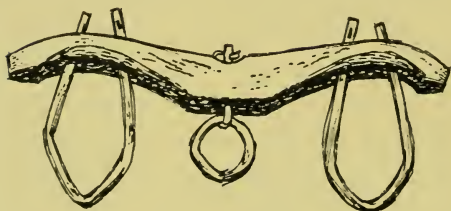


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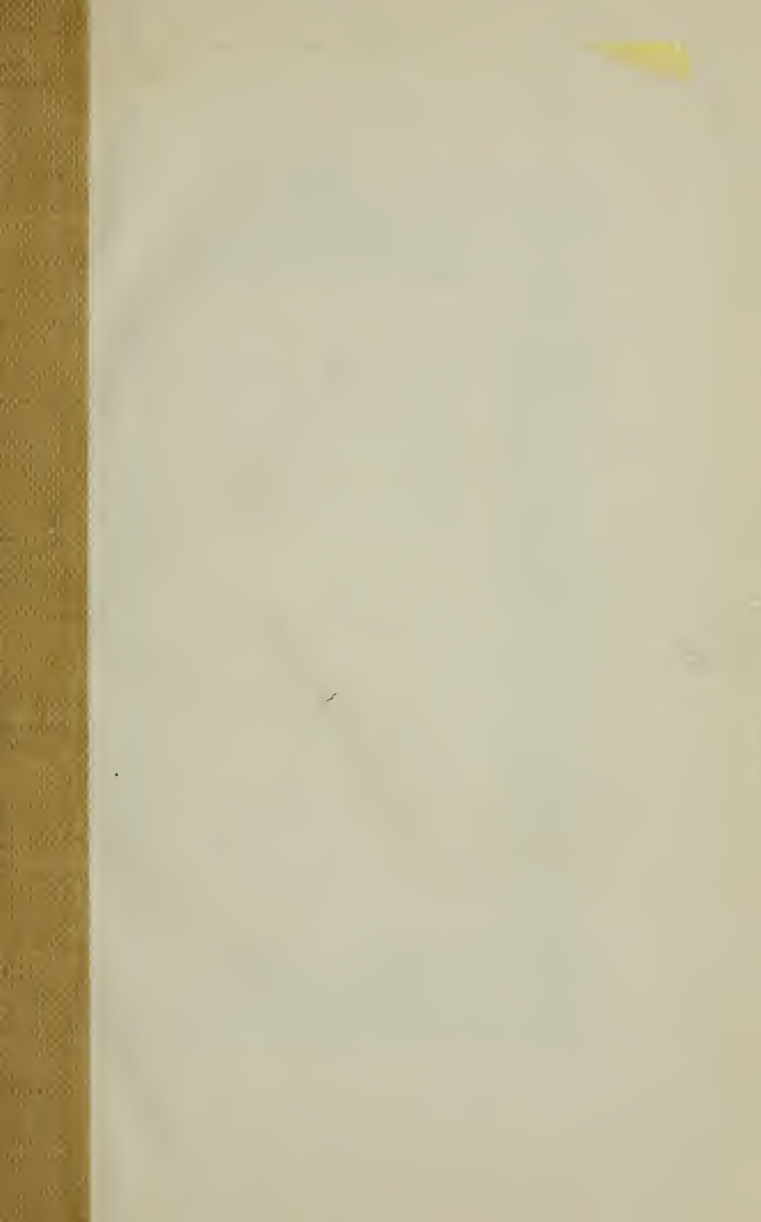
LITTLE JOURNEYS TO THE
HOMES OF AMERICAN
STATESMEN: ABRAHAM LIN-
COLN.

LINCOLN ROOM



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Little Journeys
to the Homes of
American
Statesmen
by Elbert Hubbard

Abraham Lincoln

DECEMBER, 1898

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New Rochelle, N. Y. * The
Knickerbocker Press * *

Little Journeys

SERIES OF 1898

Little Journeys to the Homes of American Statesmen

Described by ELBERT HUBBARD

- No. 1.—George Washington
- “ 2.—Benj. Franklin
- “ 3.—Alex. Hamilton
- “ 4.—Sam'l Adams
- “ 5.—John Hancock
- “ 6.—John Quincy Adams
- “ 7.—Thos. Jefferson
- “ 8.—Daniel Webster
- “ 9.—Henry Clay
- “ 10.—John Jay
- “ 11.—Wm. H. Seward
- “ 12.—Abraham Lincoln

