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Letter with attachment: Mrs. S.A. Harvey to Editors, McClure's Magazine, April 7, 1896

Harvey, S.A., Mrs.

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Editors
McClure's Magazine:

I observe in a recent no. of your magazine that you ask your readers for incidents or anecdotes of Lincoln which have come within their own observation or knowledge.

Hence I enclose the fol lowing.

Yours Respectfully,

Mrs. S. H. Harney
College Park
California.

April 7th 1896.
During the autumn (I believe) of 1858, when the agitation of slavery was the all-absorbing topic, Lincoln and Douglas were stumping the state of Illinois as opposing candidates for the Senate. Lincoln followed Douglas and was announced to speak on a certain day in the village of Vermont.

A delegation of citizens, with music and banners flying, went to meet him. On the return trip about three miles from town was a piece of natural clearing, in the center of which stood a group of seven gnarled and knotted oaks. They were remarkable for their size and for their isolation from the surrounding forest—a band of sturdy sentinels overtopping all their neighbors. They had been the wonder of my childhood, and passing years had failed to give the key to their mysterious seclusion and singular grouping. Lincoln quick eye descried them, and when the big wagon in which he rode passed in front of them, he ordered a halt. Rising and taking off his hat, he addressed the old monarchs...
in a speech full of wit and humor; sitting down amid shouts that fairly made the old woods ring. From that day forth the “oaks” were known as the “Lincoln Group.” The delegation proceeded to town, and at one o’clock in the the afternoon Lincoln stood before a large audience gathered on the public square and replied to Douglas. A drizzling rain had set in early in the day, and had increased to a steady downpour, but it did not dampen the Order of the men and women gathered there to listen to the wonderful backwoods orator. Never shall I forget the tall, gaunt figure standing under the friendly shelter of an umbrella, that dreary afternoon, nor the solemn face that looked so grand when lighted up by the smile called forth by his own fund of humor and the delight of his audience.

In conclusion, after reviewing Judge Douglas’ position in reference to the great questions at issue, Lincoln said, “My friends, the arguments of Judge Douglas are as thin as the soup made from the shadow of a starved pigeon.”
The comparison was greeted with shouts of laughter and hurrahing for “Old Abe the Kentucky giant.” That campaign and the events following are matters of history which need not be recalled. His tragic death led each and every one of us throughout the country to review little incidents and personal reminiscences connected with him, and we Vermonters reverted to the old oaks which still towered aloft with as much apparent vigor as ever. But in a few months one of them withered and died, another soon followed, and then another, and it became apparent the whole group was doomed to decay. In less than four years all were gone, death and the woodman’s axe had cleared the spot of every vestige of the famous “Lincoln group.” Time were some preposterous enough to believe the old oaks had joined away and died of broken hearts.

Mrs. I. A. Harvey.