

Chapter Twenty-five

“This Damned Old House”

The Lincoln Family in the Executive Mansion

During the Civil War, the atmosphere in the White House was usually sober, for as John Hay recalled, it “was an epoch, if not of gloom, at least of a seriousness too intense to leave room for much mirth.”¹ The death of Lincoln’s favorite son and the misbehavior of the First Lady significantly intensified that mood.

THE WHITE HOUSE

The White House failed to impress Lincoln’s other secretaries, who disparaged its “threadbare appearance” and referred to it as “a dirty rickety concern.”² A British journalist thought it beautiful in the moonlight, “when its snowy walls stand out in contrast to the night, deep blue skies, but not otherwise.”³ The Rev. Dr. Theodore L. Cuyler asserted that the “shockingly careless appearance of the White House proved that whatever may have been Mrs. Lincoln’s other good qualities, she hadn’t earned the compliment which the Yankee farmer paid to his wife when he said: ‘Ef my wife haint got an ear fer music, she’s got an eye for dirt.’”⁴ The north side of the Executive

¹ John Hay, “Life in the White House in the Time of Lincoln,” in Michael Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln’s Side: John Hay’s Civil War Correspondence and Selected Writings (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 134.

² William O. Stoddard, Inside the White House in War Times: Memoirs and Reports of Lincoln’s Secretary ed. Michael Burlingame (1880; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 41; Helen Nicolay, Lincoln’s Secretary: A Biography of John G. Nicolay (New York: Longmans, Green, 1949), 227.

³ Edward Dicey, Six Months in the Federal States (London: Macmillan, 1863), 98.

⁴ Theodore Ledyard Cuyler, Recollections of a Long Life: An Autobiography (New York: Baker & Taylor, 1902), 143.

Mansion, facing Pennsylvania Avenue, was marred by an immense portico that seemed to dwarf the building, and the statue of Thomas Jefferson on the lawn before the front entrance was a green, moldy eyesore.

Passing beneath the outsized portico, visitors entered the front door, went through a small lobby, then emerged into a large vestibule, where coat racks were set up for large public receptions. Those receptions were held in the enormous East Room, which William O. Stoddard said had “a faded, worn, untidy look” and needed fresh paint and new furniture.⁵ It featured a conventionally frescoed ceiling, satin drapes, a plush carpet, and three huge chandeliers.

Three other state parlors, designated by their colors, were smaller. Mary Lincoln’s favorite, the red one, served as her sitting room where she received guests. The president also entertained friends there after dinner. Its furniture was upholstered in red satin and gold damask, its windows had gilded cornices, and throughout were scattered many vases and much ormolu work. Few paintings other than a full-length portrait of George Washington adorned the walls. Stoddard believed that the “severe simplicity” of the White House could have been softened with more artwork.⁶ The oval blue room, which had a fine view across the spacious grounds to the Potomac river, was known as “Charles Ogle’s Elliptical Saloon,” a reference to the demagogic Pennsylvania congressman who had attacked Martin Van Buren for redecorating the White House. The green room was a small parlor where guests were received informally. (After Willie Lincoln died in 1862, his body was embalmed in the green room. His mother refused to enter it thereafter.)

⁵ Stoddard, Inside the White House, ed. Burlingame, 5.

⁶ Stoddard, Inside the White House, ed. Burlingame, 81.

Beyond these three parlors was the modestly-appointed state dining room, which could accommodate up to thirty-five guests. A smaller family dining room adjoined it on the north side. On the far end of the west wing was a spacious conservatory, a great favorite of Mary Lincoln, who used its flowers to adorn the house profusely. She also sent them to hospitals and hospital fund-raising events called “sanitary fairs.” Visitors so often picked the flowers that eventually the conservatory was declared off-limits to the public. (Flowers were not the only souvenirs taken by vandals. In the public rooms they shamelessly cut swatches from draperies and carpets, and stole tassels, ornaments, and fringes.)⁷

Also at the end of the west wing was a massive staircase leading to the second floor, which housed offices as well as the family quarters. (There were two smaller stairways, one of which led to the offices; another was a service staircase which Lincoln used most often, for it allowed him to pass from the second story to the basement hallway and exit unobserved.) The upstairs was dark, with its heavy mahogany doors and wainscoting. On the east side was the president’s sparsely-furnished office, which Stoddard described as “a wonderful historic cavern” with “less space for the transaction of the business of his office than a well-to-do New York lawyer.”⁸ In the middle of the room stood a long table around which the cabinet sat. By the center window overlooking the Potomac was Lincoln’s upright desk, resembling something from a used furniture auction. Maps were displayed on racks in the northwest corner of the room, a portrait of Andrew Jackson hung above the fireplace, and a large photograph of the English reformer John Bright adorned one wall.

⁷ Stoddard, Inside the White House, ed. Burlingame, 183.

⁸ Stoddard, Inside the White House, ed. Burlingame, 11-12, 145.

Adjoining this office-cum-cabinet-meeting-chamber was a large waiting room, through which Lincoln had to pass in order to reach the living area. (The only modification to the house made during his presidency was a partition installed toward the rear of the waiting room, creating a private passageway from the office to the family quarters). Nearby were Nicolay's small office and reception room, another office -- used by Stoddard and Hay -- and a bedroom occupied by Nicolay and Hay. Adjacent to Lincoln's bedroom was a small dressing room.

The family quarters on the west side of the second floor included an oval library-cum-family-room which was, as Stoddard put it, "a really delightful retreat." In addition to bedrooms for the president and First Lady, there were four others, one of which was for Willie and Tad. Running water for washing was available in all the family rooms save the library.

The rat-infested basement, where the kitchen and the servants' quarters were located, had "the air of an old and unsuccessful hotel," according to Stoddard.⁹ In 1864, Commissioner of Public Buildings Benjamin Brown French reported that during the previous summer "the effluvia from dead rats was offensive in all the passages and many of the occupied rooms to both the occupants of, and visitors to, the Presidential mansion." Moreover, he noted, the house "is rendered very unhealthy by the accumulation of refuse and garbage, which the tide washes to and fro between the piles of the long chain-bridges." French recommended that the president should have a new house in a less unhealthy location, like the heights of Georgetown.¹⁰

⁹ Stoddard, Inside the White House in War Times, 49.

¹⁰ Report of the Commissioner of Public Buildings, in Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), 664.

The lack of screens on windows and doors also made summers in the White House disagreeable. One night in July 1862, Nicolay amusingly reported that the “gas lights over my desk are burning brightly and the windows of the room are open, and all bugdom outside seems to have organized a storming party to take the gas lights, in numbers which seem to exceed the contending hosts at Richmond. The air is swarming with them, they are on the ceiling, the walls and the furniture in countless numbers, they are buzzing about the room, and butting their heads against the window panes, they are on my clothes, in my hair, and on the sheet I am writing on. They are all here, the plebian masses, as well as the great and distinguished members of the oldest and largest patrician families – the Millers, the Roaches, the Whites, the Blacks, yea even the wary and diplomatic foreigners from the Musquito Kingdom. They hold a high carnival, or rather a perfect Saturnalia. Intoxicated and maddened by the bright gaslight, they dance, and rush and fly about in wild gyrations, until they fall to the floor, burned and maimed and mangled to the death, to be swept out into the dust and rubbish by the servant in the morning.”¹¹

To escape the rat effluvia and the bugs, Lincoln and his family spent the warmer months of 1862, 1863, and 1864 at the Soldiers’ Home, a complex of five buildings on 300 acres, located three miles north of the White House on the Seventh Street Road.¹² Established in the early 1850s as a retreat for indigent, disabled veterans, it was officially known as the Military Asylum. On its grounds, the wealthy banker George W. Riggs built a comfortable house in the Rural Gothic style, which in time became known as the

¹¹ Nicolay to Therenia Bates, Washington, 20 July 1862, in Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 86.

¹² See Matthew Pinsker, Lincoln’s Sanctuary: Abraham Lincoln and the Soldiers’ Home (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Anderson cottage. This dwelling was in all likelihood the one that the Lincolns stayed in. “We are truly delighted with this retreat, the drives & walks around here are truly delightful,” Mary Lincoln wrote.¹³ The Home occupied high ground, catching whatever breezes might be blowing in the area and offering a splendid view of Washington. Lincoln commuted every day to the Executive Mansion, usually departing no later than 8 a.m.

The staff at the White House included doorkeepers, a coachman, messengers, a gardener, groundskeepers, a steward, cooks, waiters, a housekeeper, and guards. There was an unusually rapid turnover of staff during the Lincoln administration, just as there had been in the Lincoln household in Springfield. It was hard to please the mercurial Mary Lincoln. Among others, the English steward, Richard Goodchild, was fired to make way for Jane Watt, wife of the corrupt gardener, John Watt. The butler Peter Vermeren was let go early on, after reporting corruption in the White House. The head doorkeeper, Thomas Burns, was also dismissed soon after the Lincolns moved in.

A few members of the White House staff were blacks, including the messenger-valet-steward William Slade, known as an excellent story teller; the cook Cornelia Mitchell; and the butler Peter Brown. William Johnson, a valet-cum-barber who came from Springfield with the First Family in 1861, at first worked in the White House stoking the furnace. But the other black employees, all light-skinned, objected to his dark complexion so vehemently that Lincoln had to find him another post. To Navy Secretary Welles he wrote in mid-March 1861: “The bearer (William) is a servant who has been with me for some time & in whom I have confidence as to his integrity and faithfulness.

¹³ Mary Lincoln to Mrs. Charles Eames, Washington, 26 July 1862, Justin G. Turner and Linda Levitt Turner, eds., Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 131.

He wishes to enter your service. The difference of color between him & the other servants is the cause of our separation. If you can give him employment you will confer a favour on yours truly.”¹⁴ After several months, Johnson eventually landed a job at the treasury department, which he held till his death of smallpox in 1864. To help him earn more money, Lincoln facilitated his efforts to moonlight for others.

Security was provided by uniformed soldiers at the exterior doors and gates. Indoors, plain-clothed guards acted as doormen and other servants.

Stoddard recalled that in dealing with the staff, Lincoln "took their presence and the performance of their duties so utterly for granted. No one of them was ever made to feel, unpleasantly, the fact of his inferior position by reason of any look or word of the President. All were well assured that they could not get a word from him unless the business which brought them to his elbow justified them in coming. The number of times that Mrs. Lincoln herself entered his business-room at the White House could probably be counted on the fingers of one hand.”¹⁵ Though kindly and considerate, Lincoln could take umbrage at insubordination. One day when the president asked his Irish coachman to buy a morning paper, that gentleman said he would but then did not do so, for he considered it beneath his dignity to run errands. Lincoln himself went out on the street, hailed a newsboy, and purchased a copy of the Washington Chronicle. To convey a message to the haughty coachman, Lincoln ordered the coach up at six a.m. to take another staffer out to buy a paper. The driver was humiliated.

¹⁴ Lincoln to Welles Washington, 16 March 1861, Roy P. Basler et al., eds., Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (8 vols. plus index; New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953-55), 4:288.

¹⁵ William O. Stoddard, Abraham Lincoln: The True Story of a Great Life (New York: Fords, Howard, & Hulbert, 1884), 403.

DAILY ROUTINE

Lincoln usually rose early, for he slept lightly and fitfully. Before consuming his frugal breakfast of an egg, toast, and coffee, he spent a couple of hours glancing at newspapers, writing letters, signing documents, or studying the subjects most pressing at the time. After eating, he would read telegrams at the dingy war department building next to the Executive Mansion. Upon his return, he would go through the mail with a secretary. Around ten o'clock visitors would be admitted. Cabinet members had precedence, then senators, then congressmen, and finally the general public.¹⁶ One morning Lincoln was showing his good friend Anson G. Henry some maps when the clock struck ten, indicating that office hours were to begin. "Citizens can get in," Henry reported, "but nine times out of ten not half the Senators get in unless several go in together, & this is very often done, and they can take in with them as many of their friends or constituents as they please. It is no uncommon thing for Senators to try for ten days before they get a private interview."¹⁷ On Tuesdays and Fridays, cabinet meetings were usually held, so visiting hours ended at noon.

When the public's turn to came to enter, Lincoln had the doors opened and in surged a crowd, filling up his small office. Those who simply wished to shake his hand or to wish him well were quickly disposed of. Others seeking mercy or assistance told their tales of woe, unconcerned about who might hear them. Many who hoped for a more private consultation held back and were brought up short when the president loudly called them forward: "Well, friend, what can I do for you?" This forced them either to

¹⁶ Boston Evening Journal, n.d., copied in the Bloomington Pantagraph, 20 April 1864.

¹⁷ Anson G. Henry to his wife, Washington, n.d., fragment of a letter, Henry Papers. Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

speak up or withdraw.¹⁸ All kinds of people sought presidential assistance: army officers longing for promotion, foreign diplomats concerned about their country's interests, autograph seekers, inventors touting their creations, cabinet members soliciting favors for friends, women appealing on behalf of their sons or husbands or fathers, businessmen in quest of contracts, among others.

A satirist poked fun at the swarming hoards who desired to see the president: "They cannot be driven off; they cannot be bluffed. Bars and bolts will not shut them out. The frowns of janitors have no terrors for them. They are proof against the snubbings of secretaries. It is in vain the President sends word that he 'cannot be seen.' He must be seen; he shall be seen. Has not the Honorable Jonathan Swellhead come all the way from Wisconsin to consult him about the [draft] quota of his town? Has not the Reverend Dr. Blowhard traveled a thousand miles to impress upon him the necessity of increasing the number of fast days? Has not Christopher Carbuncle, Esq., traveled two days and nights in order to arrange with him the vexed question of the post office in Grabtown? Has not Mr. Samuel Shoddy come expressly from Boston to get him to endorse an application for a blanket contract? Has not a committee from the synod of the See-No-Further church come to implore him to open cabinet meetings with prayer and inaugurate his Wednesday levees with the singing of a psalm? Nor can these clamorous patriots be dismissed with a brief audience. They belong to the class of bores who make long speeches. Having once got the ear of the President, they resolve to keep it. They hang on like a dog to a root.

¹⁸ Hay, "Life in the White House in the Time of Lincoln," 133-34.

There is no shaking them off until that have had their say; and so hour after hour of the precious time of the head of the nation is thus frittered away.”¹⁹

Seated at his table, Lincoln greeted visitors kindly, saying to those he was not acquainted with: “Well?” and those he did know: “And how are you to-day, Mr. _____?” He usually called old friends by their first names. Seward he addressed as “Governor,” Blair and Bates as “Judge,” Stanton as “Mars,” Welles as “Neptune,” and the other cabinet secretaries as “Mister.” Patiently he listened to requests, asked questions, then informed callers what he would do for them. If, for example, his petitioner was an impoverished widow seeking a clerkship, he would peruse her letters of recommendation, ask some probing questions, then write out a note to the relevant official instructing him to honor her request. This procedure was so time-consuming that he was able to deal with only a small fraction of the crowd in the anteroom.

To Lincoln’s annoyance, many callers insisted that he solve minor disputes and deal with other petty matters. According to Hay, Lincoln “pretended to begin business at ten o’clock in the morning, but in reality the anterooms and halls were full before that hour – people anxious to get the first axe ground. He was extremely unmethodical: it was a four-years struggle on Nicolay’s part and mine to get him to adopt some systematic rules. He would break through every regulation as fast as it was made. Anything that kept the people themselves away from him he disapproved – although they nearly annoyed the life out of him by unreasonable complaints & requests.”²⁰ In 1863, Stoddard reported from the White House that the president was besieged by “the same unceasing throng in

¹⁹ Albany Evening Journal, in Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, xix.

²⁰ Hay to William H. Herndon, Paris, 5 September 1866, Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln’s Side, 109; Washington correspondence, 17 March, New York Times, 18 March 1861.

the ante-rooms . . . bent on dragging him ‘for only a few minutes only,’ from his labors of state to attend to private requests, often selfish, often frivolous, sometimes corrupt or improper, and not so often worthy of the precious time and strength thus wasted.”²¹

Private grievances, misfortunes, and wishes were so numerous that Lincoln once remarked that “it seemed as if he was regarded as a police justice, before whom all the petty troubles of men were brought for adjustment.”²²

A typical case involved an army officer who had not been paid because of a technicality. After perusing a sheaf of papers justifying the claim, the president instructed the paymaster-general to honor it. To an intercessor on the officer’s behalf, Lincoln said: “You have no idea of the number of cases of a somewhat similar character that are continually being presented to me – cases which, in the present state of affairs, there seems no adequate provision to meet. I am sitting here from day to day, just like a Justice of the Peace, hearing and determining this class of cases.”²³ An enlisted man once pestered Lincoln with a matter that the president thought should be handled by the soldier’s superior officer. When his advice was ignored, Lincoln peremptorily barked: “Now, my man, go away! I cannot attend to all these details. I could as easily bail out the Potomac with a spoon.”²⁴ Similarly, when a sutler asked Lincoln to grant him permission to peddle ale to the troops, he said sharply: “Look here! What do you take me for,

²¹ Washington correspondence, 6 April, New York Examiner, 9 April 1863, Michael Burlingame, ed., Dispatches from Lincoln's White House: The Anonymous Civil War Journalism of Presidential Secretary William O. Stoddard (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 145.

²² J. G. Holland, Life of Abraham Lincoln (Springfield, Mass.: G. Bill, 1866), 429.

²³ W. I. G., “Two Stories of the Martyr President, Exemplifying the Goodness of His Heart and His Sense of Justice,” Appleton's Journal, January 1880.

²⁴ Hay, “Life in the White House,” Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln's Side, 133.

anyhow? Do you think I keep a beer shop?”²⁵ A woman who aspired to be a physician called repeatedly, asking Lincoln to approve her application for a license to practice medicine. Because the medical faculty of the District of Columbia would not give her one, she demanded that the president do so.

Sometimes Lincoln resorted to gentle sarcasm when confronted by importunate visitors. A delegation once appealed to him to help the Washington fire department obtain new equipment. He interrupted their presentation, gravely remarking: “It is a mistake to think that I am at the head of the fire department of Washington. I am simply the President of the United States.”²⁶ When a landlord complained to Lincoln that he could not collect his rents, he expressed sympathy but asked, “what would you have me do? I have much to do, and the courts have been opened to relieve me in this regard.” Sheepishly his caller said, “I am not I the habit of appearing before big men.” With customary modesty, Lincoln replied: “and for that matter, you have no need to change your habit, for you are not before very big men now.” Patiently he concluded the interview by observing that he could not “go into the collection business.”²⁷ Lincoln had to make a similar point to another creditor: “I am really very sorry, madam, very sorry. But your own good sense must tell you that I am not here to collect small debts. You must appeal to the courts in regular order.” To an army officer, he exclaimed: “What odd kinds of people come in to see me, and what odd ideas they must have about my office! Would you believe, Major, that the old lady who has just left, came in here to get from

²⁵ Washington correspondence, 19 October, New York Evening Post, 21 October 1865.

²⁶ William Bender Wilson, A Few Acts and Actors in the Tragedy of the Civil War in the United States (Philadelphia: by the author, 1892), 109-110.

²⁷ “Reminiscences of President Lincoln,” by the editor of the Lowell Citizen, in Frank Moore, ed., Anecdotes, Poetry and Incidents of the Civil War: North and South, 1861-1865 (New York: printed for subscribers, 1866), 482-483.

me an order for stopping the pay of a Treasury clerk, who owes her a board bill of about \$70. . . . She may have come here a loyal woman, but I'll be bound she has gone away believing that the worst pictures of me in the Richmond press only lack truth in not being half black and bad enough."²⁸

An allegedly loyal Southerner asked Lincoln to sign papers permitting him to recover substantial sums for property damaged in the war. The president heatedly observed that the claimant's documents did not prove that he deserved the money. "I know what you want," Lincoln snapped, "you are turning, or trying to turn me into a justice of the peace, to put your claims through. There are a hundred thousand men in the country, every one of them as good as you are, who have just such bills as you present; and you care nothing of what becomes of them, so you get your money."²⁹ When a poor woman from Michigan came begging to help meet her mortgage, Lincoln listened patiently, perused her letters "with a half humorous, half vexed expression," and pledged a modest sum to help her out.³⁰

To a farmer seeking presidential aid in pressing a claim for damages, Lincoln exclaimed: "Why, my good sir, I couldn't think of such a thing. If I considered individual miseries, I would find enough worries for twenty Presidents!" When his interlocutor failed to take the hint, Lincoln said he was reminded of an expert pilot back in Illinois who was deftly guiding a steamboat through some rapids. As the craft pitched and rolled in the turbulent water, a young boy accosted him with a plea: "Say, Mister Cap, I wish

²⁸ F. B. Carpenter, Six Months at the White House with Abraham Lincoln: The Story of a Picture (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1867), 279.

²⁹ Frazer Kirkland, Reminiscences of the Blue and Gray, '61-'65 (Chicago: Preston, 1895), 640-641.

