

## WILLIAM LINCOLN.

BY CHARLES A. CHASE.

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It has been the good fortune of this Society, through the four-score years of its existence, that at every period in its history there has been at least one man who stood forward to render such service as should best promote its interests. Our founder gave his valuable collection of books and newspapers as a nucleus for the library, and bestowed upon us the first library-building as a depository for its treasures and such accretions as it should receive in following years; finally crowning his frequent benefactions with rich bequests for its maintenance and perpetuation. In later years, the work has been well kept up; now by those who were diligent and unwearying in gleaning from every field the choicest grains, to be garnered in the magazine; now by those whose intelligent munificence has builded a newer and a larger storehouse, or has furnished the means to employ skilful reapers, or to increase the gathered harvest. Prominent among those to whom the Society must ever be indebted, stands the name of William Lincoln, who gave it his unintermitted attention during his all-too-brief a lifetime.

Mr. Lincoln was the brother, and by twenty years the junior, of the Hon. Levi Lincoln, long a Councillor of the Society. Born at Worcester, on September 26, 1802, he was the seventh and youngest child of that Levi Lincoln who, coming to Worcester in December, 1775, was at once appointed Clerk of the courts which had then just been re-opened, was for four years Judge of Probate, was

a member of the Legislature and State Senator, a Representative in Congress, Attorney-General of the United States under President Jefferson, and Lieutenant-Governor of the Commonwealth in 1807 and 1808. On the death of Governor Sullivan, in 1808, he acted as Governor for the remainder of the term. In 1811, he was appointed a Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, by President Madison, who accompanied the notice of his appointment with a letter of the most flattering nature. A growing weakness of vision compelled him to decline the high honor, and indeed, to give up all active professional duties. A few years of rest, however, brought back his eyesight in some measure, and he was able to give his personal attention to fitting the subject of this sketch for admission to advanced standing at college. The mother of William Lincoln was Martha Waldo, daughter of Daniel Waldo, a Boston merchant of high character, who, after a temporary sojourn in Lancaster, removed to Worcester in 1782.

William Lincoln joined the junior class at Harvard College in 1820, graduating in 1822. He at once began the study of law with his elder brother, Levi Lincoln, Jr., and the latter's partner, John Davis, and was admitted to the Worcester bar in 1825. He joined the American Antiquarian Society in the same year, and served it as Librarian, as Corresponding Secretary, and Secretary for Domestic Correspondence, and as a member of the Committee of Publication.

On the shelves of this Society is a pamphlet giving an oration by "Master William Lincoln," delivered July 4, 1816, "in commemoration of American Independence, before an assembly of youth." Master Lincoln was a mere youth at that time, for he was but fourteen years and one month of age. This is a most remarkable pamphlet, exhibiting a considerable acquaintance with history, and an exceptional maturity of intellect. Eight years later, while a

student at law, he was called to deliver the address at the municipal celebration of the same anniversary. The custom of holding such a celebration was followed, almost annually, in Worcester for some sixty years beginning with 1791. In the same year in which he joined this Society, 1825, he established, with Mr. Christopher C. Baldwin, the *Worcester Magazine and Historical Journal*. This was intended to contain a particular history of each town in the County. Historical notices of eight towns and a general view of the County were furnished by various writers, but the publication was suspended after seventeen months, for want of support by the community.<sup>1</sup> The Worcester County Athenæum was incorporated March 12, 1830, on the plan and with the same objects as those of the Athenæum at Boston. Over 3,000 volumes were collected, which were stored in a room of Antiquarian Hall, and finally became merged in the library of this Society. Mr. Lincoln was Secretary of the organization. Mr. Lincoln delivered the annual address before the Worcester Agricultural Society at their fair in the autumn of 1829. On the death of Isaac Goodwin in 1832, Mr. Lincoln was chosen in his stead as Secretary of the Worcester County Institution for Savings, an office which he faithfully filled for eleven years.

