PIONEERING.

IT was a bright November morning when I went out alone from Mr. Herndon's house in Springfield, and walked quickly towards the Capitol. I wanted to stand within the walls which had thrilled so often to Abraham Lincoln's voice, to stand in the spot where his body had received the heart-felt honors of an uncounted crowd. No one followed me into the semicircular room, as plain as unpainted deals can make it, which is the hall of the House of Representatives for the State of Illinois; yet I did not fail of my purpose. I had heard two Englishmen — one of them a Professor at Oxford, another a member of Parliament struggling for popular rights — express in strong terms their sense of the service done for mankind within these walls. "I have known most of the great men of my time," said the latter, — "the great men of Europe, Asia, and America, — but I know of no speeches like these." As I stood there, the walls seemed to throw back the dead words, and some of the stir and tumult of 1839 passed into my veins. Half unconsciously I watched the old janitor, a man who loved to prate about the dead President, as he turned the key in the sacred lock, and then stopped before the door of the State Library, that he might show me, as he expressed it, "a power of books." As I entered the half-lighted hall, I did indeed start back, awed, but not by the power of *books!* The library had been temporarily turned into a studio for the artist who had just finished a magnificent portrait of Lincoln. As I entered, half a dozen finished portraits of Illinois men seemed to start from the canvas, and group themselves as in life. Some I had seen, and recognized at once, but without comprehending what subtile change had now emphasized their natural power. As I stood before them, the words, "And there were giants in those days," flitted across my mind; but the stalwart or keenly strung frame of each tall man was balanced on the canvas by a brain ponderous in proportion. The liberty the artist had taken had spent itself on the tint of the skin; he had given to each of these men the wholesome, ruddy tint which it is to be hoped will belong to their grandchildren. "And these are the men who are to reign over us," I said to myself, seeing something quite other than New England acuteness in that grand group, and recognizing for the first time that, when Abraham Lincoln took his seat in the White House, it was not so much himself as *his race* that entered there. I tried to remember where I had seen frames like these, and I recalled the Houses of Congress, twenty-five years ago, with the sturdy shoulders of Southern men looming far above those of their Eastern brothers, and the counterfeit Duke of Sonora offering an arm which seemed on a natural level with the crown of a woman's head! Then I recalled Professor Gould's statement at the meeting of the National Academy, when he told us that the slaves of certain Southern States were taller and stronger than our free colored men, but added also that the same thing was true of the *white* citizens of the same States.

"Be a little patient, men of Southern blood," I thought as I sat there, "and you shall have back, in full measure, pressed down and running over, the power for which you pine. But it will not come to the men whom you have delighted to honor. The 'poor white trash' of your proud States, carrying such portion of your best blood as you gave them in hours of lawless indulgence, or haughty contempt, driven out of your borders by your denial of human rights, having had a hand-to-hand fight with nature and circumstance, having developed moral perceptions before they knew a moral life, having taken in the idea of God and justice

before they could master that of man and purity, — these men shall come back to reign over you,—to defeat, with the hot blood of your own hearts, with the strong muscles you strapped across their bones, the very purpose of your restless, ambitious lives."

And here in Springfield two men had met, prepared, it would seem, by the Divine Hand, and held apart till the right moment, who were to wield such an influence over each other and over mankind,—who were to love each other with such passion, trust each other with such implicit faith, — as had hardly been since the days of the Paladins. These men, too, were to represent the two orders of poor whites; — the one born of good blood, but impoverished in his ancestry by a law of primogeniture, which the State of Virginia refused to repeal, yet born under the shelter of all legal helps and certainties, in a family which made a home, with a mother tender, devoted, and dignified, who honored God and freedom; the other born of that "poor white trash" which could not dare look back, — a race desperate, peculiar, undescribed, careless of legal restraints, scarce conscious of family centres, emigrating in hordes, kind-hearted, but with their hand against every man, as every man's was against them.

Yet it was this stone, which any cunning builder of us all would have rejected, which was already bearing the Divine signet, marked "Head of the Corner!"

The history of William Henry Herndon cannot be indifferent to a nation which honors Abraham Lincoln, for these two men for twenty-five years complemented each other; and if the passionate idealism of the one had not leavened the plodding, conscientious intellectual processes of the other, we might never have had the Proclamation of Emancipation.

William Herndon was the grandson, on both sides, of men who had fought in the war of the Revolution. In 1781, his grandfather, Colonel Day, "desiring that no man should ever again call him master," emancipated his slaves in Western Virginia, and emigrated into Kentucky. He had received his small patrimony while the law of primogeniture was still in force; and when he parted with his slaves, he was compelled to work. One of his brothers had married the youngest sister of Patrick Henry, and the two families went together. "I was too young," said old Mrs. Herndon, when she told me the story, "to remember much of the first hardship we encountered; but I know that we were comfortable then, compared to what I was afterwards in Illinois. We had to work, but not roughly, for there were slaves in the neighborhood who could be hired; and, wild as our life was, I grew up, like other Southern girls, without much care. When my husband asked me to come to Illinois, I consented, of course. I thought all places were alike."

And what was Illinois in 1826, when the Herndons first came to it? I will tell you, in the very language of a pioneer; for it is fit that we should see it, if we can, with his eyes.

