

LINCOLN'S LITERARY EXPERIMENTS.

WITH A LECTURE AND VERSES HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED.



PERHAPS no point in the career of Abraham Lincoln has excited more surprise or comment than his remarkable power of literary expression. It is a constant puzzle to many men of letters how a person growing up without the advantage of schools and books could have acquired the art which enabled him to write the Gettysburg address and the second inaugural. At first view, indeed, the question appears to be an educational one; and when men who devote their days and nights to rules, theories, and text-books find themselves baffled in such an acquirement, they naturally wonder how a laboring frontiersman could have gained it.

Their main error, of course, consists in assuming that it is merely an educational problem. The prime factor in such phenomena always consists of natural gifts — of the element we call genius. It is not because of their condition and surroundings, but in spite of them, that individuals occasionally manifest and develop these exceptional qualities. We find no such manifestations or results in the lives of the relatives, neighbors, or companions of Abraham Lincoln, who grew up with and about him in the woods and the cabins of Kentucky and Indiana, and who shared alike his experiences, his privations, and his opportunities, but were without his natural ability. This view, however, does not lessen our curiosity and interest in his educational processes.

We cannot better show his educational beginnings than by quoting his own statement made in two brief autobiographical sketches. In the first, written in December, 1859, he says:

My father, at the death of his father, was but six years of age, and he grew up literally without education. He removed from Kentucky to what is now Spencer County, Indiana, in my eighth year. We reached our new home about the time the State came into the Union. It was a wild region, with many bears and other wild animals still in the woods. There I grew up. There were some schools, so called, but no qualification was ever required of a teacher beyond "readin', writin', and cipherin'" to the rule of three. If a straggler supposed to understand Latin happened to sojourn in the neighborhood, he was looked upon as a wizard. There was absolutely nothing to excite ambition for education. Of course, when I came of age I did not know much. Still, somehow, I could read, write, and cipher to the rule of three.

Again, in a sketch written immediately after his first nomination for President, to be used as material for a campaign biography, his boyhood is thus spoken of:

Before leaving Kentucky, he and his sister were sent for short periods to A B C schools, the first kept by Zachariah Riney, and the second by Caleb Hazel. . . . His father's residence continued at the same place in Indiana till 1830. While here, Abraham went to A B C schools by litters, kept successively by Andrew Crawford, — Sweeny, and Azel W. Dorsey. He does not remember any other. The family of Mr. Dorsey now resides in Schuyler County, Illinois. Abraham now thinks that the aggregate of all his schooling did not amount to one year. He was never in a college or academy as a student, and never inside of a college or academy building till since he had a law license. What he has in the way of education he has picked up. After he was twenty-three and had separated from his father, he studied English grammar — imperfectly, of course, but so as to speak and write as well as he now does. He studied and nearly mastered the six books of Euclid since he was a member of Congress.

In these extracts Lincoln gives us certainly not the full picture, but at least a vivid suggestion of the early influences acting upon his intellectual development — his isolation in childhood and boyhood; the personal privations under which he grew up; the ignorance and mental poverty of his parents, companions, and neighbors; the rudeness of the manners amid which he lived; the absence of example and emulation to prompt him to study and improvement; the lamentable insufficiency of tuition which came to him from the two or three school-masters competent to give only the most primary instruction; the scarcity of books, and their elementary contents, — always excepting the Bible, — which could fall into his hands.

These conditions, which followed him from his birth until he attained his majority, impressed upon him certain characteristics that never afterward left him, — a certain plainness of manner, of thought, and of speech, differentiating him in a marked and unmistakable degree from the boy and youth who, during the same period, had grown up in comfort and plenty, in schools and colleges, in intelligent society and social refinement, — forming a striking contrast between the man of the frontier and the man of the city.

Yet these disadvantages, which were destructive clogs to sluggish or ordinary intellects,

brought some compensations to a quick and energetic mind. Though the range of ideas and experiences was narrow, and confined to the routine of farm work, hunting, and neighborhood merrymaking, though thought and speech were simple, they were at least clear and direct. Though the vocabulary was scanty, the words were short and forcible. If one inquired after the health of an ailing neighbor, and received for answer that he felt "mighty weak," the faulty construction was somewhat mitigated by the intended vigor of the statement. Most valuable of all was the aid these experiences afforded in the judgment of human nature. If Lincoln, when a barefoot country boy, or after he had grown to the stature and strength of a backwoods rail-splitter, was ever prompted to imagine the feelings and actions of a practising lawyer, or a member of Congress, or a President of the United States, when he in turn became a practising lawyer, a member of Congress, and a President of the United States, he never had need to imagine the feelings and actions of barefoot boys, or of stalwart rail-splitters, or of the plain people of the nation: he knew them by heart.

These were the influences from without. The influences from within—the natural forces of character—were, that without the stimulus of example and emulation he applied himself, with marked diligence and persistent ambition, to mastering the lessons he received; that he read, wrote, and ciphered under difficulties and discouragements which other boys failed to overcome; that even in his boyish days he put his hard-gained knowledge to practical, if not the most commendable, service in neighborhood discussions and debates, in writing copy-book essays, doggerel rhymes and satires, in now and then mounting a lonely stump and making a mock harangue to nodding corn-rows and the stolid pumpkins that lay between them. There is no record of these boyish pranks, but they can be readily imagined by all who are familiar with frontier life. There is no escape from the conclusion that his self-education must have employed these, the only available means for improvement.

