." Upon Nancy's death he took to his green lumber again and made a box for her. "There were about twenty persons at her funeral. They took her to the summit of a deeply wooded knoll, about half a mile southeast of the cabin, and laid her beside the Sparrows. If there were any burial ceremonies, they were of the briefest. The great trees were originally cut away to make a small cleared space for this primitive graveyard; but the young dogwoods have sprung up unopposed in great luxuriance, and in many instances the names of pilgrims to the burial place of the great Abraham Lin-

coln's mother are carved on their bark. With this exception, the spot is wholly unmarked. The grave never had a stone, nor even a board, at its head or its foot; and the neighbors still dispute as to which of these unsightly hollows contains the ashes of Nancy Lincoln." If Democracy in the New World sometimes stones the prophets, it is seldom guilty of building their sepulchres. Out of sight, off the stump, beyond the range of the interviewer, heroes and martyrs soon pass from the mind of a fast-living people; and weeds may grow out of the dust of Washington. But in this case what neglect has done good taste would have dictated; it is well that the dogwoods are allowed to grow unchecked over the wilderness grave.

Thirteen months after the death of his Nancy, Thomas Lincoln went to Elizabethtown, Kentucky, and suddenly presented himself to Mrs. Sally Johnston, who had in former days rejected him for a better match, but had become a widow. "Well, Mrs. Johnston, I have no wife and you have no husband, I came a purpose to marry you. I knowed you from a gal and you knowed me from a boy. I have no time to lose, and if you are willin', let it be done straight off." "Tommy, I know you well, and have no objection to marrying you; but I cannot do it straight off, as I owe some debts that must first be paid." They were married next morning, and the new Mrs. Lincoln, who owned, among other wondrous household goods, a bureau that cost forty dollars, and who had been led, it seems, to believe that her new husband was reformed and a prosperous farmer, was conveyed with her bureau to the smiling scene of his reformation and prosperity. Being, however, a sensible Christian woman, she made the best of a bad bargain, got her husband to put down a floor and hang doors and windows, made things generally decent, and was very kind to the children, especially to Abe, to whom she took a great liking, and who owed to his good stepmother what other heroes have owed to their mothers. "From that time on," according to his garrulous relative, Dennis Hanks, "he appeared to lead a new life." It seems to have been difficult to extract from him, "for campaign purposes," the incidents of his life before it took this happy turn.

He described his own education in a Congressional handbook as "defective." In Kentucky he occasionally trudged with his little sister, rather as an escort than as a school-fellow, to a school four miles off, kept by one Caleb Hazel, who could teach reading and writing after a fashion, and a little arithmetic, but whose great qualification for his office lay in his power and readiness "to whip the big boys." So far American respect for popular education as the key to success in life prevailed even in those wilds, and in such a family as that of Thomas Lincoln. Under the auspices of his new mother, Abraham began attending school again. The master was one Crawford, who taught not only reading, writing and arithmetic, but "manners."

Mr. Crawford, it seems, was a martinet in spelling, and one day he was going to punish a whole class for failing to spell *defied*, when Lincoln telegraphed the right letter to a young lady by putting his finger with a significant smile to his eye. Many years later, however, and after his entrance into public life, Lincoln himself spelt *apology* with a double p, *planning* with a single n, and *very* with a double r. His schooling was very irregular, his school days hardly amounting to a year in all, and such education as he had was picked up afterwards by himself. His appetite for mental food, however, was always strong, and he devoured all the books, few and not very select, which could be found in the neighborhood of "Pigeon Creek."

Equally strong was his passion for stump-oratory, the taste for which pervades the New World, even in the least intellectual districts, as the taste for church festivals pervades the people of Spain, or the taste for cricket the people of England. Abe's neighbor, John Romine, says "he was awful lazy. He worked for me; was always reading and thinking; used to get mad at him. He worked for me in 1829, pulling fodder. I say Abe was awful lazy, he would laugh and talk and crack jokes all the time; didn't love work, but did dearly love his pay." He liked to lie under a shade tree, or up in the loft of the cabin and read, cipher, or scribble. At night he ciphered by the light of the fire on the wooden fire shovel. He practiced stump oratory by repeating the sermons, and sometimes by preaching himself, to

his brothers and sister. His gifts in the rhetorical line were high. When it was announced in the harvest field that Abe had taken the stump, work was at an end.

