

THE STOR-Y OF A-BRA·HAM LINC·OLN

Part 2 — WORK AND SOR·ROW

In the au·tumn, just af·ter **A**·bra·ham Lin·coln wa^S eight year^S **o**ld, hi^S par·ents left their Ken·tuck·y home and moved to Spen·cer cou·nty, in In·di·an·a.

It wa^S not yet a year since In·di·an·a had **b**e·come a state. Land could **b**e bought ver·y cheap, and Mr. Lin·coln thought that **he** could **ma**ke a good liv·ing there for hi^S fa·mj·ly. **H**e had heard al·so that game wa^S plen·ti·ful in the In·di·an·a woods.

It wa^S not more than sev·en·ty or eighty mile^S from the **o**ld home to the new. But it **se**emed ver·y far, in·deed, and it wa^S a good man·y day^S **b**e·fore the tra·ve·ler^S **re**ached their jour·ney's end. **O**·ver a part of the way there wa^S **no** road, and the mo·ve^S had to cut a path for them·selve^S through the thick woods.

The boy, **A**·bra·ham, wa^S tall and ver·y strong for hi^S **a**ge. **H**e al·ready knew how to han·dle an ax, and few men could shoot with a ri·fle bet·ter than **he**. **H**e wa^S hi^S fa·ther's hel·per in all kind^S of work.

It wa^S in No·vem·ber when the fa·mj·ly came to the place which wa^S to **b**e their future home. Win·ter wa^S near at hand. There wa^S **no** house, nor shel·ter of any kind. What would **b**e·come of the pa·tient, tired mo·ther, and the gen·tle lit·tle sis·ter, who had borne them·selve^S **so** brave·ly dur·ing the long, hard jour·ney?

No soo·ner had the hor·se^S been loosed from the wa·gon than

A·bra·ham and hi^s fa·ther were at work with their axe^s. In a short time they had built what they called a "camp."

This camp wa^s but a rude shed, made of pole^s and thatched with leave^s and bran·che^s. It wa^s en·clo^sed on three side^s, so that the chill wind^s or the dri·ving rains from the north and west could not en·ter. The fourth side wa^s left o·pen, and in front of it a fire wa^s built.

This fire wa^s kept burn·ing all the time. It warmed the in·ter·i·or of the camp. A big iron ket·tle wa^s hung o·ver it by mean^s of a chain and pole, and in this ket·tle the fat ba·con, the ve·ni·son, the bean^s, and the corn were boiled for the fa·mi·ly's din·ner and sup·per. In the hot ash·e^s the good mo·ther baked lus·cious "corn dod·gers," and some·time^s, per·haps, a few po·ta·toe^s.

In one end of the camp were the few cook·ing u·ten·sil^s and lit·tle ar·ti·cle^s of fur·ni·ture which even the poor·est house can·not do with·out. The rest of the spa·ce wa^s the fa·mi·ly sit·ting·room and bed·room. The floor wa^s cov·ered with leave^s, and on the^{se} were spread the fur·ry skin^s of deer and bear^s, and o·ther an·i·mal^s.

It wa^s in this camp that the fa·mi·ly spent their first win·ter in In·di·an·a. How ver·y cold and drea·ry that win·ter must have been! Think of the stor·my night^s, of the shriek·ing wind, of the snow and the sleet and the bit·ter frost! It i^s not much won·der if, be·fore the spring months came, the mo·ther's strength be·gan to fail.

But it wa^s a bu^sy win·ter for Thom·as Lin·coln. Ev·er·y day hi^s ax wa^s heard in the wood^s. He wa^s clear·ing the ground, so that in the spring it might be plan·ted with corn and vege·ta·ble^s.

He wa^s hew·ing log^s for hi^s new house; for he had made up hi^s

mind, now, to have some-th-ing bet-ter than a ca-bin.

The woods were full of wild an-i-mals. It was ea-sy for A-bra-ham and his fa-ther to kill plen-ty of game, and thus keep the fa-mi-ly sup-plied with fresh meat.

And A-bra-ham, with chop-ping and hew-ing and hunt-ing and trap-ping, was ver-y busy for a lit-tle boy. He had but lit-tle time to play; and, since he had no play-mates, we can-not know wh-ether he even wanted to play.