It was a pleasant custom for some twenty years in Worcester, inaugurated by the Rev. Dr. Aaron Bancroft, for the children of the public schools, on a certain day in April, to repair to some church in the village and listen to an address, suited to their capacity and their needs, delivered by some gentleman of scholarly ability. Such an

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<sup>1</sup> The Manuscript Diary of Librarian Baldwin has the following entry:—  
“Feb. 10, 1830. . . . . In the evening settled with William Lincoln, Esq.: adjusting the concerns of our partnership which was formed in 1825 in the editor and proprietorship of the *Worcester Magazine and Historical Journal*. We lose our labor and much money besides.”

Disgusted with the lack of appreciation of the work, the writer adds:—“I believe in the doctrine of total depravity.”

address was given by Mr. Lincoln, in the spring of 1836. In 1838, he was appointed a trustee of the State Lunatic Hospital at Worcester, succeeding his friend Edward D. Bangs, Esq. He was a member of the Massachusetts Historical Society. He represented his native town in the Legislature from 1835 to 1840 inclusive, and was a prominent member thereof.

The history and services of the *Massachusetts Spy*, founded by Isaiah Thomas, and still published in Worcester, are familiar to the members of this Society. Mr. Lincoln gave his services for several years to another weekly newspaper in Worcester, which was always conducted with marked ability. The first number of the *National Aegis*, established in support of the views and policy of President Jefferson, appeared on December 2, 1801. It was originated by Francis Blake, a most gifted gentleman, and was for a long time remarkable for the large amount of original matter which it published from the pens of its editors and many of the ablest writers of the county. Its editors from 1801 to 1846 were: Francis Blake, Edward Bangs, Levi Lincoln, *Samuel Brazier*, *William C. White*, Enoch Lincoln, Edward D. Bangs, Pliny Merrick, William Lincoln, Christopher C. Baldwin, *William N. Green*, Samuel F. Haven and Alexander H. Bullock. Of these thirteen gentlemen all were members of this Society save three (whose names are printed in italics). William Lincoln and Messrs. Haven and Bullock all filled the editorial chair for two terms of service. During Mr. Lincoln's second term, from January, 1838, until the latter part of 1840, being a member of the State Legislature, he gave a weekly review of its proceedings in an intelligible and interesting form. Each number of the *Aegis* also contained a column of "historical collections," specially compiled for the paper. The literary and poetical selections were of a high order. The editorial articles were able and dignified, often keen but never malignant nor abusive.

The great work of Mr. Lincoln's life was the history of his native town of Worcester, which appeared from the press as an octavo volume of three hundred and eighty-four pages, early in the year 1837. It was dedicated to his beloved pastor, the Rev. Aaron Bancroft, D.D. To accomplish his object, said the preface, "the files and records of the colonial and provincial governments, of the original proprietors of the town and its parishes, churches and societies, of the county courts and registries, and the series of newspapers from the commencement, have been examined; private journals and papers, the recollections of the aged inhabitants, the treasures of the garrets, and the knowledge of the race in active life, have been collected, with some labor." So thorough and faithful was the labor that very little was left for other gleaners in the same field; and while some historical students have found considerable matter that is of interest on special lines, such general histories of the town and city as have since been hastily written, have adopted or adapted Mr. Lincoln's work for the period which it covers.

A Resolve of the State Legislature, passed March 10, 1837, authorized the Governor to procure the publication "of the Journals of each Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, with such papers connected therewith as illustrate the patriotic exertions of the people of the State in the Revolutionary contest." Mr. Lincoln was appointed by Governor Everett to carry this resolve into effect, and at once devoted himself to the congenial task. To perfect the work, he sent circulars through the Commonwealth, asking for suitable materials, and especially for copies of the Instructions to the Representatives in the General Court in 1774, and to the Delegates in each Provincial Congress; names of the Delegates in the Provincial Congress, and notices of the life and character of each; copies of notes and proceedings relating to public measures previous to the War of the Revolution, and during that contest;