Abe's first written composition appears to have been an essay against cruelty to animals, a theme the choice of which was at once indicative of his kindness of heart and practically judicious, since the young gentlemen in the neighborhood were in the habit of catching terrapins and putting hot coals upon their backs. The essay appears not to have been preserved, and we cannot say whether its author succeeded in explaining that ethical mystery—the love of cruelty in boys.

Society in the neighborhood of Pigeon Creek was of the thorough backwoods type; as coarse as possible, but hospitable and kindly, free from cant and varnish, and a better school of life than of manners, though, after all, the best manners are learned in the best school of life, and the school of life in which Abe studied was not the worst. He became a leading favorite, and his appearance, towering above the other hunting shirts, was always the signal for the fun to begun. His nature seems to have been, like many others, open alike to cheerful and to gloomy impressions. A main source of his popularity was the fund of stories to which he was always adding, and to which in after-life he constantly went for solace, under depression or responsibility, as another man would go to his cigar or snuff box. The taste was not individual but local, and natural to keen-witted people who had no other food for their wits. In those circles "the ladies drank whisky-toddy, while the men drank it straight."

Lincoln was by no means fond of drink, but in this, as in everything else, he followed the great law of his life as a politician, by falling in with the humor of the people. One cold night he and his companions found an acquaintance lying dead-drunk in a puddle. All but Lincoln were disposed to let him lie where he was, and freeze to death. But Abe "bent his mighty frame, and taking the man in his long arms, carried him a great distance to Dennis Hanks' cabin. There he built a fire, warmed, rubbed and nursed him through the entire night, his companions having left him alone in his merciful task." His real kindness of heart is always coming out in the most striking

way, and it was not impaired even by civil war.

Lincoln had a very good constitution, but his frame hardly bespoke great strength; he was six feet four and large-boned, but narrow chested, and had almost a consumptive appearance. His strength, nevertheless, was great. We are told that, harnessed with ropes and straps, he could lift a box of stones weighing from a thousand to twelve hundred pounds. In wrestling, of which he was very fond, he had not his match near Pigeon Creek, and only once found him anywhere else. He was also formidable as a pugilist. But he was no bully; on the contrary he was peaceable and chivalrous in a rough way.

That Abraham Lincoln should have said, when a bare-legged boy, that he intended to be President of the United States, is not remarkable. Every boy in the United States says it. But Lincoln was really carrying on his political education. Dennis Hanks is asked how he and Lincoln acquired their knowledge. "We learned," he replies, "by sight, scent and hearing. We heard all that was said, and talked over and over the questions heard; wore them slick and threadbare. Went to political and other speeches and gatherings, as you do now; we would hear all sides and opinions, talk them over, discuss them, agreeing or disagreeing. Abe was originally a Democrat after the order of Jackson; so was his father, so we all were. . . . He preached, made speeches, read for us, explained to us, &c. . . . Abe was a cheerful boy, a witty boy; was humorous always; sometimes would get sad, not very often. . . . Lincoln would frequently make political and other speeches; he was calm, logical and clear always. He attended trials, went to court always, read the Revised Statutes of Indiana, dated 1824, heard law speeches, and listened to law trials. He was always reading, scribbling, writing, ciphering, writing poetry and the like. Abe was a good talker, a good reader, and was a kind of newsboy." One or two articles written by Abe found their way into obscure journals, to his infinite gratification. His foot was on the first round of the ladder. It is right to say that his culture was not solely political, and that he was able to astonish the natives of Gentryville by explaining that

when the sun appeared to set, it "was we did the sinking and not the sun."

Abe was tired of his home, as a son of Thomas Lincoln might be, without disparagement to his filial piety; and he was glad to get off with a neighbor on a commercial trip down the river to New Orleans. The trip was successful in a small way, and Abe soon after repeated it with other companions. In the first trip the great emancipator came in contact with the negro in a way that did not seem likely to prepossess him in favor of the race. The boat was boarded by negro robbers, who were repulsed only after a fray in which Abe got a scar which he carried to the grave. But he saw with his own eyes slaves manacled and whipped at New Orleans; and though his sympathies were not far-reaching, the actual sight of suffering never failed to make an impression on his mind. A negrophilist he never became. "I protest," he said afterwards, when engaged in the slavery controversy, "against the counterfeit logic which concludes that because I do not want a black woman for a slave I must necessarily want her for a wife. I need not have her for either. I can just leave her alone. In some respects she certainly is not my equal; but in her natural right to eat the bread which she earns with her own hands, she is my equal and the equal of all others." It would be difficult to put the case better.

