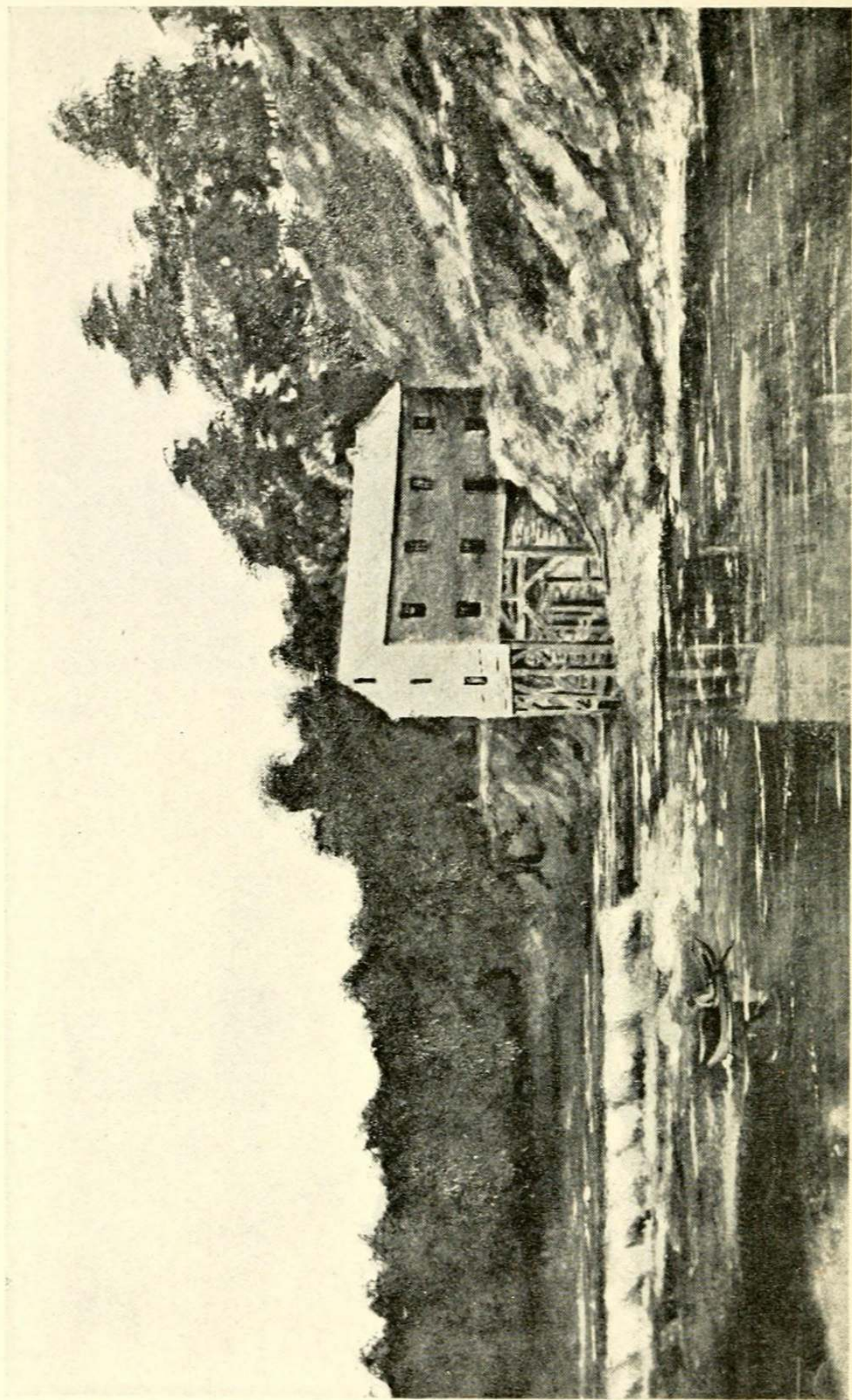




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LINCOLN'S FIRST LOVE



THE OLD MILL AT NEW SALEM

LINCOLN'S FIRST LOVE

A True Story

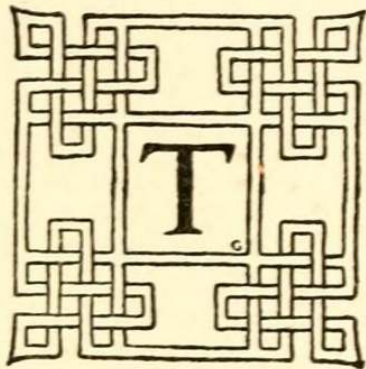
BY
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Lincoln's First Love



WO miles south of Petersburg, in the state of Illinois, are the hills of New Salem, picturesque and beautiful; yet with all their picturesqueness and beauty, they would probably never have gained more than local fame had not Abraham Lincoln there spent his early life and met his first love.

