

A Man for the Ages

A Story of the Builders of Democracy

By IRVING BACHELLER

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"HONEST ABE"

Synopsis.—Samson and Sarah Traylor, with their two children, Joseph and Betsey, travel by wagon in the summer of 1831 from their home in Vergennes, Vt., to the West, the land of plenty. Their destination is the country of the Sangamon, in Illinois. At Niagara Falls they meet a party of immigrants, among them a youth named John McNeil, who also decides 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 Traylor family to New Salem, Illinois, and are welcomed by young "Abe" Lincoln. The Traylor family are introduced to everyone and decide to settle at New Salem.

CHAPTER III.—Continued.

"Welcome! and here's the best seat at the fireside," he said to Samson. "My wife and daughter are away for a visit and for two days I've had the cabin to myself. Look, ye worshippers of fire, and see how fine it is now! The homely cabin is a place of beauty. What a heaven it is when the flames are leaping! Here is Hogarth's line of beauty; nothing perpendicular or horizontal."

He took Abe's hand and went on: "Here, ye lovers of romance, is one of the story-tellers of Ispahan who has in him the wisdom of the wandering tribes. He can tell you a tale that will draw children from their play and old men from the chimney corner. My boy, take a chair next to Mr. Traylor. Mr. Traylor, you stand up as proud and firm as a big pine. I believe you're a Yankee."

"So do I," said Samson. "If you took all the Yankee out of me I'd have an empty skin."

Then Abe began to show the stranger his peculiar art in these words: "Stephen Nuckles used to say: 'God's grace embraces the isles o' the sea an' the uttermost parts o' the earth. It takes in the Esquimaux an' the Hottentots. Some go so far to say that it takes in the Yankees but I don't go so far.'"

Samson joined in the good-natured laughter that followed.

"If you deal with some Yankees you take your life in your hands," he said. "They can serve God or Mammon and I guess they have given the devil some of his best ideas. He seems to be getting a lot of Yankee notions lately."

"There was a powerful prejudice in Kentucky against the Yankees," Abe went on. "Down there they used to tell about a Yankee who sold his hogs and was driving them to town. On the way he decided that he had sold them too cheap. He left them with his drover in the road and went on to town and told the buyer that he would need help to bring 'em in."

"How's that?" the buyer asked.

"Why they git away an' go to runnin' through the woods an' fields an' we can't keep up with 'em."

"I don't think I want 'em," said

this when I saw Webster and heard him speak at Plymouth.

"What kind of a looking man is he?" Abe asked.

"A big erect, splendid figure of a man. He walked like a ram at the head of his flock."

Abe who since his story had sat with a sad face looking into the fire now leaned forward, his elbows on his knees, and shook his head with interest while his gray eyes took on a look of animation. The diary speaks often of the "veil of sadness" on his face.

"He is a very great man," Abe exclaimed.

"Have you learned that last noble flight of his in the reply to Haynes, as you promised?" Kelso asked.

"I have," said Abe, "and the other day when I was tramping back from Bowlin' Green's I came across a drove of cattle and stopped and gave it to them. They all let go of the grass and stood looking."

"Good! Now stand up and let us see how you imitate the great chief of the Whig clan," said Kelso.

The lank and awkward youth rose and began to speak the lines in a high-pitched voice that trembled with excitement. It lowered and steadied and rang out like noble music on a well-played trumpet as the channel of his spirit filled with the mighty current of the orator's passion. Then, indeed, the words fell from his lips "like the winter snows."

"They shook our hearts as the wind shakes the branches of a tree," Samson writes in his diary. "The lean, bony body of the boy was transpired, and as I looked at his face in the firelight I thought it was handsome."

"Not a word was spoken for a minute after he sat down. I had got my first look at Lincoln. I had seen his soul. I think it was then I began to realize that a man was being made among us 'more precious than fine gold; even a man more precious than the golden wedge of Ophir.'"

The Doctor gazed in silence at the boy. Kelso sat with both hands in his pockets and his chin upon his breast looking solemnly into the fire.

"Thank you, Abe," he said in a low voice. "Something unusual has happened and I'm just a little scared."

"Why?" Abe asked.

"For fear somebody will spill it with another hog story. I'm a little afraid of anything I can say. I would venture this, that the man Webster is a prophet. In his Plymouth address he hears receding into never-returning distance the clank of chains and all the din of slavery. It will come true."

"Do you think so?" Abe asked.

"Surely—there are so many of us who hate it. These Yankees hate it and they and their children are scattering all over the midlands. Their spirit will guide the West. The love of liberty is the salt of their blood and the marrow of their bones. Liberty means freedom for all. Wait until these babies, coming out here by the wagonload, have grown to manhood. Slavery will have to reckon with them."

"I hate it, too," said Abe. "If I live I'm going to hit that thing on the head some day."

