

Chapter Thirty-four

“The Wisest Radical of All”:

Reelection (September-November, 1864)

The political tide began turning on August 29 when the Democratic national convention met in Chicago, where Peace Democrats were unwilling to remain in the background. Lincoln had accurately predicted that the delegates “must nominate a Peace Democrat on a war platform, or a War Democrat on a peace platform; and I personally can’t say that I care much which they do.”¹ The convention took the latter course, nominating George McClellan for president and adopting a platform which declared the war “four years of failure” and demanded that “immediate efforts be made for a cessation of hostilities, with a view to an ultimate convention of the states, or other peaceable means, to the end that, at the earliest practicable moment, peace may be restored on the basis of the Federal Union of the States.” This “peace plank,” the handiwork of Clement L. Vallandigham, implicitly rejected Lincoln’s Niagara Manifesto; the Democrats would require only union as a condition for peace, whereas the Republicans insisted on union and emancipation. The platform also called for the restoration of “the rights of the States

¹ Noah Brooks, Washington, D.C., in Lincoln’s Time, ed. Herbert Mitgang (1895; Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 164.

unimpaired,” which implied the preservation of slavery.² As McClellan’s running mate, the delegates chose Ohio Congressman George Pendleton, a thoroughgoing opponent of the war who had voted against supplies for the army.

As the nation waited day after day to see how McClellan would react, Lincoln wittily opined that Little Mac “must be intrenching.” More seriously, he added that the general “doesn’t know yet whether he will accept or decline. And he never will know. Somebody must do it for him. For of all the men I have had to do with in my life, indecision is most strongly marked in General McClellan; – if that can be said to be strong which is the essence of weakness.”³

A week and a half after the Chicago convention, McClellan finally issued a letter formally accepting the nomination while implicitly disavowing the “peace plank.” Yet he did indicate that he had no objection to a compromise settlement leaving slavery intact within a restored Union. It is highly unlikely that if he had won the election, McClellan could have brought the war to a successful close, with the nation reunited and slavery abolished.⁴ Throughout the campaign he never indicated that he approved of the Emancipation Proclamation or that he would make abolition a precondition for peace.

² Edward McPherson, The Political History of the United States of America During the Period of Reconstruction (Washington: Philp & Solomons, 1871), 363-64.

³ J. P. Thompson, “A Talk with President Lincoln,” The Congregationalist and Boston Recorder, 30 March 1866, p. 50. Thompson based his recollection on memoranda he wrote in September 1864.

⁴ William C. Harris, “Conservative Unionists in 1864,” Civil War History 38 (1992):300.

RALLYING AROUND THE FLAG

Though some observers agreed with Fighting Joe Hooker's prediction that McClellan would "have an easy and a successful run" because "the people seem to desire to have a President who has some influence with the Administration," the news from Chicago restored Lincoln's flagging spirits.⁵ Along with Vallandigham's "peace plank," the defiant nomination of Pendleton, Vallandigham's alter ego, estranged War Democrats and Conservative Unionists (supporters of John Bell in 1860). A New York critic of Lincoln spoke for many when he said: "I admire McClellan & should vote for him but I cannot swallow Pendleton & that Chicago platform. I never could digest them. The dyspepsia that would follow such a banquet would torment me all my days."⁶

With "great feeling and much satisfaction," Lincoln told a Pennsylvania Republican leader that "the danger was past," because "after the expenditure of blood and treasure that has been poured out for the maintenance of the government and the preservation of the Union, the American people were not prepared to vote the war a failure." Shortly before the Chicago convention, he had speculated that if the Democrats were to put McClellan "on a platform pledging the party to a vigorous prosecution of the war, . . . the result in November would not only be doubtful, but the chances were in favor of the Democracy."⁷ Lincoln was probably right. Others guessed that if McClellan

⁵ Joseph Hooker to Dr. B. M. Stevens, Watertown, New York, 1 September 1864, Schoff Civil War Collection, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

⁶ J. W. Rathbone to Manton Marble, Albany, 4 November 1864, Manton Marble Papers, Library of Congress.

⁷ Solomon Newton Pettis, interview, Washington Post, 16 August 1891, in Don E. Fehrenbacher and Virginia Fehrenbacher, eds., Recollected Words of Abraham Lincoln (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 355. Lincoln said much the same thing to Hugh McCulloch after the election. Hugh McCulloch, Men and Measures of Half a Century: Sketches and Comments (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1888), 162.

had more definitively repudiated the “peace plank,” Peace Democrats would have fielded a candidate of their own, and the general might have won the ensuing three-way race.⁸

Among the Conservatives repelled by the doings in Chicago was Edward Everett, who felt tempted to join a third party movement but instead threw his support to the Republican ticket. The “golden opportunity which had been given to the Democrats by the folly of the Republicans was miserably thrown away,” lamented former Massachusetts Governor John H. Clifford, who reluctantly decided to vote for Lincoln. He explained that if he had acted on his conservative principles and his personal inclinations, he would have backed McClellan, but Lincoln’s reelection seemed to him “a vital necessity” because the general’s letter of acceptance and his public support of the Democratic candidate in the 1863 Pennsylvania gubernatorial election created “a painful distrust of his moral strength.” Moreover, the “peace-at-any-price” men who controlled the Chicago convention would dominate his administration.⁹ Though disenchanted with Lincoln, John Pendleton Kennedy could not bring himself to vote for McClellan and thereby elevate the Peace Democrats to power. (Kennedy thought the president had not prosecuted the war vigorously enough. In addition, he confided to a friend, “I especially dislike Abraham’s bosom friends, or those, who have got into his bosom after the manner of the black snakes which are said to establish themselves as boarders with the prairie dogs.”)¹⁰

⁸ John H. Clifford to Robert C. Winthrop, New Bedford, 25 September 1864, Winthrop Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; New York Independent, 3 November 1864.

⁹ John H. Clifford to Robert C. Winthrop, New Bedford, 13, 25 September, 18 November 1864, Winthrop Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹⁰ John Pendleton Kennedy to Robert C. Winthrop, Newport, R.I., 6 September 1864, Winthrop Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

Northern morale soared. As George Templeton Strong observed, the “general howl against the base policy offered for our endorsement at Chicago is refreshing. Bitter opponents of Lincoln join in it heartily.”¹¹ One of those bitter opponents, Theodore Tilton, confided to Anna E. Dickinson: “I was opposed to Mr. Lincoln’s nomination: but now it becomes the duty of all Unionists to present a united front.” The Republican platform “is the best in American history – we can pardon something to a second-rate candidate.” While Lincoln might not be an ideal standard bearer, it would “be criminal” to desert the Republican party, which was “the only one that can save the country.” To divide it would be “to give over the country to the Copperheads” and “bring everlasting shame upon us all.”¹² Tilton campaigned so hard for the president that shortly before election day, he fainted from exhaustion while addressing a crowd. (The radical abolitionist Parker Pillsbury scolded Tilton for making “apologies for this Administration!”)¹³

Dickinson herself announced that she would campaign for the Republican ticket. To a fellow Quaker who expressed surprise at her support of Lincoln, she wrote: “My friend, this is no personal contest. I shall not work for Abraham Lincoln; I shall work for the salvation of my country’s life, that stands at stake – for the defeat of this disloyal peace party, that will bring ruin and death if it [should] come into power.”¹⁴ Greeley’s

¹¹ Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas, eds., The Diary of George Templeton Strong, 1835-1875 (4 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1952), 3:481 (entry for 5 September 1864).

¹² Tilton to Anna E. Dickinson, New York, 13 July, 3, 5 September 1864, Dickinson Papers, Library of Congress. Cf. Tilton to John A. Andrew, New York, 5 September 1864, Andrew Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹³ Pillsbury to Theodore Tilton, Henniker, New Hampshire, 10 July 1864, Miscellaneous Manuscripts, New-York Historical Society.

¹⁴ Dickinson to “My Dear Friend,” Philadelphia, 3 September 1864, National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York), 10 September 1864.

New York Tribune followed suit, declaring on September 6: “we fly the banner of ABRAHAM LINCOLN for the next Presidency, choosing that [option] far rather than the Disunion and a quarter of century of wars, of the Union and political servitude which our opponents would give us.” The editorial gave credit to the president for doing “seven-eighths of the work in his fashion; there must be vigor and virtue enough left in him to do the other fraction. . . . We MUST re-elect him, and, God helping us, we WILL.”¹⁵

Greeley told Lincoln’s personal secretary, “I shall fight like a savage in this campaign. I hate McClellan.”¹⁶

Radical Republican leaders added their voices to the swelling pro-Lincoln chorus. Although it was reported in mid-September that Charles Sumner thought “Lincoln’s election would be disaster, but McClellan’s damnation” and that the senator had “not quite given up the hope that even now someone might be substituted for Lincoln,” in the fall he delivered speeches for Lincoln in Massachusetts, New York and Connecticut.¹⁷ He argued that it was necessary to support Lincoln’s reelection: “I do not see how anything can be done except through Mr. Lincoln and with his good will.” Republican unity “must be had at all hazards and at every sacrifice.”¹⁸ To a Boston audience he declared that “if Lincoln is slow, McClellan is slower” and rhetorically asked: “why consider these petty personalities? They divert attention from the single question, ‘Are you for your country,

¹⁵ New York Tribune, 6 September 1864.

¹⁶ Nicolay to Lincoln, New York, 30 August 1864, in Michael Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House: Letters, Memoranda, and Other Writings of John G. Nicolay, 1860-1865 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 155.

¹⁷ Lillie B. Chace to Anna E. Dickinson, Valley Falls, 19 September 1864, Dickinson Papers, Library of Congress; Edward Lillie Pierce, Memoir and Letters of Charles Sumner (4 vols.; Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1877-93), 4:200.

¹⁸ Sumner to Richard Cobden, 18 September 1864, and to Francis Lieber, 3 September 1864, in Pierce, Sumner, 4:200, 198.

or are you for the rebellion?”¹⁹ Ben Butler publicly averred that “the plain duty of every loyal man” was “to support the election of Lincoln and Johnson.”²⁰ Thaddeus Stevens told voters that if they reelected “the calm statesman who now presides over the nation,” he would lead them “to an honorable peace and to permanent liberty.”²¹

Frederick Douglass, who had signed the call for the Radical Democracy convention, publicly endorsed Lincoln in September. “When there was any shadow of a hope that a man of a more decided anti-slavery conviction and policy could be elected, I was not for Mr. Lincoln,” he told a fellow abolitionist. “But as soon as the Chicago convention [adjourned], my mind was made up.” In a letter which ran in the Liberator, Douglass acknowledged that “all hesitation ought to cease, and every man who wishes well to the slave and to the country should at once rally with all the warmth and earnestness of his nature to the support of Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson.” Douglass did not actively campaign for the ticket because, as he explained, “Republican committees do not wish to expose themselves to the change of being the ‘N[igge]r party. The Negro is the deformed child, which is put out of the room when company comes.”²²

Other blacks followed Douglass’s lead. On September 24, the publisher of the Anglo-African told his readers that “we may have thought that Mr. Lincoln has not done what we think he could have done for the overthrow of oppression in our land; but that is not the question now. The great and overshadowing inquiry is, do you want to see the

¹⁹ Sumner, speech at Faneuil Hall, Boston, 28 September, Boston Daily Advertiser, 29 September 1864.

²⁰ Butler to Simon Cameron in the Cincinnati Gazette, 5 October 1864.

²¹ Beverly Wilson Palmer, ed., The Selected Papers of Thaddeus Stevens (2 vols.; Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997-1998), 2:502.

²² Frederick Douglass to Theodore Tilton, Rochester, 15 October 1864, Philip S. Foner, ed., The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass (4 vols.; New York: International Publishers, 1950-55), 3:424; The Liberator (Boston), 23 February 1864.

many noble acts which have been passed during Mr. Lincoln's administration repealed, and slavery fastened again upon Maryland, Louisiana, Tennessee, Virginia, and portions of States now free? This is the only question now, and if you are a friend of liberty you will give your influence and cast your vote for Abraham Lincoln, who, under God, is the only hope of the oppressed.”²³ John Rock, who would soon become the first black attorney to argue a case before the U.S. Supreme Court, told a convention of the National Association of Colored Citizens and Their Friends that there were only two parties: “the one headed by Lincoln is for freedom and the republic, the other one headed by McClellan is for despotism and slavery.” The delegates applauded this statement loud and long.²⁴ “As a negro, I am for the man whose party and policy have given us a free capital, a confiscation law, and a proclamation of freedom, as against the man who, with honest enough intentions, expects to drive out the devils by Beelzebub,” said the Rev. Mr. J. Sella Martin of Boston.²⁵

Even before the party nominating conventions, some blacks had called for Lincoln's reelection. On January 1, 1864, at a mass meeting of San Francisco blacks, a resolution was adopted endorsing the president for a second term. Commenting on that document, a black newspaper praised Lincoln as the only president who “has stood up in defiance of the slave-power, and dared officially to maintain the doctrine, by his official actions, that we are citizens, though of African descent – that the army and navy shall protect and defend such citizens in common with all others – that provision ought to be

²³ Anglo-African (New York), 24 September 1864.

²⁴ Martin B. Pasternak, Rise Now and Fly to Arms: The Life of Henry Highland Garnet (New York: Garland, 1995), 119.

²⁵ Anglo-African (New York), 22 July 1864.

made for their education of freedmen.”²⁶ A black resident of Brooklyn declared that Lincoln’s actions had to be understood politically, for he had a racist constituency: “I feel that much of the failure of Mr. Lincoln to do [his] duty is owing to the failure of the people of the land whose agent he is. Do we complain that Mr. Lincoln and the government do not recognize the manhood of the negro? Let us find the cause of that in the people at home. Just so long as citizens of New York exclude respectable colored persons from railway cars on the streets; just so long as the people of the city exclude the colored children from the ward schools, and force the colored children from several wards together, on the ground of color merely; just so long as even in some of the churches of the city there are negro pews – just so long as there is evidence that the people themselves do not recognize the manhood of the black man of this country.”²⁷

In Baltimore, free blacks raised money for an expensive Bible that they presented to Lincoln on September 7. It was, they explained, “a testimonial of their appreciation of your humane conduct towards the people of our race. . . . Towards you, sir, our hearts will ever be warm with gratitude. . . . The loyal colored people of this country everywhere will remember you at the Throne of Divine Grace.” Lincoln replied that “it has always been a sentiment with me that all mankind should be free. So far as able, within my sphere, I have always acted as I believed to be right and just; and I have done all I could for the good of mankind generally. In letters and documents sent from this office I have expressed myself better than I now can. In regard to this Great Book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to man. All the good the Saviour gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it we could not know right from

²⁶ Weekly Pacific Appeal (San Francisco), 9 January 1864.

²⁷ The Liberator (Boston), 20 May 1864.

wrong. All things most desirable for man's welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found portrayed in it.”²⁸

The following month Lincoln showed this volume to Sojourner Truth, the abolitionist preacher and renowned conductor on the underground railroad who had rescued many of her fellow blacks from slavery. When she complimented him as “the best President” ever, he replied: “I expect you have reference to my having emancipated the slaves in my proclamation.” He modestly cited several predecessors, including Washington, who he said “were all just as good, and would have done just as he had done if the time had come. If the people over the river [pointing across the Potomac] had behaved themselves, I could not have done what I have, but they did not, and I was compelled to do these things.” She later said “I never was treated by any one with more kindness and cordiality than was shown me by that great and good man.”²⁹

Most but not all Radicals and abolitionists fell into line. With his “well-known extravagance,” Parker Pillsbury, who felt a call to expose Lincoln’s “hypocrisy and cruelty,” insisted that “I do not believe the slaves, or free colored people, have a worse enemy on earth, than Lincoln.”³⁰ Even more hyperbolically he declared that “Egypt had its ten Plagues. For us, God seems to have massed them in one – a ten Pharaoh-power

²⁸ Reply to the loyal colored people of Baltimore, 7 September 1864, Roy P. Basler et al., eds., Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (8 vols. plus index; New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953-55), 7:542.

²⁹ Francis B. Carpenter, The Inner Life of Abraham Lincoln: Six Months at the White House (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1867), 201-203; Sojourner Truth to Oliver Johnson, 17 November, National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York), 17 December 1864.

³⁰ Oliver Johnson to J. Miller McKim, New York, 25 August 1864, Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Manuscript Collection, Cornell University; Pillsbury to Theodore Tilton, Henniker, New Hampshire, 10 July 1864, Miscellaneous Manuscripts, New-York Historical Society; Pillsbury to Wendell Phillips, Concord, 27 August 1864, Wendell Phillips Papers, Harvard University.

Plague in Lincoln.”³¹ Apropos of Garrison’s embrace of the president, Pillsbury lamented that the editor of The Liberator “has endeavored to melt us up in the seething pot of Kentucky politics. And no Samson was ever so shorn of his strength as are we. Our mighty moral power is gone; our glory is departed.”³² (Shortly after Lincoln’s death, Pillsbury would refer to him as “[o]ur kind, gentle, noble hearted chief magistrate.”)³³ Elizabeth Cady Stanton called the president “Dishonest Abe,” deplored “the incapacity and rottenness of the administration,” and pledged that if he “is reelected I shall immediately leave the country for the Fijee Islands.”³⁴ She called “Garrison’s special pleading” for Lincoln “most pitiful.”³⁵ Her cousin Gerrit Smith counseled fellow abolitionists to support the president’s reelection. In August he wrote: “Though it may be at the expense of passing by our favorite candidate, we should nevertheless all feel ourselves urged by the strongest possible motives to cast our votes . . . to defeat the compromising or sham Peace Candidate.”³⁶ Two months later, he urged Elizabeth Cady Stanton to reconsider and expressed regret that “neither you nor Wendell Phillips can favor Lincoln’s re-election. I am spending a great deal for the election of Lincoln. I see

³¹ Pillsbury to Theodore Tilton, Concord, N.H., 22 May 1864, Miscellaneous Manuscripts, New-York Historical Society.

³² Pillsbury to Charles Sumner, Concord, N.H., 24 May 1864, Sumner Papers, Harvard University.

³³ Parker Pillsbury to George B. Cheever, Concord, New Hampshire, 27 April 1865, Cheever Family Papers, American Antiquarian Society.

³⁴ Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Wendell Phillips, New York, 6 June 1863 [actually 1864], Wendell Phillips Papers, Harvard University; Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Susan B. Anthony, New York City, 25 September 1864, Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, eds., Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in Her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences (2 vols.; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1922), 2:101.

³⁵ Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Gerrit Smith, New York, 2 June [1864], Smith Papers, Syracuse University.

³⁶ Wendy Hamand Venet, Neither Ballots Nor Bullets: Women Abolitionists and the Civil War (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 138.

safety in his election.”³⁷ She rejected that advice: “We need leaders to galvanize the virtue and patriotism of the nation into life and concentrate thought and action in the right directions.” Among her criticisms she cited the president’s failure to liberate all the slaves and to do anything about atrocities committed against black troops.³⁸ (Years later, she expressed regret for having opposed Lincoln: “I see now the wisdom of his course, leading public opinion slowly but surely up to the final blow for freedom. . . . My conscience pricks me now when I recall how I worked and prayed in 1864 for the defeat of Lincoln’s re-election, and now I perceive what a grave misfortune it was that he was not left to reconstruct the South according to what would surely have been a better and wiser plan than that pushed through by the Radicals with whom I then stood.”)³⁹

Moncure Conway, then residing in England, continued his attacks on Lincoln, arguing that the president should be denied reelection because a black sergeant, William Walker, had been executed for inciting mutiny. (In fact, Walker’s death sentence was carried out illegally, before the president had a chance to review his case. If the army had followed proper procedure, it is unlikely that Walker would have been shot.)⁴⁰ Conway termed the president an “imbecile,” a “murderer,” an “irredeemable Kentuckian,” and “an impossible American” who suffered from “an utter lack of culture” and was “brutally

³⁷ Smith to Stanton, 3 October 1864, Stanton Papers, in Victor B. Howard, Religion and the Radical Republican Movement, 1860-1870 (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1990), 78.

³⁸ National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York), 20 August 1864.

³⁹ Diary entry, 12 February 1901, Stanton and Blatch, eds., Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 2:355; Ann D. Gordon, ed., The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony (4 vols.; New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997-2006), 1:531.

⁴⁰ Howard C. Westwood, "The Cause and Consequence of a Union Black Soldier's Mutiny and Execution," Civil War History 31 (1985):222-36.

ignorant of history and of his own age.”⁴¹ William Lloyd Garrison, also a target of Conway’s scathing invective, warned an English correspondent that Conway did not represent most American abolitionists: “Impulsive, eccentric, reckless, highly imaginative and ambitious at the same time for ‘radical’ distinction, his flaming zeal is not always according to knowledge; and his wisdom is too apt to ‘magnify molehills into mountains’ and ‘to give an inch the importance of a mile.’”⁴² (In 1863, Conway, acting as a self-appointed spokesman for “the leading antislavery men of America,” had lost caste with Radicals by suggesting to Confederate diplomat John M. Mason that if the Jefferson Davis government would emancipate the slaves, the abolitionists would “immediately oppose further prosecution of the war on the part of the United States government, and, since they hold the balance of power, will certainly cause the war to cease by immediate withdrawal of every kind of support from it.”)⁴³ British abolitionists could scarcely believe that their American counterparts would do anything that might improve McClellan’s chances.

Elizur Wright had little use for Lincoln, who was, he said, “fighting for the exclusive privilege of white men under a Constitution made for all men I cannot see the use of protracting this agony by reelecting Lincoln.” The president, in Wright’s view, was neither honest nor loyal.⁴⁴ Wendell Phillips, who supported Frémont’s candidacy, wrote privately: “I would cut off my right hand before doing anything to aid A. L.’s

⁴¹ Conway to Oliver Johnson, Brighton, England, 26 July, National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York), 27 August 1864.

⁴² National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York), 23 July 1864, in Mary Elizabeth Burtis, Moncure Conway, 1832-1907 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1952), 113.

⁴³ Conway to Mason, London, 10 July 1863, in Burtis, Conway, 99.

⁴⁴ Wright to Gerrit Smith, 19 August 1864, in Arthur Harry Rice, “Henry B. Stanton as a Political Abolitionist” (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1968), 405.

election – I wholly distrust his fitness to settle this thing – indeed his purpose.”⁴⁵ In a speech at Boston on October 20, he denounced the president’s “halting, half-way course, neither hot nor cold, wanting to save the North without hurting the South.” That course was dictated not “from want of brains, but want of purpose, of willingness to strike home. Observe how tender the President has been towards the South, how unduly and dangerously reluctant he has been to approach the negro and use his aid. Vigorous, despotic, decisive everywhere else, he halts, hesitates, delays to hurt the South or help the negro.” Phillips defiantly proclaimed: “I mean to agitate till I bayonet him and his party into justice.”⁴⁶

At New York’s Cooper Institute, Phillips thundered against the administration’s lack of “vigor,” “will,” “purpose,” and “loyalty in the highest sense of the word.” Moreover, he argued, Lincoln was a tyrant who trampled on the liberties of the people and was planning to steal the election: “if President Lincoln is inaugurated for the next time on the votes of Louisiana, Tennessee, or Arkansas, every citizen is bound to resist him.”⁴⁷

Incredibly, Phillips denounced Lincoln for extraditing Don Jose Augustin Arguelles, a Cuban official accused of illegally selling 141 Africans into slavery. With the profits from that crime, Arguelles moved to the United States, which had no extradition treaty with Spain. Nonetheless, when the Cuban authorities asked that he be turned over, the Lincoln administration complied, justifying its action by citing the

⁴⁵ Phillips to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, n.p., 27 September 1864, Gordon, ed., Selected Papers of Stanton, 1:531. Phillips used the same imagery in a September 19 letter to Samuel J. May, May Papers, Boston Public Library.

⁴⁶ Oscar Sherwin, Prophet of Liberty: A Biography of Wendell Phillips (New York: New York University, 1943), 505.

⁴⁷ Speech of Phillips, 26 October, New York Daily News, 27 October 1864.

Constitution, international comity, and an 1842 treaty with Great Britain dealing with attempts to shut down the international slave trade. This action represented, in the view of Phillips (and, ironically, many defenders of slavery), a case of kidnapping and a gross miscarriage of justice. (Seward remarked: “So far as depends on me, Spanish slave-dealers who have no immunity in Havana, will have none in New York.”)⁴⁸ Ironically, Phillips was making common cause with some Democrats who argued that Lincoln’s extradition of Arguelles was grounds for impeachment.⁴⁹

Phillips’s anti-Lincoln stance alienated many of his fellow antislavery militants.⁵⁰ Garrison said of the October speech at Cooper Institute: “We cannot allow it to pass without expressing our regret to perceive what seems to us a set purpose – prima facie – to represent Mr. Lincoln in the worst possible light, to attribute to him the worst possible motives, to hold him up as an imbecile and a despot, and to damage his chance of re-election to the utmost extent.”⁵¹ Though Oliver Johnson acknowledged that Lincoln “is not the man I wish he were,” the editor was “very bitter towards Phillips” and thought the Brahmin orator’s “glasses get smoky sometimes.” He deplored the way abolitionists “have wasted their power in foolish, factious and abortive ways, so that they will not have their due influence over Lincoln during his last term.”⁵² J. Miller McKim lamented Phillips’ “recklessness of assertion” and likened “destructives” such as Stephen S. Foster,

⁴⁸ Frederick William Seward, William H. Seward: An Autobiography from 1801 to 1834, with a Memoir of His Life and Selections from His Letters (3 vols.; New York: Derby and Miller, 1891), 2:215.

