

Chapter Thirty-one

“The Signs Look Better”:

Victory at the Polls and in the Field

(July-November 1863)

Lincoln’s popularity soared after the victories at Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and Port Hudson. His old friend from Illinois, Jesse W. Fell, reflected the changed public mood. In August, Fell told Lyman Trumbull that during the early stages of the war, “I did not like some things that were done, and many things that were not done, by the present Administration.” Along with most “earnest, loyal men, I too was a grumbler, because, as we thought, the Gov’t. moved too slow.” But looking back, Fell acknowledged that “we are not now disposed to be sensorious [sic] to the ‘powers that be,’ even among ourselves.” To the contrary, “it is now pretty generally conceded, that, all things considered, Mr. Lincoln's Administration has done well.” Such “is the general sentiment out of Copperhead Circles.” Lincoln had been tried, and it was clear “that he is both honest and patriotic; that if he don't go forward as fast as some of us like, he never goes backwards.”¹ To a friend in Europe, George D. Morgan explained that the president “is very popular and good men of all sides seem to regard him as the man for the place, for they see what one cannot see abroad, how difficult the position he has to fill, to keep

¹ Fell to Lyman Trumbull, Cincinnati, 11 August 1863, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

the border States quiet, to keep peace with the different generals, and give any satisfaction to the radicals.”² One of those Radicals, Franklin B. Sanborn (who had helped fund John Brown), declared that Lincoln “is really all that we desire.”³

Despite the Union’s success on the battlefield, the Confederacy would not soon collapse. White House secretary William O. Stoddard accurately predicted that “[t]his tiger is wounded unto death, but it will die hard, and fight to the last.” If “we slacken our efforts because of our successes, there is great danger that the hard-won fruit of them will be torn from us.”⁴ Lincoln fully realized the truth of this prophesy and worked hard to keep his generals from slackening their efforts. Simultaneously he girded for the looming political struggle in the fall, when elections in Pennsylvania and Ohio would measure the public mood.

As the president did so, another White House secretary, John Hay, analyzed his boss’s leadership qualities. In the summer of 1863, Hay told his coadjutor John G. Nicolay that their boss “is in fine whack. I have rarely seen him more serene & busy. He is managing this war, the draft, foreign relations, and planning a reconstruction of the Union, all at once. I never knew with what tyrannous authority he rules the Cabinet, till now. The most important things he decides & there is no cavil. I am growing more and more firmly convinced that the good of the country absolutely demands that he should be kept where he is till this thing is over. There is no man in the country, so wise, so gentle

² George D. Morgan to George G. Fogg, Irvington, 24 November 1863, Fogg Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society.

³ Franklin B. Sanborn to Moncure D. Conway, n.p., 2 November [1863, misfiled 1864], Conway Papers, Columbia University.

⁴ Washington correspondence, 5 July, New York Examiner, 9 July 1863, in Michael Burlingame, ed., Dispatches from Lincoln’s White House: The Anonymous Civil War Journalism of Presidential Secretary William O. Stoddard (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 162-63.

and so firm. I believe the hand of God placed him where he is." Hay scouted rumors that Radicals dominated administration policy: "You may talk as you please of the Abolition Cabal directing affairs from Washington: some well meaning newspapers advise the President to keep his fingers out of the military pie: and all that sort of thing. The truth is, if he did, the pie would be a sorry mess. The old man sits here and wields like a backwoods Jupiter the bolts of war and the machinery of government with a hand equally steady & equally firm."⁵ Like Hay, his assistant William O. Stoddard mused about Lincoln's place in history. "What his fame will be when all this confused lava of events, now red and molten in the fire of the Present, shall have been cooled in the rigid mould of time, none can tell; but history will be false to all that is good and true, if his effigy be not that of a great, wise and patriotic statesman."⁶

Others detected the hand of God at work. In 1864, Joseph T. Mills, who had expected to find the president a mere joker, reached a conclusion like Hay's. After a White House interview, Mills recorded in his diary the Lincoln appeared "a man of deep convictions," the "great guiding intellect of the age," whose "Atlantian shoulders were fit to bear the weight of mightiest monarchies." This visitor was so impressed by Lincoln's "transparent honesty, his republican simplicity, his gushing sympathy for those who offered their lives for their country, his utter forgetfulness of self in his concern for his country," that he concluded Lincoln "was Heaven[']s instrument to conduct his people

⁵ Hay to Nicolay, Washington, 7 August, 11 September 1863, Michael Burlingame ed., At Lincoln's Side: John Hay's Civil War Correspondence and Selected Writings, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 49, 54.

⁶ Washington correspondence, 17 November, New York Examiner, 20 November 1862, in Stoddard, Dispatches from Lincoln's White House, ed. Burlingame, 122.

thro[ugh] this red sea of blood to a Canaan of peace & freedom.”⁷ Amos Tuck of New Hampshire believed Lincoln “was sent from God to lead this nation out of Egypt, figuratively speaking.”⁸

During Lincoln’s lifetime, many others joined Hay, Stoddard, Tuck, and Mills in recognizing the president’s greatness.⁹ Among them was a Philadelphia abolitionist who in 1864 predicted that Lincoln’s “historic heights will dwarf all others in our annals.”¹⁰

FIRE IN THE REAR: RESISTANCE TO THE DRAFT

In addition to blacks’ complaints about their unequal treatment in the military, Lincoln had to deal with whites protesting against the administration of the draft. In March 1863, Congress passed “An Act for Enrolling and Calling out the National Forces” which made most of the 3,115,000 Northern men between the ages of twenty and forty-five eligible for conscription. The provisions for commutation (allowing a man to buy his way out for \$300, roughly an average worker’s annual income) and substitution (allowing a man to hire a substitute to serve in his stead) aroused special ire, provoking widespread protests about “a rich man’s war and a poor man’s fight.” Resistance to the draft became violent. By war’s end, thirty-eight enrolling officers were killed, sixty wounded, and a dozen suffered damage to their property.¹¹ In addition, anti-draft riots broke out in several cities, including New York. There, between July 13 and 15, 1863, while most local

⁷ Diary of Joseph T. Mills, 19 August 1864, in Roy P. Basler et al., eds., Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (8 vols. plus index; New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953-55), 7:507.

⁸ Amos Tuck to William E. Chandler, Boston, 12 December 1864, Chandler Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society.

⁹ Hans L. Trefousse, First Among Equals: Abraham Lincoln's Reputation During His Administration (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), passim.

¹⁰ B. Rush Plumly to N. P. Banks, New Orleans, 20 October 1864, Banks Papers, Library of Congress.

¹¹ Eugene C. Murdock, One Million Men: The Civil War Draft in the North (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1971), 62-90.

militiamen were busy in Pennsylvania assisting the Army of the Potomac, a mob ran amok, venting its wrath primarily on blacks. With shouts of “kill the naygers,” the rioters, mostly Irish, lynched people and burned the Colored Orphan Asylum. Francis Lieber reported that “negro children were killed in the street, like rats with clubs.”¹² Other targets included the draft office, the New York Tribune building, police headquarters, homes of government officials and wealthy residents, tenements and boarding houses occupied by blacks, upscale stores like Brooks Brothers, and hotels denying liquor to the rioters. Observing the anarchy from a rooftop, Herman Melville wrote that “the town is taken by its rats.”¹³ Order was finally restored when some of Meade’s troops helped New York militiamen and police suppress the roving hordes. Over 100 people were killed and 300 wounded.¹⁴ Lincoln reportedly said “that sooner than abandon the draft at the dictation of the mob, he will transfer Meade’s entire army to the city of New York.”¹⁵

During this bloody rampage, the worst riot in American history, Horatio Seymour, newly-elected governor of New York, hastened to the city and seemed to egg the rioters on by addressing them as “my friends” and saying “I assure you I am your friend. You have been my friends.” He announced that he had come “to show you a test of my friendship.”¹⁶ Seymour did not order them to disperse but gently suggested that they

¹² John F. Marszalek, Commander of All Lincoln's Armies: A Life of General Henry W. Halleck (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 184.

¹³ “The House Top: A Night Piece (July 1863),” Selected Poems of Herman Melville, ed. Hennig Cohen (New York: Fordham University Press, 1991), 34.

¹⁴ Adrian Cook, The Armies of the Streets: The New York City Draft Riots of 1863 (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 49-209; Laurence M. Hauptman, “John E. Wool and the New York City Draft Riots of 1863: A Reassessment,” Civil War History 49 (2003): 370-87.

¹⁵ Washington correspondence, 25 July, New York Independent, 30 July 1863.

¹⁶ New York Tribune, 15 July 1863.

cease and desist. His speech seemed to please the mob.¹⁷ The indiscreet allusion to “friends” was widely criticized and would dog the governor for the rest of his life.¹⁸

In the preceding months, Seymour, a narrowly partisan Democrat, had done his best to obstruct the enrollment process by delay, neglect, and denunciation. He told an ally that the Lincoln administration “is governed by a spirit of malice in all things small and great” and was acting “in a spirit of hostility” to New York.¹⁹ That was patently untrue; the president, along with the head of the draft bureau, Provost Marshal James B. Fry, and the military commander in New York, General John A. Dix, consistently showed restraint, tact, and patience in dealing with the recalcitrant governor.²⁰ (Lincoln called Dix “a very, very wise man.”)²¹

Shortly after Seymour took office on New Years Day 1863, Lincoln tried to reach out to him, believing that “as the Governor of the Empire State, and the Representative Man of the Democratic Party,” he “had the power to render great public service, and that if he exerted that power against the Rebellion and for his Country, he would be our next President.”²² In early January, Seymour’s brother called at the White House to assure Lincoln of the governor’s support. The president replied that if he could visit Seymour, he would tell him that “his desire was to maintain this Government;” that “he had the same stake in the country” as Seymour did; that he had two children and assumed

¹⁷ New York Evening Post, 14 July 1863.

¹⁸ Stewart Mitchell, Horatio Seymour of New York (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), 335; Eugene C. Murdock, “Horatio Seymour and the 1863 Draft,” Civil War History 11 (1965): 117-41.

¹⁹ Seymour to Samuel J. Tilden, Albany, 6 August 1863, Tilden Papers, New York Public Library.

²⁰ Eugene C. Murdock, Patriotism Limited, 1862-1865: The Civil War Draft and the Bounty System (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1967), 76-80.

²¹ William O. Stoddard, “White House Sketches No. 5,” New York Citizen, 15 September 1866, in Stoddard, Inside the White House in War Times: Memoirs and Reports of Lincoln’s Secretary, ed. Michael Burlingame (1890; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 162.

²² Albany Evening Journal, ca. 15 April 1863, in Mitchell, Horatio Seymour, 274n.

Seymour had at least as many; that “there could be no next Presidency if the country was broken up;” that “he was a party man and did not believe in any man who was not;” that “a party man was generally selfish, yet he had appointed most of the officers of the army from among Democrats because most of the West Point men were Democrats, and he believed a man educated in military affairs was better fitted for military office than an uneducated man, and because anti-slavery men, being generally much akin to peace, had never interested themselves in military matters and in getting up companies, as Democrats had;” that “when the army was unsuccessful, everyone was dissatisfied and criticised the administration;” that “if a cartman’s horse ran away all the men and women in the streets thought they could do better than the driver, and so it was with the management of the army;” that “the complaints of his own party gave the Democrats the weapons of their success;” that “in this contest he saw but three courses to take: one was to fight until the leaders were overthrown; one was to give up the contest altogether; and the other was to negotiate and compromise with the leaders of the rebellion,” which “he thought impossible so long as [Jefferson] Davis had the power.” The Confederate leaders’ “lives were in the rebellion; they, therefore, would never consent to anything but separation and acknowledgment.” If Seymour disagreed with this analysis, Lincoln “would be very glad to know of any fact . . . to the contrary.”²³

When nothing came of this overture, Lincoln on March 23 wrote Seymour a friendly letter inviting cooperation.²⁴ Weeks later the governor responded coolly that he was too busy to answer at length but would do so when time allowed. But he did not.

²³ John F. Seymour to his brother, Washington, 19 January 1863, manuscript biography of Horatio Seymour by the governor’s nephew, Horatio Seymour, in Alexander J. Wall, A Sketch of the Life of Horatio Seymour, 1810-1886 (New York: privately printed, 1929), 29-30.

²⁴ Lincoln to Seymour, Washington, 23 March 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:145-46.

Meanwhile he repeatedly denounced the draft as unconstitutional, arguing that no man could legally be forced “to take part in the ungodly conflict which is distracting the land.” On Independence Day, he delivered an address in Brooklyn proclaiming that Democrats “look upon this Administration as hostile to their rights and liberties; they look upon their opponents as men who would do them wrong in regard to their most sacred franchises.”²⁵ He maintained that the “bloody,” “treasonable,” and “revolutionary” argument of “public necessity” that the Lincoln administration cited could as well be employed “by a mob as well as by a government.”²⁶ In July, two days before drafting was to begin at New York, Seymour dispatched an aide to Washington with a request that it be suspended, but the message did not get through.²⁷

On July 16, Lincoln rejected appeals to declare martial law and place Ben Butler in charge of New York, remarking “that for the present the authorities of New-York seemed competent to the work of suppressing the riot, and that until it got the better of them, the General Government would not deem it necessary to interfere.”²⁸

After the riots, the governor bombarded Lincoln with acrimonious letters, arguing that the Empire State’s draft quotas were disproportionate compared to its population.²⁹ He also urged that no further conscription should be undertaken until courts had ruled on the constitutionality of the Enrollment Act, ominously hinting that violent resistance might otherwise be renewed. Seymour dispatched influential New Yorkers to urge the

²⁵ James Dabney McCabe, The Life and Public Services of Horatio Seymour (New York: United States Publishing, 1868), 52.

²⁶ Mitchell, Seymour, 305.

²⁷ Mitchell, Seymour, 275, 329.

²⁸ Philo Shelton to Thurlow Weed, Bolton, Massachusetts, 16 July 1863, Weed Papers, University of Rochester; Washington correspondence 15, 16 July, New York Tribune, 16, 17 July 1863.

²⁹ Seymour to Lincoln, Albany, 3, 7, 8, 16, 21 August 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

postponement of the draft, predicting that if conscription were renewed, Irish servant girls would torch their employers' homes.³⁰

Ignoring the tone of menace in Seymour's appeal, Lincoln on August 7 tactfully refused to honor his request. The president, who told John Hay that he was "willing and anxious to have the matter before the Courts," explained to Seymour that he did "not object to abide a decision of the United States Supreme Court, or of the judges thereof, on the constitutionality of the draft law," and would "be willing to facilitate the obtaining of it." But, he insisted, he could "not consent to lose the time while it is being obtained." (He could have pointed out that under the Constitution, laws were to be enforced until the courts ruled against them in response to complaints by persons affected by those laws.) The Confederate government, which had instituted a draft in 1862, "drives every able bodied man he can reach, into his ranks, very much as a butcher drives bullocks into a slaughter-pen. No time is wasted, no argument is used." Thus the enemy "produces an army which will soon turn upon our now victorious soldiers already in the field, if they shall not be sustained by recruits." To placate Seymour, Lincoln agreed to reduce the quotas in some New York districts.³¹

The governor, however, was not satisfied; he angrily insisted that the draft was being conducted unfairly in his state. In response, Lincoln again reduced some quotas in New York districts. When Seymour continued behaving uncooperatively, the administration dispatched 10,000 troops to New York to maintain order while the draft

³⁰ Washington correspondence, 22 July, New York Tribune, 23 July 1863. The emissaries were Samuel J. Tilden, Senator E. D. Morgan, and Judge Edwards Pierpont.

³¹ 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), 70 (entry for 6 August 1863); Lincoln to Seymour, Washington, 7 August 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:369-70.

was renewed there on August 19. To repeated protests that the administration failed to credit volunteers against the draft quotas properly, Lincoln patiently explained to Seymour that “[w]hen, for any cause, a fair credit is not given at one time, it should be given as soon thereafter as practicable. My purpose is to be just and fair; and yet to not lose time.”³² In fact, draft quotas in Democratic districts tended to be relatively high because earlier they had not furnished as many volunteers as Republican districts had.³³

When the chairman of the Democratic National Committee, August Belmont, criticized Seymour’s letters to Lincoln, the governor intemperately replied: “In dealing with the Republican leaders it is necessary to bear in mind that they are coarse, cowardly, and brutal. They cannot understand generous purposes. They represent the worst phases of the Puritan character.”³⁴ Seymour’s nerves were evidently frayed. Halleck, who thought Seymour acted like “a man stark mad,” wondered if the governor had not “inherited his father’s insanity.”³⁵ John Hay called the governor “half lunatic half demagogue,” a “delicate soul without courage or honesty fallen on evil times” and whose “reason, never the most robust is giving way under its overwork.”³⁶ According to a fellow New York Democrat, Seymour was “in a terrible state of nervous excitement” and in “danger of the loss of his wits.” He was “tormented both by the terrible reminiscence of

³² Lincoln to Seymour, Washington, 16 August 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:391.

³³ James M. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 602.

³⁴ Seymour to Belmont, 12 August 1863, in Allan Nevins, The War for the Union (4 vols.; New York: Scribner 1959-71), 3:170 (original in privately owned Belmont Papers).

³⁵ Marszalek, Halleck, 183.

³⁶ Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 74 (entry for 14 August 1863).

the riots & by the constant assertions of the Press that he is concerned in a conspiracy of which the outbreak was a mismanaged portion.”³⁷

When it was suggested that Lincoln name a special commission to investigate those conspiracy charges, he declined for fear of touching “a match to a barrel of gunpowder.” The administration was already sitting on two volcanoes, he said, one of which was “blazing away already, and the other will blaze away the moment we scrape a little loose dirt from the top of the crater. Better let the dirt alone, at least for the present. One rebellion at a time is about as much as we can conveniently handle.”³⁸

Seward remarked that the governor “is silly and short sighted. One fundamental principle of politics is to be always on the side of your country in a war.” The president was reminded of the Illinois politico Justin Butterfield, who “was asked at the beginning of the Mexican War if he were not opposed to it; he said, ‘no, I opposed one War [the War of 1812]. That was enough for me. I am now perpetually in favor of war, pestilence and famine.’”³⁹

Seymour acted badly, delivering speeches that helped create the atmosphere in which the draft riot occurred. His motive seemed political, for he did not object to the constitutionality of the draft until after the riots.⁴⁰ He told Samuel J. Tilden that he wrote to Lincoln in August as part of an attempt at “making up a record.” The governor looked

³⁷ Charles G. Halpine told this to Hay. Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 67 (entry for 25 July 1863).

³⁸ James R. Gilmore, Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War (Boston: L. C. Page, 1898), 199.

³⁹ Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 73 (entry for 13 August 1863).

⁴⁰ Murdock, Patriotism Limited, 76-77.

“for nothing but hostility” but said he should do his duty, demand his rights, “and let consequences take care of themselves.”⁴¹

Intemperate attacks on Lincoln by Seymour and other leading Democrats angered their fellow party member, T. J. Barnett, a Washington insider. He told S. L. M. Barlow, a New York attorney and Democratic kingmaker, that “Lincoln is not a madman wholly. You are mistaken if you suppose that he is blind to the mischiefs of the Radicals. Does the appointment of Meade look that way? The business of the hour is to whip the Rebels or to give up our nationality, and . . . to settle with our incendiaries afterwards I am no parasite, . . . but I do have a high respect for Mr. Lincoln’s character and motives, as an honest man with sufficient discernment to read the plain ABC of the hornbook before him. He sees and knows that the North cannot afford peace and dismemberment The struggle within and without, with us, is for national existence – and this the President sees; and more and more; every day, he discerns the waning power of the Radicals; so much so, that if the opposition to his Administration had not been so precipitate and so organized as to render him, at one time, afraid to trust them with the conduct of the war, he would long ago have made a sensational demonstration in their jaws.” Barnett deplored Democrats who were “carping and yelling about dead issues, or the secondary one of constitutional law, which will keep well enough till we have the power to settle it. And this makes Mr. Lincoln timid of the very men with whom, on the absorbing question of the instant, his predispositions are. Why do not the respectable leaders of the Conservative Party present themselves here with half the energy which brings the Radicals to Washington? The answer is [that they are] selfish and unworthy. It only

⁴¹ Seymour to Samuel J. Tilden, Albany, 6 August 1863, Tilden Papers, New York Public Library.

amounts to this, that they have failed . . . to drive him from the Chicago platform.” If Democrats would stop their reckless criticism of the administration, Lincoln would not be forced into the arms of the Radicals. Sensibly Barnett said “I want the conservatives, on the simple issue of the conduct of the war, of the probable terms of peace, and all such questions, to offer the President a fair chance to stand on a platform more moderate than that he occupies.”⁴² His sound advice fell on deaf ears.

As Barnett warned, Lincoln was moving ever closer to the Radicals. In August, one of their leaders, Michigan Senator Zachariah Chandler, expressed “little fear that the President will recede” on emancipation. Admiringly he told Lyman Trumbull that Lincoln “is as stubborn as a mule when he gets his back up & it is up now on the Proclamation.” Seward and Weed might be “shaky,” but not Lincoln: “this peculiar trait of stubbornness (which annoyed us so much 18 months ago), is now our Salvation.”⁴³

Seymour was not the only one protesting the alleged unfairness in the administration of the draft. When a delegation from Chicago, led by Joseph Medill of the Tribune, called to file such a complaint, Lincoln patiently listened, then angrily turned on them with a scowling face. Bitterly he snapped: “Gentlemen, after Boston, Chicago has been the chief instrument in bringing this war on this country. The Northwest has opposed the South as New England has opposed the South. It is you who are largely responsible for making blood flow as it has. You called for war until we had it. You called for Emancipation, and I have given it to you. Whatever you have asked you have had. Now you come here begging to be let off from the call for men which I have made to

⁴² Barnett to Barlow, Washington, 2, 7 July 1863, Barlow Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

⁴³ Chandler to Trumbull, Detroit, 6 August 1863, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

carry out the war which you have demanded. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. I have a right to expect better things of you. Go home, and raise your 6,000 extra men. And you, Medill, you are acting like a coward. You and your ‘Tribune’ have had more influence than any paper in the Northwest in making this war. You can influence great masses, and yet you cry to be spared at a moment when your cause is suffering. Go home and send us those men.” As Medill recalled, “I couldn't say anything. It was the first time I ever was whipped, and I didn't have an answer. We all got up and went out, and when the door closed one of my colleagues said: ‘Well, gentlemen, the old man is right. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves. Let us never say anything about this, but go home and raise the men.’ And we did – 6,000 men – making 28,000 in the war from a city of 156,000.”⁴⁴

Lincoln did not always react harshly to such complaints. When Indiana Governor Oliver P. Morton dispatched his assistant adjutant general, Austin Brown, to Washington to protest that his state had filled its aggregate quota even though not each district had done so, the president received him cordially. After listening to Brown, Lincoln said: “As this case appears to me, Mr. Stanton has acted unjustly and inconsistently. The government cannot be partial in such grave matters to any one State more than another, and I will not permit it.” As instructed by Lincoln, Brown left his papers and returned to the White House later that day to discuss the matter in the presence of Stanton. When the war secretary adamantly refused to budge, Lincoln grew impatient and finally said: “it seems to me that Stanton will not authorize these credits as claimed by Indiana. I now say to you that I am thoroughly convinced that justice to Indiana demands that the fact that

⁴⁴ Ida M. Tarbell, The Life of Abraham Lincoln (2 vols.; New York: Lincoln Memorial Association, 1900), 2:148-49.

she has filled her quota must be put upon the record. Mr. Brown, if you will wait I will have an order prepared for my signature addressed to the Adjutant General of the Army, and when I sign it you will please deliver it.” Stanton abruptly said “Good day, Mr. President,” and left with no further display of temper.⁴⁵

Sometimes Lincoln used humor to deflect protests about the draft. When a delegation from an Illinois village complained, he told them about a Maryland hamlet whose quota was one man. At a farmhouse there, the enrolling officer solemnly asked an old woman to name every male creature on the premises. She provided several, including one Billy Bray, who had the ill fortune to be selected for army service. When the provost-marshal came to call for Mr. Bray, he was surprised to learn that Bray was a donkey. “So,” said Lincoln, “gentlemen, you may be the donkey of your town, and so escape. Therefore don’t distress yourselves by meeting trouble half way.”⁴⁶

Lincoln was less jovial in dealing with state courts which seriously hindered the enforcement of the draft through habeas corpus proceedings. The problem became acute in Pennsylvania, where resistance to conscription was widespread, especially in the mining regions. By a 3-2 margin, that state’s supreme court ruled the Enrollment Act unconstitutional.⁴⁷ At a cabinet meeting on September 14, 1863, the president (according to Attorney General Bates) “was greatly moved – more angry than I ever saw him” by the action of judges who had been releasing civilians arrested for obstructing conscription.

⁴⁵ Reminiscences of Austin Brown, manuscript memo with penciled date of 1866 added within brackets, Austin Brown Papers, Indiana State Library.

⁴⁶ Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, 13 September 1863.

⁴⁷ The case was Kneedler v. Lane, decided in November 1863. The court’s three Democrats constituted the majority. Soon thereafter, one of them, Chief Justice Walter Lowrie, was defeated for reelection. The following January the court reversed itself. See Arnold M. Shankman, The Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement, 1861-1865 (Rutherford N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1980), 122-61.