"Do you still want to be a lawyer?" Kelso asked.

"Yes, but sometimes I think I'd make a better blacksmith," said Abe.

"I'm trying to make up my mind what's best for me."

"No, you're trying to decide what is best for your friends and your country and for the reign of law and justice and liberty."

"But I think every man acts from selfish motives," Abe insisted.

Doctor Allen demurred as follows: "The other night you happened to remember that you had overcharged Mrs. Peters for a jug of molasses and after you had closed the store you walked three miles to return the money which belonged to her. Why did you do it?"

"For a selfish motive," said Abe. "I believe honesty is the best policy."

"Then you took that long walk just to advertise your honesty—to induce people to call you 'Honest Abe' as they have begun to do?"

"I wouldn't want to put it that way," said Abe.

"But that's the only way out," the Doctor insisted, "and we knowing ones would have to call you 'Sordid Abe.'"

"There's a hidden Abe and you haven't got acquainted with him yet," Kelso interposed. "We have all caught a glimpse of him tonight. He's the Abe that loves honor and justice and humanity and their great temple of freedom that is growing up here in the new world. He loves them better than fame or fortune or life itself. I think it must have been that Abe whose voice sounded like a trumpet just now and who sent you off to Mrs. Peters with the money. You haven't the chance to know him that we have. Some day you two will get acquainted."

At this moment there was a loud rap on the door. Mr. Kelso opened it and said: "Hello, Eli! Come in."

A hairy-faced, bow-legged man, bent

under a great pack, partly covered with bed ticking, stood in the doorway.

"Hello, Mr. Kelso," the bearded man answered. "The poor vandering Jew has come back ag'in—hey? I think I haf to take de hump off my back before I gits in."

Staggering beneath his load he let it down to the ground.

"Bring in your Trojan horse and mind you do not let out its four and twenty warriors until morning. I'll have some bread and milk for you in a minute. Gentlemen, this is my friend Eli—a wandering pioneer of trade."

"I haf a wonderful line o' goods—wonderful! wonderful!" said Eli, gesturing with both hands.

"First supper—then open your Trojan horse," said Kelso.

"First I must show my goods," Eli insisted, "an' I'll bet you take dem all—everyting vat I have in dot pack an' you pay my price an' you tank me an' say 'Eli, vat you have to drink?'"

"I'll bet you four bits I don't," said Kelso.

"You are my frient; I would not take your money like dot so easy. No! It would not be right. These are Scotch goods, gentlemen—so rare an' beautiful—not'ing like dem in de world."

He began to undo his pack while the little company stood around him.

"Gentlemen, you can see but you cannot buy. Only my frient can have dem goods," he went on glibly as he removed the cover of the pack.

Suddenly there was a lively stir in it. To the amazement of all a beautiful girl threw aside the ticking and leaped out of the large wicker basket it had covered. With a merry laugh she threw her arms around Jack Kelso's neck and kissed him.

"The men clapped their hands in noisy merriment.

"That's like Bim, isn't it?" said the Doctor.

"Exactly!" Abe exclaimed.

"I stop at David Barney's an' dere she took de goods out o' my pack an' fix up dis job lot fer you," said Eli with a laugh.

"A real surprise party!" the girl exclaimed.

She was a small-sized girl, nearing sixteen, with red cheeks and hazel eyes and blonde hair that fell in curls upon her shoulders.

"Mr. Traylor, this is my daughter Bim," said Kelso. "She is skilled in the art of producing astonishment."

"She must have heard of that handsome boy at the tavern and got in a hurry to come home," said the Doctor.

"Ann Rutledge says that he is a right party boy," the girl laughed as she brushed her curls aside.

CHAPTER IV.

Which Presents Other Log-Cabin Folk and the First Steps in the Making of a New Home and Certain Capacities and Incapacities of Abe.

Next morning at daylight two parties went out in the woods to cut timber for the home of the newcomers.

In one party were Harry Needles carrying two axes and a well-filled lunchbox; Samson with a saw in his hand and the boy Joe on his back; Abe with a saw and ax and a small jug of root beer and a book tied in a big red handkerchief and slung around his neck.

When they reached the woods Abe cut a pole for the small boy and carried him on his shoulder to the creek and said:

"Now you sit down here an' keep order in this little frog city. If you hear a frog say anything improper you fetch him a whack. Don't allow any nonsense. We'll make you mayor of Frog City."

The men fell to with axes and saws while Harry limbed the logs and looked after the mayor. Their huge muscles flung the sharp axes into the timber and gnawed through it with the saw. Many big trees fell before noon time when they stopped for lunch.

While they were eating Abe said: "I reckon we better saw out a few boards this afternoon. Need 'em for the doors. We'll tote a couple of logs up on the side o' that knoll, put 'em on skids an' whip 'em up into boards with the saw."

