

## Chapter Twenty-One

“A Man So Busy Letting Rooms in One End of His House,  
That He Can’t Stop to Put Out the Fire that is Burning in the Other”:

Distributing Patronage (March-April 1861)

His first six weeks in office taxed Lincoln so severely that he told his friend Orville H. Browning in July: “of all the trials I have had since I came here, none begin to compare with those I had between the inauguration and the fall of Fort Sumter. They were so great that could I have anticipated them, I would not have believed it possible to survive them.”<sup>1</sup> He was compelled to make fateful decisions regarding war or peace while dealing with clamorous office seekers, informally known as “carpet-bag politicians.”<sup>2</sup> Two days after the inauguration, over one thousand place hunters thronged the White House.<sup>3</sup> Less than a month into his administration, the president told Henry J. Raymond that “he wished he could get time to attend to the Southern question; he thought he knew what was wanted and believed he could do something towards quieting the rising discontent; but the office-seekers demanded all his time. ‘I am,’ he said, ‘like a man so

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<sup>1</sup> Memorandum by John G. Nicolay, 3 July 1861, in Michael Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House: Letters, Memoranda, and Other Writings of John G. Nicolay, 1860-1865 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 46. A slightly different account of these remarks appears in Theodore Calvin Pease and James G. Randall, eds., The Diary of Orville Hickman Browning (2 vols.; Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1925-33), 1:476 (3 July 1861).

<sup>2</sup> Washington correspondence by Lu. P. S., 24 March, Philadelphia Inquirer, 27 March 1861. On Lincoln’s handling of the patronage, see Allan G. Bogue, The Congressman’s Civil War (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 31-40; Carl Russell Fish, The Civil Service and the Patronage (New York: Longmans, Green, 1905), 169-85; Harry J. Carman and Reinhard H. Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), passim.

<sup>3</sup> Washington correspondence, 6 March, New York Times, 7 March 1861.

busy in letting rooms in one end of his house, than he can't stop to put out the fire that is burning in the other.”<sup>4</sup>

Four years later, Lincoln asked a senator plaintively: “Can't you and others start a public sentiment in favor of making no changes in offices except for good and sufficient cause? It seems as though the bare thought of going through again what I did the first year here, would crush me.”<sup>5</sup> He said that he “was so badgered with applications for appointments that he thought sometimes that the only way that he could escape from them would be to take a rope and hang himself on one of the trees in the lawn south of the Presidents House.”<sup>6</sup>

Lincoln devoted much time to patronage because he wished to unite his party, and by extension the entire North. As Gideon Welles recalled, the president, while “striving to reconcile and bring into united action opposing views,” was “accused of wasting his time in a great emergency on mere party appointments.” Welles conceded that “some things were doubtless done, which, under other circumstances and left to himself he would have ordered differently.”<sup>7</sup> Judicious distribution of offices could cement the many factions of the Republican organization (former Whigs, Free Soilers, Know Nothings, and anti-Nebraska Democrats) into a harmonious whole.<sup>8</sup> Some thought it an unattainable

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<sup>4</sup> Henry J. Raymond, The Life and Public Services of Abraham Lincoln (New York: Derby and Miller, 1865), 720. On another occasion he said he did not want to be in a position where he had “to furnish one end of the temple while the other is burning.” Washington correspondence, 17 March, Cincinnati Gazette, 18 March 1861.

<sup>5</sup> F. B. Carpenter, Six Months at the White House with Abraham Lincoln: The Story of a Picture (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1867), 276. The senator was Daniel Clark of New Hampshire.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Wilson to William H. Herndon, Sterling, Illinois, 10 February 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), 206-7.

<sup>7</sup> Carman and Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage, 336.

<sup>8</sup> Carl Russell Fish, “Lincoln and the Patronage,” American Historical Review 8 (1902): 54, 68; Fish, The Civil Service and the Patronage, 169-72; Carman and Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage, 335-36.

goal, given the party's diversity. "It is morally impossible for any man, even of transcendent ability, . . . to so distribute his patronage and shape the policy of his administration as to gratify and keep together such a heterogeneous compound of discordant materials as that of which the 'Republican' party is composed," said an Ohio editor.<sup>9</sup> But somehow Lincoln managed to do so.

Moreover, as Welles noted, extensive "removals and appointments were not only expected, but absolutely necessary."<sup>10</sup> Lincoln believed "that all the departments are so penetrated with corruption, that a clean sweep will become necessary. This, however, will be the work of some months, too hasty removals being prejudicial to public business."<sup>11</sup> Charles Francis Adams thought that the "reform of Mr Lincoln will have to be very complete, or his whole administration will be decayed at the root." In the employ of the government "there are myriads of subordinates who remain and each in his way does what he can to impair the energy of the system that feeds him."<sup>12</sup> When one of his favorite journalists, Simon P. Hansom, wrote that the Lincoln administration would be "a reign of steel," the pun-loving president asked: "Why not add that Buchanan's was the reign of stealing?"<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> "What Will They Do With It?" Columbus Ohio Statesman, 8 November 1860.

<sup>10</sup> Carman and Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage, 336.

<sup>11</sup> Washington correspondence by Sigma, 7 March, Cincinnati Commercial, 8 March 1861. A similar remark was reported in the New York Times, 6 March 1861 (Washington correspondence of March 5).

<sup>12</sup> Charles Francis Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., Washington, 9 January 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. See Fish, Civil Service and the Patronage, 57.

<sup>13</sup> Hanscom quoted in Ben: Perley Poore, "Reminiscences of the Great Northern Uprising," Youth's Companion, 26 July 1883, 301.

Disloyalty as well as corruption had to be rooted out, especially in the diplomatic service.<sup>14</sup> There, as Seward had observed in 1856, “From the chief here [in Washington] in his bureau to the secretaries of legations in South America, Great Britain, France, Russia, Turkey, and China, there is not one of these agents who has ever rebuked or condemned the extension or aggrandizement of slavery. There is not one who does not even defend and justify it. There is not one who does not maintain that the flag of the United States covers with its protection the slaves of the slaveholding class on the high seas.”<sup>15</sup>

“Whether Fort Sumpter shall be reinforced or surrendered, is less bruited than whether the strongholds of the New York custom house, post offices, &c., shall be surrendered to the ‘irrepressibles,’ or held on to by the ‘conservatives,’” the Cincinnati Commercial reported in early March.<sup>16</sup> Lincoln was especially vexed by Illinoisans, complaining that “it was not pleasant to him to know that so many of his friends were applying for rooms in one end of the building, while the other end was on fire.”<sup>17</sup>

Cameron reported that “the scramble is so great here, from all quarters, and especially Illinois, that we begin to despair.”<sup>18</sup> On March 22, the president’s longtime friend Hawkins Taylor observed that “Lincoln is now more to be pitied than any man living; he

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<sup>14</sup> Harold Hyman, Era of the Oath (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954), 1-32; Catherine Newbold, “The Antislavery Background of the Principal State Department Appointees in the Lincoln Administration” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1962), 143-45; Norman B. Ferris, Desperate Diplomacy: William H. Seward’s Foreign Policy, 1861 (Knoxville : University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 5.

<sup>15</sup> “The Dominant Class in the Republic,” speech of 2 October 1856, The Works of William H. Seward, ed. George E. Baker (5 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1884-87), 4:266.

<sup>16</sup> Washington correspondence, n.d., Cincinnati Commercial, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 6 March 1861.

<sup>17</sup> Washington correspondence by Sigma, 11 March, Cincinnati Commercial, 12 March 1861.

<sup>18</sup> Cameron to Leonard Swett, Washington, 10 March 1861, David Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

is literally run down day and night. It would be a great blessing to him for the Senate to adjourn.”<sup>19</sup> When a journalist expressed sympathy for Lincoln, he replied: “Yes, it was bad enough in Springfield, but it was child’s play compared with the tussle here. I hardly have a chance to eat or sleep. I am fair game for everybody of that hungry lot.”<sup>20</sup>

The “hungry lot” consisted primarily of brazen self-promoters.<sup>21</sup> Most of the best offices “went to those who had most impudence and perseverance.”<sup>22</sup> One day on the street, when an office-seeker thrust a letter into the president’s hand, he snapped: “No, sir! I am not going to open shop here.”<sup>23</sup> The hoard of would-be civil servants evidently imagined that “Lincoln has nothing to do but to see them.”<sup>24</sup> On March 15, writing from the White House, John Hay informed a friend that the “throng of office-seekers is something absolutely fearful. They come at daybreak and still are coming at midnight.”<sup>25</sup> (Cabinet members were similarly besieged. Postmaster General Blair was reported “nearly run to death with office seekers” who plagued him from 8 a.m. to 2 a.m.)<sup>26</sup> In late March, Nicolay complained that he was “haunted continually by some one who ‘wants to see the

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<sup>19</sup> Hawkins Taylor to William Butler, Washington, 22 March 1861, O. M. Hatch Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>20</sup> Henry Villard, Memoirs of Henry Villard, Journalist and Financier: 1838-1900 (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1904), 1:156.

<sup>21</sup> “Boldness, impudence, and perseverance” were “the qualities which insure success in office-hunting.” Washington correspondence by “Observer,” 14 March, New York Times, 16 March 1861.

<sup>22</sup> Hawkins Taylor to Jesse K. Dubois, Washington, 23 March 1861, O. M. Hatch Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>23</sup> Alexander Milton Ross, Recollections and Experiences of an Abolitionist: From 1855 to 1865 (Toronto: Rowse and Hutchinson, 1875), 138.

<sup>24</sup> Washington correspondence, 8 March, Cincinnati Gazette, 9 March 1861.

<sup>25</sup> John Hay to William Leete Stone, Washington, 15 March 1861, Michael Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln’s Side: John Hay’s Civil War Correspondence and Selected Writings (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 5.

<sup>26</sup> Gustavus Fox to his wife Virginia, 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.

President for only five minutes.' At present this request meets me from almost every man woman and child I meet – whether it be by day or night – in the house or on the street."<sup>27</sup>

Nicolay and Hay later recalled that at all hours in the White House “one might see at the outer door and on the staircase, one line going, one coming. In the anteroom and in the broad corridor adjoining the President’s office there was a restless and persistent crowd, – ten, twenty, sometimes fifty, varying with the day and hour, – each one in pursuit of one of the many crumbs of official patronage. They walked the floor; they talked in groups; they scowled at every arrival and blessed every departure; they wrangled with the door-keepers for the right of entrance; they intrigued with them for surreptitious chances; they crowded forward to get even as much as an instant’s glance through the half-opened door into the Executive chamber. They besieged the Representatives and Senators who had privilege of precedence; they glared with envy at the Cabinet Ministers who, by right and usage, pushed through the throng and walked unquestioned through the doors. At that day the arrangement of the rooms compelled the president to pass through this corridor and the midst of this throng when he went to his meals at the other end of the Executive Mansion; and thus, one or twice a day, the waiting expectants would be rewarded by the chance of speaking a word, or handing a paper direct to the President himself – a chance which the more bold and persistent were not slow to improve.”<sup>28</sup>

Assisting Nicolay and Hay was William O. Stoddard, serving as secretary to sign land patents, who also recalled vividly the onslaught of office seekers: “such a swarm! Mingled with men of worth, energy, efficiency and highly meritorious political services,

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<sup>27</sup> Nicolay to Therenia Bates, Washington, 24 March 1861, Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 31.

<sup>28</sup> John G. Nicolay and John Hay, Abraham Lincoln: A History (10 vols.; New York: Century, 1890), 4:68-69.

were the broken-down, used-up, bankrupt, creditless, worthless, the lame, the halt and the blind, from all the highways and byways of the North. To judge by the claims set forth, there were a thousand men at least upon whose individual labors and prowess had turned the fate of that eventful canvass [of 1860]. Men there were who had never been known to pay an honest debt in their lives, but who, nevertheless, ‘expended their entire fortunes to secure Mr. Lincoln's election,’ and who deemed it only fair that their immense expenditures should somehow be reimbursed from the overflowing coffers of Uncle Sam.” Such appeals “rarely seemed to make much impression” on Lincoln.<sup>29</sup>

Lincoln sometimes dealt whimsically with those who claimed that their influence had made him president. Hay reported that “a gentleman of some local prominence came to Washington for some purpose, and so as to obtain the assistance of Lincoln, he brought a good deal of evidence to prove that he was the man who originated his nomination. He attacked the great chief in the vestibule of the Executive Mansion, and walked with him to the War Department, impressing this view upon him. When the President went in his Warwick ‘waited patiently about till Lincoln did appear.’ He walked back to the White-House with him, clinching his argument with new and cogent facts. At the door the President turned, and, with that smile which was half sadness and half fun, he said: ‘So you think you made me President?’ ‘Yes, Mr. President, under Providence, I think I did.’ ‘Well,’ said Lincoln, opening the door and going in, ‘it's a pretty mess you've got me into. But I forgive you.’”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> “White House Sketches, No. 13,” New York Citizen, 24 November 1866, in 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), 199.

<sup>30</sup> John Hay, “The Heroic Age in Washington,” lecture of 1871, in Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln's Side, 126. At a White House reception in July 1861, a delegate to the Chicago convention told the president that he

Equally whimsical was Lincoln's habit of sending importunate applicants for menial government jobs to the treasury department and to the arsenal with notes of introduction bearing the presidential signature. So many would-be messengers, watchmen, and janitors flourishing such notes descended on the treasury that George Harrington, assistant secretary of that department, called at the White House to protest. "Why, bless you," said Lincoln, "did you suppose I expected you to appoint every one bringing you a note? Why, but for you and Genl Ramsey at the arsenal I should die. One week I send all such applicants to you and the next week to Genl Ramsey. I cannot refuse to see those needy people and I am forced to put them upon you and Ramsey. If I have a special desire for an appointment I will let you know." He delivered these remarks "with a twinkle in his eye."<sup>31</sup>

Seward, who regularly visited the Executive Mansion, told his wife in mid-March that its "grounds, halls, stairways, closets, are filled with applicants, who render ingress and egress difficult." Lincoln, he added, "takes that business up, first, which is pressed upon him most. Solicitants for offices besiege him, and he, of course, finds his hands full for the present."<sup>32</sup> Two weeks later the secretary of state grouched that his boss had "No system, no relative ideas, no conception of his situation – much absorption in the details of office dispensation, but little application to great ideas." Cabinet members lacked confidence in the chief executive and in each other.<sup>33</sup>

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had voted for him on all three ballots. Lincoln remarked, "Yes, and a pretty scrape you have got me into." Washington Star, 17 July, copied in the Cincinnati Gazette, 23 July 1861.

<sup>31</sup> Undated notes by George Harrington, Harrington Papers, Missouri Historical Society.

<sup>32</sup> Seward to his wife, Washington, 16 March 1861, Seward, Seward at Washington, 2:530.

<sup>33</sup> Seward told this to Charles Francis Adams. Charles Francis Adams diary, 28 March 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.



In Washington, men from all sections of the country expressed “great indignation and disappointment that the President and all of his Cabinet devote all their time to office seekers in the present unhappy condition of the country.”<sup>34</sup> Adam Gurowski, an irascible, combative Polish nobleman and radical abolitionist who worked at the state department, confided to his diary that Lincoln was “wholly absorbed in adjusting, harmonizing the amount of various salaries bestowed on various States through its office holders.”<sup>35</sup> Murat Halstead of the Cincinnati Commercial roundly condemned the president as a man “of no account” who “is a little in the way, that’s all. He don’t add anything to the strength of the Government – not a thing. He is very busy with trifles, and lets everybody do as they please.” In making appointments, he “yields not to merit or to the force with which an application is asked, but to importunity in the applicant.”<sup>36</sup> Another journalist complained of Lincoln’s “want of system in public business” and his “free and easy way of seeing and hearing Tom, Dick and Harry.” Such informality “may enhance his personal popularity but it is a sad waste of time,” which “just now is too precious to be consumed in discussing and revising the less important nominations.”<sup>37</sup> (Such criticism was not confined to the early days of the administration. In 1863, Richard Henry Dana of Massachusetts found Lincoln “fonder of details than of principles, of tithing the mint,

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<sup>34</sup> Washington correspondence, 12, 15 March, New York Herald, 14, 16 March 1861.

<sup>35</sup> Adam Gurowski, Diary (3 vols.; Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1862-66), 1:18 (section dated March 1861). In the Lincoln Papers, at the Library of Congress is a memo in an unknown hand, dated March 1861, listing state department positions and salaries. It was reported that the administration decided on “a pro rata distribution” of diplomatic and consular appointments. Washington correspondence, 1 April, New York Tribune, 2 April 1861.

<sup>36</sup> Halstead to Timothy C. Day, Washington, 8 June, 16 July 1861, Sarah J. Day, The Man on a Hill Top (Philadelphia: Ware Brothers, 1931), 243, 247.

<sup>37</sup> William Sydney Thayer to Richard Henry Dana, Washington, 21 March 1861, Richard Henry Dana Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

anise and cummin of patronage, and personal questions, than of the weightier matters of empire.”)<sup>38</sup>

Senators, who stayed on after March 4 to consider presidential nominees for office, also believed Lincoln wasted too much time and energy on patronage matters. On March 17, a “distinguished western republican Senator” declared that “if the administration did not soon commence devoting time to more momentous questions than the distribution of the spoils he would have to denounce it.”<sup>39</sup> A week later, Senator James W. Nesmith of Oregon told his colleagues that “the Administration is very much embarrassed” by “countless spoilsmen who desire place.” When trying to lobby on behalf of his constituents, Nesmith “found every avenue to the office of every Secretary and every head of a bureau of this Government crowded with hungry office-seekers – old men and young men; long, gaunt, lean young men; old limping, bald-headed gentlemen – choking up the avenues to the various Secretaries.” Nesmith thought “the Administration should have something else to think about. It is said that Nero fiddled while Rome was burning, and here are forty thousand office-seekers fiddling around the Administration for loaves and fishes, while the Government is being destroyed.” Those thousands were bound to be frustrated, for, said the senator, it “would take a miracle, such as that performed by our Saviour when he fed five thousand people with five loaves and two little fishes, to satisfy all these greedy camp-followers.” If he were in the president’s shoes, Nesmith declared, he “would turn the Federal bayonets against the office seekers”

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<sup>38</sup> Dana to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., 9 March 1863, in Charles Francis Adams, Jr., Richard Henry Dana: A Biography (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1890), 2:264.

<sup>39</sup> Washington correspondence, 18 March, New York Herald, 19 March 1861.

and “drive them from the purlieus of this city.”<sup>40</sup> (The New York Daily News also likened the president’s conduct to that of the notorious Roman emperor. Another Democratic paper varied the metaphor, comparing the administration to “sailors gorging themselves with liquor, and drowning conscience and fear in brutal self-indulgence, while their vessel is fast drifting to destruction.”)<sup>41</sup> When a cabinet member indicated to Edwin M. Stanton, who had served as Buchanan’s attorney general, that he was swamped with office seekers, the gruff Pittsburgh lawyer replied: “Get rid of them, somehow. Fill all the places as soon as possible, so as to get at the real work before you.”<sup>42</sup> Orville H. Browning urged his friend in the White House not to “permit your time to be consumed, and your energies exhausted by personal applications for office.”<sup>43</sup> That was easier said than done, for over 1100 civilian officials were to be replaced.<sup>44</sup>

On March 17, Senator William Pitt Fessenden of Maine wrote that the “poor President is having a hard time of it. He came here tall strong & vigorous, but has worked himself almost to death. The good fellow thinks it is his duty to see every thing, and do every thing himself, and consequently does many things foolishly.” Fessenden tried to visit Lincoln at the White House a few times but remained there only briefly, for he was “pained and disgusted with the ill-bred, ravenous crowd there was about him.”<sup>45</sup> In despair Charles Francis Adams lamented that “life in the midst of the swarm of greedy

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<sup>40</sup> Congressional Globe, 37<sup>th</sup> Congress, 4<sup>th</sup> session, 1496 (23 March 1861).

<sup>41</sup> “What Hope Is Left?” New York Daily News, 21 March 1861; Washington correspondence by “Glaucus,” 2 April, Baltimore Sun, 4 April 1861.

<sup>42</sup> Seward, Seward at Washington, 2:525.

<sup>43</sup> Orville H. Browning to Lincoln, Quincy, Illinois, 26 March 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>44</sup> Carl Russell Fish, “Removal of Officials by the Presidents of the United States,” Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1899, 1:82. A useful overview of the jobs to be distributed appears in David Edward Meerse, “James Buchanan, the Patronage, and the Northern Democratic Party, 1857-1858” (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1969), 1-54.

<sup>45</sup> Fessenden to Elizabeth Warriner, Washington, 17 March 1861, Fessenden Papers, Bowdoin College.

cormorants for place who frequent all the avenues . . . is depressing to the last degree.”<sup>46</sup>

Others likened the office-seekers to leeches.<sup>47</sup> James R. Doolittle of Wisconsin complained that he “was sick and nauseated with this miserable, selfish clamoring for appointment to office.”<sup>48</sup> The scramble for office repelled Horace Greeley, who speculated that “the chances are three to one against an honest man getting anything. The thieves hunt in gangs, and each helps all the rest. Three-quarters of the post-offices will go into the hands of the corruptionists. So with most offices.”<sup>49</sup>

The press complained about the administration’s absorption in patronage matters. “Mr. Lincoln suffered his time to be occupied, his mind agitated, and his feelings harrassed by office-seekers, to an extent never before known, perhaps, in the history of our Government,” editorialized the Cincinnati Gazette.<sup>50</sup> Another paper in the Queen City indignantly observed that the president’s “time is precious to the country. The honor and material interests of the nation demand of him the clear-headed consideration of the most delicate and difficult problems ever before a president, but he is remorselessly victimized by the party vampires, and the time and attention that belongs to the country are occupied in squabbles between office hunters who are in person and politics utterly contemptible.”<sup>51</sup> It termed the news about patronage seekers “extremely disgusting and almost disheartening.”<sup>52</sup> In April, Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper lamented that a “precious month has been lost in the weighing whether Hiram Barney or Simeon Draper

<sup>46</sup> Charles Francis Adams diary, 28 March 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>47</sup> Unidentified Washington correspondent, quoted in the Chicago Evening Journal, 31 August 1861.