His father's emigration from Indiana to Illinois occurred in 1830. The first six months of the year 1831 were taken up by flat-boat building and by his trip to New Orleans. He did not begin life at New Salem until August of that year, and the following winter was scarcely over when he made up his mind to become a candidate for the legislature from Sangamon County.

His first political address or circular is dated March 9, 1832, and was printed in the "Sangamon Journal" of March 15. As there had been neither time nor opportunity for school-

ing in any form since his arrival in Illinois, this written address gives us the measure of the intellectual development he must have brought with him from Indiana. It is an earnest, well-arranged, and clearly expressed statement of his political views, discussing not merely the improvement of the Sangamon River, which was the local political hobby, but also railroads, usury, education, and the amendment of several specific statutes. As a literary production, no ordinary college graduate would need to be ashamed of it; as the program of an embryo legislator, it was probably fully up to the average of the best-educated of his competitors. The evidence is unmistakable that when he came of age he already possessed acquirements far beyond the mere ability to "read, write, and cipher to the rule of three."

The educational experiences of what may be called his second period, beginning with this first political venture in March, 1832, and extending to the end of his term in Congress in 1849, a period of seventeen years, partake of this same twofold character, the concurrent result of influences from without and influences from within. The influences from without consisted in his active participation in practical politics—party consultation or caucusing, personal electioneering, and political discussion on the stump; such elementary statesmanship as he could learn during eight years of membership in the State legislature, and two years of membership in Congress; such a study of the principles of law as was necessary to obtain an attorney's license; and such an examination and criticism of statutes as occurred in his consequent law-practice before local courts. Perhaps the most powerful outside influence was the change in his social status: he had moved from New Salem to Springfield, and had been thrown into the companionship and rivalry of a group of young men as talented, brilliant, and ambitious as ever graced the history of a State capital.

But even these outside influences now produced a twofold effect: all this while the conditions surrounding him kept him in close contact and association with the "plain people," with primitive pioneer life. Social intercourse, argument before a court, debate on the stump or legislative discussion with Douglas, Stuart, Logan, Browning, Baker, Hardin, Trumbull, Calhoun, McDougal, and others extended his knowledge, sharpened his wit, and improved his oratory; but when he went to the cabins of the settlers to solicit their votes, or when as surveyor he located their roads and ran out their farm lines, the simple modes of thought and strong rural phraseology he had learned as boy and youth were renewed and deepened, and the tendency to express ex-

travagant ideas in high-sounding words was repressed and chastened. And this was not alone the exercise of good judgment, but a measure of immediate utility. In the beginnings of his political career he had no fame to collect great audiences, such as listened to the Lincoln-Douglas debates or his Cooper Institute speech. The aspiring local candidate of those days was lucky if he found a gathering of twenty or thirty settlers at a shooting-match, a raising, or other neighborhood occasion, to whom he could propose his reforms in State legislation, or his national views on tariff and internal improvement. Sometimes it was an evening meeting assembled in a district log school-house, lighted by two or three tallow candles, with an audience of ten or fifteen persons. Only those who have been through experiences of this kind can appreciate the chilling effect of such surroundings upon oratorical enthusiasm. Here the speaker needed all his epigrams and anecdotes to dissipate the expectant gravity, the staring solemnity, of his auditors in the ghostly half-light inside and the dismal darkness and loneliness outside the little cabin. These talks were uncongenial soil for rhetoric and literary style. They needed to be seasoned with pithy argument and witty illustration, and rendered in a vocabulary that had the flavor of the cabin and the energy of the frontier. It was this kind of training in Lincoln's art which not only helped him to four successive elections to the legislature, but became to a certain degree ingrained in his literary development; for its better and higher effects are distinctly traceable in the most successful writings and utterances of his later life.

Stump-speeches, debates in the State legislature, and arguments before juries, were, in the very nature of things, always extemporaneous during his earlier days. While this practice taught him confidence and expedients in discussion, it subjected him to the danger of becoming wordy and prolix. At that period strong temptation toward this defect lay in the prevailing fashion of "spread-eagle" oratory, and in one of Mr. Lincoln's printed speeches there is a slight taint of the pernicious habit. But he quickly realized the danger, and overcame the temptation. In his later years he used to repeat with great glee and appreciation the picturesque description of the Southwestern orator of whom it was said, "He mounted the rostrum, threw back his head, shined his eyes, opened his mouth, and left the consequences to God."

With the exception of arguments addressed to juries, the law furnished him one of the strongest safeguards against rambling thought and redundant speech. The text-books of that

science afford no encouragement to the misuse of words or logic. Their formulas of legal principles are nearly as cold and rigid as the multiplication table. To these we may confidently trace Lincoln's strong tendency to definitions and axioms in his political discussions; while from the briefs and declarations he was compelled to write he gained invaluable habits of brevity and conciseness.

It is a popular and suggestive, if not entirely correct, saying that only three books are needed to make up a sufficient library—that in the Bible, Blackstone, and Shakspeare, a man may find all that is best in philosophy, law, and literature. It is certain that Lincoln worked with industry in these great intellectual quarries, and the solidity and grace that they gave to his temple of fame are plainly discernible.

If he had been a man possessing merely an average intellect, his literary and political growth would have been limited as well as fashioned by the outside influences which have been mentioned. He would have become a shrewd and successful jury lawyer, and a valuable "rabble-rousing" party lieutenant with a local fame. But all this time the influences within himself were as active and fruitful as the exterior ones. His ambition, however much hampered by the want of school training or by primitive surroundings, always prompted him to seek a better mode of expression, as well as finer thought.