"We had no need of Agassiz out here to tell us what things meant," began my friend. "It was written plain on the face of the prairie. Anybody who could run could read it. There was once a great lake stretching from the Alleghanies to the Rocky Mountains, and drenching all the land south of the Laurentian Hills. At last this sea broke bounds, and between the tall bluffs in Missouri and Kentucky, opposite St. Louis, it poured itself out. Three great 'sucks,' as we call them here, — the Ohio, the Missouri, and the Mississippi, — drained out the land; but at the best, the southern half of Indiana and Illinois was a great bog. Such a looking land as that water left! You laughed when I told you that this mud is twenty-five feet deep; but it is true. Underneath is a clay bed without a crack. The moisture can't drain away. Either the sun will drink it, or *we* must. 'Suckers' we are and must be; for, till the water is out of the soil, it is a struggle with death. The coal-fields

all lie at the same depth. The bog which made the prairie was the very bottom of that sea, — its last rich fat mud. The glaciers, starting far above the Laurentian Hills, not only melted from their moorings and floated south; they were 'sucked' into the great lines of drainage, and dropped their burdens of boulder, drift, and gravel, in almost parallel ridges, up and down the land. The rich mud settled upon, fattened, and drained away from these rocks. The retreating wave naturally left its heaviest seed, the acorns or beech-mast, on these summits; so the oak openings came at last to bless the land. Beside this, the smaller 'sucks,' or rivers, which remained after the great sea had hurried to the ocean, brought down their share of gravel, and piled it right and left. These ridges are like gigantic furrows thrown upon the face of the soil. The summits crumble down, and build by crumbling a sort of descent into the dreary bog. These ridges were the salvation of the country, — not that we could ever have settled it without the 'gopher,' but farms had to be in the timber or on its edge. Neither men nor cattle could stand the undrained muck. On it the grass grew so high that one spark of household fire might at any moment have swept destruction over a whole township. In the cold weather the unbroken prairie-wind was too sharp for man or beast; in the hot, flies destroyed the cattle, and gallinippers drove desperate the men."

"What are gallinippers?" I asked.

"Mosquitoes," he replied, "with stings three quarters of an inch long."

"But I thought those were mythical mosquitoes, invented on purpose to torment the womanly credulity of Ida Pfeiffer."

"No, indeed," said Mr. Herndon, "they were substantial facts. We looked abroad over the face of the land. Skeletons of elk and deer, of extinct creatures, — many of them now in the Museum at St. Louis, — and great herds of buffalo, stranded on the soil, were nuisances almost as great as the heaps of stone you take out of your 'strong land' at the East. We settled first on the Sangamon. My father took the ferry; in his first ploughing he turned up horns of the elk that would have arched in a doorway. I have seen their curves meet over the head of a man seven feet high. There, too, I once fled at night from the Indians. I saw the savage lift my mother's long hair and threaten to scalp her. I was but five years old, yet I shall never forget that. Make mother tell you."

"We were none of us likely to forget it," said the dignified Virginian, from her invalid's seat by the fire. "We had to go ninety miles to mill at first. and thought ourselves fortunate when it came to be only forty. It was a cool October evening. My husband had been gone since daybreak, and there had been rumors of Indian slaughter not far off. At nightfall I saw the red men coming. I had to think quick. 'Where is your man?' said the foremost as he came up to me. 'In the woodland,' I answered. Some folks," continued Mrs. Herndon, speaking with great deliberation, and in a musing mood, — "some folks say they never told a lie. *I* told a lie that night. 'Go after him,' replied the man. I turned back to the house to get my baby, and he thought I meant to cheat him. In a moment he had drawn out my comb, and, lifting my long hair, made a quick, warning sign with his scalping-knife. I heard William scream; his eye had caught the gleaming steel. I ran back to the house, put him through some open boards at the back, and told him to run to the wood for his life. I seized my shawl, and, hiding my baby under it, started after him. The Indians watched me, till the trees hid my retreating figure. Then they began to suspect. They mimicked my husband's voice, — a baby's cry, — the voices of the neighbors. Still I kept on. I had found William in the wood. I had only a mile and a half to go to our next neighbor's; but, what with him and the baby, it was late at night when I got there. They were all in bed, but sleeping with one eye open

for fear. I cried out, and asked if they would take me in. 'Yes,' they said; 'but they could not open the door; no one could tell how near the red men were. I must crawl up over the logs.' In those days, we used to barricade doors and windows, and set our guns in the crevices of the logs, but leave an open hole in the roof, near the chimney. So I climbed the low roof, let my baby down through the hole, handed Will to my neighbor, and dropped in myself."

"We only stayed a few years at the Sangamon," resumed William Herndon; "and I well remember how we moved up to the ridge where Springfield now is. I have told you about the 'gopher.' The little animal always has the sense to make his hummocks higher than the winter rains will rise. The whole way was clear bog; father made a small board cart, into which he threw the chickens, the little pigs, and the young children. He and I and mother walked beside the cart, which had two wheels. We skipped from hill to hill; and when the wheels of the cart stuck or floundered, we lifted them out of the mud and balanced them somehow on one of the hummocks."

The "gopher," which ought to be borne on the shield of Illinois, is really a marmot, — a little squirrel with long hind legs, sitting like a watch-dog at the door of its lodge, and skipping over the ground like a tiny kangaroo. The name is given in Canada, not only to the prairie-dog, but to a long-legged rat, which naturalists decline to class with the marmots.

"We reached Springfield at last," said Mr. Herndon; "and a most unlikely place it was. We had to build our log cabin on the edge of a ridge, while we labored to subdue the muck. The marks of bears' claws were deep in the trees right round us. Ten years later I have killed a hundred snakes in the three quarters of a mile between my own house and my father's, so you may guess what it was then. There they all were, — rattlesnakes, vipers, adders, and copperheads."

"And what sort of a snake is the copperhead?" I asked.