<sup>48</sup> Carman and Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage, 53.

<sup>49</sup> Greeley to Beman Brockway, Washington, 12 March 1861, Greeley Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>50</sup> “The Policy of the Administration,” Cincinnati Gazette, 8 April 1861.

<sup>51</sup> Cincinnati Commercial, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 25 March 1861.

<sup>52</sup> Cincinnati Commercial, 14 March 1861.

shall have this or that position.”<sup>53</sup> John W. Forney of the Philadelphia Press likened the president to a housewife who early one morning was sweeping the kitchen as her children slept upstairs. Suddenly the house caught fire. “The industrious mother, however, determined to finish her sweeping; and so lost her house and her children with it.”

Lincoln agreed with that point, telling one office seeker, “I must not be worried by those who desire to furnish one end of our National Government while the Southern portion of it is wrapped in flames.”<sup>54</sup> Another Philadelphia journalist, James E. Harvey, complained that while “the Government is crumbling under our feet, the only question considered is whether one man or another shall be a tide waiter, a village Postmaster or an Indian agent.”<sup>55</sup> The Indianapolis Journal scolded Lincoln for letting “politicians use up his time with personal solicitations, when he should have kicked the first man who approached him about an appointment not actually needed in the prosecution of the public business out of his sight.”<sup>56</sup> The Washington correspondent of the Charleston Mercury sneered that “grave affairs of State are to him of little moment in comparison with the distribution of rewards amongst those who have served him faithfully.”<sup>57</sup> Another Democratic paper thought the administration’s motto could be summarized thus: “The spoils first, the country last.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, 20 April 1861.

<sup>54</sup> Washington correspondence by “Occasional,” 1 April, Philadelphia Press, 2 April 1861.

<sup>55</sup> Harvey to Horace Greeley, Washington, 24 March [1861], Greeley Papers, New York Public Library.

<sup>56</sup> Indianapolis Journal, n.d., copied in the Cincinnati Commercial, 24 August 1861.

<sup>57</sup> Washington correspondence, 26 March, Charleston Mercury, 29 March 1861.

<sup>58</sup> New York Morning Express, 1 April 1861.

Lincoln rose early and spent at least twelve hours a day meeting with callers.<sup>59</sup> He was “profoundly disgusted with the importunate herd of office beggars” and complained about being cooped up all day dealing with them. Some observers feared that such “confinement will ruin him if continued.”<sup>60</sup> On March 13, he reportedly had to cut short his office hours to take a nap.<sup>61</sup> Five days later, it was alleged that Lincoln’s time “is almost wholly engrossed in hearing applications for office. His order is, that all visitors shall be treated courteously and have a fair opportunity of communicating with him personally.” Such a schedule “exposes him to harassing importunity, and seriously interferes with his own comfort and health. It has now become so vexatious that his best friends think some decided corrective should be applied.”<sup>62</sup>

One corrective was to have each caller screened by the sober, dignified Nicolay, who “was decidedly German in his manner of telling men what he thought of them.”<sup>63</sup> The young secretary was unflatteringly described as “the bulldog in the ante-room” with a disposition “sour and crusty;” as “very disagreeable and uncivil;” and as “a grim Cerebrus of Teutonic descent” who “has a very unhappy time of it answering the impatient demands of the gathering, growing crowd of applicants which obstructs

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<sup>59</sup> One report said he arose at 6 a.m. and worked till well past midnight. Washington correspondence, 15 March, New York Times, 16 March 1861.

<sup>60</sup> Washington correspondence by Sigma, 10, 11 and 12 March, Cincinnati Commercial, 11, 12, and 13 March 1861. His first excursion outside the White House occurred on March 12, when he took a brief walk around its grounds. Washington correspondence, 12 March, New York World, 13 March 1861. By March 23, he had only twice ridden out from the Executive Mansion. Washington correspondence, 23 March, New York World, 25 March 1861.

<sup>61</sup> That day was March 13. Washington correspondence, 16 March, Philadelphia Daily News, 18 March 1861. On March 23 he declined receiving any callers.

<sup>62</sup> Washington correspondence, 18 March, New York Tribune, 19 March 1861.

<sup>63</sup> William Dean Howells, Literary Friends and Acquaintance: A Personal Retrospect of American Authorship, ed. David F. Hiatt and Edwin H. Cady (1900; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), 73; William O. Stoddard, “Recollections of a Checkered Lifetime,” unpublished memoirs, 2 vols., 2:429, Stoddard Papers, Detroit Public Library; Washington correspondence, 7 March, New York Times, 8 March 1861.

passage, hall and ante-room.”<sup>64</sup> A more charitable portrait was drawn by the journalist John Russell Young, who said Nicolay “had the close, methodical, silent German way about him. Scrupulous, polite, calm, obliging, with the gift of hearing other people talk; coming and going about the Capitol like a shadow; with the soft, sad smile that seemed to come only from the eyes; prompt as lightning to take a hint or an idea; one upon whom a suggestion was never lost, and if it meant a personal service, sure of the prompt spontaneous return.” All in all, Nicolay was a “man without excitements or emotions, . . . absorbed in the President, and seeing that the Executive business was well done.”<sup>65</sup> One of his assistants, William O. Stoddard, called Nicolay a “fair French and German scholar, with some ability as a writer and much natural acuteness, he nevertheless – thanks to a dyspeptic tendency – had developed an artificial manner the reverse of ‘popular,’ and could say ‘no’ about as disagreeably as any man I ever knew.” But, Stoddard pointed out, Nicolay served the president well; his “chief qualification for the very important post he occupied, was his devotion to the President and his incorruptible honesty Lincoln-ward.” The youthful German “measured all things and all men by their relations to the President, and was of incalculable service in fending off much that would have been unnecessary labor and exhaustion to his overworked patron.” Stoddard thought that Lincoln “showed his good judgment of men when he put Mr. Nicolay where he is, with a kind and amount of authority which it is not easy to describe.”<sup>66</sup> Though unprepossessing physically, he

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<sup>64</sup> William O. Stoddard, “White House Sketches, No. 2,” New York Citizen, 25 August 1866, in Stoddard, Inside the White House, ed. Burlingame, 151, 57; Robert Colby to Lincoln, New York, 18 May 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Washington correspondence by Noah Brooks, 7 November, Sacramento Daily Union, 4 December 1863, in Michael Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed: Civil War Dispatches of Noah Brooks (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 83.

<sup>65</sup> John Russell Young, “Lincoln as He Was,” Pittsburgh Dispatch, 23 August 1891.

<sup>66</sup> Stoddard, “White House Sketches, No. 2,” New York Citizen, 25 August 1866, in Stoddard, Inside the White House, ed. Burlingame, 151, 57.

struck the president of the Illinois Central Railroad as “a man of more ability than his appearance indicates.”<sup>67</sup>

Nicolay’s principal assistant, John Hay, also helped breast the surging tide, a task which he found disagreeable. The relations between Hay and Lincoln were like those between Alexander Hamilton and George Washington when the former served as the latter’s principal aide. John Russell Young recalled that Hay “knew the social graces and amenities, and did much to make the atmosphere of the war[-]enviored White House grateful, tempering unreasonable aspirations, giving to disappointed ambitions the soft answer which turneth away wrath, showing, as Hamilton did in similar offices, the tact and common sense which were to serve him as they served Hamilton in wider spheres of public duty.” (Hay’s tactfulness was put to the test one day by a gentleman who insisted that he must see Lincoln immediately. “The President is engaged now,” replied Hay. “What is your mission?” “Do you know who I am?” asked the caller. “No, I must confess I do not,” said Hay. “I am the son of God,” came the answer. “The President will be delighted to see you when you come again. And perhaps you will bring along a letter of introduction from your father,” retorted the quick-witted secretary. Other lunatics tried unsuccessfully to see the president.)<sup>68</sup> Young, who often visited the White House during the Civil War, called Hay “brilliant” and “chivalrous,” quite “independent, with opinions on most questions,” which he expressed freely. At times sociable, Hay could also be “reserved” and aloof, “with just a shade of pride that did not make acquaintanceship

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<sup>67</sup> William H. Osborn to N. P. Banks, New York, 26 December 1863, Banks Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>68</sup> John W. Starr, “Lincoln and the Office Seekers,” typescript dated 1936, addenda, p. 6, Lincoln files, “Patronage” folder, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee. A Washington paper reported that Lincoln “is almost daily annoyed by victims of insanity, who deem their opinions and advice to be of vast importance to the interests of the nation.” Washington Sunday Chronicle, 24 November 1861. Sometimes they were arrested for disorderly conduct. Washington correspondence, 3 December, New York Herald, 4 December 1862.



spontaneous." Hay, Young said, combined "the genius for romance and politics as no one . . . since Disraeli," and judged that he was well "suited for his place in the President's family." Young depicted Hay as "a comely young man with [a] peach-blossom face," "exceedingly handsome – a slight, graceful, boyish figure – 'girl in boy's clothes,' as I heard in a sniff from some angry politician . . ." This "young, almost beardless, and almost boyish countenance did not seem to match with official responsibilities and the tumult of action in time of pressure, but he did what he had to do, was always graceful, composed, polite, and equal to the complexities of any situation which might arise." Hay's "old-fashioned speech" was "smooth, low-toned, quick in comprehension, sententious, reserved." People were "not quite sure whether it was the reserve of diffidence or aristocracy," Young remembered. The "high-bred, courteous" Hay was "not one with whom the breezy overflowing politician would be apt to take liberties." Young noticed "a touch of sadness in his temperament" and concluded that Hay "had the personal attractiveness as well as the youth of Byron" and "was what Byron might have been if grounded on good principles and with the wholesome discipline of home."<sup>69</sup>

Others added touches to Young's portrait. One of his professors at Brown recalled that Hay "was modest even to diffidence, often blushing to the roots of his hair when he rose to recite."<sup>70</sup> A college friend recollected that Hay's "quick perception, ready grasp of

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<sup>69</sup> John Russell Young, "John Hay, Secretary of State," Munsey's Magazine, 8 January 1929, 247; Young in the Philadelphia Evening Star, 22 August 1891, p. 4, cc. 3-6, p. 4, c. 1; Young, writing in 1898, quoted in T. C. Evans, "Personal Reminiscences of John Hay," Chattanooga, Tennessee, Sunday Times, 30 July 1905. Commenting on the August 1891 article, Hay told Young: "I read what you say of me, with the tender interest with which we hear a dead friend praised. The boy you describe in such charming language was once very dear to me – and although I cannot rate him so highly as you do, I am pleased and flattered more than I can tell you to know he made any such impression on a mind like yours." Hay to Young, Newbury, N.H., 27 August 1891, Young Papers, Library of Congress. On the relationship between Hamilton and Washington, see Ron Chernow, Alexander Hamilton (New York: Penguin Press, 2004).

<sup>70</sup> J. B. Angell, The Reminiscences of James Burrill Angell (New York: Longmans, Green, 1912), 109.

an idea and wonderfully retentive memory, made a mere pastime of study. His enthusiasm was boundless, and his love for and appreciation of the beautiful in nature and in art was acutely developed. If he was smitten with the charms of a pretty girl, he raved and walked the room pouring out his sentiment in a flood of furious eloquence. He would apostrophize a beautiful sunset till the last glow had expired.”<sup>71</sup> Hay’s roommate at Brown, William Leete Stone, said he was "of a singularly modest and retiring disposition," yet with "so winning a manner that no one could be in his presence, even for a few moments, without falling under the spell which his conversation and companionship invariably cast upon all who came within his influence.”<sup>72</sup>

Of that conversation, Joseph Bucklin Bishop observed: “He loved to talk, and his keen joy in it was so genuine and so obvious that it infected his listeners. He was as good a listener as he was a talker, never monopolizing the conversation . . . . He talked without the slightest sign of effort or premeditation, said his good things as if he owed their inspiration to the listener, and never exhibited a shadow of consciousness of his own brilliancy. His manner toward the conversation of others was the most winning form of compliment conceivable. Every person who spent a half-hour or more with him was sure to go away, not only charmed with Hay, but uncommonly well pleased with himself.”<sup>73</sup> Clark E. Carr described Hay as a “bright, rosy-faced, boyish-looking young man.” Carr had never met “a young man or boy who charmed me as he did when he looked at me with his mischievous hazel eyes from under a wealth of dark brown hair. He was, for

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<sup>71</sup> A. S. Chapman, “The Boyhood of John Hay,” 450.

<sup>72</sup> William Leete Stone, "John Hay, 1858," in Memories of Brown: Traditions and Recollections Gathered from Many Sources, ed. Robert Perkins Brown et al. (Providence, R. I.: Brown Alumni Magazine, 1909), 153-54.

<sup>73</sup> Bishop, “Friendship with Hay,” 778.

those days, elegantly dressed, – better than any of us; so neatly, indeed, that he would . . . have been set down as a ‘dude’ at sight.”<sup>74</sup> Logan Hay remarked that his cousin John was "a different type from the rest of the Hay family. He had a magnetic personality – more culture."<sup>75</sup> A newspaperman who saw Hay in 1861 recalled that he was "a young, good-looking fellow, well, almost foppishly dressed, with by no means a low down opinion of himself, either physically or mentally, with plenty of self-confidence for anybody's use, a brain active and intellectual, with a full budget of small talk for the ladies or anybody else, and both eyes keeping a steady lookout for the interests of 'number one.'"<sup>76</sup> In early 1861, Frederick Augustus Mitchel, who attended Brown when Hay was a student there, encountered Hay at Willard's Hotel, casually leaning against a cigar stand; in response to Mitchel's congratulations on being named assistant presidential secretary, Hay replied: "Yes. I'm Keeper of the President's Conscience."<sup>77</sup>

Hay was not so much the conscience of the president as he was his surrogate son, far more like Lincoln in temperament and interests than Robert Todd Lincoln. Hay's humor, intelligence, love of word play, fondness for literature, and devotion to his boss made him a source of comfort to the beleaguered president in the loneliness of the White House. Though nineteen years younger than Lincoln, Hay became as much a friend and confidant to the president as the age difference would allow.<sup>78</sup> He frequently wrote letters

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<sup>74</sup> Clark E. Carr, The Illini: A Story of the Prairies (Chicago: McClurg, 1904), 51.

<sup>75</sup> Logan Hay's "Notes on the History of the Logan and Hay Families," 30 May 1939, Stuart-Hay Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>76</sup> St. Louis Dispatch, 30 May [no year given], clipping in a scrapbook, Hay Papers, Brown University.

<sup>77</sup> Mitchel to Hay, East Orange, N.J., 12 February 1905, Hay Papers, Brown University.

<sup>78</sup> David Herbert Donald, "We Are Lincoln Men": Abraham Lincoln and His Friends (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 177-211.

for Lincoln's signature; most of them were routine but one – the famous 1864 letter of condolence to the widow Bixby – achieved world renown.<sup>79</sup>

In 1881, when president-elect James A. Garfield invited Hay to serve another term as a White House secretary, he declined, explaining that “contact with the greed and selfishness of office-seekers and the bull-doing Congressmen is unspeakably repulsive. The constant contact with envy, meanness, ignorance and the swinish selfishness which ignorance breeds needs a stronger heart and a more obedient nervous system than I can boast.”<sup>80</sup> An example of such greed was the case of Congressman James M. Ashley, a Radical Republican from Ohio. In obtaining the post of surveyor general of Colorado for one Francis M. Case (brother of an Indiana congressman), Ashley anticipated making a fortune in land speculation as well as obtaining a position for his brother William. “I have spent a good deal of time and some money to get this place,” Ashley assured Case, and wanted gratitude in return. “I want to have an interest with you, if I get the place, in the city and town lot speculation. The Pacific railroad will go through this Territory, and it will be a fortune for us if I can get it . . . . I will probably be chairman of the Committee on Territories . . . and then I will know all the proposed expenditures in the Territories, and post you in advance.” Case got the job but disappointed his patron by failing to engage in land speculation, though he did employ his brother William.<sup>81</sup> In the upper

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<sup>79</sup> Michael Burlingame, “The Authorship of the Bixby Letter,” in Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln's Side: John Hay's Civil War Correspondence and Selected Writings (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 169-84.

<sup>80</sup> John Hay to James A. Garfield, Washington, 16 February 1881, Hay Papers, Brown University.

<sup>81</sup> Alexander S. Latty to Chase, Defiance, Ohio, 10 September 1862, Chase Papers, Library of Congress; Chase to Latty, Washington, [17 September 1862], Niven, ed., Chase Papers, 3:273-74; see Robert F. Horowitz, The Great Impeacher: A Political Biography of James M. Ashley (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1979), 80-83; and House Report # 47, 37th Congress, 3<sup>rd</sup> session. Ashley had evidently engaged in similar conduct in connection with the post of revenue collector in Toledo. C. Waggoner to Chase, Toledo, 17 September 1862, Chase Papers, Library of Congress.

chamber, James F. Simmons of Rhode Island demanded payment from a constituent for his assistance in obtaining a government contract, and John P. Hale, an abolitionist from New Hampshire, accepted remuneration from a constituent whose dispute with the war department he helped resolve.<sup>82</sup> (Such corruption was not the exclusive province of Congress. A New York politico, A. Oakey Hall, offered Thurlow Weed \$5000 if the Dictator would obtain for him the office of U.S. district attorney.)<sup>83</sup> Some members of Congress, among them Henry L. Dawes of Massachusetts, spurned attempts at bribery.<sup>84</sup>

Much as Hay disliked the bull-doing lawmakers like Ashley, he felt some compassion for them. On March 6, he reported that congressmen “are waylaid, dogged, importuned, buttonholed, coaxed and threatened persistently, systematically, and without mercy, by day and by night.”<sup>85</sup> An office seeker thought that beleaguered Senators and Representatives “need almost as much pity” as the president and his cabinet.<sup>86</sup> “I wish there was an office for every deserving working Republican who desired it,” wrote an Indiana congressman a month after the election, “but alas! there will not be one for every fifty, I fear.”<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Bogue, Congressman’s Civil War, 106, 112. Simmons was offered \$2000 if he would obtain a post for Isaac Swain. Isaac Swain to James F. Simmons, San Francisco, 2 July 1861, Simmons Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>83</sup> A. Oakey Hall to Weed, n.p., 26 December 1860, Weed Papers, University of Rochester. Hall had contemplated offering Weed \$5000 per annum for the post of surveyor of the port of New York but decided against it.

<sup>84</sup> J. Starke to Dawes, Halifax, Vermont, 11 May 1861; Dawes to Starke, North Adams, 11 May 1861, Dawes Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>85</sup> Washington correspondence by John Hay, 6 March, New York World, 8 March 1861, Michael Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist: John Hay’s Anonymous Writings for the Press, 1860-1864 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998), 54.

<sup>86</sup> “A Disappointed Office-seeker Discourseth to his Brothers,” Washington, 20 March, New York Evening Post, 26 March 1861.

<sup>87</sup> Schuyler Colfax to [Daniel D. Pratt], Washington, 7 December 1860, Pratt Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis.

Like Hay, Lincoln objected to pushy lawmakers lobbying on behalf of their importunate constituents. According to William O. Stoddard, the president listened to office seekers and their congressional patrons “with a degree of patience and good temper truly astonishing. At times, however, even his equanimity gave way, and more than one public man finally lost the President's good will by his pertinacity in demanding provision for his personal satellites. Some Senators and Congressmen really distinguished themselves in this respect. I remember a saying of Mr. Lincoln's that comes in pretty well here: 'Poor —, he is digging his political grave!'

"Why, how so, Mr. President? He has obtained more offices for his friends than any other man I know of," said Stoddard.

"That's just it; no man can stand so much of that sort of thing. You see, every man thinks he deserves a better office than the one he gets, and hates his 'big man' for not securing it, while for every man appointed there are five envious men unappointed, who never forgive him for their want of luck. So there's half a dozen enemies for each success. I like \_\_\_\_\_, and don't like to see him hurt himself in that way; I guess I won't give him any more."<sup>88</sup> (The unnamed politico may have been Solomon Meredith of Indiana, “the most irrepressible of pipe-laying Hoosiers,” who annoyed Lincoln fearfully but managed to obtain places for many of his friends.<sup>89</sup> Another successful office seeker said “the practice seems to be with Lincoln that he yields to the man that bores [i.e., pesters] him the most.”)<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> William O. Stoddard, “White House Sketches, No. 5,” New York Citizen, 15 September 1866, in Stoddard, Inside the White House, ed. Burlingame, 161; Washington correspondence, 3 April, Cincinnati Commercial, 4 April 1861.

<sup>89</sup> Washington correspondence, 3 April, Cincinnati Commercial, 4 April 1861.

<sup>90</sup> Charles Washburn to Elihu B. Washburne, 23 May 1861, Russell K. Nelson, “The Early Life and Congressional Career of Elihu B. Washburne” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Dakota, 1954), 238.

For every applicant he pleased by making an appointment, Lincoln alienated all the others seeking that spot. As a British journalist observed, “What is the use of telling a man he can’t have a place because 100 others are asking for it, if that man thinks he is the only one who has a right to get it?”<sup>91</sup>

In late March, Nicolay persuaded his boss to limit business hours from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; soon thereafter he shortened them by two hours and eliminated Saturday visits.<sup>92</sup> 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.”<sup>93</sup>

Readers of the Cincinnati Gazette learned that the “President is about the busiest person in Washington. He is working early and late. His time is taken up mostly with the ceaseless tide of office seekers constantly pouring in upon him. . . . His family only see him at dinner, he being compelled from fatigue to retire to his room as soon as he leaves his office.” He “is besieged from morning till night in his ante-rooms, in his parlors, in his library, in his office, at his matins, at his breakfast, before and after dinner, and all

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<sup>91</sup> Washington correspondence, 29 March, London Times, 16 April 1861.

<sup>92</sup> Washington correspondence, 1 April, Cincinnati Commercial, 3 April 1861; Washington correspondence, 31 March, New York World, 1 April 1861; Nicolay to Theresia Bates, Washington, 31 March and 2 April 1861, Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 32.