The same genius, industry, and perseverance which enabled him to extract so much benefit from the poor A B C schools of Kentucky and Indiana now served him to turn to good account the practical schooling afforded by active politics and miscellaneous law practice before justices of the peace, and the circuit courts which he and the young lawyers and politicians of his coterie followed from county to county. The remarkable thing was that while nature and opportunity gave him talent and great success at story-telling and extemporaneous talking, he learned to write—learned to appreciate the value of the pen as an instrument to formulate and record his thought, and the more clearly, forcibly, and elegantly to express it.

Doubtless he made slow progress. Without books, without teachers, without a "literary" atmosphere to excite emulation, his efforts were probably only secondary—only incidental to the more engrossing occupations of law and politics. The list of his writings of this class is not large, and yet it is enough to create the inference that much similar labor must have gone to waste. In 1837 he wrote, delivered, and printed a lecture on "The Perpetuation of our Free Institutions." In 1839 he wrote out and printed a speech that he made

in one of the political debates with which the young men of Springfield enlivened their winters. In 1842 he wrote and printed a "Washingtonian" temperance address. All his longer speeches in Congress were prepared with great care, both as to argument and handwriting; and when his political idol, Henry Clay, died in 1852, he delivered and printed a long and able eulogy on his life and character.

It will thus be seen that in the course of his self-education, Lincoln from time to time engaged in composition as an art. As a further illustration of this practice, a few specimens are here for the first time printed of what may be appropriately classed as his "literary experiments." While they call for no special admiration on account of intrinsic merit, they are of exceeding interest as stepping-stones to the attainment of that literary style and power which, in his later speeches and writings, have elicited the enthusiasm of the best scholars and critics.

TREMONT, April 18, 1846.

FRIEND JOHNSTON: Your letter, written some six weeks since, was received in due course, and also the paper with the parody. It is true, as suggested it might be, that I have never seen Poe's "Raven"; and I very well know that a parody is almost entirely dependent for its interest upon the reader's acquaintance with the original. Still there is enough in the polecat, self-considered, to afford one several hearty laughs. I think four or five of the last stanzas are decidedly funny, particularly where Jeremiah "scrubbed and washed, and prayed and fasted."

I have not your letter now before me; but, from memory, I think you ask me who is the author of the piece I sent you, and that you do so ask as to indicate a slight suspicion that I myself am the author. Beyond all question, I am not the author. I would give all I am worth, and go in debt, to be able to write so fine a piece as I think that is. Neither do I know who is the author. I met it in a straggling form in a newspaper last summer, and I remember to have seen it once before, about fifteen years ago, and this is all I know about it.

The piece of poetry of my own which I alluded to, I was led to write under the following circumstances. In the fall of 1844, thinking I might aid some to carry the State of Indiana for Mr. Clay, I went into the neighborhood in that State in which I was raised, where my mother and only sister were buried, and from which I had been absent about fifteen years.

That part of the country is, within itself, as unpoetical as any spot of the earth; but still, seeing it and its objects and inhabitants aroused feelings in me which were certainly poetry; though whether my expression of those feelings is poetry is quite another question. When I got to writing, the change of subject divided the thing into four little divisions or cantos, the first only of which I send you now, and may send the others hereafter.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN.

My childhood's home I see again,
And sadden with the view;
And still, as memory crowds my brain,
There 's pleasure in it too.

O Memory! thou midway world
'Twixt earth and paradise,
Where things decayed and loved ones lost
In dreamy shadows rise,

And, freed from all that 's earthly vile,
Seem hallowed, pure and bright,
Like scenes in some enchanted isle
All bathed in liquid light.

As dusky mountains please the eye
When twilight chases day;
As bugle-notes that, passing by,
In distance die away;

As leaving some grand waterfall,
We, lingering, list its roar—
So memory will hallow all
We 've known but know no more.

Near twenty years have passed away
Since here I bid farewell
To woods and fields, and scenes of play,
And playmates loved so well.

Where many were, but few remain
Of old familiar things;
But seeing them to mind again
The lost and absent brings.

The friends I left that parting day,
How changed, as time has sped!
Young childhood grown, strong manhood gray;
And half of all are dead.

I hear the loved survivors tell
How nought from death could save,
Till every sound appears a knell,
And every spot a grave.

I range the fields with pensive tread,
And pace the hollow rooms,
And feel (companion of the dead)
I 'm living in the tombs.

SPRINGFIELD, September 6, 1846.

FRIEND JOHNSTON: You remember when I wrote you from Tremont last spring, sending you a little canto of what I called poetry, I promised to bore you with another some time. I now fulfil the promise. The subject of the present one is an insane man; his name is Matthew Gentry. He is three years older than I, and when we were boys we went to school together. He was rather a bright lad, and the son of the rich man of a very poor neighborhood. At the age of nineteen he unaccountably became furiously mad, from which condition he gradually settled down into harmless insanity. When, as I told you in my other letter, I visited my old home in the fall of 1844, I found him still lingering in this wretched condition. In my poetizing mood, I could not forget the impression his case made upon me. Here is the result:

But here 's an object more of dread
 Than aught the grave contains—
 A human form with reason fled,
 While wretched life remains.