Just west of the Sangamon River is the hill on which the little town of New Salem was built. It is very steep and rugged until you reach the summit, where it is comparatively level. The view from this hill is one of the most beautiful in Illinois. At its foot stands the old mill, long since still, as are the

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hands that there changed the golden grain into snowy flakes of flour. The noisy dam rushes and roars, disturbing the quiet and peace of the forsaken place. Not a vestige of the little town of New Salem remains. Two forest trees spread their protecting arms over the sod where once stood Abraham Lincoln's little store. Upon one of these trees some skillful hand has carved his firm, kind features.

Lift up your heads, O stately trees ;

Flow on, O shining river !

Your fame shall live with Lincoln's name,
In freedom's breast forever.

Early in the thirties, when Indians roamed the prairies of Illinois, and herds of deer lapped the sparkling water of the rivers, a young man who was destined to become one of the greatest, if not the greatest man this country

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has produced, came to New Salem to dwell among the hills. He was a most unattractive lad, with trousers of jean, and homespun jacket, not well fitted to his lean, lank form. One of the first persons to make friends with Lincoln was Mintor Graham, the village schoolmaster. This man was fond of books and learning, and he was not long in interesting Abe, who was most grateful for the instruction Mr. Graham freely and gladly gave him. Lincoln was very fond of arithmetic, and to his teacher's delight, mastered the tables and learned to do sums as well as the brightest scholar in his school. Grammar was the next study taken up by the young student, and he was seldom seen without a book in his hand. Abe, as he was familiarly called, opened a store of general merchandise and groceries. His

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genial manner and his honesty won for him many friends, and he was quite successful in his business.

* * * * *

Each morning, with neatly braided hair, a frock of homespun reaching to her ankles, a plain waist of the same brown material buttoned down the back, a little blue sunbonnet tied under her chin, Ann Rutledge tripped away to school. She was a general favorite, and lucky was the lad who discovered the first wild rose on the hillside to pin on the border of her little bonnet.

Ann was full of sentiment; in the wild flowers that grew on the hillside, in the song of the thrush, in the gold of the sunset, she read lessons that afforded her delights of which her companions knew nothing.

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Mintor Graham was a tall, sinewy man, with sandy hair, and small, sharp features. He was rather stern; any scholar who was guilty of idleness or levity was recalled to a sense of duty by a single glance of the master's eye.

The schoolhouse was a primitive structure of logs and mud plaster, with a huge chimney and a great fireplace. Often when the hickory logs burned bright, fantastic shadows of the master were reflected on the walls, causing the smaller boys to nudge each other in great merriment. Each window contained but four small panes of glass, the seats were slabs supported by four wooden pegs, the only desk was the teacher's one, a rudely constructed affair, at which the pupils took turns at writing. Abe Lincoln was greatly interested

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in Mr. Graham's school—and in one scholar in particular, Ann Rutledge. She had not passed his store twice a day, to and from school, unnoticed. Often he would catch himself glancing at the clock, wondering if it was not time for school to be out, and he would listen for the footsteps of the little maid, who was slowly, but surely, creeping into his heart.

He saw the face of Ann Rutledge in everything that grew. Were not the nuts on the hillside the same brown as her soulful eyes, the cardinal flower the red of her lips, the haw blossoms like her fair brow, and the sunlight on the stream was it not as Ann's bright smile? Little wonder the young man thought of her all day, and dreamed of her by night.

Yet this man, who in after years

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faced unflinchingly the greatest dangers, had not the courage to tell this child, who belonged to nature, just as the violet or anemone, that he loved her.

One day, as Abe sat musing in his store, his thoughts turned to Ann. Oh, if he could only protect her in the years to come from the storms of life, as the great oak protects the little flower that grows so closely by it. His reveries were abruptly disturbed by a lad, who thrust his head in at the door, with: "Say, Abe, thar's a boat a-sink-in' down thar in the river nigh the dam."