<sup>93</sup> Hay to Herndon, Paris, 5 September 1866, Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln’s Side, 109; Washington correspondence, 17 March, New York Times, 18 March 1861.

night, until wearied and worn he goes to rest.”<sup>94</sup> He allowed “himself hardly time to eat – leaving the table always before others.”<sup>95</sup> In mid-March, he “looked very bad” and “very much careworn.”<sup>96</sup> A reporter noted that Lincoln was “overworking himself” as he struggled with patronage matters and the Fort Sumter question.<sup>97</sup> (In 1864, Ohio Senator John Sherman told his constituents that Lincoln “works more hours than any other President that ever occupied the chair.”)<sup>98</sup> Similar testimony came from a frustrated office-seeker, who noted that the president “is working himself down to a shadow in the vain struggle to consider every case himself.”<sup>99</sup> A brief respite in mid-March afforded little relief, for as he noted, “when the flies commence leaving in the fall, the few remaining ones always begin to bite like the devil.”<sup>100</sup>

On March 24, it was reported that the “incessant calls upon the President are terrible. He is disturbed early in the morning and late in the night, and nothing but the persistent efforts of his friends induced him yesterday to issue an order to the effect that he would receive no visits, either of friendship or official, and yet he was intruded upon by some who ought to have commiserated his trouble.”<sup>101</sup> By April, according to Edwin M. Stanton, the president was “said to be very much broken down with the pressure in

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<sup>94</sup> Washington correspondence, 12, 22 March, Cincinnati Gazette, 13, 25 March, 1861.

<sup>95</sup> Washington correspondence by Sigma, 10 March, Cincinnati Commercial, 11 March 1861.

<sup>96</sup> Washington correspondence by Kritick, 14 March, Charleston Courier, 18 March 1861; Washington correspondence, 18 March, New York Herald, 19 March 1861.

<sup>97</sup> Washington correspondence, 17 March, New York Evening Post, 18 March 1861.

<sup>98</sup> Speech at Sandusky in the fall of 1864, Frank Moore, ed., Anecdotes, Poetry, and Incidents of the War: North and South, 1860-1865 (New York: Bible House, 1867), 449.

<sup>99</sup> “A Disappointed Office-seeker Discourseth to his Brothers,” Washington, 20 March, New York Evening Post, 26 March 1861.

<sup>100</sup> Washington correspondence by Sigma, 14 March, Cincinnati Commercial, 15 March 1861.

<sup>101</sup> Washington correspondence, 24 March, Philadelphia Press, 25 March 1861.



respect to appointments.”<sup>102</sup> On April 3, he “became so severely indisposed as to necessitate the exclusion of all visitors.”<sup>103</sup> The following day, the New York Times declared: “Mr. Lincoln owes a higher duty to the country, to the world, to his own fame, than to fritter away the priceless opportunities of the Presidency in listening to the appeals of competing office-hunters, in whose eyes the loss of a thousand-dollar clerkship would be a catastrophe little inferior to the downfall of the Republic!”<sup>104</sup> When Ohio Senator John Sherman badgered him about some appointments, Lincoln “sank in his chair” looking like “the picture of despair.” This prompted Sherman to confess that he “felt ashamed to disturb him with such matters” and to promise that he “would not bother him again with them.” The president’s “face brightened, he sat up in his chair and his whole manner changed.”<sup>105</sup>

At first Lincoln planned to examine applications closely to keep patient merit from being eclipsed by the unworthy. Perhaps recalling his own experience in seeking the commissionership of the General Land Office eleven years earlier, he told Carl Schurz in July 1860: “Men like you, who have real merit and do the work, are always too proud to ask for anything; those who do nothing are always the most clamorous for office, and very often get it, because it is the only way to get rid of them. But if I am elected, they will find

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<sup>102</sup> Stanton to Buchanan, Washington, 3 April 1861, Buchanan Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>103</sup> Washington correspondence, 3 April, Cincinnati Enquirer, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 5 April 1861.

<sup>104</sup> “Physical Theory of the Presidency,” New York Times, 4 April 1861.

<sup>105</sup> Day, Man on a Hill Top, 258.

a tough customer to deal with, and you may depend upon it that I shall know how to distinguish deserving men from the drones.”<sup>106</sup>

Among the worthy party workers to be rewarded were campaign biographers. John Locke Scripps received the Chicago post office; William Dean Howells became consul at Venice; James Quay Howard held that same post in Saint John, New Brunswick; Joseph H. Barrett was named commissioner of pensions; and in 1862, Jesse W. Fell won a coveted paymastership in the army.

Lincoln intended to call on his cabinet and Congress to help select applicants, but, as he told his old friend Robert L. Wilson, he “found to his Surprise, that members of his Cabinet, who were equally interested with himself, in the success of his administration, had been recommending parties to be appointed to responsible positions who were often physically, morally, and intellectually unfit for the place.” Apparently, he added, “most of the Cabinet officers and members of Congress, had a list of appointments to be made, and many of them were such as ought not to be made, and they knew, and their importunities were urgent in proportion to the unfitness for the appointee.”<sup>107</sup> One journalist argued that the president’s reluctance to turn over patronage matters to the cabinet exclusively was wise. Lincoln’s “strong desire to see justice done to all the applicants for office” prompted him “to devote his time from early morning to the hours of darkness in examining their papers.” The department heads “might favor their peculiar friends . . . but he represents the nation, and endeavors to be impartial.”<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Schurz to his wife, Alton, 25 July 1860, in Frederic Bancroft, ed., Speeches, Correspondence and Political Papers of Carl Schurz (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913), 1:120.

<sup>107</sup> Robert Wilson to William H. Herndon, Sterling, Illinois, 10 February 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants, 206-7.

<sup>108</sup> Washington correspondence, 31 March, New York Evening Post, 1 April 1861.

Lincoln was right: congressmen, senators, and cabinet members were less deeply concerned with the success of the administration than with their own short-term political gain. Adam Gurowski noted in his diary that cabinet secretaries “have old party debts to pay, old sores to avenge or to heal, and all this by distributing offices.” Through the use of patronage, “everybody is to serve his friends and his party, and to secure his political position. Some of the party leaders seem to me similar to children enjoying a long-expected and ardently wished-for toy. . . . They, the leaders, look to create engines for their own political security.”<sup>109</sup> Gurowski was right. Patronage greased the wheels of political machines; party service counted for more than honesty and competence when government jobs were being filled. Friendship or family ties with the powerful also weighed heavily in the balance.<sup>110</sup> An especially notorious example of political payoff was the appointment of David P. Holloway, a friend of Interior Secretary Smith, as commissioner of patents. The senate committee investigating his nomination refused to report it “on the ground of his presumed incompetence.”<sup>111</sup> The main objection was his

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<sup>109</sup> Gurowski, Diary, 1:16-17 (section headed March 1861). Bates gave posts to his Missouri friends. Marvin R. Cain, Lincoln's Attorney General: Edward Bates of Missouri (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1965), 130. Chase gave posts to his Ohio friends. John Niven, Salmon P. Chase: A Biography (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 239-42. Cameron gave posts to his Pennsylvania friends. Erwin Stanley Bradley, Simon Cameron, Lincoln's Secretary of War: A Political Biography (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966), 179-81.

<sup>110</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century, a spoils system had become well established, and civil servants were appointed not on the basis of merit but political influence. Congressmen, senators, governors, cabinet members, and local political bosses had a say in the distribution of offices. Cleveland Plain Dealer, n.d., copied in the New York Daily News, 26 February 1861; Ari A. Hoogenboom, Outlawing the Spoils: A History of the Civil Service Reform Movement, 1865-1883 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), 1-7; Carl Russell Fish, The Civil Service and the Patronage (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1920), 173-85; Leonard D. White, The Jacksonians: A Study in Administrative History, 1829-1861 (New York: Macmillan, 1954), 300-46.

<sup>111</sup> Washington correspondence, 23 March, New York Evening Post, 23 March 1861. Allegedly three New England senators, supporters of George G. Fogg, blackballed Holloway. Washington correspondence, 22 March, Philadelphia Daily News, 23 March 1861. On Holloway's unfitness, see George W. Julian to Lincoln, Centerville, Indiana, 1 May 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

lack of any background in law or science.<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, Lincoln stood by Holloway, who beat out his chief competitor, the influential George G. Fogg of New Hampshire. Only by agreeing to give Fogg the Swiss mission was Lincoln able to win senate confirmation for Holloway.<sup>113</sup> (Fogg’s displacement of Theodore S. Fay as minister to Switzerland dismayed an admirer, who said that even though the New Hampshire editor “is a good fellow,” he “is not fitted at all for a diplomatic position, and Fay sh[oul]d never have been superseded. He is the best informed man on European history & diplomacy and has the most valuable and intimate range of diplomatic social acquaintance of all the representatives of the U.S. abroad, & he is an anti-slavery man of long standing – from conviction.”)<sup>114</sup> Some regarded Holloway’s appointment as typical. Charles Francis Adams thought that Lincoln, whom he called “a vulgar man, unfitted both by education and nature for the post of President,” had been “quite obtuse” and hence had “made very bad selections for all branches of the service.”<sup>115</sup>

In fact, Lincoln knowingly appointed some questionable men to office. According to Horace White, he enjoyed a reputation in Illinois as “an adept at log-rolling or any political game that did not involve falsity.” White, who was secretary of the Republican State Committee of Illinois in the late 1850s, recalled that Lincoln often attended

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<sup>112</sup> Washington correspondence, 28 March, New York Evening Post, 29 March 1861.

<sup>113</sup> Washington correspondence, 28 March, Cincinnati Commercial, n.d., in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 1 April 1861. Fogg allegedly complained “that the office of Commissioner of Patents was tendered to him, but that while he was attending to the interests of others who were active in carrying the late election, it was given to someone else.” Washington correspondence, 19 March, Philadelphia Daily News, 20 March 1861.

<sup>114</sup> Albert G. Brown, Jr., to John A. Andrew, Washington, [28 March 1861], Andrew Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. Fay had served twenty-four years in that post. Washington correspondence, 10 March, New York Evening Post, 11 March 1861.

<sup>115</sup> The Journal of Benjamin Moran, 1857-1865, ed. Sarah Agnes Wallace & Frances Elma Gillespie (2 vols.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948-49), 2:1092 (entry for 19 November 1862); Charles Francis Adams diary, 1 May 1865, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Adams to Richard Henry Dana, London, 11 June 1862, Dana Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

meetings of that body: “His judgment was very much deferred to in such matters. He was one of the shrewdest politicians of the State. Nobody had more experience in that way, nobody knew better than he what was passing in the minds of the people. Nobody knew better how to turn things to advantage politically, and nobody was readier to take such advantage, provided it did not involve dishonorable means. He could not cheat people out of their votes any more than out of their money. . . . Mr. Lincoln never gave his assent, so far as my knowledge goes, to any plan or project for getting votes that would not have borne the full light of day. At the same time, he had no objection to the getting of votes by the pledge of offices, nor was he too particular what kind of man got the offices.”<sup>116</sup> Benjamin Moran, secretary of the U.S. legation in London, thought that “Mr. Lincoln’s Consular appointments are the very worst yet made in my time.”<sup>117</sup>

Cabinet secretaries quarreled over patronage. Seward in particular aroused anger by meddling outside his department.<sup>118</sup> Chase also poached on others’ turf. Upset by the treasury secretary’s attempt to dictate post office appointments, Samuel Galloway warned that if the president “permits his judgment to be swayed by the dictation of Chase he will soon draw upon himself universal contempt & condemnation. Chase has already alienated by his selfishness some of his warmest adherents in Ohio.” In fact, Galloway asserted, “Chase is doomed and dead in Ohio.”<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Horace White, “Introduction,” William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Weik, Abraham Lincoln: The True Story of a Great Life (2 vols.; New York: Appleton, 1909), 1:xxi-xxii.

<sup>117</sup> Sarah Agnes Wallace & Frances Elma Gillespie, eds., The Journal of Benjamin Moran, 1857-1865 (2 vols.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948-49), 2:909 (entry for 20 November 1861).

<sup>118</sup> Frederic Bancroft, The Life of William H. Seward (2 vols.; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1900), 2:356-57.

<sup>119</sup> Galloway to Weed, Columbus, 23 March 1861, Weed Papers, University of Rochester; Galloway to David Davis, Columbus, 29 March 1861, David Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

On March 26, Bates reported that his colleagues “are squabbling around me . . . about the distribution of loaves and fishes.”<sup>120</sup> The fierce battles between Chase and Seward reflected the antagonism that former Democrats and ex-Whigs felt for each other. John W. Forney was “a good deal surprised to observe the feeling that exists between the old Whigs and the old Democrats in the Republican party. It will require some tact and skill to prevent it from exploding into ugly divisions.”<sup>121</sup>

Lincoln showed that he had what Forney thought necessary: exceptional tact and preternatural skill.<sup>122</sup> According to Thurlow Weed, who lobbied hard on behalf of his own faction, Lincoln “kept a regular account book of his appointments in New York, dividing the various tit-bits of favor so as to give each faction more than it could get from any other source, yet never enough to satisfy its appetite.”<sup>123</sup> The astute, Harvard-educated Kansas leader Daniel Wilder thought Lincoln a far shrewder political operator than the Wizard of the Lobby: “Thurlow Weed was not a fractional quarter section [160 acres] to Lincoln’s township [23,040 acres].”<sup>124</sup> To Seward, the president explained his guiding principle: “In regard to the patronage, sought with so much eagerness and jealousy, I have prescribed for myself the maxim, ‘Justice to all.’”<sup>125</sup> No one faction of the party was allowed to hog the best jobs.<sup>126</sup> When Greeley and his allies demanded the

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<sup>120</sup> Bates to James O. Broadhead, Washington, 26 March 1861, Broadhead Papers, Missouri Historical Society, in Carman and Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage, 54.

<sup>121</sup> Washington correspondence by John W. Forney, 25 February, Philadelphia Press, 26 February 1861.

<sup>122</sup> Richard N. Current, The Lincoln Nobody Knows (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958), 187-213.

<sup>123</sup> Leonard Swett to William H. Herndon, Chicago, 17 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 165.

<sup>124</sup> Daniel Wilder to William H. Herndon, Rochester, N.Y., 24 November 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 419.

<sup>125</sup> Lincoln to Seward, Washington, 8 December 1860, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:149.

<sup>126</sup> Washington correspondence, 31 March, Philadelphia Inquirer, 1 April 1861.

top two posts in the New York custom house, Lincoln noted disapprovingly that they were “in favor of having the two big puddings on the same side of the board.”<sup>127</sup> The president said he would be even-handed and follow “the rule of give and take.”<sup>128</sup> The puddings would be served up equitably on both sides of the board.<sup>129</sup> On March 27, a disappointed Weed left Washington, lamenting that he had not seen Lincoln since the inauguration and that New York Senators Preston King and Ira Harris had failed to agree on a slate of appointments.<sup>130</sup>

As a participant in the 1849 patronage lottery, Lincoln had observed Zachary Taylor undermine his presidency by mishandling the distribution of offices. More recently, Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan had badly divided the Democratic party not only with unwise policies regarding slavery but also with ill-advised use of the patronage power.<sup>131</sup> The Buchanan administration had been warned by a Michigan senator who, while urging the selection of men “able and anxious to work for the redemption of the State,” admonished that “these little matters in the way of the small appointments, if they go wrong, hurt us more than a wrong move on any question of the magnitude of a war with England, a great deal.”<sup>132</sup> Unlike Buchanan, Lincoln fully

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<sup>127</sup> Lincoln, memorandum on the appointment of surveyor and collector of the port of New York, [ca. 8 April 1861], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:325.

<sup>128</sup> Charles A. Dana in Allen Thorndike Rice, ed., Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln by Distinguished Men of His Time (New York: North American Review, 1886), 364.

<sup>129</sup> A good example is the way in which Lincoln handled patronage on the west coast. See John Denton Carter, “Abraham Lincoln and the California Patronage,” American Historical Review 58 (1943): 495-506.

<sup>130</sup> Weed to James Watson Webb, New York, 27 March [1861], Webb Papers, Yale University.

<sup>131</sup> On Buchanan’s patronage policies, see Meerse, “Buchanan, the Patronage, and the Northern Democratic Party,” *passim*; Nichols, Disruption of the American Democracy, 74-93, 210-15; Kenneth M. Stampp, America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 74-82.

<sup>132</sup> Charles E. Stuart to Jacob Thompson, Kalamazoo, 30 April 1857, quoted in Meerse, “Buchanan, the Patronage, and the Northern Democratic Party,” 44-45.

appreciated the significance of patronage and through its wise distribution he was able to keep Congress relatively happy and his party intact.<sup>133</sup>

Complaints abounded. Chase protested both to Lincoln and to Seward that Ohio was not receiving its fair share of diplomatic appointments, which fell under the aegis of the department of state.<sup>134</sup> Others grouched that consular posts were given disproportionately to Easterners and to ex-Whigs.<sup>135</sup> (The president eventually ruled that the 262 diplomatic and consular posts should be distributed among the states based on their population.)<sup>136</sup> Annoyed when Seward blocked the nomination of Chase's brother as a U.S. marshal in New York, the treasury secretary successfully appealed to Lincoln.<sup>137</sup>

Other cabinet members insisted on jobs for blood relations or in-laws. Bates, for example, successfully lobbied for his wife's distant relative, Edward C. Carrington, to serve as U.S. district attorney in Washington, though Seward and Bates favored Edwin M. Stanton for that post.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Bogue, Congressman's War, 39-40.

<sup>134</sup> Chase to Lincoln, Washington, 21 March 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Chase to Seward, Washington, 20 March 1861, John Niven, ed., The Salmon P. Chase Papers (5 vols.; Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1993-1998), 3:54-55.

<sup>135</sup> David Davis to Lincoln, Bloomington, 28 January 1861, State Department Records, Applications and Recommendations, 1861-1869, Group 59, M650, National Archives; "Another Word on the New Diplomatic Appointments," New York Evening Post, 20 March 1861. As of March 23, only four of the twenty-nine men named to foreign posts were ex-Democrats. Washington correspondence, 23 March, New York Evening Post, 23 March 1861.

<sup>136</sup> Washington correspondence, 31 March, Cincinnati Gazette, 1 April 1861.

<sup>137</sup> Chase to Seward, Washington, 27 March 1861, Seward Papers, University of Rochester; Bates to Lincoln, Washington, 27 March 1861; Seward to Lincoln, Washington, 28 March 1861; Chase to Lincoln, Washington, 28 March 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Niven, Chase, 242; Carman and Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage, 167-68. Seward favored the "illiterate and rough-hewn" Andrew Bray Dickinson, who received the consolation prize of an appointment as minister to Nicaragua. Henry B. Stanton, Random Recollections (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; New York: Macgowan and Slipper, 1886), 111-12; Chase to John Sherman, Washington, 28 March 1861, Sherman Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>138</sup> Beale, ed., Welles Diary, 1:57; W. B. Webb to James Watson Webb, Washington, 13 April 1861, James Watson Webb Papers, Yale University; Joseph J. Coombs to Lincoln, Washington, 4 April 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.



An especially contentious struggle arose over the New York custom house, whose leaders had a vast amount of patronage at their disposal and enjoyed munificent incomes.<sup>139</sup> Members of the anti-Seward faction, some of whom had worked for Lincoln's nomination at Chicago, urged the president to keep the Sage of Auburn from monopolizing the patronage.<sup>140</sup> In the midst of their meeting with the president, a staff member interrupted with a message from the First Lady: "She wants you."

"Yes, yes," he said without making a move.

Soon thereafter the messenger returned and exclaimed: "I say, she wants you!"

Lincoln, though "evidently annoyed," paid no attention to this interruption; instead he told his visitors: "One side shall not gobble up everything. Make out a list of places and men you want, and I will endeavor to apply the rule of give and take."<sup>141</sup>

Seward and Weed fought to have Simeon Draper named collector of the port of New York, while their opponents championed the "quiet, unostentatious" Hiram Barney, a prominent lawyer as well as a close friend and political ally of Chase.<sup>142</sup> In 1860, Barney had raised \$35,000 for the party and chaired the New York state judiciary convention.<sup>143</sup> (Lincoln had for years served as Barney's collecting agent in Springfield

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<sup>139</sup> William J. Hartman, "Politics and Patronage: The New York Custom House, 1852-1902" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1952), 10-30. The custom house had over 1100 employees. Between 1861 and 1863, the collector received \$50,000 in fines and forfeitures in addition to his \$6340 annual salary. William Hartman, "Custom House Patronage under Lincoln," New-York Historical Society Quarterly 41 (1957): 440-57.

<sup>140</sup> The faction was headed by George Opdyke, James S. Wadsworth, Lucius Robinson, T. B. Carroll, Charles A. Dana, and Henry B. Stanton.

<sup>141</sup> Charles A. Dana, Recollections of the Civil War: With the Leaders at Washington and in the Field in the Sixties (New York: D. Appleton, 1898), 2-4.

<sup>142</sup> New York Evening Post, n.d., copied in the New York Daily News, 27 March 1861; William Allen Butler, A Retrospect of Forty Years, 1825-1865 (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1911), 349-50; "The New York Appointments," New York Daily News, 13 March 1861; Niven, Chase, 240.

<sup>143</sup> James N. Adams, "Lincoln and Hiram Barney," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 50 (1957): 349; obituary of Barney, unidentified clipping, Truman H. Bartlett Papers, Boston University.

and the two men enjoyed “agreeable and profitable business relations.” Barney said that Lincoln “is as good as a brother to me.” They had first met in 1859.<sup>144</sup> Deferring to his treasury secretary, whose department had charge of customs collection, Lincoln selected Barney, who proved to be a disappointment.<sup>145</sup> (Charles A. Dana of the New York Tribune warned that though Barney might be “an excellent man,” he “has no popular strength and no strength with the merchants. Nor do his political services give him a title it.”)<sup>146</sup> Weed protested in vain against this appointment, but he was successful in persuading Lincoln to give his faction other desirable places in the customs house despite Barney’s reluctance to fire loyal, patriotic Democrats.<sup>147</sup> Meanwhile, anti-Seward men complained that they received insufficient patronage.<sup>148</sup>

Lincoln rejoiced when the squabbling factions in the Empire State could agree on an appointment.<sup>149</sup> In May, he told Chase that one Christopher Adams “is magnificently recommended; but the great point in his favor is that Thurlow Weed and Horace Greeley join in recommending him. I suppose the like never happened before, and never will

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<sup>144</sup> “The New York Appointments,” New York Daily News, 13 March 1861; Barney to Chase, New York, 23 July 1861, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>145</sup> Carman and Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage, 61-63.

<sup>146</sup> Charles A. Dana to Chase, New York, 22 February 1861, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>147</sup> Washington correspondence, 27 March, Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 30 March 1861; Carman and Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage, 63; Barney to Chase, New York, 23 July 1861, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>148</sup> William Cullen Bryant to Chase, New York, 23 March 1861, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>149</sup> Barney to Chase, Washington, 19 June 1861, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

again; so that it is now or never.”<sup>150</sup> In neighboring Connecticut, equally bitter squabbles over patronage vexed the president.<sup>151</sup>

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The president estimated “with some disgust” that 30,000 office-seekers flocked to Washington, but he quickly added: “There are some 30,000,000 who ask for no offices.”<sup>152</sup> He predicted that “if ever this government is overthrown, utterly demoralized, it will come from this struggle and wriggle for office, for a way to live without work; from which nature I am not free myself.”<sup>153</sup> In July, just after the Union army’s defeat at Bull Run, Lincoln asked his friend Henry C. Whitney, “What do you think has annoyed me more than any one thing? . . . the fight over two post offices – one at our Bloomington, and the other at —, in Pennsylvania.”<sup>154</sup>

Hay asserted that there “never was a President who so little as Lincoln admitted personal consideration in the distribution of places. He rarely gave a place to a friend – still more rarely because he was a friend.” Lincoln “was entirely destitute of gratitude for political services rendered to himself.”<sup>155</sup> But in fact, Lincoln did reward many of his Illinois friends.<sup>156</sup> Noah Brooks, a journalist who knew the president well, recalled that he “liked to provide for his friends, who were often remembered gratefully for services

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<sup>150</sup> Lincoln to Chase, Washington, 8 May 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:361.

<sup>151</sup> Nelson R. Burr, “Abraham Lincoln: Western Star over Connecticut,” part 4, ““Mr. Lincoln, Give Me a Job!” The Patronage Problem,” Lincoln Herald 86 (1984): 6-18.

<sup>152</sup> John Hay, “The Heroic Age in Washington,” Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln’s Side, 125.

<sup>153</sup> Herndon, “Lincoln’s Individuality,” Emanuel Hertz, ed., The Hidden Lincoln: From the Letters and Papers of William H. Herndon (New York: Viking, 1938), 418.

<sup>154</sup> Whitney, Life on the Circuit, ed. Angle, 439.

<sup>155</sup> John Hay, “The Heroic Age in Washington,” Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln’s Side, 125.

<sup>156</sup> Roy P. Basler, “President Lincoln Helps His Old Friends” (pamphlet; Springfield: Abraham Lincoln Association, 1977), 3-16.

given him in his early struggles in life. Sometimes he would ‘break the slate,’ as he called it, of those who were making up a list of appointments, that he might insert the name of some old acquaintance who had befriended him in days when friends were few.”<sup>157</sup>

One of the first appointments made by the new administration was Norman B. Judd as minister to Berlin, a lucrative job. Lincoln explained that although Judd was not his oldest friend, he was “so devoted and self-sacrificing a friend as to make the distinction of an early nomination to that mission a well due tribute.”<sup>158</sup> When some Illinois friends objected to the appointment, Lincoln replied: “It seems to me he has done more for the success of the party than any one man in the state, and he is certainly the best organizer we have.”<sup>159</sup> To assist Judd, Herman Kreismann was named secretary of the legation. This irritated Seward, who complained about Lincoln’s “utter absence of any acquaintance” with foreign affairs, “and as to men he was more blind and unsettled than as to measures.” The nominations of Judd and Kreismann, he said, “were made without consultation, merely in fulfillment of a promise to give the former a Cabinet appointment, which he had been compelled to give up.”<sup>160</sup> When a senator objected that Judd spoke no German or French, Stephen A. Douglas replied that Judd knew as much of those languages as the incumbent minister to Prussia.<sup>161</sup>

The president filled diplomatic and consular posts swiftly to counteract Confederate efforts to gain recognition from European nations, some of which objected

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<sup>157</sup> Brooks, “Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln,” Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed, 216-17.

<sup>158</sup> Washington correspondence, 7 March, New York Herald, 8 March 1861. Lincoln evidently told this to Indiana Senator Henry S. Lane, who was supporting another man for the Berlin post.

<sup>159</sup> Thomas J. Pickett, “Reminiscences of Lincoln,” Lincoln, Nebraska, Daily State Journal, 12 April 1881.

<sup>160</sup> Charles Francis Adams diary, 10 March 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>161</sup> Washington correspondence, 10 March, New York Evening Post, 11 March 1861.

to the high tariff enacted by the Republicans. Henry S. Sanford of Connecticut, an experienced diplomat, was appointed quickly so that he could head off Confederate initiatives in London and Paris before he settled into his post at Brussels. (Some Republicans protested that Sanford had recently supported Democrats in the previous spring election.) Fearing that the Confederacy would attack Mexico, Lincoln promptly appointed Thomas Corwin of Ohio as minister to that country so that he could negotiate a treaty guaranteeing its territorial integrity, a treaty which it was hoped would be joined by Great Britain and France.<sup>162</sup>

In addition to Judd, other Illinois friends of Lincoln fared well at the patronage trough. The lucrative job of marshal of the District of Columbia went to Ward Hill Lamon; Anson G. Henry was named surveyor general of the Washington Territory; Simeon Francis became a paymaster in the army; Allen Francis received a consulate in Canada; and Theodore Canisius served as consul in Vienna. Lincoln picked Archibald Williams as U.S. district attorney for Kansas; Mark Delahay was named surveyor general for that state and later replaced Williams, who died in 1863. Samuel C. Parks served as associate justice of the Idaho Territory's supreme court. The pastor of Springfield's First Presbyterian Church, James Smith (whom Lincoln described as "an intimate personal friend of mine") represented U.S. interests as consul in Dundee, Scotland, the country of his birth.<sup>163</sup> Jackson Grimshaw became collector of internal revenue in the Quincy district

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<sup>162</sup> Washington correspondence, 25 March, National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York), 30 March 1861; Washington correspondence by Special, 19 March, Cincinnati Commercial, 20 March 1861; Washington correspondence, 13 March, New York Times, 14 March 1861; Washington correspondence, 20 March, 2 April, New York Evening Post, 21 March, 3 April 1861; Joseph A. Fry, Henry S. Sanford: Diplomacy and Business in Nineteenth-Century America (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1982); Harriet Chappell Owsley, "Henry Shelton Sanford and Federal Surveillance Abroad," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 48 (1961): 211-28; Washington correspondence, 20 March, New York Herald, 21 March 1861.

<sup>163</sup> Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:51.

and Gustave Koerner minister to Spain. As governor of the Washington Territory, Lincoln chose yet another Illinois friend, William Pickering, who had long served as a Whig member of the Illinois state legislature. (There he became known as “William the Headstrong” because of his emphatic opposition to slavery.)<sup>164</sup> William Jayne, Lincoln’s personal physician and a brother-in-law of Lyman Trumbull, was appointed governor of the Dakota Territory.<sup>165</sup> When Trumbull’s brother Benjamin was made a land office receiver at Omaha, some Republicans howled in protest.<sup>166</sup> (To those urging the appointment of Elizabeth Grimsley to head the Springfield post office, Lincoln 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 relatives?”)<sup>167</sup> Lawrence Weldon became district attorney for southern Illinois. Thomas J. Pickett was named an agent of the Quartermaster’s Department.

Other Illinoisans won coveted places in the federal bureaucracy. Charles L. Wilson, editor of the Chicago Journal, was named secretary of the U.S. legation in London, despite the objections of the minister-designate to Great Britain, Charles Francis Adams.<sup>168</sup> (According to a colleague in the legation, Wilson was “an ill-mannered bear,” “slovenly in dress, deficient in good breeding, lazy in his habits,” “vulgar, coarse, ill-

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<sup>164</sup> Newbold, “Antislavery Background of State Department Appointees,” 138-39.

<sup>165</sup> Trumbull insisted that he had not proposed Jayne but merely seconded the suggestion of John Todd. Lyman Trumbull to [Ozias Mather Hatch], Washington, 24 March 1861, Hatch Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>166</sup> Ozias M. Hatch to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 30 March 1861, Trumbull Papers Library of Congress.

<sup>167</sup> Lincoln to John Todd Stuart, Washington, 30 March 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:303.

<sup>168</sup> Albert G. Brown, Jr., to John A. Andrew, Washington, [28 March 1861], Andrew Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Washington correspondence, 23 March, Cincinnati Gazette, 25 March 1861; New York Daily News, 26 March 1861. Lincoln did not consult Charles Francis Adams, William L. Dayton or George Perkins Marsh about the secretaries they would have in London, Paris, and Turin. Marsh to Charles Eliot Norton, New York, 26 March 1861, Norton Papers, Harvard University.

natured, sulky, quarrelsome and disputatious.”)<sup>169</sup> George M. Hanson of Coles County secured a post in the Northern Superintendency of California Indian reservations. Uncle Jimmy Short, Lincoln’s benefactor in New Salem, became agent for the Round Valley Indian reservation in California. Oliver G. Abell, son of a New Salem woman who acted as a surrogate mother to Lincoln, was appointed messenger in the general land office.<sup>170</sup> Ethelbert P. Oliphant, who served with Lincoln in the Black Hawk War, became a judge in the Washington Territory.<sup>171</sup> Elias Wampole of Menard County went to Venezuela as a consul. (Lincoln had originally tried to give him a job in Philadelphia. When the director of the mint there balked, Lincoln told him: “You can do it for me, and you must.” He didn’t.)<sup>172</sup> His good friends and fellow clerks from New Salem days, William G. Greene and Charles Maltby, were named collectors of internal revenue. George W. Rives became a tax assessor. At Lincoln’s request, William W. Danenhower, a Know Nothing journalist, lawyer, and book dealer who had stumped for him in 1858 and 1860, was given a clerkship in the treasury department.<sup>173</sup> David Davis helped procure the appointment of Congressman William Pitt Kellogg as chief justice of the Nebraska Territory.<sup>174</sup> Thomas H. Nelson of Terre Haute (near the Illinois border) represented the

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<sup>169</sup> Journal of Benjamin Moran, ed. Wallace and Gillespie, 2:1166 (entry for 21 May 1863).

<sup>170</sup> Oliver G. Abell to Lincoln, Washington, [no day of the month indicated] April 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. Mrs. Abell explained that she and her husband faced penury because their son Oliver, upon whom they had been depending, had grown too ill to continue farming. Elizabeth Abell to Lincoln, Petersburg, 22 January 1861, Records of the Secretary of War, Applications, 1847-1887, Record Group 107, National Archives.

<sup>171</sup> Memorandum about Oliphant, [ca. 5 April 1861], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:322. In 1849, Lincoln had recommended him for a diplomatic post.

<sup>172</sup> Lincoln to James Pollock, Washington, 15 August 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:485.

<sup>173</sup> Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:327; reminiscences of Joseph L. Danenhower, Chicago Daily News, 10 February 1909.

<sup>174</sup> Paul M. Angle, ed., “The Recollections of William Pitt Kellogg,” Abraham Lincoln Quarterly 3 (1945): 328-29.

U.S. in Chile.

Illinois congressmen and senators objected to some of these appointments, which were made without their advice. Lyman Trumbull complained that Lincoln ignored most of the delegation's requests except for appointments within the state and for minor posts outside it. "I see very little of Lincoln, & know little of his policy as to appointments or anything else," Trumbull reported in late March.<sup>175</sup> A few lawmakers were so miffed they "declared they would throw up the concern and leave for home." When Congressman William Kellogg sourly complained about the treatment of a friend, Lincoln was dismayed by his ingratitude. In a memo composed around April 3, the president gave vent to his wounded feelings: "Mr. Kellogg does me great injustice to write in this strain. He has had more favors than any other Illinois member . . . . Is it really in his heart to add to my perplexities now?"<sup>176</sup> A journalist noted that "[a]ll parties are rapidly finding out that the President has a will of his own."<sup>177</sup>

Not all of Lincoln's Illinois friends succeeded in their quest for government positions.<sup>178</sup> Usher Linder begged for any office but received none.<sup>179</sup> Leonard Swett, who wished to serve as consul in Liverpool, a lucrative post, lost out to Thomas H. Dudley of New Jersey, whose case was forcefully pled by former Governor William A. Newell of the Garden State. In reluctantly acceding to Newell's importunity, Lincoln said good-naturedly: "Well, Newell, I am like a farmer with a bundle of 'fodder' between two

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<sup>175</sup> Trumbull to [O. M. Hatch], Washington, 24 March 1861, Hatch Papers, Papers Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>176</sup> Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:321.

<sup>177</sup> Washington correspondence by Sigma, 8 March, Cincinnati Commercial, 9 March 1861.

<sup>178</sup> Ozias M. Hatch to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 30 March 1861, Trumbull Papers Library of Congress.

<sup>179</sup> Usher F. Linder to Lincoln, Chicago, 26 March 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.



asses; and the wrong ass got the fodder.”<sup>180</sup> In May, when William W. Orme lobbied on behalf of some Bloomington neighbors, Lincoln balked, saying “that Illinois already had over 50 per cent of her share of appointments, and he did not see how in the world he could give any more to her.”<sup>181</sup>

One Bloomington resident, David Davis, irritated the president with his patronage requests. Davis, said Lincoln, “has forced me to appoint Archy Williams Judge in Kansas right off and Jno. Jones to a place in the State department: and I have got a bushel of dispatches from Kansas wanting to know if I’m going to fill up all the offices from Illinois.” At Davis’s urging, Lincoln had also appointed Cameron and Smith to the cabinet, and William P. Dole commissioner of Indian affairs.<sup>182</sup> In naming Williams, Lincoln had not consulted with members of the Illinois congressional delegation, who were understandably angry.<sup>183</sup> Davis remained in Washington for three weeks, returning home only when Lincoln announced that he was suspending further appointments of Illinoisans.<sup>184</sup> Before leaving the capital, he told his cousin Henry Winter Davis that he was “shocked and mortified beyond expression,” that Lincoln “lacks will – yields to pressure – & has been pressured by the radicals & mischievous men,” and that the

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<sup>180</sup> James M. Scovel, “Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln,” Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine, August 1889, 248.

<sup>181</sup> W. W. Orme to Leonard Swett, Washington, 14 May [1861], David Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>182</sup> Henry C. Whitney to William H. Herndon, n.p., 23 June 1887, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 620; Willard L. King, Lincoln’s Manager: David Davis (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 350n1. John Jones may have been John Albert Jones, an attorney at Tremont, who wrote to Lincoln in 1849 from Bloomington and four years later from Pekin and served as a delegate to the Republican state convention in 1860; or John T. Jones, a member of the Illinois State Republican Committee.

<sup>183</sup> William H. L. Wallace to his wife, Washington, 9 March 1861, Pratt, ed., Concerning Mr. Lincoln, 71.

<sup>184</sup> Washington correspondence, 14 March, New York Times, 15 March 1861.

administration would be “an utter failure.”<sup>185</sup> Caleb B. Smith agreed that in distributing patronage, the president “yields to the pressure brought on bear upon him.”<sup>186</sup>

Also mad were Eastern Republicans who thought Lincoln was biased in favor of his own region.<sup>187</sup> “Every thing in the way of office goes west,” groused Maine Senator William P. Fessenden, who was besieged by clamorous job seekers and would-be contractors. “We shall hardly get the paring of a toe-nail in New England, and many people feel badly about it.”<sup>188</sup> Fessenden’s colleague, Henry Wilson of Massachusetts, protested “against the appointment of so many Illinoisans and Indianans to important bureaus” in Washington.<sup>189</sup> Some New Yorkers felt the same way. “The partiality shone to a few of the western states have given great & just offence,” Gardiner Worthington told Lincoln. The “eastern & Northern public are not prepared to believe that all the virtue and talent is to be found in the west and therefore in the absence of proof of such facts very logically conclude it must be through the partiality of a western President.”<sup>190</sup> Michigan Senator Zachariah Chandler protested to Lincoln that his state “has been utterly ignored in the distribution of offices by your administration[.] Illinois has rec’d eight times, Ohio seven, New York, Eleven & Maine three times as much as Michigan[.] Even Wisconsin has rec[eive]d more than three times as much in both honor & Emolument.”<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Henry Winter Davis to Samuel Francis Du Pont, [Washington], 20 March 1861, transcript, S. F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware.

<sup>186</sup> Smith to Richard W. Thompson, Washington, 16 April 1861, Thompson Collection, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

<sup>187</sup> Washington correspondence, 17 March, New York Times, 18 March 1861; Washington correspondence, 16 March, New York Herald, 17 March 1861.

<sup>188</sup> Fessenden to Elizabeth Warriner, Washington, 17 March 1861, Fessenden Papers, Bowdoin College; Fessenden to James Shepherd Pike, Portland, 8 September 1861, Pike Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>189</sup> Washington correspondence by “Aga,” 21 March, Baltimore Sun, 22 March 1861.

<sup>190</sup> Gardiner Worthington to Lincoln, New York, 27 March 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>191</sup> Zachariah Chandler to Lincoln, Washington, 30 March 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

In turn, Westerners bemoaned the partiality shown to New Englanders, who had “every thing worth having – eleven chairmanships of committees in the Senate, a Vice-Presidency, a Cabinet office, the highest foreign mission, and two others of the first class, and a myriad of other lesser appointments.”<sup>192</sup>

Most of the friends whom Lincoln appointed reflected credit on his administration, but two did not: Mark Delahay and Ward Hill Lamon. Lincoln’s affection for the bibulous Delahay, whose appointment as surveyor was urged by Jesse K. Dubois and whom Henry Villard described as “an empty-headed, self-puffing, vainglorious strut,” was curious.<sup>193</sup> He may have felt sorry for the Kansas politico, who had little money and a large family, was at one time a law partner of Lincoln’s close friend Edward D. Baker, had worked on an Illinois newspaper with a loyal ally of Lincoln (James M. Ruggles), and was married to Louisiana Hicks, the daughter of a cousin of Lincoln’s.<sup>194</sup> Delahay’s subsequent elevation to the bench aroused strong opposition from Kansans, who protested that he had “not one qualification for the office.”<sup>195</sup> Jackson Grimshaw, who was recommended by several of Lincoln’s Illinois friends for that judgeship, declared that it was “disgraceful to the President who knew Delahay and all his faults, but the disgrace will be greater if the Senate confirms him. He is no lawyer, could not try a

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<sup>192</sup> Letter by “Sparta,” n.d., Indianapolis Daily Journal, 5 April 1861.

<sup>193</sup> Whitney to William H. Herndon, n.p., 23 June 1887, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 620; Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 3 December, New York Herald, 9 December 1860.

<sup>194</sup> Delahay to John Petit, Springfield, 30 January 1861, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress; Delahay to Trumbull, Leavenworth, 24 December 1860, *ibid.*; Mary E. Delahay, “Judge Mark W. Delahay: A Reminiscence by His Daughter,” typescript, William E. Barton Papers, University of Chicago; John F. Snyder, “Hon. Mark W. Delahay,” manuscript dated Virginia, Illinois, 1 December 1903, John F. Snyder Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Springfield; Richard Hanks, “Abraham Lincoln and the Politics of Nepotism,” Lincoln Memorial Association vol. 22, nos. 2 and 3 (Summer and Fall 1993), 4-9.

<sup>195</sup> Hiram Griswold to John Sherman, Leavenworth, 21 January 1864, Sherman Papers, Library of Congress. See also John T. Morton to John G. Nicolay, Topeka, 22 January 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

case properly even in a Justice’s Court, and has no character. Mr. Buchanan in his worst days never made so disgraceful an appointment to the bench.”<sup>196</sup> A Kansan complained that there was “not a respectable lawyer in the State that is not absolutely shocked at the appointment.”<sup>197</sup> When Congress launched an impeachment investigation, Delahay was revealed to be a corrupt drunkard whose behavior disgraced the court. To avoid being removed on impeachment, he resigned.<sup>198</sup>

Lamon’s appointment as marshal of the District of Columbia was highly controversial and proved a source of friction between Lincoln and Congress.<sup>199</sup> “I went to Washington,” Lamon recalled, “having been promised the consulship at Paris by Mr. Lincoln. But as soon as we realized how serious was the state of political affairs, [David] Davis, seconded by Lincoln himself, persuaded me to remain near the President’s person to protect him from danger. I was consequently made Marshal of the District of Columbia.”<sup>200</sup> Lincoln probably took pity on Lamon and sought to help him out of his desperate financial straits by giving him that remunerative post.<sup>201</sup> (Lamon estimated that it would yield \$30,000 annually, \$5,000 more than the president’s salary.)<sup>202</sup> Before nominating his friend, the president asked Republican leaders in Washington how they

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<sup>196</sup> Grimshaw to Trumbull, 12 March 1863, quoted in Carman and Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage, 118; Browning to Lincoln, Quincy, 25 September 1863; Hatch, Dubois, Milton Hay, and Shelby Cullom to Lincoln, Springfield, 29 September 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>197</sup> John T. Morton to Trumbull, Topeka, 16 November 1863, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>198</sup> Weik, Real Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 221-26.

<sup>199</sup> Several supreme court justices protested against making the job a political patronage plum. Washington correspondence, 17 March, New York World, 18 March 1861.

<sup>200</sup> King, David Davis, 179. Cf. Clint Clay Tilton, “Lincoln and Lamon: Partners and Friends,” Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society 38 (1931): 189.

<sup>201</sup> David Davis to Lincoln, Bloomington, 28 January 1861, Group 59, M650, National Archives. Davis urged Lincoln to appoint Lamon to the consulate in Paris or any other post that would pay \$5000, for “he is now in possession of but little means” and “has been desirous for years to go abroad.”

<sup>202</sup> Benjamin Brown French to Henry Flagg French, Washington, 5 July 1861, French Family Papers, Library of Congress. French thought it would yield a net of \$10,000 to \$15,000.

would react if he appointed an Illinois friend to serve as marshal; he did not wish to name anyone whom the residents of the city would find objectionable. It was customary to select a District resident for that post, and Richard Wallack, a popular Washingtonian, was in the running.<sup>203</sup> Other aspirants included B. B. French, George Harrington, and Zenas C. Robbins.<sup>204</sup>

William P. Wood, a model-maker from Alexandria who was to become superintendent of the Old Capitol Prison during the Civil War, agreed to circulate a petition on behalf of Lamon's candidacy. With some difficulty he and his friends managed to obtain about 200 signatures. After Wood informed him that the assistant marshal, George W. Phillips, and all other members of the marshal's staff should be fired for disloyalty, Lamon emphatically agreed to do so. Wood then helped raise money for Lamon's bond and did whatever else he could to facilitate his appointment. Wood, however, soon grew disenchanted with the Cavalier, as the Virginia-born Lamon was called, especially after he reneged on his pledge to fire Phillips and the others. Indignantly, Wood called at the White House four times to protest, only to be rebuffed. So in July he appealed to the senate, averring that "to enumerate in detail his [Lamon's] many violations of honor to his friends, would require too much space for this protest; suffice it so say, that instead of Republicans for his councillors and friends noted secessionists and villifyers of the present Administration; he attaches less importance to his word, than to the contents of a black bottle which he regards as his nerve regulator; he has almost entirely neglected his official duties as Marshal, leaving his deputy G. W.

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<sup>203</sup> Washington correspondence, 29 March, 8, 9, 12 April, New York Evening Post, 30 March, 10, 13 April 1861.

<sup>204</sup> Washington correspondence, 6 March, New York Times, 7 March 1861; Benjamin Brown French to his son Frank, Washington, 20 March 1861, French Family Papers, Library of Congress.

Phillips (the man whom he pledged his honor to remove) to perform the duties of Marshal; he has made himself obnoxious to the citizens of Washington by his deception falsehoods and dissipation.” Some 2500 such citizens signed a petition protesting against the appointment of a non-resident as marshal. Wood provided the senate with the names of several other Washingtonians who could confirm his story, including five of the dozen men who had on April 2 presented Lincoln with papers recommending Lamon’s appointment.<sup>205</sup> Benjamin Brown French told his brother that Lamon “did not attend [to] the duties at all.”<sup>206</sup> In response to such criticism, Lamon angrily submitted his resignation, which Lincoln ignored.<sup>207</sup>

Like Delahay, Lamon was investigated by a congressional committee, which in 1861 found him guilty of an “unwarranted and a scandalous assumption of authority” in detaching a regiment from Missouri, bringing it east, and putting himself in charge of it as a brigadier general. For this misconduct, he was fined \$20,000.<sup>208</sup> The following year Lamon again antagonized Congress, this time over the issue of fugitive slaves. As marshal of the District of Columbia, he was in charge of the Washington jail, unaffectionately known as the Blue Jug, where he held alleged runaways. Some belonging to disloyal masters were being detained by Lamon for safekeeping until the

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<sup>205</sup> William P. Wood to the Senate Judiciary Committee, Washington, 8 July 1861, Lamon Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California. See also Wood to S. Strong, Washington, 5 May 1861, *ibid*.

<sup>206</sup> Benjamin Brown French to Henry Flag French, Washington, 5 July 1861, French Family Papers Library of Congress.

<sup>207</sup> Lamon submitted his resignation on May 25. Lamon to W. W. Orme, Washington, 25 July 1861, Orme Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>208</sup> Lavern Marshall Hamand, “Ward Hill Lamon: Lincoln’s ‘Particular Friend’” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1949), 233-52; Tilton, “Lincoln and Lamon,” 27-29; Weik, Real Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 218-21.

end of the war.<sup>209</sup> Overcrowding became a scandal as the Blue Jug bulged with four times as many prisoners as it was designed to hold. Lamon collected 21¢ per day per prisoner, which yielded him a handsome profit.<sup>210</sup> When outraged Congressional Radicals tried to visit the jail, Lamon forbade them entrance. James W. Grimes of Iowa, chairman of the senate committee on the District, indignantly protested and took his case to Lincoln, who was too busy to receive him.<sup>211</sup> The senate condemned Lamon's actions.<sup>212</sup> Relations between Grimes and the president became frosty thereafter, prompting Lincoln to lament in 1864 that in all his dealings with Congress "my greatest disappointment of all has been with Grimes. Before I came here [to Washington], I certainly expected to rely upon Grimes more than any other one man in the Senate. I like him very much. He is a great strong fellow. He is a valuable friend, a dangerous enemy. He carries too many guns not to be respected in any point of view. But he got wrong against me, I do not clearly know how, and has always been cool and almost hostile to me."<sup>213</sup> (On another occasion, Lincoln said he must appoint William F. Turner to an Arizona judgeship. "It is Grimes's man, and I must do something for Grimes. I have tried hard to please him from the start,

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<sup>209</sup> Speech of Henry Wilson, Congressional Globe, 37<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> session, 10.

<sup>210</sup> New York Tribune, 2 January 1862. Lamon netted over \$18,000 in 1863, including a profit of \$9689 from feeding prisoners in the D.C. jail. Hamand, "Ward Hill Lamon," 342-43.

<sup>211</sup> New York Tribune, 18 January 1862; Hamand, "Ward Hill Lamon," 257-75; William Salter, The Life of James W. Grimes, Governor of Iowa, 1854-1858; A Senator of the United States, 1759-1869 (New York: D. Appleton, 1876), 163-67; Tilton, "Lincoln and Lamon," 29-33; Lamon, Recollections, 254-58.

<sup>212</sup> "Resolved, That Ward H. Lamon, Marshal of the District of Columbia, by a recent order as communicated to the Senate on the 14th. day of January, instant, excluding members of the Senate without a pass, from admission to the jail in the City of Washington, – which is subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of Congress, – has been guilty of a breach of the privileges of the members of the Senate, and of a contempt of the rightfull authority of this body." Senate to Lincoln, 23 January 1862, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>213</sup> Michael Burlingame and John R. Turner Ettliger, eds., Inside Lincoln's White House: The Complete Civil War Diary of John Hay (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997), 245 (entry for 8 November 1864).

but he complains, and I must satisfy him if possible.”)<sup>214</sup> According to Horace White, the president’s “moral obtuseness” in retaining Lamon in office “was the cause of the coolness that existed between Grimes & Lincoln.”<sup>215</sup> Above and beyond the Lamon case, Grimes deplored the overall patronage policies of the administration.<sup>216</sup>

Other senators, including John P. Hale of New Hampshire and Henry Wilson of Massachusetts, were highly critical of the indiscreet, belligerent, quarrelsome Lamon, who virtually challenged Congressman Elihu B. Washburne to a duel in March 1861.<sup>217</sup> The Cavalier repeatedly clashed with General James S. Wadsworth, military governor of the District.<sup>218</sup> In May 1862, a constituent warned Lyman Trumbull that “there is not one matter that has & still is causing so much reproach upon Pres. Lincoln, so much great shame to his sincere friends, as this Lamon business.”<sup>219</sup> The Cavalier was widely scorned for “his singing nigger-songs & smutty madrigals,” for “the slenderness of his mental capacity,” and for “his perfect absence from all true dignity.”<sup>220</sup>

Despite demands that he fire Lamon, Lincoln stood by his old friend, who served as an informal presidential bodyguard and companion not only on the train ride from Harrisburg to Washington but throughout the Civil War. Lincoln found him humorous,

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<sup>214</sup> Richard C. McCormick’s reminiscences, New York, 29 April, New York Evening Post, 3 May 1865.

<sup>215</sup> Weik, Real Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 383.

<sup>216</sup> Grimes to Lyman Trumbull, Burlington, Iowa, 24 October 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>217</sup> Lamon to Washburne, Washington, 13 March 1861, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress; Lamon to Wood, Washington, 25 April 1861, Lamon Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

<sup>218</sup> Hamand, “Ward Hill Lamon,” 287-308; Henry Greenleaf Pearson, James S. Wadsworth of Geneseo (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1913), 136-39.

<sup>219</sup> Jason Marsh to Lyman Trumbull, Rockford, 26 May 1862, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>220</sup> O. C. Dake to David Davis, Washington, 7 May 1861, David Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.



charming, high-spirited, convivial, earthy, amusing, and exceptionally loyal.<sup>221</sup> Lincoln's fondness for Lamon persisted even though the Cavalier had recently undergone a change. According to David Davis, who knew whereof he spoke, Lamon after the 1860 election became full of himself. "I feel sorry for Hill Lamon," the judge wrote in January 1861, for "when he was in Bloomington with his negro boy, I made up my mind that his head was turned & that he would hereafter do no good – He makes himself ridiculous."<sup>222</sup> Four months later, Davis said "Hill Lamon is crazy . . . I can[']t account for it & nobody else [can]."<sup>223</sup> The editor of the Lincoln, Illinois, Herald reported from Washington that "Lamon affects the great man here – rides up to the White House daily, & tries to be on the most familiar footing with the President . . . His head is evidently turned by his prosperity."<sup>224</sup>

Delahay and Lamon were not the only rogues for whom Lincoln had a blind spot. The bibulous William H. Herndon, too, had a streak of roguishness. Henry C. Whitney reported that in a certain town on the Eighth Circuit, Lincoln preferred the company of George Lawrence, "a drunken fellow, who turned lawyer later in life," to that of the best lawyer in town. The two men played billiards for hours.<sup>225</sup>

Another personal and political friend whom Lincoln sought to oblige was Edward D. Baker, newly elected senator from Oregon, who wished to control the patronage of the

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<sup>221</sup> Hamand, "Ward Hill Lamon," 43-47.

<sup>222</sup> Davis to W. W. Orme, St. Louis, 19 January 1861, Morgan Papers, Illinois Historical Survey, University of Illinois, quoted in Hamand, "Ward Hill Lamon," 133.

<sup>223</sup> Davis to Harvey Hogg, West Point, New York, 17 June 1861, Lamon Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California, quoted in Hamand, "Ward Hill Lamon," 232.

<sup>224</sup> O. C. Dake to David Davis, Washington, 7 May 1861, David Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>225</sup> Whitney, Life on the Circuit, ed. Angle, 423; Whitney to William H. Herndon, Chicago, 27 August 1887, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants, 631. See Weik, Real Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 215-26, for a discussion of Lincoln's penchant for morally suspect characters.

entire West Coast.<sup>226</sup> (Baker's ethical sense was not acute. As a law partner of Stephen T. Logan, he mishandled clients' money. During the Civil War, he received substantial sums to raise a regiment; upon his death in October 1861, it was discovered that he had left \$10,000 unaccounted for. His closest political advisor was the notoriously corrupt Andrew J. Butler, brother of Massachusetts politico Benjamin F. Butler.)<sup>227</sup> Baker felt entitled to control the patronage because he was the only Republican senator from the Pacific Northwest. Prominent California Republicans, led by James W. Simonton of the San Francisco Bulletin, Leland Stanford, and Joseph A. Nunes, resented Baker's presumption and complained to Lincoln. On March 30, the antagonistic factions met at the White House to discuss the awarding of offices in the far west. Baker's opponents were particularly upset that Democrat Robert J. Stevens, a son-in-law of Baker, was being championed for superintendent of the San Francisco mint. When they called at the White House, they were surprised to discover that Baker and his henchman Butler were in attendance. The meeting began with Nunes delivering a temperate appeal, after which he handed the president a slate of suggested nominees for California posts, along with a mild remonstrance against Baker's interference.<sup>228</sup> Simonton followed by reading a bitter attack on the Oregon senator, who, he said (perhaps alluding to Butler), had "presented to the President, as a most substantial and respectable man, a person whose antecedents and

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<sup>226</sup> Carter, "Lincoln and the California Patronage," 495-506.

<sup>227</sup> Carman and Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage, 68-70; Carter, "Lincoln and the California Patronage," 499. During the Civil War, Butler became infamous for engaging in questionable profiteering in New Orleans, where his brother Benjamin was in command. Chester G. Hearn, When the Devil Came Down to Dixie: Ben Butler in New Orleans (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 180-97.

<sup>228</sup> California Republicans in Washington, D. C., to Lincoln, 28 March 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; San Francisco Evening Bulletin, 17 April 1861, in Carter, "Lincoln and the California Patronage," 500-2; Washington correspondence, 13 March, New York Times, 14 March 1861; Washington correspondence by Special, 30 March, Cincinnati Commercial, 1 April 1861.

reputation Mr. Simonton denounced severely.”<sup>229</sup> (In 1862, the senate unanimously rejected the nomination of Butler to a captaincy in the army.)<sup>230</sup> Others he characterized as gamblers and blackguards.<sup>231</sup> Lincoln asked if he could keep the papers, including Simonton’s speech. The editor said he would “like to make some emendations” to his remarks. “Never mind the emendations,” replied Lincoln, “if it is mine, I want it as is.” Then, “in a withering tone of indignation,” he said that Nunes’s paper, “being somewhat respectful in its tone, I think I will keep; but this one,” holding Simonton’s text aloft, “I will show you what I will do with it.” He stepped to the fireplace and flung the offending document into the flames.<sup>232</sup> Returning to his desk, Lincoln allowed his anger to burst “forth with such vehemence and intensity that everybody present quailed before it. His wrath was simply terrible.”<sup>233</sup> He declared: “I have known Colonel Baker longer and better than any of you here, and these attacks upon him I know to be outrageous. I will hear no more of them. If you wish to do so, present you recommendations for office, and I will give them a respectful hearing, but no more of this kind of proceeding.”<sup>234</sup> Simonton “looked as though he had been struck by a thunderbolt, but finally recovered so far as to say, ‘I have simply done my duty: I have nothing to expect from the Executive, and in doing what I did, I merely mean to protect the interests of my State.’”<sup>235</sup> As the

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<sup>229</sup> Washington correspondence, 31 March, New York Times, 1 April 1861.

<sup>230</sup> Washington correspondence, 5 February, New York Times, 6 February 1862.

<sup>231</sup> Washington correspondence by Special, 1 April, Cincinnati Commercial, 3 April 1861.

<sup>232</sup> Washington correspondence, n.d., Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 1 April, copied in the Portland Oregonian, 29 April 1861.

<sup>233</sup> George W. Julian, in Rice, ed., Reminiscences of Lincoln, 51.

<sup>234</sup> Washington correspondence by X Y Z, 31 March, Philadelphia Press, 1 April 1861.

<sup>235</sup> Washington correspondence by Special, 30 March, Cincinnati Commercial, 1 April 1861.

delegation left, one of Baker's friends threatened to shoot Simonton on the spot.<sup>236</sup> Soon the president called them back, but Simonton did not reappear. On being told that the editor felt insulted, Lincoln sent a special messenger to fetch him, and they reached an entente cordiale, though patronage matters were not settled then and there.<sup>237</sup> Later the president explained that Simonton's paper "was an unjust attack upon my dearest personal friend. . . . The delegation did not know what they were talking about when they made him responsible, almost abusively, for what I had done, or proposed to do. They told me that that was my paper, to do with as I liked. I could not trust myself to reply in words: I was so angry."<sup>238</sup> It seems that Lincoln had implicitly promised Baker's daughter that her husband would receive a federal job.<sup>239</sup> Stevens did win his appointment, only to be unceremoniously removed two years later on charges of fraud leveled by the president's old friend from New Salem days, Charles Maltby.<sup>240</sup>

A similar fate befell Thomas J. Dryer, commissioner to the Hawaiian Islands and editor of the Portland Oregonian.<sup>241</sup> Dryer, who claimed that he paid his good friend

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<sup>236</sup> Washington correspondence, 31 March, New York Herald, 1 April 1861.

<sup>237</sup> Washington correspondence, 3 April, Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 6 April 1861; Washington correspondence, 31 March, Cincinnati Gazette, 1 April 1861. Simonton said Lincoln apologized to him the following day. San Francisco

Daily Evening Bulletin, 31 July 1865, in Carter, "Lincoln and the California Patronage," 503. That afternoon, Lincoln reportedly met with Baker, Leland Stanford, John Satterlee, Charles Watrous, and Gordon N. Mott. Then a compromise was evidently reached whereby Baker, Stanford, and Satterlee would form a committee to make patronage recommendations. Washington correspondence, 30 March, New York Daily News, 1 April 1861.

<sup>238</sup> Noah Brooks, Abraham Lincoln and the Downfall of American Slavery (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1894), 417.

<sup>239</sup> Carman and Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage, 69n.

<sup>240</sup> Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed, 252-53n4. See also William Rabe to Salmon P. Chase, San Francisco, 26 July 1861, and J. M. Mitchell to Chase, San Francisco, 10 March 1862, Chase Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>241</sup> Rochester American, n.d., copied in the New York Daily News, 10 April 1861; Carman and Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage, 97.

Baker several hundred dollars for his support in a quest for the commissionership, won that post despite allegations that he was “a vile, low, contemptible drunkard, unworthy to associate with honorable men.”<sup>242</sup> In 1863, after much hesitation, Lincoln dismissed him after the Hawaiian government complained that he “is habitually intoxicated and spends much of his time in the lower class of sailor dram shops.” Reportedly Dryer was “rude, rough and repulsive to genteel society,” and regularly ignored “all the proprieties of social life by a want of savoir faire or rather rough vulgarity or boorishness, which offends propriety, decency and conventional usage.”<sup>243</sup>

Although Lincoln honored most of Baker’s requests, the senator was disgusted when one of his opponents, William Rabe, was named postmaster at San Francisco.<sup>244</sup> After the first round of patronage distribution ended, Baker mused: “Mr Lincoln has acted peculiarly, and although my very good friend . . . he has not done what . . . I would have expected, yet I am sure he has a real attachment to me.”<sup>245</sup>

Lincoln’s outburst against Simonton was viewed as “the first symptom of the much vaunted, but rather tardy Jacksonism of ‘Old Abe.’”<sup>246</sup> Other signs of the president’s “latent Jacksonism” would manifest themselves in late March.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Thomas J. Dryer to Lincoln, Honolulu, 23 November 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Dr. Samuel Long to Lyman Trumbull, Collinsville, Illinois, 26 November 1862, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress. Long served as consul in Lahania in the Hawaiian Islands.

<sup>243</sup> Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 5: 147, 162; 6:51; Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed, 18, 229n15; David L. Gregg to Lincoln, Honolulu, 24 January 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Carman and Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage, 97; Washington correspondence, 6 February and 21 March, New York Times, 7 February and 22 March 1861; Washington correspondence, n.d., New York Herald, n.d., copied in the Washington correspondence by James W. Simonton, 14 December 1862, San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin, 8 January 1863.

<sup>244</sup> Washington correspondence, 9 April, New York Times, 10 April 1861.

<sup>245</sup> Baker to Anson G. Henry, Washington, 9 July [1861], Henry Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>246</sup> Washington correspondence, 30 March, New York Herald, 31 March 1861.

<sup>247</sup> New York Herald, 1 April 1861.

Lincoln also lost his temper at William Houston, brother of the governor of Texas. In July, when Henry C. Whitney mentioned Houston, the president “frowned like a bear and said – ‘don’t bother me about Bill Houston[,] he has been here sitting on his a[s]s all summer, waiting for me to give him the best office I’ve got –’” Whitney suggested that perhaps Houston could have a minor clerkship, prompting an explosive response that seared itself in Whitney’s memory: “‘I hain’t got it,’ roared Lincoln with more impatience and disgust than I ever saw manifested by him.” Whitney dropped the subject.<sup>248</sup>

Though he would not accommodate Sam Houston’s brother, Lincoln would occasionally oblige some friends by appointing their relatives to office. When Elizabeth Ridgeway Corneau, whom he regarded as “a very highly valued friend,” asked a place for her brother, the president tactfully wrote to the collector of customs in Philadelphia: “I do not demand, or insist, even, that you shall make any appointment in your office; but I would be much obliged.”<sup>249</sup> He asked the secretary of the senate to give a place to the son of Alexander Sympson, “one of my best friends whom I have not, so far, been able to recognize in any substantial way.”<sup>250</sup>

Some Illinois friends, including Governor Yates, were disappointed by Lincoln.<sup>251</sup> On March 7, Nicolay told Ozias M. Hatch: “Illinois is here in perfect hordes. You many

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<sup>248</sup> Statement by Whitney, [November 1866?], in Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 406.

<sup>249</sup> Lincoln to William B. Thomas, Washington, 8 May 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:362.

<sup>250</sup> Lincoln to Forney, Washington, 20 July 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:456. Coleman C. Sympson became a senate clerk.

<sup>251</sup> Yates to Lincoln, Springfield, 31 July 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

look out for a tremendous crop of soreheads.”<sup>252</sup> Among the sorest of the soreheads was Jesse K. Dubois, who tried to win posts both for himself and for his son-in-law, James P. Luse, editor of the Lafayette, Indiana, Journal.<sup>253</sup> “Uncle Jesse,” said the president, “there is no reason why I don’t want to appoint you, but there is one why I can’t, – you are from the town I live in myself.”<sup>254</sup> As for Luse, Dubois insisted that he be named superintendent of Indian affairs in Minnesota, but a resident of that state won the position. “I am sorely disappointed in all my expectations from Washington,” Dubois complained to the president. “I made only two or three requests of you. One for the Northern Superintendency of Indian affairs for my Friend J. P. Luse. My heart was set on this application for him, as in his appointment I could have transferd my dying daughter from the Wabash Valley to the healthy climate of Minesotta and perhaps prolonged her life. I would not go to Washington as I did not wish to trouble you, more than I could possibly help. I did feel as though I had some claims for the favors I asked for, but in all I have been disappointed.”<sup>255</sup> Lincoln replied that he was “as sorry as you can be,” but if he had appointed Luse “it would have been against the united, earnest, and, I add, angry protest of the republican delegation of Minnesota . . . . So far as I understand, it is unprecedented [to] send an officer into a state against the wishes of the members of

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<sup>252</sup> Nicolay to Ozias M. Hatch, Washington, 7 March 1861, Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 30.

