THE LIFE

OF

ABRAHAM LINCOLN;

FROM

His Birth to his Inauguration as President.

BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

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PREFACE.

I N the following pages I have endeavored to give the life of Abraham Lincoln, from his birth to his inauguration as President of the United States. The reader will judge the character of the performance by the work itself: for that reason I shall spare him the perusal of much prefatory explanation.

At the time of Mr. Lincoln's death, I determined to write his history, as I had in my possession much valuable material for such a purpose. I did not then imagine that any person could have better or more extensive materials than I possessed. I soon learned, however, that Mr. William H. Herndon of Springfield, Ill., was similarly engaged. There could be no rivalry between us; for the supreme object of both was to make the real history and character of Mr. Lincoln as well known to the public as they were to us. He deplored, as I did, the many publications pretending to be biographies which came teeming from the press, so long as the public interest about Mr. Lincoln excited the hope of gain. Out of the mass of works which appeared, of one only — Dr. Holland's — is it possible to speak with any degree of respect.

Early in 1869, Mr. Herndon placed at my disposal his remarkable collection of materials,—the richest, rarest, and fullest collection it was possible to conceive. Along with them came an offer of hearty co-operation, of which I have availed myself so extensively, that no art of mine would serve to conceal it. Added to my own collections, these acquisitions have enabled me to do what could not have been done before,—prepare an authentic biography of Mr. Lincoln.

Mr. Herndon had been the partner in business and the intimate personal associate of Mr. Lincoln for something like a quarter of a century; and Mr.
Lincoln had lived familiarly with several members of his family long before their individual acquaintance began. New Salem, Springfield, the old judicial circuit, the habits and friends of Mr. Lincoln, were as well known to Mr. Herndon as to himself. With these advantages, and from the num-
berless facts and hints which had dropped from Mr. Lincoln during the confi-
dential intercourse of an ordinary lifetime, Mr. Herndon was able to institute a thorough system of inquiry for every noteworthy circumstance and every incident of value in Mr. Lincoln's career.

The fruits of Mr. Herndon's labors are garnered in three enormous vol-
umes of original manuscripts and a mass of unarranged letters and papers. They comprise the recollections of Mr. Lincoln's nearest friends; of the surviving members of his family and his family-connections; of the men still living who knew him and his parents in Kentucky; of his schoolfellows, neighbors, and acquaintances in Indiana; of the better part of the whole population of New Salem; of his associates and relatives at Springfield; and of lawyers, judges, politicians, and statesmen everywhere, who had any thing of interest or moment to relate. They were collected at vast expense of time, labor, and money, involving the employment of many agents, long journeys, tedious examinations, and voluminous correspondence. Upon the value of these materials it would be impossible to place an estimate. That I have used them conscientiously and justly is the only merit to which I lay claim.

As a general thing, my text will be found to support itself; but whether the particular authority be mentioned or not, it is proper to remark, that each statement of fact is fully sustained by indisputable evidence remaining in my possession. My original plan was to verify every important statement by one or more appropriate citations; but it was early abandoned, not because it involved unwelcome labor, but because it encumbered my pages with a great array of obscure names, which the reader would probably pass un-
noticed.

I dismiss this volume into the world, with no claim for it of literary excellence, but with the hope that it will prove what it purports to be,—a faithful record of the life of Abraham Lincoln down to the 4th of March, 1861.

WASHINGTON CITY, May, 1872.

WARD H. LAMON.