

Mr. Lincoln loved to tell the story of Douglas. It is indelibly written in my memory. Not in the very words can I repeat it, and yet even that in the salient points.

He said Douglas, when he first met him, was the smallest man he had ever seen—in stature under five feet, in weight under ninety pounds. He was teaching a country school, and lodging with a violent Democratic politician, a local celebrity. From him Douglas got his political bias. Douglas was his protégé. He encouraged Douglas in the study of the law, procured the books for him, had him admitted to the bar before a year, pushed him into the office of prosecuting attorney, and into the Legislature.

When Van Buren became President, the patron wanted the office of Register at the Land-office, and sent Douglas to Washington to procure the place for him. In due time Douglas returned with the commission in his pocket, but not for his patron. It was to himself. The old man was enraged at the ingratitude, and swore vengeance. He listened to no explanations. It was not long before he had an opportunity to gratify his feelings.

Douglas became the Democratic candidate for Congress, the whole State constituting one Congressional district. His opponent was Mr. Stewart—still living, a relative of Mrs. Lincoln. After an animated contest Douglas was defeated by one vote in a poll of 36,000. The old patron rejoiced in the belief that that one vote was his.

Mr. Douglas's sensitive nature was overwhelmed by this defeat. He gave way to uncontrollable grief, sought consolation in excessive drink, and his career seemed at an end. But time brought its accustomed relief, and he re-appeared in the arena, again the thunderer of the scene. The years to follow were to him years of unbroken prosperity. He became successively Judge of the Supreme Court, Representative in Congress, and Senator. The name and fame of the "Little Giant" overspread the land. These, however, were cheerless years to Mr. Lincoln, yet with unshaken fortitude he bore the banner of Whiggery. It was his custom to follow Mr. Douglas about the State, replying to him.

But a change came; the Kansas-Nebraska Bill awakened the moral sense of the State, and by common consent Mr.

Lincoln became its representative. Mr. Douglas, in Washington, was alarmed at the uprising, and hurried home to educate the people up to conquering their prejudice against slavery. He made a canvass of the State, Mr. Lincoln following him and replying to him. "After having spoken at a number of places," said Mr. Lincoln, "I was surprised one evening, before the speaking began, at Mr. Douglas entering my room at the hotel. He threw himself on the bed, and seemed in distress. 'Abe, the tide is against me,' said he. 'It is all up with me. I can do nothing. Don't reply to me this evening. I can not speak, but I must, and it is my last. Let me alone to-night.' I saw he was in great distress; he could not bear adversity; and I acquiesced in his request and went home."

They did not meet again in debate, if I mistake not, until the great contest of 1858.

Mr. Lincoln had a high admiration for the abilities of Mr. Douglas, and afterward was glad to have his aid in behalf of the Union, and commissioned him a major-general; but he thought him in debate and in politics adroit, unscrupulous, and of an amazing audacity. "It is impossible," said he, "to get the advantage of him; even if he is worsted, he so bears himself that the people are bewildered and uncertain as to who has the better of it."

"When I," said Thucydides, "in wrestling have thrown Pericles and given him a fall, by persisting that he had no fall he gets the better of me, and makes the bystanders, in spite of their own eyes, believe him." Thus doth man from age to age repeat himself; and yet not quite always. We hear of Gladstone felling trees, but it is not reported that he and Froude have wrestling matches.

Some weeks after this conversation with Mr. Lincoln I met Mr. Douglas, and drew from him his opinion of Mr. Lincoln. His very words, terse and emphatic as they were, I give: "Of all the ——— Whig rascals about Springfield, Abe Lincoln is the ablest and most honest."

The Kansas-Nebraska Bill had indeed turned the tide against Douglas; the Republicans were successful, having a majority of one on joint ballot in the Legislature, thus securing the Senator.

With a common voice the Republicans of the State proclaimed Lincoln Senator. In caucus he received forty-nine votes out