While Abraham Lincoln was trading to New Orleans, his father, Thomas Lincoln, was on the move again. This time he migrated to Illinois, and there again shifted from place to place, gathering no moss, till he died as thriftless and poor as he had lived. We have, in later years, an application from him to his son for money, to which the son responds in a tone which implies some doubt as to the strict accuracy of the ground on which the old gentleman's request was preferred. Their relations were evidently not very affectionate, though there is nothing unfilial in Abe's conduct. Abraham himself drifted to Salem on the Sangamon, in Illinois, twenty miles northwest of Springfield, where he became clerk in a new store, set up by Denton Offutt, with whom he had formed a connection in one of his trips to New Orleans. Salem was then a village of a dozen houses, and the little centre of a society very like that of

Pigeon Creek and its neighborhood, but more decidedly western. We are told that "here Mr. Lincoln became acquainted with a class of men the world never saw the like of before or since. They were large men,—large in body and large in mind; hard to whip and never to be fooled. They were a bold daring and reckless set of men; they were men of their own minds,—believed what was demonstrable, were men of great common sense. With these men Mr. Lincoln was thrown; with them he lived and with them he moved and almost had his being. They were skeptics all—scuffers some. These scuffers were good men, and their scoffs were protests against theology—loud protests against the follies of Christianity; they had never heard of theism and the new and better religious thoughts of this age. Hence, being natural skeptics and being bold, brave men, they uttered their thoughts freely."

It seems to be proved, by conclusive evidence, that Mr. Lincoln shared the sentiments of his companions, and that he was never a member of any Church, a believer in the divinity of Christ, or a Christian of any denomination. He is described as an avowed, an open free-thinker, sometimes bordering on atheism, going extreme lengths against Christian doctrines, and "shocking" men whom it was probably not very easy to shock. He even wrote a little work on "Infidelity," attacking Christianity in general, and especially the belief that Jesus was the Son of God; but the manuscript was destroyed by a prescient friend, who knew that its publication would ruin the writer in the political market. There is reason to believe that Burns contributed to Lincoln's skepticism, but he drew it more directly from Volney, Paine, Hume and Gibbon. His fits of downright atheism appear to have been transient; his settled belief was theism with a morality which, though he was not aware of it, he had really derived from the Gospel. It is needless to say that the case had never been rationally presented to him, and that his decision against Christianity would prove nothing, even if his mind had been more powerful than it was. Like many skeptics, he was liable to superstition, especially to the superstition of self-consciousness, a conviction that he was the subject of a special decree

made by some nameless and mysterious power. Even from a belief in apparitions he was not free.

Abe's popularity grew apace; his ambition grew with it; it is astonishing how readily and freely the plant sprouts upon that soil. He was at this time carrying on his education evidently with a view to public life. Books were not easily found. He wanted to study English Grammar, considering that accomplishment desirable for a statesman; and, being told that there was a Grammar in a house six miles from Salem, he left his breakfast at once and walked off to borrow it. He would slip away into the woods and spend hours in study and thinking. He sat up late at night, and as light was expensive, made a blaze of shavings in the cooper's shop. He waylaid every visitor to New Salem who had any pretense to scholarship, and extracted explanations of things which he did not understand. It does not appear that the work of Adam Smith, or any work upon political economy, currency, or any financial subject fell into the hands of the student who was destined to conduct the most tremendous operations in the whole history of finance.

The next episode in Lincoln's life which may be regarded as a part of his training was the command of a company of militia in the "Black Hawk" war. Black Hawk was an Indian chief of great craft and power, and, apparently, of fine character, who had the effrontery to object to being improved off the face of creation, an offense which he aggravated by an hereditary attachment to the British. At a muster of the Sangamon company at Clary's Grove, Lincoln was elected captain. The election was a proof of his popularity; but he found it rather hard to manage his constituents in the field. The campaign opened with a cleverly-won victory on the part of Black Hawk, and a rapid retrograde movement on the part of the militia. Ultimately, however, Black Hawk was overpowered, and most of his men met their doom in attempting to retreat across the Mississippi.