"A mean thing. A rattlesnake rattles, a viper hisses, an adder spits, a black snake whistles, a water-snake blows, but a copperhead just sneaks! At nightfall we laid green logs in parallel rows, set them on fire, and drove the cattle between. Then whichever way the wind blew, we could keep off the mosquitoes and relieve the creatures. The dumb beasts knew what it meant, and we never had to drive them again. They went in of themselves. Words cannot make you understand this life. The prairies of Illinois are watered with the tears, and enriched by the graves, of her women. The first generation — have you any dim, glimmering sense of what men they must have been who turned this sea into dry land? — the first generation lived on mush and pork. Fencing was too costly to be obtained. No gardens could stand the herds of cattle, a thousand strong, which might come swooping over at any minute. Just as our corn was ripe, the bears would strip the ears; just as the pumpkins grew golden, herds of deer would hollow out the gourds. As we got more land, there was no transportation to carry away the crops. Butter was five cents a pound, eggs were three cents a dozen; corn was six cents a bushel, wheat twenty-five cents. A cow was worth five dollars, and a man's labor fifty cents a day. Do you wonder we clamored for railroads, lied for them, went in debt for them, — did anything till we got them?"

I remembered the thronging lines of railroad that I had often seen steering to some tiny depot in the vast prairie, and saw afresh that these lines were built for freight, not travel. The latter was an *accident*, happy or unhappy, as the case might be.

"And now we come to the saddest point," I said. "I want to understand the people born of this contest with the soil, the first white race born on it. Standing in a log cabin on the edge of a prairie, the other day, and looking over the half-drained surface, I said,

almost unconsciously, 'I am sure this land was settled before the Lord was willing.'"

"I am thankful to hear you say so," said a woman at the wash-tub near me. "*I* have thought so ever since I came here; and that," she added with a sigh, "is nigh on thirty year."

"New England people, travelling through your large towns, rarely see any of this great controlling population of pioneers. How can I give them any idea of the race of men among which you and Abraham Lincoln grew up? It is easy to understand the low, stupid type of man represented by the dwellers in Lacustrian towns, who were set to conquer nature for the whole race; but to understand the pioneers, you must know, first, how civilization had wronged them as poor whites; next, how nature gradually restored what civilization took. Of the rude virtues, bravery, honesty, and generosity, it is easy to get some idea. The man at the corner refused to take any pay yesterday for six sheets of brown paper; the money was not worth speaking of, he said. In Chicago, where the Southern element has made itself felt, in a way, I must not as a guest pay for my postage, my omnibus fare, my telegrams; but no sooner had I passed into the Yankee atmosphere of Milwaukee, than I felt the change like a sudden chill. There, it was quite evident, the laws of thrift prevailed, and I must pay my own way, as at home. Nor am I quite sure that the terrible preponderance of vice in Chicago bears any real relation to the morals of the prairies. It may be only the natural proportion of a city which is so placed as to be a great thoroughfare for the lower classes of many nations. It may not be an exponent of this State. We know at the East something of your lawless classes; but I believe we think they all perished a century ago; we have no idea of what this lawlessness involves, nor have we dreamed, as yet, that *among* them and *of* them — sharing, for a time at least, all that we shrink from in them, except drunkenness — Abraham Lincoln grew up."

"What would you have?" said my friend, rising in his excitement, and pacing rapidly back and forth. "To do the work which I have shown you must be done, an enormous, an abnormal vitality was required. Such a vitality could not exhaust itself on the soil. No social excitement, no lecture, theatre, book, or friendly talk, offered itself to the tired laborer when he came home at night. To drink, to indulge his passions, was the only change life offered him. For the women,— God forgive the men who brought them here!— if they sought stimulants or anodynes, how could they be to blame? And Dr. Holland said, that the pioneers were an inefficient set, who wandered from State to State, from pure shiftlessness! I tell you, that since the days of the Anakim God never made such men as the men who redeemed the State of Illinois. Whatever else you do, don't call us *shiftless!*"

And because my own testimony would hardly be sufficient, I copy from the lecture on Ann Rutledge what Mr. Herndon himself has said of these men. Speaking of the people of New Salem, where Mr. Lincoln came, partly as shopkeeper and partly as surveyor, just as he attained his majority, the lecturer says: —

"Here it was that every new-comer was initiated, quickly, sharply, and rudely, into the lights and mysteries of Western civilization. The stranger was compelled, if he assumed the appearance of a man, to *walk through* the strength and courage of naturally great men. They were men of no college culture, but they had many and broad, well-tested experiences. They had good sense and sound judgment, and, if the stranger bore himself well, he became a brother of the clan forever. If he failed, quickly, amid their mocking jeers, he sank out of sight. *He existed, if at all, to be an enemy, to be killed at first sight by any of the clan, or to be scorched in a social hell forevermore.* This is not a fancy pic-

ture. The ordeal existed as I have described it, *and Lincoln had to pass it.* He did it nobly, and held unlimited sway over the clan thenceforward. 'If you *must* have a fight, *prepare*,' he said. They had seen him in the old mill, with a strap about his waist, lift in a box a thousand pounds! But in the midst of these rough men, manly honesty, womanly tenderness, valor, strength, and great natural capacity went hand in hand. . . . . Wild, hardy, genial, these men were a mixture of the rowdy and the roisterer. They have no thrift, yet thousands of them grow rich. It is impossible to outwit or whip them. . . . . The type of the pioneer is a trusting, tolerant, and generous man, hospitable in his tent, thoroughly acquainted with the stars by which he travels, with all the dangers of his route, with horse flesh and human flesh. This pioneer is a long, tall, lean, lank man, cadaverous, sallow, sun-burnt, shaggy-haired. His face is exceeding angular, the nose long, pointed, keen. His eyes are sunken, sharp, and questioning, looking to the very background of things. He is obstinate; his muscles and nerves dance an uneasy jerking dance in the presence of civilization. He is dangerous from his ignorance of the social world. A man of deeds, not words, stern, secretive, speaking words of one syllable. . . . .

