


Abraham Lincoln  

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Writings and Speeches



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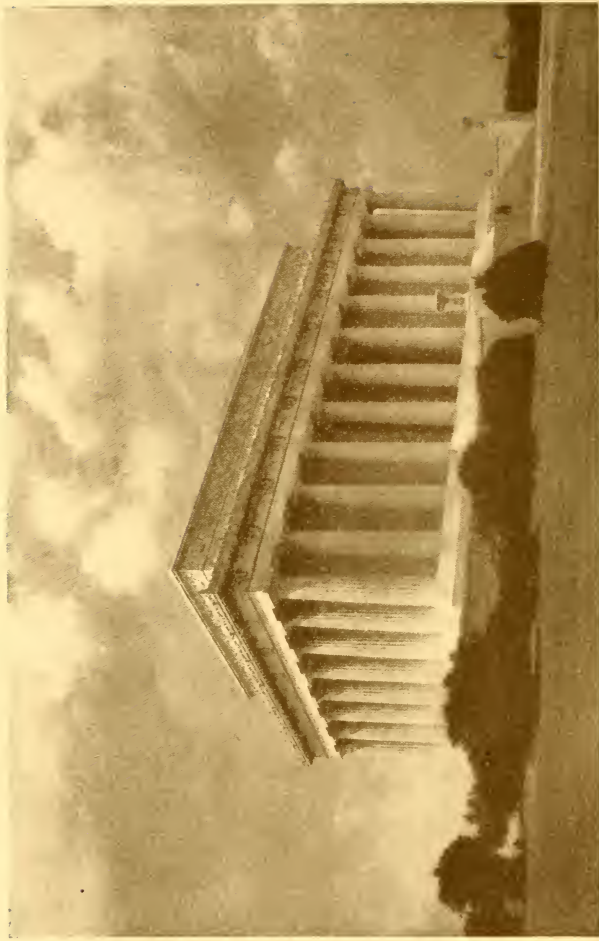
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# Abraham Lincoln

Selections from His

Speeches and Writings

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## PREFACE

A close student of Lincoln for many years past, I have in the preparation of this volume made use of all the standard works on the subject, and have, in addition, read several hundred short articles which touch his life, character, personality, and writings. As a result my obligations are so varied that it is an utter impossibility to acknowledge them all individually in any reasonable limits of space.

I wish, however, to acknowledge my deep indebtedness for permission to use certain of the selections to Messrs. G. P. Putnam's Sons, publishers of the Constitutional Edition of Lincoln's *Writings* and of *The Writings of Carl Schurz*; to the Century Company for similar permission to use Abraham Lincoln's *Complete Works* (edited by Nicolay and Hay); to Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons for permission to include a selection from Mary R. S. Andrews's *The Perfect Tribute*, and to the Macmillan Company for an extract from Ida M. Tarbell's *Life of Abraham Lincoln*.

I am under heavy obligations to my wife for invaluable assistance in making the selections, in the editorial work, and in the preparation of the manuscript.

J. G. de R. H.

Chapel Hill, N. C.

December, 1921



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## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Any attempt at a complete Lincoln bibliography is impossible, and of course, in a work of this sort is unnecessary. No man in American history has had so much attention devoted to his life as Lincoln, and the list of books and articles relating to him grows without any noticeable diminution. It may, however, be helpful to those desiring to study him in greater detail to mention here a small number of works suitable for reference purposes.

The standard biography is Nicolay and Hay's *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, in ten large volumes. This work deals with the history of the period in some detail and is biased and partisan. Tarbell's *Life of Abraham Lincoln* is very satisfactory in every way. Herndon's *Life of Lincoln* contains a great deal of valuable and interesting material bearing on his early life, as does also Lamon's *Life of Lincoln*. Of the shorter biographies Hapgood's *Lincoln, the Man of the People*, in the judgment of the writer, stands easily first. Other valuable works are Putnam's *Abraham Lincoln*; Whitney's *Life of Lincoln*; Lord Charnwood's *Abraham Lincoln*; Rice's *Reminiscences of Lincoln*; and Rothschild's *Lincoln, Master of Men*. Lowell and Schurz wrote essays on Lincoln which are excellent interpretations and which will prove very helpful to the student of Lincoln.

This list is in no sense exhaustive; rather it must be noted that others almost as satisfactory could be prepared without including any of the works mentioned.



## INTRODUCTION

This little volume of selections from Lincoln's writings is prepared with a double purpose. Primarily it is intended to serve as the basis for the work of classes in English literature, or as collateral reading in American history, but it is hoped that it may also interest those who wish to find, gathered in convenient form, the more important and characteristic speeches, letters, and state papers of the great President.

I confess to a strong prejudice against the rather common practice of including in such a collection as this portions of a speech or letter, isolated from their context. Believing that this tends to defective instruction and careless study, and that it is unjust both to author and reader, I have given the full text of all the documents included, with exceptions in the cases of one speech, of one letter, and of the annual messages. In the case of the latter, I have omitted the routine portions, and the extracts given are complete units in themselves. In the running story which accompanies the text there are also occasional brief quotations for the purpose of illustration.

I have endeavored to include in the collection not only the best known of Lincoln's writings but also those others which best illustrate his growth and development, his personality, his political ideals, and his relation to important events and movements in American history. Thus, there will be found those papers and addresses which are most noted for the beauty and power of their language and the logic and strength of their thought; others significant for their hard common sense; and

still others which are illuminating for the study of the man or his period.

Of his great political speeches I have included the Peoria, the Springfield, the Columbus, and the Cooper Union addresses, which, as Colonel Watterson says, contain his entire political philosophy. I have, however, omitted the debates with Douglas of 1858. In addition, I have thought it well to include a number of minor speeches, not so well known, which indicate the direction and character of his growth, the heart of the man, or the formulation of an opinion or policy.

In the case of the letters, I have been guided by somewhat the same idea. Every kind of letter he wrote is represented here. They have been selected with even more care than the speeches, for the light they throw upon Lincoln's character and personality; and they range from the humorous and keenly satirical to the simple and wonderfully impressive letter to Mrs. Bixby.

I believe that everything necessary to a full understanding of the man and the policies and principles for which he stood has been included.

Since the selections contain the essential outline of Lincoln's life in his own words, I have made no attempt in this introduction to tell again the story. The running interpretation of the documents will, I believe, furnish all additional detail necessary to their full understanding.

Three great reasons make the study of Lincoln's writings worth while. In the first place, uneven as they are, they contain masterpieces of English literature which in themselves, as examples of effective reasoning and presentation, fully repay study. A second reason is to be found in the revelation they furnish of a man who is one of the great figures of world history. Knowledge of his writings develops an intellectual intimacy with a man who was, in his later years at least, one of the loftiest souls of history, but one which nevertheless never

lost its contact and kinship with the minds, hearts, and souls of the mass of men; which never found difficulty in its instinctive understanding of the thoughts, hopes, and aspirations of the average man. Finally, these papers throw the strongest possible light on the political events of their period of American history, and in that light the study of history is simplified and humanized.

The power and beauty of Lincoln's writings, particularly remarkable when the lack of opportunity for conventional training is recalled, constitute one of the greatest personal achievements of his life. At an early age he set himself to work deliberately to acquire mastery of the power of clear expression. He thus described what he did:

"When a mere child I used to get irritated when anybody talked to me in a way I could not understand. I do not think I ever got angry at anything else in my life; but that always disturbed my temper, and has ever since. I can remember going to my little bedroom, after hearing the neighbors talk of an evening with my father, and spending no small part of the night walking up and down trying to make out what was the exact meaning of some of their, to me, dark sayings.

"I could not sleep when I got on such a hunt for an idea until I had caught it; and when I thought I had got it, I was not satisfied until I had put it in language plain enough, as I thought, for any boy to comprehend. This was a kind of passion with me, and it has stuck by me; for I am never easy now, when I am handling a thought, till I have bounded it north, and bounded it south, and bounded it east, and bounded it west."

It was in consequence of this rigid self-training that his writings are all marked by terseness and simplicity of statement. In all he wrote and all he said, he sought to be persuasive, and to his mind that meant, above all things, to be clear. He dealt always with essentials

which he knew thoroughly. In preparation for a speech he saturated himself with his subject, studying it from all sides, handling it, and living with it night and day. As he phrased it once to his law-partner, Herndon, when deep in the preparation of a case, "If I can clean this case of technicalities and get it properly to the jury, I'll win it." All his writings show his purpose of stripping away the technicalities and getting the case properly to the jury. He was not a quick thinker; rather he thought slowly, even with difficulty, but profoundly, and with the information available, accurately. Above all else he sought accurate thinking as a necessary preliminary to clear and persuasive expression. Thus, when finally he came to the discussion of the question, he could state his propositions with perfect exactness and in a very compact way.

This power of compression enabled him to state the vital point of his argument in a few words or sentences which impressed themselves indelibly on the minds of his hearers. A remarkable instance of this is found in his Springfield speech of 1858 where he stated his final conclusion on the slavery question in these words:

"A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other."

Along with compactness and clarity of expression went systematic building up of his argument, readiness in apt comparisons, often lighted up with keen wit, and relentless pursuit of an opponent's errors in fact or logic.

How and where did Lincoln learn how to write is a question often asked. A clever and not wholly inadequate answer is that he "learned to reason with

Euclid and to feel and speak with the authors of the Bible." Really the whole truth is not far to seek. His purpose and his guide in expression which greatly influenced his writing and speaking have been described. But, self-taught, he had to have models. As has been frequently pointed out, he might, under different circumstances, have been familiar with the work of Bryant, Poe, Hawthorne, Emerson, Lowell, Whittier, Holmes, Longfellow, and Thoreau. There is no reason, however, to believe that he knew any of them. His models were of a different sort. As a boy, forming then rapidly the man, he read the Bible, *Æsop's Fables*, *Weems's Life of Washington*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, a small history of the United States, a volume of Indiana statutes, and Webster's spelling book. Later in life he acquired Blackstone's *Commentaries* and became familiar with Shakespeare. These were his textbooks.

The contrast between this small list and the titles now within the reach and at the command of most young people is striking; and yet the contrast is one of size rather than of quality. Lincoln could hardly have had a higher average of quality in his library, and the very smallness of the collection, making every word precious, served to impress their form and thought upon his mind in a very striking way. In other words he not only, like any eager and intellectually curious boy, devoured them; he digested and assimilated them completely.

All influenced him doubtless. From Weems's remarkable work of fiction he drew his first hero-worship and possibly his first conscious devotion to the country his hero had so gloriously made and served. From the law books he acquired, doubtless, a part of his exactness and accuracy of statement, and possibly no small part of his power of logical organization and thinking. The influence of *Æsop's Fables* is easily traced in his speeches as well as in the stories for which he was famous. All

of his stories were in a sense allegorical. He never told one, at least in his speeches, which did not emphasize a point he wished to make.

But of all these, the Bible and Shakespeare contributed the most to his style and his thought. The Bible began its impress when he was a mere child and it continued to make it all his life, becoming more marked in the seriousness of his later years. He never ceased to read it, and in the last year of his life, he wrote a close friend, "I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible. Take all of this book upon reason that you can and the balance upon faith, and you will live and die a better man." In all his writings his familiarity with it is apparent, not only in his frequent quotations and allusions, but possibly more in the form and flavor of his speech and the "high seriousness" which characterized his thought. Shakespeare, coming into his hands later in life, did not make so deep an impression.

Lincoln's achievement thus described did not come all at once. In many of his early writings are touches of florid style, but he soon found that because these were not natural they were not effective, and, abandoning them, returned to his native simplicity, in which and through which in part he was to win fame. In American political literature he began a new era, setting a standard which influenced profoundly not only that narrow field but the whole field of American literature. He began the movement toward simplicity that was in time to make the high-colored speeches and essays of American politicians seem absurd in this country as well as abroad. His service here is one that should not be measured lightly.

In most of his speeches and nearly all his letters he was perfectly natural. Popularly known as a humorist with rather a coarse strain of humor, little or none of this appears in his formal writings and little more in his letters. Nor was there in his speeches any straining

for popular treatment. In his debates with Douglas, he was urged to treat his subject in this way, and replied, "The occasion is too serious, the issues are too grave. I do not seek applause, or to arouse the people, but to convince them."

In fact, his speeches are marked by reserve and dignity, but they are seasoned with an original and homely flavor that carried them direct to the mind and heart of the hearer or reader. And this was his purpose. There is nothing to indicate any purpose, at least in his maturer years, of making "literature." He acquired through close study of excellent models a sense of form that became almost instinctive, but, after all, beauty of form was to him, like clarity, chiefly an agency to persuasion.

In his writings are evident the deep conviction which moved him and an essential honesty of purpose. He was contemptuous of tricks of public speaking and scornful of the "specious and fantastic arguments by which a man may prove that a horse-chestnut is a chestnut horse," and of "sophistical contrivances groping for some middle ground between right and wrong." Honest in purpose, he consistently practiced honesty of method and expression, which made courts and juries believe in him, and, more important still, caught the ear and attention of that great jury, the people, to which he addressed himself. With all his conviction and "energy of honest directness," he was not a person unable to change an opinion. Taxed once with such a change, he said, "Yes, I have, and I don't think much of a man who isn't wiser today than he was yesterday." In this connection Lowell aptly says, "The foolish and the dead alone never change their opinion."