names of the several Committees of Correspondence and of Safety, or Inspection, in the town or county; copies of the votes of the town relating to the Declaration of Independence, under the Resolve of the General Court, May 10, 1776; and especially for the original records of the conventions held by the Committees of Correspondence. The circular stated that the copies or original papers which might be furnished would be finally deposited in the library of the American Antiquarian Society, unless their return was desired by the senders. A considerable mass of the material received in response to the circular, is now stored in our library. The published volume, of 738 pages, appeared in 1838, with the title: "The Journals of each Provincial Congress of Massachusetts in 1774 and 1775, and of the Committee of Safety. With an Appendix containing the Proceedings of the County Conventions—Narratives of the Events of the 19th of April, 1775—Papers relating to Ticonderoga and Crown Point; and other documents illustrative of the early history of the American Revolution." It is safe to say that much of the matter thus collected would have been destroyed ere now, but for the wisdom of the Legislature in its original action, and the good judgment of Governor Everett in his appointment of the agent to carry it into effect. And it is very probable that the idea of inaugurating the work originated in the mind of Mr. Lincoln himself.

It has been shown that Mr. Lincoln was connected with many societies and institutions. It is the testimony of his contemporaries that in all these he wielded a laboring oar. He was interested in their objects, and his active temperament made him useful and conspicuous in furtherance of the end to be accomplished. As a gentleman farmer, the Agricultural Society appealed to his sympathy, and his pen and his presence added much to the attractiveness of the annual exhibitions. For several years, he was chairman of the judges of swine, and his reports were crisp and

luscious as the choicest bits which those animals furnish for the table.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We give some extracts from these reports, copied from the files of the *National Aegis*:—

Massachusetts is a glorious commonwealth. Her renown heretofore has been wreathed with the valor of her warriors, the wisdom of her statesmen, and the worth of her citizens. If hereafter, in the vicissitudes of human affairs, patriotism shall grow faint, and public and private virtue become impaired, the fame of our own beloved state may rest secure on the greatness of her pigs; and the lustre of her people, if unhappily it grows dim, be rekindled by the solid excellence of the inmates of the pens. . . .

In approaching the pleasant society of females, the loveliness of form and feature, sometimes leads admiration away from the handsomeness of doings to the grace of beings. The incorruptibleness of the court permitted no such seduction. The sow of Messrs. J. G. & D. H. Perry appeared before them with ten "sweet pledges" of maternal affection, frolicking merrily, and taking the young responsibility of feeding plentifully. The venerable matron, mother of this decimal family of suckers, who played over and around her, of the greatest boar of the festival, and of another troop of chubby, white-haired children, was thrice blessed in being worthy of the first premium of five dollars. The second premium was awarded to Mr. Aaron Howe of Worcester, for a sow, beginning life by acquiring the rudiments of good breeding in Holden, and subsequently gaining legal settlement in Worcester. . . .

The excellence of the State Lunatic Hospital is known wherever the name of the best charity of our government has been heard. Its works in pork were exhibited in three splendid editions, an octavo set which had been kept five months; four thick quartos, six months and ten days old, and a series of gigantic volumes of fat. The swine belonging to the institution appeared to be perfectly rational, and of sound sense, and clear memory. Eight of them in one vast brood, gave examples of the results of good treatment, a ton-and-a-half in weight. They resembled independent sub-treasury depositaries. When they stood, they lied; for they could not stand: they could scarcely sit; if they endeavored to place themselves upright in one direction, by an easy transition they revolved into another equally perpendicular. There were no objects bearing comparison with their huge dimensions except the vegetables transplanted from Wethersfield, celebrated in Morse's Geography as the paradise of beauty and of onions, by Dr. Woodward, whose unrivalled skill not only restores to the disordered and enfeebled mind its healthful action and vigor, but gives to the earth he cultivates, new powers of production. While the mouths of our committee have watered at the prospect of the living barrels of food in the pens, the eyes of another have doubtless been moistened in contemplating the odoriferous roots which have graced the hall. It was gratifying to know the patriotic spirit which animated the vast delegation of swine from the hospital. With a promptitude worthy of all approbation, they took measures to reach their appointed place the day before the fair. How the journey was performed is not known: to have rolled over the distance would have been the easiest mode of locomotion for shapes as deep as broad, as broad as long. Loosening the green earth, around, on their arrival, they stretched themselves on its feathery pillow to rest. The chairman, moved with deep anxiety for their repose, viewed them by lantern at midnight,