Lincoln, taking his hat, locked the store, and went to the scene of trouble. He found the boat about to sink, but with his unusual strength, he managed to get it over the dam; then, by boring a hole, and tipping the boat back, he let

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the water out. On hearing of the excitement, Mr. Graham considered the event of sufficient importance to make him dismiss school.

The pupils were not long in reaching the scene. Ann trembled with fear when she saw Abe in what she considered a most dangerous position.

She waited anxiously until he was safe ashore. The shadows were now gathering, and together the two walked slowly up the hill.

"I thought sure you would be drowned, Abe," said Ann.

"Would you have cared if I had been?" replied he.

"Oh, Abe, I should feel dreadful to see any one drowned."

Mrs. Rutledge was in a state of great excitement when they reached the house.

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"Why, Ann, you're mighty late, 'pears like; where hev you bin, honey?"

"Down to the river, ma, watching Abe let the water out of a flatboat, and it in danger of sinking all the time."

"I hain't got no time to hear tell of flatboats nor nuthin' now, Ann. Dad's goin' to St. Louis to-morrie, and we got a heap to do. Sit down, Abe, I forgot my manners, I'm so stirred up over dad's goin'."

"I'll go back to the store, I guess," said Abe; "you're all so busy. I'll come to-morrow evening, Ann, at five o'clock. Will you borrow Mr. Graham's grammar? then we can study together."

"I'm glad dada's going to St. Louis," she said, "for he will get me a Kirkham's grammar, so we won't have to borrow any more. We can write our

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lessons to-morrow evening. Jim Armstrong climbed a big oak tree, got some ink galls, and made me as much as a pint of ink, I guess. Don't you think that was kind of Jim?"

Abe thought so; in fact, he thought it too kind of Jim.

Mr. Rutledge was up at daybreak next morning, and with "prairie schooner" filled with deer pelts, started at snail's pace for St. Louis.

All day Abe was busy in his store, drawing molasses, measuring calico, or weighing carpet chain, but not for a moment did he forget the hazel eyes of Ann Rutledge. More than once he stopped to listen to the thrush, which seemed to sing her praises; while the robin's sweet song expressed his heart's love so tenderly, he tried to form into words its tremulous notes. At last the hands of

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the little wooden clock on the wall, with its weights hanging down, pointed to the hour of five. Abe stepped to the mirror and looked at his plain, honest face; for the first time in his life, he wished he were a different looking man. He brushed his stubborn locks from his broad forehead, picked up his slouch hat, and sauntered out, leaving store, business, and care behind. Ann met him at her mother's door.

"Come in, Abe, and be careful that you don't fall; the floor is pretty slick, ma's just finished scrubbing it."

The floor was clean and white, having been scrubbed with soft soap and hickory ashes. Ann handed him a gourd of cold spring water from the piggin on the bench.

"Did you get the grammar, Ann?" asked Abe.

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"Of course I did; I knew you were coming to study."

They were soon in the midst of the intricacies of the verb "to love."

"First person, I love."

"You love who, Ann?" asked he.

"Not Jim Armstrong," said Ann, as she glanced mischievously from her book.

Time passed rapidly, and they were in the midst of their lesson when Mrs. Rutledge called:

"Honey, you must come and help ma now. Set the table for supper."

Reluctantly she pushed back her chair and began her task. On the hearth glowed the bright hickory embers; to the right on the trevet was a pot of aromatic coffee, a Dutch oven to the left, in which two canvasback ducks were simmering in savory gravy

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and rich dressing. Swinging on the crane over the blazing logs was a kettle of jowl and hominy. On a board in front of the fire was a row of browning johnnycakes. Ann spread the homespun cloth, white as snow, and put in its place each blue plate, cup, saucer, and pewter spoon. When she opened the cupboard she was surprised to find a large gourd of wild honey.

“Why, ma, where did you get this honey?”

“Uncle Lige Watkins robbed a bee tree this mornin’, and Betsey brung that over,” her mother answered. “Put it on fer supper. I ’low Abe would like some with his johnnycake.”

“Supper’s ready now, is n’t it, ma?” asked Ann.

“Yes, but Dave hain’t come yit. I wonder what diviltry he’s up to.”

