

Crisis, the — Volume 03 eBook

Crisis, the — Volume 03 by Winston Churchill

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RAW MATERIAL

Summer, intolerable summer, was upon the city at last. The families of its richest citizens had fled. Even at that early day some braved the long railroad journey to the Atlantic coast. Amongst these were our friends the Cluymes, who come not strongly into this history. Some went to the Virginia Springs. But many, like the Brinsmades and the Russells, the Tiptons and the Hollingsworths, retired to the local paradise of their country places on the Bellefontaine road, on the cool heights above the river. Thither, as a respite from the hot office, Stephen was often invited by kind Mr. Brinsmade, who sometimes drove him out in his own buggy. Likewise he had visited Miss Puss Russell. But Miss Virginia Carvel he had never seen since the night he had danced with her. This was because, after her return from the young ladies' school at Monticello, she had gone to Glencoe, Glencoe, magic spot, perched high on wooded highlands. And under these the Meramec, crystal pure, ran lightly on sand and pebble to her bridal with that turbid tyrant, the Father of Waters.

To reach Glencoe you spent two dirty hours on that railroad which (it was fondly hoped) would one day stretch to the Pacific Ocean. You generally spied one of the big Catherwood boys in the train, or their tall sister Maude. The Catherwoods likewise lived at Glencoe in the summer. And on some Saturday afternoons a grim figure in a linen duster and a silk skull-cap took a seat in the forward car. That was Judge Whipple, on his way to spend a quiet Sunday with Colonel Carvel.

To the surprise of many good people, the Judge had recently formed another habit. At least once a week he would drop in at the little house on Olive Street next to Mr. Brinsmade's big one, which was shut up, and take tea with Mrs. Brice. Afterward he would sit on the little porch over the garden in the rear, or on the front steps, and watch the bob-tailed horse-cars go by. His conversation was chiefly addressed to the widow. Rarely to Stephen; whose wholesome respect for his employer had in no wise abated.

Through the stifling heat of these summer days Stephen sat in the outer office, straining at the law. Had it not been for the fact that Mr. Whipple went to his mother's house, despair would have seized him long since. Apparently his goings-out and his comings-in were noted only by Mr. Richter. Truly the Judge's methods were not Harvard methods. And if there were pride in the young Bostonian, Mr. Whipple thought he knew the cure for it.

It was to Richter Stephen owed a debt of gratitude in these days. He would often take his midday meal in the down-town beer garden with the quiet German. Then there came a Sunday afternoon (to be marked with a red letter) when Richter transported him into Germany itself. Stephen's eyes were opened. Richter took him across the Rhine. The Rhine was Market Street, and south of that street was a country of which polite American society took no cognizance.



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Here was an epic movement indeed, for South St. Louis was a great sod uprooted from the Fatherland and set down in all its vigorous crudity in the warm black mud of the Mississippi Valley. Here lager beer took the place of Bourbon, and black bread and sausages of hot rolls and fried chicken. Here were quaint market houses squatting in the middle of wide streets; Lutheran churches, square and uncompromising, and bulky Turner Halls, where German children were taught the German tongue. Here, in a shady grove of mulberry and locust, two hundred families were spread out at their ease.

For a while Richter sat in silence, puffing at a meerschaum with a huge brown bowl. A trick of the mind opened for Stephen one of the histories in his father's library in Beacon Street, across the pages of which had flitted the ancestors of this blue-eyed and great-chested Saxon. He saw them in cathedral forests, with the red hair long upon their bodies. He saw terrifying battles with the Roman Empire surging back and forth through the low countries. He saw a lad of twenty at the head of rugged legions clad in wild skins, sweeping Rome out of Gaul. Back in the dim ages Richter's fathers must have defended grim Eresburg. And it seemed to him that in the end the new Republic must profit by this rugged stock, which had good women for wives and mothers, and for fathers men in whose blood dwelt a fierce patriotism and contempt for cowardice.

This fancy of ancestry pleased Stephen. He thought of the forefathers of those whom he knew, who dwelt north of Market Street. Many, though this generation of the French might know it not, had bled at Calais and at Agincourt, had followed the court of France in clumsy coaches to Blois and Amboise, or lived in hovels under the castle walls. Others had charged after the Black Prince at Poitiers, and fought as serf or noble. in the war of the Roses; had been hatters or tailors in Cromwell's armies, or else had sacrificed lands and fortunes for Charles Stuart. These English had toiled, slow but resistless, over the misty Blue Ridge after Boone and Harrod to this old St. Louis of the French, their enemies, whose fur traders and missionaries had long followed the veins of the vast western wilderness. And now, on to the structure builded by these two, comes Germany to be welded, to strengthen or to weaken.

Richter put down his pipe on the table.

"Stephen," he said suddenly, "you do not share the prejudice against us here?"

Stephen flushed. He thought of some vigorous words that Miss Puss Russell had used on the subject of the Dutch."

"No," said he, emphatically.

"I am glad," answered Richter, with a note of sadness, in his voice. "Do not despise us before you know more of us. We are still feudal in Germany—of the Middle Ages. The peasant is a serf. He is compelled to serve the lord of the land every year with so much labor of his hands. The small farmers, the 'Gross' and 'Mittel Bauern', we call them, are



also mortgaged to the nobles who tyrannize our Vaterland. Our merchants are little merchants—shopkeepers, you would say. My poor father, an educated man, was such. They fought our revolution.”



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“And now,” said Stephen, “why do they not keep their hold?”

Richter sighed.

“We were unused to ruling,” he answered. “We knew not how to act—what to do. You must remember that we were not trained to govern ourselves, as are you of the English race, from children. Those who have been for centuries ground under heel do not make practical parliamentarians. No; your heritage is liberty—you Americans and English; and we Germans must desert our native land to partake of it.”

“And was it not hard to leave?” asked Stephen, gently.

The eyes of the German filled at the recollection, nor did he seem ashamed of his tears.

“I had a poor old father whose life was broken to save the Vaterland, but not his spirit,” he cried, “no, not that. My father was born in 1797. God directed my grandfather to send him to the Kolnisches gymnasium, where the great Jahn taught. Jahn was our Washington, the father of Germany that is to be.

“Then our Fatherland was French. Our women wore Parisian clothes, and spoke the language; French immorality and atheism had spread like a plague among us Napoleon the vile had taken the sword of our Frederick from Berlin. It was Father Jahn (so we love to call him), it was Father Jahn who founded the ‘Turnschulen’, that the generations to come might return to simple German ways,—plain fare, high principles, our native tongue; and the development of the body. The downfall of the fiend Napoleon and the Vaterland united—these two his scholars must have written in their hearts. All summer long, in their black caps and linen pantaloons, they would trudge after him, begging a crust here and a cheese there, to spread his teachings far and wide under the thatched roofs.

“Then came 1811. I have heard my father tell how in the heat of that year a great red comet burned in the sky, even as that we now see, my friend. God forbid that this portends blood. But in the coming spring the French conscripts filled our sacred land like a swarm of locusts, devouring as they went. And at their head, with the pomp of Darius, rode that destroyer of nations and homes, Napoleon. What was Germany then? Ashes. But the red embers were beneath, fanned by Father Jahn. Napoleon at Dresden made our princes weep. Never, even in the days of the Frankish kings, had we been so humbled. He dragged our young men with him to Russia, and left them to die moaning on the frozen wastes, while he drove off in his sledge.

“It was the next year that Germany rose. High and low, rich and poor, Jaeger and Landwehr, came flocking into the army, and even the old men, the Landsturm. Russia was an ally, and later, Austria. My father, a last of sixteen, was in the Landwehr, under the noble Blucher in Silesia, when they drove the French into the Katzbach and the



Neisse, swollen by the rains into torrents. It had rained until the forests were marshes. Powder would not burn. But Blucher, ah, there was a man! He whipped his great sabre from under his cloak, crying 'Vorwarts! Vorwarts!' And the Landwehr with one great shout slew their enemies with the butts of their muskets until their arms were weary and the bodies were tossed like logs in the foaming waters. They called Blucher Marachall Vorwarts!

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“Then Napoleon was sent to Elba. But the victors quarrelled amongst themselves, while Talleyrand and Metternich tore our Vaterland into strips, and set brother against brother. And our blood, and the grief for the widows and the fatherless, went for nothing.”

Richter paused to light his pipe.

“After a while,” he continued presently, “came the German Confederation, with Austria at the head. Rid of Napoleon, we had another despot in Metternich. But the tree which Jahn had planted grew, and its branches spread. The great master was surrounded by spies. My father had gone to Jena University, when he joined the Burschenschaft, or Students’ League, of which I will tell you later. It was pledged to the rescue of the Vaterland. He was sent to prison for dipping his handkerchief in the blood of Sand, beheaded for liberty at Mannheim. Afterwards he was liberated, and went to Berlin and married my mother, who died when I was young. Twice again he was in prison because the societies met at his house. We were very poor, my friend. You in America know not the meaning of that word. His health broke, and when ’48 came, he was an old man. His hair was white, and he walked the streets with a crutch. But he had saved a little money to send me to Jena.

“He was proud of me. I was big-boned and fair, like my mother. And when I came home at the end of a Semester I can see him now, as he would hobble to the door, wearing the red and black and gold of the Burschenschaft. And he would keep me up half the night-telling him of our ‘Schlager’ fights with the aristocrats. My father had been a noted swordsman in his day.”

He stopped abruptly, and colored. For Stephen was staring at the jagged scar, He had never summoned the courage to ask Richter how he came by it.

“Schlager fights?” he exclaimed.

“Broadsword,” answered the German, hastily. “Some day I will tell you of them, and of the struggle with the troops in the ‘Breite Strasse’ in March. We lost, as I told you because we knew not how to hold what we had gained.

“I left Germany, hoping to make a home here for my poor father. How sad his face as he kissed me farewell! And he said to me: ‘Carl, if ever your new Vaterland, the good Republic, be in danger, sacrifice all. I have spent my years in bondage, and I say to you that life without liberty is not worth the living.’ Three months I was gone, and he was dead, without that for which he had striven so bravely. He never knew what it is to have an abundance of meat. He never knew from one day to the other when he would have to embrace me, all he owned, and march away to prison, because he was a patriot.” Richter’s voice had fallen low, but now he raised it. “Do you think, my friend,” he cried, “do you think that I would not die willingly for this new country if the time should come.

Yes, and there are a million like me, once German, now American, who will give their lives to preserve this Union. For without it the world is not fit to live in.”



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Stephen had food for thought as he walked northward through the strange streets on that summer evening. Here indeed was a force not to be reckoned, and which few had taken into account.

CHAPTER II

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

It is sometimes instructive to look back and see how Destiny gave us a kick here, and Fate a shove there, that sent us in the right direction at the proper time. And when Stephen Brice looks backward now, he laughs to think that he did not suspect the Judge of being an ally of the two who are mentioned above. The sum total of Mr. Whipple's words and advices to him that summer had been these. Stephen was dressed more carefully than usual, in view of a visit to Bellefontaine Road. Whereupon the Judge demanded whether he were contemplating marriage. Without waiting for a reply he pointed to a rope and a slab of limestone on the pavement below, and waved his hand unmistakably toward the Mississippi.

Miss Russell was of the opinion that Mr. Whipple had once been crossed in love.

But we are to speak more particularly of a put-up job, although Stephen did not know this at the time.

Towards five o'clock of a certain afternoon in August of that year, 1858, Mr. Whipple emerged from his den. Instead of turning to the right, he strode straight to Stephen's table. His communications were always a trifle startling. This was no exception.

"Mr. Brice," said he, "you are to take the six forty-five train on the St. Louis, Alton, and Chicago road tomorrow morning for Springfield, Illinois."

"Yes sir."

"Arriving at Springfield, you are to deliver this envelope into the hands of Mr. Abraham Lincoln, of the law firm of Lincoln & Herndon."

