

The Critic.

A Monthly Journal of Law, Medicine, Education,
and Divinity.

The journal also includes Social Subjects, articles relating to Civic Affairs, and Politics, from the respective standpoints of Employers and Employed, it will be unconnected with any party.

THE CRITIC is edited and published by DAVID EDWARDS, No. 4 Adelaide St. West, Toronto.

Price, 50 cts per annum. Single copies 5 cents

All communications must bear the name and address of the writer, not necessarily for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith.

Contributors will be remunerated according to merit.

THE EARLY YEARS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

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

Our readers need not be afraid that we are going to bore them with the Slavery Question or with the Civil War. We deal here not with the Martyr President, but with Abe Lincoln in embryo, leaving the great man at the entrance of the grand scene. Mr. Ward H. Lamon has published a biography* which enables us to do this, and which, besides containing a good deal that is amusing, is a curious contribution to political science, as illustrating by a world-renowned instance, the origin of the species Politician. The materials for it appear to be drawn from the most authentic sources, and to have been used with diligence, though in point of form, the book leaves something to be desired. We trust the book, and the authorities quoted in it for our facts.

After the murder, criticism, of course, was for a time impossible. Martyrdom was followed by canonization, and the popular heart could not be blamed for overflowing in hyperbole. The fallen chief "was Washington, he was Moses, and there were not lacking even those who likened him to the God and Redeemer of all the earth. These latter thought they discovered in his early origin, his kindly nature, his benevolent precepts, and the homely anecdotes in which he taught the people, strong points of resemblance between him and the Divine Son of Mary." A halo of myth naturally gathered round the cradle of this new Moses—for we will not pursue the more extravagant and offensive parallel which may serve as a set-off against that which was drawn by English Royalists between the death of Charles I. and the Crucifixion. Among other fables, it was believed that the President's family had fled from Kentucky to Indiana to escape the taint of Slavery. Thomas Lincoln, the father of Abraham, was migratory enough, but the course of his migrations was not determined by high moral motives, and we may safely affirm that had he ever found himself among the fleshpots of Egypt, he would have stayed there, however deep the moral darkness might have been. He was a thriftless "ne'er do weel," who had very commonplace reasons for wandering away from the miserable, solitary farm in Kentucky, on which his child first formed a sad acquaintance with life and nature, and which, as it happened, was not in the slave-owning region of the State. His decision appears to have been hastened by a "difficulty," in which he bit off his antagonist's nose—an incident to which it would be difficult to find a parallel in the family histories of Scripture heroes, or even in those of the Sainted Fathers of the Republic. He drifted to Indiana, and in a spot which was then an almost untrodden wilderness, built a *casa*

* The Life of Abraham Lincoln from his Birth to his Inauguration as President. By Ward H. Lamon. Boston: James R. Osgood & Co. 1872.

santa, which his connection, Dennis Hanks, calls "that darned little half-faced camp"—a dwelling enclosed on three sides and open on the fourth, without a floor, and called a camp, it seems, because it was made of poles, not of logs. He afterwards exchanged the "camp" for the more ambitious "cabin;" but his cabin was "a rough, rough log one," made of unhewn timber, and without floor, door, or window. In this "rough, rough," abode, his lanky, lean-visaged, awkward and somewhat pensive, though strong, hearty, and patient son. Abraham had a "rough, rough" life, and underwent experiences which, if they were not calculated to form a Pitt or a Turgot, were calculated to season an American politician, and make him a winner in the tough struggle for existence, as well as to identify him with the people, faithful representation of whose aims, sentiments, tastes, passions and prejudices was the one thing needful to qualify him for obtaining the prize of his ambition. "For two years Lincoln (the father) continued to live alone in the old way. He did not like to farm, and he never got much of his land under cultivation. His principal crop was corn; and this, with the game which a rifleman so expert would easily take from the woods around him, supplied his table." It does not appear that he employed any of his mechanical skill in completing and furnishing his cabin. It has already been stated that the latter had no window, door or floor. "But the furniture, if it might be called furniture, was even worse than the house. Three-legged stools served for chairs. A bedstead was made of poles stuck in the cracks of the logs in one corner of the cabin, while the other end rested in the crotch of a forked stick stuck in the earthen floor. On these were laid some boards, and on the boards a shake-down of leaves, covered with skins and old petticoats. The table was a puncheon supported by four legs. They had a few pewter and tin dishes to eat from, but the most minute inventory of their effects makes no mention of knives or forks. Their cooking utensils were a Dutch oven and a skillet. Abraham slept in the loft, to which he ascended by means of pins driven into holes in the wall." Of his father's disposition, Abraham seems to have inherited the dislike to labour, though his sounder moral nature prevented him being an idler. His tendency to politics came from the same element of character as his father's preference for the rifle. In after life we are told his mind "was filled with gloomy forebodings and strong apprehensions of impending evil, mingled with extravagant visions of personal grandeur and power." His melancholy, characterised by all his friends as "terrible," was closely connected with the cravings of his demagogic ambition, and the root of both was in him from a boy.

In the Indiana cabin Abraham's mother, whose maiden name was Nancy Hanks, died, far from medical aid, of the epidemic called milk sickness. She was preceded in death by her relatives, the Sparrows, who had succeeded the Lincolns in the "camp," and by many neighbours, whose coffins Thomas Lincoln made out of "green lumber cut with a whip saw." Upon Nancy's death he took to his green lumber again and made a box for her. There were about twenty persons at her funeral. They took her to the summit of a deeply wooded knoll, about half a mile south-east of the cabin, and laid her beside the Sparrows. If there were any burial ceremonies, they were of the briefest. But it happened that a few months later an itinerant preacher, named David Elkin, whom the Lincolns had known in Kentucky, wandered into the settlement, and he either volunteered or was employed to preach a sermon, which should commemorate the many virtues, and pass over in silence the few frailties of the poor woman who slept in the forest. Many years later the bodies of Levi Hall and his