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"He's coming up the hill now," said Ann; "and what is that he has? Why ma, it's a wild turkey!"

"Bless my heart, if it ain't!"

As he entered, Dave threw the bird down at the door, saying: "Ma, there's a present fer ye. Bob Clary went out huntin' and shot six; he sent this one to you. Guess he had an eye to Ann."

"Ah, hurry up thar, Dave! Quit your foolin' and git ready for supper," said his mother.

He washed his hands in a basin that stood on a bench just outside the door, and came in bringing a few small sticks, which he threw on the fire.

"Hullo, Abe! I spose you're so taken up with that book you can't speak to a body; you and Ann will be such scholars, common folks will be afeared to speak to ye."

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All did ample justice to the supper, after which the young students returned to their book, and studied until nine o'clock, when Abe arose to go.

"I've stayed too late," said he. "I hope I haven't kept you up, Mrs. Rutledge," as he noticed she was dozing over her knitting in the chimney corner.

"Oh, no! I hain't sleepy," she replied, with a yawn. "I'se just thinkin' uv him, wonderin' if he's getting along with them thar hides all right."

"Don't worry," said Abe; "Mr. Rutledge can take care of himself. Good night, all," and he lazily strolled down to his lonely quarters. Not a sound could he hear but the beating of his own heart, and the calling of a whip-poor-will to his mate from the willows which fringed the river banks.

Nearly four weeks had passed, and

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Mr. Rutledge had not returned. Ann and her mother were anxious, since they knew the dangers to which a lone traveler was subject on that perilous route. The barking of wolves was a familiar sound, and these ferocious animals had been known to pursue travelers. And while Dave related thrilling stories of wild cats and panthers, he generally ended by laughing at his mother and sister for feeling anxious.

“Now, you bet dad’s all right; there hain’t nuthin’ goin’ to hurt him.”

“Ma, the Clarys have invited Dave and me over to-morrow night,” said Ann; “they are going to have a party. The Potters, Armstrongs, and Greens will all be there. May I go?”

“Wal, I hain’t no objections,” said her mother, “if you git that spinnin’ done.

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I 'lowed you 'd git right smart done afore a-Saturday night."

"Well, so I will, ma. You know I can work fast when I once get at it."

The next morning Ann was at her wheel bright and early. She never looked prettier; her face wore a happy smile, her slender form bending gracefully as she stepped forward and backward, while from the distaff in her hand she spun yards and yards of flax. The low hum of the wheel made a most harmonious accompaniment to the serious, happy thoughts woven into the threads she was spinning. She was thinking of Abe, wondering if he cared for her very much, wondering if he was going to Springfield, not to return, as the neighbors said. "I shall ask him," she thought to herself, "and shall not let him know that I care, if he does

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say he is going. Abe isn't as good-looking as Jim Armstrong or Bob Clary, either. I like him, though, a great deal better than any of the other boys. But no one shall ever, ever know it. I should n't care for the new white dress, with blue ribbons, ma promised me; no, I should n't care for anything, if he went away!" Just then her mother came in, and Ann began to sing merrily.

"I'm working fast; don't you think I am, ma?"

"Yes, honey; you've done a heap to-day."

Four weeks from the day Mr. Rutledge left home, just as the sun was sinking, and the tinkle of old Brindle's bell came closer and closer, as she slowly wended her way up the hill, Mrs. Rutledge stepped to the door

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with the milk-pail in her hand. In the dim distance she saw a team slowly advancing.

"Come here, Dave!" said she. "Hain't that your dad? Them horses look powerful like Bob and Sam."

"Wal, if it hain't," said Dave, and grabbing his hat he hurried out to meet his father. It was not long before they drove up the hill, and no one ever received a heartier welcome than did Mr. Rutledge on this home-coming. He related many wonderful things that he had seen in the great town of St. Louis.

"Why, ma, there wus hundreds of people in the streets."

"Law, dad, you might have got run over and killed," said his wife.

"I went to a circus, and seen a elephant with a snout longer than my arm. I give it some gingerbread, and be

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durned if the fool thing did n't know me next day when they had it on the street! Now, here's your book, Ann; this here eddication costs a heap o' money. I paid a whole dollar fer that, and you must learn every word in it."