With his mo-ther, he read o-ver and o-ver the Bi-ble sto-ries which both of them loved so well. And, dur-ing the cold, stor-my days, when he could not leave the camp, his mo-ther taught him how to write.

In the spring the new house was raised. It was on-ly a hewed log house, with one room below and a loft a-bove. But it was so much bet-ter than the old ca-bin in Ken-tuck-y that it seemed like a pa-lace.

The fa-mi-ly had be-come so tired of liv-ing in the "camp," that they moved in-to the new house be-fore the floor was laid, or any door hung at the door-way.

Then came the plow-ing and the plan-ting and the hoe-ing. E-very-bo-dy was busy from day-light to dark. There were so man-y trees and stumps that there was but lit-tle room for the corn to grow.

The sum-mer pas-sed, and au-tumn came. Then the poor mo-ther's strength gave out. She could no lon-ger go a-bout her house-hold du-ties. She had to de-pend more and more upon the help that her chil-dren could give her.

At length she **be**·came to **fee**·ble to **le**ave her bed. She called her boy to her side. She put her arms a·bout him and said: "**A**·bra·ham, **I** am **go**·ing a·way from **you**, and **you** will ne·ver **see** me a·gain. **I** **know** that **you** will al·ways **be** good and kind to your sis·ter and fa·ther. Try to live as **I** have taught **you**, and to love your he·aven·ly Fa·ther."

On the 5th of Oc·to·ber she **fell** a·sleep, ne·ver to **wake** a·gain.

Un·der a big sy·ca·more **tree**, half a mile from the house, the neigh·bors dug the grave for the mo·ther of **A**·bra·ham Lincoln. And there they bu·ried her in si·lence and great sor·row.

There was **no** mi·ni·ster there to con·duct re·li·gious ser·vi·ces. In all that new coun·try there was **no** church; and **no** ho·ly man could **be** found to **spe**ak words of com·fort and hope to the griev·ing ones a·round the grave.

But the boy, **A**·bra·ham, re·mem·bered a tra·vel·ing prea·cher, whom they had **known** in Ken·tuck·y. The **name** of this prea·cher was **David** El·kin. If **he** would **on**·ly come!

And **so**, af·ter all was **o**·ver, the lad sat down and **wrote** a let·ter to **David** El·kin. **He** was **on**·ly a child nine years **old**, but **he** **be**·lie·ved that the good man would re·mem·ber his poor mo·ther, and come.

It was **no** **ea**·sy task to **wri**te a let·ter. **Pa**·per and ink were not th·ings of com·mon **u**se, as they **are** with us. A pen had to **be** **made** from the quill of a gose.

But at last the let·ter was fin·ished and sent a·way. How it was **car**·ried **I** do not **know**; for the mails were few and far **be**·tween in those days, and **po**·stage was ver·y **high**. It is more than **like**·ly

that some fri·end, wh^o wa^s go·ing in·t^o Ken·tuck·y, un·der·took to have it fi·nal·ly han·ded to the good prea·cher.

Months pas·sed. The leave^s were a·gain on the tree^s. The wild flow·er^s were blos·som·ing in the wood^s. At last the prea·cher came.

He had rid·den a hun·dred mile^s on horse·back; **he** had for·ded ri·ver^s, and tra·veled through path·less wood^s; **he** had dared the dan·ger^s of the wild for·est: all in an·swer to the lad's be·seech·ing let·ter.

He had **no** hope of re·ward, **save** that which i^s giv·en to ev·er·y man wh^o do^{e^s} hi^s du·ty. **He** did not **know** that there would come a time when the grea·test prea·cher^s in the world would en·vy him hi^s sad task.

And now the friend^s and neigh·bors gath·ered a·gain un·der the great sy·ca·more tree. The fun·er·al ser·mon wa^s prea·ched. Hymns were sung. A prayer wa^s of·fered. Word^s of com·fort and sym·pa·thy were spo·ken.

From that time for·ward the mind of **A·bra·ham** Lin·coln wa^s filled with a high and no·ble pur·pose. In hi^s ear·li·est child·hood hi^s mo·ther had taught him to love truth and just·ice, to **be** hon·est and up·right a·mong men, and to re·ver·en·ce God. The^{se} les·son^s **he** ne·ver for·got.

Long af·ter·ward, when the world had come to **know** him a^s a ver·y **great** man, **he** said: "All that **I** am, or hope to **be**, **I** owe to my an·gel mo·ther."