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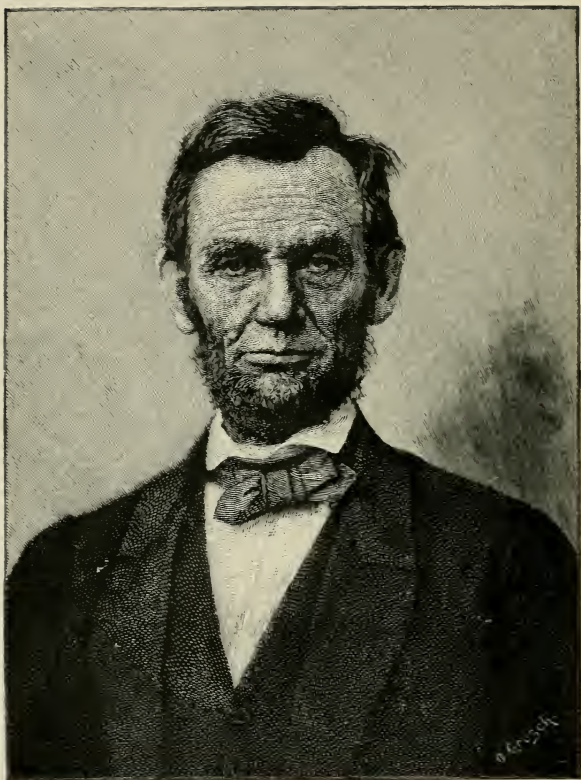
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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us, that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to the cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion ; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain ; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and the government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Speech at Gettysburg.



A. Lincoln

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Lincoln, George

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

I.

NO, dearie, I do not think my childhood differed much from that of other good healthy country youngsters. I've heard folks say that childhood has its sorrows and all that, but the sorrows of country children do not last long. The young rustic goes out and tells his troubles to the birds and flowers, and the flowers nod in recognition, and the robin that sings from the top of a tall poplar tree when the sun goes down, says plainly it has sorrows of its own—and understands.

I feel a pity for all those folks who were born in a big city, and thus got cheated out of their childhood. Zealous

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ash-box inspectors in gilt braid, prying policemen with clubs, and signs reading, "Keep off the Grass," are woful things to greet the gaze of little souls fresh from God.

Last summer six "Fresh Airs" were sent out to my farm, from the Eighth Ward. Half an hour after their arrival, one of them, a little girl five years old, who had constituted herself mother of the party, came rushing into the house exclaiming, "Say, Mister, Jimmy Driscoll he's walkin' on de grass!"

I well remember the first Keep-off-the-Grass sign I ever saw. It was in a printed book; it was n't exactly a sign, only a picture of a sign, and the single excuse I could think of for such a notice was that the field was full of bumble-bee nests, and the owner, being a good man and kind, did not want barefoot boys to add bee-stings to stone-bruises. And I never now see one of those signs but that I glance at my feet to make sure that I have shoes on.

Given the liberty of the country, the

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child is very near to Nature's heart ; he is brother to the tree and calls all the dumb, growing things by name. He is sublimely superstitious. His imagination, as yet untouched by disillusion, makes good all that earth lacks, and habited in a healthy body the soul sings and soars.

In childhood, magic and mystery lie close around us. The world in which we live is a panorama of constantly unfolding delights, our faith in the Unknown is limitless, and the words of Job, uttered in mankind's morning, fit our wondering mood : " He stretcheth out the north over the empty place ; and hangeth the earth upon nothing."

➤ I am old, dearie, very old. In my childhood much of the State of Illinois was a prairie, where wild grass waved and bowed before the breeze, like the tide of a summer sea. I remember when "relatives" rode miles and miles in springless farm-wagons to visit cousins, taking the whole family and staying two nights and a day ; when books were

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things to be read ; when the beaver and buffalo were not extinct ; when wild pigeons came in clouds that shadowed the sun ; when steamboats ran on the Sangamon ; when Bishop Simpson preached ; when hell was a place, not a theory, and heaven a locality whose fortunate inhabitants had no work to do ; when Chicago newspapers were ten cents each ; when cotton cloth was fifty cents a yard, and my shirt was made from a flour sack, with the legend, "Extra XXX" across my proud bosom, and just below the words in flaming red, "Warranted Fifty Pounds!"

The mornings usually opened with smothered protests against getting up, for country folks then were extremists in the matter of early-to-bed, early-to-rise, makes-a-man-healthy-wealthy-and-wise. We had n't much wealth, nor were we very wise, but we had health to burn. But aside from the unpleasantness of early morning, the day was full of possibilities of curious things to be found in

Abraham Lincoln

the barn and under spreading gooseberry bushes, or if it rained, the garret was an *Alsatia* unexplored.

The evolution of the individual mirrors the evolution of the race. In the morning of the world man was innocent and free; but when self-consciousness crept in and he possessed himself of that disturbing motto, "Know Thyself," he took a fall.