"Abraham Lincoln!" cried Stephen, rising and straddling his chair. "But, sir—"

"Abraham Lincoln," interrupted the Judge, forcibly "I try to speak plainly, sir. You are to deliver it into Mr. Lincoln's hands. If he is not in Springfield, find out where he is and follow him up. Your expenses will be paid by me. The papers are important. Do you understand, sir?"

Stephen did. And he knew better than to argue the matter with Mr. Whipple. He had read in the Missouri Democrat of this man Lincoln, a country lawyer who had once been



to Congress, and who was even now disputing the senatorship of his state with the renowned Douglas. In spite of their complacent amusement, he had won a little admiration from conservative citizens who did not believe in the efficacy of Judge Douglas's Squatter Sovereignty. Likewise this Mr. Lincoln, who had once been a rail-sputter, was uproariously derided by Northern Democrats because he had challenged Mr. Douglas to seven debates, to be held at different towns in the state of Illinois. David with his sling and his smooth round pebble must have had much of the same sympathy and ridicule.

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For Mr. Douglas, Senator and Judge, was a national character, mighty in politics, invulnerable in the armor of his oratory. And he was known far and wide as the Little Giant. Those whom he did not conquer with his logic were impressed by his person.

Stephen remembered with a thrill that these debates were going on now. One, indeed, had been held, and had appeared in fine print in a corner of the Democrat. Perhaps this Lincoln might not be in; Springfield; perhaps he, Stephen Brice, might, by chance, hit upon a debate, and see and hear the tower of the Democracy, the Honorable Stephen A. Douglas.

But it is greatly to be feared that our friend Stephen was bored with his errand before he arrived at the little wooden station of the Illinois capital. Standing on the platform after the train pulled out, he summoned up courage to ask a citizen with no mustache and a beard, which he swept away when he spat, where was the office of Lincoln & Herndon. The stranger spat twice, regarded Mr. Brice pityingly, and finally led him in silence past the picket fence and the New England-looking meeting-house opposite until they came to the great square on which the State House squatted. The State House was a building with much pretension to beauty, built in the classical style, of a yellow stone, with solid white blinds in the high windows and mighty columns capped at the gently slanting roof. But on top of it was reared a crude wooden dome, like a clay head on a marble statue.

“That there,” said the stranger, “is whar we watches for the County Delegations when they come in to a meetin’.” And with this remark, pointing with a stubby thumb up a well-worn stair, he departed before Stephen could thank him. Stephen paused under the awning, of which there were many shading the brick pavement, to regard the straggling line of stores and houses which surrounded and did homage to the yellow pile. The brick house in which Mr. Lincoln’s office was had decorations above the windows. Mounting the stair, Stephen found a room bare enough, save for a few chairs and law books, and not a soul in attendance. After sitting awhile by the window, mopping his brow with a handkerchief, he went out on the landing to make inquiries. There he met another citizen in shirt sleeves, like unto the first, in the very act of sweeping his beard out of the way of a dexterous expectoration.

“Wal, young man,” said he, “who be you lookin’ for here?”

“For Mr. Lincoln,” said Stephen.

At this the gentleman sat down on the dirty top step; and gave vent to quiet but annoying laughter.

“I reckon you come to the wrong place.”

“I was told this was his office,” said Stephen, with some heat.

“Whar be you from?” said the citizen, with interest.

“I don’t see what that has to do with it,” answered our friend.

“Wal,” said the citizen, critically, “if you was from Philadelphy or Boston, you might stand acquitted.”

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Stephen was on the point of claiming Boston, but wisely hesitated.

"I'm from St. Louis, with a message for Mr. Lincoln," he replied.

"Ye talk like ye was from down East," said the citizens who seemed in the humor for conversation. "I reckon old Abe's' too busy to see you. Say, young man, did you ever hear of Stephen Arnold Douglas, alias the Little Giant, alias the Idol of our State, sir?"

This was too much for Stephen, who left the citizen without the compliment of a farewell. Continuing around the square, inquiring for Mr. Lincoln's house, he presently got beyond the stores and burning pavements on to a plank walk, under great shade trees, and past old brick mansions set well back from the street. At length he paused in front of a wooden house of a dirty grayish brown, too high for its length and breadth, with tall shutters of the same color, and a picket fence on top of the retaining wall which lifted the yard above the plank walk. It was an ugly house, surely. But an ugly house may look beautiful when surrounded by such heavy trees as this was. Their shade was the most inviting thing Stephen had seen. A boy of sixteen or so was swinging on the gate, plainly a very mischievous boy, with a round, laughing, sunburned face and bright eyes. In front of the gate was a shabby carriage with top and side curtains, hitched to a big bay horse.

"Can you tell me where Mr. Lincoln lives?" inquired Stephen.

"Well, I guess," said the boy. "I'm his son, and he lives right here when he's at home. But that hasn't been often lately."

"Where is he?" asked Stephen, beginning to realize the purport of his conversations with citizens.

Young Mr. Lincoln mentioned the name of a small town in the northern part of the state, where he said his father would stop that night. He told Stephen that he looked wilted, invited him into the house to have a glass of lemonade, and to join him and another boy in a fishing excursion with the big bay horse. Stephen told young Mr. Lincoln that he should have to take the first train after his father.

"Jimmy!" exclaimed the other, enviously, "then you'll hear the Freeport debate."

Now it has been said that the day was scorching hot. And when Stephen had got back to the wooden station, and had waited an hour for the Bloomington express, his anxiety to hear the Freeport debate was not as keen as it might have been. Late in the afternoon he changed at Bloomington to the Illinois Central Railroad: The sun fell down behind the cardboard edge of the prairie, the train rattled on into the north, wrapped in its dust and smoke, and presently became a long comet, roaring red, to match that other comet which flashed in the sky.

By this time it may be said that our friend was heartily sick of his mission, He tried to doze; but two men, a farmer and a clerk, got in at a way station, and sat behind him. They began to talk about this man Lincoln.



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“Shucks,” said the clerk, “think of him opposing the Little Giant.”

“He’s right smart, Sam,” said the farmer. “He’s got a way of sayin’ things that’s clear. We boys can foller him. But Steve Douglas, he only mixes you up.”

His companion guffawed.

“Because why?” he shouted. “Because you ain’t had no education: What does a rail-sputter like Abe know about this government? Judge Douglas has worked it all out. He’s smart. Let the territories take care of themselves. Besides, Abe ain’t got no dignity. The fust of this week I seen him side-tracked down the road here in a caboose, while Doug went by in a special.”

“Abe is a plain man, Sam,” the farmer answered solemnly. “But you watch out for him.”

It was ten o’clock when Stephen descended at his destination. Merciful night hid from his view the forlorn station and the ragged town. The baggage man told him that Mr. Lincoln was at the tavern.

That tavern! Will words describe the impression it made on a certain young man from Boston! It was long and low and ramshackly and hot that night as the inside of a brick-kiln. As he drew near it on the single plank walk over the black prairie-mud, he saw countrymen and politicians swarming its narrow porch and narrower hall. Discussions in all keys were in progress, and it, was with vast difficulty that our distracted young man pushed through and found the landlord, This personage was the coolest of the lot. Confusion was but food for his smiles, importunity but increased his suavity. And of the seeming hundreds that pressed him, he knew and utilized the Christian name of all. From behind a corner of the bar he held them all at bay, and sent them to quarters like the old campaigner he was.

“Now, Ben, tain’t no use gettin’ mad. You, and Josh way, an’ Will, an’ Sam, an’ the Cap’n, an’ the four Beaver brothers, will all sleep in number ten. What’s that, Franklin? No, sirree, the Honorable Abe, and Mister Hill, and Jedge Oglesby is sleepin’ in seven.” The smell of perspiration was stifling as Stephen pushed up to the master of the situation. “What’s that? Supper, young man? Ain’t you had no supper? Gosh, I reckon if you can fight your way to the dinin’ room, the gals’ll give you some pork and a cup of coffee.”

After a preliminary scuffle with a drunken countryman in mud-caked boots, Mr. Brice presently reached the long table in the dining-room. A sense of humor not quite extinct made him smile as he devoured pork chops and greasy potatoes and heavy apple pie. As he was finishing the pie, he became aware of the tavern keeper standing over him.



“Are you one of them flip Chicagy reporters?” asked that worthy, with a suspicious eye on Stephen’s clothes.

Our friend denied this.

“You didn’t talk jest like ’em. Guess you’ll be here, tonight—”

“Yes,” said Stephen, wearily. And he added, outs of force of habit, “Can you give me a room?”

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"I reckon," was the cheerful reply. "Number ten, There ain't nobody in there but Ben Billings, and the four Beaver brothers, an' three more. I'll have a shake-down for ye next the north window."

Stephen's thanks for the hospitality perhaps lacked heartiness. But perceiving his host still contemplating him, he was emboldened to say:

"Has Mr. Lincoln gone to bed?"

"Who? Old Abe, at half-past ten? Wal I reckon you don't know him."

Stephen's reflections here on the dignity of the Senatorial candidate of the Republican Party in Illinois were novel, at any rate. He thought of certain senators he had seen in Massachusetts.

"The only reason he ain't down here swappin' yarns with the boys, is because he's havin' some sort of confab with the Jedge and Joe Medill of the 'Chicagy Press' and 'Tribune'."

"Do you think he would see me?" asked Stephen, eagerly. He was emboldened by the apparent lack of ceremony of the candidate. The landlord looked at him in some surprise.

"Wal, I reckon. Jest go up an' knock at the door number seven, and say Tom Wright sent ye."

"How shall I know Mr. Lincoln?" asked Stephen.

"Pick out the ugliest man in the room. There ain't nobody I kin think of uglier than Abe."

Bearing in mind this succinct description of the candidate, Stephen climbed the rickety stairs to the low second story. All the bedroom doors were flung open except one, on which the number 7 was inscribed. From within came bursts of uproarious laughter, and a summons to enter.

He pushed open the door, and as soon as his eyes became, accustomed to the tobacco smoke, he surveyed the room. There was a bowl on the floor, the chair where it belonged being occupied. There was a very inhospitable looking bed, two shake-downs, and four Windsor chairs in more or less state of dilapidation—all occupied likewise. A country glass lamp was balanced on a rough shelf, and under it a young man sat absorbed in making notes, and apparently oblivious to the noise around him. Every gentleman in the room was collarless, coatless, tieless, and vestless. Some were engaged in fighting gnats and June bugs, while others battled with mosquitoes—all save the young man who wrote, he being wholly indifferent.



Stephen picked out the homeliest man in the room. There was no mistaking him. And, instead of a discussion of the campaign with the other gentlemen, Mr. Lincoln was defending what do you think? Mr. Lincoln was defending an occasional and judicious use of swear words.

“Judge,” said he, “you do an almighty lot of cussing in your speeches, and perhaps it ain’t a bad way to keep things stirred up.”

“Well,” said the Judge, “a fellow will rip out something once in a while before he has time to shut it off.”

Mr. Lincoln passed his fingers through his tousled hair. His thick lower lip crept over in front of the upper one, A gleam stirred in the deep-set gray eyes.



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“Boys,” he asked, “did I ever tell you about Sam’l, the old Quaker’s apprentice?”

There was a chorus of “No’s” and “Go ahead, Abe?” The young man who was writing dropped his pencil. As for Stephen, this long, uncouth man of the plains was beginning to puzzle him. The face, with its crude features and deep furrows, relaxed into intense soberness. And Mr. Lincoln began his story with a slow earnestness that was truly startling, considering the subject.

“This apprentice, Judge, was just such an incurable as you.” (Laughter.) “And Sam’l, when he wanted to, could get out as many cusses in a second as his anvil shot sparks. And the old man used to wrestle with him nights and speak about punishment, and pray for him in meeting. But it didn’t do any good. When anything went wrong, Sam’l had an appropriate word for the occasion. One day the old man got an inspiration when he was scratching around in the dirt for an odd-sized iron.

“‘Sam’l,’ says he, ‘I want thee.’