Samson took hold of the middle of one of the logs and raised it from the ground.

"I guess we can carry 'em," he said. "Can ye shoulder it?" Abe asked.

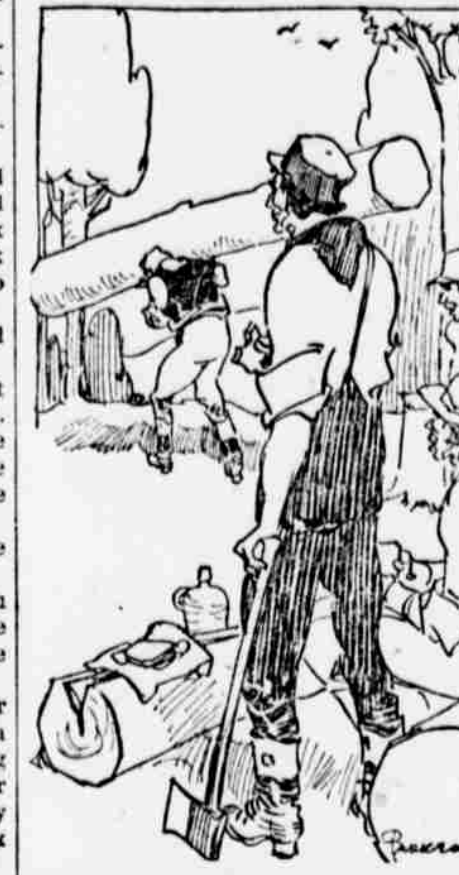
"Easy," said Samson as he raised an end of the log, stepped beneath it and, resting its weight on his back, soon got his shoulder near its center and swung it clear of the ground and walked with it to the knollside where he let it fall with a resounding thump that shook the ground. Abe stopped eating and watched every move in this remarkable performance. The ease with which the big Vermont had so defied the law of gravitation with that unwieldy stick amazed him.

"That thing'll weigh from seven to eight hundred pounds," said he. "I reckon you're the stoutest man in this part o' the state an' I'm quite a man myself. I've lifted a barrel o' whisky

and put my mouth to the bung hole. I never drink it.

"Say," he added as he sat down and began eating a doughnut. "If you ever hit anybody take a sledge hammer or a crowbar. It wouldn't be decent to use your fist."

They hewed a flat surface on opposite sides of the log which Samson had carried and peeled it and raised its lower end on a cross timber. Then they marked it with a chalk line and sliced it into inch boards with a whip saw, Abe standing on top of the log



Watched Every Move in This Remarkable Performance.

and Samson beneath it. Suddenly the saw stopped. A clear, beautiful voice flung the music of "Sweet Nightingale" into the timbered hollow. It halted the workers and set the woodland ringing. The men stood silent like those hearing a benediction. The singing ceased. Still they listened for half a moment. It was as if a spirit had passed and touched them.

"It's Bim—the little vixen!" said Abe tenderly. "She's an odd child and as pretty as a spotted fawn, and about as wild. She's a kind of a first cousin to the bobolink."

When they were getting ready to go home that afternoon Joe got into a great hurry to see his mother. It seemed to him that ages had elapsed since he had seen her—a conviction which led to noisy tears.

Abe knelt before him and comforted the boy. Then he wrapped him in his jacket and swung him in the air and started for home with Joe astride his neck.

Samson says in his diary: "His tramping play with the little lad gave me another look at the man Lincoln."

"Some one proposed once that we should call that stream the Minnehaha," said Abe as he walked along. "After this Joe and I are going to call it the Minneboohoo."

The women of the little village had met at a quilting party at ten o'clock with Mrs. Martin Waddell. There Sarah had had a seat at the frame and heard all the gossip of the countryside. The nimble-fingered Ann Rutledge—a daughter of the tavern folk—had sat beside her. Ann was a slender, good-looking girl of seventeen with blue eyes and a rich crown of auburn hair and a fair skin well browned by the sunlight. She was the most dexterous needle worker in New Salem.

John McNeil, whom the Traylor family had met on the road near Niagara Falls and who had shared their camp with them, arrived on the stage that evening. He was dressed in a new butternut suit and clean linen and looked very handsome. Samson writes that he resembled the pictures of Robert Emmet. With fine, dark eyes, a smooth skin, well-moulded features and black hair neatly brushed on a shapely head he was not at all like the rugged Abe. In a low tone and very modestly, with a slight brogue on his tongue he told of his adventures on the long shore road to Michigan. Ann sat listening and looking into his face as he talked. Abe came in, soon after eight o'clock, and was introduced to the stranger. All noted the contrast between the two young men as they greeted each other. Abe sat down for a few minutes and looked sadly into the fire but said nothing. He rose presently, excused himself and went away.

Raising the cabin.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A Compromise.