Yet knowledge usually comes to us with a shock, just as the mixture crystallizes when the chemist gives the jar a tap. We grow by throes.

I well remember the day when I was put out of my Eden.

My father and mother had gone away in the one-horse wagon, taking the baby with them, leaving me in care of my elder sister. It was a stormy day and the air was full of fog and mist. It did not rain very much, only in gusts, but great leaden clouds chased each other angrily across the sky. It was very quiet there in the little house on the prairie, except-

Abraham Lincoln

ing when the wind came and shook the windows and rattled at the doors. The morning seemed to drag and would n't pass just out of contrariness; and I wanted it to go fast because in the afternoon my sister was to take me somewhere, but where I did not know, but that we should go somewhere was promised again and again.

As the day wore on we went up into the little garret and strained our eyes across the stretching prairie to see if someone was coming. There had been much rain, for on the prairie there was always too much rain or else too little. It was either drouth or flood. Dark swarms of wild ducks were in all the ponds; V-shaped flocks of geese and brants screamed overhead, and down in the slough cranes danced a solemn minuet.

Again and again we looked for the coming something, and I began to cry, fearing we had been left there, forgotten of fate.

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At last we went out by the barn and, with much boosting, I climbed to the top of the haystack and my sister followed. And still we watched.

“There they come!” exclaimed my sister.

“There they come!” I echoed, and clapped two red, chapped hands for joy.

Away across the prairie, miles and miles away, was a winding string of wagons, a dozen perhaps, one right behind another. We watched until we could make out our own white horse, Bob, and then we slid down the hickory pole that leaned against the stack, and made our way across the spongy sod to the burying-ground that stood on a knoll half a mile away.

We got there before the procession, and saw a great hole, with square corners, dug in the ground. It was half full of water, and a man in bare feet, with trousers rolled to his knees, was working industriously to bale it out.

The wagons drove up and stopped.

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And out of one of them four men lifted a long box and set it down beside the hole where the man still baled and dipped. The box was opened and in it was Si Johnson. Si lay very still, and his face was very blue, and his clothes were very black, save for his shirt, which was very white, and his hands were folded across his breast, just so, and held awkwardly in the stiff fingers was a little New Testament. We all looked at the blue face, and the women cried softly. The men took off their hats while the preacher prayed; and then we sang, "There'll be no more parting there."

The lid of the box was nailed down, lines were taken from the harness of one of the teams standing by, and were placed around the long box, and it was lowered with a splash into the hole. Then several men seized spades and the clods fell with clatter and echo. The men shoveled very hard, filling up the hole, and when it was full and heaped up, they patted it all over with the back of their spades.

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Everybody remained until this was done, and then we got into the wagons and drove away.

Nearly a dozen of the folks came over to our house for dinner, including the preacher, and they all talked of the man who was dead and how he came to die.

Only two days before, this man, Si Johnson, stood in the doorway of his house and looked out at the falling rain. It had rained for three days, so that they could not plough, and Si was angry. Besides this, his two brothers had enlisted and gone away to the war and left him all the work to do. He did not go to the war because he was a "Copperhead"; and as he stood there in the doorway looking at the rain, he took a chew of tobacco, and then he swore a terrible oath.

And ere the swear words had escaped from his lips, there came a blinding flash of lightning, and the man fell all in a heap like a sack of oats.

And he was dead.

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Whether he died because he was a Copperhead, or because he took a chew of tobacco, or because he swore, I could not exactly understand. I waited for a convenient lull in the conversation and asked the preacher why the man died, and he patted me on the head and told me it was "the vengeance of God," and that he hoped I would grow up and be a good man and never chew tobacco nor swear.

The preacher is alive now. He is an old, old man with long, white whiskers, and I never see him but that I am tempted to ask for the exact truth as to why Si Johnson was struck by lightning.

Yet I suppose it was because he was a Copperhead: all Copperheads chewed tobacco and swore, and that his fate was merited no one but the living Copperheads in that community doubted.

That was an eventful day to me. Like men whose hair turns from black to gray in a night, I had left babyhood behind at a bound, and the problems of the world were upon me, clamoring for solution.

II.

THERE was war in the land. When it began I did not know, but that it was something terrible I could guess. I thought of it all the rest of the day and dreamed of it at night. Many men had gone away ; and every day men in blue straggled by, all going south, forever south.

And all the men straggling along that road stopped to get a drink at our well, drawing the water with the sweep and drinking out of the bucket, and squirting a mouthful of water over each other. They looked at my father's creaking doctor's sign, and sang, "Old Mother Hubbard, she went to the cupboard."