³⁰ Stoddard, "White House Sketch No. 10," New York Citizen, 20 October 1866, Stoddard, Inside the White House, ed. Burlingame, 188.

you'd just stop your boat a minute. I've lost my apple overboard!" Visiting clergy often annoyed the president. One day when a minister called at the White House, Lincoln invited him to sit, he took his own chair and announced: "I am now ready to hear what you have to say."

"Oh, bless you sir, I have nothing to say. I merely called to pay my respects."

With relief written all over his face, Lincoln rose, took the clerical visitor's hand in both of his, and exclaimed: "My dear sir, I am very glad to see you. I am very glad to see you indeed. I thought you came to preach to me!"³¹

Lincoln put in long hours attending to public business. When the First Lady was away (which was often), he would eat breakfast, lunch, and even dinner alone in his office while working away steadily. Theodore Cuyler once asked him: "Mr. President, I am here at almost every hour of the day or night, and I never saw you at the table; do you ever eat?" Lincoln replied: "I try to. I manage to browse about pretty much as I can get it."³² Receiving callers from early morning till late afternoon, he seemed to Stoddard like "a man who carried a load too great for human strength; and, as the years went on and the load grew heavier, it bowed him into premature old age. He was the American Atlas."³³

At lunchtime, Lincoln ran a gauntlet formed by would-be callers lining the hallway between his office and the family quarters. Afternoons were spent much like mornings. Late in the day he would usually take a carriage ride, often with the First Lady. Dinner was served at 6 p.m. According to John Hay, Lincoln "was one of the most abstemious of men; the pleasures of the table had few attractions for him." His lunch

³¹ New York Evening Post, 1 November 1864.

³² Cuyler, Recollections, 144-45.

³³ Stoddard, "White House Sketches Nos. 2, 4," New York Citizen, 25 August, 8 September 1866, Stoddard, Inside the White House, ed. Burlingame, 149, 157.

consisted of little more than a biscuit and some fruit, washed down with a glass of milk, and for supper he “ate sparingly of one or two courses.”³⁴ He liked simple food, especially corn pone, cabbage, and chicken fricassee. After the evening meal, he would usually return to his office to continue working. Sometimes at dinner he enjoyed the company of friends, who joined him for coffee and a postprandial chat in the red drawing room. During sessions of Congress, its members took up many of his evening hours. He went to bed between ten and eleven o’clock, but if he was expecting important news, he would stay up as late as one or two a.m., closeted with the telegraph operators at the war department. Tad usually slept with him after the death of Willie.

On Sundays, Lincoln usually attended services at the nearby New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, where the Rev. Dr. Phineas Gurley presided. Upon arriving in Washington, he asked friends and allies for recommendations about a church to attend. “I wish to find a church,” he said, “whose clergyman holds himself aloof from politics.”³⁵ At first, Willie and Tad went to Sunday school there, but later the headstrong Tad revolted, preferring to go to the livelier Fourth Presbyterian Church where his friends Holly and Bud Taft and their family worshipped.

RECEPTIONS

Like their predecessors, the Lincoln held receptions, levees, open houses, state dinners, and concerts. On March 8, leading naval officers came to pay their respects. One of them, David D. Porter, called the president “a plain politician, with very little polish of manner,” and said that he “was much confused at meeting such an imposing looking set

³⁴ Hay, “Life in the White House in the Time of Lincoln,” 134; Boston Evening Journal, n.d., copied in the Bloomington Pantagraph, 20 April 1864.

³⁵ Washington Post, 13 March 1893.

of men. Such was his embarrassment that he could not answer the little speech made to him by Commodore [Joseph] Smith.” When the officers requested to meet his wife, Lincoln went off to fetch her and “returned half dragging in the apparently confused lady.” After “a few commonplace remarks,” the visitors left. “The interview,” said Porter, “was not at all calculated to impress us favorably, and there were many remarks made about the President’s gaucherie.”³⁶

That same day Lincoln hosted his first White House reception, which Edward Bates described laconically: “motley crowd and terrible squeeze.”³⁷ The president, according to one report, “with his towering figure and commanding presence, stood like a hero, putting the foot down firmly, and breasting the stream of humanity as it swept by.” By one estimate, he shook 3000 hands, including that of a man who said, “Mr. President, you must diminish the number of your friends, or Congress must enlarge the edifice.” Lincoln, referring tongue-in-cheek to his reputation as a rail-splitter, replied: “I’ve no idea of diminishing the number of my friends, but the only question with me now is whether it would be best to have the building stretched or split.”³⁸ A journalist remarked that Mary Lincoln “made a pleasant impression upon every one who came near her. Had she been born and lived her life in the court of the Tuleries, she could not have shown more fitness for the position which she so admirably adorns.”³⁹ Agreeing that the First

³⁶ David D. Porter, “Journal of Occurrences during the War of the Rebellion,” vol. 1, pp. 56-58, Porter Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁷ Howard K. Beale, ed., The Diary of Edward Bates, 1859-1866 (Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1930, vol. IV; Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1933), 177 (entry for 8 March 1861); Washington correspondence by Joseph Howard, Jr., 8 March, New York Times, 11 March 1861.

³⁸ Washington correspondence by Ben: Perely Poore, 9 March, Boston Evening Journal, 12 March 1861.

³⁹ Washington correspondence by “A looker on,” 10 March, Philadelphia Press, 11 March 1861; Washington Star, 9 March 1861.

Lady was “really well dressed,” historian George Bancroft also found her “pleasant,” “affable,” “friendly & not in the least arrogant.”⁴⁰ John Lothrop Motley told his wife that Mrs. Lincoln “is rather nice-looking, youngish, with very round white arms, well dressed, and chatty enough, and if she would not, like all the South and West, say ‘Sir’ to you every instant, as if you were a royal personage, she would be quite agreeable.”⁴¹

Others were less favorably impressed. To Charles Francis Adams, the president looked “entirely worn out” and his facial expression seemed “formal and embarrassed.” Adams recorded in his diary that neither Lincoln nor his wife “is at home in this sphere of civilization.”⁴² (The crusty New Englander “always spoke disrespectfully of Mrs. Lincoln.”)⁴³ After attending White House receptions, attorney Richard Henry Dana, also of Massachusetts, described Mary Lincoln as a “short, fat,” “cross, suspicious, underbred” woman who “looks like the housekeeper of the establishment, & a notable, prying, & not good tempered housekeeper,” with “a snubby face & mealy complexion” and a “not good-tempered look.”⁴⁴ A New York lawyer, Charles E. Strong, thought Mrs. Lincoln “a very vulgar old woman.” His cousin and partner, George Templeton Strong, shared that view, calling her “[u]nderbred, weak, and vain.”⁴⁵

⁴⁰ George Bancroft to his wife, Washington, 15, 18 December 1861, Bancroft Papers, Cornell University.

⁴¹ George William Curtis, ed., The Correspondence of John Lothrop Motley (2 vols.; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1889), 1:387.

⁴² Charles Francis Adams diary, 8 March 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

⁴³ Diary of Benjamin Moran, secretary of the American legation in London, 16 August 1865, Library of Congress.

⁴⁴ Dana diary, entries for 7, 14 January 1862; Dana to his wife, Washington, 4 May 1864, Dana Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

⁴⁵ Letter from Charles Strong to George Templeton Strong, paraphrased in Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas, eds., The Diary of George Templeton Strong, 1835-1875 (4 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1952), 3:104 (entry for 27 February 1861); entry for 11 September 1862, ibid., 3:255.

One observer at the march 9 reception quipped that the “people turned out as if they had never seen a live President before; as indeed they had not for four years past.”⁴⁶ The levee was “voted by all the ‘oldest inhabitants’ to have been the most successful one ever known here,” Nicolay told his fiancée.⁴⁷

Nicolay’s assistant, William O. Stoddard, recalled that Lincoln’s “manner at receptions, and other occasions of ceremony or of social or official formality, was that of a man who performs an irksome but unavoidable duty, though he was never lacking in cordial hospitality.” According to Stoddard, some people attended receptions “with the dim idea that they were about to make the acquaintance of the President and his wife, and prepared themselves for a quiet little chat, with stores of questions about this and advice about that for Father Abraham. Others, not expecting much time to themselves, would prepare patriotic little speeches, which they would launch with sudden fervor and wonderfully rapid utterance at the head of the President.”⁴⁸ In July, the Baltimore Patriot reported that people “who have grasped the dexter of successive Presidents from John Quincy Adams, with his pump-handle shake, down to the present time, say that Mr. Lincoln goes through the necessary work of a reception with less fatigue than any of them did. Besides, he has kind looks for everybody, and pleasant words for all who accompany the pressure of his hand with a passing remark.” Lincoln “sends all his fellow citizens of every class and condition away with the impression that they have been

⁴⁶ Washington correspondence by Sigma, 9 March, Cincinnati Commercial, 11 March 1861.

⁴⁷ Nicolay to Therenia Bates, Washington, 10 March 1861, Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 30.

⁴⁸ William O. Stoddard, “White House Sketches,” nos. 2 and 8, New York Citizen, 25 August, 6 October 1866, Stoddard, Inside the White House, ed. Burlingame, 150, 179.

respectfully and kindly treated at the White House.”⁴⁹ Mary Clemmer Ames reported that “Lincoln looks very awkward in white kid gloves, and feels very uncomfortable in new boots; so much so, that at the very first one [reception] he slipped into his easy slippers, then back to the martyrdom, where his honest hand was squeezed in the vice of the ‘sovereign people’ for five weary hours.”⁵⁰ When asked if he did not find shaking so many hands tiresome, he replied: “Oh – it’s hard work, but it is a relief, every way; for here nobody asks me for what I cannot give.”⁵¹

At the March 7 reception for foreign representatives, Lincoln “was polite and engaging toward all.” The Russian minister, Edouard de Stoeckl, reported that generally speaking “the diplomatic corps has only praise for the reception.” (A sarcastic, witty put-down artist, Stoeckl thought the president’s “manners are those of a man who has spent all his life in a small Western town.”)⁵² Two days later, Lincoln received the officers of the navy, including Charles Henry Davis, who described the president as “awkward in his figure and manners, but his awkwardness is not gaucherie. It is by no means vulgar.”⁵³

On March 22, Herman Melville attended the second public reception at the White House. The president, said the eminent novelist, “shook hands like a good fellow – working hard at it like a man sawing wood at so much per cord.” Among the hands he

⁴⁹ Washington correspondence, 18 July, Baltimore Patriot, n.d. copied in the Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 21 July 1861. This reception took place on July 16.

⁵⁰ Washington correspondence 8 January, by Mary Clemmer Ames, Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 11 January 1862.

⁵¹ Unidentified reminiscence, Rochester Daily Democrat, 19 April 1865.

⁵² Betty John Libby, The Sketches, Letters & Journal of Libby Beaman, Recorded in the Pribilof Islands, 1879-1880 (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Council Oak Books; Austin, Texas: Distributed by Texas Monthly Press, 1987), 23; Edouard de Stoeckl to Alexander Gortchakov, Washington, 12 March 1861, dispatch 15, photocopy, Principal Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russian Reproductions, Papers of the Foreign Copying Project, Library of Congress.

⁵³ Charles Henry Davis journal, 9 March 1861, in Charles Henry Davis, Life of Charles Henry Davis, Rear Admiral, 1807-1877 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899), 114-15.

shook was Melville's own. Melville thought Mary Lincoln "rather good-looking."⁵⁴ John W. Forney concurred, reporting that she was "arrayed in greater taste than on the occasion of the first reception" and "is, as all exclaim, an affable, good-looking little lady."⁵⁵ Gustavus Fox told his wife that Mrs. Lincoln was "Lady Like, converses easily, dresses well and has the Kentucky pronunciation."⁵⁶ (Mary Lincoln did not converse easily in French, however. When asked if she spoke that language, she replied "tres poo" and later pronounced "J'entend" to rhyme with "pond.")⁵⁷

In addition to presiding at receptions, Lincoln had to be introduced to the diplomatic corps. The celebrated English journalist William Howard Russell, who would soon become persona non grata as "Bull Run" Russell, vividly described one such event. On March 27, the Chevalier Bertinatti, representing Sardinia (Italy), splendidly decked out with a sword, sash, cocked hat, white gloves, suit of blue and silver lace, and ribbon of the cross of Savoy, made his appearance at the White House. Lincoln presented a striking contrast, entering "with a shambling, loose, irregular, almost unsteady gait, a tall, lank, lean man, considerably over six feet in height, with stooping shoulders, long pendulous arms, terminating in hands of extraordinary dimensions, which, however, were far exceeded in proportion by his feet." He wore "an ill-fitting, wrinkled suit of black, which put one in mind of an undertaker's uniform at a funeral; round his neck a rope of black silk was knotted in a large bulb, with flying ends projecting beyond the collar of his

⁵⁴ Herman Melville to Elizabeth Shaw Melville, Washington, 24, 25 March 1861, Merrell R. Davis and William H. Gilman, eds., The Letters of Herman Melville (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 210.

⁵⁵ Washington correspondence by "Occasional," 24 March, Philadelphia Press, 27 March 1861.

⁵⁶ Fox to his wife, Washington, 27 March 1861, Robert Means Thompson and Richard Wainwright, eds., Confidential Correspondence of Gustavus Vasa Fox, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, 1861-1865 (2 vols.; New York: Printed for the Naval History Society by the De Vinne Press, 1918-19), 1:11.

⁵⁷ John Bigelow diary, New York Public Library (entry for 9 July 1861).

coat; his turned-down shirt-collar disclosed a sinewy muscular yellow neck, and above that, nestling in a great black mass of hair, bristling and compact like a ruff of mourning pins, rose the strange quaint face and head, covered with its thatch of wild republican hair.” The ugly “impression produced by the size of his extremities, and by his flapping and wide projecting ears, may be removed by the appearance of kindness, sagacity, and the awkward bonhommie of his face the mouth is absolutely prodigious; the lips, straggling and extending almost from one line of black beard to the other, are only kept in order by two deep furrows from the nostril to the chin; the nose itself – a prominent organ – stands out from the face, with an inquiring, anxious air, as though it were sniffing for some good thing in the wind; the eyes dark, full, and deeply set, are penetrating, but full of an expression which almost amounts to tenderness; and above them projects the shaggy brow, running into the small hard frontal space, the development of which can scarcely be estimated accurately, owing to the irregular flocks of thick hair carelessly brushed across it. One would say that, although the mouth was made to enjoy a joke, it could also utter the severest sentence which the head could dictate, but that Mr. Lincoln would be ever more willing to temper justice with mercy, and to enjoy what he considers the amenities of life, than to take a harsh view of men's nature and of the world, and to estimate things in an ascetic or puritan spirit.” Anyone “who met Mr. Lincoln in the street would not take him to be what – according to the usages of European society – is called a ‘gentleman;’ and, indeed, since I came to the United States, I have heard more disparaging allusions made by Americans to him on that account than I could have expected among simple republicans, where all should be equals.” (A case in point was the New York clergymen who wished Lincoln “were more of a gentleman,” for he was

“decidedly shabby in his dress & manner.”)⁵⁸ But, Russell added, “it would not be possible for the most indifferent observer to pass him in the street without notice.” As Lincoln “advanced through the room, he evidently controlled a desire to shake hands all round with everybody, and smiled good-humoredly till he was suddenly brought up by the staid deportment of Mr. Seward, and by the profound diplomatic bows of the Chevalier Bertinatti. Then, indeed, he suddenly jerked himself back, and stood in front of the two ministers, with his body slightly drooped forward, and his hands behind his back, his knees touching, and his feet apart. Mr. Seward formally presented the minister, whereupon the President made a prodigiously violent demonstration of his body in a bow which had almost the effect of a smack in its rapidity and abruptness, and, recovering himself, proceeded to give his utmost attention, whilst the Chevalier, with another bow, read from a paper a long address in presenting the royal letter accrediting him as ‘minister resident’; and when he said that ‘the king desired to give, under your enlightened administration, all possible strength and extent to those sentiments of frank sympathy which do not cease to be exhibited every moment between the two peoples, and whose origin dates back as far as the exertions which have presided over their common destiny as self-governing and free nations,’ the President gave another bow still more violent, as much as to accept the allusion. The minister forthwith handed his letter to the President, who gave it into the custody of Mr. Seward, and then, dipping his hand into his coat-pocket, Mr. Lincoln drew out a sheet of paper, from which he read his reply, the most remarkable part of which was his doctrine ‘that the United States were bound by duty not to interfere with the differences of foreign governments and countries.’ After

⁵⁸ Henry W. Bellows to his son, Washington, 17 October 1861, Bellows Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

some words of compliment, the President shook hands with the minister, who soon afterwards retired. Mr. Seward then took me by the hand and said ‘Mr. President, allow me to present to you Mr. Russell, of the London “Times.”’ On which Mr. Lincoln put out his hand in a very friendly manner, and said, ‘Mr. Russell, I am very glad to make your acquaintance, and to see you in this country. The London `Times' is one of the greatest powers in the world, – in fact, I don't know anything which has much more power, – except perhaps the Mississippi. I am glad to know you as its minister.’ Conversation ensued for some minutes, which the President enlivened by two or three peculiar little sallies, and I left agree impressed with his shrewdness, humor, and natural sagacity.”⁵⁹

A few weeks later Russell offered readers of the London Times a similar description of the president. His “sallow, long, and strongly marked face” was, Russell thought, “indicative of shrewdness, honesty, and some love of humour.” Lincoln’s “eyes are deeply set, dark, not very bright, but penetrating and kindly.” His “tall lank body, set on long loose legs, with powerful arms swinging by his sides, is inclined with a slight stoop forwards, and in his movements, if there be not much grace, there is no lack of vigor.”⁶⁰

Another English journalist, Edward Dicey, limned an equally vivid portrait of Lincoln: “If you take the stock English caricature of the typical Yankee, you have the likeness of the President. To say that he is ugly is nothing, to add that his figure is grotesque is to convey no adequate impression. Fancy a man six-foot, and thin out of proportion, with long bony arms and legs, which, somehow, seem to be always in the

⁵⁹ William H. Russell, My Diary North and South (Boston: T.O.H.P. Burnham, 1863), 37-39 (entry for 27 March 1861).

⁶⁰ Washington correspondence, 12 July, London Times, 29 July 1861.

way, with large rugged hands, which grasp you like a vise when shaking yours, with a long scraggy neck, and a chest too narrow for the great arms hanging by its side; add to this figure, a head coconut shaped and somewhat too small for such a stature, covered with rough, uncombed and uncombable lank dark hair, that stands out in every direction at once; a face furrowed, wrinkled, and indented, as though it had been scarred by vitriol; a high, narrow forehead; an, sunk deep beneath bushy eyebrows, two bright, somewhat dreamy eye, that seem to gaze through you without looking at you; a few irregular blotches of black bristly hair in the place where beard and whiskers ought to grow; a close-set, thin-lipped, stern mouth, with two rows of large white teeth; and a nose and ears, which have been taken by mistake from a head of twice the size. Clothe this figure, then, in a long, tight, badly-fitting suit of black, creased, soiled, and puckered up at every salient point of the figure – and every point of this figure is salient – put on large, ill-fitting boots, gloves too long for the long bony fingers, and a fluffy hat, covered to the top with dusty, puffy crepe; and then add to all this an air of strength, physical as well as moral, and a strange look of dignity coupled with all this grotesqueness, and you will have the impression left upon me by Abraham Lincoln. You would never say he was a gentleman: you would still less say he was not one. There are some women about whom no one ever thinks in connection with beauty, one way or the other – and there are men to whom the epithet of ‘gentlemanlike’ or ‘ungentlemanlike’ appears utterly incongruous, and of such the President is one. Still there is about him a complete absence of pretension, and an evident desire to be courteous to everybody, which is the essence, if

not the outward form, of high breeding. There is a softness, too, about his smile, and a sparkle of dry humor about his eye which redeem the expression of his face.”⁶¹

Other Europeans were not as kind as Dicey in describing the president. Prince Napoleon, cousin of Napoleon III, thought Lincoln had “the appearance of a bootmaker” and found him “badly put together, in a black suit.” In his diary he exclaimed: “What a difference between this sad representative of the great republic and her founding fathers!” Withal Lincoln impressed the prince as “a good man, but one without greatness nor very much knowledge.”⁶²

Some Americans concurred. Frederick Law Olmsted, a member of the Sanitary Commission and a noted landscape architect and journalist, gave an unflattering description of Lincoln. In July 1861, he saw the president “dressed in a cheap & nasty French black cloth suit just out of a tight carpet bag” looking like “an applicant for a Broadway squad policemenhip.”⁶³ Echoing Olmsted was another member of the commission, George Templeton Strong, a sophisticated Wall Street lawyer who found the president “lank and hard-featured, among the ugliest white men I have seen,” and emphatically “plebeian.” He had “the laugh of a yahoo, with a wrinkling of the nose that suggests affinity with the tapir and other pachyderms; and his grammar is weak.” In sum, he was “a barbarian, Scythian, yahoo, or gorilla, in respect of outside polish.” But beneath the uncouth surface, Strong detected “a most sensible, straightforward, honest old codger,” both “clear-headed and sound-hearted,” whose “evident integrity and

⁶¹ Dicey, Six Months in the Federal States, 221.