Mr. Lincoln was never married. His boyhood was spent in the paternal home on a part of the estate once owned by Samuel Hancock, and by John Hancock, which his father purchased in 1781. The son succeeded to the ownership of this estate, and found the highest delight in adorning and beautifying the tract of some half-dozen acres immediately about the mansion-house. Here were planted the choicest flowers and the rarest trees. A beautiful pond, which has since been filled by the road-bed of a railroad, added to the beauty of the scene, and on its surface floated

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when they slept in the silver beams of the moon, like small mountains covered with snow. The music of their dreams floated as softly on the air as the melodies of Mr. Frank Johnson's celebrated band, which has poured its sweet notes of hand on the ears of Queen Victoria. Nothing could alloy such happiness except the sad deprivation of the privilege of becoming members of the society and participating in its agreeable exercises. It has always been difficult to conceive how one pig could look another in the face without laughing from reflected enjoyment. These creatures had no faces to look at, the chief extremity, absorbed by the body, was only distinguishable from the termination which follows in the footsteps of its predecessor, by a delicate, white projection appearing as the representative of its absent constituent the snout. . . .

One of the most lively writers of American sketches, in whose hand charcoal marks white, exclaims, "I wish I was a pig: there's some sense in being a pig that's fat: pigs are decent behaved people and good citizens, though they have no votes." No considerate spectator of the calm content and philosophical repose of the inmates of the pens could refuse to respond with heartfelt sincerity to such reasonable wish and opinions. Pigs do not buy lands, nor build houses, nor pay taxes, nor have bills left with the attorney for collection, nor subject themselves to the caprice of any court except that of the judges of swine. They are not abused for owning bank shares, nor obliged to borrow money to support those who denounce them. They never burst their boilers, nor have messengers sent under an assignment process to confiscate their estates to defray the costs of settling them. Pigs are above being politicians. No hog of respectability was ever heard to express an opinion on the sub-treasury system or to commit himself in relation to the vexed question of the license laws. Nor has it been ever known that a pig has reversed the aspiration of happiness already quoted, by praying that he might be a man. There is no comparison between pigdom and manhood.—*National Aegis*, Oct. 24, 1838.

A delegation from the Court soon after their appointment, proceeded on a mission to examine the condition of the swine in other regions. They found that the hog was treated with highest consideration in the Empire State. He was permitted to frequent the principal places of resort in the Commercial Emporium, and in the cities, towns, and villages of New York. There he attended lectures and political meetings, went down into cellars, ascended the steps of the palaces of merchants, and visited the homes of the husbandman.



a canoe of birch-bark, in which Mr. Lincoln took pleasure in giving his friends a ride. The writer of this sketch remembers having been led more than once by an elder brother to see "Lincoln's Garden," as the place was called; and the surpassing beauty of the scene, and the kindly greeting of the "lord of the manor" produced an impression upon the mind of the child which is still fresh in the recollection. The mansion-house was occupied for several years by the Hon. John Davis, before he built a residence nearly opposite, and Mr. Lincoln lived as a boarder in Mr. Davis's family. The house was removed from the estate some forty years ago, and still stands upon its modern site, only a few rods north from the hall of this Society.

Mr. Lincoln was of medium height, probably about the same as that of his brother Enoch, to whom the chroniclers ascribed a stature of five feet and seven inches. His frame was well knit, his gait was sprightly, his eye was keen and twinkling, and his manner both dignified and affable. He was very sociable in his nature, and warm in his friendships. He attached himself to men who could appreciate

Like other free and independent citizens he was given to hospitality, and cultivated acquaintance with strangers by overturning them into the mud, so as to engage closer intimacy. His legs, a world too long, were imitated from the red deer; his dark body, two worlds too lank, seemed to have been whetted on the new invented revolving patent metallic razor grind-stone. The long crow-bar shaped nose formed a convenient implement for throwing up stones or throwing down walls. Looking like a greyhound on stilts, he was so fleet that the fever and ague could not overtake and shake him in a fair chase, and so thin that his shadow could not keep up with him in the race. The hog of Ohio, more dignified, reclined his colossal form beneath the Buckeye tree and refreshed his appetite with the fruits showered down from the forests. In Illinois, the beautiful prairies swarmed with legions of swine. There, where earth, rolling into waves of verdure, expands in seas of green, the pigs cropped the fairest flowers for their feasts, and reposed, when weary, beneath bowers festooned with the crimson drapery of the creeper, and gathered for their couches blossoms as rich and rare as those which bent to the breezes which swept over Eden. There is neither time nor space now afforded for describing that which is indescribable. The comparison led to the conclusion:— That a New England pig, well provided with means of support, and in good condition and comfortable circumstances, had better hold fast by the pens of the descendants of the Puritans, than to devote life, fortune, and honor to a pilgrimage towards the Paradise of the West.—*National Ægis*, Nov. 10, 1841.

him and at the same time contribute their share of improving conversation. He was especially intimate with Librarian Christopher C. Baldwin, and the diary of the latter gentleman is full of allusions to occasions on which they met. That which we call "society" as it existed in Worcester up to the middle of this century, if we consider both its quality and its proportion to the whole population of the place, was unsurpassed by that of any town west of Boston; and in this charming circle Mr. Lincoln held a conspicuous place. At the tea-table and the evening party he was a welcome and a lively guest.

While the History of Worcester will always stand forth as the monument of Mr. Lincoln, it is to be regretted that few of his fugitive addresses and poems (of which it is known that he wrote some) are now extant. A great part of his miscellaneous literary work has been lost, and chiefly, perhaps, because it was never reduced to writing by himself. Among the manuscript papers in his handwriting which have come into the possession of this Society are found what appears to be a quite complete record of his legal practice, with memoranda of the points upon which he based his pleas to the court and jury. There are full notes taken while in college, of Professor Ticknor's lectures on French and Spanish literature, and Professor Edward Everett's lectures upon Greek. As the work of his later life, we find a Lyceum lecture on Cemeteries, also his Fourth of July address, delivered at Worcester, in 1831, and repeated at New Worcester, then a village in the outskirts of the town, in 1839.

Among his papers we find some attempts at a diary, kept for a short time in his college course, but it was not until after the death of his friend Baldwin, when the carefully kept journal of the latter came into his custody, that he made daily entries that are of interest. We give a few extracts from these sheets, which throw light upon the character of the man:—

“*November 1, 1835.* I was principally occupied to-day in looking over the papers of Isaac Goodwin, Esq., which were placed in my hands for the purpose of settling his estate. They were kept in a very confused manner, and it is very difficult to find documents which are wanted.

“Many persons suffer pecuniary loss and perhaps injury to reputation from want of care in the preservation of papers, and those which are kept, from want of correct and methodical arrangement are useless to those who own them as well as to others who may become interested. I endeavor myself to be attentive to this matter, but I fear if I should be removed that many valuable papers would be lost in the immense mass of documents in my possession, for want of understanding the system I have adopted.

“*Nov. 2.* During the year past, I have made great improvements on my land. The old barns have been removed and a new one of excellent construction built. A new house built for G. W. Richardson on the street. The garden has been extended, new walks made and planted, the ground levelled, and the whole brought into a condition of great beauty. I have labored, year after year, to render the home which my father had so much ornamented a fair spot: altho' the plan is not yet perfected, it will require but few years to give height to the trees and render most of the ground elegant.