When terror spread, and neighbors ran
 Your dangerous strength to bind,
 And soon, a howling, crazy man,
 Your limbs were fast confined;

How then you strove and shrieked aloud,
 Your bones and sinews bared;
 And fiendish on the gazing crowd
 With burning eyeballs glared;

And begged and swore, and wept and prayed,
 With maniac laughter joined;
 How fearful were these signs displayed
 By pangs that killed the mind!

And when at length the drear and long
 Time soothed thy fiercer woes,
 How plaintively thy mournful song
 Upon the still night rose!

I've heard it oft as if I dreamed,
 Far distant, sweet and lone,
 The funeral dirge it ever seemed
 Of reason dead and gone.

To drink its strains I've stole away,
 All stealthily and still,
 Ere yet the rising god of day
 Had streaked the eastern hill.

Air held her breath; trees with the spell
 Seemed sorrowing angels round,
 Whose swelling tears in dewdrops fell
 Upon the listening ground.

But this is past, and naught remains
 That raised thee o'er the brute:
 Thy piercing shrieks and soothing strains
 Are like, forever mute.

Now fare thee well! More thou the cause
 Than subject now of woe.
 All mental pangs by time's kind laws
 Hast lost the power to know.

O death! thou awe-inspiring prince
 That keepest the world in fear,
 Why dost thou tear more blest ones hence,
 And leave him lingering here?

If I should ever send another, the subject will be
 a "Bear Hunt." Yours as ever,

A. LINCOLN.

FRAGMENT: NOTES FOR A LECTURE.

NIAGARA FALLS! By what mysterious power is it that millions and millions are drawn from all parts of the world to gaze upon Niagara Falls? There is no mystery about the thing itself. Every effect is just as any intelligent man, knowing the causes, would anticipate without seeing it. If the water, moving onward in a great river, reaches a

point where there is a perpendicular jog of a hundred feet in descent in the bottom of the river, it is plain the water will have a violent and continuous plunge at that point. It is also plain, the water, thus plunging, will foam, and roar, and send up a mist continuously, in which last, during sunshine, there will be perpetual rainbows. The mere physical of Niagara Falls is only this.

Yet this is really a very small part of that world's wonder. Its power to excite reflection and emotion is its great charm. The geologist will demonstrate that the plunge, or fall, was once at Lake Ontario, and has worn its way back to its present position; he will ascertain how fast it is wearing now, and so get a basis for determining how long it has been wearing back from Lake Ontario, and finally demonstrate by it that this world is at least fourteen thousand years old. A philosopher of a slightly different turn will say, "Niagara Falls is only the lip of the basin out of which pours all the surplus water which rains down on two or three hundred thousand square miles of the earth's surface." He will estimate with approximate accuracy that five hundred thousand tons of water fall with their full weight a distance of a hundred feet each minute — thus exerting a force equal to the lifting of the same weight, through the same space, in the same time. And then the further reflection comes that this vast amount of water, constantly pounding down, is supplied by an equal amount constantly lifted up by the sun; and still he says, "If this much is lifted up for this one space of two or three hundred thousand square miles, an equal amount must be lifted up for every other equal space"; and he is overwhelmed in the contemplation of the vast power the sun is constantly exerting in the quiet noiseless operation of lifting water up to be rained down again.

But still there is more. It calls up the indefinite past. When Columbus first sought this continent — when Christ suffered on the cross — when Moses led Israel through the Red Sea — nay, even when Adam first came from the hand of his Maker: then, as now, Niagara was roaring here. The eyes of that species of extinct giants whose bones fill the mounds of America have gazed on Niagara as ours do now. Contemporary with the first race of men, and older than the first man, Niagara is strong and fresh to-day as ten thousand years ago. The mammoth and mastodon, so long dead that fragments of their monstrous bones alone testify that they ever lived, have gazed on Niagara — in that long, long time, never still for a single moment [never dried], never froze, never slept, never rested.

FRAGMENT: NOTES FOR LAW LECTURE.

I AM not an accomplished lawyer. I find quite as much material for a lecture in those points wherein I have failed, as in those wherein I have been moderately successful. The leading rule for the lawyer, as for the man of every other calling, is diligence. Leave nothing for to-morrow which can be done to-day. Never let your correspondence fall behind. Whatever piece of business you have in hand, before stopping, do all the labor pertaining to it which can be done. When you bring a common-law suit, if you have the

facts for doing so, write the declaration at once. If a law point be involved, examine the books, and note the authority you rely on, upon the declaration, itself, where you are sure to find it when wanted. The same of defenses and pleas. In business not likely to be litigated — ordinary collection cases, foreclosures, partitions, and the like — make all examinations of titles, and note them, and even draft orders and decrees in advance. This course has a triple advantage; it avoids omissions and neglect, saves your labor when once done, performs the labor out of court when you have leisure, rather than in court when you have not. Extemporaneous speaking should be practised and cultivated. It is the lawyer's avenue to the public. However able and faithful he may be in other respects, people are slow to bring him business if he cannot make a speech. And yet there is not a more fatal error to young lawyers than relying too much on speech-making. If any one, upon his rare powers of speaking, shall claim an exemption from the drudgery of the law, his case is a failure in advance.

Discourage litigation. Persuade your neighbors to compromise whenever you can. Point out to them how the nominal winner is often a real loser — in fees, expenses, and waste of time. As a peacemaker the lawyer has a superior opportunity of being a good man. There will still be business enough.