⁶² Ernest d’Hauterive, ed., “Voyage du Prince Napoleon aux Etats-Unis, 1861,” Revue de Paris 40 (1933): 256.

⁶³ Laura Wood Roper, FLO: A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 167.

simplicity of purpose would compensate for worse grammar than his, and for even more intense provincialism and rusticity.” Withal, Strong concluded in January 1862, Lincoln was the “best President we have had since old Jackson’s time.”⁶⁴

John Hay reported that Lincoln “rather enjoyed” the large public receptions and “seemed surprised when people commiserated him upon them.” At those events he shook thousands of hands, “seemingly unconscious of what he was doing, murmuring some monotonous salutation as they went by, his eye dim, his thoughts far withdrawn; then suddenly he would see some familiar face, -- his memory for faces was very good, -- and his eye would brighten and his whole form grow attentive; he would greet the visitor with a hearty grasp and a ringing word and dismiss him with a cheery laugh that filled the Blue Room with infectious good nature.” Many callers “armed themselves with an appropriate speech to be delivered on these occasions, but unless it was compressed into the smallest possible space it never got utterance; the crowd would jostle the peroration out of shape. If it were brief enough and hit the President’s fancy, it generally received a swift answer. One night an elderly gentleman from Buffalo said, ‘Up our way, we believe in God and Abraham Lincoln,’ to which the President replied, shoving him along the line, ‘My friend, you are more than half right.’”⁶⁵

At a typical reception, as fancifully described by Noah Brooks, the marshal of the District of Columbia (Ward Hill Lamon) would announce the names of callers; “Mr. Snifkins of California.” Lincoln would greet him: “I am glad to see you, Mr. Snifkins – you come from a noble State – God bless her.” Snifkins “murmurs his thanks, is as warmly pressed by the hand as though the President had just begun his day’s work on the

⁶⁴ Nevins and Thomas, eds., Strong Diary, 3:188, 204 (entries for 23 October 1861 and 29 January 1862).

⁶⁵ Hay, “Life in the White House in the Time of Lincoln,” 135.

pump handle, and he is replaced by Mr. Biffkins, of New York, who is reminded by the Father of the Faithful that the Empire State has some noble men in the Army of the Union.”⁶⁶ When asked if he did not find shaking so many hands tiresome, he replied: “Oh – it’s hard work, but it is a relief, every way; for here nobody asks me for what I cannot give.”⁶⁷

When Benjamin Brown French, who referred to Mrs. Lincoln as “The Queen,” introduced callers to her, she curtsayed and asked, “How do you do?” She addressed friends with a cordial, “I am glad to see you” and presented her gloved fingertips to indicate her pleasure. French noted that one reception she “greeted every guest with such cheerful good will and kindness as to do infinite credit to her position and her heart.”⁶⁸

After the death of Willie in February 1862, his mother lost interest in entertaining. (Frank B. Carpenter, who spent several months at the White House in 1864, said “she was less hospitable” than any previous First Lady.)⁶⁹

THE LINCOLNS’ CHILDREN

During Lincoln’s first year in office, the solemn atmosphere in the White House was somewhat relieved by his two sons, the studious and lovable Willie (born in 1850) and the irrepressible and lovable Tad (born in 1853). Their older brother Robert was attending Harvard and spent little time in Washington. The young boys, Hay recorded, “kept the house in an uproar. They drove their tutor wild with their good-natured

⁶⁶ Michael Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed: Civil War Dispatches of Noah Brooks (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 17.

⁶⁷ Unidentified reminiscence, Rochester Daily Democrat, 19 April 1865.

⁶⁸ Benjamin Brown French, Witness to the Young Republic: A Yankee's Journal, 1828-1870, ed. Donald B. Cole and John J. McDonough (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1989), 418, 383, 463 (entries for 3 March 1863, 18 December 1861, 22 January 1865).

⁶⁹ Frank B. Carpenter interviewed by Harrydele Hallmark, Los Angeles Times, 17 February 1895.

disobedience; . . . they made acquaintance with the office-seekers and became the hot champions of the distressed.” Willie, “with all his boyish frolic,” was nonetheless “a child of great promise, capable of close application and study. He had a fancy for drawing up railway time-tables, and would conduct an imaginary train from Chicago to New York with perfect precision. He wrote childish verses, which sometimes attained the unmerited honors of print.” Tad, on the other hand, “was a merry, warm-blooded, kindly little boy, perfectly lawless, and full of odd fancies and inventions, the ‘chartered libertine’ of the Executive Mansion. He ran continually in and out of his father’s cabinet, interrupting his gravest labors and conversations with his bright, rapid, and very imperfect speech -- for he had an impediment which made his articulation almost unintelligible until he was nearly grown. He would perch upon his father’s knee, and sometimes even on his shoulder, while the most weighty conferences were going on. Sometimes escaping from the domestic authorities, he would take refuge in that sanctuary for the whole evening, dropping to sleep at last on the floor, when the President would pick him up and carry him tenderly to bed.”⁷⁰ Tad’s appearance as well as his speech was unusual; a journalist deemed him a “rather a grotesque looking little fellow.”⁷¹ He suffered from learning disabilities and took an inordinately long time to learn to read. Lincoln did not mind, for as John Hay noted, he “took infinite comfort in the child’s rude health, fresh fun, and uncontrollable boisterousness. He was pleased to see him growing up in ignorance of books, but with singularly accurate ideas of practical matters. . . . ‘Let him run,’ the easy-going President would say; ‘he has time enough left to learn his letters

⁷⁰ Hay, “Life in the White House in the Time of Lincoln,” 135-36.

⁷¹ “Howard Glyndon” penname of Laura Catherine Redden Searing, “The Truth about Mrs. Lincoln,” The Independent, 10 August 1882, 4-5.

and get pokey. Bob was just such a little rascal, and now he is a very decent boy.”⁷² The Lincolns hired a tutor for the boys, one Alexander Williamson, who reported that the First Lady haggled like a fishwife over his compensation.

The children had ponies, which they loved to ride. In February 1864, a fire burned down the stables, killing those steeds. Upon observing the flames, Lincoln ran toward the stables, vaulted over a hedge, and asked the guards if the horses had been removed. When told they had not, he asked impatiently why and threw open doors. Then he realized that none of the animals within could survive. Concerned for his safety, the guards hustled him back into White House, where he wept, for Willie’s pony was among the animals killed.

Among the White House menagerie on the south lawn were donkeys, horses, and a pair of goats, Nanny and Nanko. Tad hitched the latter to a chair, which he used as a cart, and drove pell-mell through the White House during a reception, to the consternation of many guests. One day Lincoln observed a goat gamboling on the lawn and remarked: “He feeds on my bounty, and jumps for joy. Do you think we could call him a bounty-jumper?”⁷³ In the spring of 1864, when Tad and the First Lady were away on one of their many trips, Lincoln sent her a telegram: “Tell Tad the goats and father are very well, especially the goats.”⁷⁴

Lincoln was fond of the cats that Seward gave to the boys. In April 1862, a dinner guest observed one of the felines perched on a chair next to the president. As he fed it with Executive Mansion cutlery, the First Lady asked: “Don’t you think it is shameful for

⁷² John Hay, “Tad Lincoln,” *New York Tribune*, 19 July 1871, in Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln’s Side, 112.

⁷³ Elizabeth Keckley, Behind the Scenes; or, Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House (New York: G. W. Carleton, 1868), 180.

⁷⁴ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:320

Mr. Lincoln to feed tabby with a gold fork?” Her husband replied: “If the gold fork was good enough for Buchanan I think it is good enough for Tabby” and continued feeding the cat.⁷⁵

Willie and Tad were prankish. One day they commandeered the spring-bell system used to summon servants. Discovering in the attic the node where the cords to the various bells were gathered, they pulled all of them, sending servants scurrying madly from room to room. On another occasion Tad, dressed in a lieutenant’s uniform (Stanton had appointed him to that rank) dismissed the regular guards and assigned the White House staff to protect the house. When his stuffy brother Robert observed this, he indignantly protested to Lincoln, who laughed it off and refused to take any disciplinary action. Late one night, when the servants complained that they could not get Tad into bed, Lincoln excused himself, saying to his guests: “I must go and suppress Tad.” Upon his return, he remarked: “I don’t know but I may succeed in governing the nation, but I do believe I shall fail in ruling my household.”⁷⁶ The public delighted in reading of the boys’ antics, for they were the first youngsters to inhabit the White House (with the exception of John Tyler’s ten-year-old son.)

The Lincoln boys had two playmates, the young sons of a patent office examiner, Horatio Nelson Taft. Eight-year-old “Holly” (Halsey Cook) and eleven-year-old “Bud” (Horatio Nelson Jr.) frequently visited the White House, escorted by their sixteen-year-old sister Julia, and the First Sons often played at the nearby Taft home. The White House roof became the boys’ favorite playground. On it they erected a fort bristling with

⁷⁵ Reminiscences of Mary Miner Hill, 1923, Small Collection 1985, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

⁷⁶ Burlingame, Inner World of Lincoln, 67

a log cannon and some condemned muskets, and sometimes they pretended that the roof was the deck of a man o' war. The attic became a playhouse for the youngsters, who put on a minstrel show there with Tad in blackface and Willie in drag, much to the amusement of a small crowd of sentinels and White House staff who gladly paid the admission charge of five cents. The attic was also the scene of blizzards that Tad created with hundreds of calling cards that had been left by White House visitors. One day Tad took his toy cannon and pretended to fire at the room where the cabinet was in session. During the bombardment, Holly Taft pinched his finger and cried out, prompting Lincoln to interrupt the meeting to see what was wrong.⁷⁷ The president and his wife indulgently smiled on such shenanigans. Lincoln told stories to the four boys, who especially relished tales of bloody conflict between Indians and frontiersmen. He also played on the floor with them. One day Julie Taft found Lincoln pinned down by the lads; when she entered the room, Tad instructed her to sit on the presidential stomach.

Tad once enraged John Watt, the White House gardener, by eating all the strawberries he was growing for a formal dinner party. Watt called the boy a "wildcat." Watt also disapproved of Tad's goat Nannie, who ate flowers promiscuously. One day he escaped from the White House grounds, probably with Watt's assistance. He doubtless was perturbed when Tad dug up the rose garden to make a grave for a Zouave doll named Jack who had fallen asleep on sentry duty (or deserted, or had acted as an enemy spy) and was executed by a firing squad armed with the lad's toy cannon. They performed this funeral several times until Watt suggested that the president might pardon Jack. Inspired by the suggestion, Tad appealed to his father for mercy. After a formal hearing, Lincoln

⁷⁷ Bayne, Tad Lincoln's Father, 43.*

granted the request. One day Tad accidentally broke a large mirror while playing with a ball indoors. Warned that it meant seven years bad luck unless he threw salt over his left shoulder, he promptly dashed to the kitchen and returned with some sodium chloride which he tossed onto the carpet in accordance with the prescribed ritual. The boys formed a military company dubbed “Mrs. Lincoln’s Zouaves,” with Willie as the colonel, Bud the major, Holly the captain, and Tad the “drum major” (at his insistence). Lincoln reviewed the unit ceremoniously. Tad wanted a pistol and finally got one after nagging his parents repeatedly. When the First Lady and the boys were away in June 1863, Lincoln wired her: “Better put ‘Tad’s’ pistol away. I had an ugly dream about him.”⁷⁸

The boys’ fun came to an end with the death of Willie Lincoln in February 1862. Thereafter, Mary Lincoln forbade the Tafts’ sons to enter the White House, for their presence conjured up memories too painful for her to bear.

THE FIRST LADY

In 1864, after calling at the White House, a Quaker wrote Mary Lincoln explaining how she could help the president: “Thou hast it in thy power to strengthen his hands in the great work in which he is engaged, to encourage him in seasons of deep discouragement; to soothe & cheer him in times of depression; to divert his attention in seasons of relaxation, from the heavy pressure of care & the weight of Government; to train his sons to honor their father & their father's God, to shield him from all little cares & annoyances in his home.”⁷⁹ Instead of performing those functions, Mrs. Lincoln was a constant source of anxiety and embarrassment to her husband, who often talked to Orville

⁷⁸ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:256.

⁷⁹ Elizabeth L. Comstock to Mary Todd Lincoln, Baltimore, 26 November 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

H. Browning “about his domestic troubles.” As Browning reported, the president “several times told me there [in the White House] that he was constantly under great apprehension lest his wife should do something which would bring him into disgrace.” David Davis also worried that Mary Lincoln “will disgrace her husband.”⁸⁰ They had good reason to be apprehensive. As if Lincoln did not have enough trouble dealing with recalcitrant generals, editors, senators, governors, congressmen, and cabinet members – not to mention Confederates – the First Lady added immeasurably to his woes.

Among other things, Mary Lincoln meddled in patronage matters, forcing her husband “to do things which he knew were out of place in order to keep his wife’s fingers out of his hair,” as Herndon put it.⁸¹ She was “ambitious of having a finger in the government pie.” In October 1861, D. W. Bartlett of the Springfield, Massachusetts, Republican alleged that she had “made and unmade the political fortunes of men. She is said to be much in conversation with cabinet members, and has . . . held correspondence with them on political topics. Some go so far as to suggest that the president is indebted to her for some of his ideas and projects.” Her “friends compare Mrs Lincoln to Queen Elizabeth in her statesmanlike tastes and capabilities.”⁸² A satirical piece in that newspaper criticized the First Lady for being “stuck up,” for accepting inappropriate gifts, and for wasting taxpayer dollars on elaborate china.⁸³ Even her close friend Mercy

⁸⁰ Browning, interview with Nicolay, Springfield, 17 June 1875, Michael Burlingame, ed., An Oral History of Abraham Lincoln: John G. Nicolay’s Interviews and Essays (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 3; David Davis to his wife, St. Louis, 15 December 1861, Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

⁸¹ Herndon to Jesse W. Weik, Springfield, 5 February 1891, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress.

⁸² Washington correspondence by Van [D. W. Bartlett], 8 October, Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 11 October 1861.

⁸³ Letter by “Polly P. Perkins,” Observatory Hill, East District, 1 October, Springfield, Massachusetts, Republican, 19 October 1861.

Levering Conkling referred to her as “her Royal Highness.”⁸⁴ Among residents of the Bay State who visited Washington, Mrs. Lincoln’s political influence was a major topic of conversation.⁸⁵ Former Congressman David Kilgore of Indiana thought the First Lady “a corrupt woman who controls her husband.”⁸⁶ Her influence reportedly led to “some very curious appointments, more curious than suitable.”⁸⁷ According to the journalist Murat Halstead, some of Lincoln’s “most unfortunate appointments have been made to please his wife who is anxious to be thought the power behind the throne and who is vulgar and pestiferous beyond description.” He added that the First Lady was “a fool – the laughing stock of the town, her vulgarity only the more conspicuous in consequence of her fine carriage and horses and servants in livery and fine dresses, and her damnable airs.”⁸⁸ An antislavery champion, Henry W. Bellows, also called Mary Lincoln “ambitious” and “vulgar.”⁸⁹ She herself told James Gordon Bennett that although she had “a great terror of strong minded Ladies,” she nonetheless believed that “a word fitly spoken and in due time” might induce her husband to make some changes in his cabinet.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Ishbel Ross, The President's Wife: Mary Todd Lincoln, A Biography (New York: Putnam, 1973), 155.

⁸⁵ Undated, anonymous communication in the Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 16 October 1861.

⁸⁶ Gayle Thornbrough et al., eds., The Diary of Calvin Fletcher (7 vols.; Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972-1981), 7:388 (entry for 2 April 1862).

⁸⁷ Washington correspondence by I. C., February 1862 (no day of the month indicated), Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 22 February 1862.

⁸⁸ Halstead to Timothy C. Day, Washington, 11, 8 June 1861, Sarah J. Day, The Man on a Hill Top (Philadelphia: Ware Brothers, 1931), 245, 243.

⁸⁹ Henry W. Bellows to Joseph Bellows, New York, 1 February 1862, Henry W. Bellows Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

⁹⁰ Mary Todd Lincoln to James Gordon Bennett, Washington, 4 October 1862, Turner and Turner, eds., Mary Todd Lincoln, 138.

Mary Lincoln thought of herself as a kind of assistant president and as such tried to influence the initial cabinet selections. From New York, where she went to shop in January 1861, she predicted that Norman B. Judd “would cause trouble & dissatisfaction,” and noted that Wall Streeters testified that “his business transactions, have not always borne inspection.” People in New York, she reported, “were laughing at the idea of Judd, being in any way, connected with the Cabinet in these times, when honesty in high places is so important.” She asked David Davis to use his influence to block Judd, who complained that his opponents were employing every possible tactic to defeat him, “including female influence.”⁹¹ (Nine years later, Mary Lincoln obsequiously and fawningly appealed to Judd to help her win a pension from Congress.)⁹² Some believed Mrs. Lincoln deserved all the credit for blocking Judd, but that seems unlikely. Upon hearing complaints that his wife was meddling in the selection of cabinet members, Lincoln replied: “Tell the gentleman not be alarmed, for I myself manage all important matters.”⁹³

(In Washington, Mary Lincoln’s shopping trip to New York was thought wildly inappropriate. Also criticized were her indiscrete public remarks. “The idea of the President[’]s wife kiting about the country and holding levees at which she indulges in a multitude of silly speeches is looked upon as very shocking,” wrote Herman Kreismann from the capital in January 1861. “Among other interesting speeches of Mrs L. reported

⁹¹ Mary Todd Lincoln to David Davis, New York, 7 January 1861, Turner and Turner, eds., Mary Todd Lincoln, 71; summary of a letter from William Butler, who had spoken with Lincoln, to Judd, n.p., n.d., in Judd to Lyman Trumbull, Chicago, 3 January 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

⁹² Mary Todd Lincoln to Norman B. Judd, Marienbad, 2 June 1870, Turner and Turner, eds., Mary Todd Lincoln, 563-64.

⁹³ Henry B. Stanton, Random Recollections, 221.*

here is that she says her husband had to give Mr Seward a place. The pressure was so great; but he did it very reluctantly.”⁹⁴

Mary Lincoln did not like Seward and let her feelings be known to visitors. When her spouse indicated to a caller that he would appoint the New Yorker secretary of state, she interrupted: “Never! Never! Seward in the Cabinet! Never. If all things should go on all right – the credit would go to Seward – if they went wrong – the blame would fall upon my husband. Seward in the Cabinet! Never!”⁹⁵ Two weeks after the election, she told guests at her home, “The country will find how we regard that Abolition sneak Seward.”⁹⁶ Later, when Mrs. Lincoln insisted to the president that Seward lacked principles and was “worse than Chase,” he replied: “Mother, you are mistaken; your prejudices are so violent that you do not stop to reason. Seward is an able man, and the country as well as myself can trust him.”

She retorted: “Father, you are too honest for this world! You should have been born a saint. You will generally find it a safe rule to distrust a disappointed, ambitious politician. It makes me mad to see you sit still and let that hypocrite, Seward, twine you around his finger as if you were a skein of thread.”⁹⁷

In 1863, Mary Lincoln told Francis P. Blair Sr. “that there was not a member of the Cabinet who did not stab her husband & the Country daily” except his son Montgomery. The First Lady qualified her observation by admitting that “she did not

⁹⁴ Herman Kreismann to Charles Henry Ray, Washington, 16 January 1861, Ray Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

⁹⁵ George B. Lincoln to Gideon Welles, Riverdale, N.J., 25 April 1874, in “New Light on the Seward-Welles-Lincoln Controversy,” Lincoln Lore no. 1718 (April 1981): 2-3.

⁹⁶ Donn Piatt, Memories of the Men Who Saved the Union (New York: Belford, Clarke, 1887), 31.

⁹⁷ Keckley, Behind the Scenes, 131.

know anything about Politics – but her instincts told her that much.”⁹⁸ She also believed that Seward spread unflattering tales about her.⁹⁹

A dramatic case of her lobbying was the First Lady’s effective campaign to have Isaac Henderson, publisher of the New York Evening Post, appointed to a lucrative post in the New York custom house. On February 11, as Lincoln was about to board the train for Washington, his wife threw a tantrum that may have led to the decision to leave her behind in Springfield that day. Henry Villard recalled that Lincoln at that time appeared “so careworn as to excite one’s compassion,” in part because of “the inordinate greed, coupled with an utter lack of propriety, on the part of Mrs. Lincoln,” who “allowed herself to be persuaded, at an early date, to accept presents for the use of her influence with her husband in support of the aspirations of office-seekers.”¹⁰⁰ (Others reported that Lincoln’s expression was as “care worn, or rather thought worn as the face of old Dante,” and that he looked “thinner than usual.”)¹⁰¹ One such bribe was extended by Isaac Henderson, an unsavory self-made man who had sent Mary Lincoln diamond jewelry to enlist her aid in his quest for office. When Lincoln balked, she carried on in hysterics at the hotel suite where they were staying during their final days in Springfield. Her antics caused Lincoln to miss an appointment with Norman B. Judd and Herman Kreismann, a Republican operative who, curious about the president-elect’s tardiness, called at the

⁹⁸ Elizabeth Blair Lee to her husband, Silver Spring, Maryland, 14 January [1863], Virginia Jeans Laas, ed., Wartime Washington: The Civil War Letters of Elizabeth Blair Lee (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 231.