He “declared that it was a formed plan of the democratic copperheads, deliberately acted out to defeat the Govt., and aid the enemy” and that “no honest man did or could believe that the State Judges have any such power.”⁴⁸ He was, he added, “determined to put a stop to these factious and mischievous proceedings.” He even threatened to banish such jurists to Confederate lines, just as he had exiled Clement L. Vallandigham.⁴⁹ Pounding the table, he “said with great emphasis: ‘I’ll not permit my officers to be arrested while in the discharge of their public duties.’”⁵⁰

Chase demurred, arguing that the writ of habeas corpus was “a most important safeguard of personal liberty” and that traditionally state courts were authorized to issue such writs “for persons detained as enlisted soldiers” and to discharge them. (Chase ignored the 1859 Supreme Court decision in Ableman v. Booth, which ruled that state courts could not prevent federal officers from carrying out their constitutional duties.) He counseled that any change in policy should be adopted only if “a clear case” could be made that the writ was being “abused with a criminal purpose of breaking up the Army.” Otherwise, he feared, “a civil war in the Free States would be inevitable.” Blair concurred, as did Usher. The president, however, “thought there was no doubt of the bad faith in which the Writ was now being used.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ Howard K. Beale, ed., The Diary of Edward Bates, 1859-1866 (Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1930, vol. 4; Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1933), 306 (entry for 14 September 1863).

⁴⁹ 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), 1:432 (entry for 14 September 1863).

⁵⁰ Statement by the son of Robert B. Carnahan, U.S. district attorney for the western district of Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, May 1896, Tarbell Papers, Allegheny College.

⁵¹ John Niven, ed., The Salmon P. Chase Papers (5 vols.; Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1993-1998), 1:441-42 (diary entry for 14 September 1863); Beale, ed., Welles Diary, 1:434 (entry for 15 September 1863).

The next day, Lincoln read to the cabinet a proposed order authorizing provost marshals to ignore habeas corpus injunctions in draft-related cases. If necessary, force could be used to resist the edict of state courts. Chase agreed that the president had the power to suspend the writ under the 1863 Habeas Corpus Act; but, he argued, Lincoln's order was too vague and might be challenged successfully. Better, said he, to issue a proclamation explicitly suspending the writ. Lincoln concurred, as did the rest of the cabinet. Seward then composed a document which, with slight modifications, was promulgated that day covering all cases involving military arrest of deserters, draft resisters, spies, aiders and abettors of the Confederacy, prisoners of war, "or any other offense against the military or naval service." It was officially announced on September 17, in the midst of the hotly contested Pennsylvania gubernatorial race. "The proclamation suspending the writ of Habeas corpus is a heavy blow but as it is right we can stand it," Curtin told the president.⁵²

Around that time, Lincoln composed an angry message to draft critics in which he explained the necessity for conscription and defended its constitutionality on the obvious grounds that Congress had the power to raise and support armies. (The U.S. Supreme Court did not rule on this question until 1918, when it upheld the Selective Service Act of 1917.) After pointing out that some men had been drafted in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, he asked rhetorically: "Wherein is the peculiar hardship now? Shall we shrink from the necessary means to maintain our free government, which our grandfathers employed to establish it, and our own fathers have already employed once to

⁵² Andrew G. Curtin to Lincoln, Harrisburg, 18 September 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

maintain it? Are we degenerate? Has the manhood of our race run out?”⁵³ Turning to the commutation and substitution provisions of the Enrollment Act, he pointed out that the latter was a traditional feature of schemes for drafting armies and that the former, which was unprecedented, made it easier for poor men to avoid becoming conscripts: “The substitution of men is the provision if any, which favors the rich to the exclusion of the poor. But this being a provision in accordance with an old and well known practice, in the raising of armies, is not objected to. There would have been great objection if that provision had been omitted. And yet being in, the money provision really modifies the inequality which the other introduces. It allows men to escape the service, who are too poor to escape but for it. Without the money provision, competition among the more wealthy might, and probably would, raise the price of substitutes above three hundred dollars, thus leaving the man who could raise only three hundred dollars, no escape from personal service. True, by the law as it is, the man who can not raise so much as three hundred dollars, nor obtain a personal substitute for less, can not escape; but he can come quite as near escaping as he could if the money provision were not in the law. To put it another way, is an unobjectionable law which allows only the man to escape who can pay a thousand dollars, made objectionable by adding a provision that any one may escape who can pay the smaller sum of three hundred dollars? This is the exact difference at this point between the present law and all former draft laws. It is true that by this law a some what larger number will escape than could under a law allowing personal substitutes only; but each additional man thus escaping will be [a] poorer man than could have

⁵³ Opinion on the draft, [14 September?] 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:444-49. In the Revolutionary War, local drafts were instituted on a small scale. James William Geary, “A Lesson in Trial and Error: The United States Congress and the Civil War Draft, 1862-1865” (PhD dissertation, Kent State University, 1976), 6-12.

escaped by the law in the other form. The money provision enlarges the class of exempts from actual service simply by admitting poorer men into it. How, then can this money provision be a wrong to the poor man? The inequality complained of pertains in greater degree to the substitution of men, and is really modified and lessened by the money provision. The inequality could only be perfectly cured by sweeping both provisions away.”⁵⁴

Lincoln did not publish this cogent analysis. He was right in pointing out that substitution was a traditional feature of drafting in both the U.S. and Europe; Congress was merely following precedent by incorporating it into the Enrollment Act. The commutation provision had been added to keep the price of substitutes from soaring and to raise money for bounties. In practice, statistics for Ohio and New York indicate that the draft did not discriminate significantly against the poor.⁵⁵ Nationwide, only 46,000 men were actually enrolled through the draft, a tiny percentage of the total Union army. Many took advantage of the commutation provision. In 1863, 59% of those drafted (and not exempt) paid the fee, while only 9% hired substitutes.⁵⁶ The following year Congress, convinced that the army needed the men who had been buying their way out of the service and reacting to protests against a “concession to the man of means,” rescinded the commutation clause for all save conscientious objectors, but retained substitution. As Lincoln predicted, the price of substitutes rose rapidly, making it more difficult for poorer

⁵⁴ Opinion on the draft, [14 September?] 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:448.

⁵⁵ James William Geary, “Civil War Conscription in the North: A Historiographical Review,” Civil War History 32 (1986): 208-28; Murdock, “Was It a ‘Poor Man’s Fight’?” Civil War History 10 (1964): 241-45; Hugh G. Earnhart, “Commutation: Democratic or Undemocratic?” Civil War History 12 (1966): 132-42; McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 602-5; Geary, “Civil War Draft,” 468-69.

⁵⁶ Geary, “Civil War Draft,” 206-7. All told, there were four draft calls. Of the 207,000 men not exempt, 87,000 availed themselves of the commutation clause, which was ended before the last two calls, and 74,000 provided substitutes. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 601.

men to escape service. Thus the repeal of commutation, not its enactment, represented class legislation favoring the well-to-do.⁵⁷

Though notoriously soft-hearted in issuing pardons, Lincoln had little sympathy for draft resistance. When the wives of two poor Irishmen who had been jailed for that crime asked the president to pardon them, he replied in the accent they had used: “If yers husbands had not been resisting the draft, they would not now be in prison; so they can stay in prison.”⁵⁸

CLAYBANKS VS. CHARCOALS: IMBROGLIO IN MISSOURI

Exasperating as problems associated with the draft might be, Lincoln found it even more vexatious to deal with political and military turmoil in the bitterly divided state of Missouri, where his generals clashed repeatedly with local authorities. In the autumn of 1861, he met with the provisional governor of that state, Hamilton R. Gamble, who requested funding for the state militia. The president, eager to free up federal troops in Missouri for service elsewhere, readily agreed, with the understanding that the general in charge of the Department of the West would ex officio become the major general commanding the new Missouri State Militia. Implemented in November, the Gamble plan seemed like a sensible arrangement, for many Missourians were unwilling to join the Union army but would happily serve in the state militia in order to suppress local Rebels and repel invading Confederates and marauding Kansas Jayhawkers. Halleck, burdened with administrative responsibilities for a vast department, assigned his assistant, John M. Schofield, to command the militia.

⁵⁷ Earnhart, “Commutation,” 133-34.

⁵⁸ Thomas F. Pendel, Thirty-Six Years in the White House (Washington: Neale, 1902), 17-18.

A West Pointer who had taught physics at Washington University in St. Louis, the gentlemanly, sociable thirty-year-old Schofield would prove a controversial figure in Missouri.⁵⁹ He had won respect for recruiting troops after the outbreak of hostilities, for assisting Nathaniel Lyon's ill-fated campaign, and for helping mobilize the old militia. Under his able direction, the new Missouri State Militia was quickly organized and performed valuable service. But his lack of enthusiasm for emancipation made him suspect in the eyes of Radicals, as did his reputation for indolence. Others found him too willing to employ extreme measures against guerillas.⁶⁰ To combat the bushwhackers and guerillas terrorizing the state, he authorized provost marshals (military police) to punish them severely.

In April 1862, when Halleck left St. Louis to take command in the field, he put Schofield in charge of most of Missouri. Schofield sent many U.S. volunteers to augment the armies of Halleck and Samuel R. Curtis, leaving militiamen to control Missouri, where guerilla bands spread havoc. To combat them, Schofield assessed damages against rebel sympathizers for killing or wounding Union soldiers or civilians and for damaging property. To supplement the 10,000-man Missouri State Militia, he drafted men into a new outfit, the Enrolled Missouri Militia, which soon had 40,000 members, mostly from the interior. They were to be supplied and transported by the federal government but paid by the state. Strapped for funds, the provisional government levied assessments on disloyal citizens. Careless recruiters allowed some disloyalists to join the Enrolled

⁵⁹ James L. McDonough, Schofield: Union General in the Civil War and Reconstruction (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1972), 11-69; Donald B. Connelly, John M. Schofield and the Politics of Generalship (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 22-83.

⁶⁰ Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, undated, in William Ernest Smith, The Francis Preston Blair Family in Politics (2 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1933), 2:220.

Missouri Militia, which soon led irate St. Louis Unionists to demand the ouster of Schofield and Gamble.

In September 1862, the ambitious Schofield was not removed but rather in effect demoted when, to his dismay, General Samuel R. Curtis took charge of the newly created Department of the Missouri, incorporating Kansas, Arkansas, Missouri, and the Indian Territory (the future Oklahoma). A West Point graduate and former congressman from Iowa, Curtis had won a major general's stars as a reward for his victory at Pea Ridge six months earlier. The serious, deliberate, fifty-six-year-old Curtis demonstrated little emotion, seldom laughed, and was known among the troops as "Old Grannie."⁶¹

Lincoln was soon embroiled in a controversy between Curtis and Governor Gamble over control of the militia. In late November, the president asked Attorney General Bates, who was Gamble's brother-in-law, to help settle the dispute: "Few things perplex me more than this question between Gov. Gamble, and the War Department, as to whether the peculiar force organized by the former in Missouri are 'State troops,' or 'United States troops.'" To Lincoln it seemed obvious that it was "either an immaterial, or a mischievous question." Who cared what title the soldiers were given? If more substantive issues were involved, it would be ruinous for the administration to intervene: "Instead of settling one dispute by deciding the question, I should merely furnish a nest full of eggs for hatching new disputes." It should be understood, he argued, that the militia was neither entirely a federal nor a state force, but was "of mixed character." It was safer to ignore the abstract question and deal with practical problems as they arose.

⁶¹ William L. Shea and Earl J. Hess, Pea Ridge: Civil War Campaign in the West (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 5; Ruth A. Gallaher, "Samuel Ryan Curtis," Iowa Journal of History and Politics 25 (1927): 338-39, 355-56.

The issue now before them was whether the governor had the power to create vacancies, either by removing officers or accepting resignations. Why should there be such bitter contention over such a minor problem, the president wondered. Let Gamble create vacancies and have the war department ratify them.⁶²

A month later, after consulting with Halleck and Stanton, the president transformed that suggestion into an official ruling, in effect designating Missouri militiamen as federal troops.⁶³ When the governor protested, Stanton agreed that Gamble's earlier decisions regarding removals and resignations would stand, but that in the future the war department would control such matters. To Lincoln's annoyance, Gamble appealed to him to overrule the war secretary.

Further irritating Governor Gamble was the Second Confiscation Act, which Curtis enforced vigorously through provost marshals. In effect, the general instituted martial law, jailing or exiling suspected disloyalists without due process. In mid-December 1862, attempting to placate Gamble, Lincoln asked Curtis: "Could the civil authority be introduced into Missouri in lieu of the military to any extent with advantage and safety?" Promptly the general replied: "The peace of this State rests on military power. To relinquish this power would be dangerous."⁶⁴

⁶² Lincoln to Bates, Washington, 29 November 1862, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 5:515-16.

⁶³ Special Orders No. 417, Washington, 28 December 1862: "By direction of the President it is ordered that His Excellency Governor Gamble may, in his discretion, remove from office all officers of the peculiar military force organized by him in Missouri (except the major-general, in regard to whom special provision is already

made), and he may accept resignations tendered by such officers, he notifying this Department of each such acceptance, when his action thereon will be confirmed. And his previous action in similar cases is hereby confirmed." OR, III, 2:995.

⁶⁴ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:8.

Later that month the president intervened when Curtis approved an order banishing the Reverend Dr. Samuel B. McPheeters, minister of the Pine Street Presbyterian Church in St. Louis. Though the pastor had taken a loyalty oath, his devotion to the Union cause appeared to some parishioners insufficiently fervent. He had offended many by baptizing an infant named after Confederate General Sterling Price. McPheeters' case quickly became a cause célèbre.⁶⁵ He hastened to Washington and appealed to Lincoln, who on December 27 suspended the banishment decree. When Curtis protested, Lincoln explained that he saw no hard evidence of McPheeters' disloyalty but would rescind his order if the general insisted. Lincoln added, however, that the federal government "must not, as by this order, undertake to run the churches. When an individual, in a church or out of it, becomes dangerous to the public interest, he must be checked; but let the churches, as such take care of themselves."⁶⁶ (Chided for seeming to take both sides in this controversy, Lincoln replied: "That forcibly reminds me of what occurred many years ago in Illinois. A farmer and his son were out in the woods one day, hunting a sow and pigs. At length, after a long and fruitless search for them, they came to what they call 'a branch' out there, where they saw tracks and rootings on each. 'Now, John,' said the old man, 'you take up on this side of the branch and I'll go up t'other, for we'll be sure to find the old critter on both sides.'")⁶⁷

⁶⁵ George M. Apperson, "Presbyterians and Radical Republicans: President Lincoln, Dr. McPheeters, and Civil War in Missouri," American Presbyterians 73 (1995): 239-50.

⁶⁶ Lincoln to Curtis, Washington, 2 January 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:33-34.

⁶⁷ Robert Livingston Stanton, "Reminiscences of President Lincoln" (c. 1883), 10-11, Robert Brewster Stanton Papers, New York Public Library. Cf. Henry B. Stanton, Random Recollections (2nd ed.; New York: Macgowan & Slipper, 1886), 114-15.

When Curtis failed to carry out this order, the president once again had to intervene. To the mayor of St. Louis he explained: “I have never interfered, nor thought of interfering as to who shall or shall not preach in any church; nor have I knowingly, or believingly, tolerated any one else to so interfere by my authority. If any one is so interfering, by color of my authority, I would like to have it specifically made known to me. If, after all, what is now sought, is to have me put Dr. M[cPheeters] back, over the heads of a majority of his own congregation, that too, will be declined. I will not have control of any church on any side.”⁶⁸

The assessment system of taxing disloyalists, designed to fund the Enrolled Missouri Militia, exacerbated tensions between Curtis and Gamble. With reason, the governor thought the implementation of the policy was arbitrary, that loyalty could not be easily measured, nor could a sum for assessment be reasonably determined. Gamble asked Lincoln to halt the assessment process. On December 10, the president complied, ordering Curtis to suspend its implementation in St. Louis. Three weeks later, Gamble urged that a similar order be issued covering the entire state.

Irrked by these incessant appeals, Lincoln on January 5, 1863, asked Curtis to cooperate with the governor and thus to spare him the necessity of intervening in Missouri’s endless disputes. “I am having a good deal of trouble with Missouri matters,” the exasperated president said. In response to the hard-liners’ charges that Gamble’s Unionism was suspect, Lincoln assured Curtis that “Gov. Gamble is an honest and true man, not less so than yourself.” He also thought that the general and the governor “could

⁶⁸ Lincoln to O. D. Filley, Washington, 22 December 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:85-86.

confer together on this, and other Missouri questions with great advantage to the public; that each knows something which the other does not, and that, acting together, you could about double your stock of pertinent information. May I not hope that you and he will attempt this? I could at once safely do, (or you could safely do without me) whatever you and he agree upon. There is absolutely no reason why you should not agree.”⁶⁹

But by this time, Curtis and Gamble had become so estranged that cooperation seemed impossible. Throughout the winter of 1863, relations between the two men worsened as Curtis seemed to cast his lot with the antislavery Radicals (known as Charcoals), who denounced the provisional government as hopelessly in the control of Conservatives (known as Claybanks). Their rivalry grew increasingly bitter after the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, which exempted Missouri. Both factions wanted the state government to abolish slavery, but Claybanks, led by the conservative, Virginia-born Gamble, supported a gradual approach while Charcoals, with the bitter, opportunistic firebrand Charles D. Drake at their head, favored immediate emancipation.

Each faction sought to drag Lincoln into the quarrel. In January, as the newly-elected Missouri legislature was choosing a senator, the Radical candidate, B. Gratz Brown, a hot-tempered former editor of the St. Louis Missouri Democrat, asked the president: “Does the Administration desire my defeat[?] if not why are its appointees here working for that end?”⁷⁰ Patiently Lincoln explained that his administration “takes no part between it's friends in Mo, of whom, I at least, consider you one; and I have never before had an intimation that appointees there, were interfering, or were inclined to

⁶⁹ Lincoln to Curtis, Washington, 5 January 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:36-37.

⁷⁰ Brown to Lincoln, Jefferson City, 7 January 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

interfere.”⁷¹ The legislature deadlocked, so the incumbent senators, who had been appointed months earlier to replace their pro-Confederate predecessors, continued in office.

During the 1862 campaign, Brown, known as “the Prince of the Radicals,” had accused Lincoln of acting dictatorially.⁷² When St. Louis Germans denounced the president in similar terms, he told their emissary that “it may be a misfortune for the nation that he was elected president. But, having been elected by the people, he meant to be president, and to perform his duty according to his best understanding, if he had to die for it. No general will be removed, nor will any change in the cabinet be made, to suit the views or wishes of any particular party, faction, or set of men.” Responding to the Germans’ sharp criticism of Halleck, Lincoln denied that the general was guilty of the charges made against him, based as they were on the “misapprehension or ignorance of those who prefer them.”⁷³

Opponents of Curtis, among them Attorney General Bates and influential members of the Missouri congressional delegation, beseeched Lincoln to remove the general. Bates thought such a move “was the only way to save Mo. from Social war and utter anarchy.”⁷⁴ In deciding to replace Curtis, the president explained that the “system of provost marshals established by him throughout the state gave rise to violent

⁷¹ Lincoln to Brown, Washington, 7 January 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:42.

⁷² Norma L. Peterson, Freedom and Franchise: The Political Career of B. Gratz Brown (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1965), 119, 123.

⁷³ James Taussig to members of a committee of Missouri Radicals, Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 9 June 1863.

⁷⁴ Beale, ed., Bates Diary, 294 (entry for 24 May 1863).

complaint.”⁷⁵ In addition, Lincoln wanted to provide Grant as many troops as possible for the Vicksburg campaign. When he asked Curtis to release some his regiments for service under Grant, the reply came back that no troops could be spared from Missouri.⁷⁶ In fact, there were enough Missouri militia to deal with local challenges, but Governor Gamble would not cooperate with Curtis. The president considered appointing Frémont or McDowell, but rather than taking either of those discredited men, he ordered General Edwin V. Sumner to replace Curtis. That appointment, made in early March, apparently solved the problem, but en route to St. Louis, Sumner died. Weeks later, Lincoln chose Schofield, explaining to that general that he made the change not because Curtis had done anything wrong, but “because of a conviction in my mind that the Union men of Missouri, constituting, when united, a vast majority of the whole people, have entered into a pestilent factional quarrel among themselves, Gen. Curtis, perhaps not of choice, being the head of one faction, and Gov. Gamble that of the other.” After laboring in vain for months to settle the quarrel, Lincoln felt obliged “to break it up some how.” Since he could not fire Gamble, he removed Curtis, over the objections of a Missouri congressman who protested that “Govr. Gamble is noted for his unrelenting spirit towards every one who disagrees with or opposes him.”⁷⁷ The president warned Schofield to avoid siding with either the Claybanks or the Charcoals: “Let your military measures be strong enough to repel the invader and keep the peace, and not so strong as to unnecessarily harrass and persecute the people. It is a difficult role, and so much greater will be the honor if you

⁷⁵ James Taussig in the Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 9 June 1863; Washington correspondence, 13 November, New York Evening Post, 14 November 1863.

⁷⁶ On the reasons for Curtis’s dismissal, see Curtis to Lincoln, St. Louis, 23 March 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

⁷⁷ Henry T. Blow to Lincoln, St. Louis, March 22, 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

perform it well. If both factions, or neither, shall abuse you, you will probably be about right. Beware of being assailed by one, and praised by the other.”⁷⁸ That was easier said than done, for the factions had become bitterly estranged amid the bloody guerilla warfare that ravaged the state.

When this private letter appeared in the St. Louis Missouri Democrat, Schofield asked the editor how he had obtained it. Receiving no answer, the general jailed him, much to Lincoln’s dismay.⁷⁹ “I regret to learn of the arrest of the Democrat editor,” he wrote Schofield in mid-July. “I fear this loses you the middle position I desired you to occupy. . . . I care very little for the publication of any letter I have written. Please spare me the trouble this is likely to bring.”⁸⁰ To Missouri Congressman Henry T. Blow, who denounced Schofield’s action, Lincoln suggested that the significance of that episode had been exaggerated: “The publication of a letter without the leave of the writer or the receiver I think cannot be justified, but in this case I do not think it of sufficient consequence to justify an arrest; and again, the arrest being, through a parole, merely nominal, does not deserve the importance sought to be attached to it. Cannot this small matter be dropped on both sides without further difficulty?”⁸¹

When the hypersensitive Gamble read the president’s letter to Schofield in the Democrat, he waxed wroth and sent Lincoln a heated protest in which he “alternately whined and growled through many pages,” as John Hay put it.⁸² The governor regarded

⁷⁸ Lincoln to Schofield, Washington, 27 May 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:234.

⁷⁹ Schofield to Lincoln, St. Louis, 14 July 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

⁸⁰ Lincoln to Schofield, Washington, 13 July 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:326.

⁸¹ Henry T. Blow to Lincoln, St. Louis, 13 July 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Lincoln to Henry T. Blow, Washington, 13 July 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:325.

⁸² Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 66 (entry for 23 July 1863).

the suggestion that he led a faction “grossly offensive” and a “most wanton and unmerited insult.” It was, he scolded the president, “unbecoming your position,” for it would be as “improper for the President of the United States to assail officially the Governor of a State, as it would be for a Governor of a State to assail officially the President of the United States.” Indignantly and self-righteously he denied that he headed a faction and self-righteously defended his record. In anger he added: “I have not approved the administration of affairs in Missouri under the rule of General Curtis. I have not approved of the system of robbery and arson and murder that has extensively prevailed. While you were treating with humanity and exchanging as prisoners of war those who were elsewhere taken actually fighting against the government, I have not approved of the cold blooded murder of persons in this State at their own homes and in their own fields upon mere suspicion of sympathy with the rebellion. I have not approved of covering the State with Provost Marshals to plunder the people, and keep up a constant irritation and prevent the restoration of peace.”⁸³

Lincoln replied with characteristic tact to Gamble’s gross overreaction to his letter: “My Private Secretary has just brought me a letter saying it is a very ‘cross’ one from you, about mine to Gen. Schofield, recently published in the Democrat. As I am trying to preserve my own temper, by avoiding irritants, so far as practicable, I have declined to read the cross letter. I think fit to say, however, that when I wrote the letter to

⁸³ Hamilton R. Gamble to Lincoln, St. Louis, 13 July 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

Gen. Schofield, I was totally unconscious of any malice, or disrespect towards you, or of using any expression which should offend you, if seen by you.”⁸⁴

This reaction typified the mature Lincoln’s patient way of dealing with hostile invective. He later declared: “As a general rule, I abstain from reading the reports of attacks upon myself, wishing not to be provoked by that to which I can not properly offer an answer.”⁸⁵ When William Kellogg protested that he was being unfairly treated, Lincoln endorsed one of his missives: “I understand my friend Kellogg is ill-natured – therefore I do not read his letters.”⁸⁶ When friends tried to inform him of personal attacks, he steered the conversation to another topic or merely said, “I guess we won’t talk about that now.”⁸⁷

Humiliated by his removal, Curtis wrote that the president’s friends in the West “consider the change one of the worst acts of his administration.”⁸⁸ To soothe the general’s hurt feelings, Lincoln sent him a conciliatory letter. “I have scarcely supposed it possible that you would entirely understand my feelings and motives in making the late change of commander for the Department of the Missouri. I inclose you a copy of a letter which I recently addressed to Gen. Schofield, & which will explain the matter in part. It became almost a matter of personal self-defence to somehow break up the state of things in Missouri. I did not mean to cast any censure upon you, nor to indorse any of the

⁸⁴ Lincoln to Gamble, Washington, 23 July 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:344.