Several months elapsed; it was the day before Christmas; the Rutledge family, except Ann, were up very early, as there was much to be done. Mrs. Rutledge's sister, Aunt Nancy Black, with her son and daughter, was coming to spend a week with them. Company was a rare thing, and they had looked forward to this visit with much pleasure. On waking, Ann looked out to see the condition of the weather; nothing was ever more peaceful than the scene before her. The Sangamon Valley and its surrounding hills, all white with a mantle of new-

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fallen snow, sparkled and gleamed in the first rays of the rising sun. The little houses on the hillside were as so many white altars, the smoke rising from the chimneys like incense.

Ann dressed in a hurry, for she knew it was late, and that her mother had been up a long time. "Dear, unselfish ma," she said to herself; "how lazy I am to lie in bed and let her get breakfast alone, expecting company, too, this very day. Ma will be all worn out by the time Aunt Nancy comes."

"Well, Ann," said her father, "did you sleep good? Your ma hain't let me and Dave speak, hardly, feared we'd wake you."

Soon Mr. Rutledge and Dave went out to feed and milk the cows, and Mrs. Rutledge and Ann busied themselves about the house, planning for their visit-

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ors. About four o'clock in the afternoon a bob-sled, drawn by two gray horses, came briskly up the road.

"They are coming," said Ann.

By the time her mother reached the door they had arrived.

"Well, Nancy, I'm powerful glad to see you," said Mrs. Rutledge; "and is this here Johnny? Well, well, and Becky, honey; I would n't ha' know'd you. This is my Ann." Mrs. Black gave her a hearty kiss on the lips. Ann had not seen her cousins since they were quite small. Mr. Rutledge and Dave came in soon and greetings were exchanged. As the Blacks lived in Canton, they were looked on as city folks. Becky was very pretty, fair, with blue eyes and light hair.

On Christmas day, Dave and Johnny hitched up the bob-sled, gathered up

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the young folks of the neighborhood, about sixteen in all, and started off for a jolly time. They were packed in snugly. Abe sat by Ann and her fair cousin. Becky had never looked so pretty to Ann as she did then. When the sun shone through her light curls on her white face, Ann thought she was really beautiful, and wondered if Abe thought so, too.

Mrs. Rutledge and Mrs. Black were left alone to enjoy a talk over old times, as they sat by the bright, cheerful fire.

“Say, Nancy, what ever becum of them Joneses that used to live down in the holler near us?”

“Law, Becky, they hain't been thar this long time; Manthy and Rachel and Bob are all dead, and the house is well-nigh gone to pieces; it is nuthin' like

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it used to be, 'ceptin' the little brook and the ellum trees. I could name our old friends that's livin' in shorter time than 't would take me to tell you of all them as is gone, Becky. There hain't nuthin' sure in this world, and I don't care much fer nuthin' since *he's* gone," she said, wiping away a tear with the corner of her apron. "If 't wern't fer Becky and Johnny I'd just as soon fold my hands in rest as not."

"Yes, Nancy; but it is fer Johnny and Becky that you ought to cheer up. God knows what is best fer us."

"But you've got your man, Becky, so you've the whole world."

"Well, I must say, Rutledge is powerful good to me. I believe I hear the children a-comin'. Law, Nancy! Come and see 'em! We can kinder live our lives over through them. I'm glad

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they 're havin' such a good time; they seem awful happy."

The Christmas week was one round of pleasure, and the Blacks were loth to go when it was over. Mrs. Rutledge was very sad when her sister left, as she thought it would probably be a long time before they would meet again.

* * * * *

Time went on. Lincoln made rapid progress in his studies. Mr. J. T. Stuart, of Springfield, had given him free use of his law books, and Abe would often walk there, a distance of some twenty miles, after one. Many times, removing his shoes to save wear, he would tie them together by the leather strings and carry them over his arm.

Doctor Allen, who was the only physician for miles around, was looked upon as a sage:

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“And still the wonder grew
That one small head could carry all he
knew.”

This reputation the doctor greatly enjoyed.

It was he who organized the first Sunday school in New Salem. The young folks looked forward to the Sunday meetings with much pleasure.

Ann had charge of a class in Sunday school over which she presided with grace and dignity. Quaint indeed did she appear in the dunstable her mother and grandmother had worn. It was customary in those days for these bonnets to pass from one generation to another.