No college man is as good as he tries to make his professor believe he is, nor as bad as he tells his girl he is.—Tear.

SHOWED HIM HOW

Mr. Brown Learned Something From His Better Half.

Of Course Her Knowledge Was Not Scientific but the Cork Came Out of That Bottle.

Brown had been pattering around in the bathroom for a half hour, while Mrs. Brown grew more and more nervous. From experience she knew that trouble was brewing when her lord and master busted himself about the house, and she was aware that he was not taking a bath in the middle of a Sunday morning. Presently there came a crash of glass falling into the porcelain tub, and Mrs. Brown was glad that the children had not yet returned from Sunday school.

"What is the matter? Can I help you, dear?" Mrs. Brown called brightly. For reply Brown came into the living room and stared at his better half with an expression in which patient suffering, rage, mockery and suspicion were nicely blended. In his hand, says the New York Sun, he held a bottle, empty, except for a cork that had been pushed inside.

"No, you cannot help me," he declared bitterly. "When did you ever help me? To satisfy your inordinate curiosity I will say that I am getting the cork out of this bottle, and, having the innate masculine qualities of determination and inventiveness, I will accomplish this seemingly impossible task, and your little plan to annoy me will fall through. Of course I know that you deliberately pushed the cork down into this bottle, though how you guessed that I would wish to use this particular flask I haven't yet taken the trouble to figure out."

"I presume that even you know that heat expands an article? Very well, then; all that is necessary is to heat the neck of this bottle until it expands and then shake out the cork. Have you the frankness to admit that that would never have occurred to you?"

"No, I do not think that would have occurred to me," Mrs. Brown answered. "You see, I am afraid that glass is different from metal in respect to responding to temperatures, and, besides, it seems to me that if you make the glass expand it will expand inward as well as outward, and so really make the opening in the neck of the bottle smaller. Now, what I'd do would be to—"

"Never mind what you'd do," retorted Brown. "You have sufficiently demonstrated your ignorance for once. In a few minutes I will show you the happy results when scientific knowledge and ingenuity go hand in hand." Whereupon he stalked out to the kitchen, and Mrs. Brown heard him lighting the gas stove. A few minutes later there was a howl of anguish from the kitchen.

"Probably your idea is entirely scientific and all right," she soothed, as she applied a cooling lotion to the thumb and finger that had incautiously grasped the hot bottle. "but, after all, it would be so much simpler to—"

"Oh, I suppose you are going to pretend that you could get that cork out without even trying," Brown snarled. "Well, let me see you do it!"

"Why, of course if you wish me to, dear," Mrs. Brown responded sweetly. She took a small but strong cord, tied a large knot in the end, dropped the knot into the bottle, turned the bottle upside down, and shook it a little until the cork joggled down in to the neck, the knot in the cord being behind the cork. Then she gave the cord a strong, steady pull, and the cork came out with a pop! "It is really easy, you see, dear," she said mildly.

France Likes Kipling.

Although Rudyard Kipling is not without honor in his own country, it is a fact that some young lions there affect to sneer at him, remarks the London Post. Like the Athenians, they want something new.

But in France he is at the height of his fame. Some fourteen volumes of translations of his works have been published by the Mercure de France. A distinguished academician, M. Andre Chevrillon, has constituted himself his chief interpreter. Now a student in Paris, preparing for the Baccalaureate, writes that he is one of the authors "see" in English, a high and exceptional honor for a contemporary.

Know Little of Their City.

Many of the lifelong residents of New York city know little of the city's rapidly expanding transportation system, says the New York Sun. They are acquainted with those minor sections they use daily, but if they have occasion to travel to unaccustomed quarters they are as puzzled as the stranger. It is usually the newcomer, the resident of a few months or years, who even pretends to know the subways or the streets of any considerable section of the town.

American Progress.

American progress is absolutely dependent upon electricity, according to Henry D. Shute, vice president of the Westinghouse Electric company, who declares that "It is no exaggeration to say that America has now become absolutely dependent upon electricity for her further progress, and in the future hardly a wheel will turn without electricity behind it."

Pa Gets Funny.

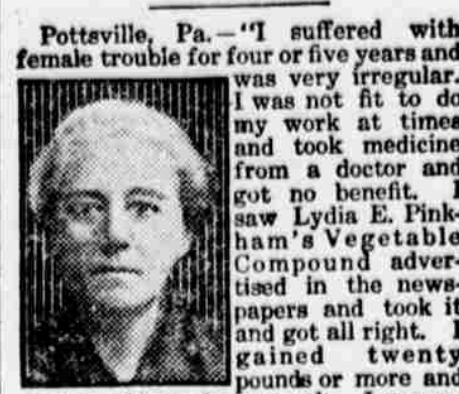
"Pa, what does the expression 'to get up in smoke' mean?"

"It refers to an aviator making an ascent in Pittsburgh, my son."

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