“Sam’l went, and found the old man standing over a big rat hole, where the rats came out to feed on the scraps.

“‘Sam’l,’ says he, ‘fetch the tongs.’

“Sam’l fetched the tongs.

“‘Now, Sam’l,’ says the old man, ‘thou wilt sit here until thou hast a rat. Never mind thy dinner. And when thou hast him, if I hear thee swear, thou wilt sit here until thou hast another. Dost thou mind?’”

Here Mr. Lincoln seized two cotton umbrellas, rasped his chair over the bare boor into a corner of the room, and sat hunched over an imaginary rat hole, for all the world like a gawky Quaker apprentice. And this was a candidate for the Senate of the United States, who on the morrow was to meet in debate the renowned and polished Douglas!

“Well,” Mr. Lincoln continued, “that was on a Monday, I reckon, and the boys a-shouting to have their horses shod. Maybe you think they didn’t have some fun with Sam’l. But Sam’l sat there, and sat there, and sat there, and after a while the old man pulled out his dinner-pail. Sam’l never opened his mouth. First thing you know, snip went the tongs.” Mr. Lincoln turned gravely around. “What do you reckon Sam’l said, Judge?”

The Judge, at random, summoned up a good one, to the delight of the audience.

“Judge,” said Mr. Lincoln, with solemnity, “I reckon that’s what you’d have said. Sam’l never said a word, and the old man kept on eating his dinner. One o’clock came, and the folks began to drop in again, but Sam’l, he sat there. ’Long towards night the boys collected ’round the door. They were getting kind of interested. Sam’l, he never looked



up.” Here Mr. Lincoln bent forward a little, and his voice fell to a loud, drawling whisper. “First thing you know, here come the whiskers peeping up, then the pink eyes a—- blinking at the forge, then—!”

“Suddenly he brought the umbrellas together with whack.

“‘By God,’ yells Sam’l, ‘I have thee at last!’”



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Amid the shouts, Mr. Lincoln stood up, his long body swaying to and fro as he lifted high the improvised tongs. They heard a terrified squeal, and there was the rat squirming and wriggling,—it seemed before their very eyes. And Stephen forgot the country tavern, the country politician, and was transported straightway into the Quaker's smithy.

CHAPTER III

IN WHICH STEPHEN LEARNS SOMETHING

It was Mr. Lincoln who brought him back. The astonishing candidate for the Senate had sunk into his chair, his face relaxed into sadness save for the sparkle lurking in the eyes. So he sat, immobile, until the laughter had died down to silence. Then he turned to Stephen.

"Sonny," he said, "did you want to see me?"

Stephen was determined to be affable and kind, and (shall we say it?) he would not make Mr. Lincoln uncomfortable either by a superiority of English or the certain frigidity of manner which people in the West said he had. But he tried to imagine a Massachusetts senator, Mr. Sumner, for instance, going through the rat story, and couldn't. Somehow, Massachusetts senators hadn't this gift. And yet he was not quite sure that it wasn't a fetching gift. Stephen did not quite like to be called "Sonny." But he looked into two gray eyes, and at the face, and something curious happened to him. How was he to know that thousands of his countrymen were to experience the same sensation?

"Sonny," said Mr. Lincoln again, "did you want to see me?"

"Yes, sir." Stephen wondered at the "sir." It had been involuntary. He drew from his inner pocket the envelope which the Judge had given him.

Mr. Lincoln ripped it open. A document fell out, and a letter. He put the document in his tall hat, which was upside down on the floor. As he got deeper into the letter, he pursed his mouth, and the lines of his face deepened in a smile. Then he looked up, grave again.

Judge Whipple told you to run till you found me, did he, Mr. Brice?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is the Judge the same old criss-cross, contrary, violent fool that he always was?"

Providence put an answer in Stephen's mouth.



“He’s been very good to me, Mr. Lincoln.”

Mr. Lincoln broke into laughter.

“Why, he’s the biggest-hearted man I know. You know him, Oglesby,—Silas Whipple. But a man has to be a Daniel or a General Putnam to venture into that den of his. There’s only one man in the world who can beard Silas, and he’s the finest states-right Southern gentleman you ever saw. I mean Colonel Carvel. You’ve heard of him, Oglesby. Don’t they quarrel once in a while, Mr. Brice?”

“They do have occasional arguments,’ said Stephen, amused.

“Arguments!” cried Mr. Lincoln; “well, I couldn’t come as near to fighting every day and stand it. If my dog and Bill’s dog across the street walked around each other and growled for half a day, and then lay down together, as Carvel and Whipple do, by Jing, I’d put pepper on their noses—”



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"I reckon Colonel Carvel isn't a fighting man," said some one, at random.

Strangely enough, Stephen was seized with a desire to vindicate the Colonel's courage. Both Mr. Lincoln and Judge Oglesby forestalled him.

"Not a fighting man!" exclaimed the Judge. "Why, the other day—"

"Now, Oglesby," put in Mr. Lincoln, "I wanted to tell that story."

Stephen had heard it, and so have we. But Mr. Lincoln's imitation of the Colonel's drawl brought him a pang like homesickness.

"No, suh, I didn't intend to shoot. Not if he had gone off straight. But he wriggled and twisted like a rattlesnake, and I just couldn't resist, suh. Then I sent m'nigger Ephum to tell him not to let me catch sight of him 'round the Planters' House. Yes, suh, that's what he was. One of these damned Yankees who come South and go into nigger-deals and politics."

Mr. Lincoln glanced at Stephen, and then again at the Judge's letter. He took up his silk hat and thrust that, too, into the worn lining, which was already filled with papers. He clapped the hat on his head, and buttoned on his collar.

"I reckon I'll go for a walk, boys," he said, "and clear my head, so as to be ready for the Little Giant to-morrow at Freeport. Mr. Brice, do you feel like walking?"

Stephen, taken aback, said that he did.

"Now, Abe, this is just durned foolishness," one of the gentlemen expostulated. "We want to know if you're going to ask Douglas that question."

"If you do, you kill yourself, Lincoln," said another, who Stephen afterwards learned was Mr. Medill, proprietor of the great 'Press and Tribune'.

"I guess I'll risk it, Joe," said Mr. Lincoln, gravely. Suddenly comes the quiver about the corners of his mouth and the gray eyes respond. "Boys," said he, "did you ever hear the story of farmer Bell, down in Egypt? I'll tell it to you, boys, and then perhaps you'll know why I'll ask Judge Douglas that question. Farmer Bell had the prize Bartlett pear tree, and the prettiest gal in that section. And he thought about the same of each of 'em. All the boys were after Sue Bell. But there was only one who had any chance of getting her, and his name was Jim Rickets. Jim was the handsomest man in that section. He's been hung since. But Jim had a good deal out of life,—all the appetites, and some of the gratifications. He liked Sue, and he liked a luscious Bartlett. And he intended to have both. And it just so happened that that prize pear tree had a whopper on that year, and old man Bell couldn't talk of anything else.



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“Now there was an ugly galoot whose name isn’t worth mentioning. He knew he wasn’t in any way fit for Sue, and he liked pears about as well as Jim Rickets. Well, one night here comes Jim along the road, whistling; to court Susan, and there was the ugly galoot a-yearning on the bank under the pear tree. Jim was all fixed up, and he says to the galoot, ‘Let’s have a throw.’ Now the galoot knew old Bell was looking over the fence So he says, ‘All right,’ and he gives Jim the first shot—Jim fetched down the big pear, got his teeth in it, and strolled off to the house, kind of pitiful of the galoot for a, half-witted ass. When he got to the door, there was the old man. ‘What are you here for?’ says he. ‘Why,’ says Rickets, in his off-hand way, for he always had great confidence, ‘to fetch Sue.’”

“The old man used to wear brass toes to keep his boots from wearing out,” said Mr. Lincoln, dreamily.

“You see,” continued Mr. Lincoln, “you see the galoot knew that Jim Rickets wasn’t to be trusted with Susan Bell.”

Some of the gentlemen appeared to see the point of this political parable, for they laughed uproariously. The others laughed, too. Then they slapped their knees, looked at Mr. Lincoln’s face, which was perfectly sober, and laughed again, a little fainter. Then the Judge looked as solemn as his title.

“It won’t do, Abe,” said he. “You commit suicide.”

“You’d better stick to the pear, Abe,” said Mr. Medill, “and fight Stephen A. Douglas here and now. This isn’t any picnic. Do you know who he is?”

“Why, yes, Joe,” said Mr. Lincoln, amiably. “He’s a man with tens of thousands of blind followers. It’s my business to make some of those blind followers see.”

By this time Stephen was burning to know the question that Mr. Lincoln wished to ask the Little Giant, and why the other gentlemen were against it. But Mr. Lincoln surprised him still further in taking him by the arm. Turning to the young reporter, Mr. Hill, who had finished his writing, he said:

“Bob, a little air will do you good. I’ve had enough of the old boys for a while, and I’m going to talk to somebody any own age.”

Stephen was halfway down the corridor when he discovered that he had forgotten his hat. As he returned he heard somebody say:

“If that ain’t just like Abe. He stopped to pull a flea out of his stocking when he was going to fight that duel with Shields, and now he’s walking with boys before a debate with the smartest man in this country. And there’s heaps of things he ought to discuss with us.”

“Reckon we haven’t got much to do with it,” said another, half laughing, half rueful.
“There’s some things Abe won’t stand.”



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From the stairs Stephen saw Mr. Lincoln threading his way through the crowd below, laughing at one, pausing to lay his hand on the shoulder of another, and replying to a rough sally of a third to make the place a tumult of guffaws. But none had the temerity to follow him. When Stephen caught up with him in the little country street, he was talking earnestly to Mr. Hill, the young reporter of the Press and Tribune. And what do you think was the subject? The red comet in the sky that night. Stephen kept pace in silence with Mr. Lincoln's strides, another shock in store for him. This rail-splitter, this postmaster, this flat-boatman, whom he had not credited with a knowledge of the New Code, was talking Astronomy. And strange to say, Mr. Brice was learning.

"Bob," said Mr. Lincoln, "can you elucidate the problem of the three bodies?"

To Stephen's surprise, Mr. Hill elucidated.

The talk then fell upon novels and stories, a few of which Mr. Lincoln seemed to have read. He spoke, among others, of the "Gold Bug." "The story is grand," said he, "but it might as well have been written of Robinson Crusoe's island. What a fellow wants in a book is to know where he is. There are not many novels, or ancient works for that matter, that put you down anywhere."

"There is that genuine fragment which Cicero has preserved from a last work of Aristotle," said Mr. Hill, slyly. "If there were beings who lived in the depths & the earth, and could emerge through the open fissures, and could suddenly behold the earth, the sea, and the:—vault of heaven—"

"But you—you impostor," cried Mr. Lincoln, interrupting, "you're giving us Humboldt's Cosmos."

Mr. Hill owned up, laughing.

It is remarkable how soon we accustom ourselves to a strange situation. And to Stephen it was no less strange to be walking over a muddy road of the prairie with this most singular man and a newspaper correspondent, than it might have been to the sub-terrestrial inhabitant to emerge on the earth's surface. Stephen's mind was in the process of a chemical change: Suddenly it seemed to him as if he had known this tall Illinoisan always. The whim of the senatorial candidate in choosing him for a companion he did not then try to account for.

"Come, Mr. Stephen," said Mr. Lincoln, presently, "where do you hail from?"

"Boston," said Stephen.

"No!" said Mr. Lincoln, incredulously. "And how does it happen that you come to me with a message from a rank Abolitionist lawyer in St. Louis?"



“Is the Judge a friend of yours, sir?” Stephen asked.

“What!” exclaimed Mr. Lincoln, “didn’t he tell you he was?”

“He said nothing at all, sir, except to tell me to travel until I found you.”

“I call the Judge a friend of mine,” said Mr. Lincoln. “He may not claim me because I do not believe in putting all slave-owners to the sword.”