<sup>253</sup> Luse to Henry S. Lane, Lafayette, Indiana, 16 February 1861, typed copy, Lane Papers, Indiana University; Dubois to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 19 March 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>254</sup> Indianapolis correspondence by Charles A. Page, 30 April 1865, in Charles A. Page, Letters of a War Correspondent, ed. James R. Gilmore (Boston: L. C. Page, 1899), 376.

<sup>255</sup> Dubois to Lincoln, Springfield, 27 March 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. In fact, Dubois recommended several men for government posts. Dubois to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 25 February 1861, Trumbull Family Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

congress of the State, and of the same party.”<sup>256</sup> When his other recommendations failed to yield results, Dubois wrote the president, bitterly observing that “I am mortified at Luse's Defeat . . . . I am still so, more from the fact that I placed a too high an estimate on my relations with you, and did not know my position. For I do know that I have insulted hundreds because I would not importune you. I did suppose I had a right to a small share of the spoils, but let it pass. It is as painful to me as it can be to you. But my Friend Lincoln they are cheating you. Do you know that you have not as yet appointed a single man from Illinois that was originally your friend, and it is so every where, and all this stuff about congressman this shall be so and that shall not be, is only a blind to crowd out your friends and put in soreheads and Grumblers.”<sup>257</sup> When Dubois’s insistent recommendations for postmasters, clerkships, mail route agents and other jobs were ignored, he complained to Lyman Trumbull that “you and Lincoln have treated me badly.”<sup>258</sup> He declared that he must remember “not to break my neck and purse to put men in high office who spit on me when the election is over.”<sup>259</sup> (The president did oblige Dubois by giving offices to Mark W. Delahay and William Beck, both of whom proved embarrassments to the administration.)<sup>260</sup> Four years later, Dubois told Henry C. Whitney: “Lincoln is a singular man and I must Confess I never Knew him: he has for 30 years past just used me as a plaything to accomplish his own ends: but the moment he was elevated to his proud position he seemed all at once to have entirely changed his

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<sup>256</sup> Lincoln to Dubois, Washington, 30 March 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:302.

<sup>257</sup> Dubois to Lincoln, Springfield, 6 April 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>258</sup> Dubois to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 19, 27 March 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>259</sup> Dubois to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 7 May 1862, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>260</sup> Dubois to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 9 March, 7 May 1862, Trumbull Papers Library of Congress.



whole nature and become altogether a new being – Knows no one and the road to favor is always open to his Enemies whilst the door is hymetically sealed to his old friends.”<sup>261</sup>

Dubois had a point, for Lincoln often used his limited patronage to attract new allies rather than reward old ones. When considering an appointment in Washington, Lincoln said “he thought it judicious to draw in as much of the Democratic element as possible” and expressed a willingness to name a loyal Democrat as U.S. district attorney.<sup>262</sup> Leonard Swett sagaciously observed that the president would “give more to his enemies than he would to his friends” because “he never had anything to spare, and in the close calculation of attaching the faction to him, he counted upon the abstract affection of his friends as an element to be offset against some gift with which he must appease his enemies. Hence, there was always some truth in the charge of his friends that he failed to reciprocate their devotion with his favors. The reason was that he had only just so much to give away – ‘He always had more horses than oats.’”<sup>263</sup>

Other felt as aggrieved as Dubois. Ward Hill Lamon complained that “Lincoln’s weak point is, to cajole & pet his enemies and to allow his friends to be sacrificed and quietly look on and witness the success of his enemies at the expense and downfall of his friends.”<sup>264</sup> In March, a frustrated office seeker from Iowa commented bitterly that senators “who never had a feeling of sympathy with Mr Lincoln” and “who fought his

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<sup>261</sup> Dubois to Henry C. Whitney, Springfield, 6 April 1865, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 620.

<sup>262</sup> Howard K. Beale and Alan W. Brownsword, eds., Diary of Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy under Lincoln and Johnson (3 vols.; New York, W.W. Norton, 1960), 1:57.

<sup>263</sup> Swett to Herndon, Chicago, 17 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 165.

<sup>264</sup> Lamon to Richard Yates, Washington, 3 July 1864, draft, Lamon Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California, quoted in Hamand, “Ward Hill Lamon,” 348-49. At that time Congress was stripping Lamon of his duties and income as marshal of the District of Columbia. When Lamon asked the president to veto a bill containing provisions harmful to the Cavalier, Lincoln replied: “I regret this, but I can not veto a Bill of this character.” Lincoln’s endorsement on Lamon’s letter of ca. 28 June 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:414.

nomination to the last” were controlling patronage; “for a man to have been an original friend of Lincoln is now an objection to him with these men.”<sup>265</sup>

Also feeling sore was David Davis, who was hurt because Lincoln gave him no office. In fact, the president had wanted to name him commissary-general of the army, but when Winfield Scott objected to placing a civilian in that post, Lincoln deferred to the general. Davis was also miffed when his recommendations for clerkships were ignored by Smith and Cameron, whom he had championed for cabinet posts. Davis’s good friend Leonard Swett also met with frustration in his quest for the Liverpool consul’s post and other government jobs. Swett was so “deeply wounded” that he regretted even applying for an office. Eventually Swett said that if Davis were named to the U.S. supreme court, he would regard that as enough for both of them.<sup>266</sup> In 1862, Lincoln did nominate Davis to the high court, belatedly gratifying two men who were most instrumental in securing his nomination and election.<sup>267</sup>

Other Illinoisans felt shortchanged. Joseph Knox, who had served as Lincoln’s co-counsel in the Rock Island Bridge case, bitterly reminded the president of his “disregard of the request of all our Judges, backed up by 130 members of our bar, for my appt. to the office of U.S. Att’y for this District.” Sarcastically he added: “You have got the immortal, [Isaac N.] Arnold & [Edwin C.] Larned for your friends, in the place of Jo.

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<sup>265</sup> Hawkins Taylor to William Butler, Washington, 22 March 1861, O. M. Hatch Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>266</sup> Leonard Swett to Lincoln, Washington, 15 August 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>267</sup> David Davis to Ward Hill Lamon, Bloomington, 24, 30 March, 14 April 1861, Lamon Papers, quoted in Hamand, “Ward Hill Lamon,” 222, 224, 225; King, David Davis, 182, 190-96; Swett to Thurlow Weed, Bloomington, 6 March 1861, Weed Papers, University of Rochester. Swett rejected two military posts and one in the diplomatic service that Lincoln offered him. Robert Eckley, “Leonard Swett: Lincoln’s Legacy to the Chicago Bar,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 92 (1999): 274-88.

Knox.”<sup>268</sup> In 1862, when Lincoln nominated Isaac B. Curran, a Democrat of Springfield, for a consular post, the president’s friends in the Illinois capital objected vehemently.<sup>269</sup> “Our people feel disheartened, discouraged & disgraced and are ready to curse the administration and all that belong to it for its ill advised and outrageous appointments,” James C. Conkling told Lyman Trumbull.<sup>270</sup> Springfield Republicans were especially upset by appointments in the quartermaster and commissary departments.<sup>271</sup> Like Dubois, Conkling was convinced that Lincoln had betrayed him. “I almost adored him, for many years,” Conkling recalled, “and spent my time and money freely for him, and did not know but that my feeling towards him were reciprocated, as least in a small degree, then to wake up to the consciousness of the fact that I was viewed by him with contempt – with disgust – as a bore to be shunned and avoided, was to me unaccountable and annoying.” Conkling had lost his bid to become a U.S. district attorney.<sup>272</sup> In 1862, Horace White told William Butler he felt “the President, for whom we labored so hard two years ago, had now sacrificed you, & as many of his Illinois friends as possible.”<sup>273</sup>

William M. Dickson of Cincinnati, who also believed he had been shabbily treated, sourly remarked that “no one can feel more personally aggrieved at Mr L than I do. Glad always to call upon me before his election, since then he has entirely forgotten

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<sup>268</sup> Knox to Lincoln, Chicago, 3 October 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>269</sup> O. M. Hatch, Jesse K. Dubois, and William Butler to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 1 June 1862, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>270</sup> Conkling to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 31 May 1862, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>271</sup> William Jayne to Lyman Trumbull, Quincy, 22 June 1862, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>272</sup> Conkling to Lyman Trumbull, Peoria, 31 May 1862, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>273</sup> Horace White to William Butler, Chicago, 11 November 1862, William Butler Papers, Chicago History Museum.

me.”<sup>274</sup> An Iowa congressman, angry at the failure of his candidate to win a land office job, concluded that Lincoln “has not as much Sacacity as I could wish. He is more of a joker than thinker.”<sup>275</sup>

For all his politically shrewd use of the patronage power, Lincoln found it difficult to reject applicants who told sob stories. “If I have one vice,” he confessed to Egbert Viele, “and I can call it nothing else, it is not to be able to say no! Thank God for not making me a woman, but if He had, I suppose He would have made me just as ugly as He did, and no one would ever have tempted me. It was only the other day, a poor parson whom I knew some years ago in Joliet came to the White House with a sad story of his poverty and his large family – poor parsons seem always to have large families – and he wanted me to do something for him. I knew very well that I could do nothing for him, and yet I couldn’t bear to tell him so, and so I said I would see what I could do. The very next day the man came back for the office which he said that I had promised him – which was not true, but he seemed really to believe it. Of course there was nothing left for me to do except to get him a place through one of the secretaries. But if I had done my duty, I should have said ‘no’ in the beginning.”<sup>276</sup> California Senator John Conness complained that Lincoln had a “too kindly heart” and thus “would yield to the pressure

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<sup>274</sup> W. M. Dickson to Friedrich Hassaurek, Cincinnati, 15 February 1864, Hassaurek Papers, Ohio Historical Society.

<sup>275</sup> Samuel R. Curtis to his wife, Washington, 1 May 1861, Kenneth E. Colton, ed., “‘The Irrepressible Conflict of 1861’: The Letters of Samuel Ryan Curtis,” Annals of Iowa, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 24 (1942): 47.

<sup>276</sup> Egbert L. Viele, “A Trip with Lincoln, Chase and Stanton,” Scribner’s Monthly 16 (1878): 818. See also Angle, ed., Herndon’s Lincoln, 262, 301, 485, for Lincoln’s remarks about being glad he had not been born a woman.

for place.”<sup>277</sup> In January 1861, Charles Henry Ray predicted that if Lincoln were to fail, “his dislike to say no to friends” would be the cause.<sup>278</sup>

Lincoln could avoid saying no and still turn aside importunate friends who sought government offices. When Indiana chums William Jones and Nat Grigsby called in quest of jobs, the president skillfully finessed them before they could make their wishes known. He greeted them warmly and took them to the White House living quarters, where he introduced them to his wife: “Mary, here are two of my old Jonesboro friends who have journeyed all the way up here just to see their old friend. You know the office seekers are pestering the life out of me and I tell you it is a comfort to me to have these boys here especially when I know they do not come to bother me about some position or office. I must hurry back to the office and I want you to take good care of these boys till I can pull loose.” Acting on this hint, Jones and Grigsby returned home without asking for anything.<sup>279</sup>

Sometimes in his desire to be accommodating, Lincoln inadvertently got himself into trouble with office seekers. In the fall of 1861, he observed that “he was glad that he had but four years to stay in Washington,” for when he left Illinois, said he: “I was reputed an honest man, but here I hardly know what my friends do call me. I am beset by hundreds of men anxious for place, and in the hurry of the moment I sometimes give encouragement to people who in consequence charge me with a want of truth, if they do

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<sup>277</sup> John Conness to Andrew Johnson, New York, 31 May 1865, William H. Wallace file, Letters of Application and Recommendation during the Administrations of Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson, 1861-1869, Record Group 59, M 650, National Archives.

<sup>278</sup> Charles H. Ray to John A. Andrew, Springfield, 17 January 1861, Andrew Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>279</sup> J. Edward Murr, “Some Pertinent Observations Concerning ‘Abe Lincoln – The Hoosier,’” 17-18, unpublished typescript, Murr Papers, DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana. Murr’s informant was James Gentry, who heard the story from Jones and Grigsby upon their return to Indiana from Washington.

not receive the office for which they apply. It is much easier to please your neighbors and maintain a fair reputation in Springfield than in Washington!”<sup>280</sup> In 1862, Lincoln explained to his Illinois friend George W. Rives, who sought work as a tax assessor: “I will not say unconditionally that I will appoint you, before the [internal revenue] law is passed, because I have been placed in an awkward position, heretofore, by promises made in advance, which I was urged to fulfill, but I think I know all about you, and can decide upon that, readily when the time shall come for action.”<sup>281</sup>

An embarrassing case in point was W. H. P. Denny, an Ohio editor who applied for the Dayton postmastership and enlisted Senator Benjamin F. Wade, among others, in his cause. Postmaster General Blair said that since the congressman representing Dayton was a Democrat, Wade’s endorsement would be influential. In mid-March, Denny called on Blair, who asserted that the decision about the Dayton post office was to be made “on the face of the papers.” On March 27, Denny visited the White House to inquire about a rumor that former Representative Robert C. Schenck would have the final say regarding the Dayton post office and would give it to his friend W. F. Comly, editor of the Dayton Journal. Echoing Blair, Lincoln replied: “I hold Mr. Schenck in high estimation; but, I mean to decide between the applicants on the strength of the recommendations.” Denny believed the president would do the right thing after reading the papers. “I will try,” pledged Lincoln, who “then remarked that his labors were excessive; that the pressure of office-seekers was so great, that promises had been extorted from him, that he was afterwards unable to perform; that ‘lies had actually been twisted out of him.’ He,

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<sup>280</sup> Washington correspondence by Van, 12 November, Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 16 November 1861.

<sup>281</sup> George W. Rives to Lyman Trumbull, Paris, Illinois, 12 February 1862, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

however, said that he did not mean to lie, but, nevertheless, he had, unwittingly, made contradictory statements.” Denny asked how long he might have to wait for an answer. Lincoln said weeks or months. Twenty minutes after Denny left, Schenck, who had campaigned for Lincoln in southern Illinois the previous year, came in and pressed hard for Comly. Lincoln tried to resist, but Schenck was inexorable. The president explained that Schenck “had just been defeated for the United States Senate [by John Sherman]; all the great offices had been filled; and here was the man before him, that had stumped Egypt!” Schenck only wanted a petty office, so Lincoln caved in and appointed Comly without even looking at the papers.<sup>282</sup>

If Lincoln had a hard time saying no to some office seekers, on occasion he could do so most emphatically. Hay recalled sitting one day in the White House with the president “when a man who had been calling on him almost daily for weeks in pursuit of an office was shown in. He made his usual request, when Lincoln said: ‘It is of no use, my friend. You had better go home. I am not going to give you that place.’ At this the man became enraged, and in a very insolent tone exclaimed, ‘Then, as I understand it, Mr. President, you refuse to do me justice.’ At this, Lincoln’s patience, which was as near the infinite as anything that I have ever known, gave way. He looked at the man steadily for a half-minute or more, then slowly began to lift his long figure from its slouching position in the chair. He rose without haste, went over to where the man was sitting, took him by

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<sup>282</sup> Cincinnati Gazette, 6 April 1861; Denny to John Sherman, Dayton, 10 November 1860 and Washington, 22 March 1861, John Sherman Papers, Library of Congress. Denny edited the Dayton Weekly Gazette and had been an active Whig and Republican. The conservative Comly had edited the Journal for over two decades; the radical Denny had edited the Gazette for two years. Edward A. Parrott to Benjamin F. Wade, Columbus, 25 February 1861, Wade Papers, Library of Congress. After failing to win a government post, Denny went on to edit the Circleville, Ohio, Union. In 1865 he became postmaster in that town. Denny to John Sherman, Circleville, 13 February, 13 March, 17 April 1865, Sherman Papers, Library of Congress. In 1864 he opposed Lincoln’s renomination and backed Chase’s bid for the presidency. Denny to Chase and to an unidentified correspondent (two letters), Circleville, 29 January 1864, Chase Papers, Library of Congress.

the coat-collar, carried him bodily to the door, threw him in a heap outside, closed the door, and returned to his chair. The man picked himself up, opened the door, and cried, 'I want my papers!' Lincoln took a package of papers from the table, went to the door and threw them out, again closed it, and returned to his chair. He said not a word, then or afterward, about the incident."<sup>283</sup> Congressman John Alley remembered a similar scene when two importunate office seekers accosted Lincoln on his way from the White House to the nearby war department building. When their pestering became intolerable, the president, "evidently worn out by care and anxiety, turned upon them, and such an angry and terrific tirade, against those two incorrigible bores, I never before heard from the lips of mortal man."<sup>284</sup>

Occasionally Lincoln used humor in turning down importunate office seekers and their congressional patrons. When a delegation appealed to the president to name an ill friend of theirs as commissioner of the Hawaiian Islands, where the salubrious climate might improve his health, Lincoln replied: "I am sorry to say that there are eight other applicants for that place, and they are all sicker than your man."<sup>285</sup> A Philadelphia office seeker who repeatedly boasted of his services to the party was told by the president: "I had in my pig sty a little bit of a pig, that made a terrible commotion – do you know why? Because the old sow had just one more little pig than she had teats, and the little porker that got no teat made a terrible squealing." Lincoln's caller took the hint and

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<sup>283</sup> Joseph Bucklin Bishop, Notes and Anecdotes of Many Years (New York: Scribner's, 1925), 65-66. See a similar account by an unidentified source, Francis Fisher Browne, The Every-Day Life of Abraham Lincoln (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; New York: G. P. Putnam's 1913), 477-78.

<sup>284</sup> John B. Alley in Rice, ed., Reminiscences of Lincoln, 589.

<sup>285</sup> Titian J. Coffey in Rice, ed., Reminiscences of Lincoln, 239-40.



returned to Pennsylvania.<sup>286</sup> (In rejecting the appeal of another office seeker, he used a similar image: “there are too many hogs and too little fodder!”)<sup>287</sup>

When trying to balance competing claims, Lincoln took into account religion as well as ideology, region, and friendship. Quakers complained that they received too little patronage.<sup>288</sup> James Mitchell, a Methodist minister whom the president named commissioner of emigration in the interior department, argued that since Methodists “aided largely to make Mr. Lincoln,” they rightfully expected him “to meet the account to the full.”<sup>289</sup> A minister in Alexandria felt that that account was overdue. “We ask the govt. to recognize our people in bestowing patronage,” he wrote, but the request went unheeded: “the treatment of our people by the Administration is an open, standing insult to the church. Episcopalians & Presbyterians have the government.”<sup>290</sup> To redress that imbalance, prominent Methodists like Bishop Matthew Simpson of Evanston, Illinois, lobbied on behalf of their coreligionists for government jobs.<sup>291</sup> For his fellow townsman, John Evans, Simpson obtained a territorial governorship. (When offered that post in the Washington Territory, Evans turned it down but later accepted the governorship of

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<sup>286</sup> Herbert Mitgang, ed., Abraham Lincoln, A Press Portrait: His Life and Times from the Original Newspaper Documents of the Union, the Confederacy, and Europe (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 274.

<sup>287</sup> Maunsell B. Field, Memories of Many Men and of Some Women: Being Personal Recollections of Emperors, Kings, Queens, Princes, Presidents, Statesmen, Authors, and Artists, at Home and Abroad, during the Last Thirty Years (New York: Harper, 1874), 310.

<sup>288</sup> Whitney, Life on the Circuit, ed. Angle, 437.

<sup>289</sup> On October 20, 1863, Mitchell hinted strongly to the president that his coreligionists would support him for reelection if he would give them patronage. Lincoln seemed to agree. James Mitchell to Matthew Simpson, Washington, 20 October 1863, Matthew Simpson Papers, Library of Congress

<sup>290</sup> John Lanahan to Matthew Simpson, Washington, 27 June 1864 and [Alexandria, Virginia?], November 1861 [no day indicated], Matthew Simpson Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>291</sup> Robert Donald Clark, The Life of Matthew Simpson (New York: Macmillan, 1956) 224-29. Several letters in the papers of Bishop Matthew Simpson urge him to use his influence with Lincoln to land jobs for deserving Methodists. See, for example, Senator James Harlan to Simpson, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, 20 June 1861, Matthew Simpson Papers, Library of Congress.

Colorado.)<sup>292</sup> Professor J. W. Marshall, another Methodist worthy who solicited the bishop's aid, was appointed consul at Leeds.<sup>293</sup> When Lincoln offered Simpson an opportunity to name the minister to Honduras, the bishop piously disclaimed any intention to dictate patronage decisions. But he did suggest that his friend, the Pennsylvania publisher Alexander W. Cummings, be given that post. (In 1865, Simpson arranged to have Cummings appointed successor to Evans as governor of Colorado.)<sup>294</sup> In 1865, Simpson succeeded in having his friend James Harlan, a devout Methodist and a senator from Iowa, named secretary of the interior. (In appointing Harlan, Lincoln once again had to disappoint his old friend, Jesse K. Dubois, who had applied for that post.)<sup>295</sup> The bishop failed, however, to have Harlan's friend Jesse Bowen appointed an auditor in the treasury department.<sup>296</sup>

Later, Methodists railed against the "proscriptive Policy" that denied them their fair share of military patronage. "I cannot learn that we have a single voice in the Government, nor a prominent officer in the Army, notwithstanding we have furnished . . . more than fifty per cent of the entire Army," complained one D. H. Whitney. "Every Presbyterian and Episcopal Private is provided with some other position than that of

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<sup>292</sup> Edgar Carlisle McMechen, Life of Governor Evans, Second Territorial Governor of Colorado (Denver: Wahlgreen, 1924); George Richard Crooks, The Life of Bishop Matthew Simpson of the Methodist Episcopal Church (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1890); Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:550; Evans to Simpson, Washington, 14 March 1861, Matthew Simpson Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>293</sup> Marshall to Simpson, Carlisle, 17, 18 May, 23 August 1861, Matthew Simpson Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>294</sup> Simpson to Cameron, Washington, 27 November 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>295</sup> Shelby M. Cullom, Fifty Years of Public Service: Personal Recollections of Shelby M. Cullom, Senior United States Senator from Illinois (Chicago: McClurg, 1911), 135.