They all sang that. They were very jolly, just as though they were going to a picnic. Some of them came back that way a few years later and they were not

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so jolly. And some there were who never came back at all.

Freight trains passed southward, blue with men in the cars and on top of the cars, and on the cow-catcher, and in the caboose, always going south and never north. For "Down South" were many Rebels, and all along the way south were Copperheads, and they all wanted to come north and kill us, so soldiers had to go down there and fight them.

And I marveled much that if God hated Copperheads, as our preacher said He did, why He did n't send lightning and kill them, just in a second, as He had Si Johnson. And then all that would have to be done would be to send for a doctor to see that they were surely dead, and a preacher to pray, and the neighbors would dress them in their best Sunday suits of black, folding their hands very carefully across their breasts, then we would bury them deep, filling in the dirt and heaping it up, patting it all down very carefully with the back of a spade,

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and then go away and leave them until Judgment Day.

Copperheads were simply men who hated Lincoln. The name came from copperhead snakes, that are worse than rattlers, for rattlers rattle and give warning. A rattler is an open enemy, but you never know that a copperhead is around until he strikes. He lies low in the swale and watches his chance. ('He is the worstest snake that am.')

It was Abe Lincoln of Springfield who was fighting the Rebels that were trying to wreck the country and spread red ruin. The Copperheads were wicked folks at the north who sided with the Rebels. Society was divided into two classes: those who favored Abe Lincoln, and those who told lies about him. All the people I knew and loved, loved Abe Lincoln.

I was born at Bloomington, Illinois, through no choosing of my own, and Bloomington is further famous for being the birthplace of the Republican party. When a year old I persuaded my parents

Abrabam Lincoln

to move seven miles north to the village of Hudson, that then had five houses, a church, a store, and a blacksmith shop. Many of the people I knew, knew Lincoln, for he used to come to Bloomington several times a year "on the circuit" to try cases, and at various times made speeches there. When he came he would tell stories at the Ashley House, and when he was gone these stories would be repeated by everybody. Some of these stories must have been peculiar, for I once heard my mother caution my father not to tell any more "Lincoln stories" at the dinner-table when we had company.

And once Lincoln gave a lecture at the Presbyterian church on the "Progress of Man," when no one was there but the preacher, my Aunt Hannah, and the sexton.

My Uncle Elihu and Aunt Hannah knew Abe Lincoln well. So did Jesse Fell, James C. Conklin, Judge Davis, General Orme, Leonard Swett, Dick Yates, and lots of others I knew. They

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never called him "Mister Lincoln," but it was always Abe, or Old Abe, or just plain Abe Lincoln. In that newly settled country you always called folks by their first names, especially when you liked them. And when they spoke the name, "Abe Lincoln," there was something in the voice that told of confidence, respect, and affection.

Once when I was at my Aunt Hannah's, Judge Davis was there and I sat on his lap. The only thing about the interview I remember was that he really did n't have any lap to speak of.

After Judge Davis had gone Aunt Hannah said: "You must always remember Judge Davis, for he is the man who made Abe Lincoln!"

And when I said, "Why, I thought God made Lincoln," they all laughed.

After a little pause my inquiring mind caused me to ask, "Who made Judge Davis?" And Uncle Elihu answered, "Abe Lincoln."

Then they all laughed more than ever.

III.

VOLUNTEERS were being called for. Neighbors and neighbors' boys were enlisting—going to the support of Abe Lincoln.

Then one day my father went away, too. Many of the neighbors went with us to the station when he took the four-o'clock train, and we all cried, except Mother—she did n't cry until she got home. My father had gone to Springfield to enlist as a surgeon. In three days he came back and told us he had enlisted, and was to be assigned his regiment in a week, and go at once to the front. He was always a kind man, but during that week when he was waiting to be told where to go he was very gentle and more kind than ever. He told me I must be the man of the house while he was away,

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and take care of my mother and sisters, and not forget to feed the chickens every morning ; and I promised.

At the end of the week a big envelope came from Springfield marked in the corner " Official."

My mother would not open it, and so it lay on the table until the doctor's return. We all looked at it curiously, and my eldest sister gazed on it long with lacklustre eye and then rushed from the room with her check apron over her head.

When my father rode up on horseback I ran to tell him that the envelope had come.

We all stood breathless and watched him break the seals.

He took out the letter and read it silently and passed it to my mother.

I have the letter before me now, and it says : " The Department is still of the opinion that it does not care to accept men having varicose veins, which make the wearing of bandages necessary. Your name, however, has been filed and

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should we be able to use your services, will advise."

Then we were all very glad about the varicose veins, and I am afraid I went out and boasted to my play-fellows about our family possessions.