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"I do not think that Judge Whipple is precisely an Abolitionist, sir."

"What! And how do you feel, Mr. Stephen?"

Stephen replied in figures. It was rare with him, and he must have caught it from Mr. Lincoln.

"I am not for ripping out the dam suddenly, sir, that would drown the nation. I believe that the water can be drained off in some other way."

Mr. Lincoln's direct answer to this was to give Stephen stinging slap between the shoulder-blades.

"God bless the boy!" he cried. "He has thought it out. Bob, take that down for the Press and Tribune as coming from a rising young politician of St. Louis."

"Why," Stephen blurted out, "I—I thought you were an Abolitionist, Mr. Lincoln."

"Mr. Brice," said Mr. Lincoln, "I have as much use for the Boston Liberator as I have for the Charleston Courier. You may guess how much that is. The question is not whether we shall or shall not have slavery, but whether slavery shall stay where it is, or be extended according to Judge Douglas's ingenious plan. The Judge is for breeding worms. I am for cauterizing the sore so that it shall not spread. But I tell you, Mr. Brice, that this nation cannot exist half slave and half free."

Was it the slap on the back that opened Stephen's eyes? It was certain that as they returned to the tavern the man at his side was changed. He need not have felt chagrined. Men in high places underestimated Lincoln, or did not estimate him at all. Affection came first. The great warm heart had claimed Stephen as it claimed all who came near it.

The tavern was deserted save for a few stragglers. Under the dim light at the bar Mr. Lincoln took off his hat and drew the Judge's letter from the lining.

"Mr. Stephen," said he, "would you like to come to Freeport with me to-morrow and hear the debate?"

An hour earlier he would have declined with thanks. But now! Now his face lighted at the prospect, and suddenly fell again. Mr. Lincoln guessed the cause. He laid his hand on the young man's shoulder, and laughed.

"I reckon you're thinking of what the Judge will say."

Stephen smiled.



“I’ll take care of the Judge,” said Mr. Lincoln. “I’m not afraid of him.” He drew forth from the inexhaustible hat a slip of paper, and began to write.

“There,” said he, when he had finished, “a friend of mine is going to Springfield in the morning, and he’ll send that to the Judge.”

And this is what he had written:—

“I have borrowed Steve for a day or two, and guarantee to return him a good Republican.

A. Lincoln.”

It is worth remarking that this was the first time Mr. Brice had been called “Steve” and had not resented it.

Stephen was embarrassed. He tried to thank Mr. Lincoln, but that gentleman’s quizzical look cut him short. And the next remark made him gasp.



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“Look here, Steve,” said he, “you know a parlor from a drawing-room. What did you think of me when you saw me to-night?”

Stephen blushed furiously, and his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth.

“I’ll tell you,” said Mr. Lincoln, with his characteristic smile, “you thought that you wouldn’t pick me out of a bunch of horses to race with the Senator.”

CHAPTER IV

THE QUESTION

Many times since Abraham Lincoln has been called to that mansion which God has reserved for the patriots who have served Him also, Stephen Brice has thought of that steaming night in the low-ceiled room of the country tavern, reeking with the smell of coarse food and hot humanity. He remembers vividly how at first his gorge rose, and recalls how gradually there crept over him a forgetfulness of the squalidity and discomfort. Then came a space gray with puzzling wonder. Then the dawning of a worship for a very ugly man in a rumpled and ill-made coat.

You will perceive that there was hope for Stephen. On his shake-down that night, oblivious to the snores of his companions and the droning of the insects, he lay awake. And before his eyes was that strange, marked face, with its deep lines that blended both humor and sadness there. It was homely, and yet Stephen found himself reflecting that honesty was just as homely, and plain truth. And yet both were beautiful to those who had learned to love them. Just so this Mr. Lincoln.

He fell asleep wondering why Judge Whipple had sent him.

It was in accord with nature that reaction came with the morning. Such a morning, and such a place!

He was awakened, shivering, by the beat of rain on the roof, and stumbling over the prostrate forms of the four Beaver brothers, reached the window. Clouds filled the sky, and Joshway, whose pallet was under the sill, was in a blessed state of moisture.

No wonder some of his enthusiasm had trickled away!

He made his toilet in the wet under the pump outside; where he had to wait his turn. And he rather wished he were going back to St. Louis. He had an early breakfast of fried eggs and underdone bacon, and coffee which made him pine for Hester’s. The dishes were neither too clean nor too plentiful, being doused in water as soon as ever they were out of use.



But after breakfast the sun came out, and a crowd collected around the tavern, although the air was chill and the muck deep in the street. Stephen caught glimpses of Mr. Lincoln towering above the knots of country politicians who surrounded him, and every once in a while a knot would double up with laughter. There was no sign that the senatorial aspirant took the situation seriously; that the coming struggle with his skilful antagonist was weighing him down in the least. Stephen held aloof from the groups, thinking that Mr. Lincoln had forgotten him. He decided to leave for St. Louis on the morning train, and was even pushing toward the tavern entrance with his bag in his hand, when he was met by Mr. Hill.

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"I had about given you up, Mr. Brice," he said. "Mr. Lincoln asked me to get hold of you, and bring you to him alive or dead."

Accordingly Stephen was led to the station, where a long train of twelve cars was pulled up, covered with flags and bunting. On entering one of these, he perceived Mr. Lincoln sprawled (he could think of no other word to fit the attitude) on a seat next the window, and next him was Mr. Medill of the Press and Tribune. The seat just in front was reserved for Mr. Hill, who was to make any notes necessary. Mr. Lincoln looked up. His appearance was even less attractive than the night before, as he had on a dirty gray linen duster.

"I thought you'd got loose, Steve," he said, holding out his hand. "Glad to see you. Just you sit down there next to Bob, where I can talk to you."

Stephen sat down, diffident, for he knew that there were others in that train who would give ten years of their lives for that seat.

"I've taken a shine to this Bostonian, Joe," said Mr. Lincoln to Mr. Medill. "We've got to catch 'em young to do anything with 'em, you know. Now, Steve, just give me a notion how politics are over in St. Louis. What do they think of our new Republican party? Too bran new for old St. Louis, eh?"

Stephen saw expostulation in Mr. Medill's eyes, and hesitated. And Mr. Lincoln seemed to feel Medill's objections, as by mental telepathy. But he said:—"We'll come to that little matter later, Joe, when the cars start."

Naturally, Stephen began uneasily. But under the influence of that kindly eye he thawed, and forgot himself. He felt that this man was not one to feign an interest. The shouts of the people on the little platform interrupted the account, and the engine staggered off with its load.

"I reckon St. Louis is a nest of Southern Democrats," Mr. Lincoln remarked, "and not much opposition."

"There are quite a few Old Line Whigs, sir," ventured Stephen, smiling.

"Joe," said Mr. Lincoln, "did you ever hear Warfield's definition of an Old Line Whig?"

Mr. Medill had not.

"A man who takes his toddy regularly, and votes the Democratic ticket occasionally, and who wears ruffled shirts."

Both of these gentlemen laughed, and two more in the seat behind, who had an ear to the conversation.



“But, sir,” said Stephen, seeing that he was expected to go on, “I think that the Republican party will gather a considerable strength there in another year or two. We have the material for powerful leaders in Mr. Blair and others” (Mr. Lincoln nodded at the name). “We are getting an ever increasing population from New England, mostly of young men who will take kindly to the new party.” And then he added, thinking of his pilgrimage the Sunday before: “South St. Louis is a solid mass of Germans, who are all antislavery. But they are very foreign still, and have all their German institutions.”



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“The Turner Halls?” Mr. Lincoln surprised him by inquiring.

“Yes. And I believe that they drill there.”

“Then they will the more easily be turned into soldiers if the time should come,” said Mr. Lincoln. And he added quickly, “I pray that it may not.”

Stephen had cause to remember that observation, and the acumen it showed, long afterward.

The train made several stops, and at each of them shoals of country people filled the aisles, and paused for a most familiar chat with the senatorial candidate. Many called him Abe. His appearance was the equal in roughness to theirs, his manner if anything was more democratic,—yet in spite of all this Stephen in them detected a deference which might almost be termed a homage. There were many women among them. Had our friend been older, he might have known that the presence of good women in a political crowd portends something. As it was, he was surprised. He was destined to be still more surprised that day.

When they had left behind them the shouts of the little down of Dixon, Mr. Lincoln took off his hat, and produced a crumpled and not too immaculate scrap of paper from the multitude therein.

“Now, Joe,” said he, “here are the four questions I intend to ask Judge Douglas. I am ready for you. Fire away.”

“We don’t care anything about the others,” answered Mr. Medill. “But I tell you this. If you ask that second one, you’ll never see the United States Senate.”

“And the Republican party in this state will have had a blow from which it can scarcely recover,” added Mr. Judd, chairman of the committee.

Mr. Lincoln did not appear to hear them. His eyes were far away over the wet prairie.

Stephen held his breath. But neither he, nor Medill, nor Judd, nor Hill guessed at the pregnancy of that moment. How were they to know that the fate of the United States of America was concealed in that Question, —was to be decided on a rough wooden platform that day in the town of Freeport, Illinois?

But Abraham Lincoln, the uncouth man in the linen duster with the tousled hair, knew it. And the stone that was rejected of the builders was to become the corner-stone of the temple.



Suddenly Mr. Lincoln recalled himself, glanced at the paper, and cleared his throat. In measured tones, plainly heard above the rush and roar of the train, he read the Question:

“Can the people of a United States Territory, in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits prior to the formation of a State Constitution?”

Mr. Medill listened intently.

“Abe,” said he, solemnly, “Douglas will answer yes, or equivocate, and that is all the assurance these Northern Democrats want to put Steve Douglas in the Senate. They’ll snow you under.”

“All right,” answered Mr. Lincoln, quietly.



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“All right?” asked Mr. Medill, reflecting the sheer astonishment of the others; “then why the devil are you wearing yourself out? And why are we spending our time and money on you?”

Mr. Lincoln laid his hand on Medill’s sleeve.

“Joe,” said he, “a rat in the larder is easier to catch than a rat that has the run of the cellar. You know, where to set your trap in the larder. I’ll tell you why I’m in this campaign: to catch Douglas now, and keep him out of the White House in 1860. To save this country of ours, Joe. She’s sick.”

There was a silence, broken by two exclamations.

“But see here, Abe,” said Mr. Medill, as soon as ever he got his breath, “what have we got to show for it? Where do you come in?”

Mr. Lincoln smiled wearily.

“Nowhere, I reckon,” he answered simply.

“Good Lord!” said Mr. Judd.

Mr. Medill gulped.

“You mean to say, as the candidate of the Republican party, you don’t care whether you get to the Senate?”

“Not if I can send Steve Douglas there with his wings broken,” was the calm reply.

“Suppose he does answer yes, that slavery can be excluded?” said Mr. Judd.

“Then,” said Mr. Lincoln, “then Douglas loses the vote of the great slave-holders, the vote of the solid South, that he has been fostering ever since he has had the itch to be President. Without the solid South the Little Giant will never live in the White House. And unless I’m mightily mistaken, Steve Douglas has had his eye as far ahead as 1860 for some time.”

Another silence followed these words. There was a stout man standing in the aisle, and he spat deftly out of the open window.

“You may wing Steve Douglas, Abe,” said he, gloomily, “but the gun will kick you over the bluff.”

“Don’t worry about me, Ed,” said Mr. Lincoln. “I’m not worth it.”



In a wave of comprehension the significance of all this was revealed to Stephen Brice, The grim humor, the sagacious statesmanship, and (best of all)—the superb self sacrifice of it, struck him suddenly. I think it was in that hour that he realized the full extent of the wisdom he was near, which was like unto Solomon's.

Shame surged in Stephen's face that he should have misjudged him. He had come to patronize. He had remained to worship. And in after years, when he thought of this new vital force which became part of him that day, it was in the terms of Emerson: "Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood."

How many have conversed with Lincoln before and since, and knew him not!