Never stir up litigation. A worse man can scarcely be found than one who does this. Who can be more nearly a fiend than he who habitually overhauls the register of deeds in search of defects in titles, whereon to stir up strife, and put money in his pocket? A moral tone ought to be infused into the profession which should drive such men out of it.

The matter of fees is important — far beyond the mere question of bread and butter involved. Properly attended to, fuller justice is done to both lawyer and client. An exorbitant fee should never be claimed. As a general rule never take your whole fee in advance, nor any more than a small retainer. When fully paid beforehand, you are more than a common mortal if you can feel the same interest in the case as if something was still in prospect for you as well as for your client. And when you lack interest in the case, the job will very likely lack skill and diligence in the performance. Settle the amount of fee and take a note in advance. Then you will feel that you are working for something, and you are sure to do your work faithfully and well. Never sell a fee note — at least not before the consideration service is performed. It leads to negligence and dishonesty — negligence by losing interest in the case, and dishonesty in refusing to refund when you have allowed the consideration to fail.

There is a vague popular belief that lawyers are necessarily dishonest. I say vague, because when we consider to what extent confidence and honors are reposed in and conferred upon lawyers by the people, it appears improbable that their impression of dishonesty is very distinct and vivid. Yet the impression is common, almost universal. Let no young man choosing the law for a calling for a moment yield to the popular belief — resolve to be honest at all events; and if in your own judg-

ment you cannot be an honest lawyer, resolve to be honest without being a lawyer. Choose some other occupation, rather than one in the choosing of which you do, in advance, consent to be a knave.

LECTURE ON "DISCOVERIES, INVENTIONS, AND IMPROVEMENTS," DELIVERED IN NEIGHBORING TOWNS IN 1859, AND BEFORE THE SPRINGFIELD LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS, February 22, 1860.

From an autograph manuscript in the Lincoln collection of Charles F. Gunther, Esq., Chicago, Illinois.

WE have all heard of Young America. He is the most current youth of the age. Some think him conceited and arrogant; but has he not reason to entertain a rather extensive opinion of himself? Is he not the inventor and owner of the present, and sole hope of the future? Men and things everywhere are ministering unto him. Look at his apparel, and you shall see cotton fabrics from Manchester and Lowell; flax linen from Ireland; wool cloth from Spain; silk from France; furs from the Arctic region; with a buffalo-robe from the Rocky Mountains as a general outsider. At his table, besides plain bread and meat made at home, are sugar from Louisiana; coffee and fruits from the tropics; salt from Turk's Island; fish from Newfoundland; tea from China; and spices from the Indies. The whale of the Pacific furnishes his candle-light; he has a diamond ring from Brazil, a gold watch from California, and a Spanish cigar from Havana. He not only has a present supply of all these, and much more, but thousands of hands are engaged in producing fresh supplies, and other thousands in bringing them to him. The iron horse is panting and impatient to carry him everywhere in no time; and the lightning stands ready harnessed to take and bring his tidings in a trifle less than no time. He owns a large part of the world by right of possessing it, and all the rest by right of wanting it, and intending to have it. As Plato had for the immortality of the soul, so Young America has "a pleasing hope, a fond desire — a longing after" territory. He has a great passion — a perfect rage — for the "new"; particularly new men for office, and the new earth mentioned in the Revelations, in which, being no more sea, there must be about three times as much land as in the present. He is a great friend of humanity; and his desire for land is not selfish, but merely an impulse to extend the area of freedom. He is very anxious to fight for the liberation of enslaved nations and colonies, provided, always, they have land, and have not any liking for his interference. As to those who have no land, and would be glad of help from any quarter, he considers they can afford to wait a few hundred years longer. In knowledge he is particularly rich. He knows all that can possibly be known; inclines to believe in spiritual rappings, and is the unquestioned inventor of "Manifest Destiny." His horror is for all that is old, particularly "Old Foggy"; and if there be anything old which he can endure, it is only old whisky and old tobacco.

If the said Young America really is, as he claims

to be, the owner of all present, it must be admitted that he has considerable advantage of Old Foggy. Take, for instance, the first of all fogies, Father Adam. There he stood, a very perfect physical man, as poets and painters inform us; but he must have been very ignorant, and simple in his habits. He had had no sufficient time to learn much by observation, and he had no near neighbors to teach him anything. No part of his breakfast had been brought from the other side of the world; and it is quite probable he had no conception of the world having any other side. In all these things, it is very plain, he was no equal of Young America; the most that can be said is, that according to his chance he may have been quite as much of a man as his very self-complacent descendant. Little as was what he knew, let the youngster discard all he has learned from others, and then show, if he can, any advantage on his side. In the way of land and live stock, Adam was quite in the ascendant. He had dominion over all the earth, and all the living things upon and round about it. The land has been sadly divided out since; but never fret, Young America will re-annex it.

The great difference between Young America and Old Foggy is the result of discoveries, inventions, and improvements. These, in turn, are the result of observation, reflection, and experiment. For instance, it is quite certain that ever since water has been boiled in covered vessels, men have seen the lids of the vessels rise and fall a little, with a sort of fluttering motion, by force of the steam; but so long as this was not specially observed, and reflected, and experimented upon, it came to nothing. At length, however, after many thousand years, some man observes this long-known effect of hot water lifting a pot-lid, and begins a train of reflection upon it. He says, "Why, to be sure, the force that lifts the pot-lid will lift anything else which is no heavier than the pot-lid. And as man has much hard fighting to do, cannot this hot-water power be made to help him?" He has become a little excited on the subject, and he fancies he hears a voice answering "Try me." He does try it; and the observation, reflection, and trial give to the world the control of that tremendous and now well-known agent called steam-power. This is not the actual history in detail, but the general principle.

