

A Man for the Ages

A Story of the Builders of Democracy

By Irving Bacheller

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Samson and Sarah Traylor, with their two children, Josiah and Nancy, travel by wagon from their home in Vergennes, Vt., to the West, the land of plenty. Their destination is the Country of the Sangamon, in Illinois.

CHAPTER II.—At Niagara Falls they meet a party of immigrants, among them a youth named John McNeil, who also wishes to go to the Sangamon country. All of the party suffer from fever and ague. Sarah's ministrations save the life of a youth, Harry Needles, in the last stages of fever, and he accompanies the Trayers. They reach New Salem, Illinois, and are welcomed by young "Abe" Lincoln.

CHAPTER III.—Among the Trayers' first acquaintances are Lincoln's friends, Jack Kelso and his pretty daughter Bim, 15 years of age.

CHAPTER IV.—Samson decides to locate at New Salem, and begins building his house. Led by Jack Armstrong, rowdy attempt to break up the proceedings. Lincoln thunders Armstrong. Young Harry Needles strikes Sam McNeil, of the Armstrong crowd, and McNeil threatens vengeance.

CHAPTER V.—A few days later Harry, alone, is sitting by McNeil's bedside, and would have seen roughly needled Sam driven on his assailant with shotgun. John McNeil, the Trayers' Niagara Falls acquaintance, is markedly attentive to Ann Rutledge. Lincoln is in love with Ann, but has never had enough courage to tell her so.

CHAPTER VI.—Traylor helps two slaves, who had run away from St. Louis, to escape. Eliphaz Biggs, owner of the slaves, following them, attempts to beat up Traylor and in a fight his arm is broken.

CHAPTER VII.—Waiting for his arm to heal, Biggs meets Bim Kelso, with whom Harry Needles has fallen in love. Biggs asks for Bim's hand, but her father refuses his consent. Biggs returns to St. Louis.

CHAPTER VIII.—Bim confesses to Harry that she loves Biggs, and the youth is disconsolate. Lincoln decides to seek a seat in the legislature. He and Harry volunteer for the Black Hawk war, and leave New Salem.

CHAPTER IX.—Biggs comes back to the village and he and Bim elope. Harry learns of it on his way home from the war. Lincoln's advice and philosophy sustain him in his grief.

CHAPTER X.—Lincoln, defeated in his candidacy for the legislature, forms a partnership with "Bill" Berry in the grocery business. Biggs sends a gang to burn Traylor's house, but the New Salem men are warned and the raiders worsted.

CHAPTER XI.—Lincoln, now postmaster, decides to run again for the legislature. Ann Rutledge is openly in love with John McNeil. He leaves for his home in the East, promising to return soon and marry Ann. Lincoln accepts his defeat manfully. No word coming from McNeil, Ann confesses to Abe that his real name is McNamar, and her fears that he will not return. Lincoln in his deep love endeavors to reassure her, though he shares her misgivings. Lincoln wins his seat in the legislature.

CHAPTER XII.—Ann hears from McNamar, but his letter is cold and she is convinced he does not love her. She tells Abe of her doubts and he consoles her love and asks her to marry him. Ann declares she does not yet love him, but will try to. With that promise Lincoln sets out for Vandalla and his legislative duties.

CHAPTER XIII.—Snubbed by Elijah Loveloy, Traylor arranges on his farm a hiding place for runaway slaves, a station on the Underground Railroad.

CHAPTER XIV.—Ann agrees to marry Abe, but her health is wrecked. Three runaway slaves seek Traylor's help in escaping. They belong to Biggs and he comes in pursuit of them. Lincoln threatened with arrest for inciting the raid on Traylor, he flees. One of the fugitives is Bim in disguise. She has fled from her husband's cruelty.

CHAPTER XV.—Dying, Ann Rutledge calls for Abe, and he bids her farewell at her bedside. Following her death, a settled sadness descends on him. He is no longer "Abe," but "Abraham Lincoln."

CHAPTER XVII.

Wherein Young Mr. Lincoln Safely Passes Two Great Danger Points and Turns into the Highway of His Manhood.

For days thereafter the people of New Salem were sorely troubled. Abe Lincoln, the ready helper in time of need, the wise counselor, the friend of all—old and young, dogs and horses—as Samson was wont to say—the pride and hope of the little cabin village, was breaking down under his grief. He seemed to care no more for work or study or friendship. He wandered out in the woods and upon the prairies alone. Many feared that he would lose his reason.