If an outward and visible sign of Mr. Lincoln's greatness were needed, —he had chosen to speak to them in homely parables. The story of Farmer Bell was plain as day. Jim Rickets, who had life all his own way, was none other than Stephen A. Douglas, the easily successful. The ugly galoot, who dared to raise his eyes only to the pear, was Mr. Lincoln himself. And the pear was the Senatorship, which the galoot had denied himself to save Susan from being Mr. Rickets' bride.



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Stephen could understand likewise the vehemence of the Republican leaders who crowded around their candidate and tried to get him to retract that Question. He listened quietly, he answered with a patient smile. Now and then he threw a story into the midst of this discussion which made them laugh in spite of themselves. The hopelessness of the case was quite plain to Mr. Hill, who smiled, and whispered in Stephen's ear: "He has made up his mind. They will not budge him an inch, and they know it."

Finally Mr. Lincoln took the scrap of paper, which was even more dirty and finger-marked by this time, and handed it to Mr. Hill. The train was slowing down for Freeport. In the distance, bands could be heard playing, and along the track, line upon line of men and women were cheering and waving. It was ten o'clock, raw and cold for that time of the year, and the sun was trying to come out.

"Bob," said Mr. Lincoln, "be sure you get that right in your notes. And, Steve, you stick close to me, and you'll see the show. Why, boys," he added, smiling, "there's the great man's private car, cannon and all."

All that Stephen saw was a regular day-car on a sidetrack. A brass cannon was on the tender hitched behind it.

CHAPTER V

THE CRISIS

Stephen A. Douglas, called the Little Giant on account of his intellect, was a type of man of which our race has had some notable examples, although they are not characteristic. Capable of sacrifice to their country, personal ambition is, nevertheless, the mainspring of their actions. They must either be before the public, or else unhappy. This trait gives them a large theatrical strain, and sometimes brands them as adventurers. Their ability saves them from being demagogues.

In the case of Douglas, he had deliberately renewed some years before the agitation on the spread of slavery, by setting forth a doctrine of extreme cleverness. This doctrine, like many others of its kind, seemed at first sight to be the balm it pretended, instead of an irritant, as it really was. It was calculated to deceive all except thinking men, and to silence all save a merciless logician. And this merciless logician, who was heaven-sent in time of need, was Abraham Lincoln.

Mr. Douglas was a juggler, a political prestidigitateur. He did things before the eyes of the Senate and the nation. His balm for the healing of the nation's wounds was a patent medicine so cleverly concocted that experts alone could show what was in it. So

abstruse and twisted were some of Mr. Douglas's doctrines that a genius alone might put them into simple words, for the common people.

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The great panacea for the slavery trouble put forth by Mr. Douglas at that time was briefly this: that the people of the new territories should decide for themselves, subject to the Constitution, whether they should have slavery or not, and also decide for themselves all other questions under the Constitution. Unhappily for Mr. Douglas, there was the famous Dred Scott decision, which had set the South wild with joy the year before, and had cast a gloom over the North. The Chief Justice of the United States had declared that under the Constitution slaves were property,—and as such every American citizen owning slaves could carry them about with him wherever he went. Therefore the territorial legislatures might pass laws until they were dumb, and yet their settlers might bring with them all the slaves they pleased.

And yet we must love the Judge. He was a gentleman, a strong man, and a patriot. He was magnanimous, and to his immortal honor be it said that he, in the end, won the greatest of all struggles. He conquered himself. He put down that mightiest thing that was in him,—his ambition for himself. And he set up, instead, his ambition for his country. He bore no ill-will toward the man whose fate was so strangely linked to his, and who finally came to that high seat of honor and of martyrdom which he coveted. We shall love the Judge, and speak of him with reverence, for that sublime act of kindness before the Capitol in 1861.

Abraham Lincoln might have prayed on that day of the Freeport debate:

“Forgive him, Lord. He knows not what he does.” Lincoln descried the danger afar, and threw his body into the breach.

That which passed before Stephen’s eyes, and to which his ears listened at Freeport, was the Great Republic pressing westward to the Pacific. He wondered whether some of his Eastern friends who pursed their lips when the West was mentioned would have sneered or prayed. A young English nobleman who was there that day did not sneer. He was filled instead with something like awe at the vigor of this nation which was sprung from the loins of his own. Crudeness he saw, vulgarity he heard, but Force he felt, and marvelled.

America was in Freeport that day, the rush of her people and the surprise of her climate. The rain had ceased, and quickly was come out of the northwest a boisterous wind, chilled by the lakes and scented by the hemlocks of the Minnesota forests. The sun smiled and frowned. Clouds hurried in the sky, mocking the human hubbub below. Cheering thousands pressed about the station as Mr. Lincoln’s train arrived. They hemmed him in his triumphal passage under the great arching trees to the new Brewster House. The Chief Marshal and his aides, great men before, were suddenly immortal. The county delegations fell into their proper precedence like ministers at a state dinner. “We have faith in Abraham, Yet another County for the Rail-sputter, Abe the Giant-killer,”—so the banners

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read. Here, much bedecked, was the Galena Lincoln Club, part of Joe Davies's shipment. Fifes skirled, and drums throbbed, and the stars and stripes snapped in the breeze. And here was a delegation headed by fifty sturdy ladies on horseback, at whom Stephen gaped like a countryman. Then came carryalls of all ages and degrees, wagons from this county and that county, giddily draped, drawn by horses from one to six, or by mules, their inscriptions addressing their senatorial candidate in all degrees of familiarity, but not contempt. What they seemed proudest of was that he had been a rail-splitter, for nearly all bore a fence-rail.

But stay, what is this wagon with the high sapling flagstaff in the middle, and the leaves still on it?

"Westward the Star of Empire takes its way.
The girls link on to Lincoln; their mothers were for Clay."

Here was glory to blind you,—two and thirty maids in red sashes and blue liberty caps with white stars. Each was a state of the Union, and every one of them was for Abraham, who called them his "Basket of Flowers." Behind them, most touching of all, sat a thirty-third shackled in chains. That was Kansas. Alas, the men of Kansas was far from being as sorrowful as the part demanded,—in spite of her instructions she would smile at the boys. But the appealing inscription she bore, "Set me free" was greeted with storms of laughter, the boldest of the young men shouting that she was too beautiful to be free, and some of the old men, to their shame be it said likewise shouted. No false embarrassment troubled Kansas. She was openly pleased. But the young men who had brought their sweethearts to town, and were standing hand in hand with them, for obvious reasons saw nothing: They scarcely dared to look at Kansas, and those who did were so loudly rebuked that they turned down the side streets.

During this part of the day these loving couples, whose devotion was so patent to the whole world, were by far the most absorbing to Stephen. He watched them having their fortunes told, the young women blushing and crying, "Say!" and "Ain't he wicked?" and the young men getting their ears boxed for certain remarks. He watched them standing open-mouthed at the booths and side shows with hands still locked, or again they were chewing cream candy in unison. Or he glanced sidewise at them, seated in the open places with the world so far below them that even the insistent sound of the fifes and drums rose but faintly to their ears.

And perhaps,—we shall not say positively,—perhaps Mr. Brice's thoughts went something like this, "O that love were so simple a matter to all!" But graven on his face was what is called the "Boston scorn." And no scorn has been known like unto it since the days of Athens.



So Stephen made the best of his way to the Brewster House, the elegance and newness of which the citizens of Freeport openly boasted. Mr. Lincoln had preceded him, and was even then listening to a few remarks of burning praise by an honorable gentleman. Mr. Lincoln himself made a few remarks, which seemed so simple and rang so true, and were so free from political rococo and decoration generally, that even the young men forgot their sweethearts to listen. Then Mr. Lincoln went into the hotel, and the sun slipped under a black cloud.

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The lobby was full, and rather dirty, since the supply of spittoons was so far behind the demand. Like the firmament, it was divided into little bodies which revolved about larger bodies. But there lacked not here supporters of the Little Giant, and discreet farmers of influence in their own counties who waited to hear the afternoon's debate before deciding. These and others did not hesitate to tell of the magnificence of the Little Giant's torchlight procession the previous evening. Every Dred-Scottite had carried a torch, and many transparencies, so that the very glory of it had turned night into day. The Chief Lictor had distributed these torches with an unheard-of liberality. But there lacked not detractors who swore that John Dibble and other Lincolnites had applied for torches for the mere pleasure of carrying them. Since dawn the delegations had been heralded from the house-tops, and waded on while they were yet as worms far out on the prairie. All the morning these continued to come in, and form in line to march past their particular candidate. The second great event of the day was the event of the special over the Galena road, of sixteen cars and more than a thousand pairs of sovereign lungs. With military precision they repaired to the Brewster House, and ahead of them a banner was flung: "Winnebago County for the Tall Sucker." And the Tall Sucker was on the steps to receive them.

But Mr. Douglas, who had arrived the evening before to the booming of two and thirty guns, had his banners end his bunting, too. The neighborhood of Freeport was stronghold of Northern Democrats, ardent supporters of the Little Giant if once they could believe that he did not intend to betray them.

Stephen felt in his bones the coming of a struggle, and was thrilled. Once he smiled at the thought that he had become an active partisan—nay, a worshipper—of the uncouth Lincoln. Terrible suspicion for a Bostonian,—had he been carried away? Was his hero, after all, a homespun demagogue? Had he been wise in deciding before he had caught a glimpse of the accomplished Douglas, whose name and fame filled the land? Stephen did not waver in his allegiance. But in his heart there lurked a fear of the sophisticated Judge and Senator and man of the world whom he had not yet seen. In his notebook he had made a copy of the Question, and young Mr. Hill discovered him pondering in a corner of the lobby at dinnertime. After dinner they went together to their candidate's room. They found the doors open and the place packed, and there was Mr. Lincoln's very tall hat towering above those of the other politicians pressed around him. Mr. Lincoln took three strides in Stephen's direction and seized him by the shoulder.

"Why, Steve," said he, "I thought you had got away again." Turning to a big burly man with a good-natured face, who was standing by, he added. "Jim, I want you to look out for this young man. Get him a seat on the stands where he can hear."



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Stephen stuck close to Jim. He never knew what the gentleman's last name was, or whether he had any. It was but a few minutes' walk to the grove where the speaking was to be. And as they made their way thither Mr. Lincoln passed them in a Conestoga wagon drawn by six milk-white horses. Jim informed Stephen that the Little Giant had had a six-horse coach. The grove was black with people. Hovering about the hem of the crowd were the sunburned young men in their Sunday best, still clinging fast to the hands of the young women. Bands blared "Columbia, Gem of the Ocean." Fakirs planted their stands in the way, selling pain-killers and ague cures, watermelons and lemonade, Jugglers juggled, and beggars begged. Jim said that there were sixteen thousand people in that grove. And he told the truth.

Stephen now trembled for his champion. He tried to think of himself as fifty years old, with the courage to address sixteen thousand people on such a day, and quailed. What a man of affairs it must take to do that! Sixteen thousand people, into each of whose breasts God had put different emotions and convictions. He had never even imagined such a crowd as this assembles merely to listen to a political debate. But then he remembered, as they dodged from in front of the horses, what it was not merely a political debate: The pulse of nation was here, a great nation stricken with approaching fever. It was not now a case of excise, but of existence.

This son of toil who had driven his family thirty miles across the prairie, blanketed his tired horses and slept on the ground the night before, who was willing to stand all through the afternoon and listen with pathetic eagerness to this debate, must be moved by a patriotism divine. In the breast of that farmer, in the breast of his tired wife who held her child by the hand, had been instilled from birth that sublime fervor which is part of their life who inherit the Declaration of Independence. Instinctively these men who had fought and won the West had scented the danger. With the spirit of their ancestors who had left their farms to die on the bridge at Concord, or follow Ethan Allen into Ticonderoga, these had come to Freeport. What were three days of bodily discomfort! What even the loss of part of a cherished crop, if the nation's existence were at stake and their votes might save it!

