

LINCOLN ON THE STUMP AND AT THE BAR.

By a Member of the Illinois Bar.

In the presidential canvass in 1840 known as the "Log

Cabin and Hard Cider" campaign, Mr. Lincoln took an active part. He was a whig and espoused with great zeal the cause of Genl. Harrison who was elected at that time president of the United States. Great excitement prevailed and monster political meetings were held in all parts of the state. At one of these meetings where were assembled many thousands of people Mr. Lincoln stood in a wagon from which he addressed the mass of people that surrounded it. The meeting was one of unusual interest because of him who was to make the principal address. It was at a time of his greatest physical strength. He was tall and perhaps a little more slender than in later life and more homely than after he became stouter in person. He was then only thirty-one years of age and yet he was regarded as one of the ablest of the whig speakers in that campaign. There was that in him that attracted and held public attention. Even then he was the subject of popular regard because of his candid and simple mode of discussing and illustrating political questions. At times he was intensely logical and was always most convincing in his arguments. The questions involved in that canvass had relation to the tariff, internal public improvements by the federal government, the distribution of the proceeds of the sales of public lands among the several states, and other questions that divided the political parties of that day. They were not such questions as enlisted and engaged his best thoughts---they did not take hold of his great nature and had no tendency to develop it. At times he discussed the questions of

the time in a logical way, but much time was devoted to telling stories to illustrate some phase of his argument, but more often the telling of these stories was resorted to for the purpose of rendering his opponents ridiculous. That was a style of speaking much appreciated at that early day. In that kind of oratory he excelled most of the contemporaries -- indeed he had no equals in the state. One story he told on that occasion was full of salient points and well illustrated the argument he was making. It was not an impure story yet it was not one it would be seemly to publish, but rendered as it was in his inimitable way it contained nothing that was offensive to a refined taste. The same story might have been told by another in such a way it would probably have been regarded as transcending and proprieties of a popular address. One characterizing feature of all the stories told by Mr. Lincoln on the stump and elsewhere, although the subject matter of some of them might not have been entirely unobjectionable, yet the manner of telling them was so peculiarly his own, they gave no offense even to refined and cultured people. On the contrary they were much enjoyed. The story he told on that occasion was much liked by the vast assembly that surrounded the temporary platform from which he spoke and was received with loud bursts of laughter and applause. It served to place the opposing party and its speakers in a most ludicrous position in respect to the question being considered and gave him a most favorable hearing for the arguments he later made in support of the measures he was sustaining. It was a habit with most speakers of that date and later to indulge in telling mirth-provoking stories when discussing political questions and Mr. Lincoln practiced that habit with wonderful effect. It made him a most popular political speaker. It is a singular fact, most people like to see their opponents discomfited

by being made the butt of a well told story. It is not fair mode of treating an adversary, but it is a mode of attack greatly relished by popular assemblies. Mr. Lincoln continued the use of that homely imagery in all his public addresses from the stump until after the repeal of the "Missouri Compromise." After that time the old or former questions that divided the whig and democratic parties ceased to engage public attention--they were no longer discussed in any state or national canvass. Questions relating to civil rights--to the right of human slavery--as to the propriety of its extension into territory where it had not before existed, arose and were discussed to the exclusion of all others. These were questions that engaged Mr. Lincoln's most earnest and intensest thoughts -- upon which he liked to think and to talk. They were in harmony with his great nature. He now became serious and thoughtful in all his utterances from the platform or rostrum. It was seldom if ever he told an anecdote after he begun to discuss these grave measures. The questions to be discussed, were themselves great -- they took hold of and had relation to the best notions of right and wrong as held by all just peoples. They were questions upon which he had bestowed much study and in elaborating them, he developed mental powers, both in oratory and logic it was not before known he possessed. With the continued discussion of these questions of liberty and equal civil rights of all men whether white or black his nature grew and expanded until in the end he became great like the themes upon which he spoke and thought. This phase of his great character will be referred to later in this sketch.