It was not so very long after that there was a Big Meeting in the "timber." People came from all over the county to attend it. The chief speaker was a man by the name of Ingersoll, a colonel in the army, who was back home for just a day or two on furlough. People said he was the greatest orator in Peoria County.

Early in the morning the wagons began to go by our house, and all along the four roads that led to the grove we could see great clouds of dust that stretched away for miles and miles and told that the people were gathering by the thousand. They came in wagons and on horseback, and on foot and with ox teams. Women rode on horseback carrying babies; two boys on one horse were common sights;

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and there were various four-horse teams with wagons filled with girls all dressed in white, carrying flags.

All of our folks went. My mother fastened the back door of our house with a bolt on the inside, and then locked the front door with a key, and hid the key under the door-mat.

At the grove there was much handshaking and visiting and asking after the folks and for the news. Several soldiers were present ; among them a man who lived near us, called "Little Ramsey." Three one-armed men were there, and a man named Al Sweetser, who had only one leg. These men wore blue, and were seated on the big platform that was all draped with flags. Plank seats were arranged, and every plank held its quota. Just outside the seats hundreds of men stood, and beyond these were wagons filled with people. Every tree in the woods seemed to have a horse tied to it, and the trees over the speakers' platform were black with men and boys. I never

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knew before that there were so many horses and people in the world.

When the speaking began the people cheered, and then they became very quiet, and only the occasional squealing and stamping of the horses could be heard. Our preacher spoke first, and then the lawyer from Bloomington, and then came the great man from Peoria. The people cheered more than ever when he stood up, and kept hurrahing so long I thought they were not going to let him speak at all.

At last they quieted down, and the speaker began. His first sentence contained a reference to Abe Lincoln. The people applauded, and someone proposed three cheers for "Honest Old Abe." Everybody stood up and cheered, and I, perched on my father's shoulder, cheered too. And beneath the legend, "Warranted Fifty Pounds," my heart beat proudly.

Silence came at last—a silence filled only by the neighing and stamping of

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horses and the rapping of a woodpecker in a tall tree. Every ear was strained to catch the orator's first words.

The speaker was just about to begin. He raised one hand, but ere his lips moved, a hoarse, guttural shout echoed through the woods: "Hurrah'h'h for Jeff Davis!!!"

"Kill that man!" rang a sharp, clear voice in instant answer.

A rumble like an awful groan came from the vast crowd.

My father was standing on a seat, and I had climbed to his shoulder. The crowd surged like a monster animal toward a tall man standing alone in a wagon. He swung a black-snake whip around him, and the lash fell savagely on two gray horses. At a lunge, the horses, the wagon, and the tall man had cleared the crowd, knocking down several people in their flight. One man clung to the tail-board. The whip wound with a hiss and a crack across his face, and he fell stunned in the roadway.

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A clear space of fully three hundred feet now separated the man in the wagon from the great throng, that with ten thousand hands seemed ready to tear him limb from limb. Revolver shots rang out, women screamed, and trampled children cried for help. Above it all was the roar of the mob. The orator, in vain pantomime, implored order.

I saw Little Ramsey drop off the limb of a tree astride of a horse that was tied beneath, then lean over, and with one stroke of a knife sever the halter.

At the same time fifty other men seemed to have done the same thing, for flying horses shot out from different parts of the woods, all on the instant. The man in the wagon was half a mile away now, still standing erect. The gray horses were running low, with noses and tails outstretched.

The spread-out riders closed in a mass and followed at terrific speed. The crowd behind seemed to grow silent. We heard the patter-patter of barefoot horses as-

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ending the long, low hill. One rider on a sorrel horse fell behind. He drew his horse to one side, and sitting over with one foot in the long stirrup, plied the sorrel across the flank with a big, white felt hat. The horse responded, and crept around to the front of the flying mass.

The wagon had disappeared over a gentle rise of ground, and then we lost the horsemen, too. Still we watched, and two miles across the prairie we got a glimpse of running horses in a cloud of dust, and into another valley they settled, and then we lost them for good.

The speaking began again and went on amid applause and tears, with laughter set between.

I do not remember what was said, but, after the speaking, as we made our way homeward, we met Little Ramsey and the young man who rode the sorrel horse. They told us that they caught the Copperhead after a ten-mile chase, and that he was badly hurt, for the wagon had upset and the fellow was beneath it. Ramsey

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asked my father to go at once to see what could be done for him.

The man was quite dead when my father reached him. There was a purple mark around his neck ; and the opinion seemed to be that he had got tangled up in the harness or something.

IV.