In the midst of that heaving human sea rose the bulwarks of a wooden stand. But how to reach it? Jim was evidently a personage. The rough farmers commonly squeezed a way for him. And when they did not, he made it with his big body. As they drew near their haven, a great surging as of a tidal wave swept them off their feet. There was a deafening shout, and the stand rocked on its foundations. Before Stephen could collect his wits, a fierce battle was raging about him. Abolitionist and Democrat, Free Soiler and Squatter Sov, defaced one another in a rush for the platform. The committeemen and reporters on top of it rose to its defence. Well for Stephen that his companion was along. Jim was recognized and hauled bodily into the fort, and Stephen after him. The populace were driven off, and when the excitement died down again, he found himself in the row behind the reporters. Young Mr. Hill paused while sharpening his pencil to wave him a friendly greeting.

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Stephen, craning in his seat, caught sight of Mr. Lincoln slouched into one of his favorite attitudes, his chin resting in his hand.

But who is this, erect, compact, aggressive, searching with a confident eye the wilderness of upturned faces? A personage, truly, to be questioned timidly, to be approached advisedly. Here indeed was a lion, by the very look of him, master of himself and of others. By reason of its regularity and masculine strength, a handsome face. A man of the world to the cut of the coat across the broad shoulders. Here was one to lift a youngster into the realm of emulation, like a character in a play, to arouse dreams of Washington and its senators and great men. For this was one to be consulted by the great alone. A figure of dignity and power, with magnetism to compel moods. Since, when he smiled, you warmed in spite of yourself, and when he frowned the world looked grave.

The inevitable comparison was come, and Stephen's hero was shrunk once more. He drew a deep breath, searched for the word, and gulped. There was but the one word. How country Abraham Lincoln looked beside Stephen Arnold Douglas!

Had the Lord ever before made and set over against each other two such different men? Yes, for such are the ways of the Lord.

.....

The preliminary speaking was in progress, but Stephen neither heard nor saw until he felt the heavy hand of his companion on his knee.

"There's something mighty strange, like fate, between them two," he was saying. "I recollect twenty-five years ago when they was first in the Legislatur' together. A man told me that they was both admitted to practice in the S'preme Court in '39, on the same day, sir. Then you know they was nip an' tuck after the same young lady. Abe got her. They've been in Congress together, the Little Giant in the Senate, and now, here they be in the greatest set of debates the people of this state ever heard; Young man, the hand of fate is in this here, mark my words—"

There was a hush, and the waves of that vast human sea were stilled. A man, lean, angular, with coat-tail: flapping-unfolded like a grotesque figure at a side-show.

No confidence was there. Stooping forward, Abraham Lincoln began to speak, and Stephen Brice hung his head and shuddered. Could this shrill falsetto be the same voice to which he had listened only that morning? Could this awkward, yellow man with his hands behind his back be he whom he had worshipped? Ripples of derisive

laughter rose here and there, on the stand and from the crowd. Thrice distilled was the agony of those moments!



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But what was this feeling that gradually crept over him? Surprise? Cautiously he raised his eyes. The hands were coming around to the front. Suddenly one of them was thrown sharply back, with a determined gesture, the head was raised,—and,—and his shame was forgotten. In its stead wonder was come. But soon he lost even that, for his mind was gone on a journey. And when again he came to himself and looked upon Abraham Lincoln, this was a man transformed. The voice was no longer shrill. Nay, it was now a powerful instrument which played strangely on those who heard. Now it rose, and again it fell into tones so low as to start a stir which spread and spread, like a ripple in a pond, until it broke on the very edge of that vast audience.

“Can the people of a United States Territory, in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits prior to the formation of a State Constitution?”

It was out, at last, irrevocably writ in the recording book of History, for better, for worse. Beyond the reach of politician, committee, or caucus. But what man amongst those who heard and stirred might say that these minutes even now basting into eternity held the Crisis of a nation that is the hope of the world? Not you, Judge Douglas who sit there smiling. Consternation is a stranger in your heart,—but answer the question if you can. Yes, your nimble wit has helped you out of many a tight corner. You do not feel the noose—as yet. You do not guess that your reply will make or mar the fortunes of your country. It is not you who can look ahead two short years and see the ship of Democracy splitting on the rocks at Charleston and at Baltimore, when the power of your name might have steered her safely.

But see! what is this man about whom you despise? One by one he is taking the screws out of the engine which you have invented to run your ship. Look, he holds them in his hands without mixing them, and shows the false construction of its secret parts.

For Abraham Lincoln dealt with abstruse questions in language so limpid that many a farmer, dulled by toil, heard and understood and marvelled. The simplicity of the Bible dwells in those speeches, and they are now classics in our literature. And the wonder in Stephen’s mind was that this man who could be a buffoon, whose speech was coarse and whose person unkempt, could prove himself a tower of morality and truth. That has troubled many another, before and since the debate at Freeport.

That short hour came all too quickly to an end. And as the Moderator gave the signal for Mr. Lincoln, it was Stephen’s big companion who snapped the strain, and voiced the sentiment of those about him.

“By Gosh!” he cried, “he baffles Steve. I didn’t think Abe had it in him.”



The Honorable Stephen A. Douglas, however, seemed anything but baffled as he rose to reply. As he waited for the cheers which greeted him to die out, his attitude was easy and indifferent, as a public man's should be. The question seemed not to trouble him in the least. But for Stephen Brice the Judge stood there stripped of the glamour that made him, even as Abraham Lincoln had stripped his doctrine of its paint and colors, and left it punily naked.



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Standing up, the very person of the Little Giant was contradictory, as was the man himself. His height was insignificant. But he had the head and shoulders of a lion, and even the lion's roar. What at contrast the ring of his deep bass to the tentative falsetto of Mr. Lincoln's opening words. If Stephen expected the Judge to tremble, he was greatly disappointed. Mr. Douglas was far from dismay. As if to show the people how lightly he held his opponent's warnings, he made them gape by putting things down Mr. Lincoln's shirt-front and taking them out of his mouth: But it appeared to Stephen, listening with all his might, that the Judge was a trifle more on the defensive than his attitude might lead one to expect. Was he not among his own Northern Democrats at Freeport? And yet it seemed to give him a keen pleasure to call his hearers "Black Republicans." "Not black," came from the crowd again and again, and once a man: shouted, "Couldn't you modify it and call it brown?" "Not a whit!" cried the Judge, and dubbed them "Yankees," although himself a Vermonter by birth. He implied that most of these Black Republicans desired negro wives.

But quick,—to the Question, How was the Little Giant, artful in debate as he was, to get over that without offence to the great South? Very skillfully the judge disposed of the first of the interrogations. And then, save for the gusts of wind rustling the trees, the grove might have been empty of its thousands, such was the silence that fell. But tighter and tighter they pressed against the stand, until it trembled.

Oh, Judge, the time of all artful men will come at length. How were you to foresee a certain day under the White Dome of the Capitol? Had your sight been long, you would have paused before your answer. Had your sight been long, you would have seen this ugly Lincoln bareheaded before the Nation, and you are holding his hat. Judge Douglas, this act alone has redeemed your faults. It has given you a nobility of which we did not suspect you. At the end God gave you strength to be humble, and so you left the name of a patriot.

Judge, you thought there was a passage between Scylla and Charybdis which your craftiness might overcome.

"It matters not," you cried when you answered the Question, "it matters not which way the Supreme Court may hereafter decide as to the abstract question whether slavery may or may not go into a territory under the Constitution. The people have the lawful means to introduce or to exclude it as they please, for the reason that slavery cannot exist a day or an hour anywhere unless it is supported by local police regulations."

Judge Douglas, uneasy will you lie to-night, for you have uttered the Freeport Heresy.

It only remains to be told how Stephen Brice, coming to the Brewster House after the debate, found Mr. Lincoln. On his knee, in transports of delight, was a small boy, and Mr. Lincoln was serenely playing on the child's Jew's-harp. Standing beside him was a proud father who had dragged his son across two counties in a farm wagon, and who

was to return on the morrow to enter this event in the family Bible. In a corner of the room were several impatient gentlemen of influence who wished to talk about the Question.



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But when he saw Stephen, Mr. Lincoln looked up with a smile of welcome that is still, and ever will be, remembered and cherished.

“Tell Judge Whipple that I have attended to that little matter, Steve,” he said.

“Why, Mr. Lincoln,” he exclaimed, “you have had no time.”

“I have taken the time,” Mr. Lincoln replied, “and I think that I am well repaid. Steve,” said he, “unless I’m mightily mistaken, you know a little more than you did yesterday.”

“Yes, sir! I do,” said Stephen.

“Come, Steve,” said Mr. Lincoln, “be honest. Didn’t you feel sorry for me last night?”

Stephen flushed scarlet.

“I never shall again, sir,” he said.

The wonderful smile, so ready to come and go, flickered and went out. In its stead on the strange face was ineffable sadness,—the sadness of the world’s tragedies, of Stephen stoned, of Christ crucified.

“Pray God that you may feel sorry for me again,” he said.

Awed, the child on his lap was still. The politician had left the room. Mr. Lincoln had kept Stephen’s hand in his own.

“I have hopes of you, Stephen,” he said. “Do not forget me.”

Stephen Brice never has. Why was it that he walked to the station with a heavy heart? It was a sense of the man he had left, who had been and was to be. This Lincoln of the black loam, who built his neighbor’s cabin and hoed his neighbor’s corn, who had been storekeeper and postmaster and flat-boatman. Who had followed a rough judge dealing a rough justice around a rough circuit; who had rolled a local bully in the dirt; rescued women from insult; tended the bedside of many a sick coward who feared the Judgment; told coarse stories on barrels by candlelight (but these are pure beside the vice of great cities); who addressed political mobs in the raw, swooping down from the stump and flinging embroilers east and west. This physician who was one day to tend the sickbed of the Nation in her agony; whose large hand was to be on her feeble pulse, and whose knowledge almost divine was to perform the miracle of her healing. So was it that, the Physician Himself performed His cures, and when work was done, died a martyr.

Abraham Lincoln died in His name



CHAPTER VI

It was nearly noon when Stephen walked into the office the next day, dusty and travel-worn and perspiring. He had come straight from the ferry, without going home. And he had visions of a quiet dinner with Richter under the trees at the beer-garden, where he could talk about Abraham Lincoln. Had Richter ever heard of Lincoln?

But the young German met him at the top of the stair—and his face was more serious than usual, although he showed his magnificent teeth in a smile of welcome.

“You are a little behind your time, my friend,” said he, “What has happened you?”

“Didn’t the Judge get Mr, Lincoln’s message?” asked Stephen, with anxiety.



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The German shrugged his shoulders.

“Ah, I know not,” he answered, “He has gone is Glencoe. The Judge is ill, Stephen. Doctor Polk says that he has worked all his life too hard. The Doctor and Colonel Carvel tried to get him to go to Glencoe. But he would not budge until Miss Carvel herself comes all the way from the country yesterday, and orders him. Ach!” exclaimed Richter, impulsively, “what wonderful women you have in America! I could lose my head when I think of Miss Carvel.”

“Miss Carvel was here, you say?” Stephen repeated, in a tone of inquiry.

“Donner!” said Richter, disgusted, “you don’t care.”

Stephen laughed, in spite of himself.

“Why should I?” he answered. And becoming grave again, added: “Except on Judge Whipple’s account. Have you heard from him to-day, Carl?”

“This morning one of Colonel Carvel’s servants came for his letters. He must be feeling better. I—I pray that he is better,” said Richter, his voice breaking. “He has been very good to me.”

Stephen said nothing. But he had been conscious all at once of an affection for the Judge of which he had not suspected himself. That afternoon, on his way home, he stopped at Carvel & Company’s to inquire. Mr. Whipple was better, so Mr. Hopper said, and added that he “presumed likely the Colonel would not be in for a week.” It was then Saturday. Eliphalet was actually in the Colonel’s sanctum behind the partition, giving orders to several clerks at the time. He was so prosperous and important that he could scarce spare a moment to answer Stephen, who went away wondering whether he had been wise to choose the law.