Another explanation of Lincoln's power lies in his possession of a keen, profound, and sympathetic knowledge of the human mind and heart. Part of this was sheer instinct; more, perhaps, was the result of long and

wide experience with men, beginning with those of an almost primitive society. He knew the average man well, both as to his mind and his heart, and to the average man most of his arguments were directed. They lost nothing from the fact that they were always addressed to the intelligence of men rather than to their prejudices, passions, and ignorance. They gain tremendously in the later years in the seeming invitation of them all to come and reason together. There is in them no pride of self or pride of opinion. Here as elsewhere, as Lowell says, Lincoln's "I" always sounds like "we."

It must not, however, be supposed that he failed in conception of his own powers and his own place. Ready always to sink all thought of self in a great cause, he knew when to assume the dignity of his place and position. The reply to Seward's famous "Thoughts for the President's Consideration" is an illustration of this. Upon occasion, too, he could be severe, as in the letters to McClellan and Hooker. But in spite of these cases, the impression grows as study of him continues, that infinite patience and sweetness of spirit were among his most characteristic possessions.

The lives of few Americans have offered so much opportunity for fascinating and profitable study as that of Lincoln. That this is so is proved by the great flood of Lincoln literature which has been poured out since 1865, and also by the fact that he is a familiar figure, not only to an extraordinary number of Americans, but also to thousands in other lands, who have come to know him as they know no other American.

But it is well to note that, partly on account of the circumstances of his death, and partly on account of the peculiar relation he bore to the nation, a semi-mythical Lincoln has grown up in the popular mind. In this misrepresentation Lincoln has suffered. A man deified is apt in time to be robbed of all that makes



him akin to mere mortals, and in that very kinship, that identification with the mass of Americans, lies a large part of Lincoln's greatness. He gains nothing in the ascription to him in this way of wisdom more than human, of goodness that might well be called divine. To no one more than Lincoln himself would such a false portraiture have been unwelcome; to no one would it have seemed more misplaced. An American to the core, he found his greatest fame in representing the people from whom he was sprung. Their virtues, their ideals, were his, and, none the less, their faults. He was not, perhaps, the wisest nor the best man America has produced, but he was beyond all doubt the most humanly representative. It is no error to call him, as did Lowell, the first American. It was this very fact, this identification with the spirit of the nation, the likeness of his great human heart to the heart of the whole people, which gave him his peculiar greatness, which enabled him to fill, as no other man in our history could have filled, the presidential office in the period of greatest national stress.

Much space and energy, not to mention ingenuity, have been spent in the effort to prove Lincoln marked from his youth as a child of Destiny. All the truth points to the contrary. Hundreds of Americans of equally humble origin and small opportunity have displayed the equal of the ability displayed by Lincoln before his inauguration. Those well qualified to judge found in him no evidences of greatness. Stanton was associated with him in 1857 in a lawsuit and regarded him as "a low, cunning clown." Later he was to call him "the original gorilla," and wonder why Du Chaillu had gone all the way to Africa. He wrote Buchanan in 1861 of Lincoln's "painful imbecility," and even after he became a member of Lincoln's cabinet is said to have informed a visitor, who presented some order from the President, that Lincoln was a "d—d fool." Lincoln's

comment, thoroughly characteristic, exhibits what may justly be considered a part of his greatness; namely his power of humorous comprehension. "If Stanton," said he, "said I was a d—d fool, then I must be one, for he is nearly always right and generally says what he means. I must step over and see him." Nor was the irascible and conceited Stanton alone in criticism; it was widespread. Charles Francis Adams, as late as 1873, said that Lincoln, when he entered upon his duties as President, displayed "moral, intellectual, and executive incompetency." This feeling is also expressed by the younger Charles Francis Adams in his biography of his father: "Seen in the light of subsequent events, it is assumed that Lincoln in 1865 was also the Lincoln of 1861. Historically speaking, there can be no greater error. The President, who has since become a species of legend, was in March, 1861, an absolutely unknown, and by no means promising political quantity."

Two sane and contemporary views of Lincoln furnish a good guide for the study of his life. John Lothrop Motley wrote his mother, "I venerate Abraham Lincoln exactly because he is the true, honest type of American democracy. There is nothing of the shabby-genteel, the would-be-but-couldn't-be fine gentleman; he is the great American Demos, honest, shrewd, homely, but through blunders struggling onward toward what he believes the right." Ward Lamon, Lincoln's intimate friend, wrote:

"With all my affection, admiration, love, and veneration for Mr. Lincoln, I have never been one of those who believed him immaculate and incapable of making mistakes. He was human and in the nature of things was liable to err, yet he erred less often than other men. He had amiable weaknesses, some of which only the more ennobled him.

"It is no compliment to his memory to smother from the closest scrutiny any of the acts of his life and trans-

figure him by fulsome deification, so that his most intimate friends cannot recognize the Abraham Lincoln of former days. The truth of history requires that he should be placed on the record now that he is dead, as he stood before the people while living. Whatever mistakes he made were made through the purest of motives. All his faults, all his amiable weaknesses, and all his virtues should be written on the same pages, so that the world may know the true man as his friends knew him."

It is fairly evident that Lincoln did not exhibit, prior to 1861, the greatness that was later beyond dispute. The debates with Douglas were those of a clever, one may almost say supreme, politician, but they went no further. Lincoln at this time was essentially the politician, albeit one of conviction, and while he did not play with principles, he frequently juggled with men. The debates, it is true, were sincere, but sincerity, if rare, is not greatness. The war made Lincoln great, not because it made him anew, but because it gave his nature opportunity for expansion, and, still more, because of the discipline it gave his character. All his qualities, save his honesty, needed the purification, which the furnace of war was to effect, to develop the new Lincoln, far different from the old and yet always the same. The new Lincoln had the same keen, almost intuitive, knowledge of men, but was softened by a deeper and tenderer sympathy. The beautiful letter to Mrs. Bixby, for example, so natural from the Lincoln of 1864, could not have been penned by the Lincoln of 1861. And so we find the same qualities of leadership, guided now by a new tact, and the same devotion to a cause, strengthened now by a loftier purpose and a willingness to endure personal sacrifice—if need be, to offer himself upon the altar of his country. This change is clearly to be seen in a contrast of the closing words of his two inaugural addresses. The Lincoln of 1861 could say with feeling:

"I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

But only the Lincoln of 1864 could say with the depth and feeling developed under the stern discipline of war:

"The Almighty has his own purposes. 'Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh.' If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'

"With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan---

to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations."

The study of his life and words leads to the conviction that in his heart, rather than in his brain, is to be found the secret of this development. Indeed there is to be found the explanation of his real relation to the nation's history, and the place he holds in the affections of his countrymen. Regardless of war with the Southern states, to him all Americans, North, South, East, and West, were his kindred and fellow-countrymen. His heart held room for all and felt with all. Maurice Thompson, a Confederate soldier, has aptly given expression to this thought, saying:

"He was the Southern mother, leaning forth  
At dead of night to hear the cannon roar,  
Beseeching God to turn the cruel North  
And break it that her son might come once more;  
He was New England's maiden, pale and pure,  
Whose gallant lover fell on Shiloh's plain.  
He was the mangled body of the dead;  
He, writhing, did endure  
Wounds and disfigurement and racking pain,  
Gangrene and amputation, all things dread."

It is fitting that the man who occupies Lincoln's place in American history and in the affections of the American people should not have sprung from one stock or one section. Born in the South of Southern and Northern ancestry, reared in the West and filled with the essentials of Western political democracy and nationalism, he had something of each of these three great sections into which the country was then divided and was in personality representative of each, though less so of the North than of the South and West. This kinship is eloquently expressed by Henry Grady:

"From the union of these Northern and Southern

colonists, from the straightening of their purposes and the crossing of their blood, slowly perfecting through a century, came he who stands as the first American, the first who comprehended within himself all the strength and gentleness, all the majesty and grace of this republic—Abraham Lincoln.

“He was the sum of Puritan and Cavalier, for in his ardent nature were fused the virtues of both, and in the depths of his great soul the faults of both were lost. He was greater than Puritan, greater than Cavalier, in that he was American, and that in his homely form were first gathered the vast and thrilling forces of his ideal government—charging it with such tremendous meaning and so elevating it above human suffering that martyrdom, though infamously aimed, came as a fitting crown to a life consecrated from the cradle to human liberty.”

Lincoln is not only the miracle of the great man, a miracle which constantly puzzles the world afresh; he is the best example of the American miracle. American to the core, he owed little or nothing to the Old World directly, nothing beyond the common heritage of Americans. Lowell might well say:

“People of sensitive organizations may well be shocked, but we are glad that in this our true war of independence, which is to free us forever from the Old World, we have at the head of affairs a man whom America made, as God made Adam out of the very earth, unancestried, unprivileged, unknown, to show us how much truth, how much magnanimity, and how much statecraft wait the call of opportunity in simple manhood when it believes in the justice of God and the worth of Man.”

## CHRONOLOGY OF LINCOLN'S LIFE AND WRITINGS

- 1809 February 12, born near Hodgenville, Hardin  
(now La Rue) County, Kentucky.
- 1816 His family moved to Gentryville, Indiana.
- 1818 His mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, died.
- 1819 His father remarried.
- 1826 Attended school.
- 1828 Made trip to New Orleans on a flatboat.
- 1829 Moved to a clearing on Sangamon River, near  
Decatur, Illinois.
- 1831 Made second trip to New Orleans on a flatboat.
- 1832 Captain in the Black Hawk War.  
Unsuccessful candidate for legislature.
- 1833 Storekeeper, postmaster, and surveyor.
- 1834 Elected to legislature.
- 1836 Reëlected to legislature.  
Whig candidate for presidential elector.
- 1837 Studied law and admitted to bar.
- 1838 Reëlected to legislature.
- 1840 Whig candidate for presidential elector.
- 1842 Married Mary Todd.
- 1844 Canvassed state as a Whig candidate for presi-  
dential elector.
- 1846 Elected to Congress.
- 1849 Retired from Congress.
- 1854 Elected to legislature.  
October 16, The Peoria Speech.
- 1855 Candidate for United States Senator.
- 1858 Nominated for Senate by Republican party.  
June 16, The Springfield Speech.  
The Lincoln-Douglas Debates:  
August 21, Ottawa.

- August 27, Freeport.  
September 15, Jonesboro.  
September 18, Charleston.  
October 7, Galesburg.  
October 13, Quincy.  
October 15, Alton.
- 1859 September 16, The Columbus Speech.
- 1860 February 27, The Cooper Union Speech.  
May 18, Nominated for President.  
November 6, Elected President.
- 1861 March 4, Inaugurated President.  
April 13, Fall of Fort Sumter.  
April 15, Call for troops.
- 1862 September 22, Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.
- 1863 January 1, Emancipation Proclamation.  
November 19, The Gettysburg Address.  
December 8, The Amnesty Proclamation.  
December 8, Gave outline of plan of reconstruction.
- 1864 June 8, Renominated for President.  
November 8, Reëlected President.
- 1865 March 4, The second inauguration.  
April 14, Mortally wounded.  
April 15, Died.



SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS  
OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

*"First pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated,  
full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without  
hypocrisy."*



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THE BOY LINCOLN

# I

## GROWTH AND TRAINING

The important facts of Lincoln's life up to the time of his nomination for the Presidency are interestingly told in the following autobiographical sketch, written at the request of a friend for use in the campaign of 1860. The sketch is an excellent example of his terse, compressed style of narration, giving every essential fact, and yet using scarcely an unnecessary word. This facility of narration is noticeable in his later speeches and was very effective.

### *AUTOBIOGRAPHY*

[Written for the Campaign of 1860]

Abraham Lincoln was born February 12, 1809, then in Hardin, now in the more recently formed county of La Rue, Kentucky. His father, Thomas, and grandfather, Abraham, were born in Rockingham County, Virginia, whither their ancestors had come from Berks County, Pennsylvania. His lineage has been traced no farther back than this.\* The family were originally Quakers, though in later times they have fallen away from the peculiar habits of that people. The grandfather, Abraham, had four brothers—Isaac, Jacob, John, and Thomas. So far as known, the descendants of Jacob and John are still in Virginia. Isaac went to a place near where Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee join; and his descendants are in that region. Thomas came to Kentucky, and after many years died there, whence his descendants went to Missouri. Abra-

\* After Lincoln's death, research into his family history established the fact that he was descended from Samuel Lincoln, who came to New England in 1657.

ham, grandfather of the subject of this sketch, came to Kentucky, and was killed by Indians about the year 1784. He left a widow, three sons, and two daughters. The eldest son, Mordecai, remained in Kentucky till late in life, when he removed to Hancock County, Illinois, where soon after he died, and where several of his descendants still remain. The second son, Josiah, removed at an early day to a place on Blue River, now within Hancock County, Indiana, but no recent information of him or his family has been obtained. The eldest sister, Mary, married Ralph Crume, and some of her descendants are now known to be in Breckinridge County, Kentucky. The second sister, Nancy, married William Brumfield, and her family are not known to have left Kentucky, but there is no recent information from them. Thomas, the youngest son, and father of the present subject, by the early death of his father, and very narrow circumstances of his mother, even in childhood was a wandering laboring-boy, and grew up literally without education. He never did more in the way of writing than to bunglingly write his own name. Before he was grown he passed one year as a hired hand with his Uncle Isaac on Watauga, a branch of the Holston River. Getting back into Kentucky, and having reached this twenty-eighth year, he married Nancy Hanks—mother of the present subject—in the year 1806. She also was born in Virginia, and relatives of hers of the name of Hanks, and of other names, now reside in Coles, in Macon, and in Adams Counties, Illinois, and also in Iowa. The present subject has no brother or sister of the whole or half blood. He had a sister, older than himself, who was grown and married, but died many years ago, leaving no child; also a brother, younger than himself, who died in infancy. Before leaving Kentucky, he and his sister were sent, for short periods, to A B C schools, the first kept by Zachariah Riney, and the second by Caleb Hazel.