In clear tones her contralto voice filled the little church, as she led in the singing, and moved more than one young man to devotion.

One morning Mrs. Rutledge was

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churning, and she and Ann were so busily talking they did not hear a rap at the door. Susan Yardly walked in.

“You’ll excuse me, but I knocked several times, and you did n’t hear me, so I just walked right in.”

“Glad to see you,” said Ann; “let me take your bonnet.”

“No,” said Susan; “I must get back home. I got to help ma with the ironing. I’ve come to see if you would n’t like to go with us all a-blackberryin’ to-morrow.”

“Who all?” said Ann.

“Why, the Potters, Clarys, Armstrongs, and Watkins; then there’s some folks a-visitin’ the Clarys, a young fellow and his sister, from way up north of here. They say he’s mighty good-lookin’. I ain’t seen neither of ’em yet.”

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"Looks don't count for anything," said Ann.

"Well, will you go?" said Sue.

"Yes, and I thank you for your trouble."

"Trouble! Why, blackberryin' or nuthin' would be no fun without you. The boys always say, first thing, 'Is Ann Rutledge goin'?' The berries are largest and thickest in Uncle Lige Potter's meadow, and that's such a pretty place. You know the old grapevine swing there, near the spring, and then there's lots of pretty flowers that we don't have around here. Them lady's slippers grow thick down there. Well, I must go home. We'll meet you at the mill. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Sue. I'll be there at eight o'clock."

The next morning Ann was off on

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time, with a little splint basket her mother had woven, swinging on her arm. She heard the merry voices of her companions as she neared the old mill, and soon joined them.

“Ann, this is Harry Blunt and his sister, Tillie,” said Bob Clary, who felt a secret satisfaction in having so well performed the ceremony of introduction, which he had many times rehearsed in his mind. He thought Ann must surely admire his self-possession and dignity.

The picnickers did not mind the dust and hot sun, nor the long walk, for when they reached the meadow they found the bushes heavily laden with rich, luscious fruit, and they soon filled their baskets. After resting awhile under the shade of the old trees, “Let’s have a game of fox and goose,” said Susan. This was

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no sooner proposed than the ring was formed, and the young folks began merrily chasing each other around the trees. Harry Blunt asked Ann if she would n't like a swing in the grapevine.

"Grapevines don't grow as big here," he said, "as on our place. Why, I've seen 'em bigger round than my arm."

Bob Clary and Dorothy Armstrong were strolling along, when suddenly, at the cry of "Snake! snake!" the girls began to scream and the boys to scamper for sticks, stones, and other weapons. Jim Armstrong became the hero of the day, by his bravery and skill in killing the rattlesnake. He slung it on a pole and carried it quite a distance, much to the dismay of the girls.

"It's pretty dusty. I guess I'll hang it on this here rail fence and bring rain."

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"Oh, what a tall fence," said Tillie Blunt.

"Yes, and Abe Lincoln split every rail in it," said Rile Potter; "he's so big and strong he can split a heap in a day."

"They ought to call him the *rail splitter*," said Tillie Blunt.

* * * * *

One day in May, nearly a year later, as Ann sat by the door stemming strawberries, a hand was laid on hers, and looking up she saw a tall figure standing by her.

"Why, Abe, how you frightened me! I thought you were in Springfield. They told me that you had gone there to live; that you were not coming back here. I thought I should never see you fishing at the old mill again; and somehow, Abe, it made me — made me — well,

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feel kind of sorry, you know, for you and I have always had such good times together.”

“Don't you think, Ann, that I will ever go to Springfield, or anywhere else to stay, as long as you are among the dear old hills of Salem. For, darling, do you not know that I love you? And Ann, dear, won't you be my wife? Don't you love me?”

She stood with her head leaning against the door jamb, looking — looking — she knew not where. But to her it seemed straight into heaven. Abe put his arm about her, and as she answered, “Yes, I love you, and always shall,” he kissed her lips, her brown hair, and her little brown hands, stained with strawberries. The two stood silent for some moments. The hills were pink

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with crab-apple blossoms, and their perfume filled all the air.

“What must Heaven be, Ann, when *this* world is so beautiful? I know that the angels are like you, and since I have your love I will be a better and happier man.”

Mrs. Rutledge, who had been in the garden gathering lettuce and radishes, was surprised to see Abe, and knew from his and Ann's manner that something unusual had occurred, but said nothing about it.

