

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 622

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

March 10, 1941

THE COLUMBIAN CLASS BOOK

Among the few books which Abraham Lincoln owned during his boyhood days in Indiana, *The Columbian Class Book* seems to have been more or less overlooked. Much emphasis has been placed on Lincoln's interest in different compilations of prose and poetry to which he had access, but this collection of monographs on geographical, historical, and biographical subjects has not received proper recognition as a valuable Lincoln source book.

We are not sure just how Lincoln came into possession of this book, but what is said to be his original autographed copy is in the Lincoln collection at the Chicago Historical Society.

This book might be called a textbook on geography, inasmuch as both the biographical and historical selections are primarily interested in the geographical approach. For instance in the rather long biographical sketch of George Washington, the twelve questions at the conclusion of the sketch prepared for testing the pupil's grasp of the subject all have to do with locations where President Washington is known to have been. In fact each discussion in the book of 354 pages concludes with a series of questions on geography.

The countries of Egypt, Guinea, New Zealand, Holland, Lapland, and Russia are described and the peculiar habits of their people discussed. Bodies of water such as the River Ganges, Lake Asphaltites, the Amazon River, the Nile, and Euphrates are mentioned, and a general discussion on the oceans, an article on mountain ranges, another on volcanic mountains, one on the White Mountains of New Hampshire, and another on the great African Desert are included in this section.

A long discussion on mining, including diamond, gold, silver, quicksilver, iron, tin, copper, lead, and coal mines, is available to the reader. Most important of all is an article on the "Grand Divisions of the Earth," in which they are listed as Europe,

Asia, Africa, America, and New Holland.

The historical discussions in the book place emphasis on the locations of the events under such captions as "The Destruction of Tyre," "Battle of the Nile," "Destruction of Carthage," "Capture of Quebec," "Destruction of Rome," "Destruction of Jerusalem," and a "Brief Sketch of the American Revolution."

The biographical section is somewhat condensed, but the opening chap-

One wonders if Abraham Lincoln as a youth may not have been greatly influenced by reading about the difficulty with which Demosthenes overcame his defects in public speaking. This paragraph must have greatly interested him and possibly encouraged Lincoln to persevere in his own efforts until he finally delivered the Gettysburg Address:

"To correct the stammering of his voice, he (Demosthenes) spoke with pebbles in his mouth; and removed the distortion of his features, which accompanied his utterance, by watching the motions of his countenance in a looking-glass. That his pronunciation might be loud and full of emphasis, he frequently ran up the steepest and most uneven walks, where his voice acquired force and energy; and on the seashore, when the waves were violently agitated, he declaimed aloud to accustom himself to the noise and tumults of a public assembly."

Some of the miscellaneous subjects noted in *The Columbian Class Book* are: Ancient Pompeii, Description of a Thunder Storm, Fort William Henry, Gibraltar, Temple of Fame, Great Wall of China.

A few most excellent poems are presented: "The Corsair" by Byron, "The Winter Evening" by Cowper, "Description of a Thunder Storm" by Thompson, "The Temple of Fame" by Pope, "Lycidas" by Milton, "Episode of Nisus and Euryalus" by Byron, "Hymn to the Sun" by Thompson, "On the Eternity of the Supreme Being" by Smart, and one very humorous anonymous poem entitled "The Cobbler."

The Columbian Class Book gave Lincoln, while still a growing boy, a comprehensive view of the universe and an intelligent understanding of the place which our world occupies in the planetary system. Lincoln also learned about the chief division of the earth, including a popular presentation of physical geography. He learned about places and people of renown and supplemented the three "Rs" of the log cabin school with the big G (Geography.)

THE COLUMBIAN CLASS BOOK,

CONSISTING OF GEOGRAPHICAL,
HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL

EXTRACTS,

COMPILED FROM AUTHENTIC SOURCES,
AND ARRANGED ON A PLAN DIFFERENT
FROM ANY THING BEFORE
OFFERED THE PUBLIC.

PARTICULARLY DESIGNED FOR THE
USE OF SCHOOLS.

BY A. T. LOWE, M. D.

"Who so readeth, let him understand."

Second Edition.

WORCESTER:

PUBLISHED BY DORR & HOWLAND.
1825.

ter in the book is a brief biography of Washington, while the only other American whose biography is presented is Benjamin Franklin. There is an extensive discussion of the American Indian and his habits. Two Englishmen, Newton and Johnson, are recognized. The bulk of the sketches, however, are interested in such characters as Socrates, Archimedes, Leonidas, Demosthenes, Cicero, Alexander the Great, and Hannibal.