⁹⁹ Anson G. Henry to Isaac Newton, Olympia, Washington Territory, 21 April 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁰⁰ Villard, Memoirs, 1:147-48.

¹⁰¹ Thomas D. Jones to William Linn McMillen, Springfield, 11 February 1861, Lincoln Collection, Lilly Library, Indiana University; J. W. Shaffer to E. B. Washburne, Freeport, 29 January 1861, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

hotel. Shocked to find Mrs. Lincoln in the throes of a fit, Kreismann was told by her husband: “she will not let me go until I promise her an office for one of her friends.” The president-elect eventually acceded to her demand, nominating Henderson to the post he wanted.¹⁰²

Three years later Henderson was dismissed after being indicted for corruption. He allegedly demanded kickbacks from contractors doing business with the Brooklyn Navy Yard; by one estimate, he extorted \$70,000. Although eventually acquitted by a court in 1865, Henderson was believed guilty by Parke Godwin and other knowledgeable observers.¹⁰³

Edgar Welles, the son of Gideon Welles recalled an episode similar to the one observed by Kreissman. As a young boy he stood outside a shop on Pennsylvania Avenue and overheard Mrs. Lincoln tell her husband that if he did not appoint a man of her choice to an office, she would descend from their carriage and roll about on the sidewalk.

¹⁰² This story is related in several sources cited in Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln’s Side, 272. Henderson was warmly recommended by his partners. See John Bigelow to Chase, Buttermilk Falls, 9 March 1861, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

It is possible that Lincoln did not acquiesce right away, which may have prompted her to refuse to travel with him. Later on the 11th, she may have impulsively changed her mind, for she took the night train to Indianapolis to join her husband. Mrs. James C. Conkling told her son that Mrs. Lincoln was impelled by a dispatch from General Scott. Evidently it arrived on the 11th. Mrs. James C. Conkling to Clinton L. Conkling, Springfield, 12 February 1861, Harry E. Pratt, ed., Concerning Mr. Lincoln, in which Abraham Lincoln Is Pictured As He Appeared to Letter Writers of His Time (Springfield: Abraham Lincoln Association, 1944), 49. Cf. Indianapolis correspondence, 11 February, New York World, 15 February 1861, in Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 24. No such dispatch from Scott is in the Lincoln Papers. Henderson was appointed in May, with strong support from John Bigelow. Bigelow diary, New York Public Library (entry for 22 May 1861).

¹⁰³ Parke Godwin to William Cullen Bryant, Roslyn, 31 July 1865, Bryant-Godwin Papers, New York Public Library; Bryant to Gideon Welles, New York, 25 June 1864, draft, ibid.; William E. Chandler to Gideon Welles, Washington, 2 June 1865, plus enclosure, Gideon Welles Papers, New York Public Library; Lincoln to William Cullen Bryant, Washington, 27 June 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:409-10; Bryant to Lincoln, New York, 25 June 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Beale, ed., Welles Diary, 2:54 (entry for 20 June 1864); Charles H. Brown, William Cullen Bryant (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1971), 459-63; Joseph F. Ryan, “Abraham Lincoln and New York City, 1861-1865: War and Politics” (Ph.D. dissertation, St. John’s University, 1969), 266-74. On Henderson, see Allan Nevins, The Evening Post: A Century of Journalism (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922), 426-30.

According to Welles, Lincoln gave in.¹⁰⁴

Bribes offered to Mary Lincoln also helped pave the way for her husband's strange decision to appoint George Denison naval agent in the New York custom house. Denison was a partner of William Henry Marston, son-in-law of Lincoln's friend and banker, Robert Irwin, who urged the appointment. The president hesitated to comply because, as he told Irwin: "I am scared about your friend Dennison. The place is so fiercely sought by, and for, others, while . . . his name is not mentioned at all, that I fear appointing him will appear too arbitrary on my part."¹⁰⁵ In a letter to Lincoln, Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase strongly objected to Denison: "A friend sometimes best proves his friendship by speaking when selfishness counsels silence. Agreeably to your directions I send a Commission for Mr. Dennison; but I shall not fulfill my duty to you if

¹⁰⁴ Ellery Sedgwick, The Happy Profession (Boston: Little, Brown, 1946), 161-62.

¹⁰⁵ Lincoln to Irwin, Washington, 20 March 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:296. To Lincoln, Irwin had made a special plea for his friend: "Enclosed find George Opdycke's letter, endorsing my friend Denison[.] This with the letters already in your hands will certainly satisfy you of his good moral character and capacity for the situation asked for— And now my friend I ask you for his appointment as the only one I have any interest in— I have been a consistent and warm political friend of yours from your first to your last race, and have at all times been for you against all others— Socially I shall not speak of— I ask this as a Republican, and for a working Republican, nor do I think you can have an applicant who will be more strongly recommended. I have arranged for the clerkship for Goudy, if Mr Denison is appointed — of which I will certainly not doubt." Irwin to Lincoln, Springfield, 27 February 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. Among the contestants for the post was Philip Dorsheimer, a prominent German leader. Francis P. Blair to Chase, Silver Spring, 26 March 1861, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Denison was born in 1822 in Greenfield, Massachusetts. Marston was born in Deerfield, N.H. in 1832. In 1851, he began working for a New York bank, Belknap & James, and three years later became a partner in F. P. James & Co. In 1853, he helped set up banks in Wisconsin and Illinois. He remained in the Midwest on and off for the next eight years. He was introduced to Springfield society in 1855. In 1862, he established a Wall Street firm, William H. Marston & Co. According to a biographical sketch of Marston, he was "recognized as the leader in the Stock Market and as one of the boldest and most successful operators that Wall Street had known at that period. During Mr. Marston's residence in the West, his headquarters were at Springfield, Illinois, and Abraham Lincoln was his lawyer and friend. He was also intimate with General John A. Logan." Biographical sketch of Marston, typescript marked "Will appear in the History of Prominent Families of New York, which will be published in Nov.," Bunn Family Papers, Sangamon Valley Collection, Lincoln Library, Springfield; Mrs. John M. Palmer, "Remembrances of Two Springfield Weddings of the Olden Time," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 3 (1910): 40. I am grateful to Linda Garvert for calling these items to my attention. Mrs. Marston accompanied her old friend Mary Lincoln on a tour of New York harbor in July 1861. Wayne C. Temple, "Mary Todd Lincoln's Travels," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 52 (1959): 185-86.

I do not say that I fear, if you make this appointment, you will regret it. When it was first proposed I had heard so little expression either way that I did not feel myself called upon, – though I felt that setting aside so many prominent men for a gentleman so little known in political or financial circles was of questionable expediency, – to say any thing against it. But during the time which has since elapsed many of the most eminent and influential gentlemen of New York have expressed to me such unfavorable opinions of Mr. D– and such strong convictions that his appointment to so high an office will affect the Administration injuriously in quarters whose good opinion is most valuable that I feel myself constrained to say that were the responsibility of decision mine, I should not put my name to the commission.”¹⁰⁶

In reply, Lincoln explained that “the urgent solicitation of an old friend who has served me all my life, and who has never before received or asked anything in return” led to the appointment. “His (Mr. Dennison's) good character was vouched for from the start by many at New York, including Mr. Opdyke.”¹⁰⁷ But some prominent New York reformers questioned Denison’s integrity.¹⁰⁸ James A. Briggs said Denison “only cares to

¹⁰⁶ Chase to Lincoln, Washington, 18 May 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁰⁷ Lincoln to Chase, Washington, 18 May 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:373; Robert Irwin to Lincoln, [Springfield, ca. February 1861], Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress: “Now my friend for the last time – as I do not want to bore [i.e., pester] you cannot you consistently give my Friend Denison the appointment he has solicited you for– I hope you will for my sake as I shall feel mortified and humbled in your not doing it– from the newspapers I gather that there is considerable squabbling for it (as well as all others) and I hope you will end all feeling by appointing my friend.”

¹⁰⁸ Parke Godwin to Lincoln, Washington, 16 April 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. Four days later, Godwin wrote: “It is exceedingly important that the appointment of Mr G. Denison, as naval officer at New York should be delayed. I think I can show that he is a dishonest man, and therefore unworthy of a public trust.” Parke Godwin to Lincoln, New York, 20 April 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. “Ever since my return from Washington I have been very ill in bed, and scarcely able to move. I am of course unable to visit that city again– In reply to your letter of the 19th Inst. I have to say, that my note was founded upon the fact that there has been upon the Ledger of Wm. C Bryant Co. various charges for Job Printing ordered by Mr Denison and delivered to him for which he has steadily refused to pay– These charges begin as far back as 1852, and though he is in good circumstances, and has been repeatedly solicited to pay, he has always evaded the settlement of the account– Today for the first time a Mr. H M Ruggles sends money to the office of W C Bryant Co to pay a small part of Mr Denisons debt, with 8 1/2

make money. He knows nobody, & nobody knows him. His appointment was a party outrage.”¹⁰⁹ Denison helped his cause by giving Mrs. Lincoln a handsome carriage and establishing a \$5000 line of credit for her in New York. Irwin was acting on behalf of Marston, a Wall Street broker with whom Denison formally agreed to split evenly the profits of his lucrative place.¹¹⁰ (Denison abused his power as naval officer, engaging in extortion, seizing ships promiscuously, and pocketing cash from out-of-court settlements that should have gone into the government’s coffers.)¹¹¹ New York Senator Preston King complained to Lincoln about these gifts.¹¹² In 1864, a New York merchant alleged that Denison was an unqualified “good looking boy about 25 years of age, whose only naval experience was obtained as a runner, or collecting clerk” for the New York Evening Post, which allegedly received \$80,000 “worth of pecuniary aid” from Denison. The appointment was made “in order to please the sinister desire of the editors” of that paper.¹¹³ Sam Ward, a Washington insider known as “King of the Lobby,” suggested that there was something unsavory about the relationship between Denison and Mrs.

years interest–. The residue of the demand remains unpaid– Accompanying this is a copy of letter of W C B & Co to H M Ruggles.” This appointment was facilitated by one Mr. Schaub of the Metropolitan, according to James A. Briggs. Oran Follett to Salmon P. Chase, Sandusky, Ohio, 12 November 1862, Chase Papers, Library of Congress. This was perhaps William Schaud, whose collection of paintings was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

¹⁰⁹ James A. Briggs to Salmon P. Chase, Eaton, Ohio, 30 September 1863, Chase Papers, Library of Congress.

¹¹⁰ New York Daily News, 5 April 1861; Oran Follett to Salmon P. Chase, Sandusky, Ohio, 12 November 1862, Chase Papers, Library of Congress; agreement between Marston and Denison, 15 February 1861, Denison Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield. Follett’s informant was James A. Briggs, who later wrote: “I am sorry to say this office was sold.” Annotation by Briggs to an article from the Painesville Press and Advertiser, 13 February 1861, in James A. Briggs Scrapbooks, vol. 1, p. 56, Western Reserve Historical Society. Irwin’s daughter Eliza married Marston in 1859.

¹¹¹ Arthur Harry Rice, “Henry B. Stanton as a Political Abolitionist” (E.D. dissertation, Columbia University Teachers College, 1968), 453-59.

¹¹² King told this to John Bigelow. Bigelow diary, 8 May 1861, New York Public Library.

¹¹³ Samuel Hotaling to William P. Fessenden, New York, 4 July 1864, Fessenden Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society.

Lincoln.¹¹⁴ In Washington, Mary Lincoln would continue to accept bribes and engage in other unethical conduct.¹¹⁵ On March 10, 1861, Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, chairman of the senate foreign relations committee, regaled a friend with stories about how “Mrs Lincoln appointed a collector [of the Port] for Boston on ac[ount] of [her son] ‘Bobby,’ and had made a naval officer” and how “Mrs. Lincoln was meddling with every office in the gift of the Executive.”¹¹⁶ For the Boston collectorship, she favored Amos Tuck of New Hampshire, who had befriended young Robert Lincoln during his year as a student at Phillips Exeter Academy (1859-60). Robert had lived with the Tuck family for a time. The wealthy Republican national leader and lieutenant governor of Massachusetts, John Z. Goodrich, was named collector; Tuck became naval officer in the Boston custom house, which Benjamin Brown French called a “good place – fat salary and no work!” Mary Lincoln wrote friendly letters to the Tucks. In January 1861, Amos Tuck visited Springfield, stayed overnight at the Lincoln home and accompanied Mrs. Lincoln part-way on her trip east to shop. The president-elect had indicated that he might appoint Tuck to the Boston collectorship.¹¹⁷ She also pestered Seward to give a friend the

¹¹⁴ Ward to S. L. M. Barlow, Washington, 21 November [1864?], Barlow Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

¹¹⁵ Burlingame, “Mary Todd Lincoln’s Unethical Conduct as First Lady,” in Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln’s Side, 185-203.

¹¹⁶ Diary of Charles Francis Adams, Jr., entry for 10 March 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Charles Francis Adams, Jr., Charles Francis Adams, 1835-1915: An Autobiography (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), 103.

¹¹⁷ Carl Russell Fish, “Lincoln and the Patronage,” American Historical Review 8 (1902): 58-59; Franklin Brooks, “The Lincoln Years in the Papers of Amos and Edward Tuck,” Dartmouth College Library Bulletin 21 (1981): 64-69; Benjamin Brown French to Henry Flagg French, Washington, 14 March 1861, French Family Papers, Library of Congress. Tuck told John Z. Goodrich, “I was appointed Naval Officer by Mr. Lincoln in March 1861, after tendering me a more elevated position which I could not accept. I was re-appointed by Mr. Lincoln in March 1865.” Tuck to John Z. Goodrich, Boston, January 1866 (no day of the month given), draft, Tuck Family Papers, Dartmouth University.

consulship at Honolulu.¹¹⁸

Mary Lincoln championed William S. Wood, the impresario of the Lincolns' train journey from Springfield, for the post of commissioner of public buildings. She told a senator that he "would always find a very true friend in her" if he would support to the pending nomination of Wood, who "was very popular and very worthy[.]"¹¹⁹ In March, Wood presented the First Lady with a gift of fine horses.¹²⁰ She also urged Ward Hill Lamon to use his influence with the president to have Wood, whom she called "a clever man," one well qualified to "make an efficient Commissioner," appointed despite Lincoln's misgivings.¹²¹ David Davis, who found the appointment of Wood "incomprehensible," was told by the president that "it would be ruinous to appoint him – ruinous to him."¹²²

It is hard to know what to make of Lincoln's statement; perhaps it had something to do with the rumors that his wife was committing adultery with Wood. In June 1861, the president received a pseudonymous letter about a "scandal" involving Mary Lincoln and Wood, who went on shopping trips together to New York. The writer warned that if the rumors about that scandal were published, it would "stab you in the most vital part."¹²³ (Those buying sprees involved extravagant purchases, including shawls costing

¹¹⁸ Mary Lincoln to Seward, Washington, 22 March [1861], Justin G. Turner and Linda Levitt Turner, eds., Mary Todd Lincoln, 81.

¹¹⁹ Manuscript diary of Orville H. Browning, 29 July 1861, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield (entry for 29 July 1861); Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln's Side, 186.

¹²⁰ Hartford Courant, 8 March 1861. The gift was from a group of influential New York citizens.

¹²¹ Mary Lincoln to Ward Hill Lamon, n.p., [11] April [1861], Turner and Turner, eds., Mary Todd Lincoln, 83.

¹²² Davis to Ward Hill Lamon, Bloomington, Illinois, 6 May 1861, and Clinton, Illinois, 31 May 1861, Lamon Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

¹²³ "Union" to Lincoln, Washington, 26 June 1861, typed copy, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield. A notation indicates that the original is in the Nicolay Papers, Library of Congress. It was not there in 2008,

\$650 and \$1000 as well as expensive china and silver plate.)¹²⁴ The president spoke sharply to his wife about this matter; Schuyler Colfax later recalled "the war she had with Mr. Lincoln" about her relations with Wood. According to Colfax, the First Couple "scarcely spoke together for several days."¹²⁵ An Iowan, referring to Wood, claimed that Mary Lincoln "used to often go from the White House to the Astor House in New York to pass the night with a man who held a high government office in Washington, given to him by her husband."¹²⁶ Benjamin Brown French called Wood a "libertine" and "a disgrace to the Nation, to Lincoln & to the office." A friend of French's, "whose wife he [Wood] undertook to seduce," termed Wood a "damned infernal villain."¹²⁷ Others regarded Wood as "a great scamp."¹²⁸

Mary Lincoln may have been unfaithful with men other than Wood. John Watt, the White House gardener, told a journalist in 1867 that "Mrs. Lincoln's relations with certain men were indecently improper" and claimed to be well informed about "the

though a card file in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, cataloguing all items in the Nicolay Papers, indicates that it once was.

¹²⁴ New York correspondence, n.d., Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch, n.d., copied in the Cincinnati Commercial, 28 May 1861.

¹²⁵ Colfax to John G. Nicolay, South Bend, Indiana, 17 July 1875, Nicolay Papers, Library of Congress.

¹²⁶ The source of this story was Lincoln H. King, who claimed that he knew Mrs. Lincoln's paramour "intimately" in New York in the late nineteenth century. The Sky Rocket (Primghar, Iowa), 15 March 1929; King to William E. Barton, Primghar, Iowa, 9 August 1930, Barton Papers, University of Chicago. King was born in either 1858 or 1860 in State Center, Iowa, and became a contractor and builder. He lived for a time in Marshalltown, Iowa, and died in Primghar, Iowa, in 1937. He supervised the construction of the huge Prudential Life Insurance Building in Newark, N.J. (erected 1901), as well as several other major structures throughout the country. John Licinius Everett Peck, Otto Hillock Montzheimer, and William J. Miller, Past and Present of O'Brien and Osceola Counties, Iowa (2 vols.; Indianapolis: B. F. Bowen, 1914), 2:896.

¹²⁷ Benjamin Brown French to his son Frank, Washington, 3 September 1861, French Family Papers, Library of Congress.

¹²⁸ James R. Doolittle to his wife Mary, Washington, 16 February 1862, Doolittle Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

secrets of Mrs. Lincoln’s domestic affairs.”¹²⁹ Rumors circulated that Watt himself had “too great an intimacy” with her.¹³⁰ Oswald Garrison Villard, son of the noted journalist Henry Villard, asserted that Robert Todd Lincoln “systematically bought up any books that reflected [poorly] on Mrs. Lincoln,” including one by “the Hungarian adventurer who very nearly succeeded in eloping with Mrs. Lincoln from the White House.”¹³¹ She purportedly wrote to her confidant Abram Wakeman, postmaster of New York, saying “I have taken your excellent advice and decided not to leave my husband while he is in the White House.”¹³² In 1870, Illinois Senator Richard Yates hinted broadly that Mary Lincoln had been unfaithful, telling his colleagues that “there are recollections and memories, sad and silent and deep, that I will not recall publicly Amid all the perils of life, and its devastation, amid good and evil report, a woman should be true to her husband. . . . I shall not . . . go into details.”¹³³ Edward McManus, a White House doorkeeper, evidently made a similar allegation to Thurlow Weed.¹³⁴

Lincoln finally agreed to appoint Wood only after the First Lady shut herself in her room.¹³⁵ She used the same tactic to win an army officer’s commission for Watt, who colluded with her in padding bills.¹³⁶ Maine Senator William P. Fessenden and the

¹²⁹ George W. Adams to [David Goodman] Croly, Washington, 7 October 1867, Manton Marble Papers, Library of Congress; New York Tribune, 17 October 1867.

¹³⁰ Z. Young to Lincoln, Washington, 9 November 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

¹³¹ Oswald Garrison Villard to Isaac Markens, New York, 26 March 1927, Lincoln Collection, Brown University.

¹³² Letter to Wakeman seen by Wakeman’s daughter, who described it to her own daughter, Elizabeth M. Alexanderson, of Englewood, New Jersey. Newark, N. J., Star, 3 March 1951.

¹³³ Congressional Globe, 41st Congress, 2nd session, 5397 (9 July 1870).

¹³⁴ Turner and Turner, eds., Mary Todd Lincoln, 202.

¹³⁵ William Howard Russell diary, 3 November 1861, Martin Crawford, ed., William Howard Russell’s Civil War: Private Diary and Letters, 1861-1862 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 162 (entry for 3 November 1861).