There was a wise and merry-hearted man who lived a mile or so from the village. His name was Bowlin Green. Those days when one of middle age had established himself in the affections of a community, its members had a way of adopting him. So Mr. Green had been adopted into many families from Beardstown to Springfield. He was everybody's "Uncle Bowlin." He had a most unusual circumference and the strength to carry it. His ruddy cheeks and curling locks and kindly dark eyes and large head were details of importance. Under all were a heart with the love of men, a mind of unusual understanding and a hand skilled in all the arts of the Kentucky pioneer. He could grill a venison steak and roast a grouse and broil a chicken in a way which had filled the countryside with fond recollections of his hospitality; he could kindle a fire with a bow and string, a pine stick and some shavings; he could make anything from a splint broom to a rocking horse with his jack-knife. Abe Lincoln was one of the many men who knew and loved him.

On a warm, bright afternoon early in September, Bowlin Green was going around the pasture to put his fence in repair, when he came upon young Mr. Lincoln. The latter sat in the shade of a tree on the hillside. He looked "terribly peaked," as Uncle Bowlin has said in a letter.

"Why, Abe, where have you been?" he asked. "The whole village is

scared. Samson Traylor was here last night lookin' for ye."

"I'm like a deer that's been hurt," said the young man. "I took to the woods. Wanted to be alone. You see, I had a lot of thinking to do—the kind of thinking that every man must do for himself. I've got the brush cleared away, at last, so I can see through. I had made up my mind to go down to your house for the night and was trying to decide whether I have energy enough to do it."

"Come on; it's only a short step," urged the big-hearted Bowlin.

"What I feel the need of, just now, is a week or two of sleep," said Mr. Lincoln, as he rose and started down the long hill with his friend.

Some time later Bowlin Green gave Samson this brief account of what happened in and about the cabin:

"He wouldn't eat anything. He wanted to go down to the river for a dip, and I went with him. When we got back, I induced him to take off his clothes and get into bed. He was fast asleep in ten minutes. When night came I went up the ladder to bed. He was still asleep when I came down in the morning. I went out and did my chores. Then I cut two venison steaks, each about the size of my hand, and a half moon of bacon. I pounded the venison to pulp with a little salt and bacon mixed in. I put it on the broiler and over a bed of hickory coals. I got the coffee into the pot and up next to the fire and some potatoes in the ashes. I basted a bird with bacon strips and put it into the roaster and set it back of the broiling bed. Then I made some biscuits and put 'em into the oven. I tell you, in a little while the smell of that fireplace would have waked the dead—honest! Abe began to stir. In a minute I heard him call:

"Say, Uncle Bowlin, I'm goin' to get up an eat you out o' house and home. I'm hungry and I feel like a new man. What time is it?"

"It'll be nine o'clock by the time you're washed and dressed," I says.

"Well, I declare," says he, "I've had about sixteen hours o' solid sleep. The world looks better to me this mornin'."

"At the table I told him a story and got a little laugh out of him. He stayed with me three weeks, choring around the place and taking it easy. He read all the books I had, until you and Doc Allen came with the law books. Then he pitched into them. I think he has changed a good deal since Ann died. He talks a lot about God and the hereafter."

In October young Mr. Lincoln returned to his surveying, and in the last month of the year to Vandalla for an extra session of the legislature, where he took a stand against the convention system of nominating candidates for public office. Samson went to Vandalla for a visit with him and to see the place before the session ended. The next year, in a letter to his brother, he says:

"Vandalla is a small, crude village. It has a strong flavor of whisky, profanity and tobacco. The night after I got there I went to a banquet with Abe Lincoln. Heard a lot about the dam nigger-loving Yankees who were trying to ruin the state and country with abolition. These were some stories like those we used to hear in the lumber camp, and no end of powerful talk, in which the names of God and the Savior were roughly handled. A few of the statesmen got drunk, and after the dinner was over two of them jumped on the table and danced down the whole length of it, shattering plates and cups and saucers and glasses. Nobody seemed to be able to stop them. I hear that they had to pay several hundred dollars for the damage done. You will be apt to think that there is too much liberty here in the West, and perhaps that is so, but the fact is these men are not half so bad as they seem to be. Lincoln tells me that they are honest, almost to a man, and sincerely devoted to the public good as they see it. I asked Abe Lincoln, who all his life has associated with rough-tongued, drinking men, how he managed to hold his own course and keep his talk and habits so clean.

"Why, the fact is," said he, "I have associated with the people who lived around me only part of the time, but I have never stopped associating with myself and with Washington and Clay and Webster and Shakespeare and Burns and DeFoe and Scott and Blackstone and Parsons. On the whole, I've been in pretty good company."

"He has not yet accomplished much in the legislature. I don't think that he will until some big issue comes along. I'm not much of a hand at hunting squirrels," he said to me the other day. "Wait till I see a bear." The people of Vandalla and Springfield have never seen him yet. They don't know him as I do. But they all respect him—just for his good-fellowship, honesty and decency. I guess that every fellow with a foul mouth hates himself for it and envies the man who can't like him. They begin to see his skill as a politician, which has shown itself in the passage of a bill removing the capital to Springfield. Abe Lincoln was the man who put it through. But he has not yet uncovered his best talents. Mark my word, some day Lincoln will be a big man.