At this time his father resided on Knob Creek, on the road from Bardstown, Kentucky, to Nashville, Tennessee, at a point three or three and a half miles south or southwest of Atherton's Ferry, on the Rolling Fork. From this place he removed to what is now Spencer County, Indiana, in the autumn of 1816, Abraham then being in his eighth year. This removal was partly on account of slavery, but chiefly on account of the difficulty in land titles in Kentucky. He settled in an unbroken forest, and the clearing away of surplus wood was the great task ahead. Abraham, though very young, was large of his age, and had an ax put into his hands at once; and from that till within his twenty-third year he was almost constantly handling that most useful instrument—less, of course, in plowing and harvesting seasons. At this place Abraham took an early start as a hunter, which was never much improved afterwards. A few days before the completion of his eighth year, in the absence of his father, a flock of wild turkeys approached the new log cabin, and Abraham with a rifle-gun, standing inside, shot through a crack and killed one of them. He has never since pulled a trigger on any larger game. In the autumn of 1818 his mother died; and a year afterwards his father married Mrs. Sally Johnston, at Elizabethtown, Kentucky, a widow with three children of her first marriage. She proved a good and kind mother to Abraham, and is still living in Coles County, Illinois. There were no children of this second marriage. His father's residence continued at the same place in Indiana till 1830. While here Abraham went to A B C schools by littles, kept successively by Andrew Crawford, — Sweeney, and Azel W. Dorsey. He does not remember any other. The family of Mr. Dorsey now resides in Schuyler County, Illinois. Abraham now thinks that the aggregate of all his schooling did not amount to one year. He was never in a college or

academy as a student, and never inside of a college or academy building till since he had a law license. What he has in the way of education he has picked up. After he was twenty-three and had separated from his father, he studied English grammar—imperfectly, of course, but so as to speak and write as well as he now does. He studied and nearly mastered the six books of Euclid since he was a member of Congress. He regrets his want of education, and does what he can to supply the want. In his tenth year he was kicked by a horse, and apparently killed for a time. When he was nineteen, still residing in Indiana, he made his first trip upon a flatboat to New Orleans. He was a hired hand merely, and he and a son of the owner, without other assistance, made the trip. The nature of part of the "cargo-load," as it was called, made it necessary for them to linger and trade along the sugar-coast; and one night they were attacked by seven negroes with intent to kill and rob them. They were hurt some in the meleé, but succeeded in driving the negroes from the boat, and then "cut cable," "weighed anchor," and left.

March 1, 1830, Abraham having just completed his twenty-first year, his father and family, with the families of the two daughters and sons-in-law of his step-mother, left the old homestead in Indiana and came to Illinois. Their mode of conveyance was wagons drawn by ox-teams, and Abraham drove one of the teams. They reached the county of Macon, and stopped there some time within the same month of March. His father and family settled a new place on the north side of the Sangamon River, at the junction of the timberland and prairie, about ten miles westerly from Decatur. Here they built a log cabin, into which they removed, and made sufficient of rails to fence ten acres of ground, fenced and broke the ground, and raised a crop of sown corn upon it the same year. These are, or are supposed to be, the rails about which so much is being

said just now, though these are far from being the first or only rails ever made by Abraham.

The sons-in-law were temporarily settled in other places in the county. In the autumn all hands were greatly afflicted with ague and fever, to which they had not been used, and by which they were greatly discouraged, so much so that they determined on leaving the county. They remained, however, through the succeeding winter, which was the winter of the celebrated "deep snow" of Illinois. During that winter Abraham, together with his stepmother's son, John D. Johnston, and John Hanks, yet residing in Macon County, hired themselves to Denton Offutt to take a flatboat from Beardstown, Illinois, to New Orleans; and for that purpose were to join him—Offutt—at Springfield, Illinois, so soon as the snow should go off. When it did go off, which was about the first of March, 1831, the county was so flooded as to make traveling by land impracticable, to obviate which difficulty they purchased a large canoe, and came down the Sangamon River in it. This is the time and manner of Abraham's first entrance into Sangamon County. They found Offutt at Springfield, but learned from him that he had failed in getting a boat at Beardstown. This led to their hiring themselves to him for twelve dollars per month each, and getting the timber out of the trees and building a boat at Old Sangamon town on the Sangamon River, seven miles northwest of Springfield, which boat they took to New Orleans, substantially upon the old contract.

During this boat-enterprise acquaintance with Offutt, who was previously an entire stranger, he conceived a liking for Abraham, and believing he could turn him to account, he contracted with him to act as clerk for him, on his return from New Orleans, in charge of a store and mill at New Salem, then in Sangamon, now in Menard County. Hanks had not gone to New Orleans,

but having a family, and being likely to be detained from home longer than at first expected, had turned back from St. Louis. He is the same John Hanks who now engineers the "rail enterprise" at Decatur, and is a first cousin to Abraham's mother. Abraham's father, with his own family and others mentioned, had, in pursuance of their intention, removed from Macon to Coles County. John D. Johnston, the stepmother's son, went to them, and Abraham stopped indefinitely and for the first time, as it were, by himself at New Salem, before mentioned. This was in July, 1831. Here he rapidly made acquaintances and friends. In less than a year Offutt's business was failing—had almost failed—when the Black Hawk War of 1832 broke out. Abraham joined a volunteer company, and, to his own surprise, was elected captain of it. He says he has not since had any success in life which gave him so much satisfaction. He went to the campaign, served near three months, met the ordinary hardships of such an expedition, but was in no battle. He now owns, in Iowa, the land upon which his own warrants for the service \* were located. Returning from the campaign, and encouraged by his great popularity among his immediate neighbors, he the same year ran for the legislature, and was beaten—his own precinct, however, casting its votes 277 for and 7 against him—and that, too, while he was an avowed Clay man, and the precinct the autumn afterwards giving a majority of 115 to General Jackson over Mr. Clay. This was the only time Abraham was ever beaten on a direct vote of the people. He was now without means and out of business, but was anxious to remain with his friends who had treated him with so much generosity, especially as he had nothing elsewhere to go to. He studied what he should do—thought of learning the blacksmith trade

\* Military service was paid for in warrants on the public lands.



—thought of trying to study law—rather thought he could not succeed at that without a better education. Before long, strangely enough, a man offered to sell, and did sell to Abraham and another as poor as himself, an old stock of goods, upon credit. They opened as merchants; and he says that was *the* store. Of course they did nothing but get deeper and deeper in debt. He was appointed postmaster at New Salem—the office being too insignificant to make his politics an objection. The store winked out. The surveyor of Sangamon offered to depute to Abraham that portion of his work which was within his part of the county. He accepted, procured a compass and chain, studied Flint and Gibson a little, and went at it. This procured bread, and kept soul and body together. The election of 1834 came, and he was then elected to the legislature by the highest vote cast for any candidate. Major John T. Stuart, then in full practice of the law, was also elected. During the canvass, in a private conversation he encouraged Abraham [to] study law. After the election he borrowed books of Stuart, took them home with him, and went at it in good earnest. He studied with nobody. He still mixed in the surveying to pay board and clothing bills. When the legislature met, the law books were dropped, but were taken up again at the end of the session. He was reelected in 1836, 1838, and 1840. In the autumn of 1836 he obtained a law license, and on April 15, 1837, removed to Springfield, and commenced the practice—his old friend Stuart taking him into partnership. March 3, 1837, by a protest entered upon the “Illinois House Journal” of that date, at pages 817 and 818, Abraham, with Dan Stone, another representative of Sangamon, briefly defined his position on the slavery question; and so far as it goes, it was then the same that it is now. The protest is as follows:

"Resolutions upon the subject of domestic slavery having passed both branches of the General Assembly at its present session, the undersigned hereby protest against the passage of the same.

"They believe that the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy, but that the promulgation of Abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than abate its evils.

"They believe that the Congress of the United States has no power under the Constitution to interfere with the institution of slavery in the different states.

"They believe that the Congress of the United States has the power, under the Constitution, to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, but that the power ought not to be exercised unless at the request of the people of the District.

"The difference between these opinions and those contained in the above resolutions is their reason for entering this protest.

"DAN STONE,

"A. LINCOLN,

"Representatives from the County of Sangamon."

In 1838 and 1840, Mr. Lincoln's party voted for him as Speaker, but being in the minority he was not elected. After 1840 he declined a reëlection to the legislature. He was on the Harrison electoral ticket in 1840, and on that of Clay in 1844, and spent much time and labor in both those canvasses. In November, 1842, he was married to Mary, daughter of Robert S. Todd, of Lexington, Kentucky. They have three living children, all sons, one born in 1843, one in 1850, and one in 1853. They lost one, who was born in 1846.

In 1846 he was elected to the lower House of Congress, and served one term only, commencing in December, 1847, and ending with the inauguration of General Taylor, in March, 1849. All the battles of the Mexi-

can war had been fought before Mr. Lincoln took his seat in Congress, but the American army was still in Mexico, and the treaty of peace was not fully and formally ratified until the June afterward. Much has been said of his course in Congress in regard to this war. A careful examination of the *Journal* and *Congressional Globe* shows that he voted for all the supply measures that came up, and for all the measures in any way favorable to the officers, soldiers, and their families, who conducted the war through; with the exception that some of these measures passed without yeas and nays, leaving no record as to how particular men voted. The *Journal* and *Globe* also show him voting that the war was unnecessarily and unconstitutionally begun by the President of the United States. This is the language of Mr. Ashmun's amendment, for which Mr. Lincoln and nearly or quite all other Whigs\* of the House of Representatives voted.

Mr. Lincoln's reasons for the opinion expressed by this vote were briefly that the President had sent General Taylor into an inhabited part of the country belonging to Mexico, and not to the United States, and thereby had provoked the first act of hostility, in fact the commencement of the war; that the place, being the country bordering on the east bank of the Rio Grande, was inhabited by native Mexicans, born there under the Mexican government, and had never submitted to, nor been conquered by, Texas or the United States, nor transferred to either by treaty; that although Texas claimed the Rio Grande as her boundary, Mexico had never recognized it, and neither Texas nor the United States had ever enforced it; that there was a broad

\* The two major political parties in the United States at this time were the Whigs and Democrats. The former, though distinctly a party of opportunism, favored a protective tariff, internal improvements, a national bank, and in general the extension of the powers of the general government. The latter, dominated by its Southern wing, was the party of loose construction and states rights. Lincoln was a member of the Whig party, or, as he would have phrased it, "a Henry Clay Whig."

desert between that and the country over which Texas had actual control; that the country where hostilities commenced, having once belonged to Mexico, must remain so until it was somehow legally transferred, which had never been done.

Mr. Lincoln thought the act of sending an armed force among the Mexicans was unnecessary, inasmuch as Mexico was in no way molesting or menacing the United States or the people thereof; and that it was unconstitutional, because the power of levying war is vested in Congress, and not in the President. He thought the principal motive for the act was to divert public attention from the surrender of "Fifty-four, forty, or fight" \* to Great Britain, on the Oregon boundary question.

Mr. Lincoln was not a candidate for reëlection. This was determined upon and declared before he went to Washington, in accordance with an understanding among Whig friends, by which Colonel Hardin and Colonel Baker had each previously served a single term in this same district.

In 1848, during his term in Congress, he advocated General Taylor's nomination for the presidency, in opposition to all others, and also took an active part for his election after his nomination, speaking a few times in Maryland, near Washington, several times in Massachusetts, and canvassing quite fully his own district in Illinois, which was followed by a majority in the district of over 1500 for General Taylor.

Upon his return from Congress he went to the practice of the law with greater earnestness than ever before. In 1852 he was upon the Scott electoral ticket,

\* The Democrats in the campaign of 1844 had as rallying cries: "The re-annexation of Texas and the re-occupation of Oregon" and "Fifty-four, forty, or fight." The latter referred to the dispute of the United States with Great Britain over the Oregon boundary; Great Britain claiming forty-nine degrees, north latitude, as the line, while the United States claimed fifty-four degrees and forty minutes, north latitude. The British contention was finally accepted.

and did something in the way of canvassing, but owing to the hopelessness of the cause in Illinois, he did less than in previous presidential canvasses.

In 1854 his profession had almost superseded the thought of politics in his mind, when the repeal of the Missouri Compromise\* aroused him as he had never been before.

In the autumn of that year he took the stump with no broader practical aim or object than to secure, if possible, the reelection of Hon. Richard Yates to Congress. His speeches at once attracted a more marked attention than they had ever before done. As the canvass proceeded he was drawn to different parts of the state outside of Mr. Yates's district. He did not abandon the law, but gave his attention by turns to that and politics. The state agricultural fair was at Springfield that year, and Douglas † was announced to speak there.