“*Nov. 6.* The love of plants is with me a deeply fixed passion. Altho' at times I grow indifferent to the garden, yet the interest revives whenever I can work or wander about the walks. I have no higher enjoyment than to plant trees unless it be to contemplate the growth. It is pleasant to consider that they will stand in the beauty of their maturity long after the hand that set them shall be perished, and altho' other generations with that tone of innovation which they will call desire of improvement may hew them away, they will acknowledge the correctness of the taste that planted even while the axe is laid at the root.

“*Nov. 7.* Dined with Stephen Salisbury, Esq., whose wedding I attended at Charlestown, N. H., two years ago this day. His wife's maiden name was Rebecca Dean, daughter of Aaron Dean of Charlestown. I 'stood up,' as it is termed, as Bride's-man, at the wedding.

“In the evening, I was nominated by the Whig party as candidate for Representative in the General Court. I was

also nominated by the Jackson men on their ticket. But their vote was afterwards reconsidered and a list of exclusive administration candidates put up. There is so much division in reference to politics, parishes, temperance and other circumstances that the election will be very doubtful.

“*Nov. 8.* I have never sought for office in the manner in which others have courted the favor of the people. I have seldom attended caucuses or town meetings, and have never hesitated to adopt a course of conduct because I supposed it would be unpopular. Office, if it comes, will be as much unsolicited in fact as it is often said to be by those who attain it by great exertion.

“*Jan. 1, 1841.* On the beginning of the year, I look backward. Whatever wrong has been done to me I forgive; whatever wrong I have done to others, I repent, and will endeavor to make reparation; the bad habits in which I may have indulged, I will attempt to reform, and I resolve that life during the coming year shall be as pure in motive and as upright in action, as it is possible for human resolution to accomplish.”

Mr. Lincoln was never in sympathy with the attempt to punish or prohibit the sale of intoxicating liquor. But the so-called “Washingtonian Movement,” which substituted moral suasion for legal penalties for the dealers, and inculcated abstinence on the part of the people, received his hearty support. He enlisted, all too late, in the cause, and left behind an able and earnest temperance address, which he delivered, in the winter of 1842-3, at Lancaster, Worcester, Sterling, Holden and Fitchburg. It must have been at some social temperance gathering in Worcester that he made the following response to a toast to his fraternity:—

“**MR. CHAIRMAN.**—The sentiment which has just been given contains some allusion to the fraternity of Old Bachelors. As I believe I am the only representative of that ancient and honorable body at this board, I venture in their behalf to return their grateful acknowledgments for the distinguished honor which has been done to them and to express their thanks for the very flattering manner in which the company have received the complimentary notice.

“I described myself as being the representative of the body alluded to. That was a mistake. I believe that I am the body itself, and you will see how small it is. Yes sir, I am the last of the Mohicans. There are no old bachelors now; they have gone out to temperance meetings and have found themselves surrounded by such fair faces and bright eyes that they have taken the pledge of matrimony, and I only am left to tell the story. Formerly there was a goodly company of these good-natured! harmless animals, but they have disappeared as rapidly as if our wise legislature had put them into the act concerning crows, blackbirds and other vermin, and offered a bounty for their heads.

“I mourn, sir, with a sorrow which scarcely knows consolation, over the extermination of this amiable race. They will be missed in this community. Justice was never done to their wants. They were exceedingly useful. They would hold a skein of thread for the ladies, take care of the children when the mother went out to pick up some pleasant scandal, and run of errands for anybody. But they are gone, as the poet almost says:—

“Princes and lords may flourish or may fade,—  
A breath may make them as a breath has made;  
But a bold bachel'dry, their country's pride,  
If once destroyed can never be supplied.”

Mr. Lincoln died at the residence of his brother-in-law and law partner, the Hon. Rejoice Newton, on the 5th of October, 1843. He was buried in “Rural Cemetery,” a lovely spot near the confines of his ancestral acres, in the establishment and adornment of which he had taken a special interest. It is difficult to persuade oneself, in contemplating the great amount of labor which the man performed, the wide influence which he exerted, and the impress which he left upon his native town and its institutions, that so much was crowded into a life whose span was but a few days more than forty-one years.

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