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THE EARLY YEARS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

No. II.

BY PROF. GOLDWIN SMITH, D.C.L.

In spite of his laziness, Abe was greatly in demand at hog-killing time, notwithstanding, or possibly in consequence of which, he contracted a peculiarly tender feeling towards swine, and in later life would get off his horse to help a struggling hog out of the mire or to save a little pig from the jaws of an unnatural mother.

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 learnt in the best school of life, and the school of life in which Abe studied was not the worst. He became a leading favourite, and his appearance, towering above the other hunting shirts, was always the signal for the fun to begin. 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 whiskey-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 the merciful task." His real kindness of heart is always coming out in the most striking way, and it is not impaired even by civil war.

Though sallow-faced, 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. But that he could raise a cask of whiskey in his arms standing upright, and drink out of the bung-hole, his biographer does not believe. The story is no doubt a part of the legendary halo which has gathered around the head of the martyr. 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. His chivalry once displayed itself in a rather singular fashion. He was in the habit, among other intellectual exercises, of writing satires on his neighbours in the form of chronicles, the remains of which, unlike any known writings of Moses, or even of Washington, are "too indecent for publication." In one of these he assailed the Grigsbys, who had failed to invite him to a brilliant wedding. The Grigsby blood took fire, and a fight was arranged. But when they came to the ring, Lincoln, deeming the Grigsby champion too much overmatched, magnanimously submitted for himself his less puissant step-brother, John Johnston, who was getting well pounded when Abe, on pretence of foul play, interfered, seized Grigsby by the neck, slung him off and cleared the ring. He then "swung a whiskey bottle over his head, and swore that he was the big buck of the lick,—a proposition which it seems, the other bucks of the lick, there assembled in large numbers, did not feel themselves called upon to dispute.

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; soon perhaps, every girl will be able to say it, and then human happiness will be complete. 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, greasy 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, as I said before, 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, etc. . . . 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. Lincoln was lazy, a very lazy man. He was always reading, scribbling, writing, ciphering, writing poetry, and the like. . . . In Gentryville, about one mile west of Thomas Lincoln's farm, Lincoln would go and tell his jokes and stories, etc., and was so odd, original, humorous and witty, that all the people in town would gather round him. He would keep them there till mid-night. I would get tired, want to go home, cuss Abe most heartily. 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 rung 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 neighbour 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. He shewed his practical ingenuity in getting the boat off a dam, and perhaps still more signally in quieting some restive hogs by the simple expedient of sewing up their eyes. In the first trip