"These men were always true to women, their fast, tried friends and defenders. Scarce any men on this globe hold women so dear. And so their lives went on: they were either creating or destroying, praying or fighting, shooting or getting shot."

These are the words of one who has grown up among them, spoken to an audience who knew them well, through which the tall forms of their sons were thinly scattered. But a stranger sees other things, which are perhaps as well worth stating. The complexion of the pioneer is not yellow or cadaverous, but *green* or *greenish* gray. In the first generation his joints are loosely hung, — too loose, it would seem, for strength. In the next generation, the complexion mellows a little, and the lean muscles fill out. These men will treat an Axminster carpet as if it were the sanded floor of a bar-room, — they will spit on it, and throw the ashes of their pipe upon it; but they will pick up a handkerchief for a washerwoman, and the manners of brothers and sisters towards each other in the log cabins have a grace and courtesy beyond our Eastern dreaming. They will wear velvet and broadcloth when the time comes; but if the ceiling crumbles, — falling perhaps on dainty bed-linen and embroidered covers, — it will never occur to them to have it repaired. We are accustomed to say that extremes meet, but hardly realize that the vices engendered of idleness and luxury in large cities may be engendered in the prairie of overwork, mental destitution, and the unsatisfied longing for the ideal. The broad sky, the infinite expanse of soil, the contact with nature, make *idealists* of these men, but cannot make them *moralists.* As I looked into the moral condition out of which many of them are just emerging, the traces of which control public opinion, and stamp the lives of the rising generation, — a condition from which neither church nor school has ever stood ready to save them, — I groaned in spirit to think a republican government should anywhere exist which did not know it to be a government duty to provide instruction for its people.

Those who have known the actual condition of the poor whites at the South in by-gone years will know what to expect of the race when it becomes a race of pioneers. What was church, or school, or marriage, to them, under the awful shadow of the "first families" and the "auction block"? What lives did the young women lead, in the close neighborhood of young men who asserted the old feudal claim to the possession of even their married slaves? If there was, as I know, a noble element in some of this lowest class, which sent them away in search of a life where better things were possible, hard labor soon checked aspiration, habits were

not easily changed, and they waited, believing that the better time would dawn, as it is dawning, on their children. A good deal of liberal Western legislation may be attributed not so much to an advance of thought as to a total want of moral perception. A public man, in Illinois, defined his duties once in this fashion: "I owe a duty to God, to mankind, to individuals"; — and the order is significant. A New-Englander would have been likely to say, "I owe a duty to my family, to mankind, and to God," — the concrete, organized obligations of life taking *first*, if not *chief*, hold of his mind. But the boundless prairie suggests liberty, power, wealth, — the sharp, long tug with the relentless earth develops acuteness, perseverance, muscle, and brain; but for the order of society, for purity between man and woman, for impressing the infinite value of one woman's relation to one man, the worse than worthlessness of any such relation with many women, it would seem as if the Divine voice must make its revelation through some deeper channel. And the best proof that this channel is possible lies in the extreme candor of the class of which we speak. These men do not deny their misdeeds: they discuss them with you, they philosophize over them. A lie seems as impossible to them as it was to Lincoln. Nor are these words at variance with those I have quoted from Mr. Herndon. When he says that the pioneers were the fast friends of women, he does not mean to claim chastity for either class, only to indicate what tender, chivalrous feeling toward the whole sex their common suffering, in the severe life he spoke of, had developed. I have seen this chivalrous feeling. To an Eastern woman it is simply something marvellous. There is no need to dwell on this state of things further than to make it comprehended. If any one would find corroborative evidence, let him seek the oldest men in Kentucky and Tennessee, and ask what manner of life was led by the poor white class in those States from 1800 to 1830. The answer will indicate what is to be told of Indiana and Illinois, and will be truer than if inquiries were made into a later time. "There are no accidents in the providence of God," wrote Charles Sumner, in the first line of his grand Eulogy on Lincoln. If not, then there is precious significance in all this. Had the best classes of the old civilization settled these States, I am afraid it would have kept the world back some centuries. A class which had never recognized the most imperative obligations of society might well begin to build it anew.

We left Herndon killing snakes, hunting bears, and smoking cattle in the bog at Springfield. There he waited, from his thirteenth to his fifteenth year, for the coming of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln, born in the class of poorest emigrants, was trained to a far different life, in his early home, from that which the books describe. I do not think that it was upon slavery that Thomas Lincoln turned his back when he went to Indiana. It was upon a brawling, reckless neighborhood, that made life unendurable. The pious care of good, poor parents, so touchingly described in our books, only to be ridiculed in Illinois, Abraham certainly never had. His step-mother — a woman far superior to any whom Thomas Lincoln could have hoped to win in any state of society but one which made a man a necessary protector to every woman — seems to have been his first and best friend. To her he was always grateful, and to the last stood between her and trouble. Among the most touching relics which I saw at Springfield was an old copy-book, in which, at the age of fourteen, Lincoln had taught himself to write and cipher. Scratched in his boyish hand on the first page were these lines: —

> "'T is Abraham Lincoln holds the pen,
> He *will* be good, but *God knows when!*"

