

his best friends were those with whom he had had differences and had settled them in the way then prevalent—in a ring of serious spectators.

In Illinois Lincoln first managed the business of a merchant named Offutt. There are one or two little instances remembered of him here. "Once, after he had sold a woman a little bill of goods and received the money, he found on looking over the account again that she had given him six and a quarter cents too much. The money burned in his hands until he locked the shop and started on a walk of several miles in the night to make restitution before he slept. On another occasion, after weighing and delivering a pound of tea, he found a small weight on the scales. He immediately weighed out the quantity of tea of which he had innocently defrauded his customer and went in search of her, his sensitive conscience not permitting any delay. To show that the young merchant was not too good for this world, another incident is given. A rural bully having made himself especially offensive one day, when a woman was present, by loud profanity, Lincoln requested him to be silent. This was, of course, a cause of war and the young clerk was forced to follow the incensed ruffian into the street, where the combat was of short duration. Lincoln threw him at once to the ground, and gathering a handful of dog-fennel, with which the roadside was plentifully bordered, he rubbed the ruffian's face and eyes with it until he howled for mercy. He did not howl in vain, for the placable giant, when his discipline was finished, brought water to bathe the culprit's smarting face, and doubtless improved the occasion with quaint admonition."

A few such passages-at-arms as this gave Lincoln great prestige, but he used it mainly in the office of peacemaker, which soon devolved upon him by general consent.

In the Indian Campaign, known as the Black Hawk War, Lincoln was present as a private and as an officer, but saw no real action. On his return in 1832 he was a candidate for the Legislature, and here begins his political life, which was his element, and in which he won his greatest triumphs.

His address to the electors, "remarkable for its soberness and reserve," winds up with the following words:—

"Upon the subjects of which I have treated, I have spoken as I have thought. I may be wrong in regard to any or all of them; but holding it a sound maxim that it is better only sometimes to be right than at all times wrong, so soon as I discover my opinions to be erroneous, I shall renounce them. . . . Every man is said to have his peculiar ambition. Whether it be true or not, I can say for one, that I have no other so great as that of being truly esteemed of my fellow-men, by rendering myself worthy of their esteem. . . . I was born and have ever remained in the most humble walks of life. I have no wealthy or powerful friends to recommend me. . . . And if the good people in their wisdom shall see fit to keep me

in the background, I have been too familiar with disappointments to be very much chagrined."

Lincoln's speeches were characterized by great good sense, and his manner of presenting his ideas was as interesting as it was original. None of the fright of the beginner was observable about him. Often before this he had discussed political questions from the top of an upturned keg, and so felt comparatively at his ease upon a platform. As an instance of his self-possession, it is related that once, while speaking he saw a ruffian attack a friend of his, and noticing that his friend was overmatched, he stepped down from the stand, and taking the "objectionable fighting man" by the neck, "threw him some ten feet," then quietly mounted to his place and continued his speech. He was unsuccessful in his first canvass—the only time in his life that he was unsuccessful in a contest before the people—but he made many warm friends and received the unanimous support of his own neighbourhood, a proof of the attachment and confidence which his genial and upright character had inspired among those who knew him best.

He was now Merchant, Post-master and Surveyor by turns. The period spent in the first of these occupations was remarkable, chiefly on account of the amount of legal reading Lincoln managed to accomplish; the business proved a failure, and was abandoned with loss. For a short time it is probable he worked "around," but his hearty friendliness and vivacity, as well as his industry, made him welcome everywhere. The same year he was appointed post-master, but this position was not long retained, the office being closed. There is one incident, however, which is remembered and which is characteristic of Lincoln: "Several years later, when he was a practising lawyer, an agent of the Post Office Department called upon him and asked for a balance due from the New Salem Office, some seventeen dollars. Lincoln rose, and opening a little trunk which lay in the corner of the room, took from it a cotton rag in which was tied up the exact sum required. 'I never use any man's money but my own,' he quietly remarked." In the business of Surveyor he was very successful, and enlarged his circle of friends. It seemed that every acquaintance he made became his friend. "There seemed to be no limit to his popularity nor to his aptitude, in the opinion of his admirers. He was continually called upon to act in the most incongruous capacities." He was judge at horse races, and all disputes on any imaginable matter were brought to him for decision. "His native tact and humour were invaluable in his work as peacemaker and his enormous physical strength, which he always used with a magnanimity rare among giants, placed his off-hand decrees beyond the reach of contemptuous question. He had grown up on the frontier, the utmost fringe of civilization, yet he was gentle and clean of speech, innocent of blasphemy or scandal. And the most uncouth ruffians of the place took a pride and