¹³⁶ On Watt, see Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln’s Side, 191-98.

historian George Bancroft both heard that she “wished a rogue [Watt] who had cheated the government made a lieutenant: the cabinet thrice put the subject aside. One morning in came Lincoln sad and sorrowful: ‘Ah,’ said he, ‘to-day we must settle the case of Lieutenant [Watt]. Mrs. Lincoln has for three nights slept in a separate apartment.’”¹³⁷

Wood did not last long as commissioner. After learning from a congressional delegation that Wood was corrupt, Lincoln obtained his resignation. While serving as commissioner-of-public-buildings-designate (the senate had not yet acted on his nomination), Wood told one Samuel A. Hopkins: "I understand that you are here . . . trying to get work from the government in the way of engraving. I want to tell you, as a friend, that there is no use at all of trying; that the work will be given to the American Bank Note Company and the National Bank Note Company." When Hopkins protested that his firm could do the work better and cheaper than those competitors, Wood explained that the contract would not go to him because Wood himself had an interest in the American Bank Note Company and that influential New York Republicans like George S. Denison and William H. Marston had an interest in the National Bank Note Company. Hopkins then said he was trying to sell the government some cannons for \$500 apiece. Wood replied: "Well, I can help you in that matter. Say nothing about the price; we can make something out of that. If the government wants them, they can as well afford to pay more as less. I will take you down and introduce you to Mr. Leslie, the chief clerk of the War Department." After Hopkins told this story on August 30, 1861, to a congressional committee investigating government contracts, members of the committee

¹³⁷ George Bancroft to his wife, [Washington], 12 December 1861, M.A. De Wolfe Howe, The Life and Letters of George Bancroft (2 vols.; New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1908), 2:144-45; William P. Fessenden to Elizabeth Warriner, Washington, 8 December 1861, Lincoln Collection, Western Reserve Historical Society.

promptly informed Lincoln, and Wood was replaced on September 6.¹³⁸

A week later Mary Todd Lincoln denounced Wood "as a very bad man" who "does not know, what truth means." Everyone, she claimed, regarded him as "a most unprincipled man." Her wrath had been occasioned in part by Wood's charge that her friend John Watt was disloyal.¹³⁹ In addition, he allegedly refused to falsify bills to the government at her behest.¹⁴⁰

Mrs. Lincoln lobbied on behalf of a pompous former New York congressman, Caleb Lyon, who had written some puff pieces about her for newspapers.¹⁴¹ (Horace Greeley noted that Mary Lincoln "enjoys flattery – I mean deference."¹⁴² She reportedly took offense at "the want of attention" from Jessie Benton Frémont when that formidable wife of John C. Frémont called at the White House.)¹⁴³ Lyon was named governor of the

¹³⁸ Government Contracts, House Report No. 2, 37th Congress, 2nd session, vol. 1 (serial no. 1142), 72-73, 501-505. The exact chronology of this story is confused. On August 8, it was reported that the president would remove Wood and name Benjamin Brown French in his stead. Lincoln told French that he would appoint him commissioner of public buildings on September 1. In fact, the appointment was made on September 6. French, Witness to the Young Republic, ed. Cole and McDonough, 370-74. Mary Todd Lincoln claimed that her husband, "to save his [Wood's] family from disgrace – When the Senate would not confirm him, [re]nominated him until the 1st of Sep. with a promise from him, he would resign." Mary Todd Lincoln to John F. Potter, Washington, 13 September 1861, Turner and Turner, eds., Mary Todd Lincoln, 104. B. B. French explained that he was appointed by Lincoln without consulting him, but before the document was signed the president decided that it was his duty to reappoint Wood. So, French told his son, "I was sent for to go to the President's, and had an interview with both him and Mrs. Lincoln. I have the vanity to believe that Mrs. L. and I rather cottoned to each other. The President explained that when he ordered my appointment he thought that Mr. Wood had been rejected by the Senate, but finding that he had not been – only laid over – and being very strong pressed by Mr. W. & his friends to give Mr. Wood an opportunity to resign! he had concluded to appoint him until the 1st of Sept. when he is to resign and I am to be appointed." B. B. French to his son Frank, Washington, 20 August 1861, French Family Papers, Library of Congress.

¹³⁹ Mary Todd Lincoln to John F. Potter, Washington, 13 September 1861, Turner and Turner, eds., Mary Todd Lincoln, 104.

¹⁴⁰ William Howard Russell diary, 3 November 1861, Crawford, ed., Russell's Civil War, 162.

¹⁴¹ Anson G. Henry to Isaac Newton, Olympia, Washington Territory, 21 April 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁴² Greeley to Beman Brockway, Washington, 12 March 1861, Greeley Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁴³ Wendell Phillips told this to the journalist Samuel Wilkeson. Wilkeson to Sydney Howard Gay, [Washington], n.d., Gay Papers, Columbia University.

Idaho Territory, where he proved a woefully inadequate administrator, spending less than half his time in the territory and embezzling money designated for Indian tribes.¹⁴⁴

When the New York World reported that in “the scramble for jobs presidential relatives did well,” it was doubtless referring to Lincoln’s in-laws, among them two of his wife’s brothers-in-law, William S. Wallace (paymaster of volunteers) and Ninian Edwards (commissary of subsistence). Wallace’s brother Edward became naval officer at Philadelphia.¹⁴⁵ Mary Lincoln boasted that she had fought a “hard battle” to get William Wallace appointed.¹⁴⁶ Lincoln explained that Wallace “is needy, and looks to me; and I personally owe him much.”¹⁴⁷ According to Herndon, Lincoln said Wallace was “appointed to a bureau simply to ‘keep hell’ out his own family!”¹⁴⁸

Mary Lincoln’s cousins fared well in the patronage lottery. Lyman Beecher Todd became postmaster of Lexington, Kentucky.¹⁴⁹ Thomas M. Campbell held the same post at Boonville, Missouri. Lincoln nominated John Blair Smith Todd as a brigadier general,

¹⁴⁴ Ralph Y. McGinnis and Calvin N. Smith, eds., Abraham Lincoln and the Western Territories (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1993), 150-55; James W. Nesmith to James Harlan, Cincinnati, 23 October 1865, Lyon file, Letters of Application and Recommendation During the Administrations of Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson, 1861-1869, Record Group 59, M 650, National Archives; Deren Earl Kellogg, “The Lincoln Administration and the Southwestern Territories” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1998), 217.

¹⁴⁵ William S. Wallace to Lincoln, Springfield, 11 April 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. Edward Wallace was the brother of William S. Wallace, who wed Mary’s sister Frances. Ninian Edwards was given the rank of captain and assigned to serve as commissary of General McClernand’s brigade. See O. H. Browning to N. W. Edwards, Washington, 14 July 1861, Lincoln Collection, Chicago History Museum; Lincoln to Edwards, Washington, 19 June 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:412.

¹⁴⁶ Mary Lincoln to Elizabeth Todd Grimsley, Washington, 29 September 1861, Turner and Turner, eds., Mary Todd Lincoln, 105.

¹⁴⁷ Lincoln to John Todd Stuart, Washington, 30 March 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:303.

¹⁴⁸ Herndon’s account in Caroline Dall, “Journal of a Tour through Illinois, Wisconsin and Ohio, Oct. & Nov. 1866,” entry for 29 October 1866, Dall Papers, Bryn Mawr College.

¹⁴⁹ Lyman Beecher Todd to Jesse W. Weik, Lexington, 17 April 1895, Jesse W. Weik,

The Real Lincoln: A Portrait, ed. Michael Burlingame (1922; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 375.

but the senate rejected him.¹⁵⁰ Lockwood Todd was appointed U.S. drayman for the San Francisco Custom House, a highly remunerative post.¹⁵¹ That selection touched off a furor. Charles S. Todd, a distant relative, became a tax assessor in Kentucky.¹⁵²

The appointment of Ninian Edwards, husband of Mary Lincoln's eldest sister Elizabeth, caused much aggravation to the president, who had been warned that Edwards associated with corrupt men.¹⁵³ Along with another quartermaster, William H. Bailhache, Edwards used his post to enrich himself, triggering protests from several of Lincoln's Springfield friends.¹⁵⁴ When Edward L. Baker defended them, Lincoln replied: "The appeal to me in behalf of Mr. Edwards and Mr. Bailhasche, for a hearing, does not meet the case. No formal charges are preferred against them, so far as I know; nor do I expect any will be made; or, if made, will be substantiated. I certainly do not suppose Mr. Edwards has, at this time of his life, given up his old habits, and turned dishonest; and while I have not known Mr. Bailhasche so long, I have no more affirmative reason to suspect him. The trouble with me is of a different character. Springfield is my home, and there, more than elsewhere, are my life-long friends. These, for now nearly two years, have been harrassing me because of Mr. E. & Mr. B. I think Mr. E. & Mr. B. without

¹⁵⁰ Norman Thomas, "John Blair Smith Todd, First Dakota Delegate to Congress," South Dakota Historical Collections 24 (1949): 202.

¹⁵¹ Isaac Swain to James F. Simmons, San Francisco, 2 July 1861, Simmons Papers, Library of Congress; Sam J. Bridge to E. B. Washburne, San Francisco, 13 June 1862, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁵² Harry J. Carman and Reinhard H. Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 190.

¹⁵³ Jesse K. Dubois, Ozias Hatch, and William Butler to Lincoln, Springfield, 22 July 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. David Davis, however, warmly endorsed his candidacy for an office. David Davis to Lincoln, Bloomington, 26 July 1861, ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Jesse K. Dubois, William Butler, and Ozias M. Hatch to Lincoln, Springfield, 21 October 1861; William Yates to Lincoln, Springfield, 22 May 1863; Jesse K. Dubois to Lincoln, Springfield, 23 May 1863; Ozias M. Hatch to Lincoln, Springfield 25 May 1863; George R. Weber to Lincoln, Springfield, 25 May 1863; Shelby M. Cullom to Lincoln, Springfield, 25 May 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

dishonesty on the other hand, could have saved me from this, if they had cared to do so. They have seemed to think that if they could keep their official record dryly correct, to say the least, it was not any difference how much they might provoke my friends, and harrass me. If this is too strong a statement of the case, still the result has been the same to me; and, as a misfortune merely, I think I have already borne a fair share of it.”¹⁵⁵

Mary Lincoln also worked hard to get her cousin Lizzie Grimsley the postmastership in Springfield.¹⁵⁶ Behind the scenes, Lincoln and Nicolay both urged Illinois friends to have her chosen by an election among the various candidates for that post.¹⁵⁷ To Lincoln’s appeal, John Todd Stuart replied: “I would not let the case of Cousin Lizzie trouble me if I were you[.] No one will complain of you if you do not give her the appointment while very many doubtless would complain of her appointment and would have much show of reason because the appointment of a lady would be unusual.”¹⁵⁸ (It would have been unusual but hardly unique; 411 women served as postmasters during Lincoln’s administration.)¹⁵⁹ When Lincoln explained “that a Post-Mistress in a place the size of Springfield would produce dis-satisfaction,” Lizzie

¹⁵⁵ Lincoln to Baker, Washington, 15 June 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:275-76. Bailhache held a position in the quartermaster’s department throughout the war. William H. Bailhache, “History of Service,” undated memo, Lincoln Collection, Brown University.

¹⁵⁶ Elizabeth Todd Grimsley to John Todd Stuart, Washington, 20 March 1861, Grimsley Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

¹⁵⁷ Lincoln to Stuart, Washington, 30 March 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:303; Nicolay to Ozias M. Hatch, Washington, 31 March 1861, Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 32. Elections to choose postmasters were not common, but this was not a unique case. Fish, Civil Service and the Patronage, 176. Lincoln had been urged to announce that postmasters would be chosen by election. Schuyler Colfax to Lincoln, South Bend, Indiana, 6 July 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁵⁸ John T. Stuart to Lincoln, Springfield, 3 April 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. One journal reported that “the Post Office Department had enrolled among its army of employees a goodly corps of postmistresses and post office clerks.” United States Mail, n.d., copied in the New York Daily News, 13 March 1861.

¹⁵⁹ Holbrook’s United States Mail, n.d., copied in the New York Herald, 20 July 1862. Department regulations forbade the employment of married women whose husbands were alive. John Kasson to Chase, Washington, 18 June 1861, Chase Papers, Library of Congress.

Grimsley immediately abandoned her quest.¹⁶⁰ Moody, who was considered not a good enough party worker for the postmastership, was offered a job either as commissary of subsistence or as a quartermaster, but he turned them down because they would take him out of Springfield.¹⁶¹

When Shelby Cullom, the speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives, asked for control of both that office and the revenue collectorship in Springfield, the president replied: “Well, you may have the collectorship, but the Post Office I think I promised to old Mrs. [Seymour] Moody for her husband. I can not let you have the post office, Cullom; take the collectorship.”

“Now, why can’t you be liberal, and let me have both?” responded Cullom.

“Mrs. Moody would get down on me,” said the beleaguered chief executive.¹⁶²

Ultimately Mrs. Grimsley and Mr. Moody both lost out to Lincoln’s friend, John Armstrong. Moody was offered a job either as commissary of subsistence or as a quartermaster, but he turned them down because they would take him out of Springfield.¹⁶³

Lizzie Grimsley’s appointment would have pleased not only Mary Lincoln but also Lydia Sayer Hasbrouck, who described herself as “a wife, mother tax payer and hard working woman.” She appealed to Lincoln for “a juster recognition of woman's individuality than has hitherto been shown her in the distribution of such offices as she is well fitted to fill.” Boldly she asserted that it was “useless for me to remind an intelagent

¹⁶⁰ Elizabeth J. Grimsley to Lincoln, Springfield, 22 November 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁶¹ Eliphalet B. Hawley to Lincoln, Springfield, 19 December 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Basler, “Lincoln Helps his Old Friends,” 6.

¹⁶² Washington correspondence, 12 February, St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 14 February 1895, p. 23. See Mrs. Seymour Moody to Lincoln, Springfield, 19 July 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁶³ Basler, “Lincoln Helps his Old Friends,” 6.

citizen of our progressive west of the growing spirit of discontent among the hard working, unrepresented tax paying women of America in relation to the manner in which men arrogate to themselves all power offices &c &c. The power is now yours to heal to some extent this growing spirit of discontent and wounded selfhood by giving to the working intelligent tax paying women who have (indirectly helped to raise you to power, a small share in the many offices at your disposal; It will be only an act of simple justice which thousands of women trust you will honor your administration by performing Thousands of Post and other offices might be filled in this way by worthy women in lieu of making them pass for able bodied men to such who are too lazy to split rails or plow.”¹⁶⁴

Mary Lincoln boasted that she significantly influenced the president’s appointments. “My husband placed great confidence in my knowledge of human nature,” she said in 1866. “He had not much knowledge of men.”¹⁶⁵ In fact, her voice counted for little except in minor cases like Watt, Henderson, and Wood. When she criticized officials, Lincoln chided her, saying: “you are too suspicious” and “you are disposed to magnify trifles.”¹⁶⁶ Some cabinet members resisted her meddling. When she lobbied to have a “half loafer, half gentleman” appointed to office, Edwin M. Stanton, who in 1862 replaced Cameron as secretary of war, replied: “If I should make such appointments, I

¹⁶⁴ Lydia Sayer Hasbrouck to Lincoln, Middletown, N. Y., 8 March 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁶⁵ Mary Lincoln, interview with William H. Herndon, [September 1866], Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants: Letters, Interviews, and Statements about Abraham Lincoln (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 359.

¹⁶⁶ Keckley, Behind the Scenes, 129.

should strike at the very root of all confidence in the government, in your husband, you and me.”¹⁶⁷

Ben Hardin Helm, husband of Mary Lincoln’s half-sister Emilie, sought a paymaster’s job, enlisting the aid of Joseph Holt in his quest.¹⁶⁸ When Lincoln obligingly offered Helm the post, he reluctantly turned it down in order to join the Confederate Army; he later said, “The most painful moment of my life was when I declined the generous offer of my brother-in-law.”¹⁶⁹ When Helm was killed at the battle of Chickamauga in 1863, Lincoln declared: “I feel as David of old did when he heard of the death of Absalom. ‘Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!’”¹⁷⁰

The largesse enjoyed by Mary Lincoln’s family created bad blood in Illinois. Ebenezer Peck bitterly remarked that the president “and his wife have some relatives not yet provided for” and that “until all these shall have been provided for, all newer friends I suppose must needs wait.”¹⁷¹ William Jayne thought it “very strange how as bitter a democrat as Capt [Lockwood] Todd can have so much influence over Mr Lincoln.”¹⁷²

Lincoln was clearly embarrassed by the extensive patronage given to the Todds. To one of his wife’s importunate cousins, he asked: “Will it do for me to go on and justify the declaration that Trumbull and I have divided out all the offices among our

¹⁶⁷ “The Late Secretary Stanton,” Army and Navy Journal, 1 January 1870.

¹⁶⁸ Helm to Lyman Trumbull, Louisville, 14 March 1861, Holt Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁶⁹ Helm, True Story of Mary, 188.8

¹⁷⁰ Washington City Herald, n.d., quoting a statement made by David Davis in 1877, reprinted in Emanuel Hertz, ed., Lincoln Talks: A Biography in Anecdote (New York: Viking, 1939), 660.

¹⁷¹ Peck to Lyman Trumbull, Chicago, 27 August 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁷² William Jayne to Lyman Trumbull, Yankton, Dakota Territory, 13 October 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

relatives?”¹⁷³ (One relative Lincoln did not accommodate was his son Robert, who wrote on behalf of a friend seeking the postmastership of Cambridge, Massachusetts, where the lad was enrolled at Harvard. Upon reading that letter, the president replied sharply: “If you do not attend to your studies and let matters such as you write about alone, I will take you away from college.”)¹⁷⁴

Mary Lincoln’s meddling in patronage matters was not the only topic that her critics dwelled on; her rustic, penny-pinching ways also set tongues to wagging. On March 11, Charles Francis Adams Jr. attended a reception at which she was discussed: “All manner of stories about her were flying around; she waited to do the right thing, but, not knowing how, was too weak and proud to ask; she was going to put the White House on an economical basis, and, to that end, was about to dismiss ‘the help,’ as she called the servants; some of whom, it was asserted, had already left because ‘they must live with gentlefolks’; she had got hold of newspaper reporters and railroad conductors, as the best persons to go to for advice and direction.”¹⁷⁵ Some believed Mary Lincoln was “close” with money because she wanted to preserve her husband’s salary “as much as possible to build them a house after [his] term at Washington expires.”¹⁷⁶ She allegedly told a White House staffer that she and her husband “were poor and hoped to save twelve thousand dollars every year from their salary.”¹⁷⁷ One Sunday in the New York Avenue

¹⁷³ Lincoln to John Todd Stuart, Washington, 30 March 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:303.

¹⁷⁴ Henry S. Huidekoper, “Lincoln as I Knew Him,” Philadelphia Ledger, 7 February 1915.

¹⁷⁵ Charles Francis Adams, Jr., diary entry for 11 March 1861, in Charles Francis Adams, Jr., Charles Francis Adams, 1835-1915: An Autobiography (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), 103.

¹⁷⁶ Comments of Mrs. Owen Lovejoy, paraphrased in the Reverend David Todd to the Reverend John Todd, Providence, Illinois, 11 June 1862, copy, Randall Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁷⁷ Mary Boykin Chesnut’s Civil War, ed. C. Vann Woodward (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 21 (diary entry for 10 March 1861).

Presbyterian church, she and her husband both placed contributions in the collection plate. As the collector moved on to the next pew, Lincoln drew him back and whispered: “I want to contribute more than that; come to the White House in the morning.”¹⁷⁸ In 1861, William Howard Russell recorded that Mary Lincoln “beat down a poor widow” by paying her fourteen cents instead of twenty for cloth “after much chaffing.”¹⁷⁹ She sought to sell the milk produced by the White House cows and haggled over the price unbecomingly.

While Lincoln gave offices to many of his wife’s relatives, he did little to accommodate his mother’s family.¹⁸⁰ Dennis Hanks sought in vain to be named postmaster of Charleston.¹⁸¹ When John Hanks asked for an Indian agency, Lincoln was eager to oblige his old partner in rail splitting. “He is thoroughly honest and his son has a tolerable education and might be his clerk,” the president told Henry C. Whitney. But Hanks’s illiteracy posed an insuperable barrier to his appointment. (In 1864, Hanks wrote to Lincoln complaining that “you hav given som of the best offices to men that I consider mi self so peair to them her under mi nose I dont think you hav treated me rite all though you hav don your duty as a president wich you ar not to blame I hav allways hav loved you from Child hood and Still think well ove you.”)¹⁸² Whitney remarked a propos of the president’s failure to gratify his cousins, “Lincoln regarded his obligation to duty as a

¹⁷⁸ Washington Post, 12 March 1893, 2.

¹⁷⁹ Burlingame, Inner World of Lincoln, 275.

¹⁸⁰ Charles H. Coleman, Abraham Lincoln and Coles County, Illinois (New Brunswick: Scarecrow Press, 1955), 211-14.

¹⁸¹ Hanks to Herndon, 26 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants, 177.

