

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. "In 1841," he says, in a letter to a friend, "you and I had together a tedious low-water trip on a steam boat from Louisville to St. Louis. You may remember, as I well do, that from Louisville to the mouth of the Ohio, there were on board ten or a dozen slaves shackled together with irons. That sight was a continued torment to me, and I see something like it every time I touch the Ohio or any other slave border." 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 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 thrifless and poor as he had lived. We have, in latter 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 north-west 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 mind,—believed what was demonstrable, were men of great common sense. With these men Mr. Lincoln was thrown; with them he believed and with them he moved and almost had his being. They were sceptics all—scoffers some. These scoffers 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 sceptics and being bold, brave men they uttered their thoughts freely. . . . They were on all occasions, when opportunity offered, debating the various questions of Christianity among themselves; they took their stand on common sense and on their own souls; and though their arguments were rude and rough, no man could overthrow their homely logic. They riddled all divines, and not unfrequently made them sceptics,—disbelievers as bad as themselves. They were a jovial, healthful, generous, true and manly set of people." It is evident that W. Herndon, the speaker, is himself a disbeliever in Christianity, and addicted to the "newer and better thought of this age." He gives one specimen which we have omitted for fear of shocking our readers, of the theological criticism of these redoubt-

able logicians of nature; and we are inclined to infer from it that the divines whom they "riddled" and converted to scepticism must have been children of nature as well as themselves. The passage, however, is a life-like, though idealized, portrait of the Western man; and the tendency to religious scepticism of the most daring kind is as truly ascribed to him as the rest.

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 freethinker, 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 scepticism, 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. His theism was not strong enough to save him from deep depression under misfortune; and we heard, on what we thought at the time good authority, that after Chancellorsville, he actually meditated suicide. Like many sceptics, 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. "It was just after my election, in 1860," he said to his Secretary, John Hay, "when the news had been coming in thick and fast all day, and there had been a great 'hurrah, boys!' so that I was well tired, I went home to rest, throwing myself upon a lounge in my chamber. Opposite to where I lay was a bureau with a swinging glass upon it; and, on looking in that glass, I saw myself reflected nearly at full length; but my face, I noticed, had two separate and distinct images, the tip of the nose of one being about three inches from the tip of the other. I was a little bothered, perhaps startled, and got up and looked in the glass; but the illusion vanished. On lying down again I saw it a second time—plainer, if possible, than before; and then I noticed that one of the faces was a little paler—say five shades—than the other. I got up and the thing melted away; and I went off and in the excitement of the hour forgot all about it,—nearly, but not quite, for the thing would once in a while come up and give me a pang, as though something uncomfortable had happened. When I went home I told my wife about it; and in a few days afterwards I tried the experiment again, when, sure enough, the thing came back again; but I never succeeded in bringing the ghost back after that, though I once tried very industriously, to show it to my wife, who was worried about it some'hat. She thought it was 'a sign' that I was to be elected to a second term of office, and that the paleness of one of the faces was an omen that I should not see life through the last term." The apparition is, of course, easily explained by reference to a generally morbid temperament and a specially excited fancy. The impression which it made on the mind of a sceptic, noted for never believing in anything which was not actually submitted to his senses, is an instance of the tendency of superstition, to creep into the void left in the heart by faith,* and as such may be classed with the astrological superstitions of the Roman Empire, and of that later age of religious and moral infidelity of which the prophet was Machiavelli. But if Mr. John Hay has faithfully repeated Lincoln's words, a point on which we may have our doubts without prejudice to Mr. Hay's veracity, Mrs. Lincoln's interpretation of the vision is, to say the least, a very curious coincidence.

* Or rather, we presume, by the lack of it.—ED.