"During this short Indian campaign," says one who took part in it, "we had some hard times, often hungry, but we had a great deal of sport, especially at nights—foot racing, some horse racing, jumping, telling anecdotes, in

which Lincoln beat all, keeping up a constant laughter and good humor all the time; among the soldiers some card-playing and wrestling in which Lincoln took a prominent part. I think it safe to say he was never thrown in a wrestle. While in the army he kept a handkerchief tied around him all the time for wrestling purposes, and loved the sport as well as anyone could. He was seldom if ever beat jumping. During the campaign Lincoln himself was always ready for an emergency. He endured hardships like a good soldier; he never complained, nor did he fear dangers."

Returning to New Salem, Lincoln, having served his apprenticeship as a clerk, commenced storekeeping on his own account. An opening was made for him by the departure of Mr. Radford, the keeper of a grocery, who, having offended the Clary's Grove boys, they "selected a convenient night for breaking in his windows and gutting his establishment." From his ruins rose the firm of Lincoln & Berry.

In storekeeping, however, Mr. Lincoln did not prosper; neither storekeeping nor any other regular business or occupation was congenial to his character. He was born to be a politician. Accordingly he began to read law, with which he combined surveying, at which we are assured he made himself "expert" by a six weeks' course of study. The few law books needed for western practice were supplied to him by a kind friend at Springfield, and, according to a witness who has evidently an accurate memory for details, "he went to read law in 1832 or 1833 barefooted, seated in the shade of a tree and would grind around with the shade, just opposite Berry's grocery store, a few feet south of the door, occasionally lying flat on his back and putting his feet up the tree." Evidently, whatever he read, especially of a practical kind, he made thoroughly his own. It is needless to say that he did not become a master of scientific jurisprudence; but it seems that he did become an effective western advocate. What is more, there is conclusive testimony to the fact that he was — what has been scandalously alleged to be rare, even in the United States — an honest lawyer.

"Love of justice and fair play," says one of his professional brothers of the bar, "was his predominant trait.

I have often listened to him when I thought he would state his case out of Court. It was not in his nature to assume or attempt to bolster up a false position. He would abandon his case first. His power as an advocate seems to have depended on his conviction that the right was on his side. Mr. Herndon, who visited Lincoln's office on business, gives the following reminiscence: "Mr. Lincoln was seated at his table, listening very attentively to a man who was talking earnestly in a low tone. After the would-be client had stated the facts of the case, Mr. Lincoln replied, 'yes, there is no reasonable doubt but that I can gain your case for you. I can set a whole neighborhood at logger heads; I can distress a widowed mother and her six fatherless children, and thereby get for you six hundred dollars, which rightly belongs, it appears to me, as much to the woman and her children as it does to you. You must remember that some things that are legally right are not morally right. I shall not take your case but will give you a bit of advice, for which I will charge you nothing. You seem to be a sprightly, energetic man. I would advise you to try your hand at making six hundred dollars in some other way.'"

There is one part of Lincoln's early life which, though scandal may batten on it, we shall pass over lightly; we mean that part which relates to his love affairs and his marriage. Criticism, and even biography, should respect as far as possible the sanctuary of affection. That a man has dedicated his life to the service of the public is no reason why the public should be licensed to amuse itself by playing with his heartstrings. Not only as a storekeeper, but in every capacity, Mr. Lincoln was far more happy in his relations with men than with women. He however loved, and loved deeply, Ann Rutledge, who appears to have been entirely worthy of his attachment, and whose death at the moment when she would have felt herself at liberty to marry him, threw him into a transport of grief, which threatened his reason and excited the gravest apprehension of his friends. In stormy weather, especially, he would rave piteously, crying that he could "never be reconciled to have the snow, rains and storms to beat upon her grave." This first love he seems never to have forgotten. He next had

an affair, not so creditable to him. Finally, he made a match of which the world has heard, perhaps, enough, though the western boy was too true a gentleman to let it hear anything about the matter from his lips. It is enough to say that this man was not wanting in that not inconsiderable element of worth, even of the worth of statesmen, strong and pure affection.

"If ever," said Abraham Lincoln, "American society and the United States Government are demoralized and overthrown, it will come from the voracious desire of office—this wriggle to live without toil, from which I am not free myself." These words ought to be written up in the largest characters in every schoolroom in the United States. The confession with which they conclude is as true as the rest. Mr. Lincoln, we are told, took no part in the promotion of local enterprises, railroads, schools, churches, asylums. The benefits he proposed for his fellow-men were to be accomplished by political means alone.