¹⁸² John T. Hanks to Lincoln, Canyon Village, Oregon, 25 February 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

stronger obligation than that to friendship.”¹⁸³ Dennis Hanks’s son-in-law, Augustus H. Chapman, sought unsuccessfully to become marshal for the southern district of Illinois, though Lincoln wanted to appoint him.¹⁸⁴

The First Lady’s sartorial taste also scandalized polite society. Alexander K. McClure reported that she “was vain, passionately fond of dress and wore her dresses shorter at the top and longer at the train than even fashion demanded. She had great pride in her elegant neck and bust, and grieved the president greatly by her constant display of her person and her fine clothes.”¹⁸⁵ Observing a particularly low-cut dress she wore, Lincoln told his wife one day: “Mother, it is my opinion, if some of that tail was nearer the head, it would be in better style.”¹⁸⁶

Mary Lincoln shocked many people at the Edward D. Baker’s funeral by appearing in a lilac dress, bonnet and gloves. Some members of her circle, thinking she should be made aware of that breach of etiquette, dispatched one of her closest friends to convey the message. Upon arriving at the White House, the emissary was greeted by Mary Lincoln with an exclamation: “I am so glad you have come, I am just as mad as I can be. Mrs. Crittenden has just been here to remonstrate with me for wearing my lilac suit to Colonel Baker’s funeral. I wonder if the women of Washington expect me to muffle myself up in mourning for every soldier killed in this great war?”

¹⁸³ Henry C. Whitney, Life on the Circuit with Lincoln, ed. Paul M. Angle (1892; Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1940), 419.

¹⁸⁴ A. H. Chapman to Lincoln, Charleston, Illinois, 3 January 1861, National Archives; Thomas A. Marshall to Lincoln, Charleston, Illinois, 14 April 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. During the Civil War, Chapman served as a lieutenant colonel. In January 1865, his wife appealed in vain to Lincoln to give him a government job, though the president did expedite his early release from the service. Lincoln’s successor named Chapman to an Indian agency. Harriet A. Chapman to Lincoln, Charleston, Illinois, 17 January 1865, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Coleman, Lincoln and Coles County, 150-52.

¹⁸⁵ A. K. McClure to Alonzo Rothschild, Philadelphia, 9 May 1907, Lincoln Contemporaries Collection, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne.

¹⁸⁶ Keckley, Behind the Scenes, 101.

“But Mrs. Lincoln,” came the reply, “do you not think black more suitable to wear at a funeral because there is a great war in the nation?”

“No, I don’t. I want the women to mind their own business; I intend to wear what I please.”¹⁸⁷

In August, Prince Napoleon noted that at a White House dinner “Mrs. Lincoln was dressed in the French style without any taste; she has the manner of a petit bourgeois and wears fake jewelry.”¹⁸⁸ Three months later the prominent English journalist William Howard Russell recorded in his diary: “Poor Mrs. Lincoln [--] a more preposterous looking female I never saw.”¹⁸⁹ In February 1862, he wrote that at a grand White House party she resembled “a damned old Irish or Scotch (or English) washerwoman dressed out for a Sunday at Highbury Barn.”¹⁹⁰ Oregon Senator James Nesmith was equally appalled by the First Lady’s appearance at that event: “The weak minded Mrs Lincoln had her bosom on exhibition and a flower pot on her head, while there was a train of silk or satin drag[g]ing on the floor behind her of several yards in length.” Nesmith “could not help regretting that she had degenerated from the industrious and unpretending woman that she was in the days when she used to cook Old Abe[’]s dinner, and milk the cows with her own hands.” Now, he acidly observed, “[h]er only ambition seems to be to

¹⁸⁷ Clipping from the New York Commercial Gazette, 9 January 1887, Randall Papers, Library of Congress; Washington correspondence, by Vidette, 11 December 1861, New York Commercial Advertiser, 13 December 1861; reminiscences of John Palmer Usher, unidentified clipping, Otto Eisenschml Papers, University of Iowa.

¹⁸⁸ Ernest d’Hauterive, ed., “Voyage du Prince Napoleon aux Etats-Unis, 1861,” Revue de Paris 40 (1933): 259 (diary entry for 6 August 1861).

¹⁸⁹ Martin Crawford, ed., William Howard Russell’s Civil War: Private Diary and Letters, 1861-1862 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 185 (diary entry for 24 November 1861).

¹⁹⁰ Russell to John T. Delane, Quebec, 11 February 1862, ibid., 222.

exhibit her own milking apparatus to the public eye.”¹⁹¹ A guest at a White House reception noted that the First Lady “wore a very low-necked dress, reminding me of the ‘French fool’ fashion.”¹⁹² A Democratic newspaper described her on one occasion as a “coarse, vain, unamiable . . . sallow, fleshy, uninteresting woman in white robes, and wearing a band of white flowers about her forehead, like some over-grown Ophelia. . . . She has less taste than any woman in the land of her half pretensions. She does not distinguish the grande monde from the demi monde.”¹⁹³ At a later reception she struck a Massachusetts economist as “a dowdy little woman.”¹⁹⁴ Mary Clemmer Ames told readers of the Springfield, Massachusetts, Republican that the “very dumpy” First Lady “stuns me with her low-necked dresses and the flower-beds which she carries on the top of her head.”¹⁹⁵ Another female correspondent for that paper noted that Mrs. Lincoln had “a beautiful bust, which was largely shown to admiring gaze” at a White House reception.¹⁹⁶ A general’s wife was scandalized by the “bad manners” of the First Lady, who was “preposterously attired” and said “‘yes ma’am,’” and ‘no ma’am’ like a servant-woman.”¹⁹⁷

¹⁹¹ James W. Nesmith to his wife, Washington, 5 February 1862, photocopy, Randall Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁹² E. S. Denison to Dudley C. Denison, Washington, 15 February 1864, George S. Denison Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁹³ An unidentified New York paper copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 30 October 1864.

¹⁹⁴ Edward Atkinson to his wife, Washington, [26 February 1865], Atkinson Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹⁹⁵ Washington correspondence by Mary Clemmer Ames, 8 January, Springfield, Massachusetts, Republican, 11 January 1862.

¹⁹⁶ Washington correspondence by E. H. Arr., 9 February, Springfield, Massachusetts, Republican, 20 February 1864.

¹⁹⁷ Mrs. James A. Mulligan told this to Maria Lydig Daly. Daly, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, ed. Harold Earl Hammond (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1962), 87 (entry for 20 December 1861).

Other women criticized the First Lady's appearance. Her friend Elizabeth Blair Lee said that Elizabeth Todd Edwards "is ten times better looking than [her sister] Mrs. Lincoln."¹⁹⁸ The abolitionist Lydia Maria Child remarked that the Mary Lincoln "looks more like a dowdy washerwoman" than "the 'representative of fashion.'" To Child, the first Lady's face seemed "mean, and vulgar," and she pitied Lincoln for "having a fool for a wife." The only thing "she cares for is flattery, and dress, and parties. Willis's Home Journal abounds with fulsome compliments about her stylish dressing, her gayeties &c. This is not becoming, when the people are suffering and sacrificing so much."¹⁹⁹ When Child read about Mrs. Lincoln's shopping trips, she exclaimed: "So this is what the people are taxed for! to deck out this vulgar doll with foreign frippery. And oppressed millions must groan on, lest her 'noble native State' [Kentucky] should take offence, if Government made use of the beneficent power God has so miraculously placed in its hands."²⁰⁰

In August 1861, a New York politico echoed Mrs. Child, expressing disgust with Mary Lincoln because at a time when "the country was in the throes of revolutionary travail she was coolly buying china and dresses in New York: and now that wounded men pant for Florence Nightingales in Washington she is relaxing at Long Branch [on the New Jersey shore] from – the cares of state."²⁰¹ She "is as meddling & injuriously

¹⁹⁸ Elizabeth Blair Lee to Samuel Phillips Lee, Washington, 1 March 1862, in Laas, ed., Wartime Washington, 104.

¹⁹⁹ Lydia Maria Child to Mary Elizabeth Preston Stearns, Wayland, 15 December 1861, Lydia Maria Child: Selected Letters, 1817-1880, ed. Milton Meltzer and Patricia G. Holland (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), 400; Child to John Greenleaf Whittier, Wayland, Massachusetts, 22 September 1861, Child Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁰⁰ Lydia Maria Child to Lucy Searle, Wayland, 11 October 1861, Lydia Maria Child Letters, Samuel J. May Antislavery Collection, Cornell University.

²⁰¹ A. Oakey Hall to Thurlow Weed, New York, 17 August 1861, Weed Papers, University of Rochester.

officious as she is conceited & ill-bred,” according to a young Bostonian, Robert C. Winthrop Jr.²⁰²

Not all observers were so critical. In 1864, a matron from Indiana wrote that although Mrs. Lincoln “is not what can be called an intellectual woman, and in many things has no doubt acted injudiciously,” nonetheless “her goodness of heart, and pleasant manner, must make her liked by all who real[l]y come in contact with her.”²⁰³ Julia Taft recalled that the First Lady was “pleasant and kind” to her, treating her like a surrogate daughter. Lincoln affectionately called her “flibbertigibbet.”²⁰⁴ Though Julia liked Mrs. Lincoln, she was shocked by her exaggerated sense of entitlement. Add Iwal 324*

The First Lady could be indiscrete in conversation. After meeting her for the first time and spending an hour conversing, Pennsylvania Congressman James H. Campbell described her as “an ordinary woman with strong likes, and dislikes, and with bitter prejudices. She prides herself on being a ‘little Southern[,]’ hates the angular Yankees, and detests the Trumbulls who are nowhere!”²⁰⁵

Mary Lincoln had never forgiven Lyman Trumbull for defeating her husband in the senatorial election of 1855, nor could she bring herself to renew her former friendship with Mrs. Trumbull, who had been one of her bridesmaids. In August 1860, Norman B. Judd told Mrs. Trumbull that “a systematic effort has been made for political purposes to poison Mary[']s mind” against her, that John A. McClernand and another Democrat

²⁰² Robert C. Winthrop, Jr., to P. P. Ellis, Boston, 10 October 1861, Winthrop Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

²⁰³ Hannah Matthews to Mrs. A. H. Pidge, Washington, 31 January 1864, Schuyler Colfax Papers, Northern Indiana Center for History, South Bend.

²⁰⁴ Bayne, Tad Lincoln’s Father, 3, 5.

²⁰⁵ James H. Campbell to his wife, Juliet Lewis Campbell, Washington, 28 January 1863, Campbell Papers, Schoff Civil War Collection, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

(unnamed) “instigated their wives to do it,” that Mrs. McClelland probably “was unconscious of it,” that “Mary had been told a great many things & advised if she had any self respect to keep away” from Julia Trumbull; that “Mary fully understood this attempt now & felt how unjust she had been” to Mrs. Trumbull and was “very happy to be again upon the old terms” with her former bridesmaid.²⁰⁶

But if the two ladies did achieve a reconciliation, it did not last long. At a presidential levee in 1861, Mrs. Trumbull paused in the receiving line to chat with the First Lady, who instructed the usher, “Tell that woman to go on.”

“Will you allow me to be insulted in this way in your house?” Julia Trumbull asked the president.²⁰⁷

In September 1861, on a boat trip Mrs. Lincoln very loudly disparaged Trumbull for having won his Senate seat dishonorably while her husband had won the presidency honorably.²⁰⁸ Shortly after her husband’s assassination, Mary Lincoln complained that

²⁰⁶ Julia Trumbull to Lyman Trumbull, Chicago, 12 August 1860, Trumbull Family Papers, Clements Library, University of Michigan.

²⁰⁷ Mrs. Norman B. Judd, undated interview with Ida Tarbell, Ida M. Tarbell Papers, Allegheny College. On February 13, 1861, Mrs. Judd reported that her husband had recently visited Springfield and found Mary Lincoln “much more amiable than before.” Lincoln had asked Judd to accompany him on the train trip to Washington, and evidently the question arose as to whether Mrs. Judd should join the entourage. Mary Lincoln apparently objected. Mrs. Judd remarked to Francis P. Blair Sr.: “One thing is very certain. My affection for Mrs Trumbull could never hold itself in abeyance to please the Lady [Mary Lincoln] under whose ‘auspices’ you would like to see me acting.” Mrs. Norman B. Judd to Francis P. Blair, Sr., Chicago, 13 February 1861, Blair and Lee Family Papers, Princeton University. A son of Mrs. Judd was known to make unfavorable remarks about Mrs. Lincoln based “on stories told him by his father.” King Dykeman to W. E. Barton, Seattle, 11 December 1923, William E. Barton Papers, University of Chicago.

²⁰⁸ Mrs. Trumbull reported to her husband that the Rev. Mr. Collins “travelled on the same boat with Mrs Lincoln between N. Y. & Washington. He says she talked so as to be heard above every one else & although he was in the Gents. Cabin he could not avoid hearing her; she discussed people freely, even those in private life[;] talked of you & I[;] referred to your first election when Mr Lincoln was defeated & then to the last fall when he was honorably elected, with an emphasis on the word which implied that yours was not honorable. He says she was surrounded by a set whose object seemed to be to draw her out.” Julia Trumbull to Lyman Trumbull, Kingston, N. Y., 26 September 1861, Trumbull Family Papers, Clements Library, University of Michigan.

Mrs. Trumbull “has not yet honored me with a call, should she ever deign, she would not be received – She is indeed ‘a whited Sepulchre.’”²⁰⁹

Mary Lincoln was also rude to the Seward family, who called on her in September 1861. They were ushered into the Blue Room, where a servant had them take a seat while he announced their presence to the First Lady. He returned after a long interval, saying “Mrs. Lincoln begged to be excused – she was very much engaged.” Young Fanny Seward, who believed that this was “the only time on record that she ever refused to see company in the evening,” confided to her diary: “The truth of Mrs. L’s engagement was probably that she did not want to see Mother – else why not give general directions to the door keeper to let no one in? It was certainly very rude to have us all seated first.”²¹⁰

The New York Herald’s premature publication of excerpts from Lincoln’s 1861 annual message created a scandal. Mary Lincoln, who according to rumor “told state secrets” and was thus considered “one of the leaky vessels – from which contraband army news, gets afloat,” embarrassed the president by allowing her close friend and influential “social adviser,” Henry Wikoff, to see an advance copy of the document.²¹¹ (According to one source, she received a substantial sum for this favor.)²¹² He then leaked it to the

²⁰⁹ Mary Lincoln to Anson G. Henry, Chicago, 26 July 1865, Turner and Turner, eds., Mary Todd Lincoln, 264.

²¹⁰ Fanny Seward diary, entry for 9 September 1861, in Patricia Carley Johnson, ed., “Sensitivity and Civil War: The Selected Diaries and Papers, 1858-1868, of Frances Adeline Seward” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1963), 360-61.

²¹¹ A. H[omer] B[yington] to Sydney [Howard Gay], Washington, 23 March [1864], Gay Papers, Columbia University.

²¹² Diary of William T. Coggshall, 7 December 1861, in Freda Postle Koch, Colonel Coggshall: The Man Who Saved Lincoln (Columbus, Ohio: Poko Press, 1985), 61; undated, unsigned manuscript in the hand of John Hay, J. W. Schuckers Papers, Library of Congress.

Herald, which employed him as a free-lancer.²¹³ When the House judiciary committee investigated the matter, Wikoff at first refused to answer its questions. He was promptly clapped into the Old Capitol Prison. When Illinois Congressman William Kellogg informed the president of these developments, he expressed great surprise for he had been unaware of any premature publication of the message. So the next day he visited Capitol Hill and "urged the Republicans on the Committee to spare him disgrace." He told the chairman, John Hickman of Pennsylvania, that "he never gave any portion of the Message to anybody except members of the Cabinet" before submitting it to Congress. The committee summoned General Daniel Sickles, who had been regularly visiting his friend Wikoff in jail. The general, initially defiant, backed down when threatened a contempt-of-Congress citation. He admitted that he had been in contact with John Watt, the White House gardener. Wikoff alleged that he had telegraphed the president's message to the Herald after receiving it from Watt. Watt told the committee that he had indeed been Wikoff's source, implausibly claiming that he had seen a copy of the message lying about in the White House library, had memorized a portion of it, and repeated it verbatim to Wikoff.²¹⁴

In fact, as White House watchman Thomas Stackpole told Orville H. Browning, the First Lady was the true culprit. According a long-suppressed passage in Browning's diary, Stackpole said that "the President's message [to Congress last December] had been furnished to [Henry] Wycoff by her, and not by Watt as is usually supposed – that she got it of [John D.] Defrees, Sup[erintendent] of government printing, and gave it to Wycoff

²¹³ Wikoff gave the information to Simon P. Hanscom, who filed the story which appeared on December 3.

²¹⁴ Washington correspondence, 14 February, New York Tribune, 15 February 1862; Wikoff's narrative of events, dated 20 February, New York Herald, 3 March 1862.

in the Library, where he read it – [and] gave it back to her, and she gave it back to Defrees.”²¹⁵

According to Alexander K. McClure, Mary Lincoln "was the easy prey of adventurers, of which the war developed an unusual crop, and many times they gained such influence over her as to compromise her very seriously."²¹⁶ Her friendship with Wikoff was a case in point. Born to wealthy Philadelphia parents in 1813, he attended Yale, from which he was expelled, and ultimately graduated from Union College. He spent much time in Europe, where he pursued pleasure single-mindedly. Eventually he became something of a journalist and an off-again, on-again friend of James Gordon Bennett, editor of the New York Herald. In 1851, he achieved notoriety by kidnapping a woman he loved. Convicted of abduction, Wikoff served fifteen months in jail; his account of this misadventure, My Courtship and Its Consequences, sold well. Later in the 1850s he worked for Bennett in Washington, acting as a go-between for the publisher in his dealings with President James Buchanan.²¹⁷

Wikoff had charm as well as notoriety. John W. Forney described him glowingly: "You might travel a long way before meeting a more pleasant companion than the cosmopolite Wikoff. He has seen more of the world than most men, has mingled with society of every shade and grade, has tasted of poverty and affluence, talks several languages fluently, is skilled in etiquette, art, and literature, and, without proclaimed

²¹⁵ Michael Burlingame, "Mary Todd Lincoln's Unethical Conduct as First Lady," Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln's Side: John Hay's Civil War Correspondence and Selected Writings (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 185-203; Washington correspondence, 14, 15 February, Chicago Tribune, 15 and 20 February 1862; Washington correspondence, 13 February, New York Tribune, New York Herald, 14 February 1862.

²¹⁶ A. K. McClure to Alonzo Rothschild, Philadelphia, 9 May 1907, Lincoln Contemporaries Collection, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne.

²¹⁷ Frank Malloy Anderson, The Mystery of "A Public Man": A Historical Detective Story (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1948), 126-28.

convictions, is a shrewd politician, who understands the motives and opinions of others."²¹⁸

Wikoff's relations with Mary Lincoln appalled polite society. In October 1861, George Gibbs, lamenting the "fatuity of Lincoln & Seward," told a friend that "Mrs L. seems now to be at the head of the State. As the Chevalier Wikoff is an habitué of the White House you need not be surprised at anything." The First Lady, Gibbs added, "is a byword among the officials here [in Washington] for ignorance, vulgarity and meanness."²¹⁹ Two months later, David Davis wrote home: "Rumors are plenty – that Mrs. Lincoln is acting badly." It was said "that she has installed as Master of Ceremonies at the White House, the Chevalier Wikoff," a "terrible libertine, & no woman ought to tolerate his presence." Washington matrons were "in distress" at this news.²²⁰ In November 1861, a journalist reported that "Mrs. Lincoln is making herself both a fool and a nuisance. Chevalier Wikoff is her gallant, and I have within the week seen two notes signed by him in her name sending compliments and invitation. . . . He is a beautiful specimen to occupy such a position."²²¹ In disbelief, Joseph R. Hawley asked: "What does Mrs. Lincoln mean by . . . having anything to do with that world-renowned whoremonger and swindler Chevalier Wikoff? Is [Mrs.] Lincoln an old saphead or is she

²¹⁸ Forney, Anecdotes of Public Men (1873-1881; 2 vols.; New York; Da Capo Press, 1970), 1:366-67.

²¹⁹ George Gibbs to John Austin Stevens, Washington, 3, 16 October 1861, Stevens Papers, New-York Historical Society.