In 1848 after Mr. Lincoln's term in Congress had nearly expired he returned to the practice of the law and continued in the work of his profession until his nomination for the presidency in

1860. It will be seen that was a most interesting period in his life. Apparently it was uneventful and even unimportant and yet it was really the period in which by thought and much study he prepared himself for his great life work -- a work that vitally affected the welfare of our common country. In 1837 Mr. Lincoln's name was entered on the roll of attorneys practicing in the Supreme and State Courts of Illinois. It may be he commenced to practice in the inferior courts before that time. Far back in the early history of the state it is said there was a class of lawyers known as "circuit lawyers." The accounts given of them are quite variant and by some incredulous people are not believed to be entirely accurate. Whatever else may be said about that class of early "circuit lawyers" it is certain they were "a peculiar people." The history of the epoch in which they lived is not obscured by the lapse of time. Their history was not written when it could have been accurately done. Like all pioneer history, much of it exists in legendary stories of doubtful authenticity. Most of the information concerning them that has come down to the present generation is given by very old lawyers many of them having a liveliness of fancy made more vivid by participation in a symposium with their friends before commencing to state what they understand to be the only authentic history of that period. Other accounts are given by voluminous after dinner speakers at bar banquets. It is thought by some doubters of that excellent history, its accuracy depends much on the time of night such speeches are made -- those given earliest are regarded as containing most veritable history. By these most veracious historians, the "circuit court" lawyer is described as one traveling on "horse-back" with the circuit judge from county to county until the entire circuit was made. It is said the time occupied in going the rounds of the

circuit often embraced many weeks. The traditions are they carried after the manner of all "Horse-back" travelers of that period the historic "saddle-bags" -- the contents of which were not always the same and sometimes a little mysterious. It is certain if an inventory had been made it would not have contained the same things found in the "saddle-bags" of the "Methodist circuit rider" of the same period. Some narrators of the history of that period intimate that the "saddle-bags" of the "circuit lawyer" contained in one end a copy of "Blackstone's Commentaries" and in the other end some soiled underwear and a "bottle of whisky." But the veracious historians of that time utter repeated cautions against giving too much credit to such idle stories to the discredit of the "circuit lawyer." The distance between county seats where the courts were held were very great in that early day -- so great it was not always practicable to make the journey in one day and so it was often necessary to seek entertainment in the humble home of some pioneer. The "circuit lawyers" are represented as having been somewhat hilarious in their conduct when riding the circuit. Each lawyer had a repertoire of stale stories from which he selected a number to be given on all occasions. Baron Munchausen would have deemed himself most happy if he could have been permitted to write the stories related by the "circuit lawyers" as given by the authors of "old circuit" history. It is said he had a great deal of ability in writing that kind of literature. That there was a class of "circuit lawyers" answering in a measure to the description given of them is no-doubt true, but much that is related of them is mere fabrication. That "horse-back" practice of the law on the circuit whatever it was had in a measure at least ceased before Mr. Lincoln came to the bar -- certainly in that part of the state where he commenced to practice.

It is not probable he ever participated in it, to any very considerable extent. If he ever traveled on the circuit other than in some wheel vehicle it is quite as probable it was on foot as on horse-back.

Later there was a "circuit practice" in which Mr. Lincoln did engage. In this later practice on the circuit, the traveling was done in buggies or other carriages. That practice gradually ceased as there became resident lawyers at every county seat competent to attend to all local legal business and by 1850 it had in a great measure ceased in the central portions of the state. A few of the most prominent lawyers would go to counties other than where they resided -- some few to seek professional business and others whose services had been previously engaged. There were and are still a few lawyers that indulge in enlarging the history of this later period in which Mr. Lincoln took a part. Some of them have represented they traveled the circuit with Mr. Lincoln and practiced law with him in "log court houses." It is not probable Mr. Lincoln ever saw a "log court house" in central Illinois where he practiced law, unless he saw one at Decatur in Macon County. In a conversation between three members of the Supreme Court of Illinois all of whom had been born in this state and had lived in it all their lives and who were certainly familiar with the central portions of the state, all declared they had never seen a "log court house" in the state. It may be at a very early day in pioneer times there may have been "log court houses" in some localities -- but as to where they were located and when they existed no certain information is at hand. If any ever existed it is probable it was before Mr. Lincoln commenced to practice law, and certainly in other parts of the state where he did not practice. His practice on the circuit was mostly in the central