Lincoln's fundamental principle was devotion to the popular will. In his address to the people of Sangamon County, he says, "while acting as their representative I shall be governed by their will on all subjects upon which I have the means of knowing what their will is, and upon all others I will do what my own judgment teaches me will advance their interests."

Lincoln's first attempt to get elected to the State legislature was unsuccessful. It however brought him the means of "doing something for his country," and partly averting the "death-struggle of the world," in the shape of the postmastership of New Salem. The business of the office was not on a large scale, for it was carried on in Mr. Lincoln's hat—an integument of which it is recorded, that he refused to give it to a conjurer to play the egg trick in, "not from respect for his own hat, but for the conjurer's eggs." The future President did not fail to signalize his first appearance as an administrator by a sally of the jocularly which was always struggling with melancholy in his mind. A gentleman of the place, whose education had been defective, was in the habit of calling two or three times a day at the post-office, and ostentatiously inquiring for letters. At last he received a letter, which, being

unable to read himself, he got the postmaster to read for him before a large circle of friends. It proved to be from a negro lady engaged in domestic service in the South, recalling the memory of a mutual attachment, with a number of incidents more delectable than sublime. It is needless to say that the postmaster, by a slight extension of the sphere of his office, had written the letter as well as delivered it.

In a second candidature the aspirant was more successful, and he became one of nine representatives of Sangamon County, in the State legislature of Illinois, who, being all more than six feet high, were called "The Long Nine." With his Brobdingnagian colleagues, Abraham plunged at once into the "internal improvement system," and distinguished himself above his fellows by the unscrupulous energy and strategy with which he urged through the legislature a series of bubble schemes and jobs. Railroads and other improvements, especially improvements of river navigation, were voted out of all proportion to the means or credit of the then thinly-peopled State.

It is instructive as well as just to remember that all this time the man was strictly, nay sensitively, honorable in his private dealings, that he was regarded by his fellows as a paragon of probity, that his word was never questioned, that of personal corruption calumny itself, so far as we are aware, never dared to accuse him. Politics, it seems, may be a game apart, with rules of its own which supersede morality.

Considering that this man was destined to preside over the most tremendous operations in the whole history of finance, it is especially instructive to see what was the state of his mind on economical subjects. He actually proposed to pass a usury law, having arrived, it appears, at the sage conviction that while to pay the current rent for the use of a house or the current fee for the services of a lawyer is perfectly proper, to pay the current price for money is to "allow a few individuals to levy a direct tax on the community." But this is an ordinary illusion. Abraham Lincoln's illusions went far beyond it. As President, when told that the finances were low, he asked whether the printing machine had given out, and he suggested, as a special temptation to capitalists, the issue of a

class of bonds which should be exempt from seizure for debt. It may safely be said that the burden of the United States debt was ultimately increased fifty per cent. through sheer ignorance of the simplest principles of economy and finance on the part of those by whom it was contracted.

Lincoln's style, both as a speaker and a writer, ultimately became plain, terse, and with occasional faults of taste, caused by imperfect education, pure as well as effective. His Gettysburg address and some of his State Papers are admirable in their way. Saving one very flat expression, the address has no superior in literature. But it was impossible that the oratory of a rising politician, especially in the west, should be free from spread-eagleism. In debate he was neither bitter nor personal in the bad sense, though he had a good deal of caustic humor and knew how to make an effective use of it.

Passing from State politics to those of the Union, and elected to Congress as a Whig, a party to which he had gradually found his way from his original position as a "nominal Jackson man," Mr. Lincoln stood forth in vigorous though discreet and temperate opposition to the Mexican War.

Great events were by this time beginning to loom on the political horizon. The Missouri Compromise was broken. Parties commenced slowly but surely to divide themselves into Pro-slavery and Anti-slavery. The "irrepressible conflict" was coming on, though none of the American politicians — not even the author of that famous phrase — distinctly recognized its advent. Lincoln seems to have been sincerely opposed to slavery, though he was not an Abolitionist. But he was evidently led more and more to take anti-slavery ground by his antagonism to Douglas, who occupied a middle position, and tried to gain at once the support of the South and that of the waverers at the North, by theoretically supporting the extension of slavery, yet practically excluding it from the territories by the doctrine of squatter sovereignty. Lincoln had to be very wary in angling for the vote of the Abolitionists, who had recently been the objects of universal obloquy, and were still offensive to a large section of the Republican party.