²²⁰ Davis to his wife Sarah, St. Louis, 15 December 1861, Davis Family Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

²²¹ Henry Smith to Charles Henry Ray and Joseph Medill, [Washington], 4 November 1861, Ray Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California. Cf. Adam Gurowski to Horace Greeley, Washington, 1 October 1861, Greeley Papers, New York Public Library.

a headstrong fool who thinks she can have a kitchen cabinet? It's a national disgrace."²²² Echoing this sentiment, John Hay deemed Wikoff an "unclean bird," a "vile creature," a "marked and branded social Pariah, a monstrosity abhorred by men and women," and declared it "an enduring disgrace to American society that it suffers such a thing to be at large."²²³ Frederick Law Olmsted was scandalized when he observed the First Lady and Wikoff, whom he called "an insufferable beast," together at a White House band concert.²²⁴ General John E. Wool found it "certainly strange" that she would call on Wikoff at Willard's Hotel, wait for him in the lobby for a long time, help him don his gloves, and then ride off with him in her carriage. "Some very extraordinary storeys are told of this Lady," Wool informed his wife.²²⁵

The public also looked askance at Mrs. Lincoln's friendship with Daniel Sickles, whose reputation was none too savory. When the president nominated him for a generalship, that gesture was thought to reflect Lincoln's "desire to confer on him respectability because his wife condescended to be attended by Sickles at a Review in public when no other women in the country of unsullied character would have done such a thing." A New Yorker reported that because of her indiscretions, "Mrs. Lincoln is seen in society at the North to be the worst enemy"²²⁶ of her husband. A New York matron,

²²² Hawley to Charles Dudley Warner, n.p., n.d., in Arthur L. Shipman (ed.), "Letters of Joseph R. Hawley," typescript dated 1929, p. 387, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

²²³ Washington correspondence, 21 October 1861, Missouri Republican (St. Louis), 25 October 1861, Michael Burlingame, ed., Lincoln's Journalist: John Hay's Anonymous Writings for the Press, 1860-1864 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998), 121.

²²⁴ McLaughlin et al. eds., Papers of Olmsted, 4:207.*

²²⁵ Wool to his wife, Baltimore, 28 September 1862, Wool Papers, New York State Library, Albany. Wool added that Mrs. Lincoln wrote to him asking him to receive a visit from a friend of hers. That friend, "a good looking man" who "was employed about the White House in some capacity," called on Wool "to obtain an appointment. I replied he only [had] to get the recommendation of Mrs Lincoln & the President and I would appoint him at once."

²²⁶ A. Mann Jr. to E. B. Washburne, New York, 1 May 1862, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

Maria Lydig Daly, thought the First Lady “behaves in the most undignified manner possible, associating with Wyckoff and Sickles, with whom no lady would deign to speak; but she seems to be easily flattered. She is not a young woman by any means, but dresses like one.”²²⁷ Senator William P. Fessenden told his cousin that the First Lady “by common consent, is making both herself & her husband very ridiculous.”²²⁸ Philo S. Shelton, a Boston merchant and speculator, indignantly remarked that Lincoln “is a humbug & his wife worse [-] only think of such men as Wikoff & Gordon Bennett & Mrs. B[ennett] being the special guests of Mrs. Lincoln & of men placed in office thro[ugh] such influences.”²²⁹

The president intervened when Matthew Hale Smith, New York correspondent for the Boston Journal, warned of a brewing scandal. Shortly after the Civil War, Smith revealed that full story: Wikoff, "with whom no reputable woman would willingly be seen on Broadway," had been "very officious in his attention to . . . Mrs. Lincoln. His frequent visits to Washington, and his receptions at the White House, were noticed by the friends of the President. At all of the receptions of Mrs. Lincoln he was an early and constant visitor. At the informal receptions he was found. No one went so early but this person could be seen cozily seated in a chair as if at home, talking to the ladies of the White House. None called so late but they found him still there." Wikoff was often "seen riding in the President's coach, with the ladies, through Pennsylvania Avenue. Frequently he was found lounging in the conservatory, or smoking in the grounds, very much at

²²⁷ Maria Lydig Daly, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, ed. Harold Earl Hammond (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1962), 86 (entry for 19 December 1861).

²²⁸ Fessenden to Elizabeth Warriner, Washington, 1 December 1861, Fessenden Papers, Bowdoin College.

²²⁹ Philo S. Shelton to Thurlow Weed, Boston, 7 February 1862, Weed Papers, University of Rochester.

home, and not at all anxious to hide his presence." Wikoff's frequent visits embarrassed the White House staff, and the press began to comment unfavorably.

Friends of the president, suspicious of Wikoff, investigated his background and discovered that he had been hired "by some parties in New York, who were using him as their tool." These men had "furnished him with money and instructions. He was to go to Washington, make himself agreeable to the ladies, insinuate himself into the White House, attend levees, show that he had the power to come and go, and, if possible, open a correspondence with the ladies of the mansion." Once he became known as an insider, he would be able to wield influence that his backers might find useful in time. (According to Charles A. Dana, Wikoff "made about \$20,000 by contracts" which Mary Lincoln "knew how to help him to.")

Wikoff carried out his assignment well. Lincoln's friends "considered that the President should be made acquainted with this plot against his honor" and dispatched Smith to do so. Accompanied by a U.S. senator, Smith visited the White House one evening. As he later recalled, Lincoln "took me by the hand, led me into the office of his private secretary, whom he drove out, and locked the door." When Smith showed him documents illuminating the purposes of Wikoff, who at that moment was downstairs in the White House, the president said; "Give me those papers and sit here till I return." Lincoln "started out of the room with strides that showed an energy of purpose." He soon came back, shook Smith's hand, and had Wikoff "driven from the mansion that night."²³⁰ According to another source, Lincoln "became jealous" of Wikoff and "taxed" his wife. The Chevalier then "volunteered an explanation," telling "the wounded & incensed"

²³⁰ Matthew Hale Smith, Sunshine and Shadow in New York (Hartford: Burr, 1868), 284-89; C. A. Dana to J. S. Pike, New York, 4 January 1862, Pike Papers, University of Maine; Washington correspondence, 11 February, New York World, 12 February 1862.

president that "he was only teaching the madame a little European Court Etiquette."²³¹ Wikoff was thereafter forbidden to enter the White House.²³²

John Watt, who was made to take the blame for Mrs. Lincoln's indiscretion in leaking her husband's annual message to Congress, was also denied access to the Executive Mansion. He created a great deal of scandal. A native of Scotland who had been residing in Washington for over a decade by 1861, Watt had served as the presidential gardener since the early 1850s. In January 1861, the thirty-seven-year old Watt became a major in the Washington, D.C., militia. On September 9, he was appointed first lieutenant in the Sixteenth U.S. Infantry, but the senate revoked his commission on 3 February 1862. (His appointment, according to George Gibbs, was made "at Mrs Lincoln's demand.")²³³ Watt later told authorities that he "was commissioned by President Lincoln and detailed for special duty at [the] White House and never served with his Regiment," and that he "also acted as recruiting officer at Washington D.C." A congressional report stated that he served as "one of the commanders of the bodyguard of President Lincoln" and "one of his personal aids and attendants." In March 1862, he was appointed to visit Europe on behalf of the Interior Department's Patent Division to inspect seeds. Returning the following year, he enlisted in the Thirteenth New York Artillery as a private on August 12, rose to the rank of corporal, and in 1865 accepted a commission as a second lieutenant in the Thirty-eighth

²³¹ T. J. Barnett to S. L. M. Barlow, Washington, 27 October 1862, Barlow Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

²³² Washington correspondence, 2 March, Philadelphia Inquirer, 3 March 1862.

²³³ George Gibbs to John Austin Stevens, Washington, 16 October 1861, Stevens Papers, New-York Historical Society.

U.S. Colored Troops, serving until 1867.²³⁴

Before the Lincolns entered the White House, Watt had already acquired an unenviable reputation. As Executive Mansion gardener during the Buchanan administration, he had been chastised by the commissioner of public buildings, John B. Black, for submitting unreasonable bills. Blake, "astonished" at a seed bill, told Watt in 1859; "You must raise your own seed hereafter." Blake also protested against an "enormous" bill "for making and sharpening tools." Sternly the commissioner warned him not to "incur the smallest debt without first consulting the public gardener or myself."²³⁵

Early in Lincoln's first term, Watt continued to attract unfavorable attention. John F. Potter, chairman of the House select committee investigating the loyalty of government employees, informed the president in September 1861 of damning testimony about Watt's pro-Confederate sympathies.²³⁶ Two independent witnesses confirmed that he had, shortly after the first battle of Bull Run, proclaimed that the South could not be defeated and that Union army consisted of human trash.²³⁷ Mary Lincoln, who was "determined that he should be retained," vehemently denied those allegations, much to

²³⁴ U.S. Senate, 59th Congress, 2nd Session, Report 69 (1903); Watt "Declaration for Invalid Pension," 25 August 1890, and Jane M. Watt, "Dependent Widow's Declaration for Pension," 29 January 1892, Pension Records, National Archives; Watt to General [name indecipherable], Washington, 16 January 1861; Watt to Lorenzo Thomas, 10 September and 3 December 1861, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Letters Received, Main Series, Record Group 94, *ibid.*; Watt's service record, *ibid.* Watt died in Washington in 1892, survived by his wife, Jane Masterson Watt. They had no children.

²³⁵ John B. Blake, commissioner, to John Watt, Washington, 10 June 1858, copy, enclosing "a copy of the decision of the Secretary of the Interior upon the charges preferred against you by Mr. John Saunders," and Blake to Watt, Washington, 5 July 1859, copy, Records of the Commissioner of Public Buildings, letters sent, vols. 13 and 14, Record Group 42, Microcopy 371, reel 7, National Archives.

²³⁶ On September 12, Potter wrote the president about this testimony. Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

²³⁷ New York Tribune, 28 January 1862.

the annoyance of Congressman Potter.²³⁸ He forwarded the documents about Watt to the president, who did not dismiss the gardener. Instead, according to Charles A. Dana, Mary Lincoln accosted Secretary of War Cameron and “after a good deal of bullying on her part & resistance on his, actually gets him appointed a lieutenant in the army with orders to report for duty not to the colonel of his regiment, but to the President.”²³⁹ When Potter’s committee issued its report in January, it expressed “surprise that, in the face of such testimony, a man clearly disloyal, instead of being instantly removed, should have been elevated to a higher and more responsible position.” Lincoln had committed a “blunder,” said the National Anti-Slavery Standard, for during “such times as these, no man against whom a respectable suspicion can lie should be kept in place under the government.”²⁴⁰ The journalist D. W. Bartlett explained that Lincoln “clings to the men around him. Not even the menials about the White House, some of whom have been proven before Potter’s investigation committee to be guilty of indulging secession sentiments, have been dismissed, because Mr. Lincoln good-naturedly says he can’t believe them to be guilty.”²⁴¹

SCANDALS

Watt was the gentleman who, according to the White House servant Thomas Stackpole, “had in the beginning of the Administration suggested to Mrs. Lincoln the

²³⁸ Washington correspondence, 14 October, National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York), 19 October 1861; Mary Todd Lincoln to John F. Potter, Washington, 13 September 1861, in Turner and Turner, eds., Mary Todd Lincoln, 104; Potter, journal entry for 15 September 1861, Potter Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society. Her intervention may have saved Watt’s job, at least temporarily. But perhaps the president would have kept him on anyway.

²³⁹ C. A. Dana to J. S. Pike, New York, 8 November 1861, Pike Papers, University of Maine.

²⁴⁰ Washington correspondence, 6 October, National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York), 12 October 1861.

²⁴¹ Washington correspondence by Van [D. W. Bartlett], 2 September, Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 7 September 1861.

making of false bills so as to get pay for private expenses out of the public treasury and had aided her in doing so.”²⁴² It is not clear just when Watt and the First Lady began conspiring to defraud the government. John P. Usher, assistant secretary of the interior, informed Browning in late July 1861 of scandals involving Mrs. Lincoln. The first known example of her bill padding occurred the following month, when she tried to charge a state dinner for Prince Napoleon to the manure fund (paid by Congress), but Watt changed it to his account.²⁴³ He billed the interior department \$900, but the secretary of that department, Caleb B. Smith, rejected the claim. Because he thought the cost exorbitant, Smith consulted with Secretary of State Seward, who had also given a dinner for the prince, involving an equal number of guests, and providing the same meal that had been served at the White House. Both dinners had been catered by the same restaurant, which charged Seward \$300. Mrs. Lincoln asked for a \$900 reimbursement. Thwarted by Smith's refusal, the First Lady then instructed Watt to prepare a bill for plants, flowers, pots, and other gardening expenses totaling \$900. She vouched for it herself and received the money. This created a scandal.²⁴⁴

The gardener's account which was used to hide the cost overrun was described by a White House gatekeeper, James H. Upperman, who complained to Interior Secretary Smith in October 1861 about "sundry petit, but flagrant frauds on the public treasury," the products of "deliberate col[l]usion." According to Upperman, Watt had in mid-September authorized payments to Alexander McKerichar, a laborer on the White House grounds,

²⁴² Orville H. Browning, manuscript diary, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield (entry for 3 March 1862).

²⁴³ C. A. Dana to J. S. Pike, New York, 8 November 1861, Pike Papers, University of Maine.

²⁴⁴ New York Commercial Advertiser, 4 October 1867.

for flowers (\$700.75) and for 215 loads of manure (\$107.50) as well as hire of a horse and cart for twenty-seven days in August to haul it to the Executive Mansion (\$47.25). These bills were apparently for goods and services not provided. Another gentleman, Charles F. Cone, was paid \$33.75 for working at the White House for twenty-seven days in August and \$47.25 for the hire of horse cart and driver, even though, Upperman testified, "this individual is no labourer and has rendered no such service as charged for as can be proved by sundry persons, that he does not work at any kind of labour and was at the time refer[r]ed to, and can yet be found in a certain locality on P[ennsylvani]a Avenue anytime during working hours." As for Cone's delivery charges, Upperman contended that "it can be proved that no such horse cart or driver rendered any such service in said grounds." Moreover, Upperman claimed, William Johnson was paid \$155 for loads of manure that were never delivered. "I imagine his whereabouts to be doubtful as nobody knows him." Augustus Jullien, a French cook employed in the White House kitchen, received \$67.50 for work done on the grounds in July and August, although he "has at no time rendered any such service." Similarly, Francis P. Burke, a presidential coachman, was paid \$33.75 for labor on the grounds for August, as was White House butler Peter Vermeren.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁵ Upperman to Caleb B. Smith, Washington, 21 October 1861, copy, Records of the U.S. Senate, Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, 37th Congress, Record Group 46, National Archives. William H. Johnson was paid \$50 for services as furnace-keeper at the White House for April, June, and August 1861, \$43.75 for carting manure in June, \$37.75 for whitewashing the Executive Mansion in July 1861. Alexander McKerichar received \$50 as a laborer on public grounds for June 1861, \$54 for hire of horse and covered wagon and driver in July 1861, \$47.25 for cartage in August. Augustus Jullien and Charles F. Cone were paid for working in June as laborers under Watt on Lafayette Square. Burke received \$31.25 as a laborer on the square south of White House for June 1861. Upperman sent Smith copies of eight receipts. Financial Records of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, Record Group 42, entry 19, box 13, National Archives. The originals are located in the First Auditor's Records, Miscellaneous Records, Treasury Department, Record Group 217, *ibid*. Sutter approved Watt's bills for monthly pay as superintendent of President's Square and for hire of his horse and cart in hauling manure in June and July 1861. He also approved Watt's pay roll for twenty-two laborers working under him. Records of the

In late October 1861, Mary Lincoln, through Watt, begged Secretary Smith to see the president, evidently about these embarrassing revelations made by the White House gatekeeper. In response to a query from Benjamin Brown French, Lincoln on October 26 said he would "determine in a few days what he would do." Watt insisted that "the arrangement of the accounts was made by [William S.] Wood & that he assured Mrs L[incoln] that the transaction was right & legal and that she had no idea that anything was done which was not authorized by law." Secretary Smith told Seward that he "would be glad to have her relieved from the anxiety under which she is suffering."²⁴⁶

Smith provided such relief by covering the scandal up. After interviewing Watt, McKerichar, and Benjamin Brown French (who had replaced Wood as commissioner of public buildings) about the \$700 flower bill, Smith concluded "that the voucher was correct, and that it had been rightfully paid by Mr. French," and therefore he "pursued the matter no further."²⁴⁷ He did not consult Upperman, Burke, Jullien, Johnson, Vermeren, Cone, or others knowledgeable about the matter. Gatekeeper Upperman then protested to Solomon Foot, chairman of the senate committee on public buildings and grounds, citing as his sources Burke, Jullien, and Vermeren, as well as the former public gardener, Thomas J. Sutter, and George W. Dant, a messenger and clerk to the commissioner of

Commissioner of Public Buildings, letters sent, vols. 13 and 14, Record Group 42, Microcopy 371, reel 7, *ibid.*

²⁴⁶ Caleb B. Smith to W. H. Seward, Washington, 27 October 1861, Seward Papers, University of Rochester.

²⁴⁷ Memo by Smith, Washington, 11 December 1861, Records of the Commissioner of Public Buildings, Letters Received, Record Group 42, volume 37, microcopy 371, reel 7, National Archives. Three days later French disallowed the payments to Jullien, Burke, and Vermeren. French to Joseph Ingle, Washington, 14 December 1861, Records of the First Auditor, Miscellaneous Records, Treasury Department, no. 143610, Record Group 217, National Archives. Cf. penciled annotations on "Account No. 1, Annual Repair of the President's House, 30 September 1861, enclosed in First Auditor's Certificate on the account of B. B. French, no. 142505, *ibid.* This "return" was evidently made on January 7, 1862. See annotation on the First Auditor's Certificate on the account of B. B. French, no. 142506, and no. 142416, *ibid.*

public buildings.²⁴⁸ Nothing came of his complaint. According to Thurlow Weed, the Interior Department and Congress "measurably suppressed" this story out of "respect for Mr. Lincoln."²⁴⁹ Pennsylvania Congressman Benjamin M. Boyer confirmed this story, adding that the president paid the bill himself and withdrew the government check.²⁵⁰ (In the fall of 1861, Lincoln gave Benjamin Brown French \$270 out of his own pocket to reimburse the government for "Accounts erroneously paid." They included \$33.75 paid to Burke, Vermeren, and Jullien for work they allegedly performed in August 1861 as well as similar sums to those gentlemen for labor purportedly done on the President's Square in July and September 1861.)²⁵¹ A congressional committee was made aware of this scandal, but it was agreed to hush it up for fear of appearing unchivalrous.

On March 11, 1862 the president asked the "watchdog of the treasury department," first comptroller Elisha Whittlesey, to help him stop the padding of bills: "once or twice since I have been in this House, accounts have been presented at your bureau, which were incorrect – I shall be personally and greatly obliged to you if you will carefully scan every account which comes from here; and if in any there shall appear the least semblance wrong, make it known to me directly."²⁵²

²⁴⁸ Upperman to Foot, Washington, 6 December 1861, Records of the U.S. Senate, Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, 37th Congress, Record Group 46, National Archives. Cf. Washington correspondence by "Iowa," 4 February 1862, Burlington, Iowa, Hawk-Eye, 8 February 1862.

²⁴⁹ New York Commercial Advertiser, 4 October 1867.

²⁵⁰ Boyer, a member of the House ways and means committee, told this story to Maryland journalist William Wilkins Glenn. Bayly Ellen Marks and Mark Norton Schatz, eds., Between North and South: A Maryland Journalist Views the Civil War, the Narrative of William Wilkins Glenn, 1861-1869 (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1976), 175-76, 296 (entries for 16 March 1865 and 4 October 1867).

²⁵¹ Benjamin B. French to Lincoln, Washington, 1 April 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁵² Lincoln to Whittlesey, Washington, 11 March 1862, Lincoln Memorial Association Bulletin, vol. 21 (1992), 1-2.

Later, Watt threatened to blackmail the First Lady. To keep him quiet, he was given a commission in the army, but when Henry Wilson, chairman of the senate military affairs committee, learned of it, he blocked the nomination. Watt then demanded to be taken care of or else he would reveal all he knew. Terrified by the threatened blackmail, Mary Lincoln appealed to Isaac Newton, head of the agriculture division of the interior department, to give Watt a clerkship. Newton refused, for he dreaded the wrath of Senator Wilson.²⁵³ According to Newton, the gardener "entered into a conspiracy to extort [\$]20,000 from the President by using three letters of Mrs. Lincoln."²⁵⁴ In those documents the First Lady apparently asked Watt to defraud the government through forgery and perjury.²⁵⁵ In 1867, Watt offered to sell a journalist an account of his relations with Mary Lincoln; it contained "a note to Watt signed by Mrs. L. (which is genuine) proposing to cover up their schemes etc."²⁵⁶ Simeon Draper, a New York politico who in 1864 paid Mary Lincoln \$20,000 for her help in obtaining his position as agent for selling cotton seized in Savannah, called on Watt and "with much bluster & great oaths" threatened to have him imprisoned. Watt then "fell on his literal marrow bones & begged, & gave up the letters & the conspiracy got demoralized & came down, down, to 1500 dollars which was paid, and the whole thing [was] settled."²⁵⁷ The money came in the form of a sinecure; in March 1862, Watt was named special agent for Newton's agriculture division to purchase seeds in Europe, at an annual salary of \$1500

²⁵³ Undated, unsigned manuscript in the hand of John Hay, J. W. Schuckers Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁵⁴ John Hay manuscript diary, 13 February 1867, Brown University.

²⁵⁵ Washington correspondence, 16 October, New York Tribune, 17 October 1867.