portions of Illinois. After 1848 it was mostly in what was known as the "old 8th Judicial Circuit" in which David Davis afterwards a member of the Supreme Court of the United States was circuit judge. That circuit was quite a large one -- probably embracing as many as fourteen counties. When it was first established it included within its bounds, Sangamon County in which Mr. Lincoln resided. Afterwards Sangamon was disconnected from Judge Davis' circuit -- the "old 8th circuit" -- but Mr. Lincoln still continued to practice in it, attending almost every court in every county. That, he did several years after other lawyers had ceased to go on the circuit regularly. During that period intervening 1848 and the time railroads began to be operated in the central portions of the state Mr. Lincoln traveled around the circuit in an open buggy drawn by one horse. Usually he traveled in company with Judge Davis who rode the circuit in a rather large and very strong buggy. He was physically a very large man. Neither Mr. Lincoln's horse nor his buggy were of much value -- both had the appearance of goods that had been bought two or three times at an administrator's sale. In storm and in sunshine, in heat and in cold, he traveled around the circuit in that rattling "old buggy" at the slow gait his horse could draw it. The speed at which he traveled was always about the same -- that was as fast as his old horse could go and that was a very slow pace. His old horse became about as well as known on the circuit as Mr. Lincoln himself. His mode of travel on the circuit exposed him to many hardships and often to much suffering. On one occasion he started from Monticello in Piatt County where a term of court had just been holden in company with the judge of the court, the Attorney General and one or two lawyers to go to Urbana where the next term of court would convene. It was on the 1st day of May perhaps in 1850.

Mr. Lincoln as usual rode in his old open buggy drawn by his old slow going horse. Shortly after starting a heavy rain began to fall and suddenly it became very cold -- unusually cold for that time of the year. The cold was so severe as to cause real suffering. The Judge and the others forming the party had better teams and could have driven away from Mr. Lincoln but they chose to remain with him. Ordinarily the trip could have been made easily in a day, but the roads became heavy and but little progress could be made. All day long the party moved on in the drenching rain. Mr. Lincoln had no wraps other than a light cloth cloak such as was then commonly worn by gentlemen around home when going out in moderate weather. It afforded him no protection either against the heavy fall of rain or the severe cold. It was discovered the town could not be reached before the darkness of night would come on so the party stopped at a farm house and secured entertainment for the night. The host built a fire in an open fire place with large sticks of wood and around that hospitable fire the party stood to warm themselves, and to dry their clothes for they had no change of raiment with them. Some of the party deemed it prudent to take a stimulant -- whiskey -- to ward off the effects of the wet and cold but Mr. Lincoln, declined to take any, saying he thought he would be quite as well off without it. The others partook of it quite freely during the evening -- even after their clothes had become dry. They were no better off next morning -- indeed if so well -- as Mr. Lincoln who had not participated with them. On another occasion Mr. Lincoln was induced by friends who were indulging a little, to taste lager beer. He took only a bare sip and spit that out with fearful grimaces declaring it was worthless stuff.

Late in 1853 -- certainly in 1854 railroads had been con-

structed and were operated to most of the county seats of the 8th Circuit and Mr. Lincoln's old horse and buggy were thereafter seldom if ever again seen on the circuit. They had become things of the past. Every county seat now had its lawyers and "circuit practice" in its original sense now ceased forever. It is true as before stated a few prominent lawyers visited some counties to seek professional business and others when previously employed attended court in the counties other than where they resided. Strictly speaking after 1854 there was no such thing in central Illinois as "traveling the circuit" as was done in earlier days. Mr. Lincoln was probably the last one to give it up in the "old 8th Circuit." He continued to go much with the judge holding the circuit courts from court to court for the opportunities it afforded him other than for the law business that came to him. What his purpose was in continuing on the circuit after everybody else had ceased to travel it regularly will be referred to later.

Mr. Lincoln's law business on the circuit such as it was brought him slight remuneration. Perhaps at every court he attended he tried some cases but they were of no great magnitude. The Courts at that early day in which Mr. Lincoln practiced most were held among a rural people, who transacted but little commercial business. Other than criminal cases the matters litigated were of no considerable importance. It did not require great ability such as Mr. Lincoln possessed to try the cases -- it could be done by the young local lawyers. As a general rule Mr. Lincoln charged less for his professional services than did most young resident lawyers. In one case -- Illinois Central Railroad Company-v- McLean County -- he received the largest fee he ever got on the circuit. The question involved was whether counties or municipal corporations through which the company's track was

laid could notwithstanding its charter exemption impose local taxes on its property so situated. The case was one of great importance to the railroad company involving as it did the annual payments of large sums of money so long as the corporation should exist. Mr. Lincoln assisted by other counsel conducted the litigation on behalf of the railroad company and the case was decided by the Supreme Court of the state in its favor on the ground suggested by him in his argument. He rendered to the company a bill for \$5000. for his services. It was very much to the discredit of the managing officers of the company they questioned the reasonableness of his fee and never did pay it until after he obtained a judgment in the McLean County Circuit Court against the company for the amount. It is probable the aggregate of all the fees he received in McLean County in all the years he practiced in that court did not exceed or even nearly equal that single fee.

No lawyer on the circuit was more unassuming than was Mr. Lincoln. He arrogated to himself no superiority over any one -- not even the most obscure member of the bar. He treated every one with that simplicity and kindness that friendly neighbors manifest in their relations with each other. He was remarkably gentle with young lawyers becoming permanent residents at the several county seats in the circuit where he had practiced for so many years. It happens sometimes young lawyers affect great legal learning when fresh from the schools and become offensively arrogant in their manners at the bar and in that way bring upon themselves a little uncomplimentary criticism, but Mr. Lincoln never grew impatient with such an one. He affected not to notice their foibles whatever they were. The result was, he became the much beloved senior member of the bar. No young lawyer ever practiced

in the courts with Mr. Lincoln that did not in all his after life have a regard for him akin to personal affection. . Any one familiar with the care he took of his legal papers would have thought he would never have been able to find one when he wanted it and yet it was seldom if ever known, he lost or mislaid an important paper. It was his habit when on the circuit -- and perhaps in all his after life -- to wear a high crowned hat after the style of the later silk hat and in which he carried many valuable papers such as promissory notes and other important small papers. It was sometimes said of him, he "kept his office in his hat." That was nearly or quite literally true when he was on the circuit. But that habit was not peculiar with Mr. Lincoln. Other lawyers and perhaps some business men in country towns were in the habit -- ridiculous as that habit was -- of carrying important small papers such as promissory notes and business letters in their hats when wearing them on the street. Sometimes a lawyer would have the crown of his hat nearly full of his papers. The only fastening was by sticking the ends of the papers under the inside band. In case a sudden gust of wind carried his hat away his papers would be scattered about the street before he could gather them up.

In the make of his character Mr. Lincoln had many elements essential to the successful circuit lawyer. He knew much of the law as written in the books, and had that knowledge ready for use at all times. That was a valuable possession in the absence of law books, where none were obtainable on the circuit. But he had no more than a knowledge of the law. He knew right and justice and knew how to make their application to the affairs of every day life. That was an element in his character that gave him power to prevail with the jury when arguing a case before them. Few lawyers ever had the influence with a jury, Mr. Lincoln had.

He had a most remarkable talent for examining witnesses -- with him it was a rare gift. It was a power to compel a witness to disclose the whole truth. Even a witness at first unfriendly under his kindly treatment would finally become friendly and would wish to tell nothing he could honestly avoid against him, if he could state nothing for him. It would not be a just analysis of his character to omit to state, he sometimes in the trial of a cause exhibited much impatience and at times vehement anger. But it was always a just indignation. In the trial of a cause in a court in one of the counties in the 8th judicial circuit where he practiced most -- perhaps in 1850 -- a witness gave most disgusting testimony against Mr. Lincoln's client. Aside from other features of the testimony Mr. Lincoln did not believe it contained a word of truth. When he came to argue the case to the jury he turned upon the offending witness a torrent of invective and denunciation of such severity as rarely ever falls from the lips of an advocate at the bar. In the same case he suddenly changed his manner of speech and became as tender and gentle as he had just been severe and violent. His client was an orphan girl that had been betrayed to her ruin. His words in defence of that friendless girl as she sat alone in the midst of strangers were gentle, beautiful, and full of tenderest pathos. In the trial of a case before a jury or before a court Mr. Lincoln was always logical and usually seemingly candid. Much of the force of his argument lay in his logical and concise statement of the facts of a case. When he had in that way secured a clear understanding of the facts, the jury and the court would seem naturally to follow him in his conclusions as to the law of the case. His simple and natural presentation of the facts seemed to give the impression, the jury were themselves making the statement. He had the happy and unusual faculty of

making the jury believe they -- and not he -- were trying the case. In that mode of presenting a case he had few if any equals. An attorney makes a grave mistake if he puts too much of himself into his argument before the jury or before the court. Mr. Lincoln kept himself in the back ground and apparently assumed nothing more than to be an assistant counsel to the court or the jury on whom the primary responsibility for the final decision of the case in fact rested. That mode of arguing a case is most satisfactory -- especially with a jury who dislike to be ignored as though they constituted no part of the court. Not infrequently Mr. Lincoln would illustrate his legal arguments with an appropriate story or anecdote. That line of legal argument with many lawyers would be a most dangerous experiment but it never failed with Mr. Lincoln. When he chose to do so he could place the opposite party and his counsel too for that matter in a most ridiculous attitude by ~~relating in his inimitable way a pertinent story. That often~~ gave him a great advantage with the jury. A young lawyer had brought an action in trespass to recover damages done to his client's growing crops by defendant's hogs. The right of action under the law of Illinois as it was then depended on the fact whether plaintiff's fence was sufficient to turn ordinary stock. There was some little conflict in the evidence on that question but the weight of the testimony was decidedly in favor of plaintiff and sustained beyond all doubt his cause of action. Mr. Lincoln appeared for a defendant. There was no controversy as to the damage by defendant's stock. The only thing in the case that could possibly admit of any discussion was the condition of plaintiff's fence and as the testimony on that question seemed to be in favor of plaintiff and as the sum involved was little in amount, Mr. Lincoln did not deem it necessary to argue the case seriously

but by way of saying something in behalf of his client he told a little story about a fence that was so crooked that when a hog went through an opening in it, invariably it came out on the same side from whence it started. His description of the confused look of the hog after several times going through the fence and still finding itself on the side from where it had started was a humorous specimen of the best story telling. The effect was to make plaintiff's case appear ridiculous and while Mr. Lincoln did not attempt to apply the story to the case, the jury seemed to think it had some kind of application to the fence in controversy -- otherwise he would not have told it and shortly returned a verdict for defendant. Few men could have made so much out of so little a story. His manner of telling a story was most generally better than the story itself. He always seemed to have an apt story on hand for use on all occasions. If he had no story in ~~stock he could formulate one instantly so pertinent it would seem~~ he had brought it into service on many previous occasions. It is believed he had never heard before, many of the mirth provoking stories he told at the bar, on the rostrum and elsewhere but formulated them for immediate use. That is a talent akin to the power to construct a parable -- a talent that few men possess.

But it must not be supposed Mr. Lincoln's practice in later life was restricted to circuit practice. He was often employed in important cases elsewhere in the state and quite often in other states. Later in his practice his services were much in demand in the larger cities where there was important litigation both on account of his ability and learning as a lawyer and his clear and forcible mode of presenting a case either to a jury or to a court.

Gradually Mr. Lincoln ceased to travel the circuit with

the same regularity he did in the beginning. The "old 8th Circuit" was several times reduced by taking from it counties to establish new circuits. Sangamon County in which Mr. Lincoln resided was stricken off but he still continued to travel the "old 8th Circuit" the same as he had done while his own county was a part of that circuit. Why he did so presents matters for curious and interesting study. It was certainly not because it was for his pecuniary advantage to do so, for he could have realized vastly more money from his practice elsewhere, especially in Chicago. It was not money he wanted. His purpose was to keep himself before the public and that could better be done in a country locality than in a large city. In many ways the "old 8th Circuit" afforded him some facilities for gratifying his ambition in that direction, of which he wished to avail. There were a few young men in that circuit, some of whom were of unusual ability and who afterwards became distinguished in state and national affairs that deemed it wise to ally themselves with the fortunes of Mr. Lincoln. In that they made no mistake. Long before Mr. Lincoln became famous in the nation it was discerned by those that dwelt near him, there was something in him that would soon make him a leader among the great men of the nation. Attached as those young men were to Mr. Lincoln they let pass no opportunity to advance his interests and to which they devoted the best services of their young and ardent lives. Judge Davis who was the judge of the "old 8th Circuit" during all the years after 1848 that Mr. Lincoln was on that circuit, was his most devoted personal and political friend. It can hardly be said, Judge Davis was a politician, but he had an unusual fondness for politics in the better sense of the word. He always took great interest in public affairs. He was a man of great force of character and possessed large executive

ability. Few men had so much ability to organize political forces as he had and nothing afforded more gratification than to exercise his powers in that direction on behalf of Mr. Lincoln in whom he then saw or thought he saw evidences of his coming greatness. Lincoln knew better what ought to be done in political matters but David knew better how to do it. Lincoln was always quiet and most deliberate in all he said and did concerning grave political questions. Davis was vehemently impulsive, forceful and resolute in effort to accomplish that which was planned for him to do or in whatever he purposed himself to do. No two men were more unlike in mental and physical characteristics. Only in one thing were they alike. Both had an integrity of character that was immovable in its steadfastness. Even in habits of thought they were unlike. But they were necessary to each other. Both were greater because of their close association and had the benefit of each others peculiar qualities. Lincoln in a thoughtful way planned and looked far into the future to discover what the end of a proposed measure would be -- that is what the effect would be on his own destiny. Davis with his abrupt energy and impulsive purpose to overcome all opposition, carried into effect much of what Lincoln devised. The opinion is ventured neither would ever have occupied the exalted positions they did, had it not been for the helpful influence each exerted for the other. Lincoln knew Davis' great powers and that a close alliance with him was necessary to him in developing his own plans and purposes. The young men of the circuit of whom mention had been made were much under the influence of Judge Davis and acted in a measure under his leadership. Their influence and it was no inconsiderable force, Davis turned to the cause of Mr. Lincoln's advancement in all he

desired to have done. It was for these reasons and for these causes Mr. Lincoln remained on the "old 8th Circuit" long after all others had ceased to travel it as "circuit lawyers" and long after there was any considerable money to be realized from such a practice. After 1856 his practice on the circuit was worth but little to him in money and after 1858 he traveled the circuit with less regularity. The "old 8th Circuit" had now been reduced to three counties, but Judge Davis was still the circuit judge. Mr. Lincoln continued to attend the courts in the reduced circuit with more or less regularity but with less desire or expectation of securing any law business. Greater subjects now occupied his thoughts. The nation was much disquieted by public discussions of the slavery question and of its extension into new national territories. The great minds of the nation were considering these disturbing questions. Events were transpiring it was evident would lead on to the maturing of policies that would effect even the national life. Mr. Lincoln during that period, planned and thought much alone. It was for the reason he then had higher aspirations and purposes to accomplish, he did not wish to reveal to others. It may be he did not believe his friends were in full sympathy in all he thought and purposed to do. Greater than all by whom he was surrounded he dwelt much in the solitude of his own reflections. But he wished to meet with the people and to get his thoughts before them. That he did by public addresses -- rarely if ever in any other way. It is not probable he ever wrote an article of any considerable pretensions for a magazine or a newspaper on public measures or in respect to national policies. If he wrote any it was but few. In the earlier days of the anti-slavery agitation his friends in the "old 8th Circuit" where he had

practised law so long were of much assistance in making opportunities for him to address the people whom he wished to educate up to his own views. It would be absurd to say all his assisting friends were in that locality. It is only true they occupied a little closer personal relation with him on account of his frequent presence among them. Later his services as a public speaker were in demand in all parts of the state and all its people were his friendly supporters. He had now become a leader of public thought. Thereafter no locality could claim him more than another. He belonged to the state and nation.

It was mainly through his management and by his advice a state convention was called in 1856 to convene in Bloomington in McLean County. It assembled in what was then known as "Major's Hall." That "old hall" has a most interesting history but it can not be written in this connection. It ought to be written before ~~it shall fall from the memory of the few familiar with it that yet survive.~~ To that convention came many of the principal men of the state -- men who before that time had had no political affiliation with each other. It was a remarkable body of men -- many of them distinguished for their learning and ability as well as for their public services. There were present old whigs and old democrats who had fiercely fought each other politically through many decades of years and there were old abolitionists whom neither of the old parties liked and with whom it was in fact distasteful to affiliate politically. That incongruous assembly had to be made harmonious if anything worthy of their coming together was to be accomplished. In that work Mr. Lincoln seemingly had less to do than any one else and yet he was the one who did more than all others to effect a union of forces and a oneness of purpose. Silently and without seeming to do so, he so planned, so

arranged and so advised that when the time for decisive action came every man in that before incongruous convention was moved as if by a strange yet forceful influence to do the right thing at the exact time as though he had known from the beginning what he was expected to do and just when to do it. It was then Mr. Lincoln stood in the midst of that body of men that had come together to counsel concerning the welfare of their common country as the acknowledged leader. All thoughtful men present and elsewhere knew and realized, events would soon transpire that would put to the test our form of republican government. Grave apprehensions existed as to what might be the result. At first counsels from the several speakers were not altogether satisfactory although patriotic sentiment seemed to control. Men talked with that depth of earnestness that comes only from a sense of impending danger to a common cause. It was a patriotic body of men who loved their country and its institutions, that loved liberty and favored equal civil rights for all men -- for the lowly as well as for the exalted. After others had spoken Mr. Lincoln came forward and stood upon the platform in the presence of the convention. His form and face had been familiar to all present for many years but never before had they seen him look so much like a great man. There was an expression on his face of intense emotion seldom if ever seen upon any one before. It was the emotion of a great soul. Even in stature he appeared greater. He seemed to realize it was a crisis in his life. A sudden stillness settled over that body of thoughtful men as Mr. Lincoln commenced to speak. Every one wanted to hear what he had to say. When he commenced, he spoke slowly as if selecting words that would best express his views and until he could get his subject well in hand. Gradually

he increased in power and strength of utterance until every word that fell from his lips had a fullness of meaning not before so fully appreciated. The scene in that old hall was one of impressive grandeur. Every man, the venerable as well as the young and the strong, stood upon his feet. In a brief moment every one in that before incongruous assembly came to feel as one man, to think as one man and to purpose and resolve as one man. Rarely if ever was so wonderful an effect produced by an oration. It was the speech of his life in the estimation of many who heard it. In speaking of it he said he thought it was the best speech he ever made unless it was one at Levenworth. It is a matter of profound regret this great speech was never reported so it could have been preserved. It was an extraordinary oration. In some respects it was not surpassed by the best efforts of the greatest orators in any country or in any age. The subjects discussed were great and were such as affected profoundly the stability of the only republic on the earth worth maintaining. The danger to that republic was imminent. Liberty and the unhappy condition of the slaves were involved and even more than that -- it was whether "government of the people, by the people and for the people" could be maintained on this continent as the fathers had established it. The subjects were themselves, themes for a great oration. Mr. Lincoln seemed to forecast the future and to comprehend what was to come from all the fierce discussion that agitated the entire land. Never was an orator more the master of the presence before which he spoke. The great audience before him was as clay in the hands of the potter. He fashioned and molded it after his own great purpose. It was a triumph that comes to but few speakers. It was an effect that could only be produced by the truest eloquence.