<sup>296</sup> Chase to Bishop Edward R. Ames, Washington, 6 April 1863, Matthew Simpson Papers, Library of Congress.

carrying a gun.”<sup>297</sup> In fact, Simpson was able to help Colonel Clinton B. Fisk win a general’s stars.<sup>298</sup>

Dismayed by such sectarian lobbying, Lincoln once said “that he preferred the Episcopalians to every other sect, because they are equally indifferent to a man’s religion and his politics.”<sup>299</sup>

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The onrushing tide of office-seekers, Hay remembered, was “inspired by a strange mixture of enthusiasm and greed, pushed by motives which were perhaps at bottom selfish, but which had nevertheless a curious touch of that deep emotion which had stirred the heart of the nation in the late election.” Amid “that dense crowd that swarmed in the staircases and the corridors, there were many well-to-do men who were seeking office to their own evident damage, simply because they wished to be a part, however humble, of a government which they had aided to put in power and to which they were sincerely devoted.” Lincoln quickly found that he could not personally attend to most applicants. As Hay recalled, “the numbers were so great, the competition so keen, that they ceased for the moment to be regarded as individuals, drowned as they were in the general sea of solicitation. Few of them received office; when, after weeks of waiting one of them got access to the President, he was received with kindness by a tall melancholy-looking man, sitting at a desk with his back to a window which opened upon a fair view of the Potomac, who heard his story with a gentle patience, took his papers and referred

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<sup>297</sup> D. H. Whitney to Matthew Simpson, Washington, 20 May 1863, Matthew Simpson Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>298</sup> Edward Bates to Simpson, [Washington], 21 November 1862, Bates Papers, Library of Congress. Fisk’s promotion was confirmed three days after Bates wrote.

<sup>299</sup> Field, Memories of Many Men and of Some Women, 310.

them to one of the Departments, and that was all; the fatal pigeonholes devoured them.”<sup>300</sup> The New York Times reported that the multitudinous callers at the White House “all come away delighted with their interview,” for the president “receives all with the most perfect kindness and cordiality, and wins golden opinions from all sorts of people.”<sup>301</sup>

An economic slump helped swell the ranks of aspirants for even the least remunerative jobs. A journalist found it “exceedingly distressing to observe how Mr. Lincoln is overrun by small politicians and office-hunters, the most of them aspiring to nothing higher than a \$1,200 clerkship, and even less than that.” The explanation was simple: “Hard times in the North have done a great deal to increase the lust after office, and, therefore, the number of applicants for small clerkships is almost incredible.”<sup>302</sup> Schuyler Colfax was “heart-sick” at the way Republicans were “fighting over offices worth one hundred to five hundred dollars.”<sup>303</sup> If those clamoring for government posts “would bestow on some reputable calling the energy and toil they waste in securing a spoonful of Government pap,” remarked Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Magazine, “they would die happier and wealthier men.”<sup>304</sup>

While making new appointments, Lincoln bolstered Southern Unionists by giving patronage to non-Republicans in the Upper South and Border States.<sup>305</sup> To John A.

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<sup>300</sup> John Hay, “Life in the White House in the Time of Lincoln,” Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln’s Side, 131-32.

<sup>301</sup> Washington correspondence by “Observer,” 24 March, New York Times, 26 March 1861.

<sup>302</sup> Washington correspondence, n.d., Philadelphia Press, n.d., copied in the Cincinnati Gazette, 5 March 1861.

<sup>303</sup> Colfax to his mother, Washington, n.d. [mid-March 1861], Hollister, Colfax, 173.

<sup>304</sup> Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, 6 April 1861.

<sup>305</sup> Daniel W. Crofts, Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 272-73.

Gilmer he explained that in Slave States where few Republicans lived, “I do not expect to inquire for the politics of the appointee, or whether he does or does not own slaves. I intend in that matter to accommodate the people in the several localities, if they themselves will allow me to accommodate them. In one word, I never have been, am not now, and probably never shall be in a mood of harassing the people either north or south.”<sup>306</sup> To show that he was implementing his policy of reaching out to Democrats and Constitutional Unionists, he cited the example of Louisville, where he appointed a John Bell supporter as postmaster rather than a Republican aspirant.<sup>307</sup> Lincoln told a group of Baltimoreans who were urging him to name only Republicans to office that “he was aware that the republicans who lived in Southern States were brave men, and fond of taking a tilt, but he doubted whether that would be the correct principle upon which he should settled the question, as to who should be Collector and Postmaster of Baltimore.”<sup>308</sup> He authorized a friend to inform Maryland Governor Thomas H. Hicks, whose refusal to summon the state legislature was widely regarded as a brave pro-Union stand, that “your recommendation will weigh tons for any appointments in Maryland.”<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> Lincoln to John A. Gilmer, Springfield, 15 December 1860, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:151.

<sup>307</sup> Washington correspondence, 15 March, New York Tribune, 20 March 1861.

<sup>308</sup> Washington correspondence, 18 March, New York Herald, 19 March 1861.

<sup>309</sup> “My intimacy with Lincoln, living as I do his near neighbour as well [as] my acquaintance with you has warranted me in writing him and in mentioning your name in connection with firmness, decision and purity of character. I have just received a letter suggested by him in which I am ‘authorized’ to say that your recommendation will weigh tons for any appointments in Maryland, with the prayer that you will stand firm.” Josiah M. Lucas to Hicks, Washington, 11 January 1861, Hicks Papers, Maryland Historical Society. See Lucas to Lincoln, Washington, 10 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. Lucas had worked with John J. Hardin editing the Jacksonville Illinoisian. In 1860 he wrote that he had been Lincoln’s neighbor since 1836 and “knew him intimately.” Lucas to O. M. Hatch, Washington, 12 August 1860, Hatch Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield. In fact, Hicks was not a true Unionist, though he opposed efforts to have his state join the Confederacy. Rather he favored letting the erring sisters go in peace and having Maryland join a middle states confederation, including the Border States and mid-Atlantic Free States. William C. Wright, The Secession Movement in the Middle Atlantic States (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1973), 40.

Hicks told Seward: “Everything depends upon proper appointments to leading places in border States.”<sup>310</sup> Maryland Congressman Henry Winter Davis moaned that it was “disheartening to see Democrats whose only merit is that they served Buchanan” continue in office “when the active & young men of the Republican party are wholly thrust aside.” Ominously he expressed the hope that in 1864 the Republicans would choose a president who “will weed out all democratic & old fogey influence from the Govt.”<sup>311</sup> (In time, Davis would become a bitter enemy of the president.) Congressman James M. Ashley of Ohio expressed similar regrets.<sup>312</sup> In some western territories, Lincoln also gave offices to Unionists regardless of their party background.<sup>313</sup>

Lincoln’s policy sometimes backfired. In Washington, the fight over the local postmastership became “a source of considerable uneasiness, heart-burning, and real trouble.” The president wanted to name his friend from congressional days, Nathan Sargent, but felt constrained not to. (Sargent eventually won the post of commissioner of customs in Connecticut.)<sup>314</sup> Lewis Clephane, former business manager of the antislavery National Era and secretary of the National Republican Association of Washington, was at first passed over in favor of an undeserving hack who had performed no services for the cause unless he was remunerated. A veteran politician remarked: “Never work for a cause or a party – work for men – be somebody’s boot-black – attach yourself to a politician – lick his boots – and he will boost you into office some day. But a cause, or a party, rarely

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<sup>310</sup> Hicks to Seward, Annapolis, 28 March 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>311</sup> Davis to [John Sherman], n.p., 30 May 1862, Sherman Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>312</sup> Ashley to Chase, Toledo, 5 May 1861, Chase Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>313</sup> Deren Earl Kellogg, “Lincoln’s New Mexico Patronage: Saving the Far Southwest for the Union,” New Mexico Historical Review 75 (2000): 527; Deren Earl Kellogg, “The Lincoln Administration and the Southwestern Territories” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1998), 44-66, 212-26.

<sup>314</sup> Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:364-65.

rewards its faithful supporters!”<sup>315</sup> Eventually Clephane won that job, though his performance in it did not please the postmaster general.<sup>316</sup>

After acquiescing in Ward Hill Lamon’s selection as marshal, Republicans in the District expected to receive the rest of the local posts. They were sorely disappointed when a resident of Maine become naval officer in the customs house and a New Yorker was named commissioner of public buildings.<sup>317</sup> Other such appointments led Benjamin Brown French to lament that “Abraham seems to be inclined to ignore us Republicans [in Washington] on the ground that we are not popular!!”<sup>318</sup>

The president encouraged supporters of John J. Crittenden’s candidacy for a seat on the U.S. supreme court.<sup>319</sup> Upon assuming control of the state department, Seward (presumably with Lincoln’s approval) immediately requested Edwin M. Stanton to draw up papers nominating the Kentuckian to the highest tribunal. The secretary confidently predicted that Crittenden would become a justice, but Radical Republicans, including Chase and Trumbull, objected so vehemently that the plan was scrapped.<sup>320</sup> Lincoln stated “that he will not make any appointment which will be calculated to divide the

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<sup>315</sup> Washington correspondence, 27 March, Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 30 March 1861.

<sup>316</sup> Montgomery Blair to Lincoln, Washington, 3 November 1862, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>317</sup> W. B. Webb to James Watson Webb, Washington, 13 April 1861, James Watson Webb Papers, Yale University.

<sup>318</sup> Benjamin Brown French to his son Frank, Washington, 20 March 1861, French Family Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>319</sup> Thomas H. Hicks to Lincoln, Annapolis, 11 March 1861; William G. Brown and James C. McGrew to Lincoln, Richmond, 10 March 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>320</sup> Stanton to Buchanan, Washington, 10 March 1861; J. S. Black to Buchanan, Baltimore, 11 March 1861, Buchanan Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Stanton to Lincoln, 6 March 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Charles Francis Adams diary, 12 March 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. It was reported that Virginia’s Senators as well as Hale, Wade, Fessenden and Trumbull would oppose the nomination. Washington correspondence, 8 and 9 March, Cincinnati Enquirer, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 12, 13 March 1861; Washington correspondence, 7, 8 March, New York Times, 8, 9 March 1861.

Republicans in the Senate, as he desires to so act as to consolidate and strengthen the party.”<sup>321</sup>

As he promised in his inaugural, Lincoln strove to appoint men to posts in the South who were unobjectionable to local residents. He urged his cabinet secretaries to make no removals on political grounds in that region, especially Virginia.<sup>322</sup> When Montgomery Blair selected a postal agent for the Old Dominion who proved so unpopular that after his first run he received death threats, Lincoln “expressed his regret that any obnoxious person was appointed mail agent on any mail route” in Virginia.<sup>323</sup> When one faction of Virginia Unionists appealed for patronage, Lincoln “replied that he must pursue a cautious policy” and showed them a letter from Congressman Sherrard Clemens recommending that action on Virginia appointments be postponed. To undermine Clemens’ influence, John C. Underwood of another faction suggested that Lincoln be shown a letter in which Clemens described the president, after an interview with him, as “a cross between a sandhill crane and Andalusian Jackass,” “vain, weak, puerile, hypocritical, without manners, without moral grace,” an “abolitionist of the Lovejoy and Sumner type,” “by all odds the weakest man who has ever been elected – worse than [Zachary] Taylor, and he was bad enough.” When “he talks to you [he] punches you under your ribs. He swears equal to uncle Toby, and in every particular, morally and mentally, I have lost all respect for him.” Clemens was shocked to discover

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<sup>321</sup> Washington correspondence by Ben: Perley Poore, 7 March, Boston Journal, 7 March 1861.

<sup>322</sup> Beale, ed., Welles Diary, 1:6.

<sup>323</sup> Washington correspondence, 27 March, Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 30 March 1861; Washington correspondence, 25 March, Baltimore Sun, 26 March 1861. The agent, Bernard C. Crook of Alexandria, a Bell supporter in 1860, was not discharged. Washington correspondence, 27 March, New York Evening Post, 28 March 1861; Washington Evening Star, 26 March 1861. Lincoln evidently received protests against several mail agents in Virginia. Washington correspondence, 26 March, New York Evening Post, 27 March 1861. Virginia Congressman Sherrard Clemens protested against a mail agent named Hall. Washington correspondence, 26 March, Philadelphia Daily News, 27 March 1861.



that Lincoln “did not know what the Adams amendment was until I told him.” The congressman predicted that “Virginia under his follies and puerilities, will secede.”<sup>324</sup> This unflattering assessment of Lincoln appeared in the press, to Clemens’ embarrassment.<sup>325</sup>

One particularly insistent group of office seekers, the German-Americans, gave Lincoln more trouble than most.<sup>326</sup> “About one-third of the German population of the West are applicants for consulships,” a journalist reported hyperbolically.<sup>327</sup> In December 1860, Henry Villard wrote that native-born Republicans in the Midwest “openly acknowledge that their victory was, if not wholly, at least to a great extent, due to the large accessions they received in the most hotly contested sections from the German ranks.”<sup>328</sup> Among them was Lincoln, who when distributing consulships and other foreign appointments, asked Seward: “what about our German friends?”<sup>329</sup> As the patronage was being distributed, Connecticut Republicans warned that they faced defeat

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<sup>324</sup> John C. Underwood to Archibald W. Campbell, Washington, 25 March 1861, Campbell Papers, West Virginia University; Clemens to [W. W. Shiver of Wheeling, Virginia], Washington, 1 March 1861, William P. Palmer Collection, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland. On the identity of the recipient of this letter, see Archibald W. Campbell to Lincoln, Wheeling, 17 March 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. Clemens said that Lincoln had summoned him. In 1862, when seeking a federal appointment, Clemens apologized to the president: “A year ago last march, immediately after your accession to the Presidency, I had a personal interview with you. You perhaps may recollect the circumstances. During its continuance, you repeatedly indulged in profanity, to my intense mortification. Under the influence of the feelings thus excited, I wrote a letter to a friend, in which, I expressed myself in terms of bitter disappointment, and as I am now satisfied of gross injustice towards you. I never hesitate to acknowledge a wrong, when convinced of it, and I must say, that your official conduct has redeemed any hasty prejudice, I may have conceived against you. As special pains was taken to bring that letter, at the time to your notice, and as it found its way, into the public prints, without my knowledge or concurrence, I some time since, made the proper reparation to you, by a letter addressed to the Secretary of War, Mr Stanton, with whom I have had the pleasure of an extended personal acquaintance.” Clemens to Lincoln, Wheeling, 6 May 1862, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>325</sup> Cleveland Plain Dealer, 3 April 1861.

<sup>326</sup> Washington correspondence by “Kappa,” 18 March, Philadelphia Press, 19 March 1861.

<sup>327</sup> Washington correspondence, 14 March, New York World, 15 March 1861.

<sup>328</sup> New York Herald, 9 December 1860.

<sup>329</sup> Lincoln to Seward, Washington, 18 March 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:293.

in the April elections if German-Americans were not courted.<sup>330</sup> The secretary of state created an uproar by opposing the appointment of foreign-born citizens to diplomatic posts in Europe.<sup>331</sup> “Next to Fort Sumter,” said the Cincinnati Commercial, Seward’s policy “excites the greatest interest.”<sup>332</sup>

At the center of the storm was Carl Schurz, the Prussian-born Wisconsin orator and indefatigable campaigner, who shamelessly lobbied for a first-class diplomatic appointment in Europe.<sup>333</sup> “The celebrated Mr. Carl Schurz appears to be a difficult child for the Administration to baptize,” as one journalist observed.<sup>334</sup> Lincoln had encouraged the young would-be diplomat, whom he liked and admired, but Seward, responding to pressure from the Catholic leadership of New York, raised objections. Other Republican leaders rightly considered Schurz “a very great egotist” whose demands were “impudent, in bad taste and selfish.”<sup>335</sup> The secretary of state urged Schurz to accept a post in Latin America or a territorial governorship rather than a European mission. Schurz balked, insisting that he be named minister to Sardinia (i.e., Italy). He managed to persuade one competitor for that post, Anson Burlingame, to withdraw from the field. When Schurz complained to Lincoln about Seward’s opposition, the president told him: “I would have appointed you at once, but I deemed it my duty to consult my Secretary of State, with whom I should not like to quarrel right after the organization of the Cabinet. I appreciate

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<sup>330</sup> Mark Howard to Gideon Welles, Hartford, 26 March 1861, Welles Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>331</sup> Gustave P. Koerner to Lincoln, Belleville, 28 March 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>332</sup> Washington correspondence by Special, 15 March, Cincinnati Commercial, 16 March 1861.

<sup>333</sup> Washington correspondence by Special, 28, 29 March, Cincinnati Commercial, 29 March, 3 April 1861.

<sup>334</sup> New York Daily News, 28 March 1861.

<sup>335</sup> Gustave Koerner to Lyman Trumbull, Belleville, Illinois, 1 May 1862, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress; Washington correspondence, 14 March, New York Herald, 16 March 1861. Cf. Washington correspondence by Special, 28, 29 March, Cincinnati Commercial, 29 March, 3 April 1861; Gustave Koerner to Lyman Trumbull, Belleville, 31 March 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

your pride and I like it, and I shall be just to you.” Schurz believed that his struggle for the Sardinian mission would cause Lincoln to confront his domineering secretary of state. As time passed, Schurz came to believe that his case was part of the larger struggle waged by Seward and his fellow compromisers to dominate the administration. When George Perkins Marsh won the Sardinian post, Lincoln offered to appoint Schurz minister to Portugal, Brazil, Chile, or Peru. “I gave him my mind without reserve,” the disgruntled Schurz wrote his wife. He told the president “that he and the republicans had been heretofore supposed to have elected a President, and not a sub-Secretary of State” and “that two thirds of the republican Senators would be before long hostilely arrayed against the administration.”<sup>336</sup> He neither accepted nor rejected the proposed alternatives. On March 19, the New York Herald reported that the question of Schurz’s appointment “seems to bother the administration more than anything else [except] the difficulty about Fort Sumter.” That day the matter appeared to be resolved when Schurz agreed to accept the position as minister to Lisbon provided that its status would be elevated to a first-class mission (with a pay increase of \$4500). Seward, however, inexplicably refused to support that change.

On March 21, the president, secretary of state, and Schurz held a stormy meeting during which the young German refused to back down despite Seward’s entreaties. “Lincoln grew quite pale, but I stood firm,” Schurz told his wife. Though he was “fed up” with politics and Washington, Schurz felt obliged to stay because of “the possibility of breaking Seward’s power over Lincoln, which would ruin the whole Administration.” Schurz boasted that in “all things, including for example the Fort Sumter affair, Seward’s

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<sup>336</sup> Washington correspondence, 24 March, New York Herald, 25 March 1861.

fatal influence makes itself felt.” With characteristic immodesty, he boasted: “I have done more than all the others to keep Lincoln on the right track.” “Seward’s hostility against me is so sharp and his influence over Lincoln is so great, that I am not sanguine enough to expect a favorable result,” Schurz wrote.

Finally, the president asked Montgomery Blair to act as an intermediary and persuade Schurz to accept the mission to Russia or Spain. Schurz agreed to the latter post, which had already been assigned to Cassius M. Clay. After mulling over the matter, Lincoln authorized Blair to ask Clay to give up the Spanish post. To Schurz it seemed that “Lincoln has finally made up his mind to act independently.” On March 28, the three-week contest ended when Clay agreed to accept the mission to Russia rather than to Spain. The president thanked the Kentuckian, saying: “Clay, you have relieved me from great embarrassment.”<sup>337</sup>

“So Seward’s influence is conquered, and I am master of the battlefield,” Schurz crowed. By stiffening Lincoln’s backbone, he may have made it easier for the president to stand up to Seward when the Fort Sumter crisis reached a climax.<sup>338</sup> A strong critic of appeasement reported that it “is a matter of congratulation today among Seward’s opponents that he has suffered the first serious defeat wh[ich] he has yet experienced in respect to any app[ointment] – in the instance of Schurz, against whom for a European Mission he had made an especial point.”<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> Clay’s recollections in Rice, ed., Reminiscences of Lincoln, 300.

<sup>338</sup> Michael Burlingame, “The Early Life of Carl Schurz, 1829-1865” (Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1971), 320-54.

<sup>339</sup> Albert G. Brown, Jr., to John A. Andrew, Washington, [28 March 1861], Andrew Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

Although Seward opposed Schurz's appointment in part because of the young German-American's radical antislavery views, several of the ministers sent abroad were staunch critics of the peculiar institution. In addition to Schurz, Marsh, and Clay, they included George G. Fogg (Switzerland), Norman B. Judd (Prussia), John Lothrop Motley (Austria), Rufus King (Papal States), Friedrich Hassaurek (Ecuador), Bradford R. Wood (Denmark), Anson Burlingame (China), and James Shepherd Pike (Holland). Many consuls were also militant opponents of slavery, among them Zebina Eastman (Bristol), Joshua R. Giddings (Montreal), John Bigelow (Paris), Thomas H. Dudley (Liverpool), Charles Dexter Cleveland (Cardiff), Thaddeus Hyatt (La Rochelle), Richard Hildreth (Trieste), Freeman H. Morse (London), and Hinton Rowan Helper (Buenos Aires). They helped educate their hosts about the fundamental issues of the Civil War.<sup>340</sup> In addition, radical antislavery leaders won a large share of the three dozen posts in the western territories.<sup>341</sup> The South reacted to these appointments indignantly, while Northern abolitionists applauded them.<sup>342</sup>

The appointment of Helper to Argentina may have given Lincoln special pleasure, for he had read the North Carolinian's controversial 1857 antislavery tract, The Impending Crisis of the South, and marked passages in it. Among them were verses quoted in the chapter "Bible Testimony":

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<sup>340</sup> Newbold, "Antislavery Background of State Department Appointees," 428-55; Robert F. Durden, James Shepherd Pike: Republicanism and the American Negro, 1850-1882 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1957), 48-49; J. J. Cardoso, "Lincoln, Abolitionism, and Patronage: The Case of Hinton Rowan Helper," Journal of Negro History 53 (1968): 144-60; Carl Wittke, "Friedrich Hassaurek: Cincinnati's Leading Forty-Eighter," Ohio Historical Quarterly 68 (1959): 1-17.