On Monday, when Stephen called at Carvel & Company’s, Eliphalet was too busy to see him. But Ephum, who went out to Glencoe every night with orders, told him that the “Jedge was wuss, suh.” On Wednesday, there being little change, Mrs. Brice ventured to despatch a jelly by Ephum. On Friday afternoon, when Stephen was deep in Whittlesey and the New Code, he became aware of Ephum standing beside him. In reply to his anxious question Ephum answered:

“I reckon he better, suh. He an’ de Colonel done commence wrastlin’ ’bout a man name o’ Linkum. De Colonel done wrote you dis note, suh.”

It was a very polite note, containing the Colonel’s compliments, asking Mr. Brice to Glencoe that afternoon with whatever papers or letters the Judge might wish to see. And since there was no convenient train in the evening, Colonel Carvel would feel



honored if Mr. Brice would spend the night. The Colonel mentioned the train on which Mr. Brice was expected.

The Missouri side of the Mississippi is a very different country from the hot and treeless prairies of Illinois. As Stephen alighted at the little station at Glencoe and was driven away by Ned in the Colonel's buggy, he drew in deep breaths of the sweet air of the Meramec Valley.

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There had been a shower, and the sun glistened on the drops on grass and flowers, and the great trees hung heavy over the clay road. At last they came to a white gate in the picket fence, in sight of a rambling wooden house with a veranda in front covered with honeysuckle. And then he saw the Colonel, in white marseilles, smoking a cigar. This, indeed, was real country.

As Stephen trod the rough flags between the high grass which led toward the house, Colonel Carvel rose to his full height and greeted him.

"You are very welcome, sir," he said gravely. "The Judge is asleep now," he added. "I regret to say that we had a little argument this morning, and my daughter tells me it will be well not to excite him again to-day. Jinny is reading to him now, or she would be here to entertain you, Mr. Brice. Jackson!" cried Mr. Carvel, "show Mr. Brice to his room."

Jackson appeared hurriedly, seized Stephen's bag, and led the way upstairs through the cool and darkened house to a pretty little room on the south side, with matting, and roses on the simple dressing-table. After he had sat awhile staring at these, and at the wet flower-garden from between the slats of his shutters, he removed the signs of the railroad upon him, and descended. The Colonel was still on the porch, in his easy-chair. He had lighted another, cigar, and on the stand beside him stood two tall glasses, green with the fresh mint. Colonel Carvel rose, and with his own hand offered one to Stephen.

"Your health, Mr. Brice," he said, "and I hope you will feel at home here, sir. Jackson will bring you anything you desire, and should you wish to drive, I shall be delighted to show you the country."

Stephen drank that julep with reverence, and then the Colonel gave him a cigar. He was quite overcome by this treatment of a penniless young Yankee. The Colonel did not talk politics—such was not his notion of hospitality to a stranger. He talked horse, and no great discernment on Stephen's part was needed to perceive that this was Mr. Carvel's hobby.

"I used to have a stable, Mr. Brice, before they ruined gentleman's sport with these trotters ten years ago. Yes sir, we used to be at Lexington one week, and Louisville the next, and over here on the Ames track after that. Did you ever hear of Water Witch and Netty Boone?"

Yes, Stephen had, from Mr. Jack Brinsmade.

The Colonel's face beamed.



“Why, sir,” he cried, “that very nigger, Ned, who drove you here from the cars-he used to ride Netty Boone. Would you believe that, Mr. Brice? He was the best jockey ever strode a horse on the Elleardsville track here. He wore my yellow and green, sir, until he got to weigh one hundred and a quarter. And I kept him down to that weight a whole year, Mr. Brice. Yes, sirree, a whole year.”

“Kept him down!” said Stephen.

“Why, yes, sir. I had him wrapped in blankets and set in a chair with holes bored in the seat. Then we lighted a spirit lamp under him. Many a time I took off ten pounds that way. It needs fire to get flesh off a nigger, sir.”

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He didn't notice his guest's amazement.

"Then, sir," he continued, "they introduced these damned trotting races; trotting races are for white trash, Mr. Brice."

"Pa!"

The Colonel stopped short. Stephen was already on his feet. I wish you could have seen Miss Virginia Carvel as he saw her then. She wore a white lawn dress. A tea-tray was in her hand, and her head was tilted back, as women are apt to do when they carry a burden. It was so that these Southern families, who were so bitter against Abolitionists and Yankees, entertained them when they were poor, and nursed them when they were ill.

Stephen, for his life, could not utter a word. But Virginia turned to him with perfect self-possession.

"He has been boring you with his horses, Mr. Brice," she said. "Has he told you what a jockey Ned used to be before he weighed one hundred and a quarter?" (A laugh.) "Has he given you the points of Water Witch and Netty Boone?" (More laughter, increasing embarrassment for Stephen.) "Pa, I tell you once more that you will drive every guest from this house. Your jockey talk is intolerable."

O that you might have a notion of the way in which Virginia pronounced intolerable.

Mr. Carvel reached for another cigar asked, "My dear," he asked, "how is the Judge?"

"My dear," said Virginia, smiling, "he is asleep. Mammy Easter is with him, trying to make out what he is saying. He talks in his sleep, just as you do—"

"And what is he saying?" demanded the Colonel, interested.

Virginia set down the tray.

"A house divided against itself," said Miss Carvel, with a sweep of her arm, "cannot stand. I believe that this Government cannot endure permanently, half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to dissolve—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided.' Would you like any more?" added Miss Virginia.

"No," cried the Colonel, and banged his fist down on the table. "Why," said he, thoughtfully, stroking the white goatee on his chin, "cuss me if that ain't from the speech that country bumpkin, Lincoln, made in June last before the Black Republican convention in Illinois."



Virginia broke again into laughter. And Stephen was very near it, for he loved the Colonel. That gentleman suddenly checked himself in his tirade, and turned to him.

“I beg your pardon, sir,” he said; “I reckon that you have the same political sentiments as the Judge. Believe me, sir, I would not willingly offend a guest.”

Stephen smiled. “I am not offended, sir,” he said. A speech which caused Mr. Carvel to bestow a quick glance upon him. But Stephen did not see it. He was looking at Virginia.

The Colonel rose.

“You will pardon my absence for a while, sir,” he said.

“My daughter will entertain you.”



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In silence they watched him as he strode off under the trees through tall grass, a yellow setter at his heels. A strange peace was over Stephen. The shadows of the walnuts and hickories were growing long, and a rich country was giving up its scent to the evening air. From a cabin behind the house was wafted the melody of a plantation song. To the young man, after the burnt city, this was paradise. And then he remembered his mother as she must be sitting on the tiny porch in town, and sighed. Only two years ago she had been at their own place at Westbury.

He looked up, and saw the girl watching him. He dared not think that the expression he caught was one of sympathy, for it changed instantly.

"I am afraid you are the silent kind, Mr. Brice," said she; "I believe it is a Yankee trait."

Stephen laughed.

"I have known a great many who were not," said he, "When they are garrulous, they are very much so."

"I should prefer a garrulous one," said Virginia.

"I should think a Yankee were bad enough, but a noisy Yankee not to be put up with," he ventured.

Virginia did not deign a direct reply to this, save by the corners of her mouth.

"I wonder," said she, thoughtfully, "whether it is strength of mind or a lack of ideas that makes them silent."

"It is mostly prudence," said Mr. Brice. "Prudence is our dominant trait."

Virginia fidgeted. Usually she had an easier time.

"You have not always shown it," she said, with an innocence which in women is often charged with meaning.

Stephen started. Her antagonism was still there. He would have liked greatly to know whether she referred to his hasty purchase of Hester, or to his rashness in dancing with her at her party the winter before.

"We have something left to be thankful for," he answered. "We are still capable of action."

"On occasions it is violence," said Virginia, desperately. This man must not get ahead of her.

“It is just as violent,” said he, “as the repressed feeling which prompts it.”

This was a new kind of conversation to Virginia. Of all the young men she knew, not one had ever ventured into anything of the sort. They were either flippant, or sentimental, or both. She was at once flattered and annoyed, flattered, because, as a woman, Stephen had conceded her a mind. Many of the young men she knew had minds, but deemed that these were wasted on women, whose language was generally supposed to be a kind of childish twaddle. Even Jack Brinsmade rarely risked his dignity and reputation at an intellectual tilt. This was one of Virginia’s grievances. She often argued with her father, and, if the truth were told, had had more than one victory over Judge Whipple.



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Virginia's annoyance came from the fact that she perceived in Stephen a natural and merciless logic,—a faculty for getting at the bottom of things. His brain did not seem to be thrown out of gear by local magnetic influences,—by beauty, for instance. He did not lose his head, as did some others she knew, at the approach of feminine charms. Here was a grand subject, then, to try the mettle of any woman. One with less mettle would have given it up. But Virginia thought it would be delightful to bring this particular Yankee to his knees; and—and leave him there.

"Mr. Brice," she said, "I have not spoken to you since the night of my party. I believe we danced together."

"Yes, we did," said he, "and I called, but was unfortunate."

"You called?"

Ah, Virginia!

"They did not tell you!" cried Stephen.

Now Miss Carvel was complacency itself.

"Jackson is so careless with cards," said she, "and very often I do not take the trouble to read them."

"I am sorry," said he, "as I wished for the opportunity to tell you how much I enjoyed myself. I have found everybody in St. Louis very kind to strangers."

Virginia was nearly disarmed. She remembered how, she had opposed his coning. But honesty as well as something else prompted her to say: "It was my father who invited you."

Stephen did not reveal the shock his vanity had received.

"At least you were good enough to dance with me."

"I could scarcely refuse a guest," she replied.

He held up his head.

"Had I thought it would have given you annoyance," he said quietly, "I should not have asked you."

"Which would have been a lack of good manners," said Virginia, biting her lips.



Stephen answered nothing, but wished himself in St. Louis. He could not comprehend her cruelty. But, just then, the bell rang for supper, and the Colonel appeared around the end of the house.

It was one of those suppers for which the South is renowned. And when at length he could induce Stephen to eat no more, Colonel Carvel reached for his broad-brimmed felt hat, and sat smoking, with his feet against the mantle. Virginia, who had talked but little, disappeared with a tray on which she had placed with her own hands some dainties to tempt the Judge.

The Colonel regaled Stephen, when she was gone, with the pedigree and performance of every horse he had had in his stable. And this was a relief, as it gave him an opportunity to think without interruption upon Virginia's pronounced attitude of dislike. To him it was inconceivable that a young woman of such qualities as she appeared to have, should assail him so persistently for freeing a negress, and so depriving her of a maid she had set her heart upon. There were other New England young men in society. Mr. Weston and Mr. Carpenter, and more. They were not her particular friends, to be sure. But they called on her and danced with her, and she had shown them not the least antipathy. But it was to Stephen's credit that he did not analyze her further.



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He was reflecting on these things when he got to his room, when there came a knock at the door. It was Mammy Easter, in bright turban and apron,—was hospitality and comfort in the flesh.

“Is you got all you need, suh?” she inquired.

Stephen replied that he had. But Mammy showed no inclination to go, and he was too polite to shut the door:

“How you like Glencoe, Mistah Bride?”

He was charmed with it.

“We has some of de fust fam’lies out heah in de summer,” said she. “But de Colonel, he a’n’t much on a gran’ place laik in Kaintuck. Shucks, no, suh, dis ain’t much of a ’stablishment! Young Massa won’t have no lawns, no greenhouses, no nothin’. He say he laik it wil’ and simple. He on’y come out fo’ two months, mebbe. But Miss Jinny, she make it lively. Las’ week, until the Jedge come we hab dis house chuck full, two-three young ladies in a room, an’ five young gemmen on trunnle beds.”

“Until the Judge came?” echoed Stephen.

“Yassuh. Den Miss Jinny low dey all hatter go. She say she a’n’t gwinter have ’em noun’ ’sturbin’ a sick man. De Colonel ’monstrated. He done give the Judge his big room, and he say he and de young men gwine ober to Mista, Catherwood’s. You a’n’t never seen Miss Jinny rise up, suh! She des swep’ ’em all out” (Mammy emphasized this by rolling her hands) “an’ declah she gwine ten’ to the Jedge herself. She a’n’t never let me bring up one of his meals, suh.” And so she left Stephen with some food for reflection.

Virginia was very gay at breakfast, and said that the Judge would see Stephen; so he and the Colonel, that gentleman with his hat on, went up to his room. The shutters were thrown open, and the morning sunlight filtered through the leaves and fell on the four-poster where the Judge sat up, gaunt and grizzled as ever. He smiled at his host, and then tried to destroy immediately the effect of the smile.

“Well, Judge,” cried the Colonel, taking his hand, “I reckon we talked too much.”

“No such thing, Carvel,” said the Judge, forcibly, “if you hadn’t left the room, your popular sovereignty would have been in rags in two minutes.”

Stephen sat down in a corner, unobserved, in expectation of a renewal. But at this moment Miss Virginia swept into the room, very cool in a pink muslin.



“Colonel Carvel,” said she, sternly, “I am the doctor’s deputy here. I was told to keep the peace at any cost. And if you answer back, out you go, like that!” and she snapped her fingers.

The Colonel laughed. But the Judge, whose mind was on the argument, continued to mutter defiantly until his eye fell upon Stephen.

“Well, sir, well, sir,” he said, “you’ve turned up at last, have you? I send you off with papers for a man, and I get back a piece of yellow paper saying that he’s borrowed you. What did he do with you, Mr. Brice?”

“He took me to Freeport, sir, where I listened to the most remarkable speech I ever expect to hear.”



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“What!” cried the Judge, “so far from Boston?”

Stephen hesitated, uncertain whether to laugh, until he chanced to look at Virginia. She had pursed her lips.

“I was very much surprised, sir,” he said.

“Humph!” grunted Mr. Whipple, “and what did you chink of that ruffian, Lincoln?”

“He is the most remarkable man that I have ever met, sir,” answered Stephen, with emphasis.

“Humph!”

It seemed as if the grunt this time had in it something of approval. Stephen had doubt as to the propriety of discussing Mr. Lincoln there, and he reddened. Virginia’s expression bore a trace of defiance, and Mr. Carvel stood with his feet apart, thoughtfully stroking his goatee. But Mr. Whipple seemed to have no scruples.

“So you admired Lincoln, Mr. Brice?” he went on. “You must agree with that laudatory estimation of him which I read in the Missouri Democrat.”

Stephen fidgeted.

“I do, sir, most decidedly,” he answered.

“I should hardly expect a conservative Bostonian, of the class which respects property, to have said that. It might possibly be a good thing if more from your town could hear those debates.”

“They will read them, sir; I feel confident of it.”

At this point the Colonel could contain himself no longer.

“I reckon I might tell the man who wrote that Democrat article a few things, if I could find out who he is,” said he.

“Pa!” said Virginia, warningly.

But Stephen had turned a fiery red, “I wrote it, Colonel Carvel,” he said.

For a dubious instant of silence Colonel Carvel stared. Then—then he slapped his knees, broke into a storm of laughter, and went out of the room. He left Stephen in a moist state of discomfiture.

The Judge had bolted upright from the pillows.



“You have been neglecting your law, sir,” he cried.

“I wrote the article at night,” said Stephen, indignantly.

“Then it must have been Sunday night, Mr. Brice.”

At this point Virginia hid her face in her handkerchief which trembled visibly. Being a woman, whose ways are unaccountable, the older man took no notice of her. But being a young woman, and a pretty one, Stephen was angry.

“I don’t see what right you have to ask me that sir,” he said.

“The question is withdrawn, Mr. Brice,” said the Judge, “Virginia, you may strike it from the records. And now, sir, tell me something about your trip.”

Virginia departed.

An hour later Stephen descended to the veranda, and it was with apprehension that he discerned Mr. Carvel seated under the vines at the far end. Virginia was perched on the railing.

To Stephen’s surprise the Colonel rose, and, coming toward him, laid a kindly hand on his shoulder.

“Stephen,” said he, “there will be no law until Monday you must stay with us until then. A little rest will do you good.”



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Stephen was greatly touched.

“Thank you, sir,” he said. “I should like to very much. But I can’t.”

“Nonsense,” said the Colonel. “I won’t let the Judge interfere.”

“It isn’t that, sir. I shall have to go by the two o’clock train, I fear.”

The Colonel turned to Virginia, who, meanwhile, had sat silently by.

“Jinny,” he said, “we must contrive to keep him.”

She slid off the railing.

“I’m afraid he is determined, Pa,” she answered. “But perhaps Mr. Brice would like to see a little of the place before he goes. It is very primitive,” she explained, “not much like yours in the East.”

Stephen thanked her, and bowed to the Colonel. And so she led him past the low, crooked outbuildings at the back, where he saw old Uncle Ben busy over the preparation of his dinner, and frisky Rosetta, his daughter, playing with one of the Colonel’s setters. Then Virginia took a well-worn path, on each side of which the high grass bent with its load of seed, which entered the wood. Oaks and hickories and walnuts and persimmons spread out in a glade, and the wild grape twisted fantastically around the trunks. All this beauty seemed but a fit setting to the strong girlish figure in the pink frock before him. So absorbed was he in contemplation of this, and in wondering whether indeed she were to marry her cousin, Clarence Colfax, that he did not see the wonders of view unrolling in front of him. She stopped at length beside a great patch of wild race bushes. They were on the edge of the bluff, and in front of them a little rustic summer-house, with seats on its five sides. Here Virginia sat down. But Stephen, going to the edge, stood and marvelled. Far, far below him, down the wooded steep, shot the crystal Meramec, chafing over the shallow gravel beds and tearing headlong at the deep passes.

Beyond, the dimpled green hills rose and fell, and the stream ran indigo and silver. A hawk soared over the, water, the only living creature in all that wilderness.

The glory of the place stirred his blood. And when at length he turned, he saw that the girl was watching him.

“It is very beautiful,” he said.

Virginia had taken other young men here, and they had looked only upon her. And yet she was not offended. This sincerity now was as new to her as that with which he had surprised her in the Judge’s room.



And she was not quite at her ease. A reply to those simple words of his was impossible. At honest Tom Catherwood in the same situation she would have laughed, Clarence never so much as glanced at scenery. Her replies to him were either flippant, or else maternal, as to a child.

A breeze laden with the sweet abundance of that valley stirred her hair. And with that womanly gesture which has been the same through the ages she put up her hand; deftly tucking in the stray wisp behind.



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She glanced at the New Englander, against whom she had been in strange rebellion since she had first seen him. His face, thinned by the summer in town, was of the sternness of the Puritan. Stephen's features were sharply marked for his age. The will to conquer was there. Yet justice was in the mouth, and greatness of heart. Conscience was graven on the broad forehead. The eyes were the blue gray of the flint, kindly yet imperishable. The face was not handsome.

Struggling, then yielding to the impulse, Virginia let herself be led on into the years. Sanity was the word that best described him. She saw him trusted of men, honored of women, feared by the false. She saw him in high places, simple, reserved, poised evenly as he was now.

"Why do you go in this afternoon?" she asked abruptly.

He started at the change in her tone.

"I wish that I might stay," he said regretfully. "But I cannot, Miss Carvel."

He gave no reason. And she was too proud to ask it. Never before had she stooped to urge young men to stay. The difficulty had always been to get them to go. It was natural, perhaps, that her vanity was wounded. But it hurt her to think that she had made the overture, had tried to conquer whatever it was that set her against him, and had failed through him.

"You must find the city attractive. Perhaps," she added, with a little laugh, "perhaps it is Bellefontaine Road."

"No," he answered, smiling.

"Then" (with a touch of derision), "then it is because you cannot miss an afternoon's work. You are that kind."

"I was not always that kind," he answered. "I did not work at Harvard. But now I have to or—or starve," he said.

For the second time his complete simplicity had disarmed her. He had not appealed to her sympathy, nor had he hinted at the luxury in which he was brought up. She would have liked to question Stephen on this former life. But she changed the subject suddenly.

"What did you really think of Mr. Lincoln?" she asked.

"I thought him the ugliest man I ever saw, and the handsomest as well."

"But you admired him?"



“Yes,” said Stephen, gravely.

“You believe with him that this government cannot exist half slave and half free. Then a day will come, Mr. Brice, when you and I shall be foreigners one to the other.”

“You have forgotten,” he said eagerly, “you have forgotten the rest of the quotation. ‘I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but cease to be divided.’ It will become all one thing or all the other.”

Virginia laughed. “That seemed to me very equivocal,” said she. “Your rail-sputter is well named.”

“Will you read the rest of that speech?” he asked

“Judge Whipple is very clever. He has made a convert of you,” she answered.

“The Judge has had nothing to do with it,” cried Stephen. “He is not given to discussion with me, and until I went to Springfield had never mentioned Lincoln’s name to me.”



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Glancing at her, he surprised a sparkle of amusement in her eyes. Then she laughed openly.

“Why do you suppose that you were sent to Springfield?” she asked.

“With an important communication for Mr. Lincoln,” he answered.

“And that most important communication was—your self. There, now, I have told you,” said Virginia.

“Was myself? I don’t understand.”

Virginia puckered her lips.

“Then you haven’t the sense I thought you had,” she replied impatiently. “Do you know what was in that note? No? Well, a year ago last June this Black Republican lawyer whom you are all talking of made a speech before a convention in Illinois. Judge Whipple has been crazy on the subject ever since—he talks of Lincoln in his sleep; he went to Springfield and spent two days with him, and now he can’t rest until you have seen and known and heard him. So he writes a note to Lincoln and asks him to take you to the debate—”

She paused again to laugh at his amazement.

“But he told me to go to Springfield!” he exclaimed.

“He told you to find Lincoln. He knew that you would obey his orders, I suppose.”

“But I didn’t know—” Stephen began, trying to come pass within an instant the memory of his year’s experience with Mr. Whipple.

“You didn’t know that he thought anything about you,” said Virginia. “That is his way, Mr. Brice. He has more private charities on his list than any man in the city except Mr. Brinsmade. Very few know it. He thinks a great deal of you. But there,” she added, suddenly blushing crimson, “I am sorry I told you.”

“Why?” he asked.

She did not answer, but sat tapping the seat with her fingers. And when she ventured to look at him, he had fallen into thought.

“I think it must be time for dinner,” said Virginia, “if you really wish to catch the train.”

The coldness in her voice, rather than her words, aroused him. He rose, took one lingering look at the river, and followed her to the house.



At dinner, when not talking about his mare, the Colonel was trying to persuade Stephen to remain. Virginia did not join in this, and her father thought the young man's refusal sprang from her lack of cordiality. Colonel Carvel himself drove to the station.

When he returned, he found his daughter sitting idly on the porch.

"I like that young man, if he is a Yankee," he declared.

"I don't," said Virginia, promptly.

"My dear," said her father, voicing the hospitality of the Carvels, "I am surprised at you. One should never show one's feelings toward a guest. As mistress of this house it was your duty to press him to stay."

"He did not want to stay."

"Do you know why he went, my dear," asked the Colonel.

"No," said Virginia.

"I asked him," said the Colonel.

"Pa! I did not think it of you!" she cried. And then, "What was it?" she demanded.

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“He said that his mother was alone in town, and needed him.”

Virginia got up without a word, and went into Judge Whipple’s room. And there the Colonel found her some hours later, reading aloud from a scrap-book certain speeches of Mr. Lincoln’s which Judge Whipple had cut from newspapers. And the Judge, lying back with his eyes half closed, was listening in pure delight. Little did he guess at Virginia’s penance!