In the canvass of 1856 Mr. Lincoln made over fifty speeches, no one of which, so far as he remembers, was put in print. One of them was made at Galena, but Mr. Lincoln has no recollection of it being printed; nor does he remember whether in that speech he said anything about a Supreme Court decision. He may have spoken upon that subject, and some of the newspapers may have reported him as saying what is now ascribed to him; but he thinks he could not have expressed himself as represented.

The period of Lincoln's life which ended in 1854 was largely given to intense and successful efforts to lift himself from the humble circumstances in which he had been born, to the making of a living, and to the study and reflection, vitalized by human contacts, which made the finished man. The indications of intellectual and moral growth furnished by the selections which follow are interesting and significant in any study of his development.

\* See page 73.

† Stephen Arnold Douglas, United States senator from Illinois, and Lincoln's almost life-long rival.

Lincoln was an aspirant for political office at a comparatively early age. This was, however, by no means unusual. Every young man in the West in that day thought of himself as a possible holder of office, not a remarkable thing in a society where every boy was taught that the Presidency was open to him, and at a time when Andrew Jackson had furnished conclusive evidence of the fact. Two years after he moved to Illinois, and only eight months after he became a resident of Sangamon County, he announced his candidacy for the legislature of the state on a conventional National Republican platform. The National Republicans in that year, it will be recalled, supported Henry Clay for President, and four years later furnished the bulk of the newly organized Whig party.

The two papers, which are his first recorded political utterances, are characteristic of the later Lincoln in their simple directness. It may, however, be noted that never again did he call himself "humble Abraham Lincoln." Growing self-confidence destroyed that feeling. Nor is it possible to find many later allusions such as, "I was born and have ever remained in the most humble walks of life. I have no wealthy or popular relations or friends to recommend me." He was never remotely ashamed of the facts thus stated, but he would not make capital of them in appeals to the people.

*ANNOUNCEMENT OF CANDIDACY FOR THE  
LEGISLATURE*

[Written about March 1, 1832]

FELLOW-CITIZENS: I presume you all know who I am. I am humble Abraham Lincoln. I have been solicited by many friends to become a candidate for the Legislature. My politics are short and sweet, like the old woman's dance. I am in favor of a national bank. I am in favor of the internal improvement system, and a high protective tariff. These are my sentiments and political principles. If elected, I shall be thankful; if not, it will be all the same.

A. LINCOLN

*ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF SANGAMON COUNTY*

[March 9, 1832]

FELLOW-CITIZENS: Having become a candidate for the honorable office of one of your representatives in the next General Assembly of this state, in accordance with an established custom and the principles of true Republicanism, it becomes my duty to make known to you—the people whom I propose to represent—my sentiments with regard to local affairs.

Time and experience have verified to a demonstration, the public utility of internal improvements. That the poorest and most thinly populated countries would be greatly benefited by the opening of good roads, and in the clearing of navigable streams within their limits, is what no person will deny. Yet it is folly to undertake works of this or any other kind, without first knowing that we are able to finish them—as half-finished work generally proves to be labor lost. There cannot justly be any objection to having railroads and canals, any more than to other good things, provided they cost nothing. The only objection is to paying for them; and the objection arises from the want of ability to pay.

With respect to the county of Sangamon, some more easy means of communication than it now possesses for the purpose of facilitating the task of exporting the surplus products of its fertile soil, and importing necessary articles from abroad, are indispensably necessary. A meeting has been held of the citizens of Jacksonville, and the adjacent country, for the purpose of deliberating and inquiring into the expediency of constructing a railroad from some eligible point on the Illinois river, through the town of Jacksonville, in Morgan County, to the town of Springfield in Sangamon County. This is, indeed, a very desirable object. No other improvement that reason will justify us in hoping for, can equal in utility the railroad. It is a never-failing source of com-

munication, between places of business remotely situated from each other. Upon the railroad the regular progress of commercial intercourse is not interrupted by either high or low water, or freezing weather, which are the principal difficulties that render our future hopes of water communication precarious and uncertain.

Yet, however desirable an object the construction of a railroad through our country may be; however high our imaginations may be heated at thoughts of it—there is always a heart-appalling shock accompanying the amount of its cost, which forces us to shrink from our pleasing anticipations. The probable cost of this contemplated railroad is estimated at \$290,000—the bare statement of which, in my opinion, is sufficient to justify the belief that the improvement of the Sangamon river is an object much better suited to our infant resources.

Respecting this view, I think I may say, without the fear of being contradicted, that its navigation may be rendered completely practicable, as high as the mouth of the South Fork, or probably higher, to vessels of from 25 to 30 tons burthen, for at least one-half of all common years, and to vessels of much greater burthen a part of that time. From my peculiar circumstances, it is probable that for the last twelve months I have given as particular attention to the stages of the water in this river as any other person in the country. In the month of March, 1831, in company with others, I commenced the building of a flatboat on the Sangamon, and finished and took her out in the course of the spring. Since that time I have been concerned in the mill at New Salem. These circumstances are sufficient evidence that I have not been very inattentive to the stages of the water. The time at which we crossed the milldam, being in the last days of April, the water was lower than it had been since the breaking of winter in February, or than it was for several weeks after. The principal difficulties we encountered in descending the river were from the drifted



timber, which obstructions all know are not difficult to be removed. Knowing almost precisely the height of water at that time, I believe I am safe in saying that it has as often been higher as lower since.

From this view of the subject it appears that my calculations with regard to the navigation of the Sangamon cannot but be founded in reason; but whatever may be its natural advantages, certain it is, that it never can be practically useful to any great extent without being greatly improved by art. The drifted timber, as I have before mentioned, is the most formidable barrier to this object. Of all parts of this river, none will require so much labor in proportion to make it navigable as the last thirty or thirty-five miles; and going with the meanderings of the channel, when we are this distance above its mouth, we are only between twelve and eighteen miles above Beardstown in something near a straight direction, and this route is upon such low ground as to retain water in many places during the season, and in all parts such as to draw two-thirds or three-fourths of the river water at all high stages.

This route is on prairie land the whole distance—so that it appears to me, by removing the turf, a sufficient width, and damming up the old channel, the whole river in a short time would wash its way through, thereby curtailing the distance, and increasing the velocity of the current very considerably, while there would be no timber upon the banks to obstruct its navigation in future; and being nearly straight, the timber which might float in at the head would be apt to go clear through. There are also many places above this where the river, in its zigzag course, forms such complete peninsulas as to be easier cut at the necks than to remove the obstructions from the bends—which, if done, would also lessen the distance.

What the cost of this work would be, I am unable to say. It is probable, however, that it would not be greater

than is common to streams of the same length. Finally, I believe the improvement of the Sangamon river to be vastly important and highly desirable to the people of the county; and if elected, any measure in the legislature having this for its object, which may appear judicious, will meet my approbation and receive my support.

It appears that the practice of loaning money at exorbitant rates of interest has already been opened as a field for discussion; so I suppose I may enter upon it without claiming the honor, or risking the danger, which may await its first explorer. It seems as though we are never to have an end to this baneful and corroding system, acting almost as prejudicially to the general interests of the community as a direct tax of several thousand dollars annually laid on each county, for the benefit of a few individuals only, unless there be a law made fixing a limit to the limits of usury. A law for this purpose, I am of opinion, may be made without materially injuring any class of people. In cases of extreme necessity there could always be means found to cheat the law, while in all other cases it would have its intended effect. I would favor the passage of a law upon this subject which might not be very easily evaded. Let it be such that the labor and difficulty of evading it could only be justified in cases of greatest necessity.

Upon the subject of education, not presuming to dictate any plan or system respecting it, I can only say that I view it as the most important subject which we as a people can be engaged in. That every man may receive, at least, a moderate education, and thereby be enabled to read the history of his own and other countries, by which he may duly appreciate the value of our free institutions, appears to be an object of vital importance, even on this account alone, to say nothing of the advantages and satisfaction to be derived from all being able to read the scriptures and other works, both of a religious and moral nature, for themselves. For my

part, I desire to see the time when education, and by its means, morality, sobriety, enterprise, and industry, shall become much more general than at present, and should be gratified to have it in my power to contribute something to the advancement of any measure which might have a tendency to accelerate that happy period.

With regard to existing laws, some alterations are thought to be necessary. Many respectable men have suggested that our estray laws, the law respecting the issuing of executions, the road law, and some others, are deficient in their present form, and require alterations. But considering the great probability that the framers of those laws were wiser than myself, I should prefer not meddling with them unless they were first attacked by others; in which case I should feel it both a privilege and a duty to take that stand which, in my view, might tend most to the advancement of justice.

But, fellow citizens, I shall conclude. Considering the great degree of modesty which should always attend youth, it is probable I have already been more presuming than becomes me. However, upon the subjects of which I have treated, I have spoken as I have thought. I may be wrong in regard to any or all of them; but, holding it a sound maxim that it is better only sometimes to be right than at all times to be wrong, so soon as I discover my opinions to be erroneous I shall be ready to renounce them.

Every man is said to have his peculiar ambition. Whether it be true or not, I can say, for one, that I have no other so great as that of being truly esteemed of my fellow men by rendering myself worthy of their esteem. How far I shall succeed in gratifying this ambition is yet to be developed. I am young and unknown to many of you. I was born and have ever remained in the most humble walks of life. I have no wealthy or popular relations or friends to recommend me. My case is thrown exclusively upon the independent voters of the county,

and if elected, they will have conferred a favor upon me for which I shall be unremitting in my labors to compensate. But if the good people in their wisdom shall see fit to keep me in the background, I have been too familiar with disappointments to be very much chagrined.

Your friend and fellow-citizen,

A. LINCOLN

Immediately after these announcements, the Black Hawk War broke out; Lincoln volunteered and, to his great surprise, was elected captain of his company, "a success," as he wrote years later, "that gave me more pleasure than any I have had since." He saw no fighting, but gained confidence in himself, learned how to handle men, and greatly widened the circle of his friends. When his company was mustered out, he reenlisted as a private, but in July he was back in New Salem, stumping the county. He displayed there the qualities of a shrewd stump speaker and debater which were later to assist powerfully in winning him fame. An interesting description of his appearance in this campaign is given by his friend, Judge S. T. Logan: "He was a very tall, gawky, and awkward-looking fellow then; his pantaloons didn't meet his shoes by six inches. But after he began speaking, I became very much interested in him." This description, in essence, remained true of him later. He always seemed awkward and ill-at-ease when he went on the platform, but when he began to speak, as a rule both he and his audience forgot all about it.

Defeated for election, but with a most gratifying vote in his own precinct, Lincoln tried keeping a store. It was a disastrous experience, the store, as he said, "winking out" in less than a year, his partner being dissipated and he himself engaged in reading whatever books he could lay hands on. In this period he made the acquaintance of Shakespeare, Burns, and Gibbon, and a little later, that of Paine and Voltaire. He also found a copy of Blackstone's *Commentaries* in a barrel of rubbish. He literally devoured it, finding in it at last the determination of his later career. During this time he learned also the rudiments of surveying and secured welcome employment in that way. He was postmaster of New Salem, carrying

the mail in his hat and reading every newspaper which came before it could be called for.

In 1834 he was elected to the legislature, where he took no active part but spent his time studying the methods of legislation and the game of practical politics in which he was to become in time so supreme a master. Here for the first time he met his lifetime rival, Stephen Arnold Douglas, lately come from Vermont and preparing for the brilliant career so soon to be his. Lincoln's first comment on him is striking. He described him as "the least man I ever saw," alluding, of course, to his size.

During this time he was continuing the reading of law, and even practicing before local magistrates. In 1836 he was again a successful candidate for the legislature. His announcement is notable for his advocacy of woman's suffrage.

#### POLITICAL VIEWS IN 1836

New Salem, June 13, 1836

TO THE EDITOR OF THE *Journal*: In your paper of last Saturday I see a communication, over the signature of "Many Voters," in which the candidates who are announced in the *Journal* are called upon to "show their hands." Agreed. Here's mine.

I go for all sharing the privileges of the government who assist in bearing its burdens. Consequently, I go for admitting all whites to the right of suffrage who pay taxes or bear arms (by no means excluding females).

If elected, I shall consider the whole people of Sangamon my constituents, as well those that oppose as those that support me.

While acting as their representative, I shall be governed by their will on all subjects upon which I have the means of knowing what their will is; and upon all others I shall do what my own judgment teaches me will best advance their interests. Whether elected or not, I go for distributing the proceeds of the sales of the public lands to the several states, to enable our state, in common

with others, to dig canals and construct railroads without borrowing money and paying the interest on it.

If alive on the first Monday in November, I shall vote for Hugh L. White for President.\*

Very respectfully,

A. LINCOLN

During this campaign he wrote a letter which is an excellent example of his honesty in a political campaign. It should not, however, be overlooked that this was also good politics.

*TO ROBERT ALLEN*

New Salem, June 21, 1836

DEAR COLONEL: I am told that during my absence last week you passed through this place, and stated publicly that you were in possession of a fact or facts which, if known to the public, would entirely destroy the prospects of N. W. Edwards and myself at the ensuing election; but that, through favor to us, you should forbear to divulge them. No one has needed favors more than I, and, generally, few have been less unwilling to accept them; but in this case favor to me would be injustice to the public, and therefore I must beg your pardon for declining it. That I once had the confidence of the people of Sangamon, is sufficiently evident; and if I have since done anything, either by design or misadventure, which if known would subject me to a forfeiture of that confidence, he that knows of that thing, and conceals it, is a traitor to his country's interest.

I find myself wholly unable to form any conjecture of what fact or facts, real or supposed, you spoke; but my opinion of your veracity will not permit me for a moment to doubt that you at least believed what you said. I am flattered with the personal regard you manifested for me;

\* Hugh L. White, Senator from Tennessee, was one of the four candidates for whom the Whigs voted in 1836.

but I do hope that, on more mature reflection, you will view the public interest as a paramount consideration, and therefore determine to let the worst come. I here assure you that the candid statement of facts on your part, however low it may sink me, shall never break the tie of personal friendship between us. I wish an answer to this, and you are at liberty to publish both, if you choose.

Very respectfully,

A. LINCOLN

Lincoln was finding himself in this campaign. It was here that he showed himself able to retaliate against an opponent. One Forquer, who resided in Springfield, though not a candidate, entered the canvass against Lincoln to "take him down." He devoted himself to scornful derision of Lincoln's dress, manners, and general personal appearance. Forquer had himself been a Whig, but having become a Democrat he had been rewarded by a lucrative office. He lived in what was probably the finest house in Springfield, which was equipped with a lightning rod, then a new thing in Illinois. At the conclusion of his speech, Lincoln replied and thus closed: "The gentleman has seen fit to allude to my being a young man, but he forgets that I am older in years than I am in the tricks and trades of a politician. I desire to live, and I desire place and distinction, but I would rather die now than, like the gentleman, live to see the day that I would change my politics for an office worth three thousand dollars a year, and then feel compelled to erect a lightning rod over my house to protect a guilty conscience from an offended God."

In the legislature Lincoln was one of the "Long Nine,"\* who secured the removal of the capital from Vandalia to Springfield and carried through a law for a system of canals and railways costing twelve million dollars. He was carried away with the internal improvements idea and was planning to be the "DeWitt Clinton of Illinois."†

This session furnished Lincoln the opportunity to express for the first time his feeling on the subject of slavery. The

\* All nine of these members were very tall.

† DeWitt Clinton, of New York, was the person most responsible for the Erie Canal, as well as other internal improvements.

abolition movement was now well under way, and Illinois was full of pro-slavery sentiment. The legislature passed the following resolutions:

*Resolved* by the General Assembly of the State of Illinois:

"That we highly disapprove of the formation of Abolition Societies, and of the doctrines promulgated by them.

"That the right of property in slaves is sacred to the slaveholding states by the Federal Constitution, and that they cannot be deprived of that right without their consent.

"That the General Government cannot abolish slavery in the District of Columbia against the consent of the citizens of said District, without a manifest breach of good faith.

"That the Governor be requested to transmit to the States of Virginia, Alabama, Mississippi, New York, and Connecticut a copy of the foregoing report and resolutions."

Lincoln had seen slavery from his boyhood in Kentucky. He had seen a harsher type on a trip down the Mississippi to New Orleans. His dislike for the institution was characteristic of the class from which he was sprung, and in him it had become intensified. These resolutions excited his opposition chiefly because they contained no condemnation of slavery and possibly because of the phrase, "the right of property in slaves is sacred." He voted against them and persuaded another Sangamon County representative to sign with him this protest.

### *PROTEST AGAINST SLAVERY*

[March 3, 1837]

The following protest was presented to the House March 3, 1837, which was read and ordered to be spread on the journals, to wit:

Resolutions upon the subject of domestic slavery having passed both branches of the General Assembly at its present session, the undersigned hereby protest against the passage of the same.

They believe that the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy, but that the promul-



gation of abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than abate its evils.

They believe that the Congress of the United States has no power under the Constitution to interfere with the institution of slavery in the different states.

They believe that the Congress of the United States has the power, under the Constitution, to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, but that the power ought not to be exercised, unless at the request of the people of the District.

The difference between these opinions and those contained in the said resolutions is their reason for entering this protest.

DAN STONE,

A. LINCOLN,

Representatives from the County of Sangamon.

In March, 1836, Lincoln had been admitted to the bar, and in 1837 he moved to Springfield. Before this time he had become engaged to Anne Rutledge, whom he tenderly loved but who died within a short time. Her death had a most powerful influence upon him, and his friends almost despaired of his reason. It apparently destroyed in him any capacity for a later romance. The following letter is descriptive of his second love affair. It lacks the taste characteristic of most of his writings, but the life of an almost frontier community lacked many of the refinements, and the wonder is that Lincoln had as much instinctive good taste as he did. The letter shows one side of Lincoln at this period, and for that reason it is included.

*TO MRS. O. H. BROWNING*

Springfield, April 1, 1838

DEAR MADAM: Without apologizing for being egotistical, I shall make the history of so much of my life as has elapsed since I saw you the subject of this letter. And, by the way, I now discover that in order to give a full and intelligible account of the things I have done

and suffered since I saw you, I shall necessarily have to relate some that happened before.

It was, then, in the autumn of 1836 that a married lady of my acquaintance, and who was a great friend of mine, being about to pay a visit to her father and other relatives residing in Kentucky, proposed to me that on her return she would bring a sister of hers with her on condition that I would engage to become her brother-in-law with all convenient dispatch. I, of course, accepted the proposal, for you know I could not have done otherwise had I really been averse to it; but privately, between you and me, I was most confoundedly well pleased with the project. I had seen the said sister some three years before, thought her intelligent and agreeable, and saw no good objection to plodding life through, hand-in-hand with her. Time passed on, the lady took her journey, and in due time returned, sister in company, sure enough. This astonished me a little, for it appeared to me that her coming so readily showed that she was a trifle too willing, but on reflection it occurred to me that she might have been prevailed on by her married sister to come, without anything concerning me having been mentioned to her, and so I concluded that if no other objection presented itself, I would consent to waive this. All this occurred to me on hearing of her arrival in the neighborhood—for, be it remembered, I had not yet seen her, except about three years previous, as above mentioned. In a few days we had an interview, and, although I had seen her before, she did not look as my imagination had pictured her. I knew she was over-size, but she now appeared a fair match for Falstaff. I knew she was called an "old maid," and I felt no doubt of the truth of at least half of the appellation, but now, when I beheld her, I could not for my life avoid thinking of my mother; and this, not from withered features—for her skin was too full of fat to permit of its contracting into wrinkles—but from her want of teeth, weather-

beaten appearance in general, and from a kind of notion that ran in my head that nothing could have commenced at the size of infancy and reached her present bulk in less than thirty-five or forty years; and, in short, I was not at all pleased with her. But what could I do? I had told her sister that I would take her for better or for worse, and I made a point of honor and conscience in all things to stick to my word, especially if others had been induced to act on it, which in this case I had no doubt they had, for I was now fairly convinced that no other man on earth would have her, and hence the conclusion that they were bent on holding me to my bargain. "Well," thought I, "I have said it, and, be the consequences what they may, it shall not be my fault if I fail to do it." At once I determined to consider her my wife, and this done, all my powers of discovery were put to work in search of perfections in her which might be fairly set off against her defects. I tried to imagine her handsome, which, but for her unfortunate corpulency, was actually true. Exclusive of this, no woman that I have ever seen has a finer face. I also tried to convince myself that the mind was much more to be valued than the person, and in this she was not inferior, as I could discover, to any with whom I had been acquainted.

Shortly after this, without attempting to come to any positive understanding with her, I set out for Vandalia, when and where you first saw me. During my stay there I had letters from her which did not change my opinion of either her intellect or intention, but, on the contrary, confirmed it in both.

All this while, although I was fixed "firm as the surge-repelling rock" in my resolution, I found I was continually repenting the rashness which had led me to make it. Through life I have been in no bondage, either real or imaginary, from the thralldom of which I so much desired to be free. After my return home I saw nothing to change my opinion of her in any particular. She was

the same, and so was I. I now spent my time in planning how I might get along in life after my contemplated change of circumstances should have taken place, and how I might procrastinate the evil day for a time, which I really dreaded as much, perhaps more, than an Irishman does the halter.

After all my sufferings upon this deeply interesting subject, here I am, wholly, unexpectedly, completely out of the "scrape," and I now want to know if you can guess how I got out of it—out, clear, in every sense of the term—no violation of word, honor, or conscience. I don't believe you can guess, and so I might as well tell you at once. As the lawyer says, it was done in the manner following, to wit: After I had delayed the matter as long as I thought I could in honor do (which, by the way, had brought me round into the last fall), I concluded I might as well bring it to a consummation without further delay, and so I mustered my resolution and made the proposal to her direct; but, shocking to relate, she answered No. At first I supposed she did it through an affectation of modesty, which I thought but ill became her under the peculiar circumstances of the case, but on my renewal of the charge I found she repelled it with greater firmness than before. I tried it again and again, but with the same success, or rather with the same want of success.

I finally was forced to give it up, at which I very unexpectedly found myself mortified almost beyond endurance. I was mortified, it seemed to me, in a hundred different ways. My vanity was deeply wounded by the reflection that I had so long been too stupid to discover her intentions, and at the same time never doubting that I understood them perfectly; and also that she, whom I had taught myself to believe nobody else would have, had actually rejected me with all my fancied greatness. And, to cap the whole, I then for the first time began to suspect that I was really a little in love with her.

But let it all go! I'll try and outlive it. Others have been made fools of by the girls, but this can never in truth be said of me. I most emphatically, in this instance, made a fool of myself. I have now come to the conclusion never again to think of marrying, and for this reason—I can never be satisfied with anyone who would be blockhead enough to have me.

When you receive this, write me a long yarn about something to amuse me. Give my respects to Mr. Browning.

Your sincere friend,

A. LINCOLN

In Springfield Lincoln entered upon the practice of law, and in 1838 and 1840 was again elected to the legislature, being the minority candidate for speaker at both sessions. He was actively in politics and exceedingly ambitious, and in 1840 was a Whig candidate for elector.

No man in the West at this time could engage in the rough and tumble game of politics without personal difficulties. Lincoln had his, but his rather singular patience, good humor, and gentleness all tended to soften down the difficulties and prevent serious quarrels. But he would not yield when he was sure that he was right. The following letter evidently related to one of these difficulties:

*TO W. G. ANDERSON\**

Lawrenceville, Ill., October 31, 1840

DEAR SIR: Your note of yesterday is received. In the difficulty between us of which you speak, you say you think I was the aggressor. I do not think I was. You say my "words imported insult." I meant them as a fair set-off to your own statements, and not otherwise; and in that light alone I now wish you to understand them. You ask for my present "feelings on the subject." I entertain no unkind feelings to you, and none of any

\* W. G. Anderson represented Lawrence County in the Illinois legislature at the sessions of 1832, 1842, and 1844.

sort upon the subject, except a sincere regret that I permitted myself to get into such an altercation.

Yours, etc.,

A. LINCOLN

The following letter, written to the sister of an intimate friend, is characteristic of Lincoln at this period of his life. It is also interesting for its allusion to the most horrible feature of slavery.

*TO MISS MARY SPEED*

Bloomington, Ill., September 27, 1841

Miss Mary Speed, Louisville, Ky.

MY FRIEND: Having resolved to write to some of your mother's family, and not having the express permission of any one of them to do so, I have had some little difficulty in determining on which to inflict the task of reading what I now feel must be a most dull and silly letter; but when I remembered that you and I were something of cronies while I was at Farmington, and that while there I was under the necessity of shutting you up in a room to prevent your committing an assault and battery upon me, I instantly decided that you should be the devoted one. I assume that you have not heard from Joshua and myself since we left, because I think it doubtful whether he has written.

You remember there was some uneasiness about Joshua's health when we left. That little indisposition of his turned out to be nothing serious, and it was pretty nearly forgotten when we reached Springfield.

We got on board the steamboat *Lebanon* in the locks of the canal, about twelve o'clock M. of the day we left, and reached St. Louis the next Monday at 8 P. M. Nothing of interest happened during the passage, except the vexatious delays occasioned by the sandbars we thought interesting.

By the way, a fine example was presented on board

the boat for contemplating the effect of condition upon human happiness. A gentleman had purchased twelve negroes in different parts of Kentucky, and was taking them to a farm in the South. They were chained six and six together. A small iron clevis was around the left wrist of each, and this was fastened to the main chain by a shorter one, at a convenient distance from the others, so that the negroes were strung together precisely like so many fish upon a trot-line. In this condition they were being separated forever from the scenes of their childhood, their friends, their fathers and mothers, and brothers and sisters, and many of them from their wives and children, and going into perpetual slavery, where the lash of the master is proverbially more ruthless and unrelenting than any other where; and yet amid all these distressing circumstances, as we would think them, they were the most cheerful and apparently happy creatures on board. One, whose offense for which he had been sold was an over-fondness for his wife, played the fiddle almost continually, and the others danced, sang, cracked jokes, and played various games with cards from day to day. How true it is that "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,"\* or in other words, that He renders the worst of human conditions tolerable, while He permits the best to be nothing better than tolerable. To return to the narrative. When we reached Springfield, I stayed but one day, when I started on this tedious circuit where I now am.