<sup>341</sup> Vincent G. Tegeeder, "Lincoln and the Territorial Patronage: The Ascendancy of the Radicals in the West," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 35 (1948): 77-90; Kellogg, "Lincoln's New Mexico Patronage," 513.

<sup>342</sup> Richmond Enquirer, 3 April 1861; Washington correspondence, 1 April, National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York), 6 April 1861.

“Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry, but shall not be heard.” (Proverbs, 21:13)

“Let the oppressed go free.” (Isaiah 58:6)

“Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.”

(Leviticus 25:10)<sup>343</sup>

Other German-Americans won diplomatic posts. In 1862, Koerner replaced Schurz at Madrid. A delay in that appointment led Koerner to complain that Lincoln’s “kindness to Mr. Schurz (which is really a very great weakness) had had a very unkind effect upon me.” It was “very strange that a man whose true character he does not know at all, and who opposed him to the very last at Chicago, should be permitted to trifle with him and the Senate, and that I should be disgraced again, whom he does know, and who had ever stood by him. . . . If Lincoln prefers office-seekers and adversaries to old and tried friends very well.”<sup>344</sup> When Lincoln named Friedrich Hassaurek of Cincinnati as minister to Ecuador, whose capital Quito sits 9000 feet above sea level, the witty Ohioan thanked the president “for appointing him to the highest place in his gift.”<sup>345</sup> Charles N. Riotte of Texas represented the U.S. in Costa Rica. German-American consuls included Francis J. Klauser and George E. Wiss (the Netherlands), Henry Boernstein (Bremen),

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<sup>343</sup> Alexander Williamson, “Reminiscences of Lincoln,” Washington Sunday Chronicle, 7 April 1869. Robert Todd Lincoln had given Williamson his father’s copy of Helper’s book which the author had presented to the president, who then marked it with a pencil. Washington Chronicle, 7 June 1865.

<sup>344</sup> Koerner to [Richard Yates], Belleville, 28 May 1862, in the possession of a private collector represented by Jonathan Mann. Koerner argued that he was more deserving of a patronage reward than any other German-American. Koerner to Lyman Trumbull, Washington, [7?] February, and Belleville, Illinois, 13 March 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress. Koerner gave a different version of this story in his memoirs. Thomas J. McCormick, ed., Memoirs of Gustave Koerner, 1809-1896 (2 vols.; Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1909), 2:114-15.

<sup>345</sup> Washington correspondence by Special, 28 March, Cincinnati Commercial, 29 March 1861.

John P. Hatterscheidt (Moscow), George Schneider (Elsinore), and Charles L. Bernays (Zurich).

Schurz was not the only diplomatic appointee to draw fire. Some Swiss-Americans objected to Bernays because he was a Jew. (No Jews were allowed to reside in Switzerland.) Washington buzzed with criticism of many others for their lack of diplomatic experience and language skills as well as their membership in “the insolvent & the medium class.”<sup>346</sup> Traditionally, diplomatic posts had been “the sewer through which flows the scum and refuse of the political puddle,” said the New York Tribune. “A man not fit to stay at home is just the man to send abroad.”<sup>347</sup> Among the more shameful emissaries representing the Great Republic were drunkards, smugglers, debauchees, and duelists.<sup>348</sup> This was especially true of the consular service, which was staffed by “semi-barbarians,” “scoundrels,” and “pompous ignoramuses unworthy of public respect.”<sup>349</sup> A notorious example was the “incorrigible drinker,” Robert Armstrong who, as consul at Liverpool in the 1840s and 1850s, would regularly have “a fit of drunkenness when he would wholly disappear leaving the duties of his office to the clerks.”<sup>350</sup> Decades after the Civil War, the former American consul in Rome wrote that “with the exception of [Charles Francis] Adams, at London, and [George Perkins] Marsh, at Turin, we had

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<sup>346</sup> Washington correspondence, 29 March, Cincinnati Enquirer, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 2 April 1861; “The Offices,” New York World, 4 April 1861; Gayle Thornbrough et al., eds., The Diary of Calvin Fletcher (8 vols.; Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972-1981), 7:69 (entry for 21 March 1861).

<sup>347</sup> Kenneth M. Stampp, America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 73.

<sup>348</sup> “Moral Respectability and Diplomatic Appointments,” New York World, 12 March 1861.

<sup>349</sup> James L. Woodress, Howells and Italy (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1952), 8-9, William James Stillman, The Autobiography of a Journalist (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1901), 1:371; Benjamin Moran diary, entry for 30 January 1860, quoted in Newbold, “Antislavery Background of State Department Appointees,” 299.

<sup>350</sup> Edward Everett diary, 26 February 1854, Everett Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

hardly a representative abroad, either consular or diplomatic, who was a credit to the country. As the war continued, the importance of being respected in Europe became more evident, and a change took place; but the few men of respectable standing who were in foreign countries representing the United States of America were appointed on account of political pressure, and not on their merits.”<sup>351</sup> This judgment has some validity but is unduly harsh.<sup>352</sup> Closer to the truth was the conclusion of The Nation, which argued that Lincoln put into office “the best set of foreign ministers we have had in many a day.”<sup>353</sup> In addition to Adams and Marsh, others serving creditably included John Lothrop Motley in Vienna, Henry S. Sanford in Brussels, Carl Schurz in Madrid, John Bigelow in Paris, Edward Joy Morris in Turkey, and Anson Burlingame in Peking.<sup>354</sup>

Rather than Adams, William L. Dayton was Lincoln’s first choice as minister to the Court of St. James. A political wheeler-dealer from New Jersey, Dayton had been the Republican vice-presidential candidate in 1856. Seward and Chase persuaded the president that the Massachusetts congressman, son of one president and grandson of another, was better qualified than the Jerseyman.<sup>355</sup> Adams uncharitably ascribed Lincoln’s initial reluctance to appoint him to “that jealousy of Mr. Seward’s influence

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<sup>351</sup> William James Stillman, Autobiography of a Journalist (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1901), 1:369-70.

<sup>352</sup> On the inadequacy of some diplomatic appointments, see James E. Harvey to Horace Greeley, Washington, 24 March [1861], Greeley Papers, New York Public Library.

<sup>353</sup> The Nation, 24 January 1867.

<sup>354</sup> Fish, “Lincoln and the Patronage,” 61; Carman and Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage, 106; Jay Monaghan, Diplomat in Carpet Slippers: Abraham Lincoln Deals with Foreign Affairs (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1945); Fry, Henry S. Sanford, 35-86; David L. Anderson, “Anson Burlingame: Reformer and Diplomat,” Civil War History 25 (1979): 293-308; Owsley, “Sanford,” 226-28.

<sup>355</sup> Lincoln to Seward, Washington, 11 March 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:281; Seward to Lincoln, Washington, 11 March 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Duberman, Charles Francis Adams, 256; Charles Francis Adams, Jr., Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909), 144.



that seems to pervade the narrow mind of the chief.”<sup>356</sup> Senator Charles Sumner, disappointed at not receiving that post, resented both the president and Adams. To mollify him, Lincoln allowed the senator carte blanche for awarding patronage to other Massachusetts men.<sup>357</sup> Three of the handful of first-class diplomatic posts went to residents of the Bay State: Adams, Burlingame, and Motley. When Sumner and Congressman John B. Alley urged the appointment of yet another Massachusetts resident as secretary of London legation instead of a man whom they deemed more qualified than the one Lincoln had chosen, the president acknowledged that they were right but still rebuffed them. Tactfully he agreed that their state could ably fill all the diplomatic and consular posts, adding “that he considered Massachusetts the banner State of the Union, and admired its institutions and people so much that he had sent his ‘Bob’ . . . to Harvard for an education.” But, he explained, he had already appointed many Massachusetts residents to office and that the man he had selected as secretary of the legation was from a swing state whose influential leaders he could not afford to alienate. Alley recalled that the president’s reasoning, “together with his shrewd compliment to Massachusetts, restored our good humor.” But, the president added, “I hope you will give me a little time before I hear from Massachusetts again.” The congressman and Sumner “went away

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<sup>356</sup> Charles Francis Adams diary, 12 March 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>357</sup> Frank Otto Gattell, John Gorham Palfrey and the New England Conscience (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 238; David Donald, Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War (New York: Knopf, 1960), 384-86.

satisfied.”<sup>358</sup> Dayton became minister to France, a nation whose tongue he did not speak. In Paris he proved a capable but undistinguished diplomat.<sup>359</sup>

When Adams called on the president to express his thanks, Lincoln replied: “Very kind of you to say so Mr Adams but you are not my choice you are Seward’s man.” He then turned to the secretary of state and said, “Well Seward I have settled the Chicago Post Office.” Adams was appalled by the president’s seeming indifference to the importance of his high diplomatic office.<sup>360</sup> In his diary he recorded his poor opinion of the “dull and inappreciative” Lincoln: “The impression which I have received is that the course of the President is drifting the country into war, by its want of decision. Every where at this place [Washington] is discouragement, not loud in words but in hopelessness of a favorable issue. For my part I see nothing but incompetency in the head. The man is not equal to the hour.”<sup>361</sup> The mercurial, egotistical, tempestuous James Watson Webb, a long-time friend of Seward and editor of the New York Courier and Express, lobbied hard for the post of minister to England, but had to settle for Brazil, where he extorted a large sum from the local government. He had been offered the mission to Turkey, which he regarded as “a gross insult” and wrote a churlish letter to Seward. When the secretary tried to show it to Lincoln, the president declined to read it

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<sup>358</sup> John B. Alley in Rice, ed., Reminiscences of Lincoln, 577-79; Edward Everett Hale, Memories of One Hundred Years, 2:78.

<sup>359</sup> Lynn M. Case and Warren F. Spencer, The United States and France: Civil War Diplomacy (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970), 603-4.

<sup>360</sup> Henry Cabot Lodge journal, 10 June 1876, Lodge Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Charles Francis Adams diary, 28 March 1861, Adams Family Papers, ibid.

<sup>361</sup> Charles Francis Adams diary, 12, 31 March 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

and evidently said some sharp things about Webb.<sup>362</sup> (J. A. C. Gray considered buying that post from him.)<sup>363</sup>

Others won important European posts even though they were not Lincoln's first choice. He named Marsh minister to Sardinia (Italy) and Anson Burlingame minister to Austria, the president explained, "because of the intense pressure of their respective states, and their fitness also."<sup>364</sup> ("What an interesting spectacle to old fashioned working Republicans [it was] to see Burlingame, Dayton, Adams and others who pertinaciously resisted the nomination of Lincoln, covered with the highest honors," Samuel Galloway remarked.)<sup>365</sup> Marsh, who would achieve renown as a pioneering conservationist, was the uncle of Vermont Senator George F. Edmunds.<sup>366</sup> It was widely believed that his "experience in diplomatic life, his vast and varied scholarship, which includes a knowledge of nearly all the languages of Europe, and his refined manners" qualified him well for the post.<sup>367</sup> When the Hapsburgs declared Burlingame, who had been defeated for reelection to Congress in 1860, persona non grata because of his support of Hungarian

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<sup>362</sup> Washington correspondence, 21 March, New York Times, 22 March 1861; James L. Crouthamel, James Watson Webb: A Biography (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1969), 148-49, 188-93; Seward to Weed, Washington, 17 May 1861, Weed Papers, University of Rochester; Nathan Smith to James Watson Webb, New York, 19 March 1861, James Watson Webb Papers, Yale University.

<sup>363</sup> Gray told this to John Bigelow. John Bigelow diary, New York Public Library (entry for 22 May 1862).

<sup>364</sup> Lincoln to Seward, Washington, 18 March 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:292. On the pressure for Marsh, see Seward to Lincoln, Washington, 12 March 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. Charles Sumner strongly backed Marsh. David Donald, Charles Sumner and the Rights of Man (New York: Knopf, 1970), 26.

<sup>365</sup> Samuel Galloway to David Davis, Columbus, 29 March 1861, David Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>366</sup> David Lowenthal, George Perkins Marsh: Versatile Vermonter (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 217-18.

<sup>367</sup> Washington correspondence, 12 March, New York Evening Post, 12 March 1861,

and Italian uprisings against Austrian rule, Lincoln sent him to China as U.S. minister plenipotentiary.<sup>368</sup>

The struggle over the Chicago post office, one of the “most animated” of all patronage battles, had been under way for weeks by the time Adams called at the White House.<sup>369</sup> The editors of the Chicago Tribune wanted the job for one of their own, explaining that they saw it as “a means of extending and insuring our business and widening the influence of the Tribune.”<sup>370</sup> (Many newspaper proprietors coveted postmasterships for such practical reasons.)<sup>371</sup> Ebenezer Peck, Lincoln’s good friend and political ally of long standing, also sought that position, as did Charles L. Wilson of the Chicago Journal. The Tribune editors at first backed Joseph Medill but eventually chose John Locke Scripps as their candidate.<sup>372</sup> Lincoln, with divided loyalties, put off the decision until late March, when he gave his blessing to Scripps. The disappointed Peck wrote Lyman Trumbull that Lincoln “once said to me, that his greatest repugnance to politics was, that a man had occasion sometimes, to put his foot in the face of his best friend in order to lift himself a round higher on the ladder of ambition.”<sup>373</sup> (Wilson was

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<sup>368</sup> Anderson, “Anson Burlingame,” 302. In 1860, Burlingame had introduced a resolution instructing the House Committee on Foreign Affairs to consider elevating the U.S. representative to Sardinia from chargé d’affaires to minister plenipotentiary.

<sup>369</sup> Washington correspondence, 14 March, New York Herald, 16 March 1861.

<sup>370</sup> Charles H. Ray to Lyman Trumbull, Chicago, 25 February 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>371</sup> Don E. Fehrenbacher, “The Post Office in Illinois Politics,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 46 (1953): 60-70.

<sup>372</sup> William Bross to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 23 February 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>373</sup> Peck to Trumbull, Chicago, 21 March 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

named secretary of the American legation in London and two years later Peck became a judge of the U.S. Court of Claims.)<sup>374</sup>

A similar dispute among friends occurred over the Rockford, Illinois, postmastership, which a number of well-connected men sought.<sup>375</sup> Among them was Wait Talcott, a founder of the Republican party in Illinois who, as a state legislator, had supported Lincoln for the senate in 1855. He needed the job, for he had fallen on hard times.<sup>376</sup> "The situation is just this," Lincoln explained to him: "I want to appoint an old friend of mine, Alex Sympson of Hancock County, United States Marshal for the Northern district; but Congressman Washburne is pressing J. Russell Jones of Galena for the place. Now, if, at Washburne's request, I make Russell Jones United States Marshal, I will give you the post office at Rockford." In due time, the marshal's post went to Jones, who was delighted that his victory allowed him, as he put it, to "tell some folks to kiss my a[rs]e."<sup>377</sup> Talcott naturally expected to be named postmaster. After consulting with the president, he told friends that Lincoln felt indebted to him for supporting his senatorial bid in 1855 and would appoint either him or Melancton Smith as postmaster. Washburne, claiming the traditional right of congressmen belonging to the majority party

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<sup>374</sup> Carman and Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage, 241; Charles Francis Adams diary, 28 March 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>375</sup> E. B. Washburne explained that "Mr. Lincoln intimated to me he should make it [the appointment] himself, as he is desirous of seeing a certain man have the office. . . . Mr. Blaisdell, Mr. Blake, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Wolds all have very strong backing." E. B. Washburne to L. F. Warner, Taunton, Massachusetts, 24 March 1861, Washburn Family Papers, Washburn Memorial Library, Norlands, Maine.

<sup>376</sup> Talcott to Elihu B. Washburne, Rockford, 9 February 1861; Ralph Emerson to Washburne, Rockford, 27 February 1861, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>377</sup> J. Russell Jones to E. B. Washburne, Springfield, 11 February 1861, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress. On March 10, Washburne told his wife that "Old Abe and our delegation in Congress do not agree very well about some appointments and we are going up this morning to the White House to have a talk about matters. Russ Jones is still here on the anxious seat, and I am afraid he will have to go around disappointed as do nineteen out of every twenty." Washburne to his wife, Washington, 10 March 1861, Washburn Papers, Washburn Memorial Library, Norlands, Maine. On Jones, see George R. Jones, Joseph Russell Jones (Chicago, 1964).

to select postmasters in their districts, insisted that Smith be chosen, which was done.<sup>378</sup>

Talcott had alienated Washburne by supporting another Republican for Congress.<sup>379</sup>

Understandably angry, Talcott said: "Mr. Lincoln, I have seen the day when I was as important to you as you are now important to me." He returned to Rockford "vastly

discouraged, not to say disgusted." The president eventually soothed Talcott's hurt

feelings by appointing him a collector of internal revenue and urging him to "make no

war upon Mr. Washburne."<sup>380</sup> In recommending him for that post, Lincoln called Talcott

"one of the best men there is."<sup>381</sup> Relations between Talcott and Washburne were

thereafter cordial.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> Smith took office on May 1. Smith to Washburne, Rockford, 11 July 1861, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress. When Smith was killed in the Civil War, his widow took over the job. E. W. Blaisdell Jr. to Lincoln, Rockford, 18 July 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>379</sup> Talcott to Lyman Trumbull, Rockford, 21 June 1862, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>380</sup> William Jayne, interviewed by J. McCan Davis, Springfield, Illinois, 22 October 1898, Ida Tarbell Papers, Allegheny College; Lincoln to Talcott, Washington, 27 August 1862, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 5:397; Melancton Smith to E. B. Washburne, Rockford, 21 March and 1 April 1861, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress. Washburne was warned that if Smith were passed over in favor of Talcott, most Republicans would be disappointed and that Democrats would argue that the president and the Congressman had quarreled. When Lincoln tried to mollify Sympton by asking if there was any other post he would like, the disappointed office seeker said there was none. Alexander Sympton to Lincoln, Washington, 11 March 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. Talcott was opposed in part because he had not lived very long in Rockford and because of his "ultraism" on the slavery issue. R. A. Sanford to E. B. Washburne, Rockford, 9, 15 February 1861; J. Weldon to Washburne, Rockford, 7 March 1861; Hobart Hatch to Washburne, Rockford, 26 March 1861, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress. Sympton attributed his defeat to Washburne but held no grudge. Indeed, he professed to admire the congressman's energy and the way he used his influence. W. K. Davison to Washburne, Warsaw, Illinois, 25 March 1861, ibid. Sympton, who was opposed by the Congressional delegation from Illinois, eventually became a paymaster in the Union Army. Benjamin M. Prentiss to Henry Asbury, Washington, 13 March 1861, Henry Asbury Papers, Chicago History Museum. Lincoln had evidently "promised Symptons friends that he should appoint him" to some post. I. A. W. Buck to Ozias M. Hatch, Aurora, 14 March 1861, Hatch Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>381</sup> Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 5:379.

<sup>382</sup> Several friendly letters from Talcott to Washburne are preserved in the Washburne Papers at the Library of Congress, among them one dated 6 January 1866, referring to the "pleasant relations that have so long existed between us." Talcott to Washburne, Rockford, 6 January 1866, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress. See also Talcott to Lyman Trumbull, Rockford, 12 December 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

Washburne was less successful in his attempt to name the postmaster at Chicago. Lincoln told him, “You can’t have the Chicago P. O. it’s already promised.” He then consulted a long list of government posts with their salaries and offered him a consolation prize: “You shall have the ministership to Paraguay.”<sup>383</sup>

Members of Congress could be touchy about their prerogatives in patronage matters. A “very angry” Galusha Grow of Pennsylvania, who became speaker of the House in July 1861, indignantly protested to Lincoln about the failure of his brother-in-law to receive a judgeship. An onlooker was surprised when Grow spoke “impertinently” and “used threats.” The president apologized and said that when making appointments he had forgotten about Grow’s brother-in-law, who would get a place soon.<sup>384</sup>

Some appointees were ill-prepared for their jobs. “Men who can scarcely write their names,” one Washington correspondent reported, “and blunder in working the simplest rules of arithmetic, have been installed in some of the Departments, despite the protest of the examiners – the Presidential decree, that the ignoramus ‘must be provided for,’ overriding all scruples, and reducing standard rules to a nullity.”<sup>385</sup>

Charles Francis Adams opined that the “difficulty with Mr Lincoln is that he has no conception of his situation. And having no system in his composition he has undertaken to manage the whole thing as if he knew all about it. The first evidence of this is to be found in his direct interference in the removal of Clerks in the Departments. The

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<sup>383</sup> Charles Francis Adams told this story to Henry Cabot Lodge. Henry Cabot Lodge journal, 10 June 1876, Lodge Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society

<sup>384</sup> Robert L. Wilson to Herndon, Sterling, Illinois, 10 February 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 206.

<sup>385</sup> Washington correspondence, 26 March, Charleston Mercury, 29 March 1861.

second is his nomination of persons suggested by domestic influence.”<sup>386</sup> A more accurate analysis of the administration’s troubles appeared in the New York Tribune: the president and his cabinet “must alienate many by their distribution of the patronage; were they angels they could not fail to do this.”<sup>387</sup> Lincoln felt bound to follow the well-established rule that Congress must be consulted about appointments. When the governor of Rhode Island protested against the administration’s candidate for postmaster of Providence, the president noted that both senators as well as two Representatives from the Ocean State favored that candidate. “In these cases,” he explained, “the Executive is obliged to be greatly dependent upon members of Congress; and while, under peculiar circumstances, a single member or two may be occasionally over-ruled, I believe as strong a combination as the present never has been. I therefore beg you to be assured that if I follow the rule in this case, as it appears to me I must, it will be with pain and not with pleasure, that you are not obliged.”<sup>388</sup>

As Lincoln dealt with vexatious patronage squabbles, he was oppressed by the Fort Sumter crisis. Should he reinforce the garrison, or merely resupply it, or surrender it in hopes of avoiding bloodshed?

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<sup>386</sup> Charles Francis Adams diary, 10 March 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>387</sup> New York Tribune, 4 March 1861.

<sup>388</sup> Lincoln to Sprague, Washington, 10 May 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:365.