⁸⁵ Speech, 11 April 1865, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 8:401.

⁸⁶ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:167.

⁸⁷ Noah Brooks, “Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln,” in Michael Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed: Civil War Dispatches of Noah Brooks (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 208.

⁸⁸ Curtis, manuscript journal, 27 March 1864, Curtis Papers, Iowa State Archives, Des Moines.

charges made against you by others. With me the presumption is still in your favor that you are honest, capable, faithful, and patriotic.”⁸⁹ When this missive also found its way into print, Gamble was further infuriated.

The following month, Lincoln invited the governor to Washington. There the president offended his guest by allowing Ohio Governor William Dennison to join their meeting, which went so poorly that Gamble expressed to Edward Bates his “profound conviction” that the president was “a mere intriguing, pettifogging, piddling politician.”⁹⁰

Schofield’s appointment dismayed Radicals not only in Missouri but throughout the North. In August, Joseph Medill of the Chicago Tribune complained that “of all the acts of omission and commission charged against the President during the last six months none has given the loyal masses of the Northwest more pain than the appointment of Gen Schofield over the great and important Department of the West. No Republican, no antislavery man, no friend of the President approves the appointment.”⁹¹ Medill urged Lincoln to name Ben Butler to replace Schofield.⁹²

The Missouri Radicals’ simmering discontent with Lincoln boiled over in the summer of 1863, when atrocities along the border with Kansas peaked. Though conflict had begun there in 1854, when Border Ruffians and Jayhawkers first clashed, the level of violence soared with the outbreak of the Civil War. Bushwhackers on both sides pillaged, looted, and committed arson as well as cold-blooded murder. On August 21, the

⁸⁹ Lincoln to Curtis, Washington, 8 June 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:253.

⁹⁰ Gamble to Bates, 10 August 1863, Bates Papers, Missouri Historical Society.

⁹¹ Medill to Nicolay, Niagara Falls, 17 August 1863, Nicolay Papers, Library of Congress.

⁹² Medill to Lincoln, Chicago, 3 October 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

notoriously cruel and brutal Confederate officer, Captain William Clarke Quantrill, led a raid against Lawrence, Kansas, where his guerilla band, acting upon orders to “kill every man big enough to carry a gun” and to “burn every house,” slaughtered 182 men and boys and torched a like number of buildings. This act of wanton terrorism, the greatest single atrocity in the war, shocked the North.

Shortly thereafter, General Thomas Ewing Jr., Union commander of the District of the Border, issued his notorious Order No. 11, banishing approximately 20,000 residents of four Missouri counties bordering Kansas.⁹³ Except for the internment of Japanese-Americans in World War II, this constituted the most repressive treatment ever undertaken by the government against American citizens on the grounds of military necessity. It caused immense hardship for loyal families as well as guerilla supporters. From the vicinity of Kansas City, a Unionist reported observing many "poor people, widows and children, who, with little bundles of clothing, are crossing the river to be subsisted by the charities of the People amongst whom they might find shelter." A federal colonel told his wife that it was “heartsickening to see what I have seen. . . . A desolated country and men & women and children, some of them all most naked. Some on foot and some in old wagons.”⁹⁴

It appears that Lincoln tacitly authorized this stern measure. On August 3, Ewing had asked Schofield for permission to deport the civilians and to free their slaves. Schofield in turn requested Frank Blair to consult with Lincoln about the matter. In mid-August, Blair called at the White House and reported back to Schofield: “I had a

⁹³ Sarah Bohl, “A War on Civilians: Order Number 11 and the Evacuation of Western Missouri,” Prologue: The Journal of the National Archives 36 (2004): 44-51.

⁹⁴ Quoted in Albert Castel, “Order No. 11 and the Civil War on the Border,” Missouri Historical Review 57 (1963):364.

conversation with the President on the topic suggested by you. He said in regard to the Guerrillas in Lafayette and Jackson counties of whom you propose to dispose & at the same time remove the causes of their organization, that his position could be very well illustrated by an anecdote. An Irishman once asked for a glass of soda water and remarked at the same time that he would be glad if the Doctor could put a little brandy in it 'unbeknownst to him.' The inference is that old Abe would be glad if you would dispose of the Guerrillas and would not be sorry to see the negroes set free, if it can done without his being known in the affair as having instigated it. He will be certain to recognize it afterward as a military necessity."⁹⁵ On August 14, Schofield approved of Ewing's plan, which was implemented four days after Quantrill's raid.⁹⁶ Union troops under the notorious Charles "Doc" Jennison carried out this assignment so brutally – pillaging and torching homes of the dispossessed residents – that the affected counties became known as the Burnt District.

On October 1, Lincoln informed Schofield that he would not interfere with the deportations: "With the matters of removing the inhabitants of certain counties en masse; and of removing certain individuals from time to time, who are supposed to be mischievous, I am not now interfering, but am leaving to your own discretion." But while the general was enjoined to "expel guerrillas, marauders, and murderers, and all who are known to harbor, aid, or abet them," he was also to "repress assumptions of unauthorized individuals to perform the same service; because under pretence of doing this, they

⁹⁵ "'Unbeknownst to Lincoln': A Note on Radical Pacification in Missouri during the Civil War," Mark E. Neely, Civil War History 44 (1998): 214. This undated letter from Blair to Schofield is located in the Hiram Barney Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

⁹⁶ Schofield to Lincoln, St. Louis, 28 August 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

become marauders and murderers themselves. To now restore peace, let the military obey orders; and those not of the military, leave each other alone; thus not breaking the peace themselves.”⁹⁷

Lincoln’s willingness to approve such a draconian measure reflected his awareness that dealing with guerillas required unorthodox tactics and that hard-and-fast rules like those laid out in General Order No. 100 (Instructions for the Government of the Armies of the United States in the Field, written by Francis Lieber at the behest of General Halleck) had to be applied flexibly.⁹⁸ He probably understood the situation in much the same way as Schofield, who explained the necessity of deportations: “The evil which exists upon the border of Kansas and Missouri is somewhat different in kind and far greater in degree than in other parts of Missouri. It is the old border hatred intensified by the rebellion and by the murders, robberies, and arson which have characterized the irregular warfare carried on during the early period of the rebellion, not only by the rebels, but by our own troops and people. The effect of this has been to render it impossible for any man who openly avowed and maintained his loyalty to the Government to live in the border counties of Missouri outside of military posts. A large majority of the people remaining were open rebels, while the remainder were compelled to abstain from any word or acts in opposition to the rebellion at the peril of their lives. All were practically enemies of the Government and friends of the rebel guerrillas. The latter found no difficulty in supplying their commissariat wherever they went, and, what was of vastly greater importance to them, they obtained prompt and accurate information

⁹⁷ Lincoln to Schofield, Washington, 1 October 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:492-93.

⁹⁸ Michael Fellman, Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 84.

of every movement of our troops, while no citizen was so bold as to give us information in regard to the guerrillas. In a country remarkably well adapted by nature for guerrilla warfare, with all the inhabitants practically the friends of guerillas, it has been found impossible to rid the country of such enemies. At no time during the war have these counties been free of them. No remedy short of destroying the source of their great advantage over our troops could cure the evil.”⁹⁹

The deportation order was, in fact, necessitated by the circumstances Schofield enumerated.¹⁰⁰ Confederate General Joseph O. Shelby acknowledged that Rebel forces “would shortly have found their way through the district into Kansas. . . . It not only cut off a large amount of supplies, but it removed a large number of our friends and sympathizers The order was fully justified and Ewing did a wise thing when he issued it.”¹⁰¹ The following year, Grant approved similar measures to deal with Virginia guerillas.

Order Number 11 aroused such vehement protests that it was suspended in November. Two months thereafter, deported loyalists were permitted to return to what was left of their homes, much to the dismay of Ewing, who complained that “the President has treated me rather unkindly in practically removing me.”¹⁰² The policy failed to reduce guerilla violence in Missouri, though no more Quantrill-style raids were made

⁹⁹ OR, I, 22, 2:574; John McAllister Schofield, Forty-Six Years in the Army (New York: Century, 1897), 83.

¹⁰⁰ Castel, “Order No. 11 and the Civil War on the Border,” 365-66.

¹⁰¹ Shelby allegedly made this remark in 1897. Lt. Col. R. H. Hunt, General Order No. 11 (Topeka: Kansas Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, 1908), 6, quoted in Connelly, Schofield, 77.

¹⁰² Ewing to John Sherman, Kansas City, Missouri, 12 January 1864, Sherman Papers, Library of Congress. Lincoln created a new Department of Kansas, reducing the scope of Ewing’s command.

in Kansas.¹⁰³ Over a year later Lincoln gave Missouri Governor Thomas Fletcher the same sort of advice he had dispensed to his predecessor (Gamble had died in January 1864) and to the military authorities in Missouri: “It seems that there is now no organized military force of the enemy in Missouri and yet that destruction of property and life is rampant every where. Is not the cure for this within easy reach of the people themselves? It cannot but be that every man, not naturally a robber or cut-throat would gladly put an end to this state of things. A large majority in every locality must feel alike upon this subject; and if so they only need to reach an understanding one with another. Each leaving all others alone solves the problem. And surely each would do this but for his apprehension that others will not leave him alone. Can not this mischievous distrust be removed? Let neighborhood meetings be every where called and held, of all entertaining a sincere purpose for mutual security in the future, whatever they may heretofore have thought, said or done about the war or about anything else. Let all such meet and waiving all else pledge each to cease harassing others and to make common cause against whomever persists in making, aiding or encouraging further disturbance. The practical means they will best know how to adopt and apply. At such meetings old friendships will cross the memory; and honor and Christian Charity will come in to help. Please consider whether it may not be well to suggest this to the now afflicted people of Missouri.”¹⁰⁴

But in Missouri the depth of hatred and the intensity of vengeful feelings were too great for such a solution. Even after the war, guerillas like Jesse James and Bloody Bill Anderson continued their lawless ways.

¹⁰³ Castel, “Order No. 11 and the Civil War on the Border,” 366-68.

¹⁰⁴ Lincoln to Fletcher, Washington, 20 February 1865, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 8:308.

Missouri and Kansas Radicals, angry at Schofield's failure to protect them from outrages like Quantrill's raid and at the general's refusal to allow Kansans to retaliate, decided to appeal directly to Lincoln. In August, Kansas Senator Jim Lane and Congressman Abel C. Wilder urged Schofield's ouster.¹⁰⁵ The following month at the Radical Union Emancipation Convention in Jefferson City, a delegation of seventy members (one from each county represented at that conclave) was chosen to go to Washington and demand that Schofield be replaced by Benjamin F. Butler, a darling of antislavery militants. They also wanted the Enrolled Missouri Militia demobilized and its function assumed by federal troops. Further, they insisted that only loyal men be allowed to vote in state elections.

Radicals also objected to the way that Schofield had acted that summer during a fateful session of the Missouri state convention, which had originally been elected to consider secession and which had been acting like a legislature for over two years. There Claybanks defeated Charcoals and adopted a measure abolishing slavery in 1870, to the chagrin of immediate emancipationists, who denounced Schofield for supporting a Lincoln-like scheme involving compensation and gradualism.¹⁰⁶ During the debates, Schofield had asked the president if loyal slaveholders could count on the administration to protect their rights for the short time that slavery would continue in Missouri. On June 22, Lincoln replied positively: "Desirous as I am, that emancipation shall be adopted by Missouri, and believing as I do, that gradual can be made better than immediate for both black and white, except when military necessity changes the case, my impulse is to say

¹⁰⁵ Lane and Wilder to Lincoln, Leavenworth, 26 August 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁰⁶ Bill R. Lee, "Missouri's Fight over Emancipation in 1863," Missouri Historical Review 45 (1951):256-74; Connelly, Schofield, 70-71.

that such protection would be given. I can not know exactly what shape an act of emancipation may take. If the period from the initiation to the final end, should be comparatively short, and the act should prevent persons being sold, during that period, into more lasting slavery, the whole would be easier. I do not wish to pledge the general government to the affirmative support of even temporary slavery, beyond what can be fairly claimed under the constitution. I suppose, however, this is not desired; but that it is desired for the Military force of the United States, while in Missouri, to not be used in subverting the temporarily reserved legal rights in slaves during the progress of emancipation. This I would desire also. I have very earnestly urged the slave-states to adopt emancipation; and it ought to be, and is an object with me not to overthrow, or thwart what any of them may in good faith do, to that end.”¹⁰⁷

Shortly before the Committee of Seventy arrived at the nation’s capital, Lincoln said that “if they can show that Schofield has done anything wrong & has interfered to their disadvantage with State politics – or has so acted as to damage the cause of the Union and good order their case is made.” But he suspected that “it will be found that Schofield is a firm competent energetic & eminently fair man, and that he has incurred their ill will by refusing to take sides with them in their local politics.” Moreover, Lincoln did “not think it in the province of a military commander to interfere with the local politics or to influence elections actively in one way or another.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Lincoln to Schofield, Washington, 22 June 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:291.

¹⁰⁸ Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 88 (entry for 29 September 1863).

The eyes of the North focused on the White House meeting, with Radicals regarding the Missourians as their surrogates.¹⁰⁹ Not since the cabinet imbroglio of the previous December had factionalism so seriously threatened to tear the Republican coalition apart. The utmost tact and diplomacy was required to damp down Radical discontent without alienating Moderates and Conservatives. More specifically, the Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, and Illinois delegations to the next Republican national convention would be profoundly affected by Lincoln's treatment of the visitors.

While willing to hear his visitors out, the president was determined not to appease them. He told John Hay: "I think I understand perfectly and I cannot do anything contrary to my convictions to please these men, earnest and powerful as they may be."¹¹⁰ He was particularly disturbed by Charles D. Drake's speech accusing him of acting like a tyrant.¹¹¹ Lincoln reasonably concluded that the visitors were not his friends, their protestations to the contrary notwithstanding.¹¹² Horace White reported that "[n]othing will convince him that there is anything serious in the Missouri question until civil war actually begins." Moreover, Lincoln suspected that the committee had an ulterior motive: to replace him with Benjamin Butler in 1864.¹¹³ Reinforcing his negative view were letters from Missouri Conservatives and Edward Bates's opinion that the Committee of

¹⁰⁹ Walter B. Stevens, A Reporter's Lincoln, ed. Michael Burlingame (1916; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 144.

¹¹⁰ Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 89 (entry for 29 September 1863).

¹¹¹ Joseph A. Hay to Lincoln, St. Louis, 11 September 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. "Excuse me for thus intruding upon your time and attention but I felt as though you ought to be posted as to who are your friends & who are the opposers of your Administration in this State. Mr C D Drake in a speech in my town (La Grange) on the 19th of August denounced you as a Tyrant and a Dictator."

¹¹² Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 89 (entry for 29 September 1863).

¹¹³ Horace White to William P. Fessenden, Washington, 7 November 1863, Fessenden Papers, Library of Congress.

Seventy was a “Jacobin Delegation.”¹¹⁴ To Bates, Lincoln complained that he “had no friends in Missouri.”¹¹⁵

An ally who urged Lincoln to deal with the delegation in a cordial manner gloomily left the White House on September 27 thinking there was no hope for an amicable meeting of the minds.¹¹⁶ In fact, the bitterness of the Charcoals and Claybanks was so great that no compromise was possible. Reflecting Lincoln’s views, Halleck told Schofield in late September that “[n]either faction in Missouri is really friendly to the President and the administration; but each is striving to destroy the other, regardless of all other considerations. In their mutual hatred they seem to have lost all sense of the perils of the country and all sentiment of national patriotism.”¹¹⁷

The Committee of Seventy approached the interview with an unbending attitude. As one of them stated: “It is for the President to decide whether he will ride in their wagon or not.”¹¹⁸ As they proceeded toward Washington, they received a warm welcome from antislavery elements in several cities. Upon arrival at the nation’s capital, they drew up a nineteen-page formal address praising the Emancipation Proclamation, endorsing immediate abolition in their state, and condemning Governor Gamble’s course as proslavery. “From the antagonisms of the radicals to such a policy,” the address stated, “have arisen the conflicts which you, Mr. President, have been pleased heretofore to term a ‘factional quarrel.’” Like Gamble, they took vigorous exception to the notion that they

¹¹⁴ James S. Rollins to Edward Bates, Columbia, Missouri, 13 September 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Beale, ed., Bates Diary, 308.

¹¹⁵ Edward Bates to Lincoln, Washington, 22 October 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

¹¹⁶ Hawkins Taylor in Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 87-88 (entry for 28 September 1863).

¹¹⁷ Halleck to Schofield, Washington, 26 September 1863, OR, I, 22, 2:574-575.

¹¹⁸ Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 87 (entry for 28 September 1863).

constituted a faction. “With all respect we deny that the radicals of Missouri have been or are, in any sense, a party to any such quarrel. We are no factionists; but men earnestly intent upon doing our part toward rescuing this great nation from the assaults which slavery is aiming at its life.” Schofield, the delegates complained, “has disappointed our just expectations by identifying himself with our state administration, and his policy as department commander has been, as we believe, shaped to conform to Gov. Gamble's proslavery and conservative views. . . . from the day of Gen. Schofield's accession to the command of that department, matters have grown worse and worse in Missouri, till now they are in a more terrible condition than they have been at any time since the outbreak of the rebellion. This could not be if Gen. Schofield had administered the affairs of that department with proper vigor and a resolute purpose to sustain loyalty and suppress disloyalty. We, therefore, respectfully pray you to send another general to command that department; and, if we do not overstep the bounds of propriety, we ask that the commander sent there be Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler. We believe that his presence here would restore order and peace to Missouri in less than sixty days.” In closing, their appeal grew melodramatic: “Whether the loyal hearts of Missouri shall be crushed is for you to say. If you refuse our requests, we return to our homes only to witness, in consequence of that refusal, a more active and relentless persecution of Union men, and to feel that while Maryland can rejoice in the protection of the government of the Union, Missouri is still to be the victim of a proslavery conservatism, which blasts wherever it reigns.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Stevens, A Reporter's Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 147.

Before meeting with the Committee of Seventy, Lincoln spoke with its secretary, Emil Preetorius, a refugee from the German revolution of 1848 who edited of the St. Louis Westliche Post. By exempting Missouri from the Emancipation Proclamation, said Preetorius, Lincoln had punished the Radicals, who felt that they must combat three administrations: Jefferson Davis's, Hamilton Gamble's, and Abraham Lincoln's. The president replied: "We need the border states. Public opinion in them has not matured. We must patiently educate them up to the right opinion."¹²⁰

On September 30, the president spent over two hours with the seventy angry Missourians and eighteen aggrieved Kansans, led by Charles D. Drake and Senator James Lane. Lincoln seemed anxious and depressed. He had good reason, for the public mood was growing sour. A few days earlier the Union army had suffered its first major defeat in the western theater when Confederates under Braxton Bragg whipped William S. Rosecrans' Army of the Tennessee badly at Chickamauga, Georgia. The bad news caused gloom and anxiety to envelop the White House.

Entering the spacious East Room at 10:30 a.m., Lincoln beheld a rather scruffy group that John Hay described as an "ill combed, black broadcloth, dusty, longhaired and generally vulgar assemblage of earnest men."¹²¹ Some of the men were battle-scarred from the guerilla warfare; one of them had his arm in a sling fashioned from a red handkerchief.¹²² The president offered no special greeting and shook no hands.

¹²⁰ Enos Clark, interview with J. McCan Davis, 2 December 1898, Tarbell Papers, Allegheny College.

¹²¹ The following description of the meeting is based on Hay and Stoddard's detailed notes. Michael Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln's Side: John Hay's Civil War Correspondence and Selected Writings (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 57-64.

¹²² John F. Hume, The Abolitionists, Together with Personal Memories of the Struggle for Human Rights, 1830-1864 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1905), 166.

The committee had disposed itself around three sides of the enormous East Room. Lincoln ambled to the open end of the room, impressing one delegate as “a great, ungainly, almost uncouth man.” There he stood, a little more erect than usual, and bowed to his callers. Stiffly and respectfully, they returned the bow. A few applauded, but when their colleagues failed to join in, they stopped.

Pompously and slowly, Drake delivered the committee’s formal address, which had been hammered out over the preceding three days. When the deep-voiced Missourian finished reading, Lincoln said he would consider the document “without prejudice, without pique, without resentment,” and provide a written response soon.

There followed a long, desultory conversation. One of the delegates, St. Louis attorney Enos Clarke, recalled that Lincoln “began to discuss the address in a manner that was very disappointing to us. He took up one phase after another and talked about them without showing much interest. In fact, he seemed inclined to treat many of the matters contained in the paper as of little importance. The things which we had felt to be so serious Mr. Lincoln treated as really unworthy of much consideration.” Lincoln “was almost impatient, as if he wished to get through with something disagreeable. When he had expressed the opinion that things were not so serious as we thought he began to ask questions, many of them. He elicited answers from different members of the delegation. He started argument, parrying some of the opinions expressed by us and advancing opinions contrary to the conclusions of the Committee of Seventy. This treatment of our grievances was carried so far that most of us felt a sense of deep chagrin.”¹²³

¹²³ Stevens, A Reporter’s Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 150.

No reporters were allowed to cover the meeting, but John Hay and William O. Stoddard took detailed notes. According to them, Lincoln insisted that Governor Gamble enjoyed no special treatment at the hands of the administration. After coming to Washington in 1861 and negotiating an arrangement whereby militia would be organized in Missouri and supported by federal funds, Gamble had repeatedly tried to assert complete control over those troops, and Lincoln had consistently refused. The governor had taken even more offense than the delegates did at the suggestion that Missouri Republicans were engaged in a “pestilent factional quarrel.”

Lincoln also insisted that he had shown no favoritism toward Schofield. He told his visitors that they had presented only nebulous charges against that general, whom he had never met and with whom he had no personal relationship. “I cannot act on vague impressions,” he insisted. “Show me that he had disobeyed orders; show me that he had done something wrong, and I will take your request for his removal into serious consideration.” He praised the general for doing his duty without complaint and for providing Grant with valuable reinforcements during the Vicksburg campaign. Schofield, Lincoln argued, could not fairly be held responsible for the Lawrence massacre, for Quantrill’s raid was the sort of act that “could no more be guarded against than assassination.” Ominously foreshadowing his own fate, he said to Senator Lane: “If I make up my mind to kill you for instance, I can do it and these hundred gentlemen could not prevent it. They could avenge but could not save you.”

To the complaint that Schofield had carried out Lincoln’s order suspending the writ of habeas corpus, the president expressed understandable puzzlement. Why should he cashier an officer for implementing his orders? As for the crackdown on the Missouri

press, Lincoln defended Schofield, saying that “when an officer in any department finds that a newspaper is pursuing a course calculated to embarrass his operations and stir up sedition and tumult, he has the right to lay hands upon it and suppress it, but in no other case.” He noted that he had approved Schofield’s order regarding the press only after the leading Radical newspaper in St. Louis, the Missouri Democrat, had endorsed it.

“We thought it was then to be used against the other side,” interjected a delegate.

“Certainly you did,” replied Lincoln caustically. “Your ideas of justice seem to depend on the application of it. You have spoken of the consideration which you think I should pay to my friends as contradistinguished from my enemies. I recognize no such thing as a political friendship personal to myself,” he remarked. “You insist upon adherence to the policy of the proclamation of Emancipation as a test of political friendship.” The committeemen, he said, “seem to be determined to have it executed” in Missouri, which was specifically exempted from its operation.

“No sir, but we think it a national test question.”

Of course, Lincoln rejoined, he thought the Proclamation was “right and expedient.” He had issued it “after more thought on the subject than probably any one of you have been able to give it.” He was better satisfied with people who agreed with him on that subject than those who did not. But, he pointed out, “some earnest Republicans, and some from very far North, were opposed to the issuing of that Proclamation holding it unwise and of doubtful legality.” Were these critics to be dismissed as enemies of the Union cause? “Now when you see a man loyally in favor of the Union – willing to vote men and money – spending his time and money and throwing his influence into the recruitment of our armies, I think it ungenerous unjust and impolitic to make his views on

abstract political questions a test of his loyalty.” Bluntly Lincoln suggested that his visitors, in demanding that the Conservatives of Missouri be proscribed, were latter-day Torquemadas: “I will not be a party to this application of a pocket Inquisition.”

In defending Missouri’s Conservatives, Lincoln insisted that they did not resemble the Copperheads who were deliberately undermining the war effort. One bold visitor contradicted him.

In reply, Lincoln gave a little sermon: “In a civil war one of the saddest evils is suspicion. It poisons the springs of social life. It is the fruitful parent of injustice and strife. Were I to make a rule that in Missouri disloyal men were outlawed and the rightful prey of good citizens as soon as the rule should begin to be carried onto effect I would be overwhelmed with affidavits to prove that the first man killed under it was more loyal than the one who killed him. It is impossible to determine the question of the motives that govern men, or to gain absolute knowledge of their sympathies.”

