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Students of the development of American institutions knew when Albert J. Beveridge died so suddenly some three years ago, leaving half finished the life of Abraham Lincoln on which he was at work, that American history had sustained a serious loss. The publication of the two volumes he left, carrying his studies up to the close of the Lincoln and Douglas debates in October of 1858, proves the loss greater than any one not familiar with what Mr. Beveridge was doing could have imagined. The two volumes make a distinguished performance, the second of them is a very great book.*

As was to be expected, Mr. Beveridge left unstudied little or nothing, manuscript or printed, directly or indirectly connected with Lincoln. The bulk of the material with which he deals is familiar to students. He has discovered little of what we call the unpublished, that is, material never before examined by writers. Up to 1850 it is not a rich field. The quality and the quantity of it show the meagreness of Lincoln's beginning, his slow and painful emergence. Compare it with the materials for the life of his great English political contemporary, William Gladstone, born in the same year that he was, 1809, and one sympathizes with the difficulty of a biographer like Mr. Beveridge, who by temperament and habit of life, was only thoroughly at home

* ABRAHAM LINCOLN. By Albert J. Beveridge. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. Two volumes. $12.50.

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where there was fullness, wealth, order, cultivation. Instinctively he shrank from the squalor of Lincoln's pioneer beginnings. This led him to over-emphasize the physical side of the childhood and manhood of young Lincoln, not to recognize adequately the intangibles which must have had much to do with his development.

It is Mr. Beveridge's exhaustive, intelligent, scholarly use of these materials which gives his work its preeminence. Out of an enormous number of small items, admirably selected he knits skillfully and closely a narrative which is compact, sustained, rarely lags, is often brilliant. Every item of this narrative is carefully documented, easily one-fifth of the 1300 pages of the two volumes being devoted to references and citations. The making of the book is an admirable guide for the writer of biography who desires to adopt the Beveridge method - and it is one of the best.

Interesting and important as it is, the first volume does not stand up as large and as fresh as the second, though the analysis of Mr. Lincoln's four terms in the Illinois legislature from 1830 to 1841 is so elaborate, its sketches of men and legislative struggles are so much fuller than anything we previously have had that it has all the value and the substance of a new contribution.

One naturally expects a great deal from Mr. Beveridge on Lincoln as a lawyer, but here he adds little to what Hill, Moores, Weik have done. The truth seems to be that all through his first

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volume, admirable as it is, Mr. Beveridge was straining to get at his second. He was eager to reach the road which begins with 1850. It was for the sake of that road that he had traveled so conscientiously and carefully the six hundred preceding pages. But he did it with no such elan as one feels in him when he finds himself free to give himself to the study of the institution of slavery and the way men were dealing with it from 1850 on.

He does his work the more whole-heartedly because he knows that practically all the vast store house of material which he handled in dealing with the political, social, economic and biological sides of slavery was familiar, at least in their essence, to the man whose life he was writing. Lincoln knew more or less of the institution of slavery from childhood. He says himself in his shory autobiography, written in June 1860 at the request of a friend who was preparing a campaign biography, that his father left Kentucky in 1816 to settle in Indiana, "partly because of slavery." Mr. Beveridge flatly disputes Lincoln on this point. "We know now that this fact (slavery) had nothing whatever to do with the family's removal," but his only quoted evidence is a statement of the garrulous and self-contradictory Denis Hanks who says that it is not true, and of another authority who merely says, "I never heard that slavery was the cause of it,"- pretty slimpsy testimony in face of a direct statement from the cautious and truth-telling Lincoln, particularly at a moment when he was taking almost Quixotic care not to misstate anything about his life.

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Beveridge begins his Big Book, the second volume of the Life, with a brilliant sketch of the Abolition attack on slavery and the Southern defense. His picture of the condition of the slaves in the South is elaborate and balanced. He has exhausted sources of every nature in an effort to be fair to both slaveholders and their critics, yet such is his temperamental detestation of exaggeration and of the dishonest practice of using one set of facts to the exclusion of a contradicting set, as we find so many Abolitionists doing before the War, that the general tone of his first chapters is almost sympathetic with the Southern point of view. His method and his interest is in getting things as they are, both the good and the bad features of an institution - any other attack irritates him.

The narrative of the second volume marches steadily on from a first chapter on the"Seeds of War,"through the Compromise of 1850, to the moment of Douglas' Kansas-Nebraska bill, including the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. Beveridge shows with a wealth of detail how the political entanglements in which Douglas found himself when he first undertook to open the Nebraska territory to settlement and the conflict of interests of various kinds forced him reluctantly to include the repeal if he was to save his bill.

The passing of the Kansas-Nebraska bill brought Lincoln into action, and Beveridge is at his best in picturing the political complications, the new forces, the clashing interests which finally drove him out of a dying party into the new Republican organization.

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The analysis of the Great Debates in 1858 is a finely sustained piece of work. Indeed the narrative throughout the second volume is animated, flexible, compact, often genuinely dramatic - a really splendid performance. But that is not saying that Mr. Beveridge, painstaking as he is, never makes a misstep. He is not quite fair, for instance, to H. C. Whitney, in speaking of Mr. Whitney's report of what is known as the "Lost Speech," that made at Bloomington, Ill., in May 1856. Mr. Beveridge finds it "as good if not better than that of most speeches made long afterwards from longhand notes and from memory," and adds, "Whitney's error was the pretence of presenting Lincoln's performance as a verbatim record as if taken down in shorthand at the time."

But Whitney made no such pretence. Here the writer speaks of what she knows as it was she who, after much persuasion, brought Mr. Whitney to the point where he transcribed notes he had made while Lincoln was talking - the only person apparently - reporters included - who remained sufficiently calm under Lincoln's eloquence to make a note. At no time did Mr. Whitney pretend that he could make a verbatim report. It was distinctly stated in every publication of the speech with which the writer was concerned - and that includes the three or four earliest, that Mr. Whitney did not claim that his report was literally correct, only that he had followed the arrangement, and that in many cases the sentences were "as Lincoln spoke them"

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