THE war-time months went dragging by, and the burden of gloom in the air seemed to lift ; for when (the Chicago *Tribune* was read each evening in the post-office) it told of victories on land and sea. Yet it was a joy not untinged with black ; for in the church across from our house, funerals had been held for farmer boys who had died in (prison pens) and been (buried in Georgia trenches.)

One youth there was, I remember, who had stopped to get a drink at our pump, and squirted a mouthful of water over me because I was handy.

One night the postmaster was reading aloud the names of the killed at Gettysburg, and he ran right on to the name of this boy. The boy's father sat there on a

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nail-keg, chewing a straw. The postmaster tried to shuffle over the name and on to the next.

“Hi! Wha—what ’s that you said?”

“Killed in honorable battle—Snyder, Hiram,” said the postmaster with a forced calmness, determined to face the issue.

(The boy’s father stood up with a jerk. Then he sat down. Then he stood up again and staggered his way to the door and fumbled for the latch like a blind man.)

“God help him! he’s gone to tell the old woman,” said the postmaster as he blew his nose on a red handkerchief.

The preacher preached a funeral sermon for the boy, and on the little pyramid that marked the family lot in the burying-ground they carved the inscription: “Killed in honorable battle, Hiram Snyder, aged nineteen.”

(Not long after, strange, yellow, bearded men in faded blue began to arrive.) Great welcomes were given them; and at

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the regular Wednesday evening prayer-meeting thanksgivings were poured out for their safe return, with names of company and regiment duly mentioned for the Lord's better identification. Bees were held for some of these returned farmers, where twenty teams and fifty men, old and young, did a season's farm work in a day, and split enough wood for a year. At such times the women would bring big baskets of provisions and long tables would be set, and there were very jolly times, with cracking of many jokes that were veterans, and the day would end with pitching horse-shoes, and at last with singing "Auld Lang Syne."

It was at one such gathering that a ghost appeared—a lank, saffron ghost, ragged as a scarecrow—wearing a foolish smile and the cape of a cavalryman's overcoat with no coat beneath it. The apparition was a youth of about twenty, with a downy beard all over his face, and countenance well mellowed with coal soot, as though he had ridden several

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days on top of a freight-car that was near the engine.

This ghost was Hiram Snyder.

All forgave him the shock of surprise he caused us—all except the minister who had preached his funeral sermon. Years after I heard this minister remark in a solemn, grieved tone : “Hiram Snyder is a man who cannot be relied on.”

V.

AS the years pass, the miracle of the seasons means less to us. But what country boy can forget the turning of the leaves from green to gold, and the watchings and waitings for the first hard frost that ushers in the nutting season ! And then the first fall of snow, with its promise of skates and sleds and tracks of rabbits, and mayhap bears, and strange animals that only come out at night, and that no human eye has ever seen !

Beautiful are the seasons ; and glad I am that I have not yet quite lost my love for each. But now they parade past with a curious swiftness ! They look at me out of wistful eyes, and sometimes one calls to me as she goes by and asks, " Why have you done so little since I saw you

Abraham Lincoln

last?" And I can only answer, "I was thinking of you."

I do not need another incarnation to live my life over again. I can do that now, and the resurrection of the past, through memory, that sees through closed eyes, is just as satisfactory as the thing itself.

Were we talking of the seasons? Very well, dearie, the seasons it shall be. They are all charming, but if I were to wed any it would be spring. How well I remember the gentle perfume of her comings, and her warm, languid breath!

There was a time when I would go out of the house some morning, and the snow would be melting, and spring would kiss my cheek, and then I would be all aglow with joy and would burst into the house, and cry: "Spring is here! spring is here!" For you know we always have to divide our joy with someone. One can bear grief, but it takes two to be glad.

And then my mother would smile and say, "Yes, my son, but do not wake the baby!"

Abrabam Lincoln

Then I would go out and watch the snow turn to water, and run down the road in little rivulets to the creek, that would swell until it became a regular Mississippi, so that when we waded the horse across, the water would come to the saddle-girth.

Then once, I remember, the bridge was washed away, and all the teams had to go around and through the water, and some used to get stuck in the mud on the other bank. It was great fun !

The first "spring beauties" bloomed very early that year ; violets came out on the south side of rotting logs, and cowslips blossomed in the slough as they never had done before. Over on the knoll, prairie chickens strutted pompously and proudly drummed.

The war was over ! Lincoln had won, and the country was safe !

The jubilee was infectious, and the neighbors who used to come and visit us would tell of the men and boys who would soon be back.

Abraham Lincoln

The war was over !