“Well, so it hain't so that you've gone to Springfield to live, then, Abe?”

“No, not gone, but going. I have a chance to study law there, so I think I'll try it. I shall miss the click of the old mill, the rippling of the Sangamon, the song of the thrush, but most of all my dear friends; and though I shall

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be in Springfield, my heart will be in Salem."

"Here comes dad and Dave, and supper ain't nigh ready. Have you got them berries stemmed?"

"Just about, ma," replied Ann.

"I will help you," said Abe.

"Set the table fer five, Ann, fer Abe's got to stay; he ain't et here this long time."

"Yes," said Mr. Rutledge, who had just come in, "and I'll beat him at a game of checkers."

An invitation, as it were, which could not be declined. Abe won the first game; and thereafter, Mr. Rutledge, having won the next two games, thought it time to quit. The evening was perfect. Abe and Ann walked by the light of the pale moon down by the river. He picked up from the sand a flat stone, about eight

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inches square, and laid it aside, saying, "To-morrow I 'll carve upon this stone the date of our betrothal."

A few days later Lincoln bade farewell to the woman to whom he had plighted his troth, and to the scenes where were spent his happiest days; and returned to his studies.

Ann found her mother and father alone next morning.

"Did Abe get off, Ann?"

"Yes, dada; and some day I am going with him, for yesterday he told me he loved me better than all the world, and asked me to be his wife. There, ma, don't cry, I will come often to see you and dada."

"Oh, Ann! your dad and me loves you so. Abe's a good fellow, and I know he'll be kind to you. I hain't no objec-

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tions to him, but it's hard to give *you* up. Thar won't be no more singin' about the house; and all day, while dad and Dave are in the field, I will be alone."

Ann glanced over at her father just as he brushed a tear away with his sleeve. She went to him, put her arms around his neck, and said: "Dada, you and ma will come to see us; I will have one room just for you, and we shall have your visits to look forward to."

"Yes, Ann. I must not act this here way; I know now how your ma's folks felt when I took her. Abe, I know, is a mighty honest feller, and I've knowed fer a long time he loved you. All I can say is, he is a lucky man."

After Lincoln left Salem, Ann was never the same. She missed him, and longed to hear his footstep on the old walk leading to the house.

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She would often stand on the brow of the hill, from where she could see the cattle feeding in the green, shady pastures, and hear the birds sing. There was little beauty in the scene, or sweetness in the robin's song.

And she would sing over and over again the old song —

“Ye banks and braes o’ bonnie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae weary, fu’ o’ care?”

Lincoln's business kept him closely confined; but a few days before Ann's twentieth birthday she received a letter containing the happy news of her lover's coming. He would be with her on the fifteenth day of July, her birthday. The hot summer days seemed to exhaust Ann, and she was unable to attend

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to the duties her mother had always required of her, but she brightened up a little at the thought of Abe's coming.

The long-expected day arrived. But the tender heart of Lincoln sank within him when he noted Ann's languid air and sad eyes. She hoped that he would n't notice that she was ill, but he knew it all too well.

"Tell me, dear," he said, as they sat on an old log by the river, "do you regret the vow you made me?"

"Oh, Abe! how can you speak so? I should die if it were not for your love for me; it is all I live for. I am thinking of you all day, and every night I dream of you. But, Abe, sometimes I dream that in—in that great place where you now live, you have forgotten poor me and don't care to come to see me any

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more. Then when I awake, I feel so heavy-hearted."

"Look into my eyes, dearest, and let me tell you that as God is my judge, my love is all yours. My only thought is of the happy time when I can take you with me, transplant my little wild rose of Salem to the city, where she will still be the fairest of the fair."

"Now, dear Abe, I shall try never to feel sad again, and not let that wretched feeling, that soon we are to part forever, come near me again."

"Do you remember the stone, Ann, I told you I would engrave? Well, I carved upon it—'Ann Rutledge and Abraham Lincoln were betrothed May 5th, 1835.' I buried it at the corner of the old store. There it shall stay until our heads are silver-white, and we to-

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gether will then unearth it, and you will say to me, 'Abe, you have kept your vow.'

"I must go back to Springfield tonight, Ann, but before I leave you, you must tell me when I may come for you. Make it soon, dear. Shall it be next month, in August?"