⁴⁹ George F. Hoeffler to Alexander Long, Cincinnati, 8 June 1864, Long Papers, Cincinnati Historical Society.

⁵⁰ James M. McPherson, The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 285.

⁵¹ The Liberator (Boston), 28 October 1864.

⁵² Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Susan B. Anthony, New York, 22 August and 25 September 1864, Stanton and Blatch, eds., Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 2:101; Oliver Johnson to Anna E. Dickinson, New York, 22 September 1864, Anna E. Dickinson Papers, Library of Congress.

James Redpath, and Parker Pillsbury to Jacobins.⁵³ Wendell Phillips' namesake, Wendell Garrison, son of William Lloyd Garrison, regretted that Pillsbury, Foster, and Phillips were inclined "to distrust everybody, to endeavor by every ingenious device to find evidence that the government is the enemy of the black man & every officer under it unworthy to be trusted." He disapproved of their "[c]austic criticism, snap judgments, & wholesale asseveration" as well as their tendency to have "only eyes for the shadows of the night & do not see the flood of daylight which is driving the blackness away."⁵⁴

Harriet Martineau thought Phillips a demagogue; Maria Weston Chapman disagreed, believing that Phillips was "merely weakly mistaken, & used by demagogues."⁵⁵ Samuel May, Jr., bluntly told Phillips that "no man is infallible" and that "your turn to be wrong has come now."⁵⁶ Lincoln, May wrote, was "greatly to be preferred to John C. Fremont on Anti-Slavery grounds." May detected in some of Phillips' allies an "uneasy spirit of jealousy."⁵⁷ Theodore Tilton insisted that he "could do nothing but denounce the whole Cleveland movement, even though in so doing, I had to pierce the bosom of my dear friend Wendell Phillips."⁵⁸ Commenting on a Frémont rally at Cooper Union in late June, Tilton called it a "complete and disastrous Copperhead display" and noted that "genuine anti-slavery men who have joined this company are in great sorrow & confusion."⁵⁹

⁵³ McKim to Caroline Weston, Philadelphia, 2 June 18[64], Weston Sisters Papers, Boston Public Library.

⁵⁴ Wendell Garrison to Ellie Garrison, 12 July 1864, in Harriet Hyman Alonso, Growing Up Abolitionist: The Story of the Garrison Children (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 218-19.

⁵⁵ Martineau told this to Caroline Weston. Maria Weston Chapman to Lizzie Chapman Laugel, Weymouth, Massachusetts, 23 February 1864, Weston Sisters Papers, Boston Public Library.

⁵⁶ May to Phillips, n.p., 30 September 1864, draft, May Papers, Boston Public Library.

⁵⁷ May to Richard Webb, Boston, 2 January 1865, May Papers, Boston Public Library.

⁵⁸ Theodore Tilton to Anna E. Dickinson, New York, 30 June 1864, Anna E. Dickinson Papers, Library of Congress.

⁵⁹ Theodore Tilton to Judge [Hugh L.?] Bond, New York, 30 June [1864], Tilton Papers, New-York Historical Society.

Some Radicals could not believe that Phillips was making common cause with John Cochrane, Frémont’s running mate. “If Phillips drank, I could account for it,” said one, but since he did not, “the coalition surpasses my comprehension.”⁶⁰ Lydia Maria Child, who was “exceedingly sorry” that Phillips attacked the administration, expressed the hope that “he will not have much influence; if he does, I fear he may be the means of giving us a Copperhead President.”⁶¹

It was thus no wonder that in late August, Parker Pillsbury lamented to Phillips: “I came up from Boston last night, sick at heart. Almost every abolitionist I see now, swears by Lincoln, & denounces your course.”⁶² A month thereafter, Elizabeth Cady Stanton similarly bemoaned the loss of support for a Radical alternative to Lincoln. “One by one our giants are being swept down with the current,” she complained to Susan B. Anthony.⁶³

In addition to Johnson, May, Child, and Tilton, Phillips’ quondam allies who disagreed with his stand included Thomas Wentworth Higginson, J. Miller McKim, Maria Weston Chapman, Josephine Griffing, Mary Grew, Sarah Pugh, Henry C. Wright, Giles Stebbins, Andrew T. Foss, Gerrit Smith, Marius R. Robinson, Calvin Fairbank, Sallie Holley, Caroline Weston, Anne Weston, and Elizabeth Buffum Chace.⁶⁴

Congressman William D. Kelley of Pennsylvania spoke for many of them when he

⁶⁰ R. S. Mathews to Theodore Tilton, Baltimore, 6 July 1864, Tilton Papers, New-York Historical Society.

⁶¹ Lydia Maria Child to Sarah Blake Sturgis Shaw, Wayland, Massachusetts, [May-June?] 1864, Child Correspondence, microfiche ed., comp. Patricia G. Holland and Milton Meltzer.

⁶² Parker Pillsbury to Wendell Phillips, Concord, New Hampshire, 27 August 1864, Phillips Papers, Harvard University.

⁶³ Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Susan B. Anthony, 25 September 1864, in Stanton and Blatch, eds., Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 2:100-1.

⁶⁴ Venet, Neither Ballots nor Bullets, 139-40; Howard, Religion and the Radical Republicans, 86-89.

declared: “Abraham Lincoln is the wisest radical of us all.”⁶⁵ A Connecticut legislator who shared Kelley’s view of Lincoln’s wisdom confessed that at times he had thought the president “was too slow, too cautious: too lenient &c, but on reflection I am led to regard him rather [as] discreet and possessed of a full share of foresight.”⁶⁶ Similarly, Henry Ward Beecher declared that “Lincoln has been slow in learning to govern, but he has learned, and I want to have him re-elected.”⁶⁷

The Democrats’ nomination of McClellan and their adoption of a peace plank were not the only developments reviving Lincoln’s chances. Four days after the Chicago convention, Sherman captured Atlanta. Lincoln was not entirely surprised, for he had recently “said the public did not properly estimate our military prospects, results of which would change the present current.” He added that he “relied upon this confidently.”⁶⁸ More specifically, he predicted that Sherman would take Georgia’s capital and that Farragut would capture the entrance to Mobile Bay. George Templeton Strong reflected the public mood when he wrote in his diary on September 3: “Glorious news this morning – Atlanta taken at last!!!” It was, Strong said, “(coming at this political crisis) the greatest event of the war.”⁶⁹ On September 6, Nicolay predicted that the “Atlanta victory alone ought to win the Presidential contest for us.”⁷⁰ To his fiancée he explained

⁶⁵ Kelley to McKim, Washington, 1 May 1864, copy, Garrison Papers, Boston Public Library.

⁶⁶ James T. Pratt to [Rufus L.] Baker, South Glastonbury, 16 November 1864, Schoff Civil War Collection, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

⁶⁷ Beecher quoted in Lydia Maria Child to Sarah Blake Sturgis Shaw, Wayland, Massachusetts, [May-June?] 1864, Child Correspondence, microfiche ed., ed. Patricia G. Holland and Milton Meltzer.

⁶⁸ Henry A. Tilden to [Samuel J. Tilden], Wash[ington], 26 August 1864, Tilden Papers, New York Public Library. The source for this was a conversation Lincoln had with a friend of Henry Tilden identified only as “C.”

⁶⁹ Nevins and Thomas, eds., Strong Diary, 3:480-81.

⁷⁰ Nicolay to Theodore Tilton, Washington, 6 September 1864, Miscellaneous Manuscripts, New-York Historical Society.

that the “political situation has not been as hopeful for six months past as it is just now. There is a perfect revolution in feeling. Three weeks ago, our friends everywhere were despondent, almost to the point of giving up the contest in despair. Now they are hopeful, jubilant, hard at work and confident of success.”⁷¹

Sherman’s triumph gave the lie to Democrats’ charge that the war was a failure. So too did Admiral David Farragut’s defeat of the Confederate ironclad Tennessee and his victory at Mobile Bay in August. (A year earlier Lincoln had told Welles that he “thought there had not been, take it all in all, so good an appointment in either branch of the service as Farragut . . . Du Pont he classed, and has often, with McClellan, but Porter he considers a busy schemer, bold but not of high qualities as a chief. For some reason he has not so high an appreciation of Porter as I think he deserves, but no man surpasses Farragut in his estimation.”)⁷² From upstate New York, former Congressman Charles B. Sedgwick, who had earlier been “in a despairing mood about Lincoln,” reported that the “old enthusiasm is reviving” because “Atlanta and Mobile have lifted us out of the slough of despond.”⁷³ The following month, Philip Sheridan trounced Jubal Early in the Shenandoah Valley, further discrediting the Democrats’ allegation. On September 23, as word of that general’s victories arrived, Lincoln was understandably “in excellent spirits” and told such funny stories that auditors laughed till they were sore.⁷⁴ He complimented

⁷¹ Nicolay to Theresia Bates, Washington, 11 September 1864, Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 158.

⁷² 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), 1:440-441 (entry for 21 September 1863).

⁷³ Charles B. Sedgwick to John Murray Forbes, Syracuse, n.d., and 5 September 1864, in Sarah Forbes Hughes, ed., Letters and Recollections of John Murray Forbes (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899), 2:101, 107.

⁷⁴ Hugh McCulloch to his wife, Washington, 25 September 1864, McCulloch Papers, Indiana University.

the general: “This Sheridan is a little Irishman, but he is a big fighter.”⁷⁵ (Lincoln once described Sheridan as a “brown, chunky little chap, with a long body, short legs, not enough neck to hang him, and such long arms that if his ankles itch he can skcratch [sic] them without stooping.”)⁷⁶ After Union forces crushed Early at the battles of Winchester and Fisher’s Hill, George William Curtis remarked that “Sheridan has opened Lincoln’s campaign with such enthusiasm among the people as I never saw.”⁷⁷ Musing on Sheridan’s accomplishments, Lincoln told a reporter: “General Grant does seem to be able to pick out the right man for the right place and at the right time. He is like that trip hammer I saw the other day. He is always certain in his movements and always the same.”⁷⁸

Grant further boosted Northern morale with a widely-published letter stating that “all we want now to insure an early restoration of the Union is a determined unity of sentiment North. The rebels have now in their ranks their last man A man lost by them can not be replaced. They have robbed the cradle and the grave equally to get their present force. Besides what they lose in frequent skirmishes and battles they are now loosing [sic] from desertions and other causes at least one regiment per day. With this drain upon them the end is visible if we will but be true to ourselves. Their only hope now is in a divided North.” Confederates “are exceedingly anxious to hold out until after

⁷⁵ Annie Wittenmyer, Under the Guns: A Woman’s Reminiscences of the Civil War (Boston: E. B. Stillings, 1895), 240.

⁷⁶ Paul Andrew Hutton, Phil Sheridan and His Army (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 2.

⁷⁷ Curtis to Charles Eliot Norton, [North Shore, New York], 24 September 1864, Curtis Papers, Harvard University.

⁷⁸ Forrester Williams, “General Sheridan’s Bad Temper,” The Independent (New York), 10 October 1901, p. 2400.

the Presidential election. They have many hopes from its effects. They hope [for] a counter revolution. They hope [for] the election of the peace candidate.”⁷⁹

Lincoln proclaimed Sunday, September 11, a day of thanksgiving for the good news from Atlanta and Mobile Bay. When the Rev. Dr. Joseph P. Thompson commended him for that taking that step, he replied: “I would be glad to give you such a proclamation every Sunday for a few weeks to come.” Thompson asked whether the capture of Atlanta or the Democrats’ blunder at Chicago had most improved his prospects for reelection. “I guess it was the victory,” he said; “at any rate I’d rather have that repeated.”⁸⁰

To defuse the effect of Lincoln’s Niagara Manifesto, some Republican newspapers and leaders (including both Seward and Interior Secretary John P. Usher) hinted that the administration would negotiate for peace without making abolition a prerequisite. The two cabinet members denied that they spoke for Lincoln, but their prominence led many to think that they were in fact doing so, despite their protestations to the contrary. George B. Cheever, who thought Lincoln “absolutely incapable of the work given him to do” and devoid of “moral dignity and honesty,” inferred from Seward’s speech a willingness on the part of the administration to accept restoration of the Union with slavery intact. “This is Lincoln’s arrangement,” Cheever confided to his wife, “and being such, I am still entirely doubtful whether God will allow him to be

⁷⁹ Grant to E. B. Washburne, 16 August 1864, John Y. Simon, ed., The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant (30 vols.; Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967-2008), 12:16-17.

⁸⁰ Joseph P. Thompson, “A Talk with President Lincoln,” letter to the editor dated New York, 27 March 1866, The Congregationalist and Boston Recorder, 30 March 1866, p. 50; sermon delivered by Thompson in New York, 30 April 1865, in Our Martyr President, Abraham Lincoln: Voices from the Pulpit of New York and Brooklyn (New York: Tibbals and Whiting, 1865), 191. Thompson based his recollection on memoranda he wrote in September 1864. The conversation took place on September 6.

reelected.”⁸¹ On the other hand, a Wisconsin Republican told Lincoln that Seward’s speech “has done much good to the Union cause,” for it “has tended to calm the excited minds” of voters who objected to the Niagara Manifesto.⁸² The issue became moot in October, when Jefferson Davis publicly announced that he would accept no peace terms unless they guaranteed Confederate independence.

PLACATING BOTH RADICALS AND CONSERVATIVES

With the fall of Atlanta, the dump-Lincoln movement collapsed. Thurlow Weed described that effort as “equally formidable and vicious, embracing a larger number of leading Men than I supposed possible. Knowing that I was not satisfied with the President they came to me for co-operation; but my objection to Mr L. is that he has done too much for those who now seek to drive him out of the Field.”⁸³ On September 20, the New York Evening Post, which had been sharply critical of Lincoln, approvingly noted that he “has gained wisdom by experience. Every year has seen our cause more successful; every year has seen abler generals, more skillful leaders, called to the head; every year has seen fewer errors, greater ability, greater energy, in the administration of affairs. . . . While Mr. Lincoln stay in power, this healthy and beneficial state of things will continue.”⁸⁴ Senator John Sherman, who had denigrated Lincoln and supported Chase’s candidacy, now told fellow Ohioans that Lincoln’s “solicitude for the public

⁸¹ George B. Cheever to Theodore Tilton, Newport, R.I., n.d., Tilton Papers, New-York Historical Society; George B. Cheever to his wife Elizabeth, New York, 22 September, 1 November 1864, Cheever Family Papers, American Antiquarian Society.

⁸² Lucius Fairchild to Lincoln, Madison, Wisconsin, 13 September 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

⁸³ Weed to Seward, New York, 10 September [1864], Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

⁸⁴ New York Evening Post, 20 September 1864, in Allan Nevins, The Evening Post: A Century of Journalism (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922), 313.

welfare is never-ceasing. I differed from him at first myself, but at last felt and believed that he was right, and shall vote for this brave, true, patriotic, kind-hearted man. All his faults and mistakes you have seen. All his virtues you can never know. His patience in labor is wonderful. He works far harder than any man in Erie County.” To exchange such a leader for the “idle, incompetent” McClellan would “be a devilish poor trade.”⁸⁵

Frémont withdrew from the race, largely thanks to the efforts of Michigan Senator Zachariah Chandler, a self-appointed peacemaker who worked behind the scenes to unite the party. In August, he began extensive shuttle diplomacy with a visit to Benjamin Wade, who realized that he had made a mistake by signing Henry Winter Davis’s manifesto. The Ohio senator was in the mood to reconcile with the president despite his personal aversion to him. When his good friend and ally Chandler asked him to stump for Lincoln, Wade agreed on condition that the president dismiss Montgomery Blair from the cabinet.⁸⁶ David H. Jerome of Detroit, a future governor of Michigan, was present at this interview and described it as “rather titanic.”⁸⁷

Chandler approached Lincoln with Wade’s request. Earlier the president had petulantly dismissed suggestions that he fire Blair, who had acquired a reputation as a “political Ishmaelite, whose hand seems to be against every man.”⁸⁸ He was still reluctant to comply, even though Senator Henry Wilson advised him that “every one hates” the

⁸⁵ Sherman, speech in Sandusky, New York Tribune, 7 October 1864.

⁸⁶ Hans L. Trefousse, “Zachariah Chandler and the Withdrawal of Frémont in 1864: New Answers to an Old Riddle,” Lincoln Herald 70 (1968):182-83.

⁸⁷ Letter from Washington by Charles Moore, n.d., who spoke with Jerome, Century Magazine, July 1895, 476-77.

⁸⁸ Shelby M. Cullom, Fifty Years of Public Service: Personal Recollections of Shelby M. Cullom, Senior United States Senator from Illinois (Chicago: McClurg, 1911); Chicago Tribune, 1 September 1865.

postmaster general and predicted that “tens of thousands of men will be lost to you or will give a reluctant vote on account of the Blair’s.”⁸⁹ When Thaddeus Stevens similarly warned that Republicans in Pennsylvania would not “work with a good will” unless Blair were dismissed, the president bristled. Expressing regret that he could not make such a promise, he said with some heat: “If I were even myself inclined to make it, I have no right to do so. What right have I to promise you to remove Mr. Blair, and not make a similar promise to any other gentleman of influence to remove any other member of my cabinet who he does not happen to like? The Republican party, wisely or unwisely has made me their nominee for President, without asking any such pledge at my hands. Is it proper that you should demand it, representing only a portion of that great party? Has it come to this that the voters of this country are asked to elect a man to be President – to be the Executive – to administer the government, and yet that this man is to have no will or discretion of his own? Am I to be the mere puppet of power – to have my constitutional advisers selected for me beforehand, to be told I must do this or leave that undone? It would be degrading to my manhood to consent to any such bargain – I was about to say it is equally degrading to your manhood to ask it. I confess that I desire to be re-elected. God knows I do not want the labor and responsibility of the office for another four years. But I have the common pride of humanity to wish my past four years Administration endorsed; and besides I honestly believe that I can better serve the nation in its need and peril than any new man could possibly do. I want to finish this job of putting down the rebellion, and restoring peace and prosperity to the country. But I would have the courage to refuse the office rather than accept it such disgraceful terms, as not really to be the

⁸⁹ Wilson to Lincoln, Natick, Massachusetts, 5 September 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

President after I am elected.”⁹⁰ When the Republican National Executive Committee asked for Blair’s resignation in compliance with the party’s platform, Lincoln flatly refused.⁹¹

In August, Francis P. Blair Sr., recognizing that the controversial postmaster general might damage Lincoln’s reelection chances, told the president “that he might rely on my sons to do all they could for him” and suggested that the president recall Frank Blair from the army “to heal party divisions in Missouri & Stump the States.” He added that Montgomery “would go the rounds also – and would very willing be a martyr to the Radical phrenzy or jealousy, that would feed on the Blair’s, if that would help.” Lincoln replied that “nobody but enemies wanted Montg[omer]y out of the Cabinet” and that “he did not think it good policy to sacrifice a true friend to a false one or an avowed enemy.” Still, he did appreciate Montgomery’s generous offer to “cheerfully resign to conciliate the class of men who had made their war on the Blair’s because they were his friends – and sought to injure him among the ignorant partizans of those seeking to supplant him.”⁹²

On September 3, Lincoln changed his mind when he met with Chandler, Elihu Washburne, Iowa Senator James Harlan, and James M. Edmunds, head of the Union League. According to Henry Winter Davis, who heard the story from Chandler, the four

⁹⁰ Interview between Thaddeus Stevens and Lincoln as recounted by R. M. Hoe, n.d., in Michael Burlingame, ed., An Oral History of Abraham Lincoln: John G. Nicolay’s Interviews and Essays (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 78-79.

⁹¹ Blair to Cassius M. Clay, Washington, 31 December 1881, copy, David Rankin Barbee Papers, Georgetown University.

⁹² Elizabeth Blair Lee to her husband, Silver Spring, [Maryland], 24 September [1864], Virginia Jeans Laas, ed., Wartime Washington: The Civil War Letters of Elizabeth Blair Lee (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 433.

men “intimated that the country thought well” of Lincoln but was upset by his acceptance of Chase’s resignation.⁹³ If “he would remove Blair all might still be well.” After the president defended his postmaster general in a lengthy rehearsal of events in Missouri, his callers replied that even if a case could be made for Blair, “still all who will vote for you think Blair false and untrustworthy and you can’t convince them; so you must remove him or be defeated.”

“But I don’t want to desert a friend!” Lincoln exclaimed.

“Very possibly, but you will go down with him. What you say about Blair may be true – but nobody thinks so and everybody wants to get rid of him. Won’t you let him go?”

“Well I’ll think of it.”

Chandler then said: “I am going to New York to see Wade; and probably if I could say you will remove Blair I could secure his support and get Fremont out of the way.”

Lincoln said, “Well I think it may be done!”

The next morning Chandler told Lincoln “if Fremont could be induced to withdraw by giving up Blair he would do [arrange] it.” To his wife, Chandler confided that Lincoln “was most reluctant to come to terms but came.”⁹⁴

⁹³ The following account is based primarily on Henry Winter Davis to S. F. Du Pont, n.p., 28 or 29 September 1864, in John D. Hayes, ed., Samuel Francis Du Pont: A Selection from His Civil War Letters (3 vols.; Ithaca: published for the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library by the Cornell University Press, 1969), 3:393-394; Trefousse, “Chandler and the Withdrawal of Frémont,” passim; and a letter from Washington by Charles Moore, n.d., who spoke with Jerome, Century Magazine, July 1895, 476-77. Davis’s account is partially confirmed by J. K. Herbert to Benjamin F. Butler, Washington, 3 September 1864, Jesse Ames Marshall, ed., Private and Official Correspondence of Gen. Benjamin F. Butler, During the Period of the Civil War (5 vols.; Norwood, Massachusetts: Plimpton Press, 1917), 5:120-121.

⁹⁴ Chandler to his wife, New York, 8 September 1864, Chandler Papers, Library of Congress.

The Michigan senator proceeded to New York on his mission, which Senator Harlan told him was so important that if he succeeded he would have done more for the campaign than any ten men could have done on the stump.⁹⁵ In New York he was chagrined to discover that Wade had not arrived. The Ohio senator had indicated that he could help persuade Frémont to quit. Undaunted, Chandler carried on negotiations with Frémont and his advisors, David Dudley Field and George Wilkes. Frankly he informed the Pathfinder that Lincoln would not withdraw and insisted that the Republicans would lose unless Frémont abandoned his campaign. Moreover, Blair would be dismissed if the Pathfinder quit. Frémont promised to think it over.

The Pathfinder received conflicting advice from friends. Some abolitionists, like Wendell Phillips, counseled him to remain in the race, while others, like John Greenleaf Whittier, favored the opposite course. Nathaniel P. Sawyer, a Pittsburgh banker and close friend of Governor Curtin, urged Frémont to “withdraw as soon as practicable in favor of Lincoln and Johnson” if he had “assurance of Mr. Blair’s immediate removal and also Mr. Stanton’s and the assurance that Mr. Seward will not be reappointed.” Although Sawyer held a rather low opinion of the president, he pledged that if Frémont withdrew, he and former Pennsylvania governor William F. Johnston would support Lincoln.⁹⁶

The persistent Chandler followed Frémont to Massachusetts and kept pressing him. After further reflection, the Pathfinder said he would quit without conditioning his action on Blair’s dismissal. He recognized that his cause was hopeless after the

⁹⁵ Chandler to his wife, Washington, 18 September 1864, Chandler Papers, Library of Congress.

⁹⁶ Sawyer to Andrew Johnson, Pittsburgh, 10 June 1865, LeRoy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, eds., The Papers of Andrew Johnson (16 vols.; Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1967-2000), 6:731; Sawyer letter of 13 September 1864, in Allan Nevins, Frémont: Pathmarker of the West (New York: Longmans, Green, 1955), 579-580.

Democratic convention had failed to endorse him, and he did not wish to see McClellan in the White House. According to the Jessie Frémont, Whittier's advice – "There is a time to do, and a time to stand aside" – was the "deciding word" that persuaded her husband to withdraw.⁹⁷

Chandler feared that if Frémont did not make his resignation contingent on Blair's removal, Lincoln might retain the postmaster general in office. After remonstrating with the Pathfinder in vain, Chandler hastened to inform Lincoln of Frémont's decision and ask for the quid pro quo that he had specified before undertaking his mission: Blair's dismissal.

When the Michigan senator made that demand, Lincoln replied: "Well, but I must do it in my own way to soften it." It is not known if Chandler informed Lincoln that Frémont would quit even should Blair remain in the cabinet. Perhaps the president realized that he could keep Blair on; if so, he may have decided to sacrifice him in order to placate Wade, Davis, and their allies.

Frémont's letter of withdrawal, written on September 17 and published five days later, understandably displeased Lincoln. In a most grudging fashion, the Pathfinder offered to support the Republican ticket: "In respect to Mr. Lincoln, I consider that his Administration has been politically, militarily, and financially a failure, and that its necessary continuance is a cause of regret for the country."⁹⁸ Lincoln was so put off that when Chandler and David H. Jerome called at the White House on September 22, he "showed symptoms of flying from the bargain." But Chandler insisted that "the form of

⁹⁷ Jessie Frémont to Whittier, Los Angeles, 19 November 1889, in Catherine Coffin Phillips, Jessie Benton Frémont: A Woman Who Made History (San Francisco: J. H. Nash, 1935), 272.

⁹⁸ Frémont to George L. Stearns et al., Nahant, 17 September 1864, Boston Daily Advertiser, 23 September 1864.

the withdrawal was not a condition; and offensive as it was, still it was a substantial advice to support L[incoln].”

The president agreed and next day graciously asked Blair to honor his pledge to step down whenever Lincoln asked him to do so: “You have generously said to me more than once, that whenever your resignation could be a relief to me, it was at my disposal. The time has come. You very well know that this proceeds from no dissatisfaction of mine with you personally or officially. Your uniform kindness has been unsurpassed by that of any friend; and, while it is true that the war does not so greatly add to the difficulties of your Department, as to those of some others, it is yet much to say, as I most truly can, that in the three years and a half during which you have administered the General Post-Office, I remember no single complaint against you in connection therewith.”⁹⁹

Blair “was very much surprised,” for he “had thought the opposition to him was dying out.”¹⁰⁰ On September 24, Blair showed the president’s letter to a startled Bates and Welles, after telling them: “I suppose you are both aware that my head is decapitated, – that I am no longer a member of the Cabinet.” When Welles asked what was behind the president’s decision, the postmaster general “said he had no doubt he was a peace-offering to Fremont and his friends. They wanted an offering, and he was the victim whose sacrifice would propitiate them.” Welles opined that “the suggestion of pacifying the partisans of Fremont might have been brought into consideration, but it was not the

⁹⁹ Lincoln to Montgomery Blair, Washington, 23 September 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 8:18.

¹⁰⁰ 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), 233 (entry for 26 September 1864).

moving cause.” Lincoln, he said, “would never have yielded to that, except under the pressing advisement, or deceptive appeals and representations of some one to whom he had given his confidence.”

“Oh,” Blair replied, “there is no doubt Seward was accessory to this, instigated and stimulated by Weed.” Welles believed that Chase was “more influential than Seward in this matter.”¹⁰¹ To his mother, Blair complained that Lincoln “has given himself and me too, an unnecessary mortification in this matter,” but added that “I am sure he acts from the best motives.”¹⁰² His brother-in-law, Gustavus Fox, thought Blair’s dismissal “rather a summary process and does not appear to me to be frank and true, but politics is not made up of the finest mettle.”¹⁰³

Bitter though he may have been about the influence of Seward and Weed at the White House, Blair responded to the president’s letter handsomely: “I can not take leave of you without renewing the expressions of my gratitude for the uniform kindness which has marked your course towards [me.]”¹⁰⁴ He was pleased that Lincoln took Francis P. Blair’s advice and appointed as his replacement William Dennison, former governor of Ohio and a friend of the Blair family.¹⁰⁵ David Davis congratulated Lincoln on the selection, calling Dennison “honorable, highminded pure, & dignified” and “a wise & safe counsellor.”¹⁰⁶ Blair’s dismissal indicated to Henry Winter Davis that “bullying may

¹⁰¹ Beale, ed., Welles Diary, 2:156-157 (entry for 23 September 1864).

¹⁰² William Ernest Smith, The Francis Preston Blair Family in Politics (2 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1933), 2:288.

¹⁰³ Gustavus V. Fox to his wife Virginia, Washington, 23 September 1864, Fox Papers, New-York Historical Society.

¹⁰⁴ Blair to Lincoln, Washington, 23 September 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁰⁵ Laas, ed., Letters of Elizabeth Blair Lee, 437n; Smith, Blair Family, 2:290.

¹⁰⁶ David Davis to Lincoln, Bloomington, 4 October 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

do something” and that Lincoln “thinks more of himself than of his friends.”¹⁰⁷ (Wendell Phillips shared Davis’s view of bullying: “We must bully the Govt!” he exclaimed to Maria Weston Chapman.)¹⁰⁸

Lincoln told Welles that he needed to placate those who were upset by the departure of Chase while Blair was allowed to remain in the cabinet. Chase and his numerous friends believed that the retention of the postmaster general was “invidious, and the public would consider it a condemnation of himself [Chase] and an approval of the Blairs.” The president trusted that Blair’s dismissal “would reconcile all parties, and rid the Administration of irritating bickerings.” As Welles later recalled, Lincoln at that time “was greatly embarrassed by contentions among his friends, by nominal Republicans, by intense radicals, and the strong front of the Democrats.”¹⁰⁹

Blair’s abrasiveness had in fact alienated most of the cabinet. Bates considered him a “tricky politician” who lacked “the first conception of statesmanship.”¹¹⁰ Chase deeply resented Blair’s private letters that Frémont had released years earlier in which the postmaster general said the treasury secretary “has more horror of seeing treasury notes below par than of seeing soldiers killed.”¹¹¹ Blair and Chase had quarreled over patronage matters, among other things. When the former dismissed Chase’s friend Lewis Clephane, the postmaster of Washington, the latter appealed to Lincoln. As they discussed the

¹⁰⁷ Henry Winter Davis to S. F. Du Pont, n.p., 28 September 1864, in Hayes, ed., Du Pont Letters, 3:395.

¹⁰⁸ Maria Weston Chapman to Lizzie Chapman Laugel, Weymouth, Massachusetts, 23 February 1864, Weston Sisters Papers, Boston Public Library.

¹⁰⁹ Beale, ed., Welles Diary, 2:158n (undated footnote).

¹¹⁰ Howard K. Beale, ed., The Diary of Edward Bates, 1859-1866 (Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1930, vol. IV; Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1933), 291 (entry for 10 May 1864); Smith, Blair Family, 2:191.

¹¹¹ Blair to Frémont, Washington, 24 August 1861, United States Congress, Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War (3 vols.; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1863), 3:116.

matter, Blair entered the room and insisted that each department head could fire employees in his domain without consulting other cabinet members. Chase snapped back, “Very well, then according to your own rule, I appoint Mr. Clephane collector in this district in the place of your friend Bowen, who is removed!” Lincoln admonished them: “Take your own course, gentlemen, and do not bother me with your changes.”¹¹² Blair and Stanton were not on speaking terms; upon learning that Chandler celebrated the dismissal of Blair by having “a good drunk,” the secretary of war “said he would like to have known when & where, that he might have had a hand in it.”¹¹³ Blair was so quick to impugn the motives of others that Lincoln felt compelled to chide him gently: “It is much better not to be led from the region of reason into that of hot blood, by imputing to public men motives which they do not avow.”¹¹⁴

As he campaigned for Lincoln that fall, Blair denied Democratic charges that he had been sacrificed to appease the Radicals: “I retired on the recommendation of my father” who “would not permit a son of his to stand in the way of the glorious and patriotic President who leads us on to success and to the final triumph that is in store for us.”¹¹⁵ Indeed, Francis P. Blair Sr. told his son Frank that if the sacrifice of Montgomery “tends to give a greater certainty of the defeat of McClellan, which I look upon as the

¹¹² Washington correspondence by Van [D. W. Bartlett], 25 March, Springfield, Massachusetts, Republican, 27 March 1863.

¹¹³ J. K. Herbert to Benjamin Butler, Washington, 26 September 1864, in Marshall, ed., Correspondence of Butler, 5:168.

¹¹⁴ Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 254 (entry for 18 December 1864).

¹¹⁵ Smith, Blair Family, 2:292.

salvation of the Republic, . . . I hope you will concur with the views I have taken. The true interests of the Country require the reelection of Lincoln.”¹¹⁶

Discontent among the Conservatives threatened to break into the open, but when Frank Blair learned that some of his friends intended to denounce the president for dismissing his brother, he squelched their plans.

Edward Bates regretted Lincoln’s decision to let Blair go, for the Radicals now seemed in the ascendant. “I think Mr. Lincoln could have been elected without them and in spite of them,” he confided to his diary. “In that event, the Country might have been governed, free from their malign influences, and more nearly in conformity to the constitution.”¹¹⁷ In Lincoln’s view, however, the Conservatives were not totally marginalized. He speculated that if Montgomery Blair “will devote himself to the success of the national cause without exhibiting bad temper towards his opponents, he can set the Blair family up again.”¹¹⁸

Lincoln’s willingness to let Blair go was rooted in his understandable fear that Frémont might siphon off essential votes. The Pathfinder was especially popular among Missouri Germans, who scorned Lincoln as the “great violator of the Constitution,” a “still greater butcher of men,” and one who “remains unmoved in the face of the greatest misery, and who can crack joke like a Nero while Rome is burning.”¹¹⁹ In late August, the president asked a Baltimore Republican about the progress of the Frémont movement,

¹¹⁶ Doris Kearns Goodwin, Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 660; Francis P. Blair to Frank Blair, Washington, [23 September 1864], copied in Elizabeth Blair Lee to her husband, Silver Spring, [Maryland,] 24 September 1864, Laas, ed., Letters of Elizabeth Blair Lee, 443.

¹¹⁷ Beale, ed., Bates Diary, 413 (entry for 23 September 1864).

¹¹⁸ Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 230 (entry for 24 September 1864).

¹¹⁹ St. Louis Anzeiger des Westens, n.d., copied in the La Crosse, Wisconsin, Daily Democrat, 17 August 1864.

which allegedly troubled him far more than did the upcoming Democratic convention.¹²⁰

The president told Gustav Koerner that “he would lose . . . the German element, which held the balance of power in Missouri, Wisconsin, and Illinois.”¹²¹ The president may well have been thinking of the 1844 election. As the postmaster of Brooklyn observed, the “Fremont movement is a weak concern,” but so was the Liberty Party candidacy of James G. Birney which doomed Henry Clay’s bid for the presidency.¹²²

Lincoln was also eager to have Wade, Davis, and other Radicals rejoin the fold. Some administration critics hoped that Chase would publicly denounce Lincoln as he had done in private, and the president expressed fear that Chase would come out against him. But Hugh McCulloch, comptroller of the currency, met with Lincoln in September to help reconcile Chase and the president. During their conversation, Lincoln “made a frank statement of his kind feelings for Mr. Chase,” thus “removing all cause for estrangement between them.” Shortly thereafter Chase, eager for the seat on the Supreme Court that seemed likely to open soon, returned to the Midwest to campaign for Lincoln and Johnson. He delivered over twenty speeches in swing states.¹²³

Reluctantly other Radicals followed suit, for no alternative candidate – not Ben Butler, or Andrew Johnson, or Henry Winter Davis, or Daniel S. Dickinson – seemed

¹²⁰ Lincoln asked Frank Corcoran this question. Worthington G. Snethen to Wendell Phillips, Baltimore, 25 August 1864, Wendell Phillips Papers, Harvard University.

¹²¹ Thomas J. McCormack, ed., Memoirs of Gustave Koerner, 1809-1896 (2 vols.; Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1909), 2:432.

¹²² George B. Lincoln to Andrew Johnson, Brooklyn, 11 June 1864, Graf and Haskins, eds., Johnson Papers, 6:732.

¹²³ Hugh McCulloch to his wife, Washington, 25 September 1864, Hugh McCulloch Papers, Indiana University; Enoch T. Carson to Chase, Washington, 25 October 1864, Chase Papers, Library of Congress; Franklin B. Sanborn to Moncure D. Conway, Florence, Massachusetts, 10 July 1864, Conway Papers, Columbia University; John Niven, Salmon P. Chase: A Biography (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 372-373.

viable.¹²⁴ “[W]ere it not for the country there would be a poetical justice in his [Lincoln’s] being beaten by that stupid ass McClellan,” Wade told Chandler. “I can but wish the d[evi]l had Old Abe,” but “to save the nation I am doing all for him that I possibly could do for a better man.”¹²⁵ As good as his word, Wade campaigned extensively throughout the Midwest.

Chandler shared his friend’s dim view of the president; in the midst of his diplomatic offensive to unite the party, he told his wife: “If it was only Abe Lincoln I would say, [‘]go to ____ in your own way, I will not stop a second to save you[.]’” But he felt that more was involved than Lincoln’s personal fortunes. At stake was “this great nation with all its hopes for the present & future” and therefore he could not “abandon the effort now.”¹²⁶

Henry Winter Davis rejoiced that Lincoln, whom he called a “mean and selfish old dog,” had dismissed the postmaster general: “Blair is gone! Our necks are relieved from that galling humiliation.”¹²⁷ The congressman told a friend that he would give a pro-Lincoln speech “if he can get his disgust off sufficiently,” adding that he felt “so disgusted that he cannot talk.”¹²⁸ Nonetheless, when Chandler urged Davis to follow Wade’s lead, the Marylander “expressed willingness to accept Blair’s displacement as an olive branch and give his earnest support to the Baltimore ticket.”¹²⁹ His support,

¹²⁴ Franklin B. Sanborn to Moncure D. Conway, Concord, Massachusetts, 16 September 1864, Conway Family Papers, Dickinson College; George Perkins Marsh to George G. Fogg, Turin, 9 September 1864, Fogg Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society.

¹²⁵ Wade to Chandler, Jefferson, Ohio, 2 October 1864, Chandler Papers, Library of Congress.

¹²⁶ Chandler to his wife, Washington, 2 September 1864, Chandler Papers, Library of Congress.

¹²⁷ Davis to Du Pont, n.p, [28 or 29 September] 1864, in Hayes, ed., Du Pont Letters, 3:393.

¹²⁸ J. K. Herbert to Benjamin Butler, Washington, 26 September 1864, Correspondence of Butler, ed. Marshall, 5:167.

¹²⁹ Smith, Blair Family, 2:285.

however, was far from warm. In late September, Davis told a Maryland audience “that neither McClellan nor Lincoln were leading men of vigor equal to the place and that the only difference was that each would be what his Congress made him in spite of himself – McClellan would be compelled to peace even if he wished war, and Lincoln would be compelled to wage the war and to execute the emancipation policy and [would be] firmly restrained from any ignominious or weak compromises.”¹³⁰ According to a Radical ally of Davis, “on all occasions he deplores the cruel necessity of voting for him [Lincoln].” His speeches contained a simple message: the president “is neither wise nor honest, good people, but if I can vote for him, it would be ridiculous [sic] for you to be more squeamish.”¹³¹

Frémont’s withdrawal, accompanied by Blair’s dismissal, did not satisfy all malcontents. On the eve of the election, George B. Cheever feared that Lincoln’s victory would spark riots throughout the North: “Choosing a man whose latest act has been the deliberate refusal to set free three millions of slaves by law, when God commanded, and the Congress in obedience to God, and in answer to the people, ordered the measure – choosing that man, I fear we set ourselves anew against God, and God against us. I fear lest it be followed by a new rebellion, and consequent disintegration of the Northern government.”¹³²

¹³⁰ Davis to Du Pont, n.p., 25, [post 28] September 1864, Hayes, ed., Du Pont Letters, 3:396n.

¹³¹ Peter G. Sauerwine to Edward McPherson, Baltimore, 8 October 1864, McPherson Papers, Library of Congress.

¹³² George B. Cheever to Theodore Tilton, Newport, R.I., n.d., Tilton Papers, New-York Historical Society; George B. Cheever to his wife Elizabeth, New York, 22 September, 1 November 1864, Cheever Family Papers, American Antiquarian Society. Cheever had long been criticizing Lincoln in similar terms. See Cheever to Salmon P. Chase, Saratoga Springs, 7 August 1863, Chase Papers, Library of Congress.

In addition to cultivating Radicals, Lincoln attempted to placate some Conservatives, including the prominent Peace Democrat, James W. Singleton of Illinois. According to one source, “Lincoln’s immediate friends were working to make the [Democratic] nominee and platform of the party as odious as possible.” In that effort “they were largely assisted” by Singleton, “who was one of the leaders of the anti-McClellan faction in the democratic party and a strong supporter of Vallandigham.”¹³³ In August, Singleton presided over a mass meeting in Peoria, which adopted resolutions denouncing the war as unwinnable and unconstitutional. Two weeks later, at a similar gathering in Springfield, Singleton threatened to abandon the Democratic party unless the radical Peoria resolutions were approved. The meeting ended amid fistfights and bitter recrimination between the Singleton faction and more moderate Democrats.¹³⁴ In September, Lincoln showed Singleton a politically embarrassing letter by McClellan.¹³⁵ Soon thereafter, Singleton delivered a scathing anti-McClellan speech. Coming from a Peace Democrat, his words carried weight with his party colleagues. In mid-October he met at Cincinnati with other radical Peace Democrats to nominate a new presidential candidate. There he helped draft a platform that described the people of the Confederacy as “brothers in blood” and recommended that “we should make all possible efforts to join them in a mutual policy of unconditional negation for the attainment of peace.” (When Alexander Long declined to serve as the rump party’s candidate, the convention

¹³³ “Old-Time Facts and Fancies” by “An Old-Timer,” clipping marked “Chicago News, 2-29-1896,” clipping collection, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne.

¹³⁴ Illinois State Register (Springfield) and Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 19 August 1864.

¹³⁵ Thomas G. Piatt to S. L. M. Barlow, Washington, 21 September 1864, Barlow Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

adjourned without fielding a ticket.) Lincoln allegedly told Singleton: “you have done more than any one else to insure my reelection.”¹³⁶

DEMOCRATIC ATTACKS

As usual, Democrats appealed shamelessly to race prejudice. A leading party newspaper alleged that Lincoln was descended from blacks. His peculiar character, “which has led so many to the belief that Mr. Lincoln is insane, is, we suspect, more rationally accounted for by the idea that he is the outcrop of a remote African in his ancestry.” This conclusion was supported by his “physical and physiognomical proportions: his face and hands, and especially his feet, which, like his manners, testify strongly of the plantation.” Moreover, “his buffoonery, his superstition, and his conscientiousness – which takes no cognizance of consequences, except such as are personal, to himself – is of the purest Congo; and his negro logic and rhetoric – which we have heretofore been inclined to attribute to his negro politics – is better accounted for upon the presumption of an earlier origin.”¹³⁷

Democrats summarized the Republican platform thus:

“Hurrah for the nigger

The sweet-scented nigger,

And the paradise for the undertaker!

Hurrah for Old Abe!”¹³⁸

The bogus issue of interracial sex, long a staple of Democratic campaign rhetoric, was more prominent than usual in 1864.¹³⁹ The party’s traditional appeal to anti-black

¹³⁶ Article by Matthew Page Andrews, New York Times, 12 February 1928.

¹³⁷ Cincinnati Enquirer, 29 March 1864, in Charles Ray Wilson, “The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer and Civil War Politics: A Study of Copperhead Opinion” (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1934), 253-254.

¹³⁸ Lacrosse, Wisconsin, Daily Democrat, 16 August 1864.

prejudice received a new twist during the campaign. David Herbert Croly and George Wakeman of the New York World coined a neologism for their anonymous anti-Republican pamphlet, Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro, which was sent to leading antislavery spokesmen. (The common term for miscegenation before the Goodman and Wakeman invented it was amalgamation.) A fraud designed to trap the recipients into endorsing interracial marriage, the tract was purportedly written by an unnamed abolitionist advocating that policy. It was filled with false “facts” which played on the North’s deep-seated Negrophobia, especially among the Irish. It concluded on a rousing note: “Let the Republican party go into the next contest with a platform worthy of itself; worthy of the events which have occurred during the last three years; worthy of the great future. Let the motto then of the great progressive party of this country be Freedom, Political and Social Equality; Universal Brotherhood.” The few gullible abolitionists who fell for the hoax became the butt of Democrats, notably by Ohio Congressman Samuel S. “Sunset” Cox. But the attempt to inveigle a prominent Republican into supporting it failed, and no branch of the party adopted it as a platform plank.¹⁴⁰ (Before 1864, a handful of abolitionists had spoken out in favor of interracial marriage.)¹⁴¹ In some Democratic circles, Republicans were referred to as “nigger fuggers.”¹⁴² When asked if he supported

¹³⁹ Sidney Kaplan, “The Miscegenation Issue in the Election of 1864,” Journal of Negro History 34 (1949):274-343; David E. Long, The Jewel of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln’s Re-election and the End of Slavery (Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 1994), 153-77.

¹⁴⁰ Michael Vorenberg, Final Freedom: The Civil War, the Abolition of Slavery, and the Thirteenth Amendment (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 141.

¹⁴¹ McPherson, Struggle for Equality, 147-48.

¹⁴² Cyrus [Bearenderfer?] to Daniel Musser, 20 February 1864, Musser Papers, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, in Arnold M. Shankman, The Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement, 1861-1865 (Rutherford, N.J.: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1980), 196.

miscegenation, Lincoln wryly answered: “That’s a [D]emocratic mode of producing good Union men, & I don’t propose to infringe the patent.”¹⁴³

The Democrats’ appeal to race prejudice alarmed some Republicans, including an Ohio judge who warned John Sherman: “This love and zeal for the nigger may be carried too far; the prejudice against social equality is just as strong now as ever; the hatred of the rebellion is such that the people, as a war measure, are in favor of emancipation; but this is the extent of their change of opinion, and it arises not from any love of the nigger.”¹⁴⁴

Lincoln could be sarcastic when confronting racist arguments. In August, an ungrammatical Pennsylvanian wrote him saying: “Equal Rights & Justice to all white men in the United States forever. White men is in class number one & black men is in class number two & must be governed by white men forever.” In reply, he wrote a biting reply over the signature of Nicolay: “The President has received yours of yesterday, and is kindly paying attention to it. As it is my business to assist him whenever I can, I will thank you to inform me, for his use, whether you are either a white man or black one, because in either case, you can not be regarded as an entirely impartial judge. It may be that you belong to a third or fourth class of yellow or red men, in which case the impartiality of your judgment would be more apparent.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Interview with Alexander W. Randall and Joseph T. Mills, 19 August 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:508.

¹⁴⁴ Simeon Nash to John Sherman, Gallipolis, Ohio, 17 June 1864, John Sherman Papers, Library of Congress. Nash made a similar argument to Chase on June 10. Chase Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁴⁵ John McMahon to Lincoln, Harmbrook, Pennsylvania, 5 August 1864, Nicolay Papers, Library of Congress; Nicolay [i.e., Lincoln] to McMahon, Washington, 6 August 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:483.

Democrats abused the president roundly, calling him “a miserable failure, a coarse filthy joker, a disgusting politician, a mean, cunning and cruel tyrant and the shame and disgrace of the nation.”¹⁴⁶ S. S. Cox ridiculed the president as an “executive trifler,” a “retailer of smutty stories,” and a “tyrant over men’s thoughts, presses, letters, persons, and lives.”¹⁴⁷ Samuel F. B. Morse called Lincoln an “illiterate,” “inhuman,” “wicked,” “irreligious” president “without brains,” and a “coarse, vulgar, uncultivated man, an inventor or re-teller of stories so low and obscene, that no decent man can listen to them without disgust.”¹⁴⁸ A Democratic newspaper in Connecticut bestowed the sobriquet “Old Smutty” on Lincoln, while the Cincinnati Enquirer scornfully remarked that if “there ever was a man who has become an object of detestation, that man is Lincoln. Since the days of the French revolution no such monstrosity has been elevated to the head of affairs. The people feel that no change could be for the worse, and that any human being upon the face of the earthy, who has the slightest prospect of beating Lincoln is to be preferred to him.”¹⁴⁹ Hysterically that paper bemoaned “the threatened extinguishment of the experiment of free government” and predicted that the fall elections might well be the last “to receive the votes of freeman.”¹⁵⁰ Under “Abraham the First,” the U.S. had become “the Russia of the Western Hemisphere.”¹⁵¹ A former mayor

¹⁴⁶ Cleveland Plain Dealer, 13 September 1864, in Donnal Vore Smith, Chase and Civil War Politics (Columbus, Ohio: F. J. Heer, 1931), 154.

¹⁴⁷ Columbus Crisis, 3 August 1864, in David Lindsey, “Sunset” Cox: Irrepressible Democrat (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1959), 84.

¹⁴⁸ Kenneth Silverman, Lightning Man: The Accursed Life of Samuel F. B. Morse (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 410-411.

¹⁴⁹ Bridgeport, Connecticut, Farmer, n.d., copied in the La Crosse, Wisconsin, Daily Democrat, 30 August 1864; Cincinnati Enquirer, n.d., in Wilson, “Cincinnati Enquirer and Civil War Politics,” 294.

¹⁵⁰ Eugene Roseboom, The Civil War Era, 1850-1873, vol. 4 of The History of the State of Ohio, ed. Carl Wittke (6 vols.; Columbus: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1941-1944), 4:435.

¹⁵¹ Cincinnati Enquirer, 23, 24 September 1864.

of Cincinnati speculated that Lincoln and his party “will proclaim themselves in power during the war. . . . I believe that Lincoln will not give up the idea of accomplishing the great idea of the war, though he may be compelled to resort to the levy en masse.”¹⁵² In Ohio’s capital, Samuel Medary asserted that “everybody not crazy with ‘negro on the brain’” knows that “Lincoln is running our country to perdition – destroying ‘life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness’ as he sought to make himself a king.”¹⁵³

A New York magazine literally demonized Lincoln while praising his opponent: “McClellan is for adhering scrupulously to the rules of civilized warfare. Lincoln is for practicing to the extremest limits the brutal customs of savage warfare. McClellan is a Christian and a gentleman. Lincoln is a barbarian and a buffoon. McClellan is humane and tolerant in all his instincts and rules of action. Lincoln is infernal and implacable in every feeling and purpose. The difference between them may defined to be precisely that between a human being and a fiend; for Lincoln is infernal. His face is a faithful chart of his soul, and his face is that of a demon, cunning, obscene, treacherous, lying and devilish. Gen. McClellan is the reverse of all this.”¹⁵⁴

Some newspapers suggested that Lincoln should be killed. In late August, the La Crosse, Wisconsin, Democrat declared that if the president were reelected, it would be well if someone assassinated him: “The man who votes for Lincoln now is a traitor. Lincoln is a traitor and murderer. He who, pretending to war for [the constitution of our country], wars against the constitution of our country is a traitor, and Lincoln is one of

¹⁵² James J. Farran to Alexander Long, Cincinnati, 26 June 1864, Long Papers, Cincinnati Historical Society.

¹⁵³ Columbus Crisis, 27 January 1864, in Smith, Medary, 130

¹⁵⁴ The Old Guard, New York, October 1864, in Joseph George, “Abraham Africanus I: President Lincoln Through the Eyes of a Copperhead Editor,” Civil War History 14 (1968):233-34.

those men. He who calls and allures men to certain butchery, is a murderer, and Lincoln has done all this. Had any former Democratic President warred upon the constitution or trifled with the destinies of the nation as Lincoln has he would have been hurled to perdition long since. And if he is elected to misgovern for another four years, we trust some bold hand will pierce his heart with dagger point for the public good.”¹⁵⁵ Similarly ominous was an editorial in the Albany Atlas and Argus paraphrasing a sentence from Patrick Henry’s 1765 “treason” speech: “Caesar had his Brutus, Charles I his Cromwell . . . and we the People recommend Abraham Lincoln to profit by their example.”¹⁵⁶ A leading Democratic newspaper in the West, the Chicago Times, darkly proclaimed that it was necessary to “ourselves and to posterity to relieve the nation in some way of a most intolerable weight of tyranny.” If Lincoln could not be voted out of office, “then the next step is plain and inevitable. We leave its character to the development of the future.”¹⁵⁷ In Pennsylvania, John Laird, editor of the Greensburg Argus, declared that Lincoln’s “defeat or his death is an indispensable condition to an honorable peace.” When Laird heard of petitions calling for the suspension of the draft, he said: “Go one step further, brethren, and suspend Old Abe – by the neck if necessary to stop the accursed slaughter of our citizens.”¹⁵⁸ The New York Daily News wished that Heaven would “direct its vengeance openly against the man who has drenched this fair land of ours with blood.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ La Crosse Daily Democrat, 25 August 1864.

¹⁵⁶ Hans L. Trefousse, First Among Equals: Abraham Lincoln’s Reputation During His Administration (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 112.

¹⁵⁷ Chicago Times, 7 June 1864.

¹⁵⁸ Greensburg, Pennsylvania, Argus, 10, 17 August 1864, in Shankman, Antiwar Movement in Pennsylvania, 177, 192.

¹⁵⁹ New York Daily News, 12 September 1864.

Less sanguinary Democrats called for Lincoln’s impeachment rather than his assassination. Others deplored his alleged indifference to the troops’ suffering. Ex-governor William Allen of Ohio declared that the people “don’t want a cold blooded joker at Washington who, while the District of Columbia is infested with hospitals, and the atmosphere burdened by the groans and sighs of our mangled countrymen, when he can spare a minute from Joe Miller’s Jest Book looks out upon the acres of hospitals and inquires ‘What houses are those?’”¹⁶⁰ Such charges peaked when the New York World alleged that Lincoln had requested Ward Hill Lamon to sing a popular ditty while they and McClellan toured the corpse-strewn Antietam battlefield. According to that flagship Democratic journal, the president said: “Come, Lamon, give us that song about Picayune Butler; McClellan has never heard it.”

“Not now, if you please,” McClellan supposedly remarked. “I would prefer to hear it some other place and time.”¹⁶¹

This bogus story inspired some Democratic doggerel:

“Abe may crack his jolly jokes
 O’er bloody fields of stricken battle,
 While yet the ebbing life-tide smokes
 From men that die like butchered cattle;
 He, ere yet the guns grow cold,
 To pimps and pets may crack his stories.”¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Reginald C. McGrane, William Allen: A Study in Western Democracy (Columbus: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1925), 168-69.

¹⁶¹ New York World, 9 September 1864.

¹⁶² Ward Hill Lamon, Recollections of Abraham Lincoln, 1847-1865, ed. Dorothy Lamon Teillard (Washington: the editor, 1911), 146.

When Lamon wrote a blistering denial, Lincoln advised him against releasing it: “I would not publish this; it is too belligerent in its tone. You are at times too fond of a fight. There is a heap of wickedness mixed up with your usual amiability. If I were you, I’d state the facts as they were. I would give the statement as you have it without the cussedness. Let me try my hand at it.”¹⁶³ Lincoln carefully and slowly composed a letter for his friend’s signature: “The President has known me intimately for nearly twenty years, and has often heard me sing little ditties. The battle of Antietam was fought on the 17th. day of September 1862. On the first day of October, just two weeks after the battle, the President, with some others including myself, started from Washington to visit the Army, reaching Harper's Ferry at noon of that day. In a short while Gen. McClellan came from his Head Quarters near the battle ground, joined the President, and with him, reviewed, the troops at Bolivar Heights that afternoon; and, at night, returned to his Head Quarters, leaving the President at Harper's Ferry. On the morning of the second, the President, with Gen. Sumner, reviewed the troops respectively at Loudon Heights and Maryland Heights, and at about noon, started to Gen. McClellan's Head Quarters, reaching there only in time to see very little before night. On the morning of the third all started on a review of the three corps, and the Cavalry, in the vicinity of the Antietam battle ground. After getting through with Gen. Burnside[']s Corps, at the suggestion of Gen. McClellan, he and the President left their horses to be led, and went into an ambulance or ambulances to go to Gen. Fitz John Porter's Corps, which was two or three miles distant. I am not sure whether the President and Gen. Mc. were in the same ambulance, or in different ones; but myself and some others were in the same with the

¹⁶³ Lamon, drafts and anecdotes (ca. 1887), folder 1, Lamon Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California, in Fehrenbacher and Fehrenbacher, eds., Recollected Words of Lincoln, 290.

President. On the way, and on no part of the battleground, and on what suggestion I do not remember, the President asked me to sing the little sad song [“Twenty Years Ago”], that follows, which he had often heard me sing, and had always seemed to like very much. I sang them. After it was over, some one of the party, (I do not think it was the President) asked me to sing something else; and I sang two or three little comic things of which Picayune Butler was one. Porter's Corps was reached and reviewed; then the battle ground was passed over, and the most noted parts examined; then, in succession the Cavalry, and Franklin's Corps were reviewed, and the President and party returned to Gen. McClellan's Head Quarters at the end of a very hard, hot, and dusty day's work. Next day, the 4th. the President and Gen. Mc. visited such of the wounded as still remained in the vicinity, including the now lamented Gen. [Israel] Richardson; then proceed[ed] to and examined the South-Mountain battle ground, at which point they parted, Gen. McClellan returning to his Camp, and the President returning to Washington, seeing, on the way, Gen [George] Hartsuff, who lay wounded at Frederick Town. This is the whole story of the singing and it's surroundings. Neither Gen. McClellan [n]or any one else made any objection to the singing; the place was not on the battle field, the time was sixteen days after the battle, no dead body was seen during the whole time the president was absent from Washington, nor even a grave that had not been rained on since it was made.”¹⁶⁴

After drafting this account, Lincoln told Lamon: “You know, Hill, that this is the truth and the whole truth about that affair; but I dislike to appear as an apologist for an act

¹⁶⁴ Memorandum, [ca. 12 September 1864], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:548-49.

of my own which I know was right. Keep this paper, and we will see about it.”¹⁶⁵ The document was not released to the press.

When Democrats charged that Lincoln received his salary in gold while other government employees were paid in greenbacks, the treasurer of the U.S., Francis E. Spinner, denied it, explaining that by law the president’s salary was issued in monthly warrant drafts, minus income tax. Rather than drawing money on those drafts, Lincoln left them sitting in his drawer for long periods (in one case for eleven months) without receiving any interest. Several times Spinner urged him to cash the warrants, pointing out that he was losing hundreds of dollars in interest. When Lincoln asked who gained thereby, Spinner said the U.S. Treasury. “I reckon the Treasury needs it more than I do,” the president remarked. By failing to cash his warrants, Lincoln had in effect contributed \$4000 to the treasury.¹⁶⁶ Understandably, he resented the Democratic editor who had first published the false allegation. “See to what depths of infamy a Northern Copperhead can descend!” he exclaimed. “If the scoundrel who wrote that don’t boil hereafter, it will be because the devil hasn’t got iron enough to make gridirons.”¹⁶⁷

More responsible criticism of the administration came from former Whigs like Robert C. Winthrop, whose oration at New London, Connecticut, was (in Lincoln’s view) the best pro-McClellan speech of the campaign. Winthrop deplored what he considered violations of the Constitution and attempts to overthrow the social structure of the South. Senator Reverdy Johnson of Maryland, who had supported Lincoln in 1860, four years later deplored his “utter unfitness for the presidency” and accused him of employing the

¹⁶⁵ Lamon, Recollections of Lincoln, 149.

¹⁶⁶ Washington correspondence, 16 October, New York Tribune, 17 October 1864.

¹⁶⁷ L. E. Chittenden in Emanuel Hertz, ed., Lincoln Talks: A Biography in Anecdotes (New York: Viking, 1939), 276.

“most unscrupulous and unexampled abuse of patronage and power.”¹⁶⁸ Whig friends in Illinois like John Todd Stuart and Orville H. Browning had grown disenchanted with Lincoln. “I am personally attached to the President, and have faithfully tried to uphold him, and make him respectable,” Browning wrote on September 6, “tho’ I never have been able to persuade myself that he was big enough for his position. Still, I thought he might get through, as many a boy has got through College, without disgrace, and without knowledge, but I fear he is a failure.”¹⁶⁹ Browning nonetheless told Lincoln he could vote and campaign for him, and he did, though lukewarmly.¹⁷⁰

THE FIRST LADY UNDER ATTACK

Democrats also attacked Mary Lincoln. According to the New York World, when she ordered \$800 worth of china from E. V. Haughwout & Co., she tried to hide other purchases, amounting to \$1500, by having the total bill (\$2300) applied to the china alone; when the skeptical interior secretary raised questions, the merchant reportedly acknowledged that the overcharge was made to disguise the unspecified items.

Haughwout & Co. denied the allegations in a letter to Manton Marble, editor of the World. In turn, Marble defended the story and rather than retracting it, he threatened to "expose what I know about Mrs. Lincoln's practices in her New York purchases – her silver service – the champagne[,] manure bills etc. etc. to say nothing of wallpaper, seed

¹⁶⁸ Johnson speech in Brooklyn, in Bernard Christian Steiner, Life of Reverdy Johnson, (New York: Russell & Russell, 1970), 64-65.

¹⁶⁹ Browning to [Edgar] Cowan, Quincy, Illinois, 6 September 1864, photostatic copy, J. G. Randall Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁷⁰ Reuben B. Hatch to Ozias M. Hatch, Quincy, 1 September 1864, O. M. Hatch Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

commissions, shawls, contracts, etc. etc. etc."¹⁷¹ Commenting on these scandals, a New York Democratic matron remarked: "It is humiliating to all American women who have to economize and struggle and part with their husbands, sons, and brothers in these sad times, to see this creature sitting in the highest place as a specimen of American womanhood."¹⁷²

The World's charges were credible. John Watt, the White House gardener who colluded with Mrs. Lincoln in various schemes to defraud the government, claimed that "a bill of \$6,000 contracted with Haughwout & Co. for silverware was paid for by a bill charged against gilding gas-fixtures."¹⁷³ According to a Maryland journalist, Mrs. Lincoln "once bought a lot of China for \$1500 in New York & made the seller give her \$1500 in cash & sent a bill for \$3000. When Lincoln refused to put his signature to the Bill prior to sending it to the Department to be paid, on the ground that it was exorbitant, [the merchant said,] 'You forget, sir, . . . that I gave Mrs Lincoln \$1500.[']"¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ New York World, 26 September 1864; E. V. Haughwout & Co. to Marble, New York, 26, 27, and 28 September 1864; [Marble] to Col. Frank E. Howe, New York, 26 September 1864; and Marble to [E. V. Haughwout & Co.], "Wednesday 2 AM", filed at the end of September 1864, and [3 October 1864], draft, Marble Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁷² Maria Lydig Daly, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, ed. Harold Earl Hammond (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1962), 305 (entry for 25 September 1864).

¹⁷³ George W. Adams to [David Goodman] Croly, Washington, 7 October 1867, Manton Marble Papers, Library of Congress. In 1862, Congress passed a supplemental appropriation of \$2,613 to cover expenses involved in plating gas fittings at the White House. Elisha Whittlesey to George Harrington, Washington, 6 March 1862, Letters Received, vol. 27, Records of the Commissioner of Public Buildings, microfilm edition, Record Group 42, microcopy 371, National Archives. On 30 July 1862, Haughwout received \$2343 from the Commissioner of Public Buildings for plating White House cutlery. Financial Records of the Commissioner of Public Buildings, entry 19, box 13, ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Between North and South: A Maryland Journalist Views the Civil War: The Narrative of William Wilkins Glenn, 1861-1869, ed. Bayly Ellen Marks and Mark Norton Schatz (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1976), 296 (entry for 4 October 1867). Cf. entry for 16 March 1865, ibid., 175.

The World also accused Mary Lincoln of sending used White House furniture to Springfield rather than putting it up for auction, as the law required, and of appropriating \$7,000 of public money for her “personal adornment.”¹⁷⁵

Shortly before election day, Democratic papers ran a scathing account of the First Lady’s imperious and tight-fisted ways. In 1862, they alleged, a dentist had been summoned to the White House to remove an aching tooth from one of the residents. After he performed the emergency surgery, Mary Lincoln asked what he charged. She balked when he said \$2.50, insisting that they had never paid more than fifty cents for such services. Offended, he replied that did not make house calls for such a small amount and would charge nothing. As he prepared to leave, Lincoln paid him the requested fee.

The First Lady was accused of treating hoteliers, theater proprietors, and merchants in a similar fashion. At a Boston hotel she allegedly “had a most wordy discussion with the head bookkeeper, a scene appropriate rather to the Fulton [Fish] Market than to the best chambers of the best hostelry.” In Washington, she was reportedly “in the habit of ordering a row of the best seats at Grover’s or Ford’s [Theatres] and sweeping out of them without any gratuity.” When she sent word to one of those establishments to reserve two private boxes, the treasurer asked for money. When told that “Mrs. Lincoln never pays anything,” he replied: “Then, d[am]n me, if she can any box in this theater.” In New York, she offended dry goods dealers, who regarded her as “very mean.” Allegedly when she visited Alexander T. Stewart’s fabled department store she would “pull down all the goods in the place, bully the clerks, falsify or question

¹⁷⁵ New York World, 30 September and 1 October 1864.

their addition, and, in the end, leave without settling her bills.” As a result, some upscale storeowners vowed that they would have no further dealings with her.¹⁷⁶

One such emporium was Genin’s hat shop. While sitting in her carriage, Mrs. Lincoln imperiously summoned a clerk who was speaking with a friend at the front door. The clerk ignored her. When informed that the First Lady was beckoning, he “replied somewhat indifferently, that he did not care” and that he acknowledged no “difference between Mrs. Lincoln and the wife of a mechanic. If she will come into the store, I will attend to her, but I am not employed to wait on people in the street.”¹⁷⁷

A Democratic paper in Ohio, astounded at reports that Mary Lincoln had spent \$5000 for a shawl and \$3000 for earrings and a pin, asked where “the money comes from that enables this very ordinary lawyer from Illinois . . . to live in this style, when the poor man can barely with the strictest economy after paying his taxes, get bread to eat?”¹⁷⁸

The First Lady uneasily observed the campaign. In March, when a spiritualist told her that the president would be defeated, she returned to the White House “crying like a child” and could not be consoled.¹⁷⁹ In response to such outbursts, Lincoln chided her gently: “Mary, I am afraid you will be punished for this overweening anxiety. If I am to be re-elected, it will be all right; if not, you must bear the disappointment.” Her nervousness stemmed in part from her fear that if Lincoln were not reelected, creditors would descend on her. She confessed to her close friend Elizabeth Keckly, “I have contracted large debts of which he [Lincoln] knows nothing, and which he will be unable

¹⁷⁶ Unidentified New York newspaper copied in the Springfield Illinois State Register, 30 October 1864.

¹⁷⁷ New York correspondence by “Metropolitan,” 9 October 1867, Boston Post, 11 October 1867.

¹⁷⁸ Columbus Crisis, 20 July 1864.

¹⁷⁹ A. H[omer] B[yington] to [Sydney Howard] Gay, Washington, 23 March [1864]; Sam Wilkeson to Sydney Howard Gay, [Washington, ca. 23 March 1864], Gay Papers, Columbia University

to pay if he is defeated.” She identified them as “store bills,” principally from Alexander T. Stewart’s in New York. “You understand, Lizabeth, that Mr. Lincoln has but little idea of the expense of a woman’s wardrobe. He glances at my rich dresses, and is happy in the belief that the few hundred dollars that I obtain from him supply all my wants. The people scrutinize every article that I wear with critical curiosity. The very fact of having grown up in the West, subjects me to more searching observation. To keep up appearances, I must have money – more than Mr. Lincoln can spare for me. He is too honest to make a penny outside of his salary; consequently, I had, and still have, no alternative but to run in debt.” She kept Lincoln in the dark about her spendthrift ways because, she explained, “if he knew that his wife was involved to the extent that she is, the knowledge would drive him mad. He is so sincere and straightforward himself, that he is shocked by the duplicity of others. He does not know a thing about any debts, and I value his happiness, not to speak of my own, too much to allow him to know anything. This is what troubles me so much. If he is re-elected, I can keep him in ignorance of my affairs.”¹⁸⁰

The First Lady owed the New York firm of Ball, Black & Company several thousand dollars for jewelry she had purchased without her husband’s knowledge.¹⁸¹ From another jeweler she made purchases totaling \$3,200 in a three-month span. Included among the items she selected were four clocks as well as two diamond and pearl bracelets. In one month she bought eighty-four pairs of gloves.¹⁸² In March 1865, she

¹⁸⁰ Elizabeth Keckley, Behind the Scenes, or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House (New York: G. W. Carleton, 1868), 149-50.

¹⁸¹ Michael Burlingame, The Inner World of Abraham Lincoln (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 312.

¹⁸² Willard King, Lincoln’s Manager, David Davis (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 235-36.

spent \$2,288 at the Galt & Bro. jewelry store in Washington.¹⁸³ (Her extravagance as First Lady was not unprecedented; earlier in Springfield, Lincoln had to chide her for mismanaging the household funds.)¹⁸⁴

At one point Mary Lincoln tearfully begged Isaac Newton, head of the agriculture bureau in the interior department, to help her pay bills she had run up at a furrier. Simeon Draper agreed to do so, but after Lincoln's death he reneged.¹⁸⁵

Mary Lincoln's spending reflected her impulsive nature. Julia Taft Bayne, who as an adolescent visited the White House often, recalled that it "was an outstanding characteristic of Mary Todd Lincoln that she wanted what she wanted when she wanted it and no substitute!" Julia remembered how the First Lady coveted a special ribbon in her mother's bonnet and brazenly asked her to hand it over. The astonished Mrs. Taft complied.¹⁸⁶

To help her husband win reelection, Mary Lincoln tricked lobbyists into giving her money. She confided to Elizabeth Keckly: "I have an object in view, Lizabeth. In a political canvass it is policy to cultivate every element of strength. These men have influence, and we require influence to reelect Mr. Lincoln. I will be clever to them until after the election, and then, if we remain at the White House, I will drop every one of them, and let them know very plainly that I only made tools of them. They are an unprincipled set, and I don't mind a little double-dealing with them." When asked if the president were aware of such schemes, she exclaimed: "God! No; he would never

¹⁸³ Records of the company as summarized in Gayle T. Harris, "Mary Lincoln's Shopping Spree," The Lincolnian 13 (1995):3.

¹⁸⁴ Burlingame, Inner World of Lincoln, 324.

¹⁸⁵ Newton told this to John Hay. Hay diary, 13 February 1867, Brown University.

¹⁸⁶ Julia Taft Bayne, Tad Lincoln's Father (Boston: Little, Brown, 1931), 49.

sanction such a proceeding, so I keep him in the dark, and will tell him of it when all is over. He is too honest to take proper care of his own interests, so I feel it to be my duty to electioneer for him.”¹⁸⁷

Mary Lincoln’s spendthrift ways did not please Union soldiers. “I can hardly wish that Mrs. Lincoln should occupy the White House for four years longer,” a supporter of Lincoln’s reelection remarked. “Her want of sympathy with the loyal ladies of the North – our mothers and sisters, who to their arduous labors in behalf of our soldiers in the field and in the hospitals, have added dispensing with expensive luxuries that our National finances may be thereby improved, is not at all to her credit.”¹⁸⁸

The actions of Mary’s half-sister, Martha Todd White, also became a campaign issue. The wife of an Alabama physician, she strongly resembled Mary in temperament and appearance. In late 1863, she had snuck into the North by accompanying her sister Emilie, who had received a pass from Lincoln. As she prepared to return home, she asked him for a pass of her own. Rebuffed at first, she pestered Lincoln until he finally complied with her wishes. She then boldly asked that her baggage be exempt from inspection. Lincoln again balked, and she again besieged him, enlisting the aid of Kentucky Congressman Brutus Clay. When Clay called at the White House to lobby on her behalf, Lincoln snapped: “If Mrs. W. did not leave forthwith, she might expect to find herself within twenty-four hours in the Old Capitol Prison.”¹⁸⁹

Taking this threat seriously, Mrs. White left Washington for Fort Monroe, where she refused to permit Union troops to inspect her thirteen pieces of luggage. General

¹⁸⁷ Keckley, Behind the Scenes, 146.

¹⁸⁸ James H. Linsley to Miss Conant, Bermuda Hundred, Virginia, 16 June 1864, typescript, Schoff Civil War Collection, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

¹⁸⁹ Beale, ed., Welles Diary, 2:21 (entry for 29 April 1864).

Butler allowed her to proceed anyhow, touching off a firestorm of press criticism.

Lincoln had Nicolay investigate the matter and write a defense of the administration for the New York Tribune, which had made much of the story. Greeley retracted charges of misconduct, and the matter, which had preoccupied the press in March and April, was closed. The scandal caused Lincoln much anxiety.¹⁹⁰

THE PRISONER OF WAR ISSUE

Democrats condemned the “shameful disregard of the Administration to its duty in respect to our fellow citizens who now are and long have been prisoners of war and in a suffering condition.”¹⁹¹ In 1861, when urged by a member of the Sanitary Commission to exchange prisoners, Lincoln replied: “I feel just as you do about this matter. I don’t like to think of our men suffering in the Southern prisons, neither do I like to think that the Southern men are suffering in our prisons; but you don’t want me to recognize the Southern Confederacy, do you? I can’t propose an exchange of prisoners without recognizing the existence of the Confederate Government.”¹⁹² Lincoln did, however, informally encourage a limited exchange of sick POWs. When asked why he could not expand that to a general exchange, “he said that the main trouble grew out of the fact that he had not capital enough, in the shape of prisoners, to venture upon very liberal expenditures of this sort.”¹⁹³

The following year, both sides agreed to a prisoner exchange cartel that worked effectively for ten months, but once the Union began recruiting blacks, the agreement fell

¹⁹⁰ Stephen Berry, House of Abraham: Lincoln and the Todds, A Family Divided by War (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), 157-65.

¹⁹¹ Democratic party national platform, 1864, in McPherson, Political History of the United States, 364.

¹⁹² Thomas Clark, Reminiscences (New York: T. Whittaker, 1895), 142.

¹⁹³ Washington correspondence by “Rhode Island,” 18 October, Providence Journal, 21 October 1861.

apart. The Confederates would not exchange ex-slaves whom they captured in uniform. Their exchange commissioner said Southern troops would "die in the last ditch" before they would "give up the right to send slaves back to slavery as property recaptured."¹⁹⁴ In response, the administration ended the cartel. Stanton insisted that to acquiesce in a discriminatory system of exchanges would constitute "a shameful dishonor to the Government bound to protect them. When they [the Confederates] agree to exchange all alike there will be no difficulty."¹⁹⁵ The result was untold suffering by thousands of Federal and Rebel troops in prison camps like Andersonville in Georgia and Johnson's Island in Lake Erie. Further stiffening Northern resistance to exchanges was the discovery that many of the 40,000 Rebel soldiers paroled at Vicksburg and Port Hudson were found fighting once again in the Confederate ranks in violation of their word of honor.

In the summer of 1864, stories of Union POW's suffering badly at the grossly overcrowded Andersonville prison and elsewhere outraged the North. Something should be done! As pressure mounted, Lincoln refused to budge as long as the Confederates declined to exchange former slaves serving in the Union army. The Davis government "excited the rage and disgust of Mr. Lincoln" by compelling black POWs to help fortify Mobile rather than exchanging them for captured Rebels.¹⁹⁶ The Confederates finally yielded in January 1865, when they were planning to recruit black troops. The POW issue played a relatively small role in the election campaign.

COUNTERATTACK: THE TREASON ISSUE

¹⁹⁴ Ould quoted in S. A. Meredith to E. A. Hitchcock, Fort Monroe, 25 August 1863, OR, II, 6:226.

¹⁹⁵ Stanton to Benjamin Butler, Washington, 17 November 1863, OR, II, 6:528.

¹⁹⁶ W.A. Croffut, ed., Fifty Years in Camp and Field: The Diary of Major-General Ethan Allen Hitchcock, U.S.A. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), 457-458.

Republicans countered Democratic rhetoric with exaggerated charges of treason, allegedly being fomented by secret societies like the Sons of Liberty and the Order of American Knights. In late October, Judge Advocate General Joseph Holt released a 14,000-word report accusing such organizations of disloyal conduct. Lincoln charitably expressed skepticism about the Sons of Liberty, calling it “a mere political organization, with about as much of malice and as much of puerility as the Knights of the Golden Circle.”¹⁹⁷ In June, Vallandigham had returned from exile to serve as “Supreme Grand Commander” of the Sons.¹⁹⁸ Rather than re-arrest him, Lincoln thought it best to let him sow dissension among the Democratic ranks. In late 1863, Fernando Wood, a leading Peace Democrat, urged the president “to publish some sort of amnesty for the northern sympathizers and abettors of rebellion, which would include Vallandigham, and permit him to return.” Wood promised that if Lincoln “would so do, they would have two Democratic candidates in the field at the next Presidential election.”¹⁹⁹ New York Senator Edwin D. Morgan gave similar advice.²⁰⁰ To John Hay, Lincoln explained “that the question for the Government to decide is whether it can afford to disregard the contempt of authority & breach of discipline displayed in Vallandigham’s unauthorized return: for the rest, it cannot but result in benefit to the Union cause to have so violent and indiscreet a man go to Chicago as a firebrand to his own party.” According to Hay, Lincoln had long beforehand “seriously thought of annulling the sentence of exile but had been too

¹⁹⁷ Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 207 (entry for 17 June 1864).

¹⁹⁸ Frank L. Klement, The Limits of Dissent: Clement L. Vallandigham and the Civil War (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 261-63.

¹⁹⁹ Nicolay memorandum, 14 December 1863, Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 122.

²⁰⁰ Edwin D. Morgan to Lincoln, New York, 9 May 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

much occupied to do it.”²⁰¹ (He may have hesitated when Ohio Senators John Sherman and Benjamin Wade warned him in 1863 “that if his order of banishment was revoked, it would result in riots and violence.”)²⁰² In late June, Lincoln drafted a letter instructing the authorities in Ohio to watch Vallandigham closely, report his activities to Washington, and take him into custody only if he contributed to “any palpable injury” or presented an imminent “danger to the military.” But on second thought, he decided to withhold the order.²⁰³ When Kentuckians protested against the arrest of one of their own (Colonel Frank Walford of the First Kentucky Cavalry) and asked Lincoln why he did not arrest Vallandigham, he allegedly replied “that he had not been officially notified” of the Ohioan’s return “but whenever he learned certainly that he [Vallandigham] was making . . . speeches [discouraging enlistments] he would arrest him at once.” Senator Lazarus Powell indignantly rejected that explanation: “No, sir, you won’t; you are afraid to arrest him again, and you now full well if you undertake it 260,000 freemen of the state of Ohio will rush to his rescue. You dare not make the experiment.”²⁰⁴

Lincoln’s skepticism to the contrary notwithstanding, there was some truth in the allegations about dangerous sedition. Confederate agents did in fact conspire with leading Northern Democrats to liberate prisoners of war, to seize high-ranking state officials, to stir uprisings on election day in Chicago and New York, and to induce Midwest states to

²⁰¹ Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 207-8 (entry for 17 June 1864).

²⁰² John Sherman, Recollections of Forty Years in the House, Senate and Cabinet: An Autobiography (2 vols.; Chicago: Werner, 1895), 1:324.

²⁰³ Lincoln to John Brough and Samuel P. Heintzelman, Washington, 20 June 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:402.

²⁰⁴ Speech of Congressman Robert Mallory at Lexington, n.d., Illinois State Register (Springfield), 4 November 1864.

secede.²⁰⁵ The most conspicuous example was the attempt of pro-Confederate forces in southern Indiana to arm insurrectionaries. Four leaders of that scheme were tried and condemned to death. (In 1866, in a landmark decision, the Supreme Court threw out their conviction on procedural grounds, maintaining that military courts could not operate in areas where civil courts were open.)

WOOLING NEW YORK AND THE BORDER STATES

Lincoln grew concerned about his chances in New York, which he had narrowly won in 1860. Republicans like George William Curtis of Long Island were not at all sure that they could prevail. Curtis told a friend, “we have a very desperate political campaign before us, and we need all our friends. I wish with all my heart they were pluckier. The cause is so transcendent that even to fail in it is incomparably more glorious than to win with its opponents.”²⁰⁶ To the Republican gubernatorial candidate, Reuben Fenton, Lincoln expressed concern about Thurlow Weed’s disaffection: “I am anxious for New York, and we must put our heads together and see if the matter can’t be fixed.”²⁰⁷ Weed and his allies were, Lincoln noted in June, on “the verge of open revolt.”²⁰⁸ The New York boss objected not only to administration policies but also to some of the men who had received lucrative posts in the administration.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ Jennifer L. Weber, Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln’s Opponents in the North (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

²⁰⁶ Curtis to Charles Eliot Norton, North Shore, New York, 1 September 1864, George William Curtis Papers, Harvard University.

²⁰⁷ Fenton in Allen Thorndike Rice, ed., Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln by Distinguished Men of His Time (New York: North American, 1886), 68-69.

²⁰⁸ Lincoln to Chase, Washington, 28 June 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:413-14.

²⁰⁹ See for example, Weed to Lincoln, New York March [1864], and Weed to David Davis, March 30, 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

Trouble had been brewing for months as the Greeley wing of the Republican party continued battling the Seward-Weed forces over New York patronage, especially in the customs house. Such intra-party squabbles dismayed Lincoln, who naturally feared their impact on Republican electoral chances. Just as Missouri Republicans felt hurt when the president criticized their “pestilent factional quarrel,” so too Weed was disgruntled when he heard that Lincoln regarded a controversy between himself and Greeley as a personal quarrel. Lincoln tactfully apologized to the thin-skinned Weed for hurting his feelings: “I have been brought to fear recently that somehow, by commission or omission, I have caused you some degree of pain. I have never entertained an unkind feeling, or a disparaging thought towards you; and if I have said or done anything which has been construed into such unkindness or disparagement, it has been misconstrued. I am sure if we could meet we would not part with any unpleasant impression on either side.”²¹⁰ Somewhat huffily Weed protested that “My ‘quarrells’ are in no sense personal. . . . I am without personal objects or interests. I have done something in my day towards Electing Presidents and Governors, none of whom have found me an expensive Partizan.”²¹¹

The following year, Weed told Lincoln “that the infamies of the Appraisers Office required the Removal of [John T.] Hogeboom and [Isaac O.] Hunt. . . . It is not alone that these men are against Mr Lincoln, but they disgrace the office – a Department everywhere spoken of as a ‘Den of Thieves.’”²¹² Hogeboom allegedly wrote articles for

²¹⁰ Lincoln to Weed, Washington, 14 October 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 6:513-14.

²¹¹ Weed to Lincoln, Albany, 18 October 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

²¹² Weed to David Davis, New York, 29 March 1864, David Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

the New York Standard & Statesman disparaging Lincoln.²¹³ In March 1864, Weed exploded in wrath when the president, to humor Chase, appointed Hogeboom general appraiser.²¹⁴ “Mr. Lincoln not only spurns his friends . . . but Promotes an enemy who ought to be Removed!” Lord Thurlow exclaimed. “After this outrage and insult,” he added, “I will cease to annoy him [Lincoln] . . . I feel this keenly because it subjects me to the mortification of learning that the President has no respect for my opinions.”

To Lincoln’s intimate friend David Davis, Weed grouched that almost “all the Office-holders appointed through our enemies, are now Mr. Lincoln’s Enemies. My Friends, though ‘out in the cold,’ are the Friends of the President.”²¹⁵ In despair he confessed to Davis that he was “greatly discouraged,” for he feared that “ultra Abolitionists will destroy our Government and Union. The war cannot go on, at the rate of blood and treasure it has cost . . . without Revolution or Anarchy.” Weed’s feelings were hurt because Lincoln and Stanton approved his plan to win the war but then failed to implement it.²¹⁶ He begged Davis to inform Lincoln “distinctly and emphatically, that if this Custom House is left in custody of those who have for two years sent ‘aid and comfort’ to the enemy, his fitness for President will be questioned.”²¹⁷

After consulting with Lincoln, Davis reported back to Weed that it “pains him very evidently when you are not satisfied with what he does. He stated to me that he had

²¹³ H. J. Hastings to David Davis, Albany, 9 February 1864, enclosing an article from the New York Standard & Statesman, 8 February 1864, David Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

²¹⁴ E. D. Morgan to Weed, Washington, 27 March 1864, Weed Papers, University of Rochester.

²¹⁵ Weed to David Davis, New York, 29 March 1864, photostatic copy, Davis Papers Chicago History Museum.

²¹⁶ Weed to David Davis, Albany, 15 March [1864], Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield. In November, Weed had laid out his proposal for winning the war in eight months’ time.

²¹⁷ Weed to David Davis, Albany, 24 March [1864], Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

the highest esteem for you, knew that you was patriotic & that it hurt him when he could not do what you thought advisable. He feels the necessity for a change [in the New York customs house], but it seems to me that he fears that he w[oul]d at the present get from one muss to another. I think he ought to act & act promptly. But his mind is constituted differently from yours and mine. We will have to await the slowness of his movements about this important matter.” Lincoln protested that he was Weed’s friend and wanted Lord Thurlow to be his.²¹⁸

In an attempt to pacify Weed, the president sent Nicolay to New York with a note for the Dictator saying he had been “pained and surprised” to learn that Lord Thurlow felt “wounded.” He was “pained, because I very much wish you to have no unpleasant feeling proceeding from me, and surprised, because my impression is that I have seen you, since the last Message issued, apparantly feeling very cheerful and happy. How is this?”²¹⁹

Through Nicolay, Weed expressed solicitude for Lincoln’s political future. High-ranking officials in the New York customs house, including the collector and his principal assistants, were working against his renomination, the Dictator had warned. Moreover, the appraiser’s bureau “had been engaged in treasonably aiding the rebellion.” In January, Lincoln had told Weed that he would look into the matter but by late March he had done nothing about replacing the “incapable and unworthy” men who infested not only the customs house but also the cabinet, which, in Weed’s view, was “notoriously weak and inharmonious – no Cabinet at all – gives the President no support. Welles is a cypher, Bates a fogy, and Blair at best a dangerous friend.” Moreover, even though

²¹⁸ David Davis to Weed, Washington, 21 March 1864, Weed Papers, University of Rochester; same to same, Washington, 4 April 1864, Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

²¹⁹ Lincoln to Weed, Washington, 25 March 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:268.

“Chase was not formidable as a candidate in the field,” still “by the shrewd dodge of a withdrawal” the treasury secretary was “likely to turn up again with more strength than ever.” Weed protested that his highest ambition was “not to get office for himself, but to assist in putting good men in the right places. If he was good for anything, it was as an outsider to give valuable suggestions to an administration that would give him its confidence. He feared he did not have your entire confidence – that you only regarded him with a certain degree of leniency; that you only regarded him as being not quite so great a rascal as his enemies charged him with being.”²²⁰

In August, Lincoln once again sent Nicolay to placate Weed. The Dictator and Henry J. Raymond urged that immediate changes be made in the leadership of the customs house.²²¹ Nicolay found the assignment “very delicate, disagreeable and arduous” but derived satisfaction from his ability to help broker a deal. Hiram Barney, collector, and Rufus Andrews, surveyor, were replaced by Simeon Draper and Abram Wakeman respectively.²²² Those changes, along with others in several lesser customs house posts and the appointment of James Kelly as postmaster of New York, satisfied Weed.²²³ Lincoln liked Barney personally but believed that he had “ceased to be master of his position.”²²⁴ Nicolay asked Barney to resign “as a personal and political favor of great value & importance” to the president, for it would “relieve him from political

²²⁰ Nicolay to Lincoln, New York, 30 March 1864, in Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 132-33. Cf. David Davis to Weed, Washington, 4 April 1864, Weed Papers, University of Rochester.

²²¹ Raymond to Lincoln, New York, 30 August 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

²²² James N. Adams, “Lincoln and Hiram Barney,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 50 (1957):370-76.

²²³ Glyndon G. Van Duesen, Thurlow Weed, Wizard of the Lobby (Boston: Little, Brown, 1947), 310-11; Harry Carman and Reinhard H. Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 280-81.

²²⁴ Lincoln to Chase, Washington, [12 February 1864], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:181; Barney to Chase, New York, 11 February 1864, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

embarrassments” and lay “him under great obligations.” Nicolay assured him of Lincoln’s “personal kind regard and continued friendship.”²²⁵ To demonstrate his good will, the president planned to offer Barney the post of minister to Portugal.²²⁶

Simeon Draper’s elevation to the collectorship of the customs house displeased some Republicans. John Murray Forbes called him “a mere pipe layer & wire puller – windy, pompous, and with a very damaged mercantile reputation.”²²⁷ Gideon Welles termed the appointment of the “corrupt” Draper “abominable” and predicted that it “will beget distrust in the Administration.”²²⁸

At the Brooklyn Navy Yard, similar problems emerged. The head of the New York Union Party State Committee reported that almost half of the employees at that facility “are hostile to the present Administration, and will oppose the reelection of Mr. Lincoln. Of this number there are Mechanics in the different departments who must be retained, but I have no doubt that of the 6,000 to 7,000 employed it will not be necessary for the efficient working of the departments to retain as many as 1,000 who are opposed to us.”²²⁹ Henry J. Raymond wanted to assess each employee 5% of his pay and to fire workers there who did not support the administration. Political assessments were common in other departments, but Gideon Welles forbade them at navy yards. Unable to make progress with the navy secretary, Weed and Raymond pestered Lincoln, who said he would defer to Welles. But Welles doubted that the president would long resist the

²²⁵ Barney to Chase, New York, 5 September 1864, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Barney to Fessenden, New York, 31 August 1864, Fessenden Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society.

²²⁶ Lincoln to Chase, Washington, [12 February 1864], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:181.

²²⁷ John Murray Forbes to John A. Andrew, New Bedford, 3 September 1864, Andrew Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

²²⁸ Beale, ed., Welles Diary, 2:138 (entry for 5 September 1864).

²²⁹ Charles Jones to Raymond, New York, 2 August 1864, Raymond Papers, New York Public Library.

New Yorkers' pressure. Lincoln's "convictions and good sense will place him with me," Welles speculated, but Weed and Raymond "will alarm him with forebodings of disaster if he is not vindictive."²³⁰ The secretary was right, for in October dozens of workmen in the Brooklyn yard were dismissed for political disloyalty.²³¹

Lincoln did not, however, make all the changes desired by New York politicians. To one of them, who demanded the removal of an official who opposed the president's renomination, Lincoln impatiently snapped: "You cannot think _____ to be half as mean to me as I know him to be, but I can not run this thing upon the theory that every officeholder must think I am the greatest man in the nation, and I will not." The offending critic kept his job.²³² Similarly, Lincoln restored an officer to the army after Stanton had dismissed him for giving a pro-McClellan speech. "Supporting McClellan for the presidency is no violation of military regulations," said the president, adding puckishly that "as a question of taste of choosing between him and me, well, I'm the longest, but he's better looking."²³³ When warned that he was about to appoint a bitter opponent of his renomination to an important post, Lincoln remarked: "I suppose that Judge —, having been disappointed before, did behave pretty ugly; but that wouldn't make him any less fit for this place, and I have a Scriptural authority for appointing him. You recollect that while the Lord on Mount Sinai was getting out a commission for Aaron, that same Aaron was at the foot of the mountain making a false god, a golden calf, for the people to worship; yet Aaron got his commission, you know." On another occasion he appointed a

²³⁰ Beale, ed., Welles Diary, 2:97, 98, 122-24, 136, 137, 142-45, 175-76.

²³¹ Carman and Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage, 298; Francis Brown, Raymond of the Times (New York: Norton, 1951), 262-63.

²³² Speech by Leonard Swett, 22 October, Chicago Times, 23 October 1880.

²³³ E. W. Andrews in Rice, ed., Reminiscences of Lincoln, 518.

former opponent over the objections of current friends. To them Lincoln observed that no one “will deny that he is a first-rate man for the place, and I am bound to see that his opposition to me personally shall not interfere with my giving the people a good officer.”²³⁴

The changes displeased the Greeley faction of the party. “I am so disgusted with Lincoln’s behavior that I cannot muster respectful terms in which to write him,” growled William Cullen Bryant.²³⁵ Rumor had it that Weed was still unhappy and spoke disparagingly of Lincoln two days before the election in the hopes of defeating him in New York.²³⁶

Another internecine battle in New York irritated Lincoln. A substantial number of Republican leaders in former Congressman Roscoe Conkling’s upstate district announced that they would not support his candidacy even though the party had officially nominated him. Lincoln wrote: “I am for the regular nominee in all cases; and that no one could be more satisfactory to me as the nominee in that District, than Mr. Conkling. I do not mean to say there [are] not others as good as he in the District; but I think I know him to be at least good enough.”²³⁷

Indiana Congressman George W. Julian confronted a similar problem when a newspaper controlled by Commissioner of Patents David P. Holloway refused to support him for reelection, even after he had won the party primary. When Julian complained to Lincoln, the president reassured him: “Your nomination is as binding on Republicans as

²³⁴ Brooks, “Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln,” in Michael Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed: Civil War Dispatches of Noah Brooks (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 217.

²³⁵ Bryant to John Murray Forbes, n.p., n.d., in Hughes, ed., Letters and Recollections of Forbes, 2:101.

²³⁶ Simeon Draper to William P. Fessenden, New York, 22 November 1864, Fessenden Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society.

²³⁷ Lincoln to Ward Hunt, Washington, 16 August 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:498.

mine, and you can rest assured that Mr. Holloway shall support you, openly and unconditionally, or lose his head.” When he learned that Holloway ignored his directive, Lincoln called for his messenger and “in a very excited and emphatic way” exclaimed: “Tell Mr. Holloway to come to me!” Taken aback by unwonted vehemence of the president, the messenger hesitated, prompting an even more emphatic order: “Tell Mr. Holloway to come to me!”²³⁸ The commissioner’s newspaper soon endorsed Julian’s candidacy.²³⁹

Lincoln also had to intervene when the postmaster of Philadelphia, Cornelius Walborn, refused to back Congressman William D. Kelley for reelection. Lincoln gently chided Walborn: “Complaint is made to me that you are using your official power to defeat Judge Kelly's renomination to Congress. I am well satisfied with Judge Kelly as an M.C. and I do not know that the man who might supplant him would be as satisfactory; but the correct principle, I think, is that all our friends should have absolute freedom of choice among our friends. My wish therefore is that you will do just as you think fit with your own suffrage in the case, and not constrain any of your subordinates to do other than as he thinks fit with his. This is precisely the rule I inculcated, and adhered to on my part, when a certain other nomination, now recently made, was being canvassed for.”²⁴⁰

Walborn promised to do as he was told, but did not; upon learning that almost all of the hundreds of postmasters under his jurisdiction were opposing Kelley, Lincoln asked an influential Republican editor in Philadelphia to inform Walborn that “he must find a way to relieve me from the suspicion that he is not keeping his promise to me in good

²³⁸ Julian in Rice, ed., Reminiscences of Lincoln, 51-52.

²³⁹ Kenneth M. Stampp, Indiana Politics During the Civil War (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1949), 197-98.

²⁴⁰ Memorandum of a conversation, 20 June 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:402.

faith.”²⁴¹ Kelley won reelection. When John Locke Scripps, postmaster at Chicago and an old friend of Lincoln, refused to support Congressman Isaac N. Arnold’s reelection bid, the president sent him a copy of his letter to Walborn.

Lincoln’s remarkable ability to harmonize factions helped chances for reelection as well as Northern chances for victory in the war. To Leonard Swett, he remarked: “I may not have made as great a President as some other men, but I believe I have kept these discordant elements together as well as anyone could.”²⁴² Others agreed, including David Davis, who in 1864 wrote his father-in-law: “I conscientiously believe that no man could have kept [together] the incongruous elements of which the Republican party consists better than he has.”²⁴³

In addition to New York, Lincoln worried about the Border States, whose voters, like many Conservatives throughout the North, disliked both the Emancipation Proclamation and the recruitment of black troops. In Missouri, Charcoals and Claybanks continued to wrangle. To combat the chronic divisiveness, Lincoln dispatched Nicolay to St. Louis, where he spent a week conferring with various Republican leaders. The young emissary managed to promote enough harmony so that Republicans swept the state that fall.²⁴⁴ In the summer, when a leading Claybank, Charles Gibson, publicly resigned his government post with a blast at the Baltimore platform, Lincoln wrote a response which

²⁴¹ Lincoln to Morton McMichael, Washington, 5 August 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:480-81.

²⁴² Swett to Herndon, 1887, in Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants: Letters, Interviews, and Statements about Abraham Lincoln (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 165n.

²⁴³ David Davis to Julius Rockwell, Washington, 25 February 1864, photostatic copy, Davis Papers, Chicago History Museum.

²⁴⁴ Nicolay to Lincoln, St. Louis, 12 October 1864, in Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 162-65; William Earl Parish, Turbulent Partnership: Missouri and the Union, 1861-1865 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1963), 178-207.

went out over the signature of Hay: the president “thanks Mr. Gibson for his acknowledgment that he has been treated with personal kindness and consideration; and he says he knows of but two small draw-backs upon Mr. Gibson's right to still receive such treatment, one of which is that he never could learn of his giving much attention to the duties of his office, and the other is this studied attempt of Mr. Gibson's to stab him.”²⁴⁵

Hostility to Lincoln had grown especially acute in Kentucky. “The nigger is Kentucky politics,” reported an Ohioan serving as collector of customs at Louisville. That official caustically and accurately summarized the attitude of Unionists in the Blue Grass State: “Save the nigger: save the country if you can, but – save the nigger. Hold on to slavery: hold on to the Union if you can, but – hold on to Slavery. Take care of your great domestic institution: take care of your liberties if you can, but – take care of your great domestic institution. . . . Damn Abe Lincoln and his Cabinet: help fight the rebels if that will keep your State from being overrun by them and your homes from pillage and your wives and daughters from ravishment, but – damn Abe Lincoln and his Cabinet. Call them fools, knaves, imbeciles, abolitionists, despots, anything you please that’s ugly: call upon them to protect you from invasion whenever invasion is threatened by the naked and hungry hordes under arms in Dixie who long for the flesh-pots on which you fatten, but – call them the hardest names your vocabulary can supply.”²⁴⁶

In late March 1864, when a Kentucky delegation consisting of Governor Thomas E. Bramlette, former senator Archibald Dixon, and newspaper editor Albert G. Hodges

²⁴⁵ John Hay to Charles Gibson, Washington, 25 July 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:462.

²⁴⁶ William Davis Gallagher to Salmon P. Chase, Louisville, 11 June 1863, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

called at the White House, the president made “a little speech” to them which he subsequently wrote out at the request of Hodges. It was one of his most masterful public letters, addressing head-on their complaints about his policies. In it he sought to convince them that he had been forced by circumstances to liberate the slaves and employ blacks in the army. He began by frankly acknowledging his hostility to slavery: “I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I can not remember when I did not so think, and feel.” But he insisted that his hatred for slavery had not determined his policies because he felt duty-bound to honor his oath of office: “I have never understood that the Presidency conferred upon me an unrestricted right to act officially upon this judgment and feeling. It was in the oath I took that I would, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States. I could not take the office without taking the oath. Nor was it my view that I might take an oath to get power, and break the oath in using the power. I understood, too, that in ordinary civil administration this oath even forbade me to practically indulge my primary abstract judgment on the moral question of slavery. I had publicly declared this many times, and in many ways. And I aver that, to this day, I have done no official act in mere deference to my abstract judgment and feeling on slavery. I did understand however, that my oath to preserve the constitution to the best of my ability, imposed upon me the duty of preserving, by every indispensable means, that government – that nation – of which that constitution was the organic law. Was it possible to lose the nation, and yet preserve the constitution? By general law life and limb must be protected; yet often a limb must be amputated to save a life; but a life is never wisely given to save a limb. I felt that measures, otherwise unconstitutional, might become lawful, by becoming indispensable

to the preservation of the constitution, through the preservation of the nation. Right or wrong, I assumed this ground, and now avow it. I could not feel that, to the best of my ability, I had even tried to preserve the constitution, if, to save slavery, or any minor matter, I should permit the wreck of government, country, and Constitution all together.”