I am not ashamed of the tears that started as I read, with instructed eyes, that half-despairing prayer. He never carried from home the "laughing face" which Charles Sumner once ascribed to

him. His life had been sad; there was nothing pleasant to remember in anything connected with the past, — many things he would have given the world to forget. "I must make a name for myself," he began to think; and, turning his back on the home which he had no desire to see again, he went to New Salem, and opened his life as a shopkeeper and surveyor. Here he met a woman more cultivated and refined than could have been expected among the people I have described. Once — about the time of his arrival there — he was wrestling, in Illinois fashion, with his sister Sarah and some neighbor's girls. He threw one of the latter roughly, and his sister turned upon him with sharp words. "What do you ever expect to be," she asked, "if you treat women like that?" A sort of shadow settled over him; the exhilaration of the gymnast disappeared, and, putting a hand on each of her shoulders, he answered seriously, "I am to be a great man, Sarah, and to have a sad destiny," then turned and left her. Whether this "great, sad destiny" encompassed him even then, — whether those dark, sad eyes told his story without words, — or whether, as was natural, Mr. Lincoln told to the only girl he ever loved a tale of sorrow such as he afterwards admitted to his best friends among men, we shall never know. It is enough that the hearts of Ann Rutledge and Abraham Lincoln drew together, and that the key to his whole life will one day be shown to lie in the facts of this love, and those facts of his history which transpired before his own birth.

Ann Rutledge was a lady, — one of the very few that had penetrated to Illinois as early as 1833. Of a family educated and aristocratic, but broken down, she was betrothed, before Mr. Lincoln ever saw her, to a Scotch merchant. In those days Illinois was as far from New York as Kamtchatka now is. They were soon to be married, when the Scotchman went for business purposes to that city. For months nothing was heard of him. It was supposed that he was dead, or had wickedly deserted Ann. The truth was, that he lay ill of delirious fever, at a small wayside town. In this state of things, while Ann's mind was tortured by suspense and disappointment, Mr. Lincoln went to her father's house to board. Here he first learned to read Shakespeare and Burns. Can we doubt whose memory made their poems precious during those last few months of his life, in which he was once heard to say, "My heart lies buried in the grave of that girl"? In time a sort of provisional engagement ensued. There were circumstances in both lives which depressed and pained. They learned to hold each other very dear. Upon this state of things broke the rumor of the recovered Scotchman's return, after an absence of more than two years. The delicate nature of the woman sank under it. Betrothed to two, both of whom she had loved, she had no choice but to die. Under the conflict of feeling, Mr. Lincoln's own reason gave way. He pleaded in his despair for one last interview, which, long refused, was at last granted, before she died, in August, 1835. That the shock given to his powerful mind was a severe one, his subsequent life was to show. Twice, in crises of great suffering, the unreasoning despair returned, and from that moment he lost his moral poise for years. All the resources of the neighborhood were exhausted to restore him to himself. How he who had been absent loved Ann, let the sequel show. He bought the farm for her sake, and lives there still a bachelor. His quivering hand pointed out, not long ago, the very spot where she died.

Mr. Lincoln's tastes were quiet and domestic. Had he married Ann Rutledge, it is not likely he would have continued in political life. He would have tasted the cup of happiness, and it would have been enough. "The love and death of this girl," said Mr. Herndon, "shattered Lincoln's purpose and tendencies. He threw off his infinite sorrow only by leaping wildly into the political arena." "He need-

ed," said another, "whip and spur to save him from despair."

For myself I go farther and deeper. Up to this period, his habits had been simple and pure. But this trial unhinged him, made his own life a matter of indifference to him, — made him for years reckless, despairing, and atheistic. His strength and his weakness came to him in this hour; for the death of this girl was, as Charles Sumner said, 'no accident.' Through it he learned to understand himself, and then to understand others. It was very gradually that he came to conquer the revolt of his own soul. It was that work, well done, which finally fitted him to conquer other men. It was in 1824 that he had said he *would be good.* Now, in 1835, he left New Salem, and determined, with an evident personal ambition that I have never seen ascribed to him, that he *would be great;* but in essential and absolute respects, goodness, though dropped out of sight, was the necessary law of his mind. It was from his associating his favorite poem, "O, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?" with the life and death of Ann Rutledge, that it kept its power over him.

At that time Springfield was little better than a bog, with about thirty log cabins, on the edge of the oak openings. Here he had probably begun to study law with A. T. Stewart before Ann's death, for he was elected as a Whig to the Legislature of Illinois in 1834. It was then, in the boggy streets of Springfield, while his election was still pending, that he first met William Herndon, a lad not fifteen years old. It has been customary to ascribe to Mr. Lincoln a *native* conviction on the subject of slavery; but, although his personal trials and position may be said to have been the indirect result of that institution, there was nothing in his mother's house to draw his attention to the fact, nor is there any reason to think that at this time it had ever crossed his mind. In his weaknesses, Mr. Lincoln was one of the people among whom he was born; in his greatness he far transcended them; and it was his moral integrity, sustained by a rare personal honesty, which made him a Whig. It was Democratic corruption, *not* American slavery, which determined his political position in 1834, and inspired his most ardent philippics in 1839. When words ran high concerning the proposed election, there was one lad who, true to the traditions of his ancestry, knowing little enough of corruption, but hating, with all his soul, the pro-slavery tendencies and professions of the Democractic party, mounted daily the stump, in the streets of Springfield, contending against the whole boyish population in behalf of Abraham Lincoln's election. "Who are you?" said that moody man, one day, unbending to the child, — "who are you, that you are not against me, like all the rest of the boys?" "I am Colonel Day's grandson," was in substance the proud answer; and from that time, Abraham Lincoln never lost sight of Herndon. He talked with him about all political matters; and when he opened an office with Logan, he put Herndon into it to read law. From this moment, the relation between these men, one of whom was twelve years older than the other, was not so much a business relation as one of tenderness and confidence.

To explain this, it must be understood, first, that Lincoln had in no wise outgrown the moodiness and coldness which settled on him at New Salem, — a moodiness which constantly interfered to prevent his forming any marriage connection that could have made his life happy. "I thought," said one good woman, in breaking off from him, — "I thought that his extraordinary indifference to the comfort of others grew out of selfishness or abstraction. If it was selfishness, I did not want to marry him; if it was abstraction, it was clear that he did not want to marry me!" All the lawyers who knew him at the period speak of his coldness and his entire indifference to society; but, once attracted closely, he clung to the friend,

were it man or woman, with his whole strength.

When Herndon was very young, — probably before Mr. Lincoln made his first protest in the Legislature of his State in behalf of liberty, — Lincoln once said to him: "I cannot see what makes your convictions so decided as regards the future of slavery. What tells you the thing must be rooted out?"

"I feel it in my *bones*," was Herndon's emphatic answer. "This continent is not broad enough to endure the contest between freedom and slavery!"

It was almost in these very words that Mr. Lincoln afterwards opened the great contest between Douglas and himself. From this time forward he submitted all public questions to what he called "the test of Bill Herndon's *bone philosophy*," and their arguments were close and protracted. By and by, there came a time when both he and Judge Logan were candidates for the same office, and it seemed fit that the partnership between them should be dissolved.

In spite of their close friendship, Mr. Herndon could not understand it, when Lincoln one day darted up the office stairs, and said, "Herndon, should you like to be my partner?"

"Don't laugh at me, Mr. Lincoln," was the poor fellow's sole response.

Persistent repetition of the question could hardly gain a hearing; but at last Mr. Herndon said: "Mr. Lincoln, you know I am too young, and I have no standing and no money; but if you are in earnest, there is nothing in this world that would make me so happy."

Nothing more was said till the papers were brought to Herndon to sign.

I have said that these men were very different. Herndon was poetic, ideal, speculative. He read Carlyle, Theodore Parker, Ruskin, and Emerson, and he was persistently putting these books into Lincoln's hands; but Lincoln did not like them. Herndon has also the deep, sad eyes of the pioneer, and is in his nature sensitive and perceptive like a woman. There was nothing perceptive in Mr. Lincoln. He knew very little of individual men, took them at their own estimate, was not warned till he was cheated. As they grew older, he depended more and more on his partner in such matters. He did not like to study; so he would tell Herndon beforehand what authorities and illustrations he should want for his speeches, and Herndon would do the reading up.

"When I began business," said Mr. Herndon, "I saw no reason why I should not gain a true point on a false plea; but Lincoln never would have it, — he put an end to it at once. I never knew him do a mean thing or a dirty trick. During all our intercourse, we never had a word nor a quarrel. We never kept any books nor separate accounts against each other. We held each other's money constantly; but I, at least, was never wronged out of a single cent. He was the truest friend I ever had, next to my mother. When he did attach himself, he was intensely wrapt in his friend. Nothing but a demonstration of *dishonesty* would wean him: ordinary vice would not. Neither directly nor indirectly did he ever give one cent to influence an election. I have heard him refuse over and over!"

And yet, in a republican land, *he* rose to the highest office! What a rebuke to politics and politicians! Well may Illinois be proud of the "honestest man in all the West"!

An incident which occurred while I was in Mr. Lincoln's office will throw a little light on Western habits and character. I took up carelessly, as I stood thinking, a handsome octavo volume on the business table. It opened so persistently at one place, as I played with it, that I looked to see what it was, and found that somebody had thoroughly thumbed the pages of "Don Juan." Now I confess to the conviction that the world would be no worse for the entire loss of this poem. I knew Mr. Herndon was not a man to dwell on it, and it darted through my mind, with a quick sense of pain, that perhaps it had been a favorite with Mr. Lincoln.

"Did Mr. Lincoln ever read this book?" I said, hurriedly.

"That book?" said Herndon, looking up from his writing, with the utmost innocence, and taking it out of my hand. "O, yes! he read it often. It is the *office copy!*"

What would Eastern lawyers say, I wonder, to an *office copy* of Byron's poems? Or is it only that I am ignorant of them and their ways?

"Did Mr. Lincoln *never* do an unfair thing?" I once interrupted Herndon to ask; for I heard stories in Illinois that made me think it was possible that even *he* had not been immaculate,— some rumor of an ex-governor guilty of enormous frauds upon the revenue, whose retainer he had accepted.

"I cannot say he *never* did," replied Herndon, "for I remember one or two rare instances. One morning a gentleman came here and asked him to use his legal influence in a certain quarter, where Lincoln again and again assured him he had no power. I heard him refuse the five hundred dollars offered over and over again. I went out and left them together. I suppose Lincoln got tired of refusing, for he finally took the money; but he never offered any of it to me; and it was noticeable that, whenever he took money in that way, he never seemed to consider it his own or mine. In this case, he gave the money to the Germans in the town, who wanted to buy themselves a press. A few days after, he said to me, in the coolest way, 'Herndon, I gave the Germans two hundred and fifty dollars of yours the other day.' 'I am glad you did, Mr. Lincoln,' I answered. Of course I could not say I was glad he took it."

This partnership, while it developed in Herndon an intense love for Abraham Lincoln, must have had its pains as well as its pleasures. The periods of suffering, when no man could comfort him, his friend well knew how to shelter; but I am sure there must also have been times when, to excuse him, it was necessary to remember that he was unhappy. Mr. Lincoln was not a man to make a confidant of set purpose; but in the long, lonely circuit rides, his whole heart came out to his younger friend. Herndon had married early an excellent woman, and a happy home sheltered him from all the worst temptations of his people. He was a silent, receptive person. His simplicity and personal purity invited confidence. Yet there were those jealous of his influence and character. A powerful effort was once made, on the ground of indiscretions growing out of political excitement, to separate Mr. Lincoln from him.