But was this first inventor of the application of steam wiser or more ingenious than those who had gone before him? Not at all. Had he not learned much of those, he never would have succeeded, probably never would have thought of making the attempt. To be fruitful in invention, it is indispensable to have a habit of observation and reflection; and this habit our steam friend acquired, no doubt, from those who, to him, were Old Fogies. But for the difference in habit of observation, why did Yankees almost instantly discover gold in California, which had been trodden upon and overlooked by Indians and Mexican greasers for centuries? Gold-mines are not the only mines overlooked in the same way. There are more mines above the earth's surface than below it. All nature—the whole world, material, moral, and intellectual—is a mine; and in Adam's

day it was a wholly unexplored mine. Now, it was the destined work of Adam's race to develop, by discoveries, inventions, and improvements, the hidden treasures of this mine. But Adam had nothing to turn his attention to the work. If he should do anything in the way of inventions, he had first to invent the art of invention, the instance, at least, if not the habit, of observation and reflection. As might be expected, he seems not to have been a very observing man at first; for it appears he went about naked a considerable length of time before he ever noticed that obvious fact. But when he did observe it, the observation was not lost upon him; for it immediately led to the first of all inventions of which we have any direct account—the fig-leaf apron.

The inclination to exchange thoughts with one another is probably an original impulse of our nature. If I be in pain, I wish to let you know it, and to ask your sympathy and assistance; and my pleasurable emotions also I wish to communicate to and share with you. But to carry on such communications, some instrumentality is indispensable. Accordingly, speech—articulate sounds rattled off from the tongue—was used by our first parents, and even by Adam before the creation of Eve. He gave names to the animals while she was still a bone in his side; and he broke out quite volubly when she first stood before him, the best present of his Maker.

From this it would appear that speech was not an invention of man, but rather the direct gift of his Creator. But whether divine gift or invention, it is still plain that if a mode of communication had been left to invention, speech must have been the first from the superior adaptation to the end, of the organs of speech, over every other means within the whole range of nature. Of the organs of speech the tongue is the principal; and if we shall test it, we shall find the capacities of the tongue in the utterance of articulate sounds absolutely wonderful. You can count from one to one hundred quite distinctly in about forty seconds. In doing this, two hundred and eighty-three distinct sounds or syllables are uttered, being seven to each second, and yet there should be enough difference between every two to be easily recognized by the ear of the hearer. What other signs to represent things could possibly be produced so rapidly? Or even if ready-made, could be arranged so rapidly to express the sense? Motions with the hands are no adequate substitute. Marks for the recognition of the eye—writing—although a wonderful auxiliary of speech, is no worthy substitute for it. In addition to the more slow and laborious process of getting up a communication in writing, the materials—pen, ink, and paper—are not always at hand. But one always has his tongue with him, and the breath of his life is the ever-ready material with which it works.

Speech, then, by enabling different individuals to interchange thoughts, and thereby to combine their powers of observation and reflection, greatly facilitates useful discoveries and inventions. What one observes, and would himself infer nothing from, he tells to another, and that other at once sees a valuable hint in it. A result is thus reached

which neither alone would have arrived at. And this reminds me of what I passed unnoticed before: that the very first invention was a joint operation, Eve having shared with Adam the getting up of the apron. And, indeed, judging from the fact that sewing has come down to our times as "woman's work," it is very probable she took the leading part, he, perhaps, doing no more than to stand by and thread the needle. That proceeding may be reckoned as the mother of all "sewing-societies," and the first and perfect "World's Fair," all inventions and all inventors then in the world being on the spot.

But speech alone, valuable as it ever has been and is, has not advanced the condition of the world much. This is abundantly evident when we look at the degraded condition of all those tribes of human creatures who have no additional means of communicating thoughts. Writing, the art of communicating thoughts to the mind through the eye, is the great invention of the world. Great is the astonishing range of analysis and combination which necessarily underlies the most crude and general conception of it — great, very great, in enabling us to converse with the dead, the absent, and the unborn, at all distances of time and space; and great, not only in its direct benefits, but greatest help to all other inventions. Suppose the art, with all conceptions of it, were this day lost to the world, how long, think you, would it be before Young America could get up the letter A with any adequate notion of using it to advantage? The precise period at which writing was invented is not known, but it certainly was as early as the time of Moses; from which we may safely infer that its inventors were very Old Fogies.

Webster, at the time of writing his dictionary, speaks of the English language as then consisting of seventy or eighty thousand words. If so, the language in which the five books of Moses were written must at that time, now thirty-three or -four hundred years ago, have consisted of at least one quarter as many, or twenty thousand. When we remember that words are sounds merely, we shall conclude that the idea of representing those sounds by marks, so that whoever should at any time after see the marks, would understand what sounds they meant, was a bold and ingenious conception, not likely to occur to one man in a million in the run of a thousand years. And when it did occur, a distinct mark for each word, giving twenty thousand different marks first to be learned, and afterward to be remembered, would follow as the second thought, and would present such a difficulty as would lead to the conclusion that the whole thing was impracticable.