My father and mother talked of it across the table, and the men talked of it at the store, and earth, sky, and water called to each other in glad relief, " The war is over ! "

But there came a morning when my father walked up from the railroad-station very fast, and looking very serious. He pushed right past me as I sat in the doorway. I followed him into the kitchen where my mother was washing dishes, and heard him say, " They have killed Lincoln ! " and then he burst into tears.

I had never before seen my father shed tears—in fact I had never seen a man cry. There is something terrible in the grief of a man.

Soon the church-bell across the road began to toll. It tolled all that day. Three men—I can give you their names—rang the bell all day long, tolling, slowly tolling; tolling until night came and the stars came out. I thought it a little curi-

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ous that the stars should come out, for Lincoln was dead; but they did, for I saw them as I trotted by my father's side down to the post-office.

There was a great crowd of men there. At the long line of peeled hickory hitching poles were dozens of saddle-horses. The farmers had come for miles to get details of the news.

On the long counters that ran down each side of the store men were seated, swinging their feet, and listening intently to someone who was reading aloud from a newspaper. We worked our way past the men who were standing about, and with several of these my father shook hands solemnly.

Leaning against the wall near the window was a big, red-faced man, whom I knew as a Copperhead. He had been drinking, evidently, for he was making boozy efforts to stand very straight. There were only heard a subdued buzz of whispers and the monotonous voice of the reader, as he stood there in the cen-

Abraham Lincoln

tre, his newspaper in one hand and a lighted candle in the other.

The red-faced man lurched two steps forward, and in a loud voice said: "L—L—Lincoln is dead,—an' I'm damn glad of it!"

Across the room I saw two men struggling with Little Ramsey. Why they should struggle with him I could not imagine, but ere I could think the matter out, I saw him shake himself loose from the strong hands that sought to hold him. He sprang upon the counter, and in one hand I saw he held a scale-weight. Just an instant he stood there, and then the weight shot straight at the red-faced man. The missile glanced on his shoulder and shot through the window. In another second the red-faced man plunged through the window, taking the entire sash with him.

"You'll have to pay for that window," called the alarmed postmaster out into the night.

The store was quickly emptied, and on

Abraham Lincoln

following outside no trace of the red man could be found. The earth had swallowed both the man and the five-pound scale-weight.

After some minutes had passed in a vain search for the weight and the Copperhead, we went back into the store and the reading was continued.

But the interruption had relieved the tension, and for the first time that day men in that post-office joked and laughed. It even lifted from my heart the gloom that threatened to smother me, and I went home and told the story to my mother and sisters, and they too smiled, so closely akin are tears and smiles.

IV

THE story of Lincoln's life had been ingrained into me long before I ever read a book. For the people who knew Lincoln, and the people who knew the people that Lincoln knew, were the only people I knew. I visited at their houses and heard them tell what Lincoln had said when he sat at table where I then sat. I listened long to Lincoln stories, "and that reminds me" was often on the lips of those I loved. All the tales told by the faithful Herndon and the needlessly loyal Nicolay and Hay were current coin, and the rehearsal of the Lincoln-Douglas debate was commonplace.

When our own poverty was mentioned, we compared it with the poverty that Lincoln had endured, and felt rich. I

Abraham Lincoln

slept in a garret where the winter's snow used to sift merrily through the slab shingles, but then I was covered with warm buffalo robes, and a loving mother tucked me in and on my forehead imprinted a good-night kiss. But Lincoln at the same age had no mother and lived in a hut that had neither windows, doors, nor floor, and a pile of leaves and straw in the corner was his bed. Our house had two rooms, but one winter the Lincoln home was only a shed enclosed on three sides.

I knew of his being a clerk in a country store at the age of twenty, and that up to that time he had read but four books ; of his running a flat-boat, splitting rails, and poring at night over a dog-eared law-book ; of his asking to sleep in the law office of Joshua Speed, and of Speed's giving him permission to move in. And of his going away after his "worldly goods" and coming back in ten minutes carrying an old pair of saddle-bags which he threw into a corner saying, "Speed, I've moved !"

Abraham Lincoln

I knew of his twenty years of country law-practice, when he was considered just about as good and no better than a dozen others on that circuit, and of his making a bare living during the time. Then I knew of his gradually awakening to the wrong of slavery, of the expansion of his mind, so that he began to incur the jealousy of rivals and the hatred of enemies, and of the prophetic feeling in that slow-but sure-moving mind that "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this Government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free."

I knew of the debates with Douglas and the national attention they attracted, and of Judge Davis's remark, "Lincoln has more common-sense than any man in America"; and then, chiefly through Judge Davis's influence, of his being nominated for President at the Chicago Convention. I knew of his election, and the coming of the war, and the long, hard fight, when friends and foes beset and none but he had the patience and

Abraham Lincoln

the courage that could wait. And then I knew of his death, that death which then seemed a calamity—terrible in its awful blackness.