"By what I can hear," said the pioneer who told me this story, — "by what I can hear, Mr. Lincoln *rose ten feet tall* when they spoke to him, and, turning sharply, answered, 'Gentlemen, the man you talk of is worth you all put together. He has gone into danger for my sake.'"

The men to whom he spoke went straight from his presence into Herndon's, and it is not likely that the young man loved him any less for this outburst.

In 1854, Mr. Lincoln had a long political conversation with Mr. Herndon in reference to slavery, after which Herndon was left free to commit him to extreme ground upon the subject, or what was at that time thought extreme ground, whenever in his judgment the time was ripe for action. Directly after, in a speech at Peoria, Lincoln expressed himself against the monstrous injustice with more than his usual decision. During his absence on this very tour, I believe, Herndon drew up a call for a convention at Bloomington, "summoning together all those who wished to see the government conducted on the principles of Washington and Jefferson"; and when it appeared, the name of Abraham Lincoln was in its right place, — it led those of the prominent men of Illinois!

After breakfast, A. T. Stewart walked into the office. "Is Lincoln here?" he asked of Herndon.

"No."

"Did he see that letter, or sign it?"

"No."

"Then you 've got him into a devil of a scrape," said the retreating barrister.

But Herndon, though his heart might beat quick, did not believe it. No sooner had the door closed than he sat down and wrote a long letter, explaining his motives. Mr. Lincoln was at Pekin, sixty miles north of Springfield; but on the next day's electric wire flashed back to him the words, "Billy, you 've done just right!"

"Never did a man change," said Herndon, "as Lincoln did from that hour. No sooner had he planted himself right on the slavery question, than his whole soul seemed burning. He blossomed right out. Then, too, other spiritual things grew more real to him. He took hold of God as never before. The convention met at Bloomington on the 29th of May, 1856." *

His mind, however, was long in recovering from the unbelieving position into which his early trials had forced it; and he was slow to use the language of devout faith.

I had seen a letter in Quincy, addressed to one of Mr. Lincoln's friends there, thanking this person for assisting him to restore the freedom of a colored man imprisoned in New Orleans. It struck me, when I read it, as a noble contrast to that letter of Washington in which *he* had thanked some Portsmouth man for trying to return a fugitive slave to Mrs. Washington. I now asked for some explanation of this letter.

"I remember it very well," said Herndon. "A man named Hinckels had brought here from Kentucky an old woman named Polly Mack. Her son, a free negro, going down to New Orleans on a steamer, had been fined and imprisoned, and was finally advertised for sale. Polly came to Mr. Lincoln with her trouble, and Lincoln wrote to Alexander P. Field, begging him to get the poor fellow off, and promising money for costs and services. There were, of course, a good many difficulties, and one day Lincoln sent me to Governor Bissell to ask his interposition. The Governor answered, that he did n't think he had any authority in the case.

* The interest which attaches to anything connected with Mr. Lincoln's name made me very anxious to decide precisely every period of his anti-slavery development. If I have not done so, I shall be excused when I say that no one in New England, not even Governor Andrew, could definitely fix the date of the Bloomington Convention; and it was because of the failure of every attempt to get positive information in Illinois, that I at first left the matter vague. Since this article went to press, however, some details have come into my possession.

Mr. Herndon knew that Lincoln's mind was constituted judicially; he knew him to be an extremely timid man, but one who would be sure to see the right, if he were forced into a position to defend it. This timidity, or caution, was shown in a curious manner when he became a candidate for Congress in 1847. He was very anxious about his own district. I suppose there must have been fifteen towns in Sangamon County, for he had fifteen lettered blank-books distributed throughout the district, that the votes of each town might be privately registered and returned to him. He kept the Springfield register himself, writing every name and checking each one off, as the disposition of each became known to him.

In Congress his votes were, as Sumner said, "constant against slavery," but no extreme action was required. Meanwhile, the radical anti-slavery people of Illinois were half afraid to trust him. They knew Herndon well. He was not only the grandson of a practical Abolitionist, but had been with them heart and soul from the beginning. After the call for the Bloomington Convention was issued, to be held on the 29th of May, 1856, the following card was drawn up to secure the election of delegates: —

"We, the undersigned, citizens of Sangamon County, who are opposed to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and the present administration, and who are in favor of restoring to the general government the policy of Washington and Jefferson, would suggest the propriety of a County Convention to be held in the city of Springfield, on Saturday, the 24th day of May, at two o'clock, P. M., to appoint delegates to the Bloomington Convention.

"A. Lincoln,
"W. H. Herndon," and others.

Under this call Mr. Lincoln was elected a delegate, and that established him in his radical position.

"I forged his name, if you like," Mr. Herndon would say, with a queer smile; "but I knew what I was about. He stood square."

For the same reason I have desired, but in vain, to ascertain precisely what number of pioneers still exist, of pure Southern blood, in the first and second generations. All the statistics I can get mix in the Yankee element, which is quite a different thing.

A member of the Senate of Illinois writes me, that, if you take the census of his State to-day, the first generation may be found as one in 10,000, which would give about 2700 in all; and the second generation as one in 2,000, which would give about 15,000 more. I believe this number to be too small; but their early possession of the soil gave the Southern pioneers an influence which their present relation to the population does not suggest.

'By God!' said Lincoln, starting up, 'before I 've done, I 'll make the road so hot that he shall find authority!'"