But the necessity still would exist; and we may readily suppose that the idea was conceived, and lost, and reproduced, and dropped, and taken up again and again, until at last the thought of dividing sounds into parts, and making a mark, not to represent a whole sound, but only a part of one, and then of combining those marks, not very many in number, upon principles of permutation, so as to represent any and all of the whole twenty thousand words, and even any additional number, was somehow conceived and pushed into practice. This was the invention of phonetic writing, as distin-

guished from the clumsy picture-writing of some of the nations. That it was difficult of conception and execution is apparent, as well by the foregoing reflection as the fact that so many tribes of men have come down from Adam's time to our own without ever having possessed it. Its utility may be conceived by the reflection that to it we owe everything which distinguishes us from savages. Take it from us, and the Bible, all history, all science, all government, all commerce, and nearly all social intercourse, go with it.

The great activity of the tongue in articulating sounds has already been mentioned; and it may be of some passing interest to notice the wonderful power of the eye in conveying ideas to the mind from writing. Take the same example of the numbers from one to one hundred written down, and you can run your eye over the list, and be assured that every number is in it, in about one half the time it would require to pronounce the words with the voice; and not only so, but you can in the same short time determine whether every word is spelled correctly, by which it is evident that every separate letter, amounting to eight hundred and sixty-four, has been recognized and reported to the mind within the incredibly short space of twenty seconds, or one third of a minute.

I have already intimated my opinion that in the world's history certain inventions and discoveries occurred of peculiar value, on account of their great efficiency in facilitating all other inventions and discoveries. Of these were the arts of writing and of printing, the discovery of America, and the introduction of patent laws. The date of the first, as already stated, is unknown; but it certainly was as much as fifteen hundred years before the Christian era; the second — printing — came in 1436, or nearly three thousand years after the first. The others followed more rapidly — the discovery of America in 1492, and the first patent laws in 1624. Though not apposite to my present purpose, it is but justice to the fruitfulness of that period to mention two other important events — the Lutheran Reformation in 1517, and, still earlier, the invention of negroes, or of the present mode of using them, in 1434. But to return to the consideration of printing, it is plain that it is but the other half, and in reality the better half, of writing; and that both together are but the assistants of speech in the communication of thoughts between man and man. When man was possessed of speech alone, the chances of invention, discovery, and improvement were very limited; but by the introduction of each of these they were greatly multiplied. When writing was invented, any important observation likely to lead to a discovery had at least a chance of being written down, and consequently a little chance of never being forgotten, and of being seen and reflected upon by a much greater number of persons; and thereby the chances of a valuable hint being caught proportionately augmented. By this means the observation of a single individual might lead to an important invention years, and even centuries, after he was dead. In one word, by means of writing the seeds of invention were more permanently preserved and more widely sown. And yet for three thousand years during

which printing remained undiscovered after writing was in use, it was only a small portion of the people who could write, or read writing; and consequently the field of invention, though much extended, still continued very limited. At length printing came. It gave ten thousand copies of any written matter quite as cheaply as ten were given before; and consequently a thousand minds were brought into the field where there was but one before. This was a great gain—and history shows a great change corresponding to it—in point of time.

I will venture to consider it the true termination of that period called "the dark ages." Discoveries, inventions, and improvements followed rapidly, and have been increasing their rapidity ever since. The effects could not come all at once. It required time to bring them out; and they are still coming. The capacity to read could not be multiplied as fast as the means of reading. Spelling-books just began to go into the hands of the children, but the teachers were not very numerous or very competent, so that it is safe to infer they did not advance so speedily as they do nowadays. It is very probable—almost certain—that the great mass of men at that time were utterly unconscious that their condition or their minds were capable of improvement. They not only looked upon the educated few as superior beings, but they supposed themselves to be naturally incapable of rising to equality.

To emancipate the mind from this false underestimate of itself is the great task which printing came into the world to perform. It is difficult for us now and here to conceive how strong this slavery of the mind was, and how long it did of necessity take to break its shackles, and to get a habit of freedom of thought established.

It is, in this connection, a curious fact that a new country is most favorable—almost necessary—to the emancipation of thought, and the consequent advancement of civilization and the arts. The human family originated, as is thought, somewhere in Asia, and have worked their way principally westward. Just now, in civilization and the arts the people of Asia are entirely behind those of Europe; those of the east of Europe behind those of the west of it; while we, here in America, think we discover, and invent, and improve, faster than any of them. They may think this is arrogance; but they cannot deny that Russia has called on us to show her how to build steamboats and railroads, while in the older parts of Asia they scarcely know that such things as steamboats and railroads exist.

In anciently inhabited countries, the dust of ages—a real, downright old-fogysm—seems to settle upon and smother the intellects and energies of man. It is in this view that I have mentioned the discovery of America as an event greatly favoring and facilitating useful discoveries and inventions. Next came the patent laws. These began in England in 1624, and in this country with the adoption of our Constitution. Before then any man [might] instantly use what another man had invented, so that the inventor had no special advantage from his invention. The patent system changed this, secured to the

inventor for a limited time exclusive use of his inventions, and thereby added the fuel of interest to the fire of genius in the discovery and production of new and useful things.

It would obviously be unjust to devote any serious criticism to the foregoing quotations from Mr. Lincoln's miscellaneous writings. They must be regarded in the light of mere recreation to satisfy the craving for a change from the monotony of law and politics. In the United States, where the extended circulation of newspapers stimulates not alone the habit of reading, but also the taste for writing, and affords abundant opportunity to gratify it, even versification becomes contagious. Could we know all the biographical secrets of our great names in statesmanship and jurisprudence, we should doubtless be surprised at the quantity of rhyme attempted or perpetrated by them at some period in their lives. As it is, we have many conspicuous examples, among which we need mention only President John Quincy Adams, Justice Joseph Story, the great expounder of the Constitution Daniel Webster, the historian George Bancroft, and Chief-Justice Salmon P. Chase.