Lincoln reminded his callers that he had overruled emancipation orders by John C. Frémont in 1861 and David Hunter in 1862 and had objected to Simon Cameron’s 1861 annual report calling for the enlistment of blacks. At the time, he thought there was no “indispensable necessity” for those measures. As a further indication of his essentially moderate approach to slavery, he cited his appeals in March, May, and July 1862 “to the border states to favor compensated emancipation,” for, he said, he “believed the indispensable necessity for military emancipation, and arming the blacks would come, unless averted by that measure.” After they rejected his advice, he said he was “driven to the alternative of either surrendering the Union, and with it, the Constitution, or of laying strong hand upon the colored element. I chose the latter.” That policy proved successful, for over a year after emancipation had been declared, the North had suffered “no loss by it in our foreign relations, none in our home popular sentiment, none in our white military force, – no loss by it any how or any where. On the contrary, it shows a gain of quite a hundred and thirty thousand soldiers, seamen, and laborers. These are palpable facts, about which, as facts, there can be no cavilling. We have the men; and we could not have had them without the measure.”

With iron logic, Lincoln challenged any Unionist “who complains of the measure” to “test himself by writing down in one line that he is for subduing the rebellion by force of arms; and in the next, that he is for taking these hundred and thirty thousand

men from the Union side, and placing them where they would be but for the measure he condemns. If he can not face his case so stated, it is only because he can not face the truth.”

In this letter to Hodges, Lincoln added a supplement to his earlier verbal remarks. He wished the public to understand that the steps he took were to some extent necessitated by the will of the Almighty: “In telling this tale I attempt no compliment to my own sagacity. I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now, at the end of three years struggle the nation's condition is not what either party, or any man devised, or expected. God alone can claim it. Whither it is tending seems plain. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills also that we of the North as well as you of the South, shall pay fairly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein new cause to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God.”²⁴⁷

DIVINING THE DIVINE WILL

Like Lincoln's 1862 letter to Horace Greeley, this missive was a campaign document designed to reassure Moderates and Conservatives that he was scrupulously obeying the Constitution and not willfully imposing his own personal views on the public. Both letters have been misunderstood as profoundly revealing documents shedding light on Lincoln's innermost thoughts and feelings. To be sure, the frank acknowledgment of his long-standing hatred of slavery was candid. But the implication that he was essentially the plaything of forces beyond his control is misleading. Lincoln

²⁴⁷ Lincoln to Albert G. Hodges, Washington, 4 April 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:281-82.

was a forceful leader who used the power of his office tactfully but assertively, recognizing with characteristic fatalism that while he could shape events up to a point, larger forces were at work than his own will. His attitude toward fate resembled what the twentieth-century theologian Reinhold Niebuhr expressed in his “serenity prayer”: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.”

In the fall of 1862, Lincoln had stressed this theme to a delegation of Quakers headed by Eliza Gurney. “We are indeed going through a great trial,” he told them, “a fiery trial. In the very responsible position in which I happen to be placed, being a humble instrument in the hands of our Heavenly Father, as I am, and as we all are, to work out his great purposes, I have desired that all my works and acts may be according to his will, and that it might be so, I have sought his aid – but if after endeavoring to do my best in the light which he affords me, I find my efforts fail, I must believe that for some purpose unknown to me, He wills it otherwise. If I had had my way, this war would never have been commenced; if I had been allowed my way this war would have been ended before this, but we find it still continues; and we must believe that He permits it for some wise purpose of his own, mysterious and unknown to us; and though with our limited understandings we may not be able to comprehend it, yet we cannot but believe, that he who made the world still governs it.”²⁴⁸

Two years later, in the midst of election campaign, Lincoln reiterated to Mrs. Gurney his belief in the power of the Almighty to shape events. “I am much indebted to the good christian people of the country for their constant prayers and consolations; and

²⁴⁸ Reply to Eliza Gurney, 26 October 1862, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 5:478.

to no one of them, more than to yourself. The purposes of the Almighty are perfect, and must prevail, though we erring mortals may fail to accurately perceive them in advance. We hoped for a happy termination of this terrible war long before this; but God knows best, and has ruled otherwise. We shall yet acknowledge His wisdom and our own error therein. Meanwhile we must work earnestly in the best light He gives us, trusting that so working still conduces to the great ends He ordains. Surely He intends some great good to follow this mighty convulsion, which no mortal could make, and no mortal could stay.’²⁴⁹

In a private memo for himself, probably written in the summer of 1864, Lincoln ruminated on the Lord’s intentions. Dismayed by the terrible bloodshed of the spring campaigns, he asked why a benevolent deity would allow it: “The will of God prevails. In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both may be, and one must be wrong. God can not be for, and against the same thing at the same time. In the present civil war it is quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the purpose of either party – and yet the human instrumentalities, working just as they do, are of the best adaptation to effect His purpose. I am almost ready to say this is probably true – that God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet. By his mere quiet power, on the minds of the now contestants, He could have either saved or destroyed the Union without a human contest. Yet the contest began. And having begun He could give the final victory to either side any day. Yet the contest proceeds.’²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ Lincoln to Eliza Gurney, Washington, 4 September 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:535.

²⁵⁰ Undated memo known as the “Meditation on the Divine Will,” probably written in 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 5:403-4.

Lincoln had long been pondering the will of God, which was not clear to him. In 1861, when Orville Browning assured him that God would not smile on the Union cause until slavery was abolished, the president startled him by responding: “suppose God is against us in our view on the subject of slavery in this country, and our method of dealing with it?” Browning was “very much struck” by this response, which he said “indicated to me for the first time that he was thinking deeply of what a higher power than man sought to bring about by the great events then transpiring.”²⁵¹

By March 1865, Lincoln had reached a conclusion about the will of God which he was to share with the public in his second inaugural address. But before he could be inaugurated once more, he must win reelection.

In the election campaign Lincoln issued no public letters other than the one to Hodges, but he did draft a response to an invitation to address a mass meeting in Buffalo. In it he defended his decision to go to war, blaming the Confederates for starting the conflict: “Much is being said about peace; and no man desires peace more ardently than I. Still I am yet unprepared to give up the Union for a peace which, so achieved, could not be of much duration. The preservation of our Union was not the sole avowed object for which the war was commenced. It was commenced for precisely the reverse object – to destroy our Union. The insurgents commenced it by firing upon the Star of the West, and on Fort Sumpter, and by other similar acts. It is true, however, that the administration accepted the war thus commenced, for the sole avowed object of preserving our Union; and it is not true that it has since been, or will be, prosecuted by this administration, for

²⁵¹ Browning interviewed by Nicolay, Springfield, 17 June 1875, in Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 5.

any other object. In declaring this, I only declare what I can know, and do know to be true, and what no other man can know to be false.”

Addressing emancipation and the employment of black troops, he reiterated arguments he had made to his Wisconsin visitors and in his open letter to Albert G. Hodges: “my present position in reference to the rebellion is the result of my best judgment, and according to that best judgment, it is the only position upon which any Executive can or could save the Union. Any substantial departure from it insures the success of the rebellion. An armistice – a cessation of hostilities – is the end of the struggle, and the insurgents would be in peaceable possession of all that has been struggled for. Any different policy in regard to the colored man, deprives us of his help, and this is more than we can bear. We can not spare the hundred and forty or fifty thousand now serving us as soldiers, seamen, and laborers. This is not a question of sentiment or taste, but one of physical force which may be measured and estimated as horse-power and Steam-power are measured and estimated. Keep it and you can save the Union. Throw it away, and the Union goes with it. Nor is it possible for any Administration to retain the service of these people with the express or implied understanding that upon the first convenient occasion, they are to be re-inslaved. It can not be; and it ought not to be.”

Lincoln decided not to release this document, for, as he explained to the chief organizer of the Buffalo event: “I believe it is not customary for one holding the office, and being a candidate for re-election, to do so.” Moreover, “a public letter must be written with some care, and at some expense of time, so that having begun with your

meeting, I could not well refuse others, and yet could not get through with all having equal claims.”²⁵²

Lincoln did write a brief letter to be read at a Baltimore rally supporting the new state constitution that abolished slavery. He reiterated his oft-proclaimed desire that “all men” should be free and predicted that abolition would promote “the material prosperity of the already free.” Slavery, he declared, was the “only thing which ever could bring this nation to civil war. I attempt no argument. Argument upon the question is already exhausted by the abler, better informed, and more immediately interested sons of Maryland herself. I only add that I shall be gratified exceedingly if the good people of the State shall, by their votes, ratify the new constitution.”²⁵³

DEFINING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WAR

During the campaign, the president spoke informally to regiments calling at the White House. In those brief speeches, he pithily and eloquently summarized the Union cause. “I wish it might be more generally and universally understood what the country is now engaged in,” he told the 164th Ohio in mid-August. “We have, as all will agree, a free Government, where every man has a right to be equal with every other man. In this great struggle, this form of Government and every form of human right is endangered if our enemies succeed. There is more involved in this contest than is realized by every one. There is involved in this struggle the question whether your children and my children shall enjoy the privileges we have enjoyed.” Do not let side issues distract your attention, he urged. “There may be mistakes made sometimes; things may be done wrong while the

²⁵² Lincoln to Isaac M. Schemerhorn, Washington, 12 September 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 8:2.

²⁵³ Lincoln to Henry W. Hofmann, Washington, 10 October 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 8:41.

officers of the Government do all they can to prevent mistakes. But I beg of you, as citizens of this great Republic, not to let your minds be carried off from the great work we have before us. This struggle is too large for you to be diverted from it by any small matter. When you return to your homes rise up to the height of a generation of men worthy of a free Government, and we will carry out the great work we have commenced.”²⁵⁴

A few days thereafter, Lincoln told another Ohio regiment: “I almost always feel inclined, when I happen to say anything to soldiers, to impress upon them in a few brief remarks the importance of success in this contest. It is not merely for to-day, but for all time to come that we should perpetuate for our children's children this great and free government, which we have enjoyed all our lives. I beg you to remember this, not merely for my sake, but for yours. I happen temporarily to occupy this big White House. I am a living witness that any one of your children may look to come here as my father's child has. It is in order that each of you may have through this free government which we have enjoyed, an open field and a fair chance for your industry, enterprise and intelligence; that you may all have equal privileges in the race of life, with all its desirable human aspirations. It is for this the struggle should be maintained, that we may not lose our birthright – not only for one, but for two or three years. The nation is worth fighting for, to secure such an inestimable jewel.”²⁵⁵

These brief, informal addresses rank among the best of Lincoln's spontaneous utterances and give the lie to critics who disparaged his ability to address the public without a prepared text.

²⁵⁴ Speech to the 164th Ohio Regiment, 18 August 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:504-5.

²⁵⁵ Speech to the 166th Ohio Regiment, 22 August 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:512.

CELEBRATING EMANCIPATION IN MARYLAND

In October, Lincoln responded to civilian serenaders congratulating him on the emancipationists' victory in Maryland. Behind the scenes he had helped promote their cause, for he believed that its success "would aid much to end the rebellion."²⁵⁶ Six months earlier, as voters in the Free State prepared to decide whether to summon a new constitutional convention, he wrote the recently elected Congressman John A. J. Creswell that he was "very anxious for emancipation to be effected in Maryland in some substantial form." He feared that his "expressions of a preference for gradual over immediate emancipation, are misunderstood." He "had thought the gradual would produce less confusion, and destitution, and therefore would be more satisfactory; but if those who are better acquainted with the subject, and are more deeply interested in it, prefer the immediate, most certainly," he had "no objection to their judgment prevailing." He wished "that all who are for emancipation in any form, shall co-operate, all treating all respectfully, and all adopting and acting upon the major opinion, when fairly ascertained." He was afraid "that by jealousies, rivalries, and consequent ill-blood – driving one another out of meetings and conventions – perchance from the polls – the friends of emancipation themselves may divide, and lose the measure altogether." Lincoln instructed Creswell not to make his letter public, but the congressman was free to let people know that anyone agreeing with its sentiments would not "be in any danger of contradiction" from the White House.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ Lincoln to John A. J. Creswell, Washington, 17 March 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:251.

²⁵⁷ Lincoln to John A. J. Creswell, Washington, 7 March 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:226-27.

Lincoln also imparted his concern to the newly appointed commander of the Middle Department, Lew Wallace. When that general called at the White House, the president said at the close of their conversation: "I came near forgetting that there is an election nearly due over in Maryland, but don't you forget it." He urged Wallace "to be fair, but to give the benefit of all doubts to the emancipationists." Stanton, who had opposed assigning Wallace to such a sensitive post, gravely explained to the general that the "Maryland legislature passed an act for an election looking to the abolition of slavery in the state by constitutional amendment. The President has set his heart on the abolition in that way; and mark, he don't want it to be said by anybody that the bayonet had anything to do with the election. He is a candidate for a second nomination. You understand?"²⁵⁸

Perversely, Henry Winter Davis of Maryland said "in spite of the Prests. ill will, we will carry the constitutional conv[ention] for emancipation."²⁵⁹ But it was in part because of Lincoln's support (and Wallace's tactful adherence to his instructions) that the pro-convention forces had triumphed handily in the spring.²⁶⁰ Davis scorned the proposal to compensate slave owners.

Shortly after that emancipationist victory, Lincoln helped open the Baltimore Sanitary Fair with a speech in which he congratulated the people of Maryland for their service to the cause of liberty: "The world has never had a good definition of the word

²⁵⁸ Lincoln to Stanton, Washington, 31 March 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:276-77; Lew Wallace, Lew Wallace: An Autobiography (2 vols.; New York: Harper, 1906), 2:670, 672; Wallace to his wife, Washington, 13 March 1864, Baltimore, 1 April 1864, Wallace Papers, Indiana Historical Society; Wallace to Benson J. Lossing, Crawfordsville, Indiana, 26 January 1864, ibid.

²⁵⁹ Henry Winter Davis to Samuel F. Du Pont, n.p., 29 February 1864, transcript, Du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware.

²⁶⁰ Charles Wagandt, The Mighty Revolution: Negro Emancipation in Maryland, 1862-1864 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1964), 197-220.

liberty, and the American people, just now, are much in want of one. We all declare for liberty; but in using the same word we do not all mean the same thing. With some the word liberty may mean for each man to do as he pleases with himself, and the product of his labor; while with others the same word may mean for some men to do as they please with other men, and the product of other men's are two, not only different, but incompatable things, called by the same name – liberty. And it follows that each of the things is, by the respective parties, called by two different and incompatable names – liberty and tyranny.” Sarcastically he observed that the “shepherd drives the wolf from the sheep's throat, for which the sheep thanks the shepherd as a liberator, while the wolf denounces him for the same act as the destroyer of liberty, especially as the sheep was a black one. Plainly the sheep and the wolf are not agreed upon a definition of the word liberty; and precisely the same difference prevails to-day among us human creatures, even in the North, and all professing to love liberty. Hence we behold the processes by which thousands are daily passing from under the yoke of bondage, hailed by some as the advance of liberty, and bewailed by others as the destruction of all liberty. Recently, as it seems, the people of Maryland have been doing something to define liberty; and thanks to them that, in what they have done, the wolf's dictionary, has been repudiated.”²⁶¹

In early September, the Maryland convention adopted a constitution outlawing slavery. Late in that month, when William L. W. Seabrook expressed skepticism about the chances for ratification, Lincoln replied: “You alarm me, sir! you alarm me! I did not dream there was the slightest danger of such a calamity as the defeat of this Constitution. I fear you and others of our friends in Maryland are not alive to the importance of this

²⁶¹ Speech in Baltimore, 18 April 1864, Basler ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:301-3.

matter and its influence upon the conflict in which we are engaged. The adoption of your Constitution abolishing slavery will be equal to a victory by one of our armies in the field. It will be a notification to the South that, no matter what the result of the war shall be, Maryland is lost to that section forever. I implore you, sir, to go to work and endeavor to induce others to go to work for your Constitution, with all your energy. Try to impress other unionists with its importance as a war measure, and don't let it fail! Don't let it fail."²⁶² To help the pro-ratification cause, Lincoln urged Henry W. Hoffman, collector of the port of Baltimore and chairman of the Maryland Unconditional Union Central Committee, to harmonize Maryland's Republican factions.

On the eve of the vote, Lincoln sent a letter to be read at a pro-constitution rally: "I presume the only feature of the instrument, about which there is serious controversy, is that which provides for the extinction of slavery. It needs not to be a secret, and I presume it is no secret, that I wish success to this provision. I desire it on every consideration. I wish all men to be free. I wish the material prosperity of the already free which I feel sure the extinction of slavery would bring. I wish to see, in process of disappearing, that only thing which ever could bring this nation to civil war. I attempt no argument. Argument upon the question is already exhausted by the abler, better informed, and more immediately interested sons of Maryland herself. I only add that I shall be gratified exceedingly if the good people of the State shall, by their votes, ratify the new constitution."²⁶³ As the day of the ratification vote approached, Lincoln heard that Henry Winter Davis was still bad-mouthing him; in response, he said that if the congressman

²⁶² William L. W. Seabrook, Maryland's Great Part in Saving the Union (Westminster, Md.: American Sentinel, 1913), 55-56.

²⁶³ Lincoln to Henry W. Hoffman, Washington, 10 October 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 8:41

“and the rest can succeed in carrying the state for emancipation, I shall be very willing to lose the electoral vote.”²⁶⁴

On October 12, Maryland voters ratified the constitution by the narrow margin of 30,174 to 29,799 (50.3% to 49.7%). Only the solid vote (2,633 to 263, 90% to 10%) enabled it to win.²⁶⁵ Abolitionists rejoiced. “Glory to God!” exclaimed Lydia Maria Child. “This is marvelous progress. Glory to God! Hallelujah!”²⁶⁶

Lincoln, too, was delighted. When several hundred black residents of Washington descended on the White House to celebrate the new Maryland constitution, he told them: “It is no secret that I have wished, and still do wish, mankind everywhere to be free. [Great cheering and cries of ‘God bless Abraham Lincoln.’] And in the State of Maryland how great an advance has been made in this direction. It is difficult to realize that in that State, where human slavery has existed for ages, ever since a period long before any here were born – by the action of her own citizens – the soil is made forever free. [Loud and long cheering.] I have no feeling of triumph over those who were opposed to this measure and who voted against it, but I do believe that it will result in good in the white race as well as to those who have been made free by this action of emancipation, and I hope that the time will soon come when all will see that the perpetuation of freedom for all in Maryland is best for the interests of all, though some may thereby be made to suffer temporary pecuniary loss. And I hope that you, colored people, who have been emancipated, will use this great boon which had been given you to improve yourselves,

²⁶⁴ Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 230 (entry for 24 September 1864).

²⁶⁵ Wagandt, Mighty Revolution, 260.

²⁶⁶ Child to Eliza Scudder, Wayland, 14 November 1864, Samuel J. May Collection of Antislavery Papers, Cornell University.

both morally and intellectually.”²⁶⁷ To Charles H. Philbrick, an Illinoisan who had recently joined the White House staff as an assistant to his friends Nicolay and Hay, Lincoln remarked that the outcome of the Maryland vote “was a victory worth double the number of electoral votes of the state because of its moral influence.”²⁶⁸ Similarly, the president confided to Noah Brooks: “I had rather have Maryland upon that issue than have a State twice its size upon the Presidential issue; it cleans up a piece of ground.” Brooks observed that anyone “who has ever had to do with ‘cleaning up’ a piece of ground, digging our vicious roots and demolishing old stumps, can appreciate the homely simile applied to Maryland.”²⁶⁹

That night Lincoln addressed another issue when a group of Marylanders serenaded him. Democrats had been predicting that the president would cling to power no matter how the election turned out. A former Ohio congressman speculated that even if the Democratic candidate won the presidency, the Republicans “will proclaim themselves in power during the war. . . . I believe that Lincoln will not give up the idea of accomplishing the great idea of the war, though he may be compelled to resort to the levy en masse.”²⁷⁰ The Illinois State Register echoed the charge.²⁷¹ Lending credence to this speculation was a widely read speech delivered by Seward in October arguing that Lincoln had been chosen president of all the states but had not actually served in that capacity, since several states had seceded. The opposition press interpreted Seward’s

²⁶⁷ Washington correspondence, 2 November, Sacramento Daily Union, 2 December 1864, in Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed, 142.

²⁶⁸ Philbrick to Nicolay, Washington, 28 October 1864, Nicolay Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁶⁹ Washington correspondence, 19 October, Sacramento Daily Union, 25 November 1864, in Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed, 138.

²⁷⁰ James J. Faran to Alexander Long, Cincinnati, 26 June 1864, Long Papers, Cincinnati Historical Society.

²⁷¹ Illinois State Register (Springfield), 14 November 1863.

remarks as a sure sign that Lincoln would not relinquish the White House even if defeated. To the Maryland serenaders, the president (who was reportedly unhappy about Seward's speech) insisted that it was not his intention "to ruin the government." On the contrary, said he, "I am struggling to maintain government, not to overthrow it. I am struggling especially to prevent others from overthrowing it. I therefore say, that if I shall live, I shall remain President until the fourth of next March; and that whoever shall be constitutionally elected therefor in November, shall be duly installed as President on the fourth of March; and that in the interval I shall do my utmost that whoever is to hold the helm for the next voyage, shall start with the best possible chance to save the ship. This is due to the people both on principle, and under the constitution. Their will, constitutionally expressed, is the ultimate law for all. If they should deliberately resolve to have immediate peace even at the loss of their country, and their liberty, I know not the power or the right to resist them. It is their own business, and they must do as they please with their own. I believe, however, they are still resolved to preserve their country and their liberty; and in this, in office or out of it, I am resolved to stand by them."²⁷²

PRESIDENTIAL ANGER

Lincoln's anger burst forth toward the end of the campaign when a delegation from Tennessee called to protest the strict loyalty oath that Governor Andrew Johnson had prescribed for would-be voters. (A voter had to swear that he was "an active friend of the Government of the United States, and the enemy of the so-called Confederate States," that he "ardently desire[d] the suppression of the present rebellion," that he "sincerely rejoice[d] in the triumph of the armies and navies of the United States," and "cordially

²⁷² Washington correspondence, 23 October, National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York), 29 October 1864; Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 8:52-53.

oppose[d] all armistices or negotiations for peace with rebels in arms.”)²⁷³ The Tennesseans submitted a petition implying that Lincoln “was making a selfish and corrupt use of his power.”²⁷⁴

In reply, the president impatiently asked: “May I inquire how long it took you and the New-York politicians to concoct that paper?” (In fact, New York Democratic leaders complained with some justice that the oath virtually “commands every loyal citizen of Tennessee to vote for the Republican candidate or to abstain from the polls.”)²⁷⁵

The delegation’s spokesman, John Lellyett, insisted that the document accurately represented the opinion of Tennessee’s people. Lincoln snorted: “I expect to let the friends of George B. McClellan manage their side of this contest in their own way; and I will manage my side of it in MY way.”²⁷⁶ Democrats denounced this “undignified and rude” response from “our coarse despot” as “an exhibition of party spite and petulance.”²⁷⁷ (A week later, he sent the Tennesseans a far more civil response, in which he asserted somewhat disingenuously that he had no control over the governor – Andrew Johnson – whom he had appointed.)²⁷⁸

William O. Stoddard ascribed Lincoln’s intemperate outbursts to stress and overwork: “To such an extent was his absorbed devotion to business carried that the perpetual strain upon his nervous system, with the utter want of all exercise, began to tell

²⁷³ Graf and Haskins, eds., Johnson Papers, 7:203-4.

²⁷⁴ Nicolay and Hay, Lincoln, 9:358.

²⁷⁵ Hand-book of the Democracy for 1863 & '64 (New York: Diffusion of Political Knowledge, 1864), 237.

²⁷⁶ The American Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1864 (New York: D. Appleton, 1865), 766.

²⁷⁷ New York Daily News, 18, 25 October 1864.

²⁷⁸ Lincoln to William B. Campbell et al., Washington, 22 October 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 8:58-72.

seriously upon his health and spirits Even his temper suffered, and a petulance entirely foreign to his natural disposition was beginning to show itself as a symptom of an overtaken brain.”²⁷⁹ Noah Brooks also observed that as the war progressed, Lincoln’s “hearty, blithesome, genial, wiry” spirit changed: “The old, clear laugh never came back; the even temper was sometimes disturbed; and his natural charity for all was often turned into an unwonted suspicion of the motives of men.” Mary Lincoln also acknowledged that when “worn down,” her husband “spoke crabbedly to men, harshly so.”²⁸⁰

During the Christmas season of 1864, Lincoln was beseeched to pardon a condemned soldier whose mother wanted to plead in her son’s behalf. The president “cried out angrily, ‘There is no use of her coming here crying about me. I can’t do anything for her.’” The chaplain escorting her then explained that he wished to represent the interests of the accused lad and some other young men. “Well,” the president asked, “suppose they were old men, with families to support, would than make it any better?” Eventually he relented.²⁸¹

Lincoln disliked requests for a story, as if he were a professional entertainer. Gently he put off a visitor to Washington who accosted him just as he mounted his horse: “I thought I would call and see you before leaving the city and hear you tell a story.” The

²⁷⁹ Stoddard, “White House Sketches, No. 11,” New York Citizen, 27 October 1866, in William O. 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), 190.

²⁸⁰ Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed, 211; Mary Lincoln, interview with William H. Herndon, September 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 361.

²⁸¹ E. S. Nadel, “Some Impressions of Lincoln,” Scribner’s Magazine 39 (March 1906):370.

president asked where he lived. “Western New York,” came the answer. “Well, that’s a good enough country without stories,” replied Lincoln as he rode off.²⁸²

Though Lincoln lost patience more and more frequently as time passed, it was remarkable that (as Stoddard put it), “he generally succeeds in keeping down the storm which is continually stirred up within him by the treacheries, cowardices, villainies and stupidities, which, almost daily and hourly, he is compelled to see and understand and wrestle with and overcome.”²⁸³

THE SOLDIER VOTE

Lincoln had ascribed the Republicans’ 1862 political reverses to the inability of many soldiers to vote. To prevent a recurrence of that electoral setback, nineteen states had passed laws allowing troops to cast ballots in the field or by proxy; Indiana, Illinois, Delaware, Oregon, Massachusetts, and New Jersey, however, had not done so.²⁸⁴ (At Lincoln’s suggestion, William E. Chandler wrote a campaign pamphlet chronicling the Democrats’ strong opposition to such legislation.)²⁸⁵ Indiana Republican leaders warned Stanton that their state would go Democratic in the gubernatorial election unless the draft were delayed and 15,000 soldiers were furloughed so that they could return home to vote.²⁸⁶ So in mid-September, Lincoln appealed to General Sherman: “The State election of Indiana occurs on the 11th. of October, and the loss of it to the friends of the Government would go far towards losing the whole Union cause. The bad effect upon the

²⁸² The visitor was a Doctor Hovey from Dansville, New York. New York Evening Post, 1 November 1864.

²⁸³ William O. Stoddard, Inside the White House in War Times (New York: C. L. Webster, 1890), 55.

²⁸⁴ Jonathan W. White, “Canvassing the Troops: The Federal Government and the Soldiers’ Right to Vote,” Civil War History 50 (2004):291-318.

²⁸⁵ Lincoln made this suggestion to Chandler on 10 September 1864. Memo by Chandler for Isaac Markens, 3 February 1914, Chandler Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society.

²⁸⁶ William Dudley Foulke, Life of Oliver P. Morton (2 vols.; Indianapolis: Bowen-Merrill, 1899), 1:367.

November election, and especially the giving the State Government to those who will oppose the war in every possible way, are too much to risk, if it can possibly be avoided. The draft proceeds, notwithstanding its strong tendency to lose us the State. Indiana is the only important State, voting in October, whose soldiers cannot vote in the field. Any thing you can safely do to let her soldiers, or any part of them, go home and vote at the State election, will be greatly in point. They need not remain for the Presidential election, but may return to you at once. This is, in no sense, an order, but is merely intended to impress you with the importance, to the army itself, of your doing all you safely can, yourself being the judge of what you can safely do.”²⁸⁷ Sherman, who did not much admire the president, furloughed only sick and wounded troops, numbering around 9,000. (The general complained that Lincoln allowed himself to be “pulled hither & thither by every shade of policy – trimming his sails to every puff of wind.”)²⁸⁸

One soldier who obtained leave was especially important: General John A. Logan. A brave commander especially admired by Lincoln, Logan stumped throughout Illinois on behalf of the Republican ticket. A former Democratic congressman from southern Illinois, he had become a devoted Republican and highly capable general. In September, Lincoln asked Sherman to furlough Logan, for his “presence in Illinois was most important to the National Cause.”²⁸⁹ Sherman agreed, and Logan did yeoman service in the electoral campaign.

²⁸⁷ Lincoln to William T. Sherman, Washington, 19 September 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 8:11.

²⁸⁸ William T. Sherman to John Sherman, 7 July 1863, Sherman Family Papers, in Stanley P. Hirshson, The White Tecumseh: A Biography of General William T. Sherman (New York: J. Wiley, 1997), 148.

²⁸⁹ Sherman to Logan, Washington, 20 February 1883, typed copy, Logan Papers, Library of Congress.

Another political general who obtained leave to take the stump, Carl Schurz, wielded significant influence among German voters. In early 1864, Schurz suggested to Lincoln that he given a furlough in order to electioneer. The president at first discouraged him: “Allow me to suggest that if you wish to remain in the military service, it is very dangerous for you to get temporarily out of it; because, with a Major General once out, it is next to impossible for even the President to get him in again. With my appreciation of your ability, and correct principle, of course I would be very glad to have your service for the country in the approaching political canvass; but I fear we can not properly have it, without separating you from the military.”²⁹⁰ But as the political skies darkened in August, Lincoln invited Schurz to Washington, where he approved the general’s plan to give several campaign speeches.

Unlike many of his fellow Radicals, Schurz admired Lincoln extravagantly. To a European critic, he penned a ringing defense of the president. “The main thing,” Schurz wrote, “is that the policy of the government moves in the right direction – that is to say, the slaveholder will be overthrown and slavery abolished. Whether it moves in that direction prudently or imprudently, slowly or rapidly, is a matter of indifference as against the question of whether a policy should be adopted which would move in another, and opposite and destructive, direction.” He conceded that Lincoln “does not understand artifices of speech and attitude,” nor was he highly educated. His manners “harmonize little with the European conception of the dignity of a ruler.” For all that, he was “a man of profound feeling, just and firm principles, and incorruptible integrity.” He possessed “sound common sense” to “a marvelous degree.” Schurz confessed that he had “often

²⁹⁰ Lincoln to Schurz, Washington, 13 March 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:243-44.

criticized him severely,” but later “found that he was right.” Such as they were, the president’s weaknesses were those “of a good man.” His personality had “a quite peculiar significance” in the Civil War, for he personified the people, and “that is the secret of his popularity.” His administration “is the most representative that has ever existed in world history.” Presciently, Schurz speculated that within fifty years or less, “Lincoln’s name will stand written upon the honor roll of the American Republic next to that of Washington, and there it will remain for all time. The children of those who now disparage him will bless him.”²⁹¹

During their conversation, Lincoln primed Schurz for his stumping tour, explaining “various acts of the administration which in the campaign might be questioned and call for defense.” He emphasized heavily that “the Executive could do many things by virtue of the war power, which Congress could not do in the way of ordinary legislation.” As Schurz left, the president told him: “Well, things might look better, and they might look worse. Go in, and let us all do the best we can.”²⁹² Schurz pitched in, repeating Lincoln’s arguments before several audiences and helping to keep the German vote in the Republican column.

Serving that same end was Berlin-born Francis Lieber, the aggressive head of the Loyal Publication Society in New York. He wrote ten of the society’s ninety pamphlets, including the highly influential Lincoln oder McClellan? Aufruf an die Deutschen in Amerika, which was widely distributed in both German and English. Many of the

²⁹¹ Carl Schurz to Theodore Petrasch, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 12 October 1864, Joseph Schafer, ed., Intimate Letters of Carl Schurz, 1841-1869 (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1928), 306-9.

²⁹² Schurz, The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz (3 vols.; New York: McClure, 1907-1908), 3:104-5.

500,000 copies of the society's pamphlets circulated among the troops, helping to assure a solidly Republican soldier vote.

Keenly aware of the importance of that vote, Lincoln told a crowd at a White House rally that “no classes of people seem so nearly unanimous as the soldiers in the field and the seamen afloat” in the war “to save the country and its liberties.” Let their devotion to the cause inspire others, he counseled. “Do they not have the hardest of it? Who should quail while they do not? God bless the soldiers and seamen, with all their brave commanders.”²⁹³ When the California supreme court struck down the state's law permitting men in military service to cast ballots, Lincoln said “he was sorry to see the Courts there had thrown out the soldier's right to vote” and called that action “a bad augury for the success of the loyal cause on Nov. 8th.”²⁹⁴

VICTORY AT THE POLLS

The first electoral contest after the national nominating conventions was a judicial race on August 1 in Kentucky, widely regarded as a portent of things to come. On July 5, Lincoln had somewhat redundantly suspended the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus in the Bluegrass State. The order, written by Seward, stipulated that martial law “will not . . . interfere with the holding of lawful elections.” Nonetheless, General Stephen G. Burbridge struck the name of the incumbent judge from the ballot three days before the election. To avoid arrest, that jurist fled Kentucky. The Democrats hastily found a

²⁹³ Response to a serenade, 19 October 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 8:52-53.

²⁹⁴ Henry W. Bellows to his son, 2 November 1864, Bellows Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, in James G. Randall and Richard N. Current, Lincoln the President: Last Full Measure (vol. 4 of Lincoln the President; New York: Dodd, Mead, 1955), 4:256.

replacement, who won. It foreshadowed McClellan's sweeping victory there in November.²⁹⁵

For Republicans in other states, the signs were more propitious. In September, their gubernatorial candidates handily won contests in Maine and Vermont. Writing from Portland, former Governor Israel Washburn reported that Lincoln "is wonderfully popular in the North, & is nowhere stronger than in Maine. Nothing but some great blunder can prevent his re-election."²⁹⁶ Based on these New England results, Nicolay accurately predicted that "Lincoln will receive a very large majority of the Electoral votes."²⁹⁷ Along with the fall of Atlanta and the Democrats' decision to adopt a peace platform, these elections persuaded malcontents to rally around Lincoln lest their opposition hopelessly discredit Radicalism.²⁹⁸

Far more significant elections took place on October 11, when voters flocked to the polls in Ohio, Indiana, and Pennsylvania. Republicans swept to victory in the Buckeye State, claiming seventeen of the nineteen congressional seats and carrying the state ticket by over 50,000. Among the Democratic casualties was S. S. Cox, one of the most prominent Democrats in the House. Despite Lincoln's refusal to postpone the draft, Indiana's Governor Morton received 20,000 more votes than his Democratic challenger,

²⁹⁵ E. Merton Coulter, The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926), 184-88.

²⁹⁶ Israel Washburn to Elihu B. Washburne, Portland, 27 July 1864, Washburn Family Papers, Washburn Memorial Library, Norlands, Maine.

²⁹⁷ Nicolay to Therenia Bates, Washington, 18 September 1864, in Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 160.

²⁹⁸ John Austin Stevens to Henry T. Cheever, New York, 14 September 1864, Cheever Family Papers, American Antiquarian Society; Stevens to John A. Andrew, New York, 19 September 1864, Andrew Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

and the Republicans took eight of the Hoosier State's eleven congressional seats while gaining control of the legislature.

A month before the election, John W. Forney warned Lincoln that Republicans might lose the Keystone State, and Simon Cameron, who headed the Union party there, predicted that the “campaign will be short and must be urged with vigor now, on our side, if we hope to succeed. The enemy are full of money – we have none – and they will act with all the zeal usual to the opposing party who have hopes of success.”²⁹⁹

As it turned out, the Republican/Union candidates in Pennsylvania squeaked by with a 15,000-vote margin; their majority in the home vote was a meager 391.³⁰⁰ “Is not the result of the ‘home-vote’ in this state sickening to a man who loves his country and desires to respect his countrymen?” asked the disgruntled head of the Pennsylvania Union League, who resolved to work night and day till the November election.³⁰¹ Opposition to the draft there hurt Republicans so badly that Stanton was considered “a heavy load for Mr Lincoln to carry.”³⁰²

As Lincoln sat at the War Department with Stanton and Charles A. Dana awaiting the October election returns, he read aloud from one of his favorite humorists, David Ross Locke, creator of the comic character Petroleum V. Nasby. (“For the genius to write

²⁹⁹ George W. Adams to Manton Marble, Washington, 20 September 1864, Marble Papers, Library of Congress; Cameron to William P. Fessenden, Washington, 10 September 1864, Lincoln Collection, Yale University.

³⁰⁰ Shankman, Antiwar Movement in Pennsylvania, 197; Erwin Stanley Bradley, The Triumph of Militant Republicanism: A Study of Pennsylvania and Presidential Politics, 1860-1872 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), 206.

³⁰¹ George Boker to Bayard Taylor, 13 October 1864, in Edward Sculley Bradley, George Henry Boker: Poet and Patriot (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1927), 224.

³⁰² James T. Hale to Gideon Welles, Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, 17 October 1864, Welles Papers, Library of Congress.

these things I would gladly give up my office,” Lincoln said of Locke’s pieces.)³⁰³

According to Dana, the secretary of war “viewed these proceedings with great impatience,” but the president “paid no attention to that. He would read a page or a story, pause to con a new election telegram, and then open the book again and go ahead with a new passage.” When the humorless Chase arrived, Lincoln stopped reading. The equally humorless Stanton pulled Dana into an adjoining room and exploded in indignation: “God damn it to hell. Was there ever such nonsense? Was there ever such inability to appreciate what is going on in an awful crisis? Here is the fate of this whole republic at stake, and here is the man around whom it all centers, on whom it all depends, turning aside from this monumental issue to read the God damned trash of a silly mountebank!!”³⁰⁴

The soldier vote seemed to be going heavily Republican save for the denizens of the Carver Hospital in Washington, which Lincoln and Stanton both rode past daily. (The president and war secretary were still residing at the Soldier’s Home at the time.) “That[’]s hard on us Stanton,” said the president; “they know us better than the others.” Lincoln’s own bodyguard, the 150th Pennsylvania, voted 63-11 in favor of the Republican ticket. As the evening wore on, Lincoln grew concerned, saying “he was anxious about Pennsylvania because of her enormous weight and influence which, cast definitely into the scale, wd. have closed the campaign & left the people free to look again with their whole hearts to the cause of the country.”³⁰⁵ The result was still not clear the next day; in

³⁰³ He told this to Charles Sumner. *Reminiscences of Sumner*, in Pierce, Sumner, 4:223.

³⁰⁴ 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, 261-262; Benjamin P. Thomas and Harold M. Hyman, Stanton: The Life and Times of Lincoln’s Secretary of War (New York: Knopf, 1962), 330.

³⁰⁵ Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 241 (entry for 11 October 1864).

response to an inquiring telegram from Grant, Lincoln wired back: “Pennsylvania very close and still in doubt on home vote.”³⁰⁶

On October 13, Lincoln appeared “unusually weary and depressed” as he sat in the war department telegraph office jotting a prediction of the November results. He said he was not entirely sure that he would be reelected, for he anticipated losing New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Illinois, and thus managing to defeat McClellan in the electoral college by the extremely narrow margin of 117 to 114.³⁰⁷ (Nine days earlier, Democratic candidates for assessors and judges in Delaware had won 1,300 more votes than their Union/Republican opponents.)

Especially alarmed by the narrowness of the Republican victory in Pennsylvania, Lincoln asked Alexander K. McClure to help strengthen the state central committee.³⁰⁸ That was necessary, for McClure, who barely won a legislative seat in October, warned that the committee was “a miserable affair” and that McClellan might well carry the state in November.³⁰⁹ In Washington, Pennsylvanians who had taken a furlough to vote at home accused Cameron of badly mismanaging the campaign.³¹⁰ In late September, Congressman William D. Kelley of Philadelphia had cautioned Lincoln that “our state is not safe. It is very doubtful. The campaign is not being conducted by the state committee with reference to your election, but to so organising legislative and committee and other influence as to constrain you to accept Simon Cameron as Secty of War – or if that fail to

³⁰⁶ Lincoln to Grant, Washington, 12 October 1864, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 8:45.

³⁰⁷ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 8:46; David Homer Bates, Lincoln in the Telegraph Office: Recollections of the United States Military Telegraph Corps During the Civil War (New York: Century, 1907), 275-78.

³⁰⁸ Alexander K. McClure, Abraham Lincoln and Men of War-Times (Philadelphia: Times, 1892), 200.

³⁰⁹ McClure to Leonard Swett, Chambersburg, 14 October 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

³¹⁰ Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 242 (entry for 14 October 1864).

restore him to the Senate.” The committee ignores “every man, and every influence that is not devoted to Cameron.” The Chief “is everywhere courting the impression that he alone of Pennsylvania[’]s sons is potential with you, and that he is certain of going into the Cabinet. This impression must be removed, or you will in certain districts fail to win with the congressional ticket, and may lose the state.”³¹¹

When Lincoln asked Cameron to cooperate with his old nemesis McClure, the Chief agreed readily, for the poor showing in his state (compared with Ohio and Indiana) mortified him. Despite the resulting improvement in Republican operations, Lincoln continued to fear the result in Pennsylvania. According to McClure, the president “knew that his election was in no sense doubtful, but he knew that if he lost New York and with it Pennsylvania on the home vote, the moral effect of his triumph would be broken and his power to prosecute the war and make peace would be greatly impaired.” At McClure’s suggestion, the president arranged to have 10,000 Keystone State troops furloughed to vote at home.³¹²

Shortly after the October elections, James W. Singleton urged Lincoln to announce that Confederate states could be restored without abandoning slavery. The president replied through their mutual friend Ebenezer Peck that while he respected the integrity of Singleton’s motives, he could not take his advice. According to Peck, the president said that the “favorable results of the recent elections, might subject him to the imputation of being willing now, to disregard the desires of the radical men, who have so

³¹¹ William D. Kelley to Lincoln, Philadelphia, 30 September 1864, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

³¹² McClure, Lincoln and Men of War Times, 200-3.

reluctantly come in to his support, and thus subject him to the imputation of catering to new elements [i.e., Conservatives] in disregard of their opinion.”³¹³

The Republican victories in October foreshadowed the party’s triumph the following month. On election day, November 8, Lincoln said of the vituperative campaign: “It is a little singular that I who am not a vindictive man, should always have been before the people for election in canvasses marked for their bitterness: always but once: When I came to Congress it was a quiet time: But always besides that the contests in which I have been prominent have been marked with great rancor.”³¹⁴

That morning a positive report from Maryland surprised Lincoln. A month earlier, the Republicans had narrowly won elections there. Now the higher turnout might indicate that Democrats were voting in larger numbers. “I shall be glad if that holds,” the president remarked.

That afternoon, Lincoln, looking “care-worn and dilapidated,” found it understandably difficult to concentrate on routine business.³¹⁵ Tad relieved the tension somewhat when he raced into his father’s room to announce that the soldiers guarding the White House were off to vote. Lincoln noticed that the boy’s pet turkey, which he had rescued from the butcher’s block a year earlier, was accompanying the troops to the polls. (They had made a mascot of him.) When the president asked if the turkey was also going

³¹³ Peck to Singleton, Washington, 14 October 1864, in Harry E. Pratt, ed., Concerning Mr. Lincoln: In Which Abraham Lincoln Is Pictured as He Appeared to Letter Writers of His Time (Springfield: Abraham Lincoln Association, 1944), 112-114.

³¹⁴ Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 243 (entry for 8 November 1864).

³¹⁵ Cincinnati Gazette, 7 November 1864, in Randall and Current, Last Full Measure, 259.

to cast a ballot, Tad shot back: “Oh, no; he isn’t of age yet!” The proud father regarded that response as far superior to many humorous “Lincoln stories” in circulation.³¹⁶

Noah Brooks, who spent that afternoon and evening with the president, reported that the “President took no pains to conceal his anxious interest in the result of the election.” Lincoln confessed: “I am just enough of a politician to know that there was not much doubt about the result of the Baltimore Convention, but about this thing I am far from being certain; I wish I were certain.” Around 6:30, word arrived from Indianapolis announcing a predictable Republican landslide.

After dinner, the president and John Hay splashed over to the War Department through the rainy night. Passing a soaked sentry encased in his own vapor, they entered the building through a side door and climbed to the telegraph room, where the president was handed a dispatch from John W. Forney predicting a 10,000-vote majority in Philadelphia. Laconically he remarked: “Forney is a little excitable.”

Around nine o’clock, a telegram from Baltimore announced a solid 10,000-vote Republican victory. Lincoln “only smiled good-naturedly and said that was a fair beginning.”³¹⁷

From Massachusetts came news that Congressman Alexander H. Rice was leading by 4000. Incredulous, Lincoln said: “Rice has one of the closest districts in the country, and those figures are more likely to be 40 or perhaps 400.” When subsequent reports confirmed the original estimate, he took heart: “If the doubtful districts come in in this shape, what may we expect from the certain ones?” (A few days later, he told Rice:

³¹⁶ Brooks, “Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln,” Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed, 198-99.

³¹⁷ Washington correspondence, 11 November, Sacramento Daily Union, 10 December 1864, in Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed, 142-43; Brooks, Washington, D.C., in Lincoln’s Time, ed. Mitgang, 195-96.

“Well, your district proved to be a good deal like a jug after all, with the handle all on one side.”³¹⁸

Assistant Secretary of the Navy Gustavus Fox took special pleasure in Rice’s victory, for the congressman was a friend of the navy. When Fox expressed joy that two of his department’s congressional enemies had been defeated, Lincoln told him: “You have more of that feeling of personal resentment than I. Perhaps I may have too little of it, but I never thought it paid. A man has not time to spend half his life in quarrels. If any man ceases to attack me, I never remember the past against him.”³¹⁹

When a dispatch announced that Pennsylvania was indeed going heavily Republican, Lincoln “looked solemn, as he seemed to see another term of office looming before him” and observed: “As goes Pennsylvania, so goes the Union, they say.”³²⁰ He then ordered the news conveyed to his wife, explaining that she was “more anxious than I.”³²¹

When Thomas T. Eckert of the telegraph office staff arrived, Lincoln asked why his pants were so mud-splattered. He had taken a tumble crossing the street, the major replied. That reminded Lincoln of something that happened to him six years earlier: “For such an awkward fellow, I am pretty sure-footed. It used to take a pretty dextrous man to throw me. I remember, the evening of the day in 1858, that decided the contest for the Senate between Mr Douglas and myself, was something like this, dark, rainy & gloomy. I had been reading the returns, and had ascertained that we had lost the Legislature and

³¹⁸ Washington Post, 24 September 1889.

³¹⁹ Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 245 (entry for 8 November 1864).

³²⁰ Washington correspondence, 11 November, Sacramento Daily Union, 10 December 1864, in Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed, 143.

³²¹ Helen Nicolay, Lincoln’s Secretary: A Biography of John G. Nicolay (New York: Longmans, Green, 1949), 217.

started to go home. The path had been worn hog-back was slippery. My foot slipped from under me, knocking the other one out of the way, but I recovered myself & lit square, and I said to myself, 'It's a slip and not a fall.'"³²²

Returns from the doubtful state of New York were slow to come in. A dispatch indicating that McClellan had carried it by 40,000 was regarded skeptically, for the state had been carefully canvassed and a close result was expected. When another dispatch proclaimed that the Republicans had won the state by 10,000, Lincoln scoffed: "I don't believe that." More plausible to him was a midnight wire from Greeley predicting a 4,000-vote Republican victory that – on top of victories in Pennsylvania, Maryland, New England, Michigan, and Wisconsin – seemed to clinch the election. When congratulated on that likely result, Lincoln "took it very calmly – said that he was free to confess that he felt relieved of suspense, and was glad that the verdict of the people was so likely to be clear, full and unmistakable, for it then appeared that his majority in the electoral college would be immense."³²³

At that point Eckert served supper with the help of Lincoln, who "went awkwardly and hospitably to work shoveling out the fried oysters." Hay recorded that the president "was most agreeable and genial all the evening."³²⁴

Lincoln still felt anxious about Illinois, which did not report good news till 1 a.m. An hour later, when a group of Pennsylvanians serenaded him, Lincoln replied with what

³²² Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 244-45 (entry for 8 November 1864).

³²³ Washington correspondence, 11 November, Sacramento Daily Union, 10 December 1864, in Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed, 143.

³²⁴ Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 246 (entry for 8 November 1864).

Noah Brooks called “one of the happiest and noblest little speeches of his life.”³²⁵ The president emphasized to his well-wishers the significance of the election: “I earnestly believe that the consequences of this day's work . . . will be to the lasting advantage, if not to the very salvation, of the country.” All those “who have labored to-day in behalf of the Union organization, have wrought for the best interests of their country and the world, not only for the present, but for all future ages. I am thankful to God for this approval of the people.” Yet Lincoln would not gloat: though “deeply grateful for this mark of their confidence in me, if I know my heart, my gratitude is free from any taint of personal triumph. I do not impugn the motives of any one opposed to me. It is no pleasure to me to triumph over any one; but I give thanks to the Almighty for this evidence of the people's resolution to stand by free government and the rights of humanity.”³²⁶ According to Hay, the president spoke “with rather unusual dignity and effect.”³²⁷

Lincoln won 55.4% of the popular vote and carried all states save Kentucky, Delaware, and New Jersey, making the electoral college margin 212 to 21. This showing was slightly below the average that Republicans had received in 1863, when they received 56.6% of the ballots cast in the sixteen Northern states where the two parties clashed.³²⁸ The recorded soldier vote (4% of the total) went 78% for the president as compared with 53% of the civilian vote. This lopsided result was surprising, for over 40% of the troops had been Democrats or belonged to Democratic families in 1860. As one Vermont trooper wrote: “Soldiers don't generally believe in fighting to put down

³²⁵ Washington correspondence, 11 November, Sacramento Daily Union, 10 December 1864, in Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed, 144.