"The death of his sweetheart has aged and sobered him. When we are together he often sits looking down with a sad face. For a while not a word out of him. Suddenly he will begin saying things, the effect of which will go with me to my grave, although I cannot call back the words and place them as he did. He is what I would call a great captain of words. Seems as if I heard the band playing while they marched by me as well

dressed and stepping as proud and regular as the Boston Guards. In some great battle between Right and Wrong you will hear from him. I hope it may be the battle between Slavery and Freedom, although at present he thinks they must avoid coming to a clinch. In my opinion it cannot be done. I expect to live to see the fight and to take part in it."

Late in the session of 1836-1837 the prophetic truth of these words began to reveal itself. A bill was being put through the legislature denouncing the growth of abolition sentiment and its activity in organized societies and upholding the right of property in slaves. Suddenly Lincoln had come to a fork in the road. Popularity, the urge of many friends, the counsel of wealth and power, and public opinion, the call of good politics pointed in one direction and the crowd went that way. It was a stampee. Lincoln stood alone at the corner. The crowd beckoned, but in vain. One man came back and joined him. It was Dan Stone, who was not a candidate for re-election. His political career was ended. There were three words on the sign-board pointing toward the perilous and lonely road that Lincoln proposed to follow. They were the words Justice and Human Rights. Lincoln and Dan Stone took that road in a protest, declaring that they "believed the institution of slavery was founded upon injustice and bad policy." Lincoln had followed his conscience, instead of the crowd.

At twenty-eight years of age he had safely passed the great danger point in his career. The declaration at Decatur, the speeches against Douglas, the miracle of turning 4,000,000 beasts into 4,000,000 men, the sublime utterance at Gettysburg, the wise parables, the second inaugural, the innumerable acts of mercy, all of which lifted him into undying fame, were now possible. Henceforth he was to go forward with the growing approval of his own spirit and the favor of God.

BOOK THREE

CHAPTER XVII.

Wherein Young Mr. Lincoln Betrays Ignorance of Two Highly Important Subjects.

There were two subjects of which Mr. Lincoln had little understanding. They were women and finance. Until they had rightly appraised the value of his friendship, women had been wont to regard him with a riant curiosity. He had been aware of this, and for years had avoided women, save those of old acquaintance. When he lived at the tavern in the village, often he had gone without a meal rather than expose himself to the eyes of strange women. The reason for this was well understood by those who knew him. The young man was an exceedingly sensitive human being. No doubt he had suffered more than any one knew from ill-concealed ridicule, but he had been able to bear it with composure in his callow youth. Later nothing roused his anger like an attempt to ridicule him.

Two women he had regarded with great tenderness—his foster mother, the second wife of Thomas Lincoln, and Ann Rutledge. Others had been to him, mostly, delightful but insupportable beings. The company of women and of dollars had been equally unfamiliar to him. He had said more than once in his young manhood that he felt embarrassed in the presence of either, and knew not quite how to behave himself—an exaggeration in which there was no small amount of truth.

In 1836 the middle frontier had entered upon a singular phase of its development. Emigrants from the East and South and from overseas had been pouring into it. The summer before the lake and river steamers had been crowded with them, and their wagons had come in long processions out of the East. Chicago had begun its phenomenal growth. A frenzied speculation in town lots had been under way in that community since the autumn of '35. It was spreading through the state. Imaginary cities were laid out on the lonely prairies and all the corner lots sold to eager buyers and paid for with promises. Millions of conventional, promissory dollars, based upon the gold at the foot of the rainbow, were changing hands day by day. The legislature, with an empty treasury behind it, voted twelve millions for river improvements and imaginary railroads and canals, for which neither surveys nor estimates had been made, to serve the dream-built cities of the speculator. If Mr. Lincoln had had more experience in the getting and use of dollars and more acquaintance with the shrinking timidity of large sums, he would have tried to dissipate these illusions of grandeur. But he went with the crowd, every member of which had a like inexperience.

In the midst of the session Samson Traylor arrived in Vandalla on his visit to Mr. Lincoln.

"I have sold my farm," said Samson to his old friend the evening of his arrival.

"Did you get a good price?" Mr. Lincoln asked.

"All that my conscience would allow me to take," said Samson. "The man offered me three dollars an acre in cash and ten dollars in notes. We compromised on seven dollars, all cash."

"What are you going to do now that you have sold out?"

"I was thinking of going up to Tazewell county."

"Why don't you go to the growing and prosperous town of Springfield?" Mr. Lincoln asked. "The capital will be there, and so will I. It is going to be a big city. Men who are to make

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history will live in Springfield. You must come and help. I shall need your friendship, your wisdom and your sympathy. I shall want to sit often by your fireside. You'll find a good school there for the children. If you'll think of it seriously I'll try to get you into the public service."