Lincoln's poetical temperament is sufficiently evinced in his fine appreciation of Shakspeare, Burns, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and probably many other poets whom tradition has not brought to general knowledge. The music of Lincoln's thought was always in the minor key. His favorite poems, such as "Oh, Why Should the Spirit of Mortal be Proud?" and Holmes's "Last Leaf," specially emphasize this mood; they are distinctively poems of sadness. So also among Shakspeare's plays he found his chief fascination in "Macbeth," full of the same undercurrent of the great problems of life and destiny with which his own slight attempts at versification are in harmony.

The date of Lincoln's verses likewise serves to show that they sprang from the mere desire for a temporary change in his currents of thought. He tells us that he wrote them in the fall of 1844, when, as a candidate for presidential elector, he was making stump speeches in Indiana for Henry Clay. Weary with the monotony of political harangues, a visit to the graves of his mother and only sister touched and gave utterance to emotions which the hard, practical duties of his life, perhaps even more than the consciousness of literary imperfection, held in patient subjection.

It is more difficult to fix the date when the lecture on "Discoveries, Inventions, and Improvements" was written. He states in a letter of March 28, 1859, that he "delivered a sort of lecture to three different audiences during the last month and this," which can only apply to the one here printed. He also delivered it on

February 22, 1860, in Cook's Hall, Springfield, Illinois, before the Library Association of that city. The writer, then living in Springfield, sat among the audience in Cook's Hall, and remembers that the version of the lecture he then heard was much longer than the present one, and contained several fine passages which made an impression on his memory; notably a reference to the importance and value of laughter, and a characterization of it as the "joyous, beautiful, universal evergreen of life." This confirms the belief that the version here printed is only a portion of the original draft, as indeed its form and brevity sufficiently indicate. First delivered in 1859, it must have been written at odd moments before that date, but certainly within ten years before, for it mentions the California gold discoveries.

The strong probability is that it was at least partly composed within that period of comparative leisure when, in March, 1849, his service of one term in Congress ended, and before the Nebraska Bill in January, 1854, unchained the

new political controversy in which Lincoln became so conspicuous an actor and so dominant a leader. It was during that five years' lull following his congressional service that, he tells us, he took up and worked through the first six books of Euclid, by way of practice in the art of reasoning and demonstration; and the supposition is not a violent one that he may have added occasional literary composition as attractive by-play.

Since this fragment has been preserved, which sufficiently illustrates his steps in the use of language, we need not grieve over the loss of the more perfect "lecture." Five days after he read it in Cook's Hall, he was in New York, and delivered there his famous Cooper Institute speech, which showed that he had trained himself for better uses than writing newspaper verses, describing Niagara, or extolling the material achievements of Young America. A gigantic moral and patriotic crusade was about to open, to which his thoughts, his words, his patience, his will, were destined to give voice, courage, perseverance, victory.

John G. Nicolay.

OLD DUTCH MASTERS.

MEYNDERT HOBBERMA (1638-1709).



HE landscapes of Meyndert Hobbema were little known or appreciated until about a century after his death, and consequently the details of his life are few and scanty. He is said to have studied under

Salomon van Ruisdael, though by others he is believed to have been the pupil of the greater Jacob van Ruisdael, nephew of the former. He certainly enjoyed the friendship and advice of the latter, whose junior he was by a few years, and, as might naturally be expected, his works bear a certain affinity to those of his famous contemporary. He was born in 1638, probably at Amsterdam, though the city of Haarlem, the town of Koeverden, and the village of Middelharnis in Holland are each said to have been his birthplace. He is known, however, to have resided at Amsterdam, and to have been married there in 1668, to which event his friend Jacob was a witness. He then recorded his age as thirty. He died in Amsterdam, December 14, 1709, and was buried there, ending his days in poverty and obscurity, his last lodging being in the Roosgraft, the street in which Rembrandt had died, just as poor, forty years before.

Only thirty-five years ago the best of his works were not valued at much more than thirty dol-

lars, and often the signatures were effaced from them, and better known names, such as Ruisdael and Decker, were substituted. Now, however, his canvases are highly valued, and a work which before went begging at thirty dollars would probably fetch a thousand times as much. Hobbema ranks next to Ruisdael as a landscape-painter. Most of his works are in England.

The subject I have engraved is known as "The Avenue, Middelharnis, Holland." The long avenue of straight, lopped trees leads up to the village, in which the church tower is a conspicuous object. It is a faithful and characteristic glimpse of Holland, with its pastures, waterways, low horizons, and expansive and impressive skies. Above all, it is the sky which holds us here; we feel the vastness of the immense vault of heaven. The work is gray and neutral in coloring, yet clear, strong, and fresh. In this respect Hobbema stands about midway between the golden manner of Cuypp and the cool, sober style of Ruisdael. This painting is one of the finest of Hobbema's, and is to be seen in the National Gallery, London. It is on canvas, and measures three feet, four and one half inches high, by four feet, seven and one half inches wide. The date upon it, 16-9, is read by some to be 1689, which would make it one of the latest of the artist's signed pictures.

T. Cole.