³²⁶ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 8:96.

³²⁷ Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 246 (entry for 8 November 1864).

³²⁸ Lex Renda, Running on the Record: Civil War-Era Politics in New Hampshire (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 129-30.

treason, and voting to let it live.”³²⁹ Colonel Charles Russell Lowell, a Massachusetts abolitionist and Harvard valedictorian, feared that if McClellan won the nation would become “either half a dozen little republics, or one despotism,” leaving the U.S. “in the condition of the South American republics.”³³⁰ A less highly educated private looked forward to giving “the rebel[l]ion another thump this fall by voting for old Abe. I cannot afford to give three years of my life to maintaining this nation and then giving them Rebles all they want.”³³¹ A sergeant reported that in “this army (as it is with all others) ‘Old Abe’ has the preference, his majority will be large in the army. McClellan lost friends by accepting the nomination on such a platform as that Chicago convention got up.”³³² On the eve of the election, an Illinois officer predicted that the army “will be overwhelmingly for ‘Old Abe.’ A large proportion feel that he can put down this rebellion much better than any other man, and none are for peace with armed rebels.”³³³

Gratified as he was to receive the soldier vote, Lincoln did not need it; in most states that he won, the civilian vote sufficed. In New York and Connecticut, where no separate records of soldier and home votes were kept, the former may have made the difference. The soldier vote also allowed several Republican congressional candidates to

³²⁹ Strasburg, Va., dispatch of 8 November 1864, in the Green Mountain Freeman (Montpelier, Vermont), n.d., in Emil Rosenblatt, ed., Anti-Rebel: The Civil War Letters of Wilbur Fisk (Croton-on-Hudson: E. Rosenblatt, 1983), 276.

³³⁰ Charles Russell Lowell to his wife, near Smithfield, 1 September 1864, in Edward W. Emerson, ed., Life and Letters of Charles Russell Lowell, Captain Sixth United States Cavalry, Colonel Second Massachusetts Cavalry, Brigadier-General United States Volunteers (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1907), 332.

³³¹ James M. McPherson, For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 176-77.

³³² John Walter Lee to his father, 6 September 1864, in Joseph Allan Frank, With Ballot and Bayonet: The Political Socialization of American Civil War Soldiers (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 95.

³³³ Major Thaddeus H. Capron of 59th Illinois Infantry, “War Diary of Thaddeus H. Capron, 1861-65,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 12 (1919):395.

prevail. In Pennsylvania, Lincoln won the home vote by a margin of only 5,503 (50.5% to 49.5%). During the campaign Lincoln had said, “I rely upon the religious sentiment of the country, which I am told is very largely for me.”³³⁴ Indeed, evangelical Protestant churches supported his candidacy enthusiastically.³³⁵

On November 10, a huge crowd converged on the White House with banners, lanterns, transparencies, and bands blaring martial tunes. A booming cannon added to the din. Approximately one-third of the serenaders were black, prompting one aged citizen of the capital to observe: “The white men there would not have made up a very large assemblage.” Such a turnout of blacks was unprecedented.³³⁶

In addressing this crowd, Lincoln analyzed the importance of the election. He had written out his remarks, for as Noah Brooks reported, “being well aware that the importance of the occasion would give it significance,” Lincoln “was not willing to run the risk of being betrayed by the excitement of the occasion into saying anything which would make him sorry when he saw it in print.” Upon appearing at the second story window, he was greeted with “a tremendous yell.”³³⁷ When the prolonged loud cheering finally died down, he began with a point he had made in his July 4, 1861 message to Congress: “It has long been a grave question whether any government, not too strong for the liberties of its people, can be strong enough to maintain its own existence, in great

³³⁴ Joseph P. Thompson, sermon delivered in New York, 30 April 1865, in Our Martyred President: Voices from the Pulpit of New York and Brooklyn (New York: Tibbal and Whiting, 1865), 191.

³³⁵ Howard, Religion and Radical Republicans, 68-89; William Frank Zornow, Lincoln and the Party Divided (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 214-15; Richard J. Carwardine, Lincoln (Harlow, England: Pearson/Longman, 2003), 288-89.

³³⁶ Washington correspondence, 12 November, National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York), 19 November 1864.

³³⁷ Washington correspondence, 11 November, Sacramento Daily Union, 10 December 1864, in Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed, 145.

emergencies. On this point the present rebellion brought our republic to a severe test; and a presidential election occurring in regular course during the rebellion added not a little to the strain. If the loyal people, united, were put to the utmost of their strength by the rebellion, must they not fail when divided, and partially paralyzed, by a political war among themselves?”

Though the danger was great, it would not have justified suspending or canceling the election, which “was a necessity,” for “[w]e can not have free government without elections; and if the rebellion could force us to forego, or postpone a national election, it might fairly claim to have already conquered and ruined us. The strife of the election is but human-nature practically applied to the facts of the case. What has occurred in this case, must ever recur in similar cases. Human-nature will not change. In any future great national trial, compared with the men of this, we shall have as weak, and as strong; as silly and as wise; as bad and good. Let us, therefore, study the incidents of this, as philosophy to learn wisdom from, and none of them as wrongs to be revenged.”

Deplorable though the bitter canvass may have been, Lincoln insisted that it “has done good too,” for it “demonstrated that a people's government can sustain a national election, in the midst of a great civil war. Until now it has not been known to the world that this was a possibility. It shows also how sound, and how strong we still are. It shows that, even among candidates of the same party, he who is most devoted to the Union, and most opposed to treason, can receive most of the people's votes. It shows also, to the extent yet known, that we have more men now, than we had when the war began. Gold is good in its place; but living, brave, patriotic men, are better than gold.”

In closing, Lincoln urged his supporters to show magnanimity toward their defeated opponents: “now that the election is over, may not all, having a common interest, re-unite in a common effort, to save our common country? For my own part I have striven, and shall strive to avoid placing any obstacle in the way. So long as I have been here I have not willingly planted a thorn in any man's bosom. While I am deeply sensible to the high compliment of a re-election; and duly grateful, as I trust, to Almighty God for having directed my countrymen to a right conclusion, as I think, for their own good, it adds nothing to my satisfaction that any other man may be disappointed or pained by the result. May I ask those who have not differed with me, to join with me, in this same spirit towards those who have?”³³⁸

After finishing, Lincoln stepped away from the window as the crowd gave him three enthusiastic cheers.³³⁹ He told John Hay: “Not very graceful, but I am growing old enough not to care much for the manner of doing things.”³⁴⁰ Hay thought more highly of the speech, calling it “one of the weightiest and wisest of all his discourses,” an opinion shared by the Washington correspondent of the London Times, who deemed it “one of the best speeches he has ever made.”³⁴¹ Lydia Maria Child told a friend that it “charmed me exceedingly. A most beautiful spirit pervaded it.”³⁴²

Those remarks were hastily written, for Lincoln was unusually busy then. A week later he told a delegation of Marylanders that he had planned to prepare some remarks for

³³⁸ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 8:100-1.

³³⁹ Washington correspondence, 10 New York Tribune, 11 November 1864.

³⁴⁰ Burlingame and Ettlinger, eds., Hay Diary, 248 (entry for 11 November 1864).

³⁴¹ Nicolay and Hay, Lincoln, 9:379; Washington correspondence, 11 November, London Times, n.d., copied in the New York Daily News, 20 December 1864.

³⁴² Child to Eliza Scudder, Wayland, Massachusetts, 14 November 1864, Samuel J. May Antislavery Papers Collection, Cornell University.

them, but he had been unable to find the time and would therefore speak off the cuff. He said that he “thought the adoption of their free State constitution was a bigger thing than their part in the Presidential election. He could, any day, have stipulated to lose Maryland in the Presidential election to save its free constitution, because the Presidential election comes every four years and the adoption of the constitution, being a good thing, could not be undone. He therefore thought that they had a victory for the right worth a great deal more than their part in the Presidential election, although he thought well of that.”³⁴³

Abolitionists rejoiced that his remarks were “thoroughly emancipation in tone” and that he had evidently abandoned any thought of gradual emancipation.³⁴⁴

Lincoln’s annual message to Congress in December also pleased Radicals.³⁴⁵ It eloquently summarized the lesson taught by the election: “The most reliable indication of public purpose in this country is derived through our popular elections. Judging by the recent canvass and its result, the purpose of the people, within the loyal States, to maintain the integrity of the Union, was never more firm, nor more nearly unanimous, than now. The extraordinary calmness and good order with which the millions of voters met and mingled at the polls, give strong assurance of this. Not only all those who supported the Union ticket, so called, but a great majority of the opposing party also, may be fairly claimed to entertain, and to be actuated by, the same purpose. It is an unanswerable argument to this effect, that no candidate for any office whatever, high or low, has ventured to seek votes on the avowal that he was for giving up the Union. There

³⁴³ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 8:113.

³⁴⁴ Washington correspondence, 21 November, National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York), 26 November 1864.

³⁴⁵ National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York), 10 December 1864; New York Tribune, 7 December 1864.

have been much impugning of motives, and much heated controversy as to the proper means and best mode of advancing the Union cause; but on the distinct issue of Union or no Union, the politicians have shown their instinctive knowledge that there is no diversity among the people. In affording the people the fair opportunity of showing, one to another and to the world, this firmness and unanimity of purpose, the election has been of vast value to the national cause.”³⁴⁶

Harper's Weekly agreed with the president's assessment, calling the election result “the proclamation of the American people that they are not conquered; that the rebellion is not successful; and that, deeply as they deplore war and its inevitable suffering and loss, yet they have no choice between war and national ruin, and must therefore fight on.” Lincoln's reelection demonstrated “that the people are conscious of the power and force of their own Government” and vindicated “the American system of free popular government. No system in history was ever exposed to such a strain directly along the fibre as that which ours has endured in the war and the political campaign, and no other could possibly have endured it successfully. The result is due to the general intelligence of the people, and to the security of perfectly free discussion.” The U.S. showed itself to be “a nation which comprehends its priceless importance to human progress and civilization, and which recognizes that law is the indispensable condition of Liberty.”³⁴⁷ More succinctly, General John W. Geary told his wife, it “is now certain that the United States must be all free or all slave, and the momentous question has been

³⁴⁶ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 8:149-50

³⁴⁷ Harpers Weekly, 19 November 1864.

decided in favor of freedom by the verdict of the people in November.”³⁴⁸ Charles Eliot Norton predicted that November 8, 1864, “will always be esteemed as one of our great historic days. Never before was a people called upon for a decision involving more vital interests not only to itself but to the progress of mankind, and never did any people show itself so worthy to be entrusted with freedom and power.”³⁴⁹

Some Confederates recognized that Lincoln’s victory spelled their doom. A Rebel prisoner told a Union soldier if the president were reelected, “we are gone up but . . . if you elect McC[lellan]D we are all right yet and will whip you yet.” Many of this fellow’s comrades shared that view.³⁵⁰ Colonel Robert G. H. Kean, chief of the Confederate bureau of war, recorded in his journal that the “Yankee election was evidently a damper on the spirits of many of our people, and is said to have depressed the army a good deal. Lincoln’s triumph was more complete than most of us expected. Most judicious persons . . . hoped that it would be closely contested, possibly attended with violence.”³⁵¹ Lee’s chief of ordnance lamented that “our subjugation is popular at the north.”³⁵² From Atlanta, a Union general reported that the “rebs here are much chapfallen at the disaster to their political friends in the north. They seem to consider it worse than a disaster in the

³⁴⁸ J. W. Geary to his wife, near Savannah, no day of the month indicated, December 1864, in William Alan Blair, ed., A Politician Goes to War: The Civil War Letters of John White Geary (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 217.

³⁴⁹ Charles Eliot Norton to George P. Marsh, Cambridge, 29 December 1864, Marsh Papers, University of Vermont.

³⁵⁰ Chauncey B. Welton to his parents, 13 November 1864, Welton Papers, in John R. Brumgardt, “Overwhelmingly for ‘Old Abe’”: Sherman’s Soldiers and the Election of 1864,” Lincoln Herald 78 (1976):156.

³⁵¹ Edward Younger, ed., Inside the Confederate Government: The Diary of Robert Garlick Hill Kean, Head of the Bureau of War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), 177 (entry for 20 November 1864).

³⁵² Sarah Woolfolk Wiggins, ed., The Journals of Josiah Gorgas, 1857-1878 (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995), 139 (entry for 17 November 1864).

field, and a death blow to their dearest hopes of success.”³⁵³ Jefferson Davis, however, did not share that view and determined to fight on to the bitter end, needlessly prolonging an unwinnable war.

Lincoln savored his victory, though the possibility of defeat held few terrors for him. As he told Noah Brooks the day after the election, “Being only mortal, after all, I should have been a little mortified if I had been beaten in the canvass before the people; but the sting would have been more than compensated by the thought that the people had notified me that my official responsibilities were soon to be lifted off my back.”³⁵⁴ To another journalist he remarked that the cares of his office were “so oppressive” that “he felt as though the moment when he could relinquish the burden and retire to private life would be the sweetest he could possibly experience.”³⁵⁵ Still, Lincoln acknowledged to a committee of Marylanders that he “would not attempt to conceal from them the fact that he was gratified at the results of the Presidential election, and he would assure them that he had kept as near as he could to the exercise of his best judgment, for the promotion of the interests of the whole country; and now, to have the seal of approbation marked on the course he had pursued was exceedingly gratifying to his feelings.”³⁵⁶

To Brooks, the president modestly acknowledged his need of divine assistance: “I should be the veriest shallow and self-conceited blockhead upon the footstool if, in my discharge of the duties which are put upon me in this place, I should hope to get along without the wisdom which comes from God and not from men.”³⁵⁷ This modest

³⁵³ J. W. Geary to his wife, Atlanta, 24 November 1864, in Blair, ed., A Politician Goes to War, 211.

³⁵⁴ Brooks, “Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln,” in Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed, 210.

³⁵⁵ James W. Winchell in Fehrenbacher and Fehrenbacher, eds., Recollected Words of Lincoln, 506.

³⁵⁶ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 8:113.

³⁵⁷ Brooks, Washington, D.C., in Lincoln’s Time, ed. Mitgang, 198.

sensibility led him to reject Brooks's suggestion that he share the good electoral news with his old friend Anson G. Henry in Oregon: "I don't think it would look well for a message from me to go traveling around the country blowing my own horn. You sign the message and I will send it."³⁵⁸

Democratic blunders and Union military success did not alone account for Lincoln's reelection, important though they were. It is hard to say precisely how significant a role his character and personality played, but it was a big one. The perceptive journalist E. L. Godkin informed readers of the London Daily News that men in rural America showed little concern about the president's sartorial taste or his manners. Instead "his logic and his English, his jokes, his plain common sense, his shrewdness, his unbounded reliance on their honesty and straightforwardness, go right to their hearts." They "are in earnest in a way the like of which the world never saw before, silently, calmly, but deliberately in earnest; and they will fight on, in my opinion, as long as they have men, muskets, powder, and corn and wool, and would fight on, though the grass were growing in Wall Street, and there was not a gold dollar on this side of the Atlantic."³⁵⁹ This strong resolve was partly inspired by Lincoln's own indomitable will.

Endearing Lincoln to the voters was his remarkable unselfishness. "Among the great civilians of the day," William O. Stoddard noted in 1862, "the greatest and strongest, our good Chief Magistrate, is great and strong chiefly because the people have perfect faith in him that he has no ambition, no selfish lust of power, nor any hope for the future unconnected with the welfare of his country." In addition, people identified with

³⁵⁸ Brooks, "Personal Reminiscences of Lincoln," Scribner's Monthly 15 (1877/1878):677.

³⁵⁹ Dispatch dated 10 September, London Daily News, 27 September 1864, in Allan Nevins, The War for the Union (4 vols.; New York: Scribner, 1959-1971), 4:103, 141-142.

Lincoln. “He is the most perfect representative of the purely American character now in public life,” Stoddard maintained. “This is why the mutual understanding between him and the people is so perfect. This it is which enables him to exercise powers which would never by any possibility be entrusted to another man, though his equal in other respects. The people know that they can trust their great chief, and so they bid him ‘see to it that the Republic suffers no detriment.’”³⁶⁰ In early 1864, Harriet Beecher Stowe noted that of all “the many accusations which in hours of ill-luck have been thrown out upon Lincoln, it is remarkable that he has never been called self-seeking, or selfish. When we were troubled and sat in darkness, and looked doubtfully towards the presidential chair, it was never that we doubted the good-will of our pilot – only the clearness of his eyesight. But Almighty God has granted to him that clearness of vision which he gives to the true-hearted, and enabled him to set his honest foot in that promised land of freedom which is to be the patrimony of all men, black and white – and from henceforth nations shall rise up to call him blessed.”³⁶¹ A frustrated Wendell Phillips said “Lincoln had won such loving trust from the people that it was impossible to argue anything against him.”³⁶²

Lydia Maria Child called Lincoln’s victory “the triumph of free schools; for it was the intelligence and reason of the people that reelected Abraham Lincoln.” According to her, the voters were sophisticated and thoughtful enough to overlook the president’s many shortcomings: “There was no enthusiasm for honest old Abe. There is

³⁶⁰ Washington correspondence, 21 July, New York Examiner, 24 July 1862, 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), 88.

³⁶¹ Stowe in Littell’s Living Age, 6 February 1864.

³⁶² Phillips to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 23 April 1865, Ida Husted Harper Collection, Huntington Library, in Don E. Fehrenbacher, “The Anti-Lincoln Tradition,” Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association 4 (1982):14.

no beauty in him, that men should desire him; there is no insinuating, polished manner, to beguile the senses of the people; there is no dazzling military renown; no silver flow of rhetoric; in fact, no glittering prestige of any kind surrounds him; yet the people triumphantly elected him, in spite of all manner of machinations, and notwithstanding the long, long drag upon their patience and their resources, which this war has produced. I call this the triumph of Free Schools; for it was the intelligence and reason of the people, that reelected Abraham Lincoln.” For all his flaws and lack of polish, the president was likable, Child acknowledged. “I have sometimes been out of patience with him; but I will say of him that I have constantly gone on liking him better and better.”³⁶³

Lincoln’s lack of affectation or insincerity also endeared him to the electorate. The Shakespearean authority, Horace Howard Furness, lauded the president’s “rare wisdom . . . that he knows himself, & makes no attempt to be other than God made him.”³⁶⁴

With Lincoln’s reelection, antislavery forces heaved a sigh of relief. Gerrit Smith said he was “more thankful than joyful over the Election – too deeply thankful to be joyful.”³⁶⁵ Child exclaimed: “Glory to God!” and was delighted that she could finally “breathe freely now that this great danger is passed. If McLellan had been elected, the slave holders would have had it all their own way.”³⁶⁶ She rejoiced “to have a rail-splitter

³⁶³ Child to Eliza Scudder, Wayland, Massachusetts, 14 November 1864, Samuel J. May Antislavery Papers Collection, Cornell University.

³⁶⁴ Furness to Lydia Maria Child, n.p., n.d., quoted in Child to Lucy Osgood, Wayland, Massachusetts, 20 November 1864, Child Correspondence, microfiche ed., comp. Patricia G. Holland and Milton Meltzer.

³⁶⁵ Smith to Lydia Maria Child, 21 November 1864, in Ralph Volney Harlow, Gerrit Smith, Philanthropist and Reformer (New York: H. Holt, 1939), 441.

³⁶⁶ Child to John Fraser, Wayland, Massachusetts, 10 November 1864, Child Correspondence, microfiche ed., comp. Patricia G. Holland and Milton Meltzer.

for President, and a tailor for Vice President.”³⁶⁷ Lucy Stone was equally relieved: “how glad I am, that Mr. Lincoln [in] spite of his short comings, is re-elected.”³⁶⁸ George William Curtis urged friends to “thank God and the people for this crowning mercy.”³⁶⁹

Some Radicals were less enthusiastic. Bradford R. Wood rejoiced but “with fear and trembling for the future,” for Lincoln’s honesty meant little “if he surrounds himself with incompetent or second rate men, to be the tools of our State Banks or our plutocrats or our old political hacks.”³⁷⁰ Henry Winter Davis did not look forward to a second Lincoln administration: “We must for four years more rely on the forcing process of Congress to wring from that old fool what can be gotten for the nation.”³⁷¹ Davis, however, would not be able to lead the forcers in Congress, for he lost his bid for renomination. Baltimore Republicans wanted a Representative who would cooperate with the administration instead of acting as one of its bitterest enemies.³⁷² Moncure Conway told his English readers that “[n]ever before in America has a president been elected so detested by his own electors as Abraham Lincoln.”³⁷³ (A propos of Conway’s article, George S. Hillard of Boston remarked that if it were read by everyone in Massachusetts, “it would be of no effect,” for the “faith of the most ignorant and bigoted Catholic in the pope does not equal the faith of the great majority of this community in Abraham

³⁶⁷ Child to Whittier, Wayland, 19 June 1864, in John Albee, ed., Whittier Correspondence from the Oak Knoll Collections, 1830-1892 (Salem, Massachusetts: Essex Book and Print Club, 1911), 147.

³⁶⁸ Stone to an unidentified friend, 12 December 1864, in Elinor Rice Hays, Morning Star: A Biography of Lucy Stone, 1818-1893 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), 183.

³⁶⁹ Curtis to Charles Eliot Norton, New York, 9 November 1864, Curtis Papers, Harvard University.

³⁷⁰ Bradford Wood to Chase, Copenhagen, 29 December 1864, Chase Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁷¹ Davis to Du Pont, n.p., 28 or 29 September 1864, in Hayes, ed., Du Pont Letters, 3:392.

³⁷² Gerald S. Henig, Henry Winter Davis: Antebellum and Civil War Congressman from Maryland (New York: Twayne, 1973), 228-29.

³⁷³ Conway’s article, Fraser’s Magazine, January 1865, in Mary Elizabeth Burtis, Moncure Conway, 1832-1907 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1952), 116.

Lincoln.” Another Bostonian remarked that Conway had “made himself a national laughing stock.”³⁷⁴

“Congratulate the President for me for the double victory,” Grant wired Stanton. “The election having passed off quietly, no bloodshed or riot throughout the land, is a victory worth more to the country than a battle won. Rebeldom and Europe will so construe it.”³⁷⁵

In his formal reply to the congressional committee notifying him of his reelection, Lincoln was eloquent: “Having served four years in the depths of a great, and yet unended national peril, I can view this call to a second term, in nowise more flatteringly to myself, than as an expression of the public judgment, that I may better finish a difficult work, in which I have labored from the first, than could any one less severely schooled to the task. In this view, and with assured reliance on that Almighty Ruler who has so graciously sustained us thus far; and with increased gratitude to the generous people for their continued confidence, I accept the renewed trust, with its yet onerous and perplexing duties and responsibilities.”³⁷⁶ Thurlow Weed told the president that this document “is not only the neatest but the most pregnant and effective use to which the English Language was ever put.”³⁷⁷

Lincoln’s victory reminded him of an ominous vision that he had seen four years earlier. “It was just after my election in 1860,” he told Noah Brooks, “when the news had been coming in thick and fast all day, and there had been a great ‘Hurrah, boys!’ so that I

³⁷⁴ G. S. Hillard to J. F. Fisher, Boston, 21 February 1865, Francis F. Hart Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; C. H. Brainard to William Lloyd Garrison, Boston, 25 July 1864, Garrison Papers, Boston Public Library.

³⁷⁵ Grant to Stanton, City Point, 10 November 1864, OR, I, 42, 3:541.

³⁷⁶ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 8:326.

³⁷⁷ Thurlow Weed to Lincoln, New York, 4 March 1865, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

was well tired out, and went home to rest, throwing myself down on a lounge in my chamber. Opposite where I lay was a bureau, with a swinging-glass upon it, and looking in that glass, I saw myself reflected nearly at full length; but my face, I noticed, had two separate and distinct images, the tip of the nose of one being about three inches from the tip of the other. I was a little bothered, perhaps startled, and got up and looked in the glass, but the illusion vanished. On lying down again, I saw it a second time – plainer, if possible, than before; and then I noticed that one of the faces was a little paler, say five shades, than the other. I got up, and the thing melted away, and I went off and, in the excitement of the hour, forgot all about it – nearly, but not quite, for the thing would once in a while come up, and give me a little pang as though something uncomfortable had happened. When I went home, I told my wife about it, and a few days after I tried the experiment again, when, sure enough, the thing came back again; but I never succeeded in bringing the ghost back after that, though I once tried very industriously to show it to my wife, who was worried about it somewhat. She thought it was ‘a sign’ that I was to be elected to a second term of office, and that the paleness of one of the faces was an omen that I should not see life through the last term.”³⁷⁸

³⁷⁸ Brooks, “Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln,” in Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed, 205-6.