"Oh, not so soon as that, Abe; think how lonely poor ma and dada would be."

"If you should wait a year they would be just as loth to part with you," he said. "You can come to see them often, Ann."

"Well, when the maple leaves are crimson, and the sunlight's hazy, too; when the cardinal flower's in blossom, and the goldenrod hangs in rich yellow plumes, I will go with you to our new home; but I shall never feel strange or

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lonely, because I shall have you. I shall be your wife."

"That means that I may come for you in October. Uncle Peter Cartwright will marry us, and all will be joy and happiness. Good night, dear girl. When I come again, let me find your eyes bright and your heart light."

He left Ann at her door, and mounting his horse, rode away. She listened to the sound of the horse's hoofs until it died away in the distance, then went to her little bedroom and knelt in prayer, thanking God for the many blessings she had received. She tucked the little patch-work quilt about her aching form, and sank down in her bed, never to leave it.

For two long weeks she suffered.

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Doctor Allen was summoned, but his bitter doses were of no avail. Nothing could assuage the high fever. She called for Abe repeatedly, and they thought best to send for him. Dave, riding one horse and leading another, hurried off to Springfield.

Just at ten o'clock the next morning Abe and Dave entered Salem; and Abe, in his anxiety, was not long in reaching Ann's bedside.

"Oh, Abe, I am so glad you have come, dear!" said Ann. "I thought I must die without seeing you. I wanted so to tell you not to grieve for me, and to comfort ma and dada when I am gone."

"Dear, you are not going to leave me! Why, I could not live without you!"

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“God knows better than we,” she said. “Sing to me, dear.”

He knelt by her bed, and with trembling voice sang her favorite hymn,

“God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform.”

Lincoln sat by her all day, holding her feverish hand. He would not leave her a moment, nor did he eat anything.

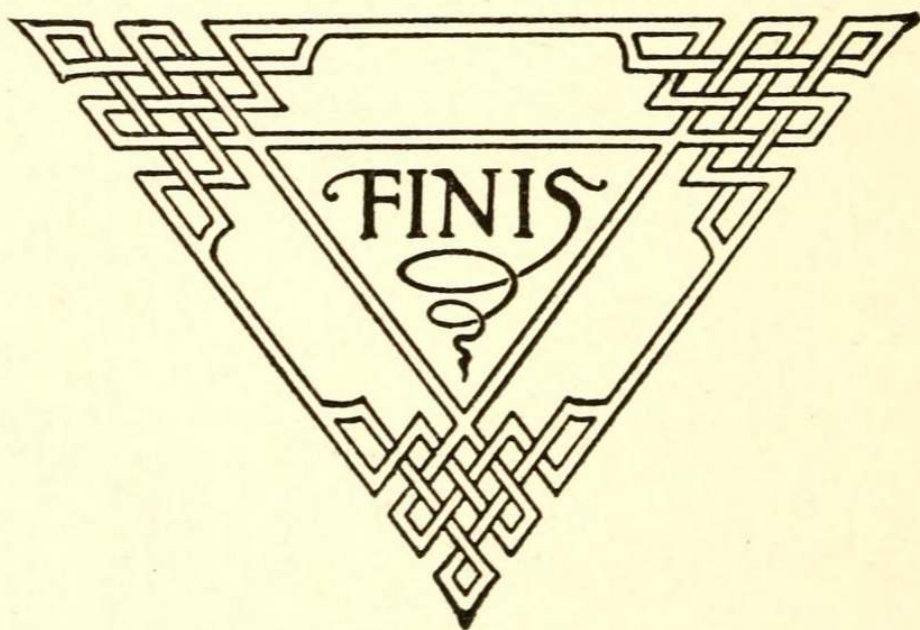
Just at twilight, when the young moon hung low and bright o'er the western hills, and all nature seemed hushed by the wonderful spell; when father, mother, brother, and lover were at her side, Ann Rutledge, with a long, sad look into the eyes of Abraham Lincoln, passed into the spiritual world.

She was buried beneath an old elm-tree in Concord churchyard, but the

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body was afterwards removed to the new cemetery at Petersburg. After the burial, Lincoln threw himself upon the grave, saying these words:

“Here lies the body of Ann Rutledge, and the heart of Abe Lincoln.”





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