On one occasion, the opinions which he propounded by no means suited the Abolitionists, and "they required him to change them forthwith. *He thought it would be wise to do so considering the peculiar circumstances of his case*; but, before committing himself finally, he sought an understanding with Judge Logan. He told the judge what he was disposed to do, and said he would act upon the inclination if the judge would not regard it as treading on his toes. The judge said he was opposed to the doctrine proposed, but, for the sake of the cause on hand, he would cheerfully risk his toes. *And so the Abolitionists were accommodated.* Mr. Lincoln quietly made the pledge, and they voted for him." He came out, however, square enough, and in the very nick of time with his "house divided against itself" speech, which took the wind out of the sails of Seward with his "irrepressible conflict." Douglas, whom Lincoln regarded with intense personal rivalry, was tripped up by a string of astute interrogations, the answers to which hopelessly embroiled him with the South.

Lincoln's campaign against Douglas for the Senatorship greatly and deservedly enhanced his reputation as a debater, and he became marked out as the western candidate for the Republican nomination to the Presidency. A committee favorable to his claims sent to him to make a speech at New York. He arrived "in a sleek and shining suit of new black, covered with very apparent creases and wrinkles acquired by being packed too closely and too long in his little valise." Some of his supporters must have moralized on the strange apparition which their summons had raised. His speech, however, made before an immense audience at the Cooper Institute, was most successful, and as a display of constitutional logic it is a very good speech. It fails, as the speeches of these practical men one and all did fail, their common sense and shrewdness notwithstanding, in clear perception of the great facts that two totally different systems of society had been formed, one in the Slave States and the other in the Free, and that political institutions necessarily conform themselves to the social character of the people. Whether the Civil War could, by any men or means, have been arrested, it would be hard to say; but assuredly stump orators, even the very best of

them, were not the men to avert it. At that great crisis no saviour appeared.

On May 10th, in the eventful year 1860, the Republican State Convention of Illinois, by acclamation, and amid great enthusiasm, nominated Lincoln for the Presidency. One who saw him receive the nomination says, "I then thought him one of the most diffident and most plagued of men I ever saw." We may depend upon it, however, that his diffidence of manner was accompanied by no reluctance of heart. The splendid prize which he had won had been the object of his passionate desire. In the midst of the proceedings, the door of the wigwam opened, and Lincoln's kinsman, John Hanks, entered, with "two small triangular 'heart-rails,' surmounted by a banner with the inscription, 'Two rails from a lot made by Abraham Lincoln and John Hanks in the Sangamon bottom, in the year 1830.'" The bearer of the rails, we are told, was met "with wild and tumultuous cheers," and "the whole scene was simply tempestuous and bewildering."

The Democrats, of course, did not share the delight. An old man, out of Egypt (the southern end of Illinois) came up to Mr. Lincoln, and said: "So you're Abe Lincoln?" "That's my name, sir." "They say you're a self-made man." "Well, yes, what there is of me is self-made." "Well, all I have got to say," observed the old Egyptian, after a careful survey of the statesman, "is, that it was a d—n bad job." This seems to be the germ of the smart reply to the remark that Andrew Jackson was a self-made man, "that relieves the Almighty of a very heavy responsibility."

The nomination of the State Convention of Illinois was accepted after a very close and exciting contest between Lincoln and Seward by the convention of the Republican party assembled at Chicago. The proceedings seem to have been disgraceful. A large delegation of roughs, we are told, headed by Tom Shyer, the pugilist, attended for Seward. The Lincoln party, on the other side, spent the whole night in mustering their "loose fellows," and at daylight the next morning packed the wigwam, so that the Seward men were unable to get in. Another politician was there nominally as a candidate, but really only to sell himself for a seat in

the Cabinet. When he claimed the fulfilment of the bond, Lincoln's conscience, or at least his regard for his own reputation struggled hard. "All that I am in the world—the Presidency and all else—I owe to that opinion of me which the people express when they call me 'honest old Abe.' Now, what will they think of their honest Abe when he appoints this man to be his familiar adviser?" What they might have said with truth was that Abe was still honest but politics were not.