"We need you plenty," Samson answered. "We kind o' think o' you as one o' the family. I'll talk it over with Sarah and see. Never mind the job. If I keep you behavin' yourself, it'll be job enough. Anyway, I guess we can manage to get along."

"I've had a talk with Stuart and have some good news for Harry and Bim," said young Mr. Lincoln. "Stuart thinks she can get a divorce under the law of 1827. I suppose they are still interested in each other."

"He's like most of the Yankees. Once he gets set, it's hard to change him. The Kelsoes have moved to Chicago, and I don't know how Bim stands. If Harry knows, he hasn't said a word to us about it."

"I'm interested in that little romance," said the legislator. "It's our duty to do what we can to secure the happiness of these young lovers. Tell Harry to come over here. I want to talk with him."

(To be continued)



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(By REV. P. B. FITZWATER, D. D.,
Teacher of English Bible in the Moody
Bible Institute of Chicago.)
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LESSON FOR SEPTEMBER 11

PAUL IN ATHENS.

LESSON TEXT—Acts 17:16-34.

GOLDEN TEXT—In him we live, and move, and have our being.—Acts 17:28.

REFERENCE MATERIAL—Luke 4:16.

PRIMARY TOPIC—Paul Telling the People about God.

JUNIOR TOPIC—Paul in Athens.

INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—In a Famous Greek City.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—Paul in a Center of Learning, Being Driven from Berea, Paul Fleed to Athens.

I. The Idolatry of the Athenians (v. 16).

Athens was the intellectual metropolis of the world at that time, the home of the world's great eloquence and philosophy. Paul's spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

II. The Parties Concerned (vv. 17-21).

True to his usual custom Paul went into the Jewish synagogue and entered into earnest argument with the Jews. From them he turned to such as were found in the market place. Here he came into touch with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. The former were atheistic materialists. They denied the doctrine of Creation. They gave themselves up to sensual indulgence since they had no idea of future judgment. The latter were pantheists. When they heard the preaching of Paul they desired to know what new doctrine he preached, so they invited him to the Areopagus where he might speak to them of his new doctrine. They inquired as to what this "babbling" might say. The word "babbling" means literally "seed-picker."

III. Paul's Address on Mars' Hill (vv. 22-31).

1. The Introduction (vv. 22, 23). He did not accuse them of "superstition" as the A. V. would make it, but as in the Am. R. V. he introduces his discourse in a courteous and conciliatory manner, stating that he perceived that they were very religious. This he explained by stating that as he was viewing their city he beheld an altar with an inscription "To the Unknown God." This was his point of contact. He proceeds at once to connect it with the idea of the living God, implying that this altar had been erected to Him. He was too wise to begin at once to denounce heathenism and

idolatry.

2. The body of his discourse (vv. 24-31).

(1) A declaration concerning God (vv. 24, 25). (a) He created the material universe (v. 24). This was a direct blow at the philosophy of both the Epicureans and the Stoics. He did not attempt to prove the existence of God; it needs no proof. The Bible everywhere assumes the existence of a divine being. (b) His spirituality and immensity (vv. 24, 25). He is not served with "men's hands as though he needed anything," neither is He confined by any sort of religious temple. Being essentially spiritual He demands heart-service, and being transcendent above all He is not confined to earthly temples. (c) His active providence (v. 25). He gives existence, bestows needed gifts, and as sovereign directs all things.

(2) Declaration concerning man (vv. 26-31). (a) His common origin (v. 26). This was a blow at the foolish Athenian pride which supposed that they were superior to all other people. This proposition he proved from their own literature (see v. 28). If men are the offspring of God and bear His likeness it is utterly folly to make images as the senseless idols were. (b) Nations have their place by the sovereign purpose of God (v. 26). The position and mission of each nation is of God's appointment. (c) Men should seek God (v. 26). His goodness and grace in supplying all our needs, and ordering even the affairs of the nations should move man to see and seek God, for He is indeed very near to every one; so near that our existence and movements are all under His control (v. 27). (d) Pressing obligation to repent (vv. 30, 31). This was his supreme message. Though God had formerly passed over idolatry He now calls to all men to repent. The solemn reason for such action is the coming day of judgment, the credential of which is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The judgment of God of an unbelieving world is as sure as this fact. Men will be judged on the basis of their attitude toward Jesus Christ.

IV. Result of Paul's Preaching (vv. 32-34).

- 1. Some mocked (v. 32).
- 2. Some procrastinated (v. 32).
- 3. Some believed (v. 34).

All to God.

You should frequently arouse within yourself the desire to give to God all the faculties of your soul—that is, of your mind, to know Him and think of Him, and of your will, to love Him; and further seek to consecrate all your outward senses to Him in all their actions.—Peppelen.

If it happened you will find it in these columns.