It does not belong to me to trace the gradual development of Lincoln's character, nor to offer proof here of many things I dare to indicate. That belongs to one who loved him like a brother, and can sustain with evidence, as well as conviction, every word that he shall write. The world will wait eagerly for what he shall offer; but I must say for myself, that I find it hard to forgive those who, in their folly or their falsehood, have fabricated so much that had no foundation concerning Abraham Lincoln. Many things attributed to him as virtues were, if true, not virtues *in him*, as a close inspection of his life betrays, but were born of prudence imposed by bitter circumstance. Many other things, such as the story of his offering only *water* to the committee who came to him from Chicago when he was first nominated to the Presidency, it is hard to give up, having once accepted them; but, as is very well known in Springfield, Abraham Lincoln's parlor was on that day what any other Western parlor would have been on the like occasion. Not that he — a temperate, but not a *temperance* man — provided liquor for the townspeople; but he would have been a very different man from what the facts must represent him had he forbidden his friends to provide it.

A great change for the better had been going on in him from 1854 to 1860. But the work was slow and painful. It would have been easier had his mind had less of the judicial quality. He could not help knowing what was fair and what was unfair; and, seeing what private griefs pressed upon him at the hour of his election, any man might marvel that he kept his sweetness. He had been led by a hard, dark way; he had expiated in his own person, not only his own sins, but those of all his ancestry, as he was hereafter to expiate those of his nation. Why should he, alone of all the world, have bent under such a yoke?

When I was at Oberlin, President Finney spoke of the extreme slowness with which Lincoln seemed to take in the Providential character of the war. "It would seem," he said, "as if any man living soberly through the first two years must have felt the Divine Presence very near. Lincoln did not, and it troubled me so that, when he gave notice that, certain conditions failing, he should publish on the 1st of January a Proclamation of Emancipation, I wrote him a letter, and begged him to treat the subject as if it were the Lord's business he was about. I don't know whether my letter did any good, or whether the Lord did it in *his own way;* but when the paper was published, I found the words I wanted. That was the first time."

Those who know Charles Finney well will understand his right to address the President, and will not think the anecdote out of place.

Meanwhile the eyes whose sadness had been born of childish pain, of lonely scepticism, took a deeper charm from a new consciousness budding in him of the relation of a man's private carriage to his public walk. He began to regret many things, and it was this inward growth going on in his own soul which made it easy for him to do in Washington pure, unselfish work.

A little before his nomination, while making political speeches in New York and Connecticut, he had received from a committee in New York a small sum of money. He took it, supposing it to be a common thing; and after his nomination it began to be told against him. Thereupon he wrote a minute account of the whole matter to political friends in Illinois. "I tell this to *you*," he said, "because I want you to know that there is no stain on my garment; but don't undertake to explain it to the enemy. If you do not answer them, their railing will soon come to an end. If you do, *they will have the best of it!*"

When he was about to leave for Washington, he went to the dingy little law office which had sheltered his saddest hours. He sat down on the couch. "Billy," said he, "you and I have

been together more than twenty years, and have never 'passed a word.' Will you let my name stay on the old sign till I come back from Washington?" The tears started to Mr. Herndon's eyes. He put out his hand. "Mr. Lincoln," said he, "I will never have any other partner while you live"; — and to the day of the assassination, all the doings of the firm were in the name of Lincoln and Herndon.

It will be seen that I think this nation owes to Herndon a great debt; for it was he who first bent Mr. Lincoln's mind to the subject of slavery. Utterly refusing office at the President's hands, he kept the friend's moral power to the very last. When he went to Washington, Mr. Lincoln's face brightened. "I like to see a man who will ask me for nothing," he said cheerily. "In Springfield," said Mr. Herndon, "Lincoln has been called ungrateful, because he never gave me an office; but I wanted nothing, and *he* knew it. Once he telegraphed me from Washington, and asked if I would take a cotton judgeship in one of the Southwestern States. I knew what was due to him better than to refuse the President of the United States by telegraph. I responded that 'I would gladly fill any station for which he thought I was fit.' But that night I sat down and wrote him. I told him I loved my home better than gold or cotton, and he knew it!"

When at last the fatal shot was fired, it was the "neighbors and loving friends" of Abraham Lincoln who assembled in Springfield to do his lifeless body honor. Were the words ever before used, I wonder, to summon men to the funeral of a chief magistrate? The wilderness had educated him; the wilderness had pronounced upon him; now, at last, into its broad bosom the wilderness should receive him.

The cemetery is on one of the wooded prairie ridges intersected by narrow ravines, — little used as yet, but a place of surpassing beauty. Its loneliness and breezy woodland suit the man whom they have laid here. Could he speak, he would say, "Well done!" A gradually ascending path brings us to the hillside where the body lies. A brick arch is there, capped with limestone. The red wall recedes in terraces to support vases, filled in summer-time with flowers. How convey the thoughts and emotions which throng upon one who stands before it? When the cold earth fell over him, and Mother Nature wove for him the soft coverlet of the spring grass, no heart that knew his life to the core but must give thanks in silence.

THE UNITED STATES SANITARY COMMISSION.

FORT SUMTER surrendered on the 13th of April. The next day was Sunday. The people of Charleston sang Te Deum. The people of the North made their first preparation for the five years' war.

I first saw the war as I came into Boston on Wednesday, returning to town from a journey northward. I passed up Washington Street as the Fourth Massachusetts filed out from Boylston Hall on their way to the Fall River train, which took them towards Fort Monroe. The throng of people in the street pressed up to bid good-by to the men, not only with cheers, but with words of personal greeting. So that the first words I heard addressed to any soldier in that conflict were the words of a parting salutation, — "Take care of yourself, George."

I have thought of it a thousand times