Widely different was the training undergone for the leadership of the people by the Pericles of the American Republic from that undergone by the Pericles of Athens, or by any group of statesmen before him, Greek, Roman, or European. The advantages and the disadvantages of Lincoln's political education are manifest at a glance. He was sure to produce something strong, genuine, practical, and entirely in unison with the thoughts and feelings of a people which, like the Athenian in the days of Pericles, was to be led, not governed. On the other hand, it necessarily left the statesman without the special knowledge necessary for certain portions of his work, such as finance, which was badly managed during Lincoln's Presidency, without the wisdom which flows from a knowledge of the political world and of the past, without elevation and comprehensiveness of view. It was fortunate for Lincoln that the questions with which he had to deal, and with which his country and the world proclaim him to have dealt, on the whole, admirably well, though not in their magnitude and importance, were completely within his ken, and had been always present to his mind. Reconstruction would have made a heavier demand on the political science of Clary's Grove. But that task was reserved for other hands.*

* The foregoing article, written a number of years ago for a volume of Lectures and Essays, originally printed for private circulation, we have the kind permission of the author to reproduce here. To bring it within the scope of our pages, the essay has been considerably abridged. Despite the latter fact, the paper will doubtless prove acceptable to our readers, as it presents some interesting phases in the early career of Lincoln not usually met with in later-day critiques.
ED. S. C.

A REIGN FRUITFUL IN HIGH ACHIEVEMENT

THE reign of Queen Victoria is at once the longest and most fruitful in British history. Since she ascended the throne her Empire has broadened its bounds until to-day it numbers one-fourth the population of the world. And the sway of Victoria finds response in a loyalty very different from the grudging submission accorded her predecessors — especially her immediate predecessors on the throne. For all that the blood of the Stuarts flows in her veins, and granddaughter of George III. though she is, the Queen has been content to reign simply, and leave the task of government to her constitutional advisers. Such influence upon public affairs as she may have exerted has ever been on the side of peace and good-will; by kin or marriage bond the chief rulers of Europe are of her family, so that her influence has often at critical times been weighty, and, perhaps, more than once, decisive. In domestic politics her convictions are almost unknown; she stands for no party, but for the whole people, who rally round the throne as built upon a foundation deeper far than any moving tent of political sect or faction. Thrice happy has it been for England that, in the sixty eventful years when the tide of democratic feeling reflected from the shores of America has surged higher and higher, the sceptre of empire has rested in the gentle hand of a woman. A king, however tactful, wise and gracious, could scarcely have been so completely detached from kingly traditions of personal rule; and rare indeed in the roll of kings is the record of a home life so admirable as that of this good wife and mother.

While the reign of Elizabeth stands forth preëminently as the age of victory in arms, of an unexampled outburst in literary genius, the epoch of Victoria will be ever memorable as the golden era of Science. Within the past six decades man has entered upon an insight into nature and a mastery of her forces incomparably greater than during the six centuries that went before, and in this progress Englishmen have borne a leading part. The locomotive and the steamship, both British inventions, had been but introduced in 1837; these, with the

telegraph, largely a product of British skill and enterprise, have transformed the world. Indeed, without them there could be no such colonial empire as that which to-day, scattered upon every sea, finds itself within earshot and control of Westminster. To Faraday, Wheatstone, Maxwell, and Kelvin are due the instruments, or the researches, which at this hour bring electricity to services of more moment to man than those which had their birth when first he kindled fire and rejoiced.

If Newton dignified the reign of Anne by his discovery of universal gravitation, yet more has Spencer glorified the age of Victoria by expounding the profounder law of universal evolution. In this mighty task his chief ally was Darwin, the first naturalist of the century. Nor is it only in the triumphs of the chemist, the physicist, or the philosopher that radiance is reflected upon the garlands of Victoria. So much has the well-being of her subjects advanced since 1837, that the life of the average Englishman has been lengthened by no less than four years. While comfort has been diffused throughout the whole body of the people, crime and pauperism have subsided. With public opinion omnipotent and intelligent as never before, the government responds to the progressive needs of the people in a fashion that denies birth to the discontent which brings a cloud to the brow of every other monarch of Europe.

Whilst in the past six decades British progress has been mainly in the fields of science, Victorian literature is worthy a place near to the golden fruit of even the great Elizabethans. If the Virgin Queen saw the culmination of the drama under the touch of Shakespeare, Victoria has seen the perfect flowering of the novel at the hands of George Eliot, Thackeray, and Dickens, while in Carlyle, and Ruskin, Grote, Macaulay, and Green, the Victorian era can boast names unmatched in the annals of Elizabeth. Only in one supreme singer of the earlier time need Tennyson, Browning, and Matthew Arnold bow to their master. In art, no less than in letters, is the age of Victoria great. How much richer are British folk in treasures of the brush, how much