When a delegate said, “Let the loyal people judge,” Lincoln asked sharply: “And who shall say who the loyal people are? You ask the disfranchisement of all disloyal people: but difficulties will environ you at every step in determining the questions which will arise in that matter.” They should rely on their long-established test oath for voters to keep secessionists from casting ballots.

“Are we to be protected at the polls in carrying out these laws?” asked a delegate.

“I will order Gen. Schofield to protect you at the polls and save them from illegal interference. He will do it you may be assured. If he does not I will relieve him.”

Senator Jim Lane interrupted boisterously: “Do you think it sufficient cause for the removal of a General, that he has lost the entire confidence of the people.”

Pointedly Lincoln shot back: “I think I should not consider it a sufficient cause if he had lost the confidence unjustly, it would [not] be a very strong reason for his removal.”

When Lane asserted that “General Schofield has lost that confidence,” Lincoln exclaimed: “You being judge!” (Lane asserted that Lincoln told him “that whoever made war on General Schofield, under the present state of affairs, made war on him – the President.”)¹²⁴

The meeting grew ever more tense as the delegates murmured their agreement with Lane.

Swiftly Lincoln added that he had evidence that Schofield “has not lost the confidence of the entire people of Missouri.”

“All loyal people,” they objected.

“You being the standard of loyalty.”

A delegate from a rural district, bellowing like an enraged bull, complained about “the sufferings me and the rest of the board suffers, with the guerillas achasing of us, and we a writing to Mr. Scovil for help & he not giving it to us, so we couldn’t collect the broken bonds.”

“Who’s us?” asked the president.

“The Board.”

“What board?”

“The Board for collecting the broken bonds,” came the somewhat nervous reply.

¹²⁴ Lane told this to Major Champion Vaughn, former editor of the Leavenworth Times, who in turn told Schofield. Schofield diary, 13 October 1863, Schofield, Forty-Six Years in the Army, 99.

Sternly Lincoln queried: “Who appointed you & by what law, & how were you acting & by what right did you ask a military force from Gen. Schofield?”

The reply to these questions revealed the gentleman to be, in the words of John Hay, a cattle thief and “a sportive and happy free plunderer on the estates of misguided traitors.”

Similar exchanges followed, which Hay described: “a question or two from the President pricked the balloon of loud talk and collapsed it around the ears of the delegate to his no small disgust and surprise. The baffled patriot would retreat to a sofa & think the matter over again or would stand in his place and quietly listen in a bewildered manner to the talk and discomfiture of another.”

Without naming him, Lincoln addressed charges against him made by Charles D. Drake. “I am aware that by many, by some even among this delegation, – I shall not name them, – I have been in public speeches and in printed documents charged with ‘tyranny’ and willfulness, with a disposition to make my own personal will supreme. I do not intend to be a tyrant. At all events I shall take care that in my own eyes I do not become one. I shall always try and preserve one friend within me, whoever else fails me, to tell me that I have not been a tyrant, and that I have acted right. I have no right to act the tyrant to mere political opponents. If a man votes for supplies of men and money; encourages enlistments; discourages desertions; does all in his power to carry the war on to a successful issue, – I have no right to question him for his abstract political opinions. I must make a dividing line, somewhere between those who are the opponents of the Government and those who only oppose peculiar features of my administration while they sustain the Government.”

As the contentious meeting drew to a close, Lincoln reiterated his support for gradual emancipation and chided the Radicals for letting him down: “My friends in Missouri last winter did me a great unkindness. I had relied upon my Radical friends as my mainstay in the management of affairs in that state and they disappointed me. I had recommended Gradual Emancipation, and Congress had endorsed that course. The Radicals in Congress voted for it. The Missouri delegation in Congress went for it, – went, as I thought, right. I had the highest hope that at last Missouri was on the right track. But I was disappointed by the immediate emancipation movement. It endangers the success of the whole advance towards freedom. But you say that the gradual emancipation men were insincere; – that they intended soon to repeal this action; that their course and their professions are purely fraudulent. Now I do not think that a majority of the gradual Emancipationists are insincere. Large bodies of men cannot play the hypocrite.

“I announced my own opinion freely at the time. I was in favor of gradual emancipation. I still am so. You must not call yourselves my friends, if you are only so while I agree with you. According to that, if you differ with me you are not my friends.

“But the mode of emancipation in Missouri is not my business. That is a matter which belongs exclusively to the citizens of that state: I do not wish to interfere. I desire, if it pleases the people of Missouri, that they should adopt gradual emancipation. I think that a union of all anti-slavery men upon this point would have made emancipation a final fact forever. Still, I do not assume any control. I am sorry to see anti-slavery men opposing such a movement.”

According to one delegate, Lincoln “spoke kindly, yet now and then there was a little rasping tone in his voice that seemed to say, ‘You men ought to fix this thing up without tormenting me.’”¹²⁵

Lincoln recollected that as he listened to the delegates, he “saw that their attack on Gamble was malicious. They moved against him by flank attacks from different sides of the same question. They accused him of enlisting rebel soldiers among the enrolled militia: and of exempting all the rebels and forcing Union men to do the duty: all this in the blindness of passion.” Lincoln scolded them for jeopardizing the chances of Unionist candidates for the U.S. Senate (the Radical B. Gratz Brown and the Conservative John B. Henderson) at the upcoming session of the Missouri legislature. Sternly he told them that it was “their duty was to elect Henderson and Gratz Brown.” (In November, when the legislature elected those two men, Lincoln said “nothing in our politics . . . has pleased me more.”)¹²⁶

After the delegation left, Lincoln was in a good humor and told Edward Bates that some of its members “were not as bad as he supposed” and in fact that he “really thought some of them were pretty good men.”¹²⁷

John Hay was not so positive. He concluded that the delegation’s “incoherent, vague, abusive, prejudiced” case “did no good.” They had “claimed to advocate no man but asked for Butler – to speak without prejudice – yet abused Schofield like drabs; to ask for ascertained rights and they rambled through a maze of ridiculous grievances and

¹²⁵ Charles Philip Johnson in Tarbell, Life of Lincoln, 2:177.

¹²⁶ Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 125 (entry for 10 December 1863).

¹²⁷ Beale, ed., Bates Diary, 308 (entry for 30 September 1863).

absurd suggestions. In the main ignorant and and well-meaning, they chose for their spokesman Drake, who is neither ignorant nor well-meaning, who covered the marrow of what they wanted to say in a purposeless mass of unprofitable verbiage which they accepted because it sounded well, and the President will reject because it is nothing but sound. He is a man whom only facts of the toughest kind can move and Drake attacked him with tropes & periods which might have had weight in a Sophomore Debating Club. And so the great Western Delegation from which good people hoped so much for freedom, discharged their little rocket, and went home with no good thing to show for coming – a little angry and a good deal bewildered – not clearly seeing why they have failed – as the President seemed so fair and their cause so good.”¹²⁸

Hay thought that Lincoln “never appeared to better advantage in the world. Though he knows how immense is the danger to himself from the unreasoning anger of that committee, he never cringed to them for an instant. He stood where he thought he was right and crushed them with his candid logic.”¹²⁹

Three days later Drake left four supplementary statements at the White House.¹³⁰

When he called there yet again on October 5, a servant informed him that the president “is sorry, but he really can't see you. He has a hundred pages of the manuscript you left him to read yet!” Washingtonians chuckled when they learned of that rebuff.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln's Side, 64.

¹²⁹ Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 89-90 (entry for 30 September 1863).

¹³⁰ Benjamin F. Loan to Lincoln, 3 October 1863; Joseph W. McClurg to Lincoln, 1 October 1863; Charles D. Drake to Lincoln, 3 October 1863; A. Jackson et al. to Lincoln, 3 October 1863, Lincoln Papers Library of Congress.

¹³¹ Washington correspondence by Agate [Whitelaw Reid], 5 October, Cincinnati Gazette, 8 October 1863. On October 10, Drake finally gave up trying to see the president.

Reflecting on the upcoming elections in Missouri, Lincoln told Hay: "I believe, after all, those Radicals will carry the state & I do not object to it." (In fact, at the hotly contested statewide judicial elections in November, the three Radical candidates for the supreme court narrowly outpolled their Conservative opponents.)¹³² The Radicals, Lincoln added, "are nearer to me than the other side, in thought and sentiment, though bitterly hostile personally. They are utterly lawless – the unhandiest devils in the world to deal with – but after all their faces are set Zionwards."¹³³ He believed that the Radicals "have in them the stuff which must save the state and on which we must mainly rely. They are absolutely uncorrosive by the virus of secession. It cannot touch or taint them." The Conservatives, on the other hand, "in casting about for votes to carry through their plans, are tempted to affiliate with those whose record is not clear. If one side must be crushed out & the other cherished there could be no doubt which side we would choose as fuller of hope for the future. We would have to side with the Radicals."

(Lincoln was indeed ideologically closer to the Radicals than to Governor Gamble, whose conservatism led him in early 1861 to declare that Southern secessionists had legitimate complaints; to protest against troops who permitted slaves to escape to Union lines; to issue an order forbidding Home Guard soldiers to harbor runaway bondsmen; and to discriminate against Radicals when appointing officers.)

But the Radicals' intolerance offended Lincoln. "They insist that I shall hold and treat Governor Gamble and his supporters – men appointed by loyal people of Mo. as reps. of Mo. loyalty – and who have done their whole duty in the war faithfully &

¹³² William E. Parrish, Turbulent Partnership: Missouri and the Union, 1861-1865 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1963), 170-72. The combined vote of the three Claybank candidates was 141,580; their Charcoal opponents received 139,279. Peterson, Gratz Brown, 128.

¹³³ Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 101 (entry for 28 October 1863).

promptly – who when they have disagreed with me have been silent and kept about the good work – that I shall treat these men as copperheads and enemies to the Govt. This is simply monstrous.” Lincoln found it noteworthy that some fierce Radicals, notably their leader Charles D. Drake, had once been bitter opponents of abolition. Others had been Confederates. He did not object “to penitent rebels being radical: he was glad of it.” But he thought it only fair for them to be more charitable in dealing with Gamble. In matters political, Lincoln “was in favor of short statutes of limitations.”¹³⁴ His problems with Radicals had more to do with their style than with their ideology. While he and they shared much in common, he did object to what he deemed “the self-righteousness of the Abolitionists.”¹³⁵

In his written response to the Committee of Seventy, Lincoln reiterated some of the arguments he had made verbally to those unhandy devils a week earlier, but now he wished to defend his Missouri policies to the larger public. He rejected the delegation’s contention that Schofield and the Enrolled Missouri Militia caused the Unionists’ woes. “The whole can be explained on a more charitable, and, as I think, a more rational hypothesis,” he assured them. “We are in civil war. In such cases there always is a main question; but in this case that question is a perplexing compound – Union and Slavery.” Thus several political combinations emerged, causing severe strains within the pro-Union coalition: gradual vs. immediate emancipationists; pro-slavery Unionists vs. antislavery Unionists; Unionists who cared little about slavery, but were inclined to favor it vs. those who cared little about slavery, but were inclined to oppose it. All the various combinations and permutations of Unionism “may be sincerely entertained by honest and

¹³⁴ Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 125 (entry for 10 December 1863).

¹³⁵ William D. Kelley, Lincoln and Stanton (New York: Putnam’s, 1885), 86.

truthful men.” Yet “sincerity is questioned, and motives are assailed.” Once war breaks out, “blood grows hot, and blood is spilled. Thought is forced from old channels into confusion. Deception breeds and thrives. Confidence dies, and universal suspicion reigns. Each man feels an impulse to kill his neighbor, lest he be first killed by him. Revenge and retaliation follow. . . . Every foul bird comes abroad, and every dirty reptile rises up. These add crime to confusion. Strong measures, deemed indispensable but harsh at best, such men make worse by mal-administration. Murders for old grudges, and murders for pelf, proceed under any cloak that will best cover for the oc[c]asion. These causes amply account for what has occurred in Missouri, without ascribing it to the weakness, or wickedness of any general.” Schofield was no more to blame for this chaos than were Frémont, Hunter, Halleck, and Curtis, under whom such anarchy was just as bad.

Lincoln acknowledged that the assessment system and the provost marshal network were flawed. “To restrain contraband intelligence and trade, a system of searches, seizures, permits, and passes, had been introduced That there was a necessity for something of the sort was clear; but that it could only be justified by stern necessity, and that it was liable to great abuse in administration, was equally clear. Agents to execute it, contrary to the great Prayer, were led into temptation. Some might, while others would not resist that temptation. It was not possible to hold any to a very strict accountability; and those yielding to the temptation, would sell permits and passes to those who would pay most, and most readily for them; and would seize property, and collect levies in the aptest way to fill their own pockets. Money being the object, the man having money, whether loyal or disloyal, would be a victim. This practice doubtless existed to some extent, and it was a real additional evil, that it could be and was,

plausably charged to exist in greater extent than it did.” Critics of assessments and provost marshals made valid points but ignored the necessity for them, while defenders made valid points about the necessity for them and ignored the mistakes, and each side “bitterly assailed the motives of the other. I could not fail to see that the controversy enlarged in the same proportion as the professed Union-men there distinctly took sides in two opposing political parties. I exhausted my wits, and very nearly my patience also, in efforts to convince both that the evils they charged on each other, were inherent in the case, and could not be cured by giving either party a victory over the other.”

To modify the “irritating system,” Lincoln replaced General Curtis with General Schofield. “I gave the new commander no instructions as to the administration of the system mentioned, beyond what is contained in the private letter, afterwards surreptitiously published, in which I directed him to act solely for the public good, and independently of both parties. Neither anything you have presented me, nor anything I have otherwise learned, has convinced me that he has been unfaithful to this charge.” Moreover, Lincoln said, he could not believe “charges that Gen. Schofield has purposely withheld protection from loyal people, and purposely facilitated the objects of the disloyal.” So Schofield would retain command in Missouri.

The Enrolled Militia could not with safety be scrapped and replaced by U.S. troops. “Whence shall they come?” asked Lincoln rhetorically. “Shall they be withdrawn from Banks, or Grant, or Steele, or Rosecrans? Few things have been so grateful to my anxious feeling as when, in June last, the local force in Missouri aided Gen. Schofield to

so promptly send a large general force to the relief of Gen. Grant, then investing Vicksburg, and menaced from without by Gen. Johnston.”

Lincoln agreed with the Radicals that disloyal elements should not be allowed to vote, and he instructed Schofield accordingly. Masterfully Lincoln explained why he could not side with either the Radicals or the Conservatives. “I do not feel justified to enter upon the broad field you present in regard to the political differences between radicals and conservatives. From time to time I have done and said what appeared to me proper to do and say. The public knows it all. It obliges nobody to follow me, and I trust it obliges me to follow nobody. The radicals and conservatives, each agree with me in some things, and disagree in others. I could wish both to agree with me in all things; for then they would agree with each other, and would be too strong for any foe from any quarter. They, however, choose to do otherwise, and I do not question their right. I too shall do what seems to be my duty. I hold whoever commands in Missouri, or elsewhere, responsible to me, and not to either radicals or conservatives. It is my duty to hear all; but at last, I must, within my sphere, judge what to do, and what to forbear.”¹³⁶

Hay justly called this document “a superb affair” in which the president showed himself to be “courteous but immovable. He will not be bullied even by his friends. He tries to reason with those infuriated people. The world will hear him if they do not.”¹³⁷ Indeed the world did hear, for the letter appeared in the press to general acclaim. Even

¹³⁶ Lincoln to Drake et al., Washington, 5 October 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:499-504.

¹³⁷ Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 93-94 (entry for 18 October 1863).

Radical Senator Samuel C. Pomeroy of Kansas approved of Schofield's conduct in Missouri.¹³⁸

Other Radicals were less enthusiastic. Treasury agent Ralph S. Hart reported from St. Louis that it was “just like the President – a dodge. It has disaffected his friends in Mo to an awful extent.”¹³⁹ Theodore Tilton, editor of the New York Independent, agreed, observing that Lincoln “swings his scythe among some men of straw” and has thus “grieved to the heart of his best friends and supporters, by closing his ears against the one single and groaning burden of their [the Missourians'] grievances,” namely, “that he permits Slavery to override Freedom in that state, and appoints his enemies to govern his friends.”¹⁴⁰ After Wendell Phillips alleged that Seward had written the letter to Drake and his colleagues, Lincoln explained privately that when “the Missouri delegation was appointed and it was known they were coming to see me, Seward asked that until I should hear and decide their case in my own mind, I would not say a word to him on the subject, or in any way ask his opinion concerning the controversy, so that hereafter we might both say that he had taken no part whatever in the matter; to which I agreed.”¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Samuel C. Pomeroy to William O. Stoddard, Boston, 7 October 7 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

¹³⁹ Hart to Chase, St. Louis, 24 October 1863, Chase Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁴⁰ New York Independent, 29 October 1863; Theodore Tilton to Lincoln, New York, 28 October 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁴¹ Nicolay, memorandum of 8 December 1863, 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), 116.

En route back to Missouri, members of the Committee of Seventy damaged their cause with inflammatory speeches at Manhattan's Cooper Union.¹⁴² The New York Commercial Advertiser observed that "Mr. Drake and his political friends have the sympathies of the unconditional Unionists in all loyal states, but the intemperate language used by the Missouri delegates at their public meetings in this city tended to shake confidence in their judgment."¹⁴³ Noting that the Radicals denounced Lincoln even before they received his written response to their demands, Henry J. Raymond's New York Times remarked that if the tone of the speeches were "the measure of their loyalty and respect for the established authorities of the nation, the President will be excused from paying any further attention to their demands."¹⁴⁴ The editors of the Washington Chronicle said that they had "too much respect for the cause of radical emancipation in Missouri to say an unkind word in reference to its friends. We would much rather rescue it from the hands of such men as Mr. Drake Until the Republic is safe Drake and his friends must not be surprised if the country does not hearken to their appeals."¹⁴⁵ The resolutions adopted at the Cooper Institute meeting "do injustice to Mr. Lincoln," noted the New York Evening Post.¹⁴⁶ Lincoln reportedly was "a little sore" at what he considered the Missourians' attempt to browbeat him.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² David DeArmond March, "The Life and Times of Charles Daniel Drake" (PhD dissertation, University of Missouri, 1949), 246-52.

¹⁴³ New York Commercial Advertiser, reprinted in the St. Joseph Morning Herald, 31 October 1863, in March, "Drake," 249-50.

¹⁴⁴ New York Times, 3 October 1863.

¹⁴⁵ Washington Chronicle, reprinted in the St. Joseph Morning Herald, 1 November 1863, in March, "Drake," 250.

¹⁴⁶ New York Evening Post, 3 October 1863.

¹⁴⁷ Washington correspondence by Van [D. W. Bartlett], 7 October, Springfield, Massachusetts, Republican, 9 October 1863.

Four days before replying to the Missouri Radicals, Lincoln instructed Schofield have his troops “compel the excited people” in Missouri “to leave one another alone,” insofar as that was possible. The general was cautioned to use restraint: “only arrest individuals, and suppress assemblies, or newspapers, when they may be working palpable injury to the Military in your charge; and, in no other case will you interfere with the expression of opinion in any form, or allow it to be interfered with violently by others. In this, you have a discretion to exercise with great caution, calmness, and forbearance.” His troops were neither to return fugitive slaves nor to encourage slaves to become fugitives. Honoring a request of the Radicals, Lincoln stipulated that at elections, only those taking the test oath should be permitted to vote.¹⁴⁸ He also agreed to make Kansas a separate military department and place a Radical general in charge of it. A Radical judge was also appointed in that state.

Gamble was not pleased. The governor’s character, as even his friends acknowledged, had a harsh, stern quality. His integrity and strength of will inspired respect but no fondness.¹⁴⁹ On September 30, he drafted an imperious, slightly hysterical letter to the president insisting that the administration protect Missouri’s provisional government from the imminent danger posed by violent Radicals who wished to overthrow it. “My patience is exhausted by accusations of disloyalty,” he told the president. “I am tired with the repeated imputations of sympathy with bushwhackers and guerillas, against whom I have employed all the power of the State. Without attempting to dictate to you, who shall be commanding General in this Department, I do demand, as

¹⁴⁸ Lincoln to Schofield, Washington, 1 October 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:492-93.

¹⁴⁹ Beale, ed., Bates Diary, 328 (entry for 5 February 1864).

I have a right to demand, that you will frankly and boldly discountenance the revolutionists [i.e., the Radicals] who are about to involve the State in anarchy."¹⁵⁰ The following day he toned down this missive, but he was still adamant: "I . . . demand of you Mr President that you shall order the General commanding this department to maintain by all the force under his control the integrity of the State Government, and to suppress in its incipency every combination designed to subvert its authority and to take such measures as may be necessary to this end."¹⁵¹ When Edward Bates insisted that Gamble stood on firm constitutional ground, Lincoln replied that he would of course protect the Missouri government just as vigorously as he would protect the government of Pennsylvania, "neither more nor less."¹⁵² He offered Gamble similar assurances while expressing serious doubt about the reasonableness of the governor's alarmism.¹⁵³

Gamble's faction rejoiced when Attorney General Bates sacked the Radical William W. Edwards as district attorney for eastern Missouri. Though Chase partisans claimed that it meant "war from the White House upon the friends of Mr. Chase," Lincoln disavowed any knowledge of the case beyond what Bates told him, namely "that Edwards was inefficient and must be removed for that reason."¹⁵⁴ (In fact, the attorney general explained to Edwards that he was fired for "active participation in political enterprises hostile to the known views and wishes of the Executive Government of both

¹⁵⁰ Draft, Gamble Papers, Missouri Historical Society.

¹⁵¹ Gamble to Lincoln, Saint Louis, 1 October 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁵² Beale, ed., Bates Diary, 310 (entry for 16 October 1863).

¹⁵³ Lincoln to Gamble, Washington, 19 October 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:526-27.

¹⁵⁴ Ralph S. Hart to Chase, St. Louis, 30 October 1863, Chase Papers, Library of Congress; Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 111 (entry for 18 November 1863).

the nation and the state.”)¹⁵⁵ When Radicals demanded the dismissal of Bates, Lincoln ignored them.

The election of the Conservative John B. Henderson and the Radical B. Gratz Brown to the senate did not end bitter factionalism in Missouri. Brown understandably resented Schofield’s opposition to his senatorial bid and sought to have him removed from command. In the senate, Brown blocked Schofield’s promotion to major general and urged his dismissal. On December 11, Brown reported to a friend: "Have just returned from a long and satisfactory interview with the President, and if he will adhere to the purpose expressed all will be well in Mo. very briefly. He . . . expressed an inclination to order Schofield elsewhere and substitute in his place Rozencrans [William S. Rosecrans].”¹⁵⁶ The next day, Representatives John Covode, George S. Boutwell, and James M. Ashley called on Lincoln to demand that Schofield be removed as head of the Department of Missouri.¹⁵⁷ The president may not have been entirely chagrined, for he was upset by Elihu Washburne’s report that Schofield had not only tried to thwart Brown’s senatorial aspirations but had subsequently rejected Brown’s offer to forgo his opposition to Schofield’s promotion if the general would abandon his attempts to prevent Missourians from holding a constitutional convention dealing with emancipation. Lincoln said that Schofield’s actions were “obviously transcendent of his instruction and must not be permitted” and summoned the general to Washington for an explanation.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Bates to Edwards, 2 November, New York Times, 16 November 1863.

¹⁵⁶ Brown to N. B. Judd, Washington, 11 December 1863, Lincoln Collection, Brown University.

¹⁵⁷ Washington correspondence, 14 December, Chicago Tribune, 15 December 1863.

¹⁵⁸ Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 127 (entry for 13 December 1863).

At the White House, Schofield was insufficiently persuasive to save his job. He told Lincoln that he “did not believe any general in the army could, as department commander, satisfy the Union people of both Kansas and Missouri; neither the man nor the policy that would suit the one would be at all satisfactory to the other.” He also denied intervening in the Missouri senatorial election, despite what Washburne and others reported.¹⁵⁹ Unwilling to discredit Washburne, the president wrote Stanton on December 18: “I believe Gen. Schofield must be relieved from command in the Department of Missouri, otherwise a question of veracity, in relation to his declaration as to his interfering, or not, with the Missouri Legislature, will be made.”¹⁶⁰ In fact, Schofield had proved effective as a leader of troops in the field but not as an administrator of civilian affairs.¹⁶¹ But before removing Schofield, he wanted him promoted to major general. He lobbied Senator Brown repeatedly, asking him to allow Schofield’s promotion to go forward. The president believed that the “Prince of Radicals” had agreed, but that gentleman inveigled Senator Charles Sumner to protest against Schofield. According to John Hay, Lincoln was “very much disappointed at Brown. After three interviews with him he understood that Brown would not oppose the confirmation. It is rather a mean dodge to get Sumner to do it in his stead.”¹⁶²

When Radical Senators Morton Wilkinson and Zachariah Chandler called on Lincoln to protest against Schofield’s promotion, the president told them the General William T. Sherman “says that Schofield will fight, and that he is a good soldier.

¹⁵⁹ Schofield, Forty-Six Years in the Army, 107-9.

¹⁶⁰ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:78.

¹⁶¹ William G. Eliot to Charles Sumner, St. Louis, 4 September 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁶² Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 129 (entry for 23 December 1863).

Sherman says he would like to have him, and that he will give him a corps and put him at active duty in the field. Now if you will confirm Schofield I will send him down there to Sherman and I will send Rosecrans up to take his place in Missouri. And I think that this will so harmonize matters that the whole thing will hang together.”¹⁶³ The senators reported this conversation to their colleagues, prompting Gratz Brown to ask: “what in the hell is up now?” The Missouri congressional delegation argued that Schofield’s promotion would “be an imputation upon the radical men of their State, and a declaration of the Administration against them.”¹⁶⁴ In May 1864, the senate finally confirmed Schofield as a major general. Lincoln gave him command of the Army of the Ohio, and off he went to join Grant and Sherman, with whom he performed ably.¹⁶⁵

DEFEAT IN THE WEST: ROSECRANS AT CHICKAMAUGA

To St. Louis went William S. Rosecrans, who weeks earlier had been dismissed from his post as commander of the Army of the Cumberland. For many months after his crucial victory at the battle of Stones River in January, he had done little with his men. In the summer, however, he maneuvered Braxton Bragg’s army out of Shelbyville, then Tullahoma, and finally Chattanooga. But he incautiously pursued the Confederates into Georgia, where his men were routed on September 19 and 20 at the battle of Chickamauga and driven back into Chattanooga, which Bragg besieged.

Upon learning the defeat at Chickamauga, Lincoln told John Hay: “Well, Rosecrans has been whipped, as I feared. I have feared it for several days. I believe I feel

¹⁶³ Morton S. Wilkinson, interview with Nicolay, 22 May 1876, in Michael Burlingame, ed., An Oral History of Abraham Lincoln: John G. Nicolay’s Interviews and Essays (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 60-61.

¹⁶⁴ Washington correspondence, 26 December, Ohio State Journal, 29 December 1863.

¹⁶⁵ Connelly, Schofield, 81-83.

trouble in the air before it comes. Rosecrans says we have met with a serious disaster – extent not ascertained.”¹⁶⁶ When the extent was ascertained, Lincoln reportedly was “sober and anxious over it, but not in the least despondent.”¹⁶⁷ He did severely criticize two of Rosecrans’ corps commanders, Thomas L. Crittenden and Alexander McCook, who with their commander had skedaddled back to Chattanooga, leaving George H. Thomas to hold off the enemy.¹⁶⁸ Thomas did so effectively, earning the sobriquet, “The Rock of Chickamauga.” When General James A. Garfield called at the White House and vividly described the battle, Lincoln “listened with the eagerness of a child over a fairy tale,” according to Hay.¹⁶⁹

Other distressing news arrived from the Georgia battlefield: Mary Lincoln’s brother-in-law, Confederate General Benjamin Hardin Helm, had been killed. Lincoln had befriended Helm and his wife before the war, and word of his death profoundly saddened him. “I never saw Mr. Lincoln more moved,” recollected David Davis, “than when he heard of the death of his young brother-in-law Ben Hardin Helm, only thirty-two years old, at Chickamauga. I called to see him about 3 o’clock on the 22d of September. I found him in the greatest grief. ‘Davis,’ said he, ‘I feel as David of old did when he was told of the death of Absalom.’ “Would to God I had died for thee, oh Absalom, my son, my son!”” I saw how grief stricken he was so I closed the door and left him alone.”¹⁷⁰ In the 1850s Lincoln had become acquainted Helm, whom he regarded with fraternal

¹⁶⁶ Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 86 (entry for 27 September 1863).

¹⁶⁷ Washington correspondence, 26 September, New York Independent, 1 October 1863.

¹⁶⁸ Washington correspondence by Van [D. W. Bartlett], 30 September, Springfield, Massachusetts, Republican, 2 October 1863.

¹⁶⁹ Hay, “Life in the White House in the Time of Lincoln,” in Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln’s Side, 133.

¹⁷⁰ Washington Sunday Herald, 5 December 1886, in Stephen Berry, House of Abraham: Lincoln and the Todds, A Family Divided by War (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), 147.

affection. At the outbreak of the war, he tried to appoint the Kentuckian a paymaster with the rank of major. Though tempted, Helm rejected the generous offer and joined the Confederate army; he regarded the day he did so as “the most painful moment of my life.”¹⁷¹

To Hardin’s widow Emilie (favorite half-sister of Mary Todd) Lincoln said, “You know Little Sister I tried to have Ben come with me. I hope you do not feel any bitterness or that I am in any way to blame for all this sorrow.”¹⁷² At her request, he arranged for passes to be issued allowing her to return to her Kentucky home.¹⁷³ He also invited her to visit Washington. She accepted the offer and stayed at the White House for two weeks, much to the dismay of some patriots. When Daniel Sickles chided him for hosting the widow of a Rebel general, Lincoln replied with quiet dignity: “Excuse me, General Sickles, my wife and I are in the habit of choosing our own guests. We do not need from our friends either advice or assistance in the matter.”¹⁷⁴ The following year, when Mrs. Helm sought another pass in order to retrieve cotton from Atlanta, Lincoln refused because she refused to take a loyalty oath. She chided him for his unwillingness to help her in an hour of need: “I have been a quiet citizen and request only the right which humanity and Justice always give to Widows and Orphans.” Bitterly she added: “your Minnie bullets have made us what we are.”¹⁷⁵

(Lincoln had trouble with another of his wife’s half-sisters who wanted a cotton trading permit. In the spring of 1864, Martha Todd White of Alabama, who was

¹⁷¹ Katherine Helm, The True Story of Mary, Wife of Lincoln (New York: Harper, 1928), 188.

¹⁷² Helm, Mary, Wife of Lincoln, 233.

¹⁷³ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:517.

¹⁷⁴ Helm, Mary, Wife of Lincoln, 231.

¹⁷⁵ Emilie Todd Helm to Lincoln, Lexington, 30 October 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

estranged from Mrs. Lincoln, called at the White House, where the First Couple refused to see her. The president did, however, grant her a pass to return to the South. When she asked for special permission to have her baggage exempt from inspection, Lincoln balked. She then sent emissaries to plead her case. To one of them the president sternly remarked that “if Mrs. W[hite] did not leave forthwith she might expect to find herself within twenty-four hours in the Old Capitol Prison.” Despite this refusal, newspapers asserted that she had, while passing through General Butler’s lines, refused to allow soldiers to inspect her bags, insisting that she had a special presidential pass. Lincoln had Nicolay write a denial, which ran in the New York Tribune, the source of the original false story.)¹⁷⁶

While grief-stricken at the death of Helm, Lincoln was indignant at the conduct of Burnside. “Burnside instead of obeying the orders which were given him on the 14th & going to Rosecrans has gone up on a foolish affair to Jonesboro to capture a party of guerillas,” he complained to Hay.¹⁷⁷ When he first received word that Burnside was moving away from Chattanooga and towards Jonesboro, he angrily exclaimed: “Jonesboro? Jonesboro?? D— Jonesboro!” and hastily penned a rebuke to the general: “Yours of the 23rd is just received, and it makes me doubt whether I am awake or dreaming. I have been struggling for ten days, first through Gen. Halleck, and then directly, to get you to go to assist Gen. Rosecrans in an extremity, and you have repeatedly declared you would do it, and yet you steadily move the contrary way.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 136-138, 243-244.

¹⁷⁷ Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 86 (entry for 27 September 1863).

¹⁷⁸ Albert B. Chandler in William Hayes Ward, Abraham Lincoln, Tributes from His Associates: Reminiscences of Soldiers, Statesmen and Citizens (New York: T.Y. Crowell, 1895), 222; Lincoln to Burnside, Washington, 25 September 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:480.

Persuaded that such language was too harsh, he simply urged Burnside to move quickly toward Chattanooga. To Rosecrans, Lincoln sent words of encouragement: “Be of good cheer, we have unabated confidence in you. . . . We shall do our utmost to assist you.”¹⁷⁹

But Lincoln’s faith in Rosecrans was shaken by dispatches from Assistant Secretary of War Charles A. Dana, who was traveling with the Army of the Cumberland. Dana thought the “dazed and mazy” general “was greatly lacking in firmness and steadiness of will” and should be replaced.¹⁸⁰ Compounding the president’s anxiety were Old Rosy’s telegrams indicating that he was (in Lincoln’s colorful image) “confused and stunned like a duck hit on the head.”¹⁸¹ On the night of September 23, the excitable Stanton asked John Hay to summon the president from the Soldiers’ Home to attend a council of war. The young secretary wakened his boss, who expressed concern, for this was the first time that Stanton had sent for him at the Home.¹⁸²

At the War Department, Lincoln joined Halleck, Stanton, Seward, Chase, Peter H. Watson, Daniel C. McCallum, and James A. Hardie; together they considered ways to reinforce Rosecrans. When Stanton estimated that 30,000 troops could be moved in five days from the Army of the Potomac to Chattanooga, Lincoln skeptically remarked: “I will bet that if the order is given tonight, the troops could not be got to Washington in five days.”¹⁸³ Despite his reservations, which were shared by Halleck, it was agreed that the Eleventh and Twelfth Corps should be detached from Meade and rushed to Rosecrans

¹⁷⁹ Lincoln to Rosecrans, Washington, 21 September 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:472-73.

¹⁸⁰ 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), 123-27.

¹⁸¹ Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 99 (entry for 24 October 1863).

¹⁸² Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 85-86 (entry for 27 September 1863).

¹⁸³ Niven, ed., Chase Papers, 1:453-454 (diary entry for 24 September 1863).

posthaste, with Hooker in charge.¹⁸⁴ Though Fighting Joe would have a much smaller command than usual, and despite his reservations about the proposed strategy, he agreed to take on the new assignment. The grateful president remarked: “Whenever trouble arises I can always rely upon Hooker’s magnanimity.”¹⁸⁵ Stanton thereupon organized the most successful and dramatic use of railroads in the war, dispatching 23,000 men southwestward. They completed the 1192-mile journey in record time.

Those reinforcements kept the Confederates from crushing Rosecrans’ army, but Bragg still might be able to starve it out. Could Rosecrans deal with that threat? The tone of Old Rosy’s dispatches convinced the president that the general no longer had confidence in his ability to hold the city.¹⁸⁶ In mid-October, Lincoln said: “Rosecrans has seemed to lose spirit and nerve since the battle of Chickamauga.” So the president put all three western armies under the command of Grant, who was told he could retain Rosecrans in charge of the Army of the Cumberland or remove him as he saw fit. Stating that Old Rosy “never would obey orders,” Grant replaced him with George H. Thomas, who had heroically prevented the defeat at Chickamauga from becoming a total rout.¹⁸⁷ Lincoln had lavishly praised Thomas: “It is doubtful whether his heroism and skill . . . has ever been surpassed in the world.”¹⁸⁸

Months later the president explained to James R. Gilmore why he had authorized the removal of Rosecrans: “The army had lost confidence in him. We could not have held

¹⁸⁴ David Homer Bates, Lincoln in the Telegraph Office: Recollections of the United States Military Telegraph Corps during the Civil War (New York: Century, 1907), 174-75.

¹⁸⁵ Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 86-87 (entry for 27 September 1863).

¹⁸⁶ Garfield to Rosecrans, 16 December 1863, in William M. Lamers, The Edge of Glory: A Biography of General William S. Rosecrans, U.S.A. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1961), 413.

¹⁸⁷ Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 94, 107-8 (entries for 19 October, 2 November 1863).

¹⁸⁸ Lincoln to Robert A. Maxwell, Washington, 23 September 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:475.

Chattanooga three days longer if he had not been removed. His own dispatches after the battle confirmed that. I think Stanton had got a pique against him, but Chickamauga showed that Rosecrans was not equal to the occasion. I think Rosecrans a true man, and a very able man, and when the War Department merged the departments, I fully expected Rosecrans would remain in command. But you wouldn't have me put him in active service against Grant's express request, while Grant is commander-in-chief? I try to do my best. I have tried to do justice by Rosecrans. I did the most I could.”¹⁸⁹ Similarly, in December Lincoln told James A. Garfield that he had “never lost confidence” in Rosecrans’ patriotism or courage and wanted it understood that he was still a friend of the general.¹⁹⁰

Taking charge of the beefed-up Army of the Cumberland, Grant swiftly opened a supply line to Chattanooga, then methodically planned a counteroffensive against Bragg. In the last week of November, Union forces at the battles of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge trounced the Confederates, who fled into Georgia.

While Grant prepared to reverse the tide in Tennessee, N. P. Banks bungled an attempt to secure a beachhead in Texas. After the surrender of Port Hudson, that general wanted to move against Mobile, an important railroad center and one of the few deep-water ports still in Confederate hands. But Lincoln wished to establish a Union presence in the Lone Star State in order to send a message to Louis Napoleon, whose troops in June 1863 occupied Mexico City. Soon thereafter, the French emperor installed the Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian of Austria to head a puppet government. It was feared that that the French might try to restore Texas to Mexico. In September, responding to

¹⁸⁹ Gilmore, "Why Rosecrans Was Removed," Atlanta Constitution, 22 December 1895.

¹⁹⁰ Garfield to Rosecrans, 18 December 1863, Nevins, War for the Union, 3:203-204.

Halleck's orders, Banks dispatched troops to Sabine Pass, where they were routed by a small contingent of Rebels. Weeks later, another Union advance toward Texas through western Louisiana was thwarted at Bayou Bourbeau. In November, Banks did manage to capture Brownsville, but that minor accomplishment hardly offset the earlier failures.

OHIO SAVES THE UNION: SUCCESS AT THE FALL ELECTIONS

During the summer and fall of 1863, Lincoln worried about political as well as military developments. Eight gubernatorial elections were to be held; they constituted a crucial turning point in the war, especially those in Ohio and Pennsylvania. Would the electorate repudiate the administration as it had done the previous year? Would Clement L. Vallandigham be elected governor of Ohio? Would George W. Woodward oust Pennsylvania's Governor Andrew G. Curtin?¹⁹¹ The New York Tribune noted that people in both the North and South as well as in England "feel that the fate of the Union rests upon the results of the election in Ohio."¹⁹² The Tribune editor feared that Democrats would triumph by claiming that their victory would produce "instant Peace and Reunion," while a Republican triumph would mean "interminable War."¹⁹³ In September, T. J. Barnett predicted that all "the instant questions will be settled by the coming elections. If they go for the Democracy, then Mr Lincoln will not wind up the war – a new feeling & spirit will inspire the South, to try the Fabian policy, until they can have a chance at the new order of things."

¹⁹¹ For an overview of the 1863 elections, see Christopher Dell, Lincoln and the War Democrats: The Grand Erosion of Conservative Tradition (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1975), 231-61; William B. Hesseltine, Lincoln and the War Governors (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1948), 308-339; Nevins, War for the Union, 3:148-79.

¹⁹² New York Tribune, 3 October 1863.

¹⁹³ Horace Greeley to Salmon P. Chase, New York, 27 August 1863, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

In June, after Vallandigham had been exiled, Lincoln told Barnett that the administration had nothing to fear from the Peace Party, which had just held a massive rally at Manhattan's Cooper Union. Barnett reported that the president "looks upon it as an amalgam of the elements of discontent in New York, & of folks apprehensive of the personal effect of the Conscription act." Opposition to the draft, Lincoln speculated, "will give the Democrats far more trouble than it will anybody else." Grant's splendid campaign in Mississippi would dampen antiwar sentiment. The president was "in great spirits about Vicksburg, & looks to that as the beginning of the end of organized Opposition to the war." Lincoln pooh-poohed criticism of his supposedly dictatorial ways, calling himself "more of a 'Chief Clerk' than a 'Despot.'" In sum, said Barnett, "he smokes the pipe of Peace with his Conscience & will keep on 'pegging away at the Rebels,' wholly satisfied that . . . his head will not be brought to the block." Opponents of the war might fuss and fume, but they were unlikely to commit political suicide. With frontier earthiness Lincoln told Barnett that "'Mrs Grundy [i.e., excessively conventional people] will talk' – but that, after all, she has more sense than to scald her own a[s]s in her own pot."¹⁹⁴

Lincoln's optimism was partly rooted in Republican successes that spring, when the party swept to victory in gubernatorial elections in New England and in municipal contests throughout the Midwest. As the summer progressed, military triumphs at Vicksburg, Gettysburg, and Tennessee cheered up the public. Even Rosecrans' defeat at Chickamauga failed to persuade many voters that the war was a failure. Nor could the daring raid of Confederate partisan John Hunt Morgan, who in July led 2500 men across

¹⁹⁴ Barnett to S. L. M. Barlow, Washington, 14 September, 10 June 1863, Baarlow Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

the Ohio River and rampaged through Indiana and Ohio, stealing horses and spreading panic, before being driven off with huge losses. The raid backfired politically. “If there was before any doubt about the Ohio election,” wrote Lyman Trumbull in early August, “Morgan’s raid has settled it. No campaign before ever damaged a political friend so much as Morgan’s has damaged Vallandigham’s.”¹⁹⁵ Lee’s unsuccessful invasion of Pennsylvania had a similar effect.

Helping brighten Republican prospects were new organizations, Union Leagues and Union Clubs, dedicated to promoting loyalty irrespective of party. In Eastern cities socially prestigious Union League Clubs emerged to complement its more down-to-earth branches in the Midwest. Members wrote and distributed patriotic literature; encouraged men to enlist; bolstered Union morale; and intimidated blatant Copperheads. Though not officially connected with the Republican party, the League did yeoman service in building support for the administration.¹⁹⁶ Lincoln’s secretary William O. Stoddard, an active member of the League, called it “the most perfect party skeleton ever put together for utter efficiency of political machine work.”¹⁹⁷

In part, the Union Leagues were intended to combat the activities of organizations like the Knights of the Golden Circle, a secret society formed in the 1850s to help spread slavery into the Caribbean basin. During the war, chapters were formed in the lower Midwest to promote the “Northwest Confederacy” project, an attempt to merge the South and West into a new nation and exclude New England. “The Northwest must prepared to

¹⁹⁵ Lyman Trumbull to Zachariah Chandler, 4 August 1863, Chandler Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁹⁶ Guy Gibson, “Lincoln’s League: The Union League Movement during the Civil War,” (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois, 1957); Clement M. Silvestro, “None but Patriots: Union Leagues in the Civil War and Reconstruction” (PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1959).

¹⁹⁷ Stoddard, Inside the White House in War Times, ed. Burlingame, 73.

take her destiny in her own hands,” the Chicago Times declared the day before the Emancipation Proclamation was formally promulgated. Confederate secret service agents encouraged the Knights and other elements trying to undermine the war effort.¹⁹⁸

Some Republicans exaggerated the threat posed by the Knights in order to discredit all Democrats, many of whom were loyal to the Union while opposed to the Republican economic program. During the war, Congress established a national banking system, granted public land to railroads, enacted an income tax, passed homestead legislation, jacked up tariff rates, and took other Hamiltonian steps, the likes of which Democrats had been denouncing since Thomas Jefferson’s day. Lincoln deferred to the legislature, spending little time or political capital on such economic legislation. (A conspicuous exception was the national banking act, which he championed vigorously.)¹⁹⁹ But the activities of many Knights and their ilk were far more sinister than simple Jeffersonian-Jacksonian dissent against modernization.²⁰⁰

Further enhancing the Republicans’ chances was the blundering leadership of the Democratic party. As T. J. Barnett told a leading New York Democrat, “the partizans are carping & yelling about dead issues, or the secondary one of Constitutional law.” In Washington, leading opponents of the administration were “selfish & unworthy!” They should stop criticizing Lincoln personally, stop harping on the race issue, and stop acting

¹⁹⁸ Wood Gray, The Hidden Civil War: The Story of the Copperheads (New York: Viking Press, 1942), passim; Frank L. Klement, The Copperheads in the Midwest (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 134-69; Chicago Times, 31 December 1862.

¹⁹⁹ G. S. Boritt, Lincoln and the Economics of the American Dream (Memphis, Tennessee: Memphis State University Press, 1978); Heather Cox Richardson, The Greatest Nation of the Earth: Republican Economic Policies During the Civil War (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Leonard P. Curry, Blueprint for Modern America: Non-military Legislation of the First Civil War Congress (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968).

²⁰⁰ Jennifer L. Weber, Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

in such a partisan manner.²⁰¹ “The hatchet must be buried with Mr Lincoln, on the War question,” Barnett counseled. The “Democracy must stand like Ate with her hound-furies, under the flag and by the side of its constituted authorities.” As it was, the Democrats did not seem like “a grand loyal Union party.” Barnett was right. The Democrats sorely missed the leadership of Stephen A. Douglas, whose unalloyed Unionism contrasted sharply with the negativism of so many other party spokesmen. Plaintively Barnett expressed the hope that the Democrats would “discard such oracles as Fernando Wood, James Brooks, & [Charles] Ingersoll, and [James W.] Wall, and Vallandigham, and [Daniel] Voorhees.”²⁰²

Even more embarrassing were Democratic legislatures in Indiana and Illinois, which brazenly refused to appropriate money or men for the war effort. The Republican governors (Oliver P. Morton and Richard Yates, respectively) used extra-constitutional means to thwart the obstructionists. Yates prorogued the Prairie State’s General Assembly, while Morton raised money from the federal government and private citizens.

Some Democrats hated Lincoln and his fellow leaders passionately. Shortly after Gettysburg, Samuel F. B. Morse called the president a man “without brains, so illiterate as not to be able to see the absurdities of his own logic, so weak and vacillating as to be swayed this way and that by the vulgar cant and fanaticism of such mad zealots as Wilson, Wade, Sumner, Chandler, [and] Wendell Phillips.”²⁰³

²⁰¹ T. J. Barnett to S. L. M. Barlow, Washington, 2, 9, 10 July 1863, Barlow Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

²⁰² T. J. Barnett to S. L. M. Barlow, Washington, 6 July 1863, Barlow Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

²⁰³ Morse to William M. Goodrich, 9 July 1863, in Nevins, War for the Union, 3:170-171.

In August, a Kentucky Unionist won the race for governor with the help of substantial military intervention. Lincoln wrote his vacationing wife that “the election in Kentucky has gone very strongly right. Old Mr. Wickliffe got ugly, and is terribly beaten.” (Charles A. Wickliffe received only 17,344 votes to his opponent’s 67,586.) The president also rejoiced at the victory of Unionist candidates for Congress, especially that of Green Clay Smith, who defeated incumbent John Menzies. Lincoln noted that Menzies “behaved very badly in the last session of Congress.”²⁰⁴

To bolster Republican prospects, the administration furloughed thousands of soldiers and granted leave to government employees from Pennsylvania and Ohio, allowing them to return home to vote. While that policy significantly helped Republican chances, Lincoln’s most important contribution to the campaign was his response to an invitation to visit Springfield, where Democrats had held a huge rally in June. To trump that event, Republicans organized an even bigger rally in August and wanted Lincoln to address it. He was tempted to go but felt he could not leave Washington when military events in Tennessee were unfolding. So he wrote a public letter, one of his very best, to be read at the Springfield conclave.

The invitation had come from his old friend, James C. Conkling, who like many Illinoisans worried about the strength of antiwar Democrats capitalizing on opposition to emancipation and the use of black soldiers. Even Republicans were growing disenchanted with the administration. Jackson Grimshaw lamented to Ozias M. Hatch: “God help us all but it looks blue. . . . Cotton & family speculations, concessions to army rascals – arrests one day & releases the next – Kentucky policy and all that have shit us to hell. . . . There

²⁰⁴ Lincoln to Mary Todd Lincoln, Washington, 8 August 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:372; Lowell H. Harrison, Lincoln of Kentucky (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 180-81.

are some loyal men amongst our democrats, but the Government must use force and crush out treason at home or we are used up.”²⁰⁵

Lincoln’s letter, which he asked Conkling to read slowly to the crowd at the Illinois capital, masterfully defended the Emancipation Proclamation and the decision to enroll black troops but avoided discussing the unpopular Conscription Act.²⁰⁶ With iron logic, Lincoln bluntly challenged Peace Democrats to answer some tough questions: “You desire peace; and you blame me that we do not have it. But how can we attain it? There are but three conceivable ways. First, to suppress the rebellion by force of arms. This, I am trying to do. Are you for it? If you are, so far we are agreed. If you are not for it, a second way is, to give up the Union. I am against this. Are you for it? If you are, you should say so plainly. If you are not for force, nor yet for dissolution, there only remains some imaginable compromise.”

But, Lincoln averred, no compromise which restored the Union was possible. Neither the Confederate army nor its civilian leadership had indicated interest in such a compromise. “In an effort at such compromise we should waste time, which the enemy would improve to our disadvantage; and that would be all.”

Lincoln boldly addressed the race issue, challenging his critics: “you are dissatisfied with me about the negro. Quite likely there is a difference of opinion between you and myself upon that subject. I certainly wish that all men could be free, while I suppose you do not.” As he had done earlier in the public letter addressed to Horace

²⁰⁵ Grimshaw to Ozias M. Hatch, 8 September 1862, 12 February 1863, Hatch Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

²⁰⁶ Lincoln allegedly told Schuyler Colfax “that he had prepared the argument in the previous spring & intended to send it to Congress if asked by them on that subject, & as he did not thus use it he did not wish to waste it & hence embodied it in a letter to his Springfield friend.” Colfax to John G. Nicolay, Newport, Rhode Island, 26 August 1875, Nicolay-Hay Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

Greeley, Lincoln emphasized that he issued the emancipation proclamation and approved the recruitment of black troops as Union-saving measures. He chided critics for their reluctance to avail themselves of his generous offer to pay for slaves: “I suggested compensated emancipation; to which you replied you wished not to be taxed to buy negroes. But I had not asked you to be taxed to buy negroes, except in such way, as to save you from greater taxation to save the Union exclusively by other means.” To those who objected that the Emancipation Proclamation violated the Constitution, Lincoln insisted that “the constitution invests its commander-in-chief, with the law of war, in time of war,” which permitted the seizure of property. Was there any doubt, he asked rhetorically, “that by the law of war, property, both of enemies and friends, may be taken when needed? And is it not needed whenever taking it, helps us, or hurts the enemy? Armies, the world over, destroy enemies' property when they can not use it; and even destroy their own to keep it from the enemy.”

Military leaders, the president assured his critics, had praised the Emancipation Proclamation and the employment of black troops as essential weapons in prosecuting the war. “I know as fully as one can know the opinions of others, that some of the commanders of our armies in the field who have given us our most important successes, believe the emancipation the heaviest blow yet dealt to the rebellion; and that, at least one of those important successes, could not have been achieved when it was, but for the aid of black soldiers. Among the commanders holding these views are some who have never had any affinity with what is called abolitionism, or with republican party politics; but who hold them purely as military opinions. I submit these opinions as being entitled to

some weight against the objections, often urged, that emancipation, and arming the blacks, are unwise as military measures, and were not adopted, as such, in good faith.”

Lincoln scolded and shamed those who said they would not serve in an army whose mission was to liberate the slaves: “You say you will not fight to free negroes. Some of them seem willing to fight for you; but, no matter. Fight you, then, exclusively to save the Union. I issued the proclamation on purpose to aid you in saving the Union. Whenever you shall have conquered all resistance to the Union, if I shall urge you to continue fighting, it will be an apt time, then, for you to declare you will not fight to free negroes. I thought that in your struggle for the Union, to whatever extent the negroes should cease helping the enemy, to that extent it weakened the enemy in his resistance to you. Do you think differently? I thought that whatever negroes can be got to do as soldiers, leaves just so much less for white soldiers to do, in saving the Union. Does it appear otherwise to you?”

If blacks were to help save the Union, they must be given some incentive to do so, for they, “like other people, act upon motives. Why should they do any thing for us, if we will do nothing for them? If they stake their lives for us, they must be prompted by the strongest motive – even the promise of freedom. And the promise being made, must be kept.”

Briefly, Lincoln set aside his relentless logical grilling of his critics to offer a somewhat whimsical progress report on the war, paying tribute to all who made the recent successes possible: “The signs look better. The Father of Waters again goes unvexed to the sea. Thanks to the great North-West for it. Nor yet wholly to them. Three hundred miles up, they met New-England, Empire, Key-Stone, and Jersey, hewing their

way right and left. The Sunny South too, in more colors than one, also lent a hand. On the spot, their part of the history was jotted down in black and white. The job was a great national one; and let none be banned who bore an honorable part in it. And while those who have cleared the great river may well be proud, even that is not all. It is hard to say that anything has been more bravely, and well done, than at Antietam, Murfreesboro, Gettysburg, and on many fields of lesser note. Nor must Uncle Sam's Web-feet be forgotten. At all the watery margins they have been present. Not only on the deep sea, the broad bay, and the rapid river, but also up the narrow muddy bayou, and wherever the ground was a little damp, they have been, and made their tracks. Thanks to all. For the great republic – for the principle it lives by, and keeps alive – for man's vast future, – thanks to all.”

In an eloquent conclusion, Lincoln meditated on the larger significance of the war. “Peace does not appear so distant as it did. I hope it will come soon, and come to stay; and so come as to be worth the keeping in all future time. It will then have been proved that, among free men, there can be no successful appeal from the ballot to the bullet; and that they who take such appeal are sure to lose their case, and pay the cost.” With crushing force he put critics of black recruitment in their place: “And then, there will be some black men who can remember that, with silent tongue, and clenched teeth, and steady eye, and well-poised bayonet, they have helped mankind on to this great consummation; while, I fear, there will be some white ones, unable to forget that, with malignant heart, and deceitful speech, they have strove to hinder it.”²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:406-411.

With this powerful letter, Lincoln helped scotch the Copperhead snake. It was read at the massive Springfield rally which, Conkling told the president, “was a magnificent success,” drawing between 50,000 and 75,000 people. “The most unbounded enthusiasm prevailed. The speeches were of the most earnest, radical and progressive character and the people applauded most vociferously every sentiment in favor of the vigorous prosecution of the war until the rebellion was subdued – the Proclamation of Emancipation and the arming of negro soldiers and every allusion to yourself and your policy.”²⁰⁸ A mass meeting of young men in New York greeted it “with shouts, cheers, thanksgiving, & tears.”²⁰⁹ Lincoln’s insistence that emancipation would not be reversed pleased many Radicals, who called the document “a blow at the copperheads which they will find it hard to parry” and “one of the heaviest blows they have ever received – unless we except Gov. Seymour’s mob.”²¹⁰ Charles Sumner told Lincoln that his “true & noble letter” was a “historic document” in which the “case is admirably stated, so that all but the wicked must confess its force. It cannot be answered.”²¹¹ Said the Chicago Tribune: “It has been feared that even he looked upon his Proclamation as a temporary expedient, born of the necessities of the situation, to be adhered to or retracted as a shortsighted or time-serving policy dictated; and that when the moment for attempting compromise might come, he would put it aside. In a few plain sentences, none more important were ever uttered in this country, Mr. Lincoln exonerates himself from the charge urged against him, shows the untenableness of the position that his enemies occupy, and gives

²⁰⁸ Conkling to Lincoln, Springfield, 4 September 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁰⁹ James A. Briggs to Salmon P. Chase, New York, 5 September 1863, Chase Papers, Library of Congress.

²¹⁰ F. B. Sanborn to Moncure D. Conway, Concord, Massachusetts, 3 September 1863, Conway Papers, Columbia University; National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York), 12 September 1863.

²¹¹ Charles Sumner to Lincoln, Boston, 7 September 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

the world assurance that that great measure of policy and justice, which . . . guarantees freedom to three millions of slaves, is to remain the law of the republic. . . . The battle is to be fought out. No miserable compromise . . . is to stop the progress of our arms God bless Old Abe!" The Chicago Times huffed: "If the proclamation cannot be retracted then every provision in the constitution pertaining to slavery is abrogated. . . . The Constitution has been murdered – assassinated – by him who solemnly swore to 'preserve, protect and defend it.'" The Louisville Daily Democrat inferred that "we must go on until there is no power to resist left in the South – not a remnant," and "at the end, if there ever be an end, we shall have, not a restoration of the Union, but something else, which may be desirable or not, no one can foresee." In New York, the anti-administration journal The Old Guard bitterly remarked, "If it has any meaning at all it means that the object of this struggle is to free negroes. And to do this he is willing to shed the blood of a quarter of a million of white men."²¹²

Though some Republicans who had anticipated that Lincoln would discuss Reconstruction issues were disappointed, most cheered the Conkling letter. The New York Times rejoiced, insisting "that it is plain that the President has no power to make a man once legally free again legally a slave. The President's argument for the employment of colored troops is unanswerable."²¹³ The New York Evening Post lauded the "singularly clear and ingenuous letter," which radiated "manly honesty, a sincere desire to do right, a conscientious intention to observe faithfully his oaths of office, and to do his duty as an American citizen, and a lover of democratic institutions and of that liberty

²¹² Allen C. Guelzo, "Defending Emancipation: Abraham Lincoln and the Conkling Letter, 1863," Civil War History 48 (2002): 313-337.

²¹³ New York Times, 3 September 1863.

upon which our government is founded.”²¹⁴ The North American Review thought that Lincoln has "been reproached with Americanisms by some not unfriendly British critics," but the editor agreed with George Templeton Strong, who judged that some sentences “a critic would like to eliminate, but they are delightfully characteristic of the man.” The letter, Strong predicted, was "likely to be a conspicuous document in the history of our times.”²¹⁵ The Illinois State Register was less tolerant of presidential colloquialisms: "Mr. Lincoln speaks of 'Uncle Sam's webbed feet' as if the government were a goose," and "in the radical view of who constitutes 'the government,' perhaps he is right.”²¹⁶ A Radical admirer of the letter acknowledged that it “is a queer mingling of sense and humor.”²¹⁷

Charles Eliot Norton, who had been a harsh critic of Lincoln’s rhetoric, praised “the extraordinary excellence of the President's letter.” In Norton’s opinion, the president rose “with each new effort, and his letters are successive victories.” The public letters since the one to Erastus Corning and the other Albany Democrats “are, as he says to General Grant of Vicksburg, ‘of almost inestimable value to the country,’ – for they are of the rarest class of political documents, arguments seriously addressed by one in power to the conscience and reason of the citizens of the commonwealth.” Such public letters, Norton boldly asserted, were “of the more value to us as permanent precedents – examples of the possibility of the coexistence of a strong government with entire and immediate dependence upon and direct appeal to the people. There is in them the clearest

²¹⁴ New York Evening Post, 3 September 1863.

²¹⁵ Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey, eds., The Diary of George Templeton Strong (4 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1952), 3:355 (entry for 3 September 1863); North American Review 98 (January 1864):244.

²¹⁶ Illinois State Register (Springfield), 8 September 1863.

²¹⁷ F. B. Sanborn to Moncure D. Conway, Concord, Massachusetts, 3 September 1863, Conway Papers, Columbia University.

tone of uprightness of character, purity of intention, and goodness of heart.”²¹⁸ John Hay deemed the Conkling letter "a great thing" despite some "hideously bad rhetoric" and "some indecorums that are infamous." It "takes its solid place in history as a great utterance of a great man. The whole Cabinet could not have tinkered up a letter which could have been compared with it. He can snake a sophism out of its hole, better than all the trained logicians of all schools."²¹⁹

The reaction in England was generally positive. The London Star called the Conkling letter "the manifesto of a truly great man in the exigency of almost unequaled moment" and "a masterpiece of cogent argument." As "an appeal to the spirit of the nation it is sublime in the dignified simplicity of its eloquence," which was "worthy of a Cromwell or a Washington."²²⁰ The eminent British analyst of slavery, John Elliot Cairnes, was "particularly pleased" with the Conkling letter, which he thought "an immense advance" over the Greeley letter; it proved that Lincoln was "a man of truly statesmanlike caliber of mind. To my taste there has been none like him since Washington. The metal indeed received the temper slowly, but now that it has got it, 'it can stand the strain of being in deadly earnest.'"²²¹

The Democrats' most egregious blunder was nominating Clement L. Vallandigham for governor of Ohio instead of a more moderate candidate like Representative S. S. "Sunset" Cox or an earlier gubernatorial candidate like Hugh J.

²¹⁸ Norton to George William Curtis, Cambridge, 3 September 1863, Sara Norton and M. A. De Wolfe Howe, eds., Letters of Charles Eliot Norton (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), 1:263.

²¹⁹ Hay to Nicolay, Washington, 11 September 1863, in Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln's Side, 53-54.

²²⁰ Louis A. Warren, Lincoln's Gettysburg Declaration: "A New Birth of Freedom" (Fort Wayne: Lincoln National Life Foundation, 1964), xv, 51.

²²¹ Cairnes to George William Curtis, n.p., n.d., quoted in George William Curtis to Charles Eliot, North Shore, New York, 5 November 1863, George William Curtis Papers, Harvard.

Jewett, Rufus P. Ranney, or Henry B. Payne. The campaign became a referendum on the war rather than alleged government violations of civil liberties. From exile in Canada, where Vallandigham had settled weeks after Lincoln banished him to the South, he was unable to mount a serious campaign against his opponent, John Brough, a rotund, witty, persuasive orator and former Democrat who had served as Ohio's state auditor as well as president of a railroad. Unlike the incumbent governor, David Tod, Brough warmly supported emancipation. Republicans denounced Vallandigham as a traitor for opposing the war effort. Noting that he had been a brigadier in the Ohio militia in antebellum days, they ridiculed him as a general who was "invincible in peace, invisible in war."²²² Republicans soft-pedaled the slavery issue, for as Murat Halstead warned, "if the vote were taken in Ohio between Vallandigham and the 'radical policy' of the President, the foolish and hopelessly impracticable proclamation &c, the election of Vallandigham would be the result. The essential thing in this canvass is to keep the Administration out of sight as much as possible, and talk of the cause of nationality and nothing else." Halstead grew optimistic when Burnside left Ohio for Tennessee: "now we will beat Vallandigham without the soldiers vote, if there can be a few moments quiet on the nigger question."²²³

But the Democrats would not keep quiet on that issue. Appealing to race prejudice, they called Brough a "nigger-lover," a "fat Knight of the corps d'Afrique," and a candidate of the "nigger-worshipping Republican party." Their rallies featured young women standing beneath banners imploring: "Father, save us from Negro Equality." One

²²² Frank L. Klement, The Limits of Dissent: Clement L. Vallandigham & the Civil War (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 240.

²²³ Halstead to Chase, Cincinnati, 28 August 1863, Chase Papers, Library of Congress.

Democrat warned that the “‘irrepressible conflict’ between white and black laborers will be realized in all its vigor upon Ohio soil if the policy of Lincoln and Brough is carried.” Another urged fellow Buckeyes to let “every vote count in favor of the white man, and against the Abolition hordes, who would place negro children in your schools, negro jurors in your jury boxes, and negro votes in your ballot boxes!” Democrats portrayed their candidate as a “Martyr to Freedom of Speech.”²²⁴

As the campaign heated up, Republicans in mid-September rejoiced at the news from Maine, where they won the gubernatorial election by a landslide and captured an overwhelming majority of the legislature. On October 13, as Ohio voters flocked to the polls, Lincoln said he felt nervous.²²⁵ The stakes were high, as Thomas F. Meagher, a War Democrat and founder of the Irish Brigade, explained: “The importance of the coming contest in Ohio . . . cannot be exaggerated. The triumph of the National Government in this contest . . . will be of no less (possibly of greater) consequence, than the repulse of the armed enemy at Gettysburg and the capitulation of Vicksburg have been. Defeated in Ohio, the malcontents and conspirators of the North are beaten everywhere. Their backbone is broken; and the surest way to kill a copperhead or any other reptile . . . is to break his back.”²²⁶

When Brough triumphed over Vallandigham by a margin of slightly less than 100,000, capturing 95% of the soldier vote, Lincoln was vastly relieved.²²⁷ The following

²²⁴ V. Jacque Voegeli, Free but Not Equal: The Midwest and the Negro during the Civil War (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 126-27; Klement, Limits of Dissent, 243-48.

²²⁵ Beale, ed., Welles Diary, 1:469-70 (entry for 13 October 1863).

²²⁶ W. F. Lyons, Brigadier-General Thomas F. Meagher (New York, 1870), 182.

²²⁷ Arnold Shankman, “Soldier Votes and Clement L. Vallandigham in the 1863 Ohio Gubernatorial Election,” Ohio History 82 (1973): 88-104. Even without the soldier vote, Brough would have triumphed by a margin of over 60,000.

day, with “a good deal of emotion” he told Gideon Welles that he “had more anxiety in regard to the election results of yesterday [in Ohio] than he had in 1860 when he was chosen. He could not have believed four years ago that one genuine American would or could be induced to vote for such a man as Vallandigham; yet he has been made the candidate of a large party, their representative man, and has received a vote that has discredited the country.”²²⁸

When Brough called at the White House and lamented that he had not prevailed by 100,000 votes, Lincoln said he was reminded of a “man who had been greatly annoyed by an ugly dog” and “took a club and knocked the dog on the head and killed him; but he still continued to whack the animal, when a passer-by cried out to him, ‘Why, what are you about, man? Don’t you see the dog is dead? Where is the use of beating him now?’ ‘Yes,’ replied the man, whacking away at the dog, ‘I know he is dead, but I wanted to teach the mean dog that there is punishment after death.’ Poor Val was dead before the election, but Brough wanted to keep on whacking him, as the man did the dog, after death.”²²⁹

Lincoln was also gratified by the outcome in Pennsylvania, where Governor Andrew G. Curtin stood for reelection despite suffering from such poor health that he could not campaign extensively. The Democrats had nominated George W. Woodward, the cold, calculating chief justice of the state supreme court who maintained that both the Enrollment and the Legal Tender Acts were unconstitutional. He had done his best to impede the draft. During the secession crisis, he called slavery an “incalculable blessing”

²²⁸ Beale, ed., Welles Diary, 1:470 (entry for 14 October 1863).

²²⁹ Washington correspondence, 27 November, New Haven Palladium, 30 November 1863. Cf. Ward Hill Lamson, Recollections of Abraham Lincoln, 1847-1865, ed. Dorothy Lamson Teillard (Washington: the editor, 1911), 138.

and expressed the hope that if the country were to be split, the dividing line would run north of the Keystone State.²³⁰ On September 4, Secretary Chase, who actively campaigned for Brough in Ohio, informed a friend that “Gov. Curtin’s reelection or defeat is now the success or defeat of the administration of President Lincoln.”²³¹ That same day Curtin warned Lincoln that if “the election were to occur now, the result would be extremely doubtful.”²³² As October began, Curtin reported that he was “having a hotly-contested canvass.”²³³ On election day, a letter by General McClellan, who was angling for the 1864 Democratic presidential nomination, appeared in Democratic newspapers stating that “I would, were it in my power, give to Judge Woodward my voice and vote.”²³⁴ Little Mac’s intervention proved futile, for Curtin, known as the “Soldiers’ Friend,” bested Woodward by over 15,000 votes, winning 51.5% of the ballots cast. But the Young Napoleon did improve his chances to win his party’s nod for the presidency a few months later. According to Alexander K. McClure, Lincoln took “unusual interest” in the Pennsylvania campaign “and his congratulations to Curtin upon his re-election were repeated for several days, and often as quaint as they were sincere.”²³⁵

George William Curtis urged friends to “rejoice over Penn. & Ohio. It is the great vindication of the President, and the popular verdict upon the policy of the war.”

²³⁰ Shankman, Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement, 122-40.

²³¹ Chase to Jay Cooke, Washington, 4 September 1863, Chase Papers, Library of Congress.

²³² Curtin to Lincoln, Harrisburg, 4 September 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

²³³ Curtin to E. D. Morgan, Harrisburg, 1 October 1863, Morgan Papers, New York State Library.

²³⁴ Stephen B. Sears, George B. McClellan: The Young Napoleon (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1988), 357-58.

²³⁵ Alexander K. McClure, Abraham Lincoln and Men of War-Times (Philadelphia: Times, 1892), 265.

Rhetorically he asked, “Is it not the sign of the final disintegration of that rotten mass known technically as the Democratic party?”²³⁶

Republicans also won gubernatorial races in Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Massachusetts, as well as carrying numerous local elections. Lincoln’s spirits soared; he was especially delighted with the landslide victory in the Bay State.

TRANSFORMING THE FREE STATE INTO A FREE STATE

The November elections in Maryland (for congressmen, state comptroller, and local offices) caused Lincoln some anxiety, for he was especially eager to promote emancipation there. But the public was led to believe otherwise when on October 3, Montgomery Blair delivered a speech at Rockville attacking “ultra-abolitionist” demands and sharply criticizing Charles Sumner’s reconstruction views. (Four months earlier he had made similar remarks in New Hampshire, denouncing Radicals for policies which, he predicted, would lead to racial amalgamation and servile war.) Infuriated Radicals, like Senators Wade and Chandler, warned that if Blair made another such speech “it would kill Lincoln.”²³⁷ Thaddeus Stevens complained that Blair’s “vile” remarks were “much more infamous than any speech yet made by a Copperhead orator. I know of no rebel sympathizer who has charged such disgusting principles and designs on the republican party as this apostate. It has and will do us more harm at the election than all the efforts of the Opposition. If these are the principles of the Administration no earnest anti-slavery man will wish it to be sustained. If such men are to be retained in Mr. Lincoln’s cabinet, it

²³⁶ George William Curtis to Charles Eliot Norton, New York, 15 October 1863, George William Curtis Papers, Harvard University.

²³⁷ James A. Briggs to Chase, New York, 2 November 1863, Chase Papers, Library of Congress.

is time, we were consulting about his successor."²³⁸ Stevens also denounced Seward, telling Lincoln: "I and ever so many Penn[sylvanian]s went to Chicago to get rid of Seward & after all that trouble & taking you to get rid of him, here we are saddled with both of you."

"Well," replied Lincoln, "I suppose you would be willing to get rid of me to get rid of him."

"I don[']t know, Mr. Pres[iden]t what the people might think if they had the opportunity to speak!!"²³⁹

Another Pennsylvanian, John W. Forney, told Lincoln, in the postmaster general's presence, "that if B[lair]'s speech had been made 30 days before it was made it would have lost us Penn[sylvania]."²⁴⁰ When Blair protested, Forney asked heatedly: "why don't you leave the Cabinet, and not load down with your individual and peculiar sentiments the administration to which you belong?"²⁴¹ Lincoln observed this sharp exchange in silence.

Embarrassed by Blair's indiscretion, Lincoln claimed not to have read the Rockville speech.²⁴² To John Hay, he explained that he saw little difference between Sumner's approach to Reconstruction and Blair's. He deemed the controversy "one of mere form and little else. I do not think Mr Blair would agree that the states in rebellion

²³⁸ Thaddeus Stevens to Chase, Lancaster, 8 October 1863, Beverly Wilson Palmer, ed., The Selected Papers of Thaddeus Stevens (2 vols.; Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997-1998), 1:413-414.

²³⁹ Henry Winter Davis to Samuel F. Du Pont, n.p., 5 December 1863, transcript, S. F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware.

²⁴⁰ James A. Briggs to Chase, New York, 2 November 1863, Chase Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁴¹ Noah Brooks, Washington, D. C., in Lincoln's Time, ed. Herbert Mitgang (1895; Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 127.

²⁴² Washington correspondence, 2 November, National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York), 7 November 1863.

are to be permitted to come at once into the political family & renew the very performances which have so bedeviled us. I do not think Mr. Sumner would insist that when the loyal people of a state obtain the supremacy in their councils & are ready to assume the direction of their own affairs, that they should be excluded. I do not understand Mr. Blair to admit that Jefferson Davis may take his seat in Congress again as a Representative of his people; I do not understand Mr Sumner to assert that John Minor Botts may not. So far as I understand Mr Sumner he seems in favor of Congress taking from the Executive the power it at present exercises over insurrectionary districts, and assuming it to itself. But when the vital question arises as to the right and privilege of the people of these states to govern themselves, I apprehend there will be little difference among loyal men. The question at once is presented in whom this power is vested. And the practical matter for decision is how to keep the rebellious populations from overwhelming and outvoting the loyal minority.”²⁴³

Unlike Lincoln, many Radicals viewed the issues raised by Blair’s speech as matters of substance rather than form. They also objected to the postmaster general’s efforts to defeat the candidacy of Congressman Henry Winter Davis. To Radicals, Lincoln’s reluctance to disavow Blair made it seem as if he were “on the fence, apparently caring little which party wins – the anti-slavery or the pro-slavery.”²⁴⁴

To defuse such criticism, Lincoln injected himself into the campaign publicly by having Samuel Galloway of Ohio convey a message to a huge Union party rally at

²⁴³ Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 105-6 (entry for 1 November 1863).

²⁴⁴ Washington correspondence, 2 November, National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York), 7 November 1863.

Baltimore in late October: “I am with them in heart, sympathy, in the great cause of Unconditional Union and Emancipation.”²⁴⁵

Lincoln also tried to promote harmony between Unconditional and Conservative Unionists in Maryland. The army’s practice of recruiting slaves in a rather arbitrary manner, making little distinction between loyal and disloyal owners, had strained relations between those factions.²⁴⁶ When irate Unionist slaveholders protested, the president told them “that if the recruiting squads did not conduct themselves properly, their places should be supplied by others, but that the orders under which the enlistments were being made could not be revoked, since the country needed able-bodied soldiers, and was not squeamish as to their complexion.”²⁴⁷ He emphasized, however, that he wished to offend no Marylanders. In October, he issued a general order providing that loyal slaveholders would be paid up to \$300 for any slave who enlisted, with the understanding that all such recruits would “forever thereafter be free.”²⁴⁸ Any loyal slave owners unwilling to let their slaves join the army must themselves enter the ranks.

Earlier Lincoln had instructed General Robert C. Schenck to rein in aggressive recruiters, for he feared that discontent among the loyal slaveholders might jeopardize the Union party at the polls. Learning that his instructions were not being conscientiously obeyed, he became angry at Schenck, whom he described as “wider across the head in the region of the ears, & loves fight for its own sake, better than I do.”²⁴⁹ Summoning the

²⁴⁵ Baltimore American, 29 October 1863.

²⁴⁶ Augustus W. Bradford to Montgomery Blair, Baltimore, 11 September 1863, copy, Bradford Papers, Maryland Historical Society; Augustus W. Bradford to Lincoln, Annapolis, 28 September 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁴⁷ Washington correspondence, 21 October, New York Tribune, 22 October 1863.

²⁴⁸ OR, III, 3:860-61.

²⁴⁹ Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 97 (entry for 22 October 1863).

general and his chief of staff, Donn Piatt, to the White House, he dressed them down. “I do not care to recall the words of Mr. Lincoln,” Piatt later wrote. “They were exceedingly severe, for the President was in a rage.”²⁵⁰

Lincoln also sought to curb Schenck’s high-handed interference in the electoral process. The general prescribed a stringent loyalty oath for voters and dispatched troops around the state to intimidate Democrats and Conservative Unionists. Though Lincoln upheld Schenck’s test oath, he modified the general’s order to arrest anyone near the polls who seemed disloyal. In an unapologetic letter to Governor Augustus W. Bradford, who protested against Schenck’s procedures, the president insisted that loyal voters would be protected against violent attempts to intimidate them: “General Schenck is fully determined, and has my strict orders besides, that all loyal men may vote, and vote for whom they please.”²⁵¹

Abolitionists applauded Lincoln’s “manly letter to Gov. Bradford,” which allegedly “gave solid encouragement to the Emancipationists of Maryland, and enabled them to elect their candidates.”²⁵² They also cheered his decision to remove some federal office-holders in Maryland who opposed emancipation. The president’s action gave the lie to Conservatives’ claims that he was on their side. In late October, when Maryland Senator Reverdy Johnson informed the president of his constituents’ apprehension about

²⁵⁰ Donn Piatt, Memories of the Men Who Saved the Union (New York: Belford, Clarke, 1887), 44-45.

²⁵¹ Augustus W. Bradford to Lincoln, Annapolis, 31 October, 3 November 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Lincoln to Augustus W. Bradford, Washington, 2 November 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:556-57.

²⁵² Washington correspondence, 9 November, National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York), 14 November 1863.

potential military interference, Lincoln “hooted the idea, said that no such purpose was entertained, nor had he received any intimation of any desire to that effect.”²⁵³

On election day, however, Schenck’s forces actively intervened at the polls and helped depress the turnout. At the White House, returns from Maryland were anxiously awaited. There was great relief when news arrived that Unconditional Unionists won four congressional races while Representative John W. Crisfield, a Conservative Unionist, lost his reelection bid. Emancipationists also won control of the legislature. The antislavery forces’ triumph, which paved the way for emancipation the following year, would probably not have occurred without federal interference.²⁵⁴

With some justification critics like Reverdy Johnson condemned the “rule of military despotism” in Maryland. His senate colleague from Kentucky, Lazarus W. Powell, charged the administration “with trampling under foot the . . . right of free suffrage.”²⁵⁵ Lincoln pledged “to hold to account” any officer who violated his order.²⁵⁶ Congress outlawed the use of troops at election time except “to repel the armed enemies of the United States or to keep peace at the polls.

²⁵³ Augustus W. Bradford to George Vickers, Annapolis, 27 October 1863, Bradford Papers, Maryland Historical Society. With Reverdy Johnson, Bradford had called at the White House on October 22.

²⁵⁴ Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 109 (entry for 4 November 1863); Charles Wagandt, The Mighty Revolution: Negro Emancipation in Maryland, 1862-1864 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1964), 133-84.

²⁵⁵ Congressional Globe, 38th Congress, 1st session, appendix 34.

²⁵⁶ John W. Crisfield to Augustus W. Bradford, Princess Anne, Maryland, 14 November 1863, Crisfield Papers, Maryland Historical Society. Crisfield complained that his defeat was caused by army meddling in the election. Crisfield to Montgomery Blair, Princess Anne, 8 November 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

Lincoln's public letters, most notably the one to Conkling, helped make the crucial electoral victories possible. That document, along with the Corning and Birchard letters about Vallandigham and the correspondence with Seymour, was published in pamphlet form and widely distributed. Maine Governor Israel Washburn told the president that the Conkling letter "aided not a little in swelling our wonderful majority" in the September election.²⁵⁷

Lincoln modestly disclaimed credit for the electoral victories, saying he was "very glad" that he had "not, by native depravity, or under evil influences, done anything bad enough to prevent the good result."²⁵⁸ When congratulated on the outcome, he remarked: "The people are for this war. They want the rebellion crushed and as quick as may be, too."²⁵⁹

WIDELY NOTED AND LONG REMEMBERED: ADDRESS AT GETTYSBURG

Shortly after the elections Lincoln prepared a brief public utterance that would clinch his reputation as a supremely gifted writer: the Gettysburg Address.

In the summer of 1863, when David Wills, an aggressive and successful young attorney in Gettysburg, organized an effort to create a national cemetery for the Union soldiers killed there, he and his fellow planners decided to consecrate the site with a solemn ceremony. They agreed that the principal speaker should be Edward Everett, the most celebrated orator of the day, and that Lincoln should also be invited to deliver a "few appropriate remarks." Everett's invitation went out on September 23. In accepting, he asked that the scheduled date for the ceremony (October 23) be postponed to

²⁵⁷ Israel Washburn Jr. to Lincoln, Orono, Maine, 15 September 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁵⁸ Lincoln to Zachariah Chandler, Washington, 20 November 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:24.

²⁵⁹ Washington correspondence, 4 November, New York Evening Post, 5 November 1863.

November 19 in order to give him sufficient preparation time. Wills honored this request and waited till November 2 to write an invitation to the president asking him to “formally set apart these grounds to their Sacred use by a few appropriate remarks.” Lincoln was probably approached earlier, perhaps by Pennsylvania Governor Andrew G. Curtin in late August.²⁶⁰

Lincoln was predisposed to accept the invitation, for he had told White House serenaders on July 7 that the defeat of Lee’s army on the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence was “a glorious theme, and the occasion for a speech.” But, he added, he was not at that moment “prepared to make one worthy of the occasion.”²⁶¹ His inclination to make such a speech was probably enhanced by suggestions he received from correspondents, among them John Murray Forbes. That Massachusetts railroad magnate and philanthropist said that because the Conkling letter had “exhausted (so far as you are concerned) the question of the Negro,” it was now time to direct the public’s attention to “the true issue of the existing struggle” namely, the worldwide struggle for democracy. Forbes suggested that Lincoln “seize an early opportunity and every subsequent chance to reach your great audience of plain people that the war is not North against South but the Poep[le] against the Aristocrats[.] If you can place this in the same strong light that you have the Negro question you will settle it in men[']s minds as you have that.”²⁶²

²⁶⁰ Warren, Lincoln's Gettysburg Declaration, 40-47.

²⁶¹ Response to a serenade, 7 July 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:319-20.

²⁶² John Murray Forbes to Lincoln, Boston, 8 September 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. Forbes had been making this point strongly for months. See Forbes to Chase, aboard the steamer Arabia, 27 March 1863, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania: “this is a war of a class against the people,” a fact which he feared “our good President does not duly appreciate.”

From the outset of the war, Lincoln had regarded the conflict as one to vindicate democracy, not simply to preserve the Union for its own sake or to liberate slaves. As he told John Hay in May 1861, “the central idea” of the war was to prove “that popular government is not an absurdity.”²⁶³ In writing his address, Lincoln did not take Forbes’s suggestion to emphasize class consciousness and antagonism, but he did make it clear that the stakes of the war involved more than slavery and territorial integrity. Union soldiers died in the effort to prove that self-government was viable for all nations, not just the United States. “Man’s vast future” would be determined by the outcome of the war.

The president evidently did not share Forbes’ view that the Conkling letter had disposed of the slavery issue. In his speech he would emphasize that the war would midwife “a new birth of freedom” by liberating slaves and thus move the country closer to realizing the Founders’ vision of equality. Since 1854 he had been stressing the need to live up to the ideal expressed in the Declaration of Independence.

It is not clear when and how Lincoln composed his Gettysburg address. He told close friends like James Speed and Noah Brooks that he began composing it in Washington and finished it in Pennsylvania.²⁶⁴ John G. Nicolay, who accompanied the president to Gettysburg, testified that he saw him revise the address on the morning of November 19. Nicolay emphatically denied that Lincoln composed or revised it on the

²⁶³ Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 20 (entry for 7 May 1861).

²⁶⁴ James Speed to John R. Sutherland, Louisville, 13 April 1887, New York Times, 20 April 1887.

train ride from Washington.²⁶⁵ That seems plausible, for the train jerked and bumped along so much that it was virtually impossible for passengers to write anything.²⁶⁶

When composing his speech, Lincoln doubtless recalled the language of Daniel Webster and Theodore Parker.²⁶⁷ In Webster's celebrated 1830 reply to Robert Hayne, the Massachusetts senator referred to the "people's government, made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people." Parker, whom the president admired and who frequently corresponded with Herndon, used a similar definition of democracy. Lincoln was familiar with at least two of Parker's formulations. In his "Sermon on the Dangers which Threaten the Rights of Man in America," delivered on July 2, 1854, the Unitarian divine twice referred to "government of all, by all, and for all." In another sermon delivered four years later, "The Effect of Slavery on the American People," Parker said "Democracy is Direct Self-government, over all the people, for all the people, by all the people." Lincoln, who owned copies of these works, told his good friend Jesse W. Fell that he thought highly of Parker. Fell believed that Lincoln's religious views more closely resembled Parker's than those of any other theologian.²⁶⁸ Lincoln may also have recalled the words that Galusha Grow, speaker of the U.S. House, uttered on the memorable 4th of July 1861 as Congress met for the first time during the war: "Fourscore years ago fifty-six bold merchants, farmers, lawyers, and mechanics, the representatives of a few feeble colonists, scattered along the Atlantic seaboard, met in convention to

²⁶⁵ John G. Nicolay, "Lincoln's Gettysburg Address," Century Magazine 47 (February 1894):601.

²⁶⁶ Cincinnati Commercial, 23 November 1863.

²⁶⁷ Carl F. Wieck, Lincoln's Quest for Equality: The Road to Gettysburg (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002), *passim*; Garry Wills, Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 106-32.

²⁶⁸ Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants: Letters, Interviews, and Statements about Abraham Lincoln (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 580.

found a new empire, based on the inalienable rights of man."²⁶⁹ Many newspapers published that speech.

Lincoln told James Speed that “he was anxious to go” to Gettysburg, but as the ceremony date drew near, the president worried that he might not be able to do so, for he was reluctant to leave the bedside of his son Tad, ill with scarletina.²⁷⁰ In addition, Ben: Perley Poore reported on November 14 that even though “it has been announced that the President will positively attend the inauguration of the Gettysburg soldiers’ cemetery, it can hardly be possible for him to leave at this time, when his public duties are so pressing.”²⁷¹ (Among other things, Lincoln was paying close attention to military developments at Chattanooga and was busy composing his annual message to Congress, to be delivered in early December.) But four days later, Poore wrote that “Such had been the pressure exerted on the President that he will probably go to Gettysburg tomorrow.”²⁷² The president did in fact depart for Pennsylvania on November 18 even though Tad’s health remained questionable.

Accompanying Lincoln to Gettysburg were cabinet members (Seward, Usher, and Blair), personal secretaries (Nicolay and Hay), a body servant (William Johnson), diplomatic representatives, Everett’s daughter and son-in-law, and the Pennsylvania politician Wayne McVeagh. Also aboard the four-coach train were bodyguards, journalists, and musicians. Stanton had originally arranged for the president to leave on

²⁶⁹ Congressional Globe, 37th Congress, 1st session, p. 4. Don E. Fehrenbacher plausibly argued that Lincoln would have read these remarks and stored them in his memory. Fehrenbacher, Lincoln in Text and Context: Collected Essays (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 347.

²⁷⁰ Long Remembered: Facsimiles of the Five Versions of the Gettysburg Address in the Handwriting of Abraham Lincoln (Washington, Library of Congress, 1963), 3; Collier’s, 7 February 1925.

²⁷¹ Washington correspondence, 14 November, Boston Journal, 17 November 1863.

²⁷² Washington correspondence, 18 November, Boston Journal, 20 November 1863.

the morning of the 19th, but Lincoln, fearing that was cutting it too close, insisted on departing the day before.

Arriving in Gettysburg in the late afternoon of November 18, Lincoln, flanked by a cheering crowd, proceeded to the home of David Wills, where he was to spend the night. Edward Everett observed that at supper, the president was as gentlemanly in appearance, manners, and conversation as any of the diplomats, governors, and other eminenti at the table. Thus did Lincoln belie his reputation for backwoods social awkwardness.²⁷³ After the meal, when serenaders regaled him at the Wills house, he asked to be excused from addressing them: “I appear before you, fellow-citizens, merely to thank you for this compliment. The inference is a very fair one that you would to hear me for a little while at least, were I to commence make a speech. I do not appear before you for the purpose of doing so, and for several substantial reasons. The most substantial of these is that I have no speech to make. [Laughter.] In my position it is somewhat important that I should not say any foolish things.” An irreverent voice rang out: “If you can help it.” Lincoln replied good-naturedly: “It very often happens that the only way to help it is to say nothing at all. [Laughter.] Believing that is my present condition this evening, I must beg of you to excuse me from addressing you further.”²⁷⁴ The crowd cheered enthusiastically then moved next door to the home of Robert G. Harper, where Seward was staying. The secretary of state obliged them with more extensive remarks, strongly endorsing the Emancipation Proclamation and emphasizing that the war was fought to vindicate the principle of majority rule. This speech probably represents the

²⁷³ On November 15, 1864, Everett said this in a toast offered at a Boston banquet honoring the captain and crew of the U. S. S. Kearsarge. Warren, Lincoln’s Gettysburg Declaration, 66.

²⁷⁴ Remarks to citizens of Gettysburg, 18 November 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:17.

formal speech that Seward would have delivered at the ceremony in case Lincoln had remained in Washington. (A journalist objected to Seward's egotism, pointing out that he used the first person singular pronoun ten times.)²⁷⁵

Later that evening Lincoln greeted guests at a reception for an hour, then retired to work on his speech. Around 11 o'clock he stepped next door to confer with Seward and returned in less than half an hour. It is not known what, if any, suggestions the secretary of state may have made. Lifting the president's spirits was a telegram announcing that his son might be "slightly better."²⁷⁶

The next morning, well before dawn, all roads to Gettysburg grew clogged with wagons, buggies, horseback riders, and pedestrians eager to attend the well-publicized ceremony. Others came pouring out of the uncomfortable trains that chugged into the local station. Quickly they overflowed the town's streets.²⁷⁷ According to one reporter, most "were fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters, who had come from distant parts to look at and weep over the remains of their fallen kindred, or to gather up the honored relics and bear them back to the burial grounds of their native homes – in relating what they had suffered and endured, and what part their loved ones had borne in the memorable days of July." An elderly Massachusetts gentleman remarked, "I have a son who fell in the first day's fight, and I have come to take back his body, for his mother's heart is breaking, and she will not be satisfied till it is brought home to her." A Pennsylvanian explained: "My brother was killed in the charge of the Pennsylvania

²⁷⁵ New York Tribune, 30 November 1863.

²⁷⁶ Mary Todd Lincoln to Lincoln, Washington, 18 November 1863, Justin G. Turner and Linda Levitt Turner, eds., Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters (New York: Knopf, 1972), 158.

²⁷⁷ Washington Daily Morning Chronicle, 21 November 1863.

Reserves on the enemy when they were driven from Little Round-top, but we don't know where his remains are."²⁷⁸

The sky, at first overcast, cleared during the ceremony. John Hay called it “one of the most beautiful Indian Summer days ever enjoyed.”²⁷⁹ As people swarmed into town, Lincoln rose early, toured the battlefield with Seward, and polished his address.²⁸⁰ To a reporter who had managed to gain access to the Wills’ house, the president said: “The best course for the journals of the country to pursue, if they wished to sustain the Government, was to stand by the officers of the army.” Rather than harping on military failures, newspapers should urge people to render “all the aid in their power” to the war effort.”²⁸¹ At 10 o’clock he joined the procession to the cemetery, led by his friend Ward Hill Lamon, the marshal in charge of arrangements. Upon emerging from the Wills house wearing a black suit and white gauntlets, Lincoln encountered a huge crowd whose deafening cheers made him blush. A journalist noted that his “awkwardness which is so often remarked does not extend to his horsemanship.”²⁸² Another reporter wrote that once in the saddle, Lincoln “sat up the tallest and grandest rider in the procession, bowing and nearly laughing his acknowledgments to the oft-repeated cheers – ‘Hurrah for Old Abe;’ and ‘We’re coming, Father Abraham,’ and one solitary greeting of its kind, ‘God save

²⁷⁸ Nevins, War for the Union, 3:447.

²⁷⁹ Washington Daily Morning Chronicle, 21 November 1863.

²⁸⁰ Washington Daily Morning Chronicle, 21 November 1863; Nicolay, “Gettysburg Address,” 601.

²⁸¹ Pittsburgh Daily Commercial, 23 November 1863, in Gabor Boritt, The Gettysburg Gospel: The Lincoln Speech That Nobody Knows (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 94.

²⁸² Boston Evening Journal, 23 November 1863.

Abraham Lincoln.”²⁸³ His admirers insisted on shaking hands until the marshals finally intervened to protect his arm from more wrenching.²⁸⁴

Benjamin Brown French, acting as one of Lamon’s assistants, was struck by the way people lionized the president. “Abraham Lincoln is the idol of the American people at this moment,” French confided to his journal. “Anyone who saw & heard as I did, the hurricane of applause that met his every movement at Gettysburg would know that he lived in every heart. It was no cold, faint, shadow of a kind reception – it was a tumultuous outpouring of exultation, from true and loving hearts, at the sight of a man whom everyone knew to be honest and true and sincere in every act of his life, and every pulsation of his heart. It was the spontaneous outburst of heartfelt confidence in their own President.”²⁸⁵ A Virginia woman visiting Gettysburg recorded in her diary that “[s]uch homage I never saw or imagined could be shown to any one person as the people bestow on Lincoln. The very mention of his name brings forth shouts of applause.”²⁸⁶

Amid the firing of minute guns and the huzzahing of the crowd, the procession, according to John Hay, “formed itself in an orphanly sort of way & moved out with very little help from anybody.”²⁸⁷ Led by the Marine Band, the long line of marchers and riders advanced slowly, reaching the cemetery in about twenty minutes. Thanks to recent rains, the immense cavalcade stirred up little dust. A Gettysburg resident described the

²⁸³ Philadelphia Press, 20 November 1863.

²⁸⁴ Washington Daily Morning Chronicle, 21 November 1863.

²⁸⁵ Benjamin Brown French, Witness to the Young Republic: A Yankee's Journal, 1828-1870, ed. Donald B. Cole and John J. McDonough (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1989), 435, 436.

²⁸⁶ Josephine Forney Roedel, diary, 19 November 1863, Library of Congress.

²⁸⁷ Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 113 (entry for 19 November 1863).

procession as “a grand and impressive sight. I have no language to depict it and though the mighty mass rolled on as the waves of the ocean, everything was in perfect order.”²⁸⁸

At the cemetery, Lincoln and three dozen other honored guests – including governors, congressmen, senators, cabinet members, and generals – took their places on the 12’ x 20’ platform. As the president slowly approached that stage, the 15,000 spectators maintained a respectful silence. In keeping with the solemnity of the occasion, men removed their hats.²⁸⁹ As the president sat waiting for the ceremony to begin, Martin D. Potter of the Cincinnati Commercial sketched a pen portrait of him: “A Scotch type of countenance, you say, with the disadvantage of emaciation by a siege of Western ague. It is a thoughtful, kindly, care-worn face, impressive in repose, the eyes cast down, the lids thin and firmly set, the cheeks sunken, and the whole indicating weariness, and anything but good health.”²⁹⁰

(Around that time a White House caller thought Lincoln was so weary that he resembled “a New York omnibus beast at night who had been driven all day” during an August heat spell. Journalists reported that he was “not looking well,” that he was “careworn,” that he appeared “thin and feeble,” and that “his eyes have lost their humorous expression.” Lincoln refused to heed the advice of friends who urged him to leave the capital to recruit his health.)²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ Harvey Sweney to Andrew Sweney, Gettysburg, 29 November 1863, Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 51 (1958):105.

²⁸⁹ Gettysburg correspondence, 19 November, Philadelphia Press, 20 November 1863.

²⁹⁰ Cincinnati Commercial, 23 November 1863.

²⁹¹ Sam Wood to Bradford R. Wood, n.p., n.d., quoted in Bradford Wood to George G. Fogg, Copenhagen, Denmark, 20 October 1863, Fogg Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society; Washington correspondence, 15 August, 13 October, New York Evening Post, 17 August, 14 October 1863.

Once the other dignitaries were seated, a dirge opened the proceedings, followed by the Rev. Dr. Thomas H. Stockton's long prayer which, Hay quipped, "thought it was an oration."²⁹² Stockton may have bored Hay but he brought tears to many eyes, including those of the president.²⁹³ For the next two hours, Everett delivered his polished, carefully researched and memorized speech describing the battle, analyzing the causes and nature of the war, rebutting secessionist arguments, predicting a quick postwar sectional reconciliation, citing ancient Greek funeral rites, and denouncing the enemy. Lincoln occasionally smiled at especially apt passages. At one point, he whispered his approval in Seward's ear.²⁹⁴ When Everett alluded to the suffering of the dying troops, tears came to Lincoln's eyes, as they did to the eyes of most auditors.²⁹⁵

Everett's speech as a whole did not move everyone. The crowd gave it only tepid applause, and the Philadelphia Daily Age remarked dismissively: "Seldom has a man talked so long and said so little. He told us nothing about the dead heroes, nothing of their former deeds, nothing of their glories before they fell like conquerors before their greater conqueror, Death. He gave us plenty of words, but no heart. His flowers of rhetoric were as beautiful and as scentless and as lifeless as wax flowers. His style was as clear and cold as Croton ice. He talked like a historian, or an encyclopaedist, or an essayist, but not like an orator, but a great disappointment." The editors objected to the "frigid sentences" and "classical conceits."²⁹⁶ George William Curtis found the oration "smooth and cold,"

²⁹² Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 113 (entry for 19 November 1863).

²⁹³ Gettysburg correspondence, 19 November, Boston Evening Journal, 23 November 1863; Washington National Republican, 20 November 1863.

²⁹⁴ Cincinnati Commercial, 23 November 1863.

²⁹⁵ Boston Evening Journal, 23 November 1863.

²⁹⁶ Philadelphia Daily Age, 21 November 1863.

lacking "one stirring thought, one vivid picture, one thrilling appeal."²⁹⁷ Another observer thought Everett's speech "painfully cold . . . with no sunbeam warmth. He seemed the hired mourner – the laureate chanting a funeral dirge to order, with no touch of 'in memoriam' about it. His monument was an iron statue with no glow or pulse or passion in it."²⁹⁸ The Milwaukee Sentinel complained that the speech lacked "the fire and spirit of true eloquence" and failed "to stir the blood and absorb the feelings, as one had reason to expect on such an occasion, and from so famous as an orator."²⁹⁹

The New York press also found little to admire. The Herald called it "milk and water; utterly inadequate, although his sentences were as smooth as satin and his metaphors as white as snow."³⁰⁰ The World opined that Mr. Everett "has fallen below his own reputation in the greatest opportunity ever presented to him, for rearing a monument more enduring than brass. . . . Every figure is culled in advance; every sentence composed in the closet; every gesture practiced before a mirror. . . . But where nature requires a voice, Mr. Everett's tears lie too near his eyes; they never gush up from the depths of a swelling heart."³⁰¹ The Philadelphia Daily Evening Bulletin complained that it was "deficient in warmth,"³⁰² and the Hartford Evening Press speculated that the "address will add nothing to Mr. Everett's reputation, for it is not adequate to the occasion, in feeling."³⁰³

²⁹⁷ Harpers Weekly, 5 December 1863.

²⁹⁸ Frank L. Klement, The Gettysburg Soldiers' Cemetery and Lincoln's Address: Aspects and Angles (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane, 1993), 46.

²⁹⁹ Milwaukee Sentinel, 26 November 1863.

³⁰⁰ Warren, Lincoln's Gettysburg Declaration, 100.

³⁰¹ New York World, 20 November 1863.

³⁰² Philadelphia Daily Evening Bulletin, 20 November 1863.

³⁰³ Hartford Evening Press, 21 November 1863.

After a musical interlude, Lincoln slowly rose to speak, causing a stir of expectation. His “reception was quite cordial,” noted Ben: Perley Poore of the Boston Journal.³⁰⁴ The Washington Chronicle reported that when Lamon introduced Lincoln, the president was “vociferously cheered by the vast audience.”³⁰⁵ As spectators on the outer fringes of the crowd pressed forward, those closer to the platform pushed back, causing a brief disturbance. A nurse in the audience recalled that she and the others “seemed like fishes in a barrel,” so tightly jammed together that they “almost suffocated.”³⁰⁶ When calm was restored, the president put on his glasses, drew a paper from his pocket, and “in a sharp, unmusical, and treble voice,” read his brief remarks “in a very deliberate manner, with strong emphasis, and with a most business-like air.” His “clear, loud” voice “could be distinctly heard at the extreme limits of the large assemblage.”³⁰⁷ John Hay recorded in his diary that Lincoln spoke “in a firm free way, with more grace than is his wont.”³⁰⁸

Lincoln’s words were taken down by reporters whose accounts differ slightly.³⁰⁹ The Associated Press correspondent, Joseph L. Gilbert, claimed that after delivering the speech, Lincoln allowed him to copy the text from his manuscript. Charles Hale of the Boston Daily Advertiser took down Lincoln’s words in shorthand. Conflating these two versions, we can obtain a good idea of what Lincoln actually said. It differs from the

³⁰⁴ Boston Evening Journal, 23 November 1863.

³⁰⁵ Washington Chronicle, 21 November 1861.

³⁰⁶ Sophronia E. Bucklin, In Hospital and Camp: A Woman’s Record of Thrilling Incidents Among the Wounded in the Late War (Philadelphia: J. E. Potter, 1869), 196.

³⁰⁷ Boston Evening Journal, 23 November 1863; Cincinnati Commercial, 23 November 1863; New York Times, 23 November 1863.

³⁰⁸ Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 113 (entry for 19 November 1863).

³⁰⁹ On the problem of establishing just what Lincoln said, see Wills, Lincoln at Gettysburg, 191-203, and Boritt, Gettysburg Gospel, 272-86.

revised versions he made later when donating copies to charitable causes. The following text is what he probably said, with bracketed italics representing revisions he made for the final version (the so-called “Bliss copy” of the speech): “Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon [*on*] this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. [Applause.] Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We are met [*have come*] to dedicate a portion of it [*that field*] as the [*a*] final resting place of [*for*] those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. [Applause.] The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. [Applause.] It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work that [*which*] they [*who fought here*] have thus far so nobly carried on [*advanced*]. [Applause.] It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us, that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave [*they gave*] the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain [applause]; that the nation shall, under God, [*nation, under God, shall*] have a new birth of freedom; and that Government of the people, by the people, [*for the people*] and for the people, shall not perish from the earth. [Long-continued applause.]”³¹⁰

³¹⁰ The manuscript from which Lincoln read is not extant. Unlike the version published by Joseph L.

The audience was profoundly moved.³¹¹ Isaac Jackson Allen of the Columbus Ohio State Journal reported that Lincoln's "calm but earnest utterance of this deep and beautiful address stirred the deepest fountains of feeling and emotion in the hearts of the vast throngs before him; and when he had concluded, scarcely could an untearful eye be seen, while sobs of smothered emotion were heard on every hand." When the president said that the "world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here," a captain who had lost an arm "burst all restraint; and burying his face in his handkerchief, he sobbed aloud while his manly frame shook with no unmanly emotion. In a few moments, with a stern struggle to master his emotions, he lifted his still streaming eyes to heaven and in a low and solemn tone exclaimed, 'God Almighty bless Abraham Lincoln!'"³¹²

As Everett noted, the president's handiwork was "greatly admired."³¹³ Some commentators immediately recognized that Lincoln had produced a masterpiece. The Philadelphia Press correspondent called it a "brief, but immortal speech," and the paper ran an editorial stating that "the occasion was sublime; certainly the ruler of the nation never stood higher, and grander, and more prophetic."³¹⁴ The Chicago Tribune reporter declared that the "dedicatory remarks of President Lincoln will live among the annals of man."³¹⁵ Other papers shared this high opinion. The Washington Daily Morning Chronicle said that the speech "glittered with gems, evincing the gentleness and goodness

Gilbert, a surviving early version of the speech – the so-called Nicolay copy – does not contain "under God."

³¹¹ Philadelphia Public Ledger, 23 November 1863.

³¹² Columbus Ohio State Journal, 23 November 1863.

³¹³ Everett to Mrs. Hamilton Fish, Boston, 18 March 1864, Fish Papers, Library of Congress.

³¹⁴ Philadelphia Press, 21, 25 November 1863.

³¹⁵ Chicago Tribune, 20 November 1863.

of heart peculiar to him."³¹⁶ The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin remarked that the "President's brief speech is most happily expressed. It is warm, earnest, unaffected and touching."³¹⁷ In Ohio, the Cincinnati Gazette called it "the right thing, in the right place, and a perfect thing in every respect," and the Columbus editor Isaac Jackson Allen termed it "the best word of his administration," accurately predicting that it "will live long after many more elaborate and pretentious utterances shall have been forgotten."³¹⁸

Men of letters were equally enthusiastic. Josiah G. Holland of the Springfield, Massachusetts, Republican wrote that "the rhetorical honors of the occasion were won by President Lincoln. His little speech is a perfect gem; deep in feeling, compact in thought and expression, and tasteful and elegant in every word and comma. Then it has the merit of unexpectedness in its verbal perfection and beauty. We had grown so accustomed to homely and imperfect phrase in his productions that we had come to think it was the law of his utterance. But this shows he can talk handsomely as well as act sensibly. Turn back and read it over, it will repay study as a model speech. Strong feelings and a large brain were its parents."³¹⁹ James Burrill Angell, president of Brown University, confessed that he did not know "where to look for a more admirable speech than the brief one which the President made at the close of Mr. Everett's oration. It is often said that the hardest thing in the world is to make a five minute speech. But could the most elaborate and splendid oration be more beautiful, more touching, more inspiring than those few words of the President? They had in my humble judgement the charm and power of the very

³¹⁶ Washington Daily Morning Chronicle, 21 November 1863.

³¹⁷ Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, 20 November 1863.

³¹⁸ Cincinnati Gazette, 20 November 1863; Ohio State Journal (Columbus), 4 April 1864.

³¹⁹ Springfield, Massachusetts, Republican, 20 November 1863.

highest eloquence.”³²⁰ George William Curtis thought that the “few words of the President went from the heart to the heart. They cannot be read, even, without kindling emotion. . . . It was as simple and felicitous an earnest a word as was ever spoken.” More extravagantly, he called the Gettysburg address the “most perfect piece of American eloquence, and as noble and pathetic and appropriate as the oration of Pericles over the Peloponnesian dead.”³²¹

The speech won over some who had been critical of Lincoln’s rhetoric. In August, Charles King Newcomb, a Rhode Island Emersonian, bemoaned the president’s “want of eloquence,” but on November 23, after reading the Gettysburg Address, Newcomb concluded that “Lincoln is, doubtless, the greatest orator of the age: a point not generally seen.”³²² Charles Francis Adams, Jr., thought the speech showed that Lincoln had “a capacity for rising to the demands of the hour which we should not expect from orators or men of the schools.”³²³

Edward Everett added his voice to the chorus of praise, writing with customary graciousness to Lincoln the day after the ceremony: “Permit me . . . to express my great admiration of the thoughts expressed by you, with such eloquent simplicity & appropriateness, at the consecration of the Cemetery. I should be glad, if I could flatter myself that I came as near to the central idea of the occasion, in two hours, as you did in

³²⁰ Providence Daily Journal, 20 November 1863.

³²¹ Harpers Weekly, 5, 12 December 1863.

³²² Judith Kennedy Johnson, ed., The Journals of Charles King Newcomb (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1946), 194, 196 (entries for 21 August and 23 November 1863).

³²³ Charles Francis Adams, Jr., to Charles Francis Adams, Newport, R.I., 7 March 1865, in Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., A Cycle of Adams Letters, 1861-1865 (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1920), 2:257.

two minutes.”³²⁴ (Lincoln told his friend James Speed that “he had never received a compliment he prized more highly.”)³²⁵

Equally gracious, Lincoln replied: “In our respective parts yesterday, you could not have been excused to make a short address, nor I a long one. I am pleased to know that, in your judgment, the little I did say was not entirely a failure. Of course I knew Mr. Everett would not fail; and yet, while the whole discourse was eminently satisfactory, and will be of great value, there were passages in it which transcended my expectation. The point made against the theory of the general government being only an agency, whose principals are the States, was new to me, and, as I think, is one of the best arguments for the national supremacy. The tribute to our noble women for their angel-ministering to the suffering soldiers, surpasses, in its way, as do the subjects of it, whatever has gone before.”³²⁶

³²⁴ Everett to Lincoln, Washington, 20 November 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

³²⁵ Louisville Commercial, 12 November 1879.

³²⁶ Lincoln to Everett, Washington, 20 November 1863, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:24. These are the passages from Everett’s oration that Lincoln refers to: “It has been said that it is characteristic of Americans to treat women with a deference not paid to them in any other country. I will not undertake to say whether this is so; but I will say, that, since this terrible war has been waged, the women of the loyal States, if never before, have entitled themselves to our highest admiration and gratitude, – alike those who at home, often with fingers unused to the toil, often bowed beneath their own domestic cares, have performed an amount of daily labor not exceeded by those who work for their daily bread, and those who, in the hospital and the tents of the Sanitary and Christian Commissions, have rendered services which millions could not buy. . . .

“But to hide the deformity of the crime under the cloak of that sophistry which strives to make the worse appear the better reason, we are told by the leaders of the Rebellion that in our complex system of government the separate States are 'sovereigns,' and that the central power is only an 'agency' established by these sovereigns to manage certain little affairs – such, forsooth, as Peace, War, Army, Navy, Finance, Territory, and Relations with the native tribes – which they could not so conveniently administer themselves. It happens, unfortunately for this theory, that the Federal Constitution (which has been adopted by the people of every State of the Union as much as their own State constitutions have been adopted, and is declared to be paramount to them) nowhere recognizes the States as 'sovereigns' – in fact, that, by their names, it does not recognize them at all; while the authority established by that instrument is recognized, in its text, not as an 'agency,' but as 'the Government of the United States.' By that Constitution, moreover, which purports in its preamble to be ordained and established by 'the People of the United States,' it is expressly provided, that 'the members of the State legislatures, and all executive and judicial officers, shall be bound by oath or affirmation to support the Constitution.' Now it is a common thing, under all

(Privately Lincoln expressed a less favorable view of Everett. Shortly after the orator's death, the president told Noah Brooks: "I think Edward Everett was much overrated. He hasn't left any enduring monument."³²⁷ To a foreign visitor Lincoln described his standard of judgment in oratory: "It is very common in this country to find great facility of expression, and common, though not so common, to find great lucidity of thought. The combination of the two faculties in one person is uncommon indeed; but whenever you do find it, you have a great man."³²⁸)

Some Democrats criticized the Gettysburg address for injecting politics into a solemn, nonpartisan occasion. Samuel Medary of the Columbus, Ohio, Crisis sneeringly wrote that "the President read a mawkish harrangue [sic] about this 'war for freedom' of the negro by the destruction of the liberties of American citizens."³²⁹ The leading Democratic journal of the Midwest, the Chicago Times, called it "an offensive exhibition of boorishness and vulgarity" and added that the "cheek of every American must tingle with shame as he reads the silly flat and dishwattery remarks of the man who has to be pointed out as the President of the United States."³³⁰ The Harrisburg Weekly Patriot and Union expressed similar contempt for the address and made a wildly inaccurate guess about its future: "We pass over the silly remarks of the President. For the credit of

governments, for an agent to be bound by oath to be faithful to his sovereign; but I never heard before of sovereigns being bound by oath to be faithful to their agency." (Wills, Lincoln at Gettysburg, 233, 236-37)

³²⁷ Brooks, "Personal Reminiscences of Lincoln," Scribner's Monthly Magazine 15 (March 1878):678.

³²⁸ Edward Dicey, Spectator of America, ed. Herbert Mitgang (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 95-96.

³²⁹ Columbus Crisis in Earl W. Wiley, "Buckeye Criticism of the Gettysburg Address," Speech Monographs 23 (1956):5, 8.

³³⁰ Chicago Times, 23 November 1863.

the nation we are willing that the veil of oblivion shall be dropped over them, and they shall be no more repeated or thought of."³³¹

Democrats criticized most vehemently the implication that the war was being fought, at least in part, to free the slaves. (Though Lincoln did not say so explicitly, that was the evident meaning of his references to a “new birth of freedom” and to equality.) “We submit that Lincoln did most foully traduce the motives of the men who were slain at Gettysburg,” protested the Chicago Times. “They gave their lives maintain the old government, and the old constitution and Union.”³³² After citing passages in the Constitution alluding to slavery, the editor argued that “Mr. Lincoln occupies his present position by virtue of this constitution, and is sworn to the maintenance and enforcement of these provisions. It was to uphold this constitution, and the Union created by it, that our officers and soldiers gave their lives at Gettysburg. How dare he, then, standing on their graves, misstate the cause for which they died, and libel the statesmen who founded the government? They were men possessing too much self-respect to declare negroes were their equals, or were entitled to equal privileges.”³³³ The New York World maintained that “the Constitution not merely does not say one word about equal rights, but expressly admits the idea of inequality of human rights.”³³⁴ The New York World maintained that “the Constitution not merely does not say one word about equal rights, but expressly admits the idea of inequality of human rights.”³³⁵ In Keene, New Hampshire, the Cheshire Republican indignantly declared: “If it was to establish negro

³³¹ Harrisburg Weekly Patriot and Union, 26 November 1863.

³³² Chicago Times, 25 November 1863.

³³³ Chicago Times, 23 November 1863.

³³⁴ New York World, 27 November 1863.

³³⁵ New York World, 27 November 1863.

equality that our soldiers lost their lives, Mr. Lincoln should have said so before. These soldiers won the day at Gettysburg under the noble impulse that they were contending for the Constitution and the Union.”³³⁶

Democrats also objected to what they considered poor taste in Lincoln’s opening sentence. It was “questionable,” said the New York World, to represent “the 'fathers' in the stages of conception and parturition.”³³⁷ Similarly, the Boston Daily Courier protested against the “obstetric allusion.”³³⁸ The London Times correspondent said “[a]nything more dull and commonplace it wouldn't be easy to produce.”³³⁹

Though posterity has come to regard Lincoln’s remarks as a terse, sublime masterpiece and Everett’s oration as a florid, diffuse history lecture, the contemporary press devoted more coverage to the latter than to the former.³⁴⁰ Several myths grew up around the Gettysburg Address, among them that the president composed it on the train, that he regarded it as a failure, that the crowd and other contemporaries failed to appreciate it, and that it surreptitiously bootlegged the concept of equality into the Constitution.

Following the ceremony, Lincoln returned to David Wills’ home, where he ate dinner and then shook visitors’ hands for an hour. Afterwards he walked to the Presbyterian Church to hear an oration by Charles Anderson, lieutenant governor of Ohio. En route he was accompanied by John Burns, an elderly cobbler who had won

³³⁶ Cheshire Republican (Keene, New Hampshire), 25 November 1863.

³³⁷ New York World, 27 November 1863.

³³⁸ Boston Daily Courier, 1 December 1863.

³³⁹ New York correspondence, 20 November, London Times, 4 December 1863.

³⁴⁰ Ronald F. Reid, “Newspaper Response to the Gettysburg Addresses,” Quarterly Journal of Speech 53 (1967): 50-60; Wiley, “Buckeye Criticism of the Gettysburg Address,” 1-8; Joseph George, Jr., “The World Will Little Note?: The Philadelphia Press and the Gettysburg Address,” Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 114 (1990): 385-98; Boritt, Gettysburg Gospel, 131-41.

acclaim for fighting alongside the Union troops in July. Lincoln had heard of his exploits and asked to be introduced to him. Around 6 p.m., the president and his suite boarded a train for Washington.

Lincoln honored at least three requests for autograph copies of the Gettysburg Address. The version known as the “Bliss copy,” composed for sale at the 1864 Baltimore Sanitary Fair, is the one best known; its text is carved into a wall of the Lincoln Memorial. Since it was the final copy made, it represents, as Robert Todd Lincoln observed, his father’s “last and best thought as to the address.”³⁴¹

The speech was in effect another of Lincoln’s highly successful public letters.³⁴² He realized, as some commentators prophesied, that people “who would not read the long elaborate oration of Mr. Everett will read the President's few words” which would “receive the attention and command the admiration of all the tens of thousands who will read it.”³⁴³ His audience was the Northern public at large, not merely the crowd at Gettysburg. He aimed to lift the morale of his constituents with a terse, eloquent exposition of the war’s significance. His words admirably served that function in his own day and have inspired the respect and admiration of subsequent generations. In 1865, Ralph Waldo Emerson accurately predicted that Lincoln’s “brief speech at Gettysburg will not easily be surpassed by words on any recorded occasion.”³⁴⁴

SOMETHING TO GIVE TO EVERYONE: PRESIDENTIAL SMALLPOX

³⁴¹ Warren, Lincoln's Gettysburg Declaration, 170.

³⁴² Douglas L. Wilson, Lincoln’s Sword: The Presidency and the Power of Words (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 231-34.

³⁴³ Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, 10 November 1863; Washington Daily Morning Chronicle, 21 November 1863.

³⁴⁴ “Abraham Lincoln: Remarks at the Funeral Services Held in Concord, April 19, 1863,” in Emerson, Miscellanies (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1884), 311.

Back in Washington, Lincoln came down with a mild case of smallpox, known as varioloid, which persisted for several days. Part of that time he was quarantined. When told that his illness was contagious, he quipped “that since he has been President he had always had a crowd of people asking him to give them something, but that now he has something he can give them all.” Alluding to both the scars that smallpox often caused and to his appearance, he told his physician: “There is one consolation about the matter, doctor. It cannot in the least disfigure me!”³⁴⁵ In fact, he was not disfigured. A visitor on December 6 wrote that although he “looks feeble,” yet “not a mark can be seen.” Earlier “he only had half a dozen.”³⁴⁶

The varioloid did more than disfigure one of the members of the presidential party at Gettysburg, William H. Johnson, the young black man who accompanied Lincoln from Illinois and served in the White House until his fellow black staffers there objected to his presence because his skin was too dark. Lincoln then obtained for him a job in the treasury department. Johnson contracted smallpox, which killed him in January 1864. One day that month, as the poor fellow lay in the hospital, a journalist discovered the president counting out some greenbacks. Lincoln explained that such activity “is something out of my usual line, but a president of the United States has a multiplicity of duties not specified in the Constitution or acts of Congress. This is one of them. This money belongs to a poor Negro [Johnson] who is a porter in one of the departments (the Treasury) and who is at present very bad with the smallpox. He did not catch it from me, however; at least I think not. He is now in hospital and could not draw his pay because he

³⁴⁵ Washington correspondence by “Zeta,” 3 December, Chicago Tribune, 8 December 1863.

³⁴⁶ Gustavus V. Fox to his wife Virginia, Washington, 6 December 1863, Fox Papers, New-York Historical Society.

could not sign his name. I have been at considerable trouble to overcome the difficulty and get it for him and have at length succeeded in cutting red tape I am now dividing the money and putting by a portion labeled, in an envelope, with my own hands, according to his wish.”³⁴⁷

Johnson had borrowed \$150 from the First National Bank of Washington using Lincoln as an endorser. After Johnson died, the bank’s cashier, William J. Huntington, happened to mention the outstanding notes to Lincoln: “the barber who used to shave you, I hear, is dead.”

“‘Oh, yes,’ interrupted the President, with feeling; ‘William is gone. I bought a coffin for the poor fellow, and have had to help his family.’”

When Huntington said the bank would forgive the loan, Lincoln replied emphatically: “No you don’t. I endorsed the notes, and am bound to pay them; and it is your duty to make me pay them.”

“Yes,” said the banker, “but it has long been our custom to devote a portion of our profits to charitable objects; and this seems to be a most deserving one.”

When the president rejected that argument, Huntington said: “Well, Mr. Lincoln, I will tell you how we can arrange this. The loan to William was a joint one between you and the bank. You stand half of the loss, and I will cancel the other.”

After thinking it over, Lincoln said: “Mr. Huntington, that sounds fair, but it is insidious; you are going to get ahead of me; you are going to give me the smallest note to pay. There must be a fair divide over poor William. Reckon up the interest on both notes,

³⁴⁷ Washington correspondence, 14 January, Chicago Tribune, 19 January 1864.

and chop the whole right straight through the middle, so that my half shall be as big as yours. That's the way we will fix it."

Huntington agreed, saying: "After this, Mr. President, you can never deny that you indorse the negro."

"That's a fact!" Lincoln exclaimed with a laugh; "but I don't intend to deny it."³⁴⁸

Though sick, Lincoln worked diligently on his annual message, a draft of which he read to the cabinet and to Congressman Elihu B. Washburne.³⁴⁹

VICTORY IN TENNESSEE

On November 21, Lincoln predicted that "the next two weeks would be the most momentous period of the rebellion."³⁵⁰ Indeed, the war in the West was approaching a climax as Grant prepared to dislodge Bragg's forces from the heights above Chattanooga. Two days later, encouraging word arrived from Chattanooga, but Lincoln warned friends against overconfidence and would not rejoice until receiving conclusive news of Grant's victory. On the 24th and 25th, Union troops captured strong Confederate positions on Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain, forcing Bragg to retreat into Georgia. The president could not participate in celebrations of this victory because he was sick abed.³⁵¹

Meanwhile, he grew quite anxious about Burnside's fate.³⁵² That hapless general,

ensconced in Knoxville, was menaced by James Longstreet's corps of the Army of

³⁴⁸ Samuel Wilkeson, "How Mr. Lincoln Indorsed the Negro," unidentified clipping, Redlands Shrine, Redlands, California.

³⁴⁹ E. B. Washburne to his wife, Washington, 6 December 1863, Washburn Family Papers, Washburn Memorial Library, Norlands, Maine.

³⁵⁰ He made this remark in conversation on November 21. Washington correspondence, 22 November, New York Times, 23 November 1863.

³⁵¹ Washington correspondence by D. W. Bartlett 28 November, New York Independent, 3 December 1863.

³⁵² Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 117 (entry for 22 November 1863); Bates, Lincoln in the Telegraph Office, 162.

Northern Virginia, which Lee had sent to Tennessee weeks earlier.³⁵³ On November 24, the president expressed great relief upon learning that artillery had recently been heard booming in the vicinity of Knoxville. When asked why he reacted so positively to news indicating that Union forces might be in serious danger, he replied: "I had a neighbor out West, a Sally Taggart, who had a great many unruly children whom she did not take very good care of. Whenever she heard one squall in some out-of-the-way place, she would say, 'Well, thank Goodness, there's one of my young ones not dead yet!' As long as we hear guns, Burnside is not captured."³⁵⁴

On November 29, Burnside repulsed Longstreet's attack. Soon thereafter, Sherman linked up with Old Burn, forcing Longstreet to pull back toward Virginia. When the president learned of that junction, he joyfully declared that it "is one of the most important gains of the war – the difference between Burnside saved and Burnside lost is one of the greatest advantages of the war – it secures us East Tennessee." At the same time, he expressed dismay at the inactivity in the East, predicting that Meade would probably not move to intercept Longstreet's fleeing Confederates: "if this Army of the Potomac was good for anything – if the officers had anything in them – if the army had any legs, they could move thirty thousand men down to Lynchburg and catch Longstreet. Can anybody doubt, if Grant were here in command that he would catch him? There is not a man in the whole union who would for a moment doubt it."³⁵⁵

³⁵³ William Marvel, Burnside (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 315-33.

³⁵⁴ John Hay, "The Heroic Age in Washington," 1871, in Michael Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln's Side: John Hay's Civil War Correspondence and Selected Writings (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 129; Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 118 (entry for 24 November 1863), 118; a similar account can be found in the Washington correspondence, 2 December, Sacramento Daily Union, 28 December 1863, in Michael Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed: Civil War Dispatches of Noah Brooks (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 93.

³⁵⁵ Nicolay memorandum, 7 December 1863, in Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 121.

The Union triumphs in Tennessee, combined with those at Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and Port Hudson in July, sealed the fate of the Confederacy. Military victory for Jefferson Davis's government was no longer possible. Fighting would continue for another year and a half, but the outcome no longer seemed doubtful. Grant secured his reputation as the leading Union general. Though it seemed logical to replace Meade with Grant, Lincoln said on December 7, "I do not think it would do to bring Grant away from the West. I talked with Gen. Halleck this morning about the matter, and his opinion was the same."

"But you know Mr President," remarked Old Brains, "how hard we have tried to get this army to move towards the enemy and we cannot succeed."³⁵⁶

Indeed, Meade had proved difficult to budge. In September, when the general argued that it would be quite difficult to attack Richmond, the exasperated Lincoln told Halleck: "to attempt to fight the enemy slowly back into his intrenchments at Richmond, and there to capture him, is an idea I have been trying to repudiate for quite a year. My judgment is so clear against it, that I would scarcely allow the attempt to be made, if the general in command should desire to make it. My last attempt upon Richmond was to get McClellan, when he was nearer there than the enemy was, to run in ahead of him. Since then I have constantly desired the Army of the Potomac, to make Lee's army, and not Richmond, it's objective point. If our army can not fall upon the enemy and hurt him where he is, it is plain to me it can gain nothing by attempting to follow him over a succession of intrenched lines into a fortified city."³⁵⁷

³⁵⁶ Nicolay memorandum, 7 December 1863, Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 121.

³⁵⁷ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:457.

A month later, Lincoln tried to goad Meade into taking the offensive against Lee. “If Gen. Meade can now attack him on a field no worse than equal for us,” he instructed the general through Halleck, “and will do so with all the skill and courage, which he, his officers and men possess, the honor will be his if he succeeds, and the blame may be mine if he fails.”³⁵⁸ Meade replied with a typical excuse for inaction.³⁵⁹

Months later Grant would be placed in charge of all Union forces, and the Army of the Potomac would move decisively against the enemy without such presidential inducements.

³⁵⁸ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:518.

³⁵⁹ OR, I, 29, 2:333.