²⁵⁶ George W. Adams to [David Goodman] Croly, Washington, 7 October 1867, Manton Marble Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁵⁷ John Hay manuscript diary, 13 February 1867, Brown University.

plus travel costs.²⁵⁸ (Stackpole had urged Browning "to get the President to give Watt the appointment of public gardener, or agent to buy seeds for [the] patent office.") After failing to be paid for his services in Europe, Watt in 1863 billed the president \$736 to compensate him for Mary Lincoln's hotel bills, cash advances, and "Commissary stores." The vouchers for these payments and advances from Watt to the First Lady were held by Simeon Draper.²⁵⁹ Watt told Simon Cameron: "You know very well what difficulties I had to contend with in regard to Mrs. Lincoln. . . . I paid about \$700.00 for Mrs. Lincoln on one trip to Cambridge, Mass."²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ D. P. Holloway to John Watt, Washington, 14 March 1862, copy, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. When Watt asked for instructions, he was put off by the secretary of the interior. Caleb B. Smith to Watt, Washington, 29 March 1862, copy, *ibid.*

²⁵⁹ In the Ward Hill Lamon Papers at the Henry E. Huntington Library is the following document, dated on its folder [Feb. 1] 1863:

"His Excellency
 Abraham Lincoln
 Due to John Watt
 1863
 To Commissary stores for the use of the President[']s House \$361.00
 the items and vouchers for this sum of money are in the hand [of] Genl Simm Draper
 To Cash sent to Mrs Lincoln from this city [Washington?] to Mrs L by a draft at her request
 \$350.00
 the authority to send the same to Mrs Lincoln to New York is also in the hand of Mr Draper
 To Cash paid Mrs Lincoln Hotel bill in Boston, receipt in Mr Lincoln[']s hand 15.00
 To Cash handed Mrs Lincoln NY 10[.00]
 \$736.00

Mr. Watts presents this account with reluctance & never intended to present it for payment and departs from his purpose originally intended as the wishes of the Hon Secretary Smith has [sic] not been carried out by Mr Newton the head of the Agriculture bureau in not compensation [compensating] ~~me~~ him for ~~my~~ time and services in his ~~my~~ visit to Europe for that Bureau, as that has not been done Mr Watts feels bound to present the above bill for payment as he cannot afford now to lose it. Mr Watts parted with the vouchers refer[e]d to with the understanding that the account would be promptly paid."

²⁶⁰ Watt to Cameron, n.p., n.d., Turner and Turner, eds., Mary Todd Lincoln, 103n.

The Watt affair became the talk of the capital. David Davis wrote his wife in February 1862 that "I got a letter from Washington & the gossip is still about Mrs. Lincoln and the gardener Watt." Such gossip was "horrid, about money speculation, etc. etc."²⁶¹ The press reported that Watt, at Mary Lincoln's instigation, bought two cows "and charged them to the manure fund – that is, a fund voted in one of the general appropriation bills to provide manure for the public lands." This bill was rejected, probably by Interior Secretary Smith. Watt facilitated the sale of a White House rug to a Washington photographer to pay an outstanding bill; the carpet was replaced at public expense.²⁶²

Mary Lincoln suggested to a New York merchant that he provide the White House with a \$500 chandelier and charge \$1000 for it, thus allowing her to conceal \$500 worth of jewelry purchases. The businessman refused to cooperate and apparently lost the sale of the chandelier.²⁶³ Rumor had it that Mary Lincoln "appropriated the manure piles which had always been the perquisites of the gardener" and used the funds from the sale of that commodity for her own purposes.²⁶⁴ Horace Greeley alleged that in September the First Lady purchased a \$600 carriage and charged it to the contingency fund.²⁶⁵

The First Lady also exasperated her husband by overspending the \$25,000 earmarked by Congress in 1861 for refurbishing the White House.²⁶⁶ When she realized

²⁶¹ Davis to his wife, St. Louis, 19, 23 February 1862, David Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library.

²⁶² Washington correspondence by "Iowa," 4 February 1862, Burlington, Iowa, Hawk-Eye, 8 February 1862, p. 2, c. 3; Marks and Schatz, eds., Narrative of William Watkins Glenn, 176 (4 October 1867).

²⁶³ New York correspondence by "Metropolitan," 9 October 1867, Boston Post, 11 October 1867.

²⁶⁴ Marks and Schatz, eds., Narrative of William Wilkins Glenn, 176.

²⁶⁵ C. A. Dana to J. S. Pike, New York, 8 November 1861, Pike Papers, University of Maine.

²⁶⁶ Pratt and East, "Mrs. Lincoln Refurbishes the White House," Lincoln Herald 47 (1945): 13-22.

that a supplemental appropriation would be necessary to cover her redecorating expenses, she desperately appealed to Commissioner of Public Buildings Benjamin Brown French.

“I have sent for you to get me out of trouble,” she pleaded on December 14; “if you will do it, I will never get into such a difficulty again.” She confessed that the contractor’s bill exceeded the original congressional authorization by \$6,700. “Mr. Lincoln will not approve it,” she lamented. “I want you to see him and tell him that it is common to overrun appropriations – tell him how much it costs to refurnish, he does not know much about it, he says he will pay it out of his own pocket.” She wept as she begged French’s help: “Major, he cannot afford that, he ought not to do it. Major you must get me out of this difficulty[;] it is the last, I will always be governed by you, henceforth, I will not spend a cent without consulting you, now do go to Mr. Lincoln and try to persuade him to approve the bill. Do Major for my sake, but do not let him know that you have seen me.” She gave the commissioner the bill with her annotation, dated December 13: “This bill is correct. Mr Lincoln will please have it settled – this closes the house furnishing.”²⁶⁷

When French, whose position made him a virtual member of the presidential household, complied with her request, he found the president “inexorable.” The commissioner explained that “a Mr. Carryl has presented a bill of some \$7000 over the appropriation, for furnishing this house, and, before I can ask for an appropriation to pay it, it must have your approval.”

The president, “a little excited,” exclaimed: “It never can have my approval – I’ll pay for it out of my own pocket first – it would stink in the nostrils of the American

²⁶⁷ Bill for \$6858 from William H. Carryl & Bro., 31 July 1861, First Auditor’s Records, Miscellaneous Records, Treasury Department, Record Group 217, no. 143610, National Archives.

people to have it said that the President of the United States had approved a bill overrunning an appropriation of \$20,000 for flub dubs for this damned old house, when the poor freezing soldiers cannot have blankets! Who is that Carryl, and how came he to be employed[?]"

French replied: "I do not know, sir – the first I ever heard of him he brought me a large bill for room paper."

Lincoln was especially shocked by a "Rich, Elegant Carpet made to order" that his wife had purchased. "I would like to know where a carpet worth \$2,000 can be put," he queried.

"In the East Room," French suggested.

The president called it "a monstrous extravagance," adding: "Well I suppose Mrs. Lincoln must bear the blame, let her bear it, I swear I won't! . . . It was all wrong to spend one cent at such a time, and I never ought to have had a cent expended, the house was furnished well enough, better than any one we ever lived in, and if I had not been overwhelmed with other business I would not have had any of the appropriation expended, but what could I do? I could not attend to everything." He concluded "by swearing that he never would approve that bill" and that rather than sign such legislation "he would pay it out of his own pocket!"²⁶⁸

Rumor had it that when Lincoln refused to authorize payment, his wife "was mad & stormed . . . and would not sleep with him for three nights."²⁶⁹

²⁶⁸ I have conflated two of French's accounts of this conversation. Burlingame, Inner World of Lincoln, 299-300; and French, Witness to the Young Republic, 382.

²⁶⁹ James R. Doolittle to his wife Mary, Washington, 16 February 1862, Doolittle Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

(In April 1862, French told his son that Mary Lincoln “is a little troublesome, & I can tell you some rather funny things relative to my experience with the worthy President and his Lady. Abraham is my beau ideal of an honest man, and Mrs. L. is – not my beau ideal pendant to that picture. You have heard the song I presume ‘Oh Kitty Clover she troubles me so, Oh – oh – oh – oh – oh –oh.’ Substitute Mrs. L- for Kitty & I can sing it from my heart!”)²⁷⁰

In February 1862, Congress passed a supplemental appropriation of \$14,000 for White House “extras,” over the objections of some Republicans, including Senators Lyman Trumbull, Morton Wilkinson, and James Grimes.²⁷¹ Senator James R. Doolittle of Wisconsin explained that he and his colleagues “were placed in this fix[:] either the President must pay this money out of his own pocket or we must appropriate it to cover deficiencies.” According to Doolittle, Senator James A. Pearce of Maryland “very delicately passed the matter on in the Senate and we voted it somewhat upon the principle that is it not gentlemanly to overhaul a lady’s wardrobe.” The legislators also thought “it would not be just to compel the President to pay” for the act of his “silly” and “vainglorious” wife. It was, Doolittle said, “exceedingly mortifying.”²⁷²

Mary Lincoln “was surrounded by flatters and intriguers, seeking for influence or such places as she can give!” exclaimed William H. Russell.²⁷³ She had, said the editor of the Indianapolis Journal, “been spoiled by the gross flatteries of the fools about the White House, and thinks she must conduct herself like a European Queen.” Concurring, that

²⁷⁰ B. B. French to his son Frank, Washington, 13 April 1862, French Family Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁷¹ Washington correspondence, 7 February, New York Tribune, 8 February 1862.

²⁷² James R. Doolittle to his wife Mary, Washington, 16 February 1862, Doolittle Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

²⁷³ Russell, My Diary North and South, 54 (entry for 30 March 1861).

Republican newspaper editorialized: “If the President hasn’t sense enough, or control enough, over his foolish wife,” then it was up to members of Congress “to exert that control themselves over him and his wife both.”²⁷⁴ Other newspapers referred to her as “our parvenue queen” who had “no conception of dignity” and “all the peevish assurance of a baseless parvenue.” David Davis criticized the “queenly” way she traveled, and she reportedly sought to have the presidential yacht, the Harriet Lane, renamed the Lady Lincoln.²⁷⁵ Her imperious manner led people to call the First Lady “her royal majesty.”²⁷⁶ Even her friend Mercy Levering Conkling referred to her as “Our Royal Highness.”²⁷⁷ A satirical newspaper piece criticized her for being “stuck up,” for accepting inappropriate gifts, and for wasting taxpayer dollars on elaborate china.²⁷⁸ A gentleman in Crawfordsville, Indiana, said that everybody there regarded her as “decidedly a snob” and made fun of her. He regretted that “we have a president with so little mind, and a presidentess with so little of the lady.”²⁷⁹

Benjamin Brown French later wrote that in his dealings with Mary Lincoln, “I always felt as if the eyes of a hyena were upon me, & that the animal was ready, if I made a single mismove, to pounce upon me!” He called her a “bundle of vanity and folly” and wrote verses about her regal ways:

²⁷⁴ Indianapolis Journal, 12 February 1862.

²⁷⁵ An unidentified New York paper copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 30 October 1864; Davis to his wife Sarah, Washington, 25 December 1862, Davis Family Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

²⁷⁶ Among those using this locution was General Robert C. Schenck of Ohio. See Allen Peskin, “Putting the ‘Baboon’ to Rest: Observations of a Radical Republican on Lincoln’s Funeral Train,” Lincoln Herald 27 (1979): 77.

²⁷⁷ Jean Baker, Mary Todd Lincoln (New York: Norton, 1989), 192.

²⁷⁸ Letter by “Polly P. Perkins,” Observatory Hill, East District, 1 October, Springfield, Massachusetts, Republican, 19 October 1861.

²⁷⁹ E. Miller to Amanda Hanna, Crawfordsville, Indiana, 2 March 1862, Robert B. Hanna Family Papers, Indiana Historical Society.

[She] moved in all the insolence of pride
as if the world beneath her feet she trod;
Her vulgar bearing, jewels could not hide,
And gold's base glitter was her only god!²⁸⁰

In May 1865, French confided to his diary that Mrs. Lincoln “is a most singular woman, and it is well for the nation that she is no longer in the White House. It is not proper that I should write down, even here, all I know!”²⁸¹

The White House remodeling, undertaken by William H. Carryl & Brother of Philadelphia, won lavish praise from the New York Herald, but some thought the costly wallpaper too dark, “like that of a steamboat,” giving the East Room a “heavy appearance.”²⁸²

In February 1862, the First Lady scandalized the North by throwing an elaborate White House party, inaccurately called a ball (there was no dancing because Lincoln emphatically forbade it). Instead of the traditional open house, she decided to invite a select group, thereby antagonizing those who were excluded. It was widely viewed as a regrettable social blunder.²⁸³ Many objected to the exclusiveness of the event, which seemed like a throwback to the aristocratic “drawing rooms” of Martha Washington and a

²⁸⁰ B. B. French to his son Frank, Washington, 9 July 1865, 3 January 1866, French Family Papers, Library of Congress; Kuhnhart, Twenty Days, 67.

²⁸¹ French, Witness to the Young Republic, 479 (entry for 24 May 1865).

²⁸² Washington correspondence, 17 December, New York Herald, 18 December 1861; Washington correspondence, 1 December, Philadelphia Inquirer, 2 December 1861; Mrs. Richard Henry Dana's opinion cited in Richard Henry Dana to his children, Washington, 15 February 1863, Dana Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

²⁸³ Washington correspondence, 2 February, New York Herald, 3 February 1862.

repudiation of the egalitarian practice introduced by Thomas Jefferson.²⁸⁴ The last exclusive White House fete, given by Mrs. John Tyler two decades earlier, had offended many.²⁸⁵

Some newspapers became indignant because reporters were not invited. When two New York congressmen, flatterers of Mrs. Lincoln, asked that an exception be made for the New York Herald and the Spirit of the Times, the White House staff feared that she would bend the rule and thus cause other journalists to protest against such favoritism. John G. Nicolay, in charge of White House social arrangements, appealed to his assistant, William O. Stoddard: “I can’t do anything! It will make all sorts of trouble. ‘She’ is determined to have her own way. You will have to see to this. ‘She’ wouldn’t listen to me.” Stoddard artfully persuaded the First Lady to reject the appeal of the two courtiers, much to their dismay.²⁸⁶

On February 1, with the party less than a week off, Mary Lincoln asked Benjamin Brown French to take charge of the arrangements. “That good lady, who is not popular, but ‘more sinned against than sinning,’ is hand and glove with me, and seems to expect me to get her out of every difficulty,” French told his son. “She implores me, & I try my best to respond to her implorations.” A month later French reported that “[w]e are all well, and looking on at the doings of our great & good President with admiration. We rather wish Mrs. President was – a more prudent lady.”²⁸⁷

²⁸⁴ Washington correspondence by Ben: Perley Poore, 6 February, Boston Evening Journal, 8 February 1862; Washington correspondence, 4 February, Philadelphia Inquirer, 5 February 1862.

²⁸⁵ Washington correspondence n.d. [ca. 2 February], New York Evening Express, 3 February 1862.

²⁸⁶ William O. Stoddard, “Recollections of a Checkered Lifetime,” typescript, Stoddard Papers, Detroit Public Library, 2 vols., 2:346-48, 366.

²⁸⁷ B. B. French to his son Frank, Washington, 2 February, 13 March 1862, French Family Papers, Library of Congress.

Mary Lincoln's motive in breaking with tradition was evidently to silence criticism that under her stewardship, White House entertainments failed to match the splendor of parties given earlier by Southern leaders' wives.²⁸⁸ She reportedly thought that it was "her duty to show those haughty secessionist dames [who once ruled society at the capital] that there is sufficient of fashion and respectability among the ladies of loyal families in and about Washington to constitute a court that will easily cast into the shade of that of their bogus President [i.e., Jefferson Davis.]"²⁸⁹ In addition, she evidently sought to economize. A woman defender of Mary Lincoln argued that state dinners were customary at the White House, that the new administration had continued the tradition, and that the First Lady sensibly thought it more efficient and economical to have a few stand-up parties for hundreds of guests than to hold a long series of weekly dinner parties accommodating no more than forty people at a time. Moreover, it gave employment to caterers, dressmakers, and dry goods merchants.²⁹⁰

But unlike her critics, Mary Lincoln's defenders were few in number. She was widely denounced for indulging in extravagance and frivolity while soldiers were suffering and dying. One day she received eighteen hostile letters.²⁹¹ Bitterly the National Anti-Slavery Standard remarked that she "has selected this darkest hour of the Republic for fiddling and dancing at the Presidential mansion. It is fit and proper that the most favored of her guests should be Mr. and Mrs. James Gordon Bennett. So we go. If we

²⁸⁸ Washington correspondence by Ben: Perley Poore, 6 February, Boston Evening Journal, 8 February 1862.

²⁸⁹ New York Herald, 5 February 1862.

²⁹⁰ Mrs. Henry A. Wise (nee Charlotte Everett) to her father, Edward Everett, Washington, 2 March 1862, Everett Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. She was not acquainted with Mrs. Lincoln.

²⁹¹ Washington correspondence by Miriam [Mrs. John A. Kasson], 26 June, Iowa State Register (Des Moines), 8 July 1862.

cannot fight, let us show the world that we can dance.”²⁹² (That abolitionist paper noted that Bennett’s New York Herald had previously run “fulsome panegyrics of Mrs. Lincoln, which disgust all people of taste.”)²⁹³ “Poor woman,” Massachusetts Congressman Henry L. Dawes observed. “She seems to act if she expected to be the last President’s wife and was disposed to make the most of it. Trifling at the White House in these times seems as inappropriate as jollity at a funeral.”²⁹⁴ Through an intermediary Dawes told the president that nothing could “break down his administration so rapidly as this dancing-party given at the time when the nation is in the agonies of civil war. With equal propriety might a man make a ball with a corpse in his house!” In declining an invitation to the party, Ohio Senator Ben Wade asked: “Are the President and Mrs. Lincoln aware there is a Civil War? If they are not, Mr. and Mrs. Wade are and for that reason decline to participate in feasting and dancing.”²⁹⁵ George H. Boker, a poet and ardent Republican, penned a scathing set of verses, “The Queen Must Dance.”²⁹⁶ The Cincinnati Commercial thought it “unfortunate that Mrs. Lincoln has so poor an understanding of the true dignity of her position, and the duties devolving upon her. It is not becoming her to be assuming the airs of a fine lady and attempting to shine as the bright star of ‘the Republican court,’ as shameless and designing flatterers call the White House circle.” The editors disapproved of her “rich dresses and glittering equipage, her

²⁹² Washington correspondence, 10 March, National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York), 15 March 1862.

²⁹³ Washington correspondence, 26 August, National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York), 31 August 1861. Examples of such panegyrics can be found in the Herald for 21 and 24 October and 11 November 1861.

²⁹⁴ Henry L. Dawes to his wife, Washington, 29 January 1862, Dawes Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁹⁵ Washington correspondence by Van [D. W. Bartlett], 5 February, Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 8 February 1862; Washington correspondence by Ben: Perely Poore, 2 February, Boston Evening Journal, 4 February 1862; Hans L. Trefousse, Benjamin Franklin Wade, Radical Republican from Ohio (New York: Twayne, 1963), 167.

²⁹⁶ Keckley, Behind the Scenes, 102.

adornment of the President's House with costly upholstery," and her penchant for "crowding it with gay assemblages."²⁹⁷ To the public, according to another Cincinnati paper, "the occasion seems too serious, the national peril too imminent, the distress of the country too great, and the condition of the nation too humiliating, to inaugurate a carnival at the Government mansion."²⁹⁸ The journalist Mary Clemmer Ames concluded that Mrs. Lincoln, "unconsciously elated, carried away with the sudden honors of her new condition; unsuspectingly pleased with the delicate, dangerous flatteries of brilliant yet unprincipled intriguers, had little thought for anything but shopping and dressing."²⁹⁹ The Indianapolis Journal protested: "With an empty treasury and a failing credit, a war raging all around us, and foreign nations threatening to interfere, such displays as that at the White House are a disgrace to the President."³⁰⁰ Wendell Phillips exclaimed that "Mrs. Lincoln is vulgar, and wants to be fashionable!"³⁰¹

In light of all this evidence, it is no wonder that Alexander K. McClure concluded that the First Lady "was a consuming sorrow to Mr. Lincoln." Yet, McClure recalled, the president "bore it all with unflagging patience. She was sufficiently unbalanced to make any error possible and many probable, but not sufficiently so as to dethrone her as mistress of the White House."³⁰²

²⁹⁷ "The Domestic Department of the White House," Cincinnati Commercial, 10 February 1862.

²⁹⁸ Cincinnati Gazette, n.d., copied in the New York Evening Express, 11 February 1862.

²⁹⁹ Washington correspondence by Mary Clemmer Ames, 25 February, Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 1 March 1862.

³⁰⁰ Indianapolis Journal, 8 February 1862.

³⁰¹ Wendell Phillips, speech in Hartford, 21 February 1862, in Chicago Times, 28 February 1862.

³⁰² A. K. McClure to Alonzo Rothschild, Philadelphia, 9 May 1907, Lincoln Contemporaries Collection, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne.