

**ABRAHAM
LINCOLN**

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Abraham Lincoln by Various

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A SOUVENIR OF
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THE BATTLE OF THE GIANTS

FREDERICK TREVOR HILL



ON Friday the 20th of August, 1858, every turnpike, cross-road, and country lane leading to Ottawa, Illinois, was alive with travelers journeying on horseback, in wagons, and afoot, under clouds of dust and a burning summer sun. All sorts and conditions of conveyances were included in the straggling processions. Here a clumsy hay-cart lumbered forward, its merry crowd of young straw riders laughing and singing as they bumped along over the ill-made roads; here a canvas-covered ship of the desert jolted its solemn family party, children's faces staring from its cavernous entrance, and a stovepipe protruding from its roof; here a couple of short-legged urchins, innocent of shoes or stockings, proudly bestrode a shaggy old farm-horse, guiding it by a bit of rope tied loosely around its neck; here a market-wagon loaded with men and provisions towed a buggy accommodating the women and babies of the farm; and here, there, and everywhere trudged dusty men and barefoot boys and girls, converging from all points of the compass toward the county seat of La Salle County.

Ottawa was better prepared than most of the circuit towns for such an invasion, for the sessions of the Supreme Court were held there twice a year, when all the countryside made it a market, but the

limits of its hospitality were soon reached, and long before the vanguard of the approaching army arrived upon the scene its accommodations for visitors had been completely exhausted. Indeed, it is doubtful if there was a town anywhere in Illinois, with the exception of Chicago—some seventy odd miles away—that could have risen to the emergency, for substantially the entire population of the surrounding country was descending upon the little village. All work was practically suspended in the adjoining counties, the fields were deserted, most of the farmhouses showed barred doors and shuttered windows, and the wayfarers were evidently on pleasure bent, laughing and joking with each other as they passed.

But if the inhabitants of Ottawa were at all alarmed at the prospect of having to provide for the advancing hosts, their fears were soon relieved. One by one the wagons drew off on the prairie as they approached the town, groups of pedestrians congregated about them, and by nightfall the sky was lit up by their camp-fires, the smell of cooking mingling with the smoke. It was a good-natured, friendly crowd that occupied the bluffs and spread itself over the fields, greetings were exchanged, hospitality proffered, provisions shared, and wherever two or three were gathered together the subject of conversation was the coming struggle be-

tween the Big and the Little Giant, for Douglas and Lincoln were matched to meet in debate the next day, and this was the event that was drawing the populace from far and near.

For months Illinois had been watching the rival Senatorial candidates fighting at long range, but no one except a few lawyers who had witnessed their occasional contests in the courts had seen them pitted against each other, and the prospective meeting had aroused unprecedented interest and no little speculation as to its result. To the enthusiastic adherents of Douglas the outcome was not in doubt. No one, in their opinion, compared with the little Judge, who had proved himself more than a match for the ablest Senators in Washington, and it was their belief that it would not take him long to "chaw up Abe Lincoln or anybody like him." The partizans of Lincoln were not without misgivings for their favorite, but they put on a bold front, retorting that the Little Giant would find that he had bitten off more than he could "chaw" by the following evening, and the fact that he had not been overanxious to accept the challenge of his opponent lent force to their assertions. Stout as the claims and counter-claims of the rival parties were, there was very little ill-feeling or bitterness exhibited, for every one was in a holiday mood, and the immediate interest centred more

upon the merits of the rival champions than upon the principles they represented. Indeed, many of those around the camps on that hot Friday night had not made up their minds upon the great issues at stake and many a vote depended on the coming contest.

The first light of dawn on Saturday morning showed picketed horses grazing at the limits of their tethers, kitchen utensils piled around the smoldering fires, men and boys sleeping out in the open or under improvised shelters and women resting inside the hay-carts, buggies, and emigrant wagons. Before the sun had fairly risen, however, the campers were astir. Newcomers could be seen approaching in distant clouds of dust, and before long the advance guard of the invaders began pouring into the town.

The county seats of the Illinois circuits in 1858 closely resembled typical New England villages, and each bore a strong family resemblance to the other. In the centre of the public square, around which the town was grouped, stood the circuit court-house, a substantial building of brick or stone, its roof surmounted by a dome or cupola, and its portico supported by tall white columns. The square itself was guarded from the highway by a wooden hitching-rail, and on court days this