

'TIS BETTER TO FORGET.

I've seen the household dark and lone
Where once the friendly astrals shone,
And to the haunts of harp and hymn
There came no tone.

Oh, vanished forms of bower and hall,
That Memory's fadeless lamps recall,
The myrtles twine around your graves,
And snowflakes fall!

So near the doors of God we live,
So near the earth, ah, who would give
A single word to draw a tear,
Or one receive!

So near the earth where graves lie wet,
Too near for heartache and regret:
'Tis better to forgive each wrong,
And all forget.

Trust on and wait, what'er befall,
Let Memory's lamps but love recall;
Live thou thy better self—thy wrongs,
Forget them all.

So near to earth, so near to heaven,
Forgive them all, and be forgiven
And other hearts shall nobly strive,
Where thou hast striven.

Time tells the truth, and pleasantly
The winters change, and o'er the sea
The purple swallows singing come,
Unloosed and free.

So happier days await thy trust;
Though others wrong thee, yet be just,
So near the doors of God is life,
So near the dust.

Live on—thy torch of life must fade,
Love on—for thee will fall the shade,
Trust on, till each withholden hand
In thine be laid.

So shall thy heart bear no regret,
So Love thy lapses will forget,
And violets kiss thy grave at last,
With tear-drops wet.

—Hezekiah Butterworth in *Youth's Companion*.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S FIRST LETTER.

BY MRS. G. HALL.

The man who in his later years was able to write his name by public acts upon the annals of every State in the Union was once a very poor boy, living in a floorless, dismal cabin, in the western wilds of Indiana, much wilder then than now.

It was a dwelling of but one room, furnished with four or five three-legged stools, a few cooking utensils, and something that answered for a bed; while across the logs overhead irregular slabs were laid so as to make a sort of chamber, reached by a ladder from the room below, for the growing boy, who nightly laid himself upon its floor, with no other bedding than coarse blankets, and slept with as much content as if he had been in some lordly mansion. Abraham Lincoln, or as he was then more familiarly called, "Abe," had never known better fare than this.

His father, oppressed by hard times and harder fortunes, had all he could do to earn enough to keep soul and body together, and from his boyhood up had never been allowed a single day of schooling, so that he could neither read nor write, though a kindly industrious man, and withal persevering; while his mother, to whom Abe owed so much, with her good judgment, rare common-sense, and strong mental powers had they been developed, could read, though she could not write, finding much comfort therefrom in the little worn-out Bible which she so often read aloud to her husband and son, that she could not rest until her boy, who seemed to be quick and bright, should be spared from the hard farm work, if only for an hour each day, to pick out the letters, and "we'll trust to Providence," she would say, "to make him a writer, sometime; he's so earnest, once get him started, he'll go on himself."

Not a great while after an opportunity offered. Abe's father at length consented, when the matter was laid before him, although he could ill afford to spare the boy, as he had no other helper on his small farm.

How all his life Abraham Lincoln must have blessed the persevering mother and that first day at school! What a new source of joy it opened out to him! He improved every moment, and, after the death of his mother, a few months later, he was enabled to while away many an hour for the poor, lonely father in reading aloud, not only the Bible, but "Pilgrim's Progress," and the "Life of Washington," both loans from

Gethsemane.

"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."—MATT. xxvi. 38.

1. 'Tis midnight; and on Olive's brow The star is dimmed that late-ly shone:
2. 'Tis midnight; and from all re-moved The Sa-viour wrestles lone with fears;

'Tis midnight; in the gar-den now The suffering Sa-viour prays a-lone,
E'en that dis-ci-ple whom He loved Heeds not his Mas-ter's grief and tears.

'Tis midnight and for others guilt,
The Man of Sorrows weeps in blood;
Yet He who hath in anguish knelt,
Is not forsaken by his God.

'Tis midnight, and from other plains
Is born the song that angle's know
Unheard by mortals are the strains
That sweetly soothe the Saviour's woe.

some of the neighbors. What these books did towards the formation of the character of this good man, as seen in after years, we shall never know.

The reading was now fairly conquered, but some time elapsed before the way was opened for little "Abe" to learn to write, and the poor mother never lived to see it fulfilled; but her faith was very strong in the belief that her boy would be kept out of "the jaws of ignorance," and in the end would make a better scholar than either father or mother.

"You do pretty well as to books, Abe," his father said to him one day, "but I'm going to give you an hour more a day to learn to write. Can you do it, boy?" "Can I do it? Try me!" he answered.

"Well next week young Hanks is coming to take old Jenkins' cabin, and he's been to school a lot; and I've got him to say he'll take you and show you how, but you must do your level best, Abe."

When the day arrived for the first lesson, Hanks sent for young Abe, telling him at the same time that he could do very little at it himself, but he'd teach him what he knew. All the boy wanted was to get an idea how to form the letters, and then he could go on himself, he knew. This Hanks could impart, and he saw a bright boy, determined on success, in his pupil.

To be sure, Abe was awkward enough at first, but he believed in practice, and when he had learned to shape one letter, he would try it and try it again until he had mastered it. With pieces of chalk and charcoal he would make them everywhere—on trunks of trees, on slabs of his floor, on the stools, wherever there was room for a letter there it was put.

Mr. Lincoln was too poor to get him the paper he needed, and in his ambition he had to resort to these expedients; often using a charred stick, he would work-most dexterously, never discouraged by the difficulties surrounding him. Boys of so much resolution always succeed. Even in the midst of harvesting, when there was little time to spare, he would stop now and then and astonish the neighboring farmers, who could not write themselves, by writing his name on the ground with a stick, and they learned to look upon the young Lincoln as nothing short of a prodigy. It was not only on the little bit of soil where he lived, but on the whole State of Indiana that he wrote his name in after days.

Of course Abe's father was getting to feel very proud of his abilities, and he must now make them available; and so one day, after their simple repast, which he usually prepared himself, he called him from his attic room where he was practising in the noon hour.

"Say, Abe, I want you to write me a letter. I have been waiting a long time to have it done."

"Who to, father?" asked Abe, putting on an air of importance, that at last he could do what his father could not do for himself.

"Why, to Elkins, our old minister! It is high time he heard of your mother's death" (the Lincolns had moved from the

place where Mr. Elkins had been their minister), "and tell him I want him to come and preach the funeral sermon. It's e'en a most a year since she died, and he knew what a good woman she was, Abe. She bent you all right, he knew that."

"Why, who knows but what he's dead himself," said Abe.

"Well, we can but try; and she'd be so glad to know you could do it, boy."

With this affectionate suggestion, Abe started the letter. His father, having furnished the paper, sat by his side to give him the matter also.

"Now," said Mr. Lincoln, "read it all over, Abe."

"What, the whole of it?"

"Yes, of course; I want to hear how it sounds, and see if I've left out anything." What satisfaction to have a son that could write this long-delayed letter! No other member of the family had ever performed such a feat.

"See what it is worth, my son, to write a letter. If only just this one, it pays for all the trouble."

"It ain't no trouble," said Abe, "and I'll tell you what, I'll write a better one some day, see if I don't!"

Well, the letter was signed, sealed and delivered, and sped on its errand, young Abe, meanwhile, all impatience to know the result. Perhaps, in all his after life there was nothing so important as the sending off of that first letter. Would it ever reach his mother's old friend, and if that did, couldn't he do more with his pen? All over the settlement the news flew about the letter that Mr. Lincoln's son had written. Henceforth he was a hero in that part of the country, where learning was at a low ebb. Kind-hearted boy as he was, many a friendly letter was written for the neighbors to far distant friends, who had to thank him for the words of greeting they otherwise would never have received.

The letter reached Mr. Elkins, who, at length, came; but he could hardly believe that young Abe had been the penman, and that it was only his first attempt.

This is but one instance of the development of young Abe from the time he could read to his manhood days. He thought, he reflected, he persevered, and his mental powers developed faster than those of many boys at school.

There was no doubt that much of Abraham Lincoln's style and felicity of composition in later years, both as writer and speaker, could date back to those early efforts with the country teacher, and his kindly and oft-repeated acts as amanuensis for the neighborhood. He has set an example that all boys ought to follow.

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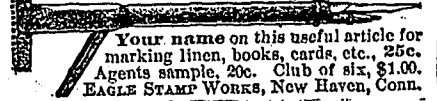
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