Do you remember my going to the city, while I was in Kentucky, to have a tooth extracted, and making a failure of it? Well, that same old tooth got to paining me so much that about a week since I had it torn out, bringing with it a bit of the jawbone, the consequence of which is that my mouth is now so sore that I can neither talk nor eat.

\* Sterne, *Sentimental Journey*.

I am literally "subsisting on savory remembrances"—that is, being unable to eat, I am living upon the remembrance of the delicious dishes of peaches and cream we used to have at your house. When we left, Miss Fanny Henning was owing you a visit, as I understood. Has she paid it yet? If she has, are you not convinced that she is one of the sweetest girls in the world? There is but one thing about her, so far as I could perceive, that I would have otherwise than as it is—that is, something of a tendency to melancholy. This, let it be observed, is a misfortune, not a fault.

Give her an assurance of my very highest regard when you see her. Is little Siss Eliza Davis at your house yet? If she is, kiss her "o'er and o'er again" for me.

Tell your mother that I have not got her "present" [an "Oxford" Bible] with me, but I intend to read it regularly when I return home. I doubt not that it is really, as she says, the best cure for the blues, could one but take it according to the truth. Give my respects to all your sisters (including Aunt Emma) and brothers. Tell Mrs. Peay, of whose happy face I shall long retain a pleasant remembrance, that I have been trying to think of a name for her homestead, but as yet cannot satisfy myself with one. I shall be very happy to receive a line from you soon after you receive this, and in case you choose to favor me with one, address it to Charleston, Coles County, Ill., as I shall be there about the time to receive it.

Your sincere friend,

A. LINCOLN

The next few years saw Lincoln, after an unlucky engagement, married to Mary Todd; in partnership in law, first with Judge Logan and later with William H. Herndon; and continuing his active work in politics. In 1844 he was a Whig candidate for elector and as such made speeches in various parts of Illinois and also in Indiana. In 1843 he was a candidate for Congress but was defeated by John J. Hardin. It is





MARY TODD LINCOLN



probable that it was then agreed that Edward D. Baker should be elected two years later, to be followed in 1846 by Lincoln.

In the meantime anti-slavery sentiment, long-delayed, was growing in Illinois, and in 1844 the Liberty party, which nominated James G. Birney for President, gained considerable strength in the state, though not enough to influence the result. Two brothers, Williamson and Madison Durley, were prominent leaders in the party, and in 1845 Lincoln, keenly interested in the course of state politics, and himself a prospective candidate for Congress, wrote to Williamson Durley this letter, notable for its practical logic.

TO WILLIAMSON DURLEY

Springfield, October 3, 1845

DEAR SIR: When I saw you at home, it was agreed that I should write to you and your brother, Madison. Until I then saw you I was not aware of your being what is generally called an abolitionist, or, as you call yourself, a Liberty man, though I well knew there were many such in your country.

I was glad to hear that you intended to attempt to bring about, at the next election in Putnam, a union of the Whigs proper and such of the Liberty men as are Whigs in principle on all questions save only that of slavery. So far as I can perceive, by such union neither party need yield anything on *the* point in difference between them. If the Whig abolitionists of New York had voted with us last fall, Mr. Clay would now be President, Whig principles in the ascendant, and Texas not annexed; whereas, by the division, all that either had at stake in the contest was lost. And, indeed, it was extremely probable beforehand that such would be the result. As I have always understood, the Liberty men deprecated the annexation of Texas extremely; and this being so, why they should refuse to cast their votes [so] as to prevent it, even to me seemed wonderful. What was their process of reasoning, I can only judge from what a single one of them told me. It was this: "We are

not to do evil that good may come." This general proposition is doubtless correct; but did it apply? If by your votes you could have prevented the *extension*, etc., of slavery, would it not have been *good*, and not *evil*, so to have used your votes, even though it involved the casting of them for a slaveholder? By the *fruit* the tree is to be known. An *evil* tree cannot bring forth *good* fruit. If the fruit of electing Mr. Clay would have been to prevent the extension of slavery, could the act of electing have been evil?

But I will not argue further. I perhaps ought to say that individually I never was much interested in the Texas question. I never could see much good to come of annexation, inasmuch as they were already a free republican people on our own model. On the other hand, I never could very clearly see how the annexation would augment the evil of slavery. It always seemed to me that slaves would be taken there in about equal numbers, with or without annexation. And if more *were* taken because of annexation, still there would be just so many the fewer left where they were taken from. It is possibly true, to some extent, that with annexation, some slaves may be sent to Texas and continued in slavery that otherwise might have been liberated. To whatever extent this may be true, I think annexation an evil. I hold it to be a paramount duty of us in the free states, due to the union of the states, and perhaps to liberty itself (paradox though it may seem), to let the slavery of the other states alone; while, on the other hand, I hold it to be equally clear that we should never knowingly lend ourselves, directly or indirectly, to prevent that slavery from dying a natural death—to find new places for it to live in, when it can no longer exist in the old. Of course I am not now considering what would be our duty in cases of insurrection among the slaves. To recur to the Texas question, I understand the Liberty men to have viewed annexation as a much greater evil

than ever I did, and I would like to convince you, if I could, that they could have prevented it, if they had chosen.

I intend this letter for you and Madison together, and if you and he, or either, shall think fit to drop me a line, I shall be pleased.

Yours with respect,

A. LINCOLN

\* In 1846 Lincoln was at last elected to Congress. The Mexican War had already been fought, but he was violently opposed to the policy of the administration, and his speeches were largely devoted to attacks upon President Polk as the responsible aggressor against Mexico. He sought in every way to prove the administration guilty of falsehood in relation to the war, and thereby greatly antagonized his district. During his term he favored and voted for the Wilmot Proviso, which was intended to exclude slavery from the new territory acquired from Mexico. He voted against a resolution for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, because it did not require the assent of Virginia and Maryland, which he thought necessary from a moral standpoint, and because there was no provision for compensation. He also voted against a resolution looking to the abolition of the slave-trade in the District because he did not like the form of the resolution. Later, he offered an elaborate substitute.

In this short experience he showed no greater capacities than the average run of new members. He was a clever Western politician, so far as one could see, and that was all. A close study of his activities, however, does reveal the fact that he did not mind unpopularity, if he was convinced that he was right and that he had a fairly consistent record of supporting his convictions.

It was sound experience for him, in that it brought him in contact with the workings of government at Washington and with the men who conducted it. He made a number of warm friends, among them Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia, later Vice President of the Confederacy. Lincoln's first allusion to him in his letters is most interesting.

TO WILLIAM H. HERNDON

Washington, February 2, 1848

DEAR WILLIAM: I just take my pen to say that Mr. Stephens, of Georgia, a little, slim, pale-faced, consumptive man, with a voice like Logan's, has just concluded the very best speech of an hour's length I ever heard. My old withered dry eyes are full of tears yet.

If he writes it out anything like he delivered it, our people shall see a good many copies of it.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN

Lincoln had no desire to leave Congress. Not only was he ambitious and firm in the belief that there lay his road to distinction, but he also liked the life and work of a member of Congress. He had secured recognition from his party and acquired a degree of leadership that was very gratifying to him. But he could not ask for reelection without a breach of faith with his district, in which he had preached rotation in office and thereby secured election. In January, 1848, he wrote, "I made the declaration that I would not be a candidate again more from a wish to deal fairly with others, to keep peace among our friends, and to keep the district from going to the enemy, than from any cause personal to myself; so that if it should happen that nobody else wishes to be elected, I could not refuse the people the right of sending me again. But to enter myself as a competitor of others, or to authorize anyone so to enter me, is what my word and honor forbid."

Accordingly he retired at the expiration of his term, without the prospect of any office in which he might continue in active political life. He was a tardy applicant for the post of commissioner of the land office, refraining in order not to injure the chances of a friend, but he failed to secure the appointment. There was, however, a strong disposition among the Whigs to reward him for his activity, and in the summer of 1849 he was offered by President Taylor the governorship of Oregon Territory. Many of his friends urged him to accept and he was tempted to do so, since Oregon had the lure of the unknown and because it was clear that it would soon be admitted to statehood, when he would have little difficulty in

securing an election to the United States Senate. He had never aspired higher than the Senate, and he was frankly tempted by the prospect. But his wife, fortunately for his future, was opposed and he declined.

He was keenly interested in the success of the Taylor administration. The following letter, inspired by that feeling, is interesting for its reflection of his admiration for Jackson's decisiveness and readiness to assume responsibility:

TO JOHN M. CLAYTON

Springfield, Ill., July 28, 1849

Hon. J. M. Clayton, Sec'y of State.

DEAR SIR: It is with some hesitation I presume to address you this letter—and yet I wish not only you, but the whole cabinet, and the President, too, would consider the subject matter of it—*my being among the people*, while you and they are not, will excuse the apparent presumption. It is understood that the President at first adopted, as a general rule, to throw the responsibility of the appointments upon the respective Departments; and that such rule is adhered to and practiced upon. This course I at first thought proper; and, of course, I am not now complaining of it. Still I am disappointed with the effect of it upon the public mind. It is fixing for the President the unjust and ruinous character of being a mere man of straw. This must be arrested, or it will damn us all inevitably. It is said Gen. Taylor and his officers held a council of war at Palo Alto (I believe); and that he then fought the battle against unanimous opinion of those officers—this fact (no matter whether rightfully or wrongfully) gives him more popularity than ten thousand submissions, however really wise and magnanimous those submissions may be. The appointments need be no better than they have been, but the public must be brought to understand that they are the *President's* appointments. He must occasionally say, or seem to say, “by the Eternal,” “I take the responsi-

bility." Those phrases were the "Samson's locks" of Gen. Jackson, and we dare not disregard the lessons of experience.

Your Ob't Sev't,

A. LINCOLN

With no political future apparently before him, and with urgent need of a growing income, Lincoln now quietly took leave of politics and devoted himself almost exclusively to the practice of law. In this connection some notes of his for a law lecture, written about this time, throw light on the professional ideas, and ideals of the man.

#### *NOTES FOR A LAW LECTURE*

[Written about July 1, 1851]

I am not an accomplished lawyer. I find quite as much material for a lecture in those points wherein I have failed as in those wherein I have been moderately successful. The leading rule for the lawyer, as for the man of every other calling, is diligence. Leave nothing for tomorrow which can be done today. Never let your correspondence fall behind. Whatever piece of business you have in hand, before stopping, do all the labor pertaining to it which can then be done. When you bring a common law-suit, if you have the facts for doing so, write the declaration at once. If a law point be involved, examine the books, and note the authority you rely on upon the declaration itself, where you are sure to find it when wanted. The same of defenses and pleas. In business not likely to be litigated—ordinary collection cases, foreclosures, partitions, and the like—make all examinations of titles, and note them and even draft orders and decrees in advance. This course has a triple advantage; it avoids omissions and neglect, saves your labor when once done, performs the labor out of court when you have leisure, rather than in court when you have not.

Extemporaneous speaking should be practiced and



cultivated. It is the lawyer's avenue to the public. However able and faithful he may be in other respects, people are slow to bring him business if he cannot make a speech. And yet there is not a more fatal error to young lawyers than relying too much on speech-making. If anyone, upon his rare powers of speaking, shall claim an exemption from the drudgery of the law, his case is a failure in advance.

Discourage litigation. Persuade your neighbors to compromise whenever you can. Point out to them how the nominal winner is often a real loser—in fees, expenses, and waste of time. As a peacemaker the lawyer has a superior opportunity of being a good man. There will still be business enough.

Never stir up litigation. A worse man can scarcely be found than one who does this. Who can be more nearly a fiend than he who habitually overhauls the register of deeds in search of defects in titles, whereon to stir up strife, and put money in his pocket? A moral tone ought to be infused into the profession which should drive such men out of it.

The matter of fees is important, far beyond the mere question of bread and butter involved. Properly attended to, fuller justice is done to both lawyer and client. An exorbitant fee should never be claimed. As a general rule never take your whole fee in advance, nor any more than a small retainer. When fully paid beforehand, you are more than a common mortal if you can feel the same interest in the case, as if something was still in prospect for you, as well as for your client. And when you lack interest in the case, the job will very likely lack skill and diligence in the performance. Settle the amount of fee and take a note in advance. Then you will feel that you are working for something, and you are sure to do your work faithfully and well. Never sell a fee note—at least not before the consideration service is performed. It leads to negligence and dishonesty—negligence by losing in-

terest in the case, and dishonesty in refusing to refund when you have allowed the consideration to fail.

There is a vague popular belief that lawyers are necessarily dishonest. I say vague, because when we consider to what extent confidence and honors are reposed in and conferred upon lawyers by the people, it appears improbable that their impression of dishonesty is very distinct and vivid. Yet the impression is common, almost universal. Let no young man choosing the law for a calling for a moment yield to the popular belief—resolve to be honest at all events; and if in your own judgment you cannot be an honest lawyer, resolve to be honest without being a lawyer. Choose some other occupation, rather than one in the choosing of which you do, in advance, consent to be a knave.

His financial needs were greatly increased by his growing family and by the necessity of assisting his father and step-mother, who now, after years of moving from place to place, were settled at Goose Nest Prairie, Illinois. Thomas Lincoln died in 1851, and Lincoln's care for his step-mother continued until his death. One of her sons by her first marriage was John D. Johnston. He was an amiable but shiftless n'er-do-well who constantly appealed to Lincoln for aid. Three letters to him, written in 1851, show the sound common sense of Lincoln as well as his kindly nature.