But now the years have passed, and I comprehend somewhat of the paradox of things, and I know that this death was just what he might have prayed for. It was a fitting close for a life that had done a supreme and mighty work.

His face foretold the end.

Lincoln had no home ties. In that plain, frame house, without embellished yard or ornament, where I have been so often, there was no love that held him fast. In that house there was no library, but in the parlor, where six haircloth chairs and a slippery sofa to match stood guard, was a marble table on which were various gift-books in blue and gilt. He only turned to that home when there was no other place to go. Politics, with its attendant travel and excitement, allowed him to forget the what-might-have-beens. Foolish bickering, silly pride, and stupid

Abrabam Lincoln

misunderstanding pushed him out upon the streets and he sought to lose himself among the people. And to the people at length he gave his time, his talents, his love, his life. Fate took from him his home that the country might call him savior. Dire tragedy was a fitting end ; for only the souls who have suffered are well loved.

Jealousy, disparagement, calumny, have all made way and North and South alike revere his name.

The memory of his gentleness, his patience, his firm faith, and his great and loving heart are the priceless heritage of a united land. He had charity for all and malice toward none ; he gave affection, and affection is his reward.

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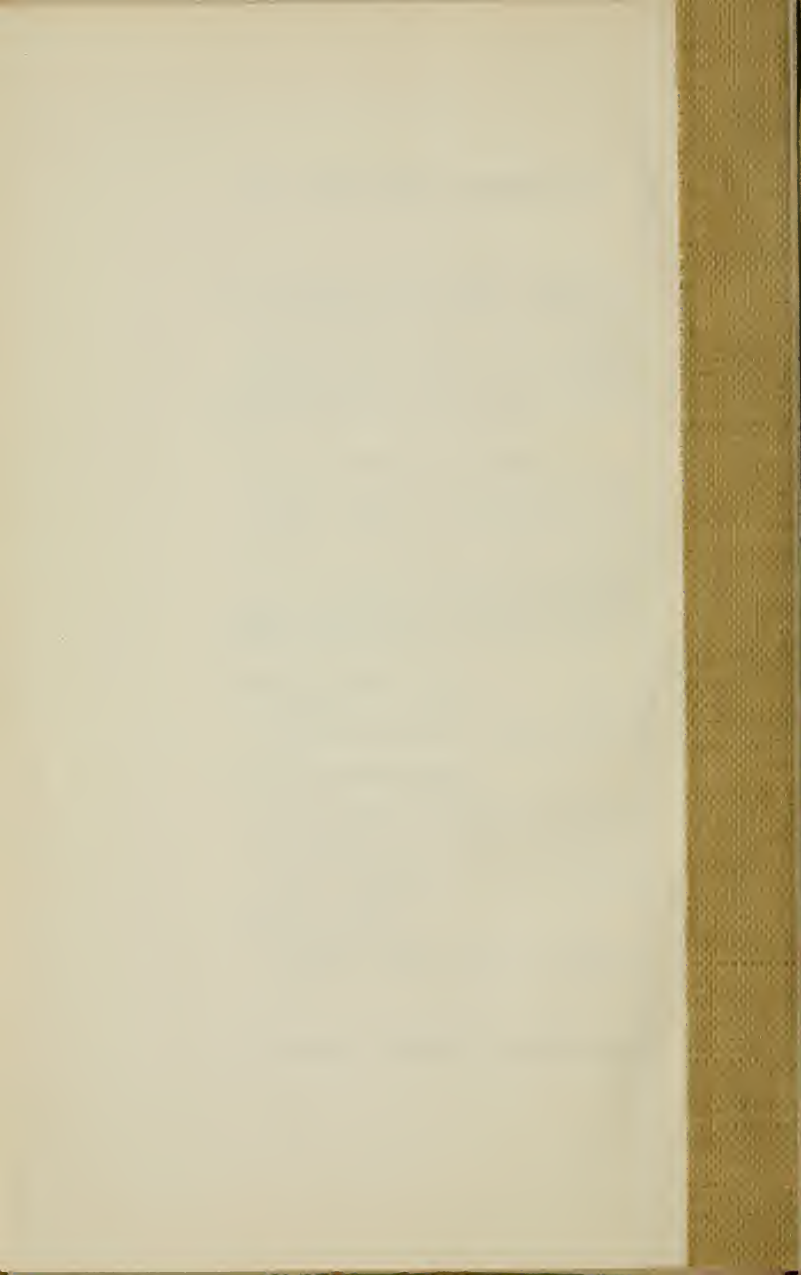
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