*TO JOHN D. JOHNSTON*

January 2, 1851

DEAR JOHNSTON: Your request for eighty dollars I do not think best to comply with now. At the various times when I have helped you a little you have said to me, "We can get along very well now"; but in a very short time I find you in the same difficulty again. Now this can only happen by some defect in your conduct. What that defect is, I think I know. You are not lazy, and still you are an idler. I doubt whether, since I saw you, you have done a good whole day's work in any one day.

You do not very much dislike to work, and still you do not work much, merely because it does not seem to you that you could get much for it. This habit of uselessly wasting time is the whole difficulty; it is vastly important to you, and still more so to your children, that you should break the habit. It is more important to them, because they have longer to live, and can keep out of an idle habit before they are in it, easier than they can get out after they are in.

You are now in need of some money; and what I propose is, that you shall go to work, "tooth and nail," for somebody who will give you money for it. Let father and your boys take charge of your things at home, prepare for a crop, and make the crop, and you go to work for the best money wages, or in discharge of any debt you owe, that you can get; and to secure you a fair reward for your labor, I now promise you, that for every dollar that you will, between this and the first of May, get for your own labor, either in money or as your own indebtedness, I will then give you one other dollar. By this, if you hire yourself at ten dollars a month, from me you will get ten more, making twenty dollars a month for your work. In this I do not mean you shall go off to St. Louis, or the lead mines, or the gold mines in California, but I mean for you to go at it for the best wages you can get close to home in Coles County. Now, if you will do this, you will soon be out of debt, and, what is better, you will have a habit that will keep you from getting in debt again. But if I should now clear you out of debt, next year you would be just as deep in as ever. You say you would almost give your place in heaven for seventy or eighty dollars. Then you value your place in heaven very cheap, for I am sure you can, with the offer I make, get the seventy or eighty dollars for four or five months' work. You say if I will furnish you the money you will deed me the land, and, if you don't pay the money back, you will deliver possession. Nonsense!

If you can't now live with the land, how will you then live without it? You have always been kind to me, and I do not mean to be unkind to you. On the contrary, if you will but follow my advice, you will find it worth more than eighty times eighty dollars to you.

Affectionately your brother,

A. LINCOLN

*TO JOHN D. JOHNSTON*

Shelbyville, November 4, 1851

DEAR BROTHER: When I came into Charleston day before yesterday, I learned that you are anxious to sell the land where you live and move to Missouri. I have been thinking of this ever since, and cannot but think such a notion utterly foolish. What can you do in Missouri better than here? Is the land any richer? Can you there, any more than here, raise corn and wheat and oats without work? Will anybody there, any more than here, do your work for you? If you intend to go to work, there is no better place than right where you are; if you do not intend to go to work, you cannot get along anywhere. Squirming and crawling about from place to place can do no good. You have raised no crop this year; and what you really want is to sell the land, get the money, and spend it. Part with the land you have, and, my life upon it, you will never after own a spot big enough to bury you in. Half you will get for the land you will spend in moving to Missouri, and the other half you will eat, drink, and wear out, and no foot of land will be bought. Now, I feel it my duty to have no hand in such a piece of foolery. I feel that it is so even on your own account, and particularly on mother's account. The eastern forty acres I intend to keep for mother while she lives; if you will not cultivate it, it will rent for enough to support her—at least, it will rent for something. Her dower in the other two forties she can let you have, and no thanks to me. Now, do not mis-

understand this letter; I do not write it in any unkindness. I write it in order, if possible, to get you to face the truth, which truth is, you are destitute because you have idled away all your time. Your thousand pretenses for not getting along better are all nonsense; they deceive nobody but yourself. Go to work is the only cure for your case.

A word to mother. Chapman tells me he wants you to go and live with him. If I were you I would try it awhile. If you get tired of it (as I think you will not), you can return to your own home. Chapman feels very kindly to you, and I have no doubt he will make your situation very pleasant.

Sincerely your son,

A. LINCOLN

TO JOHN D. JOHNSTON

Springfield, November 25, 1851

John D. Johnston.

DEAR BROTHER: Your letter of the 22d is just received. Your proposal about selling the east forty acres of land is all that I want or could want for *myself*; but I am not satisfied with it on mother's account—I want her to have her living, and I feel that it is my duty, to some extent, to see that she is not wronged. She had a right of dower (that is, the use of one-third for life) in the other two forties! but, it seems, she has already let you take that, hook and line. She now has the use of the whole east forty, as long as she lives; and if it be sold, of course, she is entitled to the interest on all the money it brings, as long as she lives; but you propose to sell it for three hundred dollars, take one hundred away with you, and leave her two hundred at 8 per cent, making her the *enormous* sum of 16 dollars a year. Now, if you are satisfied with treating her in that way, I am not. It is true, that you are to *have* that forty for two hundred dollars, at your mother's death; but you are

not to have it *before*. I am confident that land can be made to produce for mother at least \$30 a year, and I cannot, to oblige any living person, consent that she shall be put on an allowance of sixteen dollars a year.

Yours, etc.,

A. LINCOLN

In the years between 1849 and 1854, Lincoln's practice grew rapidly, but since he cared little for money, his fees were so small as to excite the displeasure of his brethren of the bar and even to bring a protest from the presiding judge. His only political activity was as candidate for presidential elector in 1852. He was never effective where his heart was not, and the Whig platform of 1852, which had no fighting issue, excited in him no particular interest. He had thrown himself with renewed enthusiasm into fresh study of the law and was bidding fair, if nothing should prevent, to become possibly a great lawyer. Interestingly enough, he was now studying and mastering Euclidean geometry, which gave him probably, even at this mature age, a power of closer reasoning. Although increasingly a student he did not withdraw from contact with the people. In fact he became during this period the idol of the Eighth Judicial Circuit in Illinois and increasingly well-known to the entire state. Here were formed the personal associations which did so much to make Lincoln, with all his handicaps, the Republican nominee for President in 1860.

The Compromise of 1850 had apparently settled the slavery question, for that generation at least, and while Lincoln was firm in the conviction that "nothing is really ever settled until it is settled right," and while his dislike of slavery had not lessened, he had, as a practical matter, dismissed the question from his mind, when the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, with its repeal of the Missouri Compromise, reopened the whole question in a new form, and ushered in a new period in his life.

II

FIGHTING THE EXTENSION OF  
SLAVERY





## II

### FIGHTING THE EXTENSION OF SLAVERY

In this second period of his life, Lincoln devoted practically all his time and thought to opposing the extension of slavery into the territories of the United States. With slavery where it already existed he did not quarrel. Believing that it was a great evil, he nevertheless was convinced that under the Constitution of the United States it was entitled to protection. But quite different was his attitude as regarded its spread. It was to him more than a political question, and he never overlooked its possibilities in that respect; it was a moral question of the highest importance, and to the contest he gave all the strength that he had. In the contest he grew and developed more rapidly than he had ever done.

By the Ordinance of 1787, providing for the government of the Northwest Territory, it was provided that "there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said Territory, otherwise than in punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." As a result, the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin were free of slavery. In 1803 the United States purchased Louisiana, in part of which slavery already existed. Louisiana was admitted as a slave state in 1812, and in 1818 the people of Missouri petitioned Congress to be admitted as a slave state. In the North great opposition developed, and the House of Representatives and Senate were at a deadlock, the former insisting upon admission only upon the condition of the gradual emancipation of slaves, and the latter insisting that it should be a slave state. Finally, upon the suggestion of Senator Thomas of Illinois, Missouri was admitted as a slave state, but in all the rest of the Louisiana Purchase, north of 36° 30', which was the southern boundary of Missouri, slavery was forever prohibited. This not only determined the status of the

northern portion of the Louisiana Purchase, but it was a recognition of the right of Congress to deal with slavery in the territories. Under it there was little question of slavery extension until the Mexican War.

As a result of the Mexican War, the slavery question was reopened in Congress. California was particularly adapted for slavery, and there was an immediate demand from the South that the Missouri Compromise line be extended to the Pacific. The North still advocated the principle of the Wilmot Proviso that slavery should not extend to the new territory. At the same time there was a strong Northern demand for the abolition of slavery, or at least of the slave-trade, in the District of Columbia, while the South, which was losing two thousand slaves a year through the operations of the Underground Railway, demanded a more effective law for the return of fugitive slaves. In addition there were other questions, all connected, directly or indirectly, with slavery, which were agitated in Congress, such as the western boundary of Texas, and whether Utah and New Mexico should be free or slave.

The discovery of gold in California in 1848 carried a flood of settlers there, and, without waiting for the establishment of a territorial government, they drew up a state constitution which prohibited slavery, and in 1849 applied for admission to the Union. Admission would of course prevent the extension of the Compromise line to the Pacific, and the South opposed admission for this reason. The dispute grew so angry that there was serious danger of disunion, when Henry Clay, who had returned to the Senate for the purpose, proposed a series of compromise measures, which were finally adopted and which, together, form the Compromise of 1850. Under these acts California was admitted as a free state, New Mexico was given territory claimed by Texas, and in return debts of the state of Texas to the amount of \$10,000,000 were assumed by the United States, while Utah and New Mexico were given territorial government with the provision that when either should be admitted as a state "the said territory . . . shall be admitted into the Union, with or without slavery, as their constitution may provide at the time of admission." This was a recognition of the principle of "popular sovereignty" which General Lewis Cass of Michigan had suggested as a way of settlement. In addition the slave-trade was

abolished in the District of Columbia, and a new and more stringent fugitive slave law was passed.

Both political parties accepted the compromise and agreed not to discuss slavery further. National discussion did for a short time largely cease. But the new fugitive slave law was very unpopular in the North, and in every free state, except two, laws were passed to interfere with its operation. In addition its execution was frequently interrupted by mobs, backed by public sentiment. This angered the South, which felt that the North was unwilling to grant the protection guaranteed by the Constitution.

With the development of overland trade to California which began in 1849, came a demand for the organization of the territory west of the Missouri River, which now was being slowly settled. In June, 1854, Stephen A. Douglas, who was chairman of the committee on the territories in the Senate, introduced a bill for the organization of the Nebraska Territory, with the provision that the people of the territory should decide whether or not it should have slavery. This fresh application of "popular sovereignty," or, as it was popularly called, "squatter sovereignty," was at once opposed as contrary to the Missouri Compromise. Douglas contended that the Compromise of 1850 had set aside the earlier compromise, and later included in the bill a specific provision for the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. At the same time provision was made in the bill for two territories instead of one: Kansas, which was clearly intended to be slave, and Nebraska, which was to be free, thus maintaining the traditional balance between slave and free states.

This Kansas-Nebraska Bill, with its "popular sovereignty" plan, represented the ideas of many people in the West who in their adoration of democratic, popular government, thought that the people most nearly concerned should decide political questions. These people saw here a local question, like that of schools; they failed utterly to see that any question which involved a policy toward slavery was necessarily national in its scope. They also failed to see that it involved any moral question.

The bill was passed, in spite of sharp opposition in the North. A large part of the Democratic party, the Anti-Nebraska men, refused to support it, and so unpopular was

the bill that Douglas said that his way home from Washington was lighted all the distance "by Stephen A. Douglas, burning in effigy." When he reached Chicago he attempted to defend his course in a public speech and was hissed from the platform. But each day he roused more enthusiasm and won back friends. This was the situation in Illinois and the nation when Lincoln came actively back into politics.

The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill inevitably brought Lincoln into politics. To him the issue involved was moral rather than political, and it was in the discussion of such questions that his powers and abilities lay. He threw himself into a close study of the whole question. The following notes show the trend of his thought. They are chiefly interesting because they contain the germ of many of the arguments which he was to use later in a more developed form.

*THE NATURE AND OBJECTS OF GOVERNMENT,  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SLAVERY*

[About July 1, 1854]

[Fragmentary Notes]

Government is a combination of the people of a country to effect certain objects by joint effort. The best framed and best administered governments are necessarily expensive; while by errors in frame and maladministration most of them are more onerous than they need be, and some of them very oppressive. Why, then, should we have government? Why not each individual take to himself the whole fruit of his labor, without having any of it taxed away, in services, corn, or money? Why not take just so much land as he can cultivate with his own hands, without buying it of anyone?

The legitimate object of government is "to do for the people what needs to be done, but which they cannot, by individual effort, do at all, or do so well, for themselves." There are many such things—some of them exist independently of the injustice in the world. Making and maintaining roads, bridges, and the like; providing for

the helpless young and afflicted; common schools; and disposing of deceased men's property, are instances.

But a far larger class of objects springs from the injustice of men. If one people will make war upon another, it is a necessity with that other to unite and coöperate for defense. Hence the military department. If some men will kill, or beat, or constrain others, or despoil them of property, by force, fraud, or non-compliance with contracts, it is a common object with peaceful and just men to prevent it. Hence the criminal and civil departments.

. . . . .

The legitimate object of government is to do for a community of people whatever they need to have done, but cannot do at all, or cannot so well do, for themselves, in their separate and individual capacities. In all that the people can individually do as well for themselves, government ought not to interfere. The desirable things which the individuals of a people cannot do, or cannot well do, for themselves, fall into two classes: those which have relation to wrongs, and those which have not. Each of these branches off into an infinite variety of subdivisions.

The first—that in relation to wrongs—embraces all crimes, misdemeanors, and non-performance of contracts. The other embraces all which, in its nature, and without wrong requires combined action, as public roads and highways, public schools, charities, pauperism, orphanage, estates of the deceased, and the machinery of government itself.

From this it appears that if all men were just, there still would be some, though not so much, need of government.

Equality in society alike beats inequality, whether the latter be of the British aristocratic sort or of the domestic slavery sort.

We know Southern men declare that their slaves are

better off than hired laborers amongst us. How little they know whereof they speak! There is no permanent class of hired laborers amongst us. Twenty-five years ago I was a hired laborer. The hired laborer of yesterday labors on his own account today, and will hire others to labor for him tomorrow.

Advancement—improvement in condition—is the order of things in a society of equals. As labor is the common burden of our race, so the effort of some to shift their share of the burden on to the shoulders of others is the great durable curse of the race. Originally a curse for transgression upon the whole race, when, as by slavery, it is concentrated on a part only, it becomes the double-refined curse of God upon his creatures.

Free labor has the inspiration of hope; pure slavery has no hope. The power of hope upon human exertion and happiness is wonderful. The slave-master himself has a conception of it, and hence the system of tasks among slaves. The slave whom you cannot drive with the lash to break seventy-five pounds of hemp in a day, if you will task him to break a hundred, and promise him pay for all he does over, he will break you a hundred and fifty. You have substituted hope for the rod. And yet perhaps it does not occur to you that, to the extent of your gain in the case, you have given up the slave system and adopted the free system of labor.

. . . . .

If A can prove, however conclusively, that he may of right enslave B, why may not B snatch the same argument and prove equally that he may enslave A? You say A is white and B is black. It is color, then; the lighter having the right to enslave the darker? Take care. By this rule you are to be slave to the first man you meet with a fairer skin than your own.

You do not mean color exactly? You mean the whites are intellectually the superiors of the blacks, and therefore have the right to enslave them? Take care again.

By this rule you are to be slave to the first man you meet with an intellect superior to your own.

But, say you, it is a question of interest, and if you make it your interest you have the right to enslave another. Very well. And if he can make it his interest he has the right to enslave you.

. . . . .

The ant who has toiled and dragged a crumb to his nest will furiously defend the fruit of his labor against whatever robber assails him. So plain that the most dumb and stupid slave that ever toiled for a master does constantly know that he is wronged. So plain that no one, high or low, ever does mistake it, except in a plainly selfish way; for although volume upon volume is written to prove slavery a very good thing, we never hear of the man who wishes to take the good of it by being a slave himself.

Most governments have been based, practically, on the denial of the equal rights of men, as I have, in part, stated them; ours began by affirming these rights. They said some men are too ignorant and vicious to share in government. Possibly so, said we; and, by your system, you would always keep them ignorant and vicious. We proposed to give all a chance; and we expected the weak to grow stronger, the ignorant wiser, and all better and happier together.

We made the experiment, and the fruit is before us. Look at it, think of it. Look at it in its aggregate grandeur, of extent, of country, and numbers of population—of ship and steamboat, and railroad.

Lincoln did not content himself with study. He went on the stump in behalf of a friend who was a candidate for Congress, stating that he would only speak in opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska act. He also began to write letters with the view of organization of public opinion against it. The following is a good example of these:

TO JOHN M. PALMER

Springfield, September 7, 1854

Hon. J. M. Palmer.

DEAR SIR: You know how anxious I am that this Nebraska measure shall be rebuked and condemned everywhere. Of course I hope something from your position, yet I do not expect you to do anything which may be wrong in your own judgment; nor would I have you do anything personally injurious to yourself. You are, and always have been, honestly and sincerely, a democrat; and I know how painful it must be to an honest, sincere man to be urged by his party to the support of a measure, which in his conscience he believes to be wrong. You have had a severe struggle with yourself, and you have determined not to swallow the wrong. Is it not just to yourself that you should, in a few public speeches, state your reasons, and thus justify yourself? I wish you would; and yet I say, "Don't do it, if you think it will injure you."—You may have given your word to vote for Major Harris;\* and if so, of course you will stick to it.—But allow me to suggest that you should avoid speaking of this, for it probably would induce some of your friends, in like manner, to cast their votes.—You understand.—And now let me beg your pardon for obtruding this letter upon you, to whom I have ever been opposed in politics.—Had your party omitted to make Nebraska a test of party fidelity, you probably would have been the Democratic candidate for Congress in the district.—You deserved it, and I believe it would have been given you.—In that case I should have been quite happy that Nebraska was to be rebuked at all events.—I still should have voted for the Whig candidate; but I should have made no speeches, written no letters; and you would have been elected by at least a thousand majority. Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN

\* Thomas L. Harris, the Democratic candidate for Congress.



The State Fair, held in October at Springfield, always attracted huge crowds, and Douglas arranged to speak there on October 3, in defense of his policy. Lincoln, who was now a candidate for the legislature, was promptly called upon to answer him and did so on the next day. His speech was very successful. Of it the *Springfield Journal* said:

"The Anti-Nebraska speech of Mr. Lincoln was the profoundest, in our opinion, that he has made in his whole life. He felt upon his soul the truths burn which he uttered, and all present felt that he was true to his own soul. His feelings once or twice swelled within and came near stifling utterance. He quivered with emotion. The whole house was still as death. He attacked the Nebraska bill with unusual warmth and energy; and all felt that a man of strength was its enemy and that he intended to blast it if he could by strong and manly efforts. He was most successful, and the house approved the glorious triumph of truth by loud and continued huzzas."

Douglas replied the following day and these speeches may be said to be the beginning of the series of debates which was to last almost without interruption until 1860. Lincoln's speech was not published, but when he spoke at Peoria twelve days later in reply to Douglas he used substantially the same arguments, lacking, possibly, the fire of the Springfield speech.

The Peoria address is also notable because it contains the germ of many arguments and illustrations that he was to use during the next six years. In spite of the fact that it was written when Lincoln was in the process of finding himself, it is far superior to his speeches in the much more famous debates with Douglas in 1858. It is more imaginative, has greater elevation of thought, and is franker and more convincing. It is a fine example of brief, direct, and terse statement. His major plea was for the vindication and restoration of the policy of the fathers of the republic toward slavery, but here, too, is made clearly the chief point of all his speeches of this period—that slavery was fundamentally wrong; that while it could not be disturbed where it already existed, it must be confined there and not allowed to spread at all into free territory. It is notable also for its spirit of fairness toward the Southern people.

*THE PEORIA SPEECH*

[October 16, 1854]

I do not rise to speak now, if I can stipulate with the audience to meet me here at half-past six or at seven o'clock. It is now several minutes past five, and Judge Douglas has spoken over three hours. If you hear me at all, I wish you to hear me through. It will take me as long as it has taken him. That will carry us beyond eight o'clock at night. Now, everyone of you who can remain that long can just as well get his supper, meet me at seven, and remain an hour or two later. The Judge has already informed you that he is to have an hour to reply to me. I doubt not but you have been a little surprised to learn that I have consented to give one of his high reputation and known ability this advantage of me. Indeed, my consenting to it, though reluctant, was not wholly unselfish, for I suspected, if it were understood that the Judge was entirely done, you Democrats would leave and not hear me; but by giving him the close I felt confident you would stay for the fun of hearing him skin me.

[The audience signified their assent to the arrangement, and adjourned to seven o'clock P. M., at which time they reassembled, and Mr. Lincoln spoke substantially as follows:]

The repeal of the Missouri Compromise, and the propriety of its restoration, constitute the subject of what I am about to say. As I desire to present my own connected view of this subject, my remarks will not be specifically an answer to Judge Douglas; yet, as I proceed, the main points he has presented will arise, and will receive such respectful attention as I may be able to give them. I wish further to say that I do not propose to question the patriotism or to assail the motives of any man or class of men, but rather to confine myself strictly to the naked merits of the question. I also wish to be no less than national in all the positions I may take, and

whenever I take ground which others have thought, or may think, narrow, sectional, and dangerous to the union, I hope to give a reason which will appear sufficient, at least to some, why I think differently.

And as this subject is no other than part and parcel of the larger general question of domestic slavery, I wish to make and keep the distinction between the existing institution and the extension of it, so broad and so clear that no honest man can misunderstand me, and no dishonest one successfully misrepresent me.

In order to a clear understanding of what the Missouri Compromise is, a short history of the preceding kindred subjects will perhaps be proper.

When we established our independence, we did not own or claim the country to which this compromise applies. Indeed, strictly speaking, the Confederacy then owned no country at all; the states respectively owned the country within their limits, and some of them owned territory beyond their strict state limits. Virginia thus owned the Northwestern Territory—the country out of which the principal part of Ohio, all Indiana, all Illinois, all Michigan, and all Wisconsin have since been formed. She also owned (perhaps within her then limits) what has since been formed into the State of Kentucky. North Carolina thus owned what is now the State of Tennessee; and South Carolina and Georgia owned, in separate parts, what are now Mississippi and Alabama. Connecticut, I think, owned the little remaining part of Ohio, being the same where they now send Giddings to Congress, and beat all creation in making cheese.

These territories, together with the states themselves, constitute all the country over which the Confederacy then claimed any sort of jurisdiction. We were then living under the Articles of Confederation, which were superseded by the Constitution several years afterwards. The question of ceding the territories to the General Government was set on foot. Mr. Jefferson, the author

of the Declaration of Independence, and otherwise a chief actor in the Revolution; then a delegate in Congress; afterwards, twice President; who was, is, and perhaps will continue to be, the most distinguished politician of our history; a Virginian by birth and continued residence, and withal a slaveholder—conceived the idea of taking that occasion to prevent slavery ever going into the Northwestern Territory. He prevailed on the Virginia legislature to adopt his views, and to cede the Territory, making the prohibition of slavery therein a condition of the deed.\* Congress accepted the cession with the condition; and the first ordinance (which the acts of Congress were then called) for the government of the Territory provided that slavery should never be permitted therein. This is the famed "Ordinance of '87," so often spoken of.

Thenceforward for sixty-one years, and until, in 1848, the last scrap of this Territory came into the Union as the State of Wisconsin, all parties acted in quiet obedience to this ordinance. It is now what Jefferson foresaw and intended—the happy home of teeming millions of free, white, prosperous people, and no slave among them.

Thus, with the author of the Declaration of Independence, the policy of prohibiting slavery in new territory originated. Thus, away back to the Constitution, in the pure, fresh, free breath of the Revolution, the State of Virginia and the National Congress put that policy into practice. Thus, through more than sixty of the best years of the republic, did that policy steadily work to its great and beneficent end. And thus, in those five states, and in five millions of free, enterprising people, we have before us the rich fruits of this policy.

But now new light breaks upon us. Now Congress declares this ought never to have been, and the like of it must never be again. The sacred right of self-government is grossly violated by it. We even find some men

\* This was an error which Lincoln later corrected.

who drew their first breath—and every other breath of their lives—under this very restriction, now live in dread of absolute suffocation if they should be restricted in the “sacred right” of taking slaves to Nebraska. That perfect liberty they sigh for—the liberty of making slaves of other people—Jefferson never thought of, their own fathers never thought of, they never thought of themselves, a year ago. How fortunate for them they did not sooner become sensible of their great misery! Oh, how difficult it is to treat with respect such assaults upon all we have ever really held sacred!

But to return to history. In 1803 we purchased what was then called Louisiana, of France. It included the present states of Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, and Iowa; also the territory of Minnesota, and the present bone of contention, Kansas and Nebraska. Slavery already existed among the French at New Orleans, and to some extent at St. Louis. In 1812 Louisiana came into the Union as a slave state without controversy. In 1818 or '19, Missouri showed signs of a wish to come in with slavery. This was resisted by Northern members of Congress; and thus began the first great slavery agitation in the nation. This controversy lasted several months, and became very angry and exciting—the House of Representatives voting for the prohibition of slavery in Missouri, and the Senate voting as steadily against it. Threats of the breaking up of the Union were freely made, and the ablest public men of the day became seriously alarmed. At length a compromise was made, in which, as in all compromises, both sides yielded something. It was a law passed on the 6th of March, 1820, providing that Missouri might come into the Union with slavery, but that in all the remaining part of the territory purchased of France, which lies north of thirty-six degrees and thirty minutes north latitude, slavery should never be permitted. This provision of law is the “Missouri Compromise.” In excluding slavery north of

the line, the same language is employed as in the ordinance of 1787. It directly applied to Iowa, Minnesota, and to the present bone of contention, Kansas and Nebraska. Whether there should or should not be slavery south of that line, nothing was said in the law. But Arkansas constituted the principal remaining part south of the line; and it has since been admitted as a slave state, without serious controversy. More recently, Iowa, north of the line, came in as a free state without controversy. Still later, Minnesota, north of the line, had a territorial organization without controversy. Texas, principally south of the line, and west of Arkansas, though originally within the purchase from France, had, in 1819, been traded off to Spain in our treaty for the acquisition of Florida. It had thus become a part of Mexico. Mexico revolutionized and became independent of Spain. American citizens began settling rapidly with their slaves in the southern part of Texas. Soon they revolutionized against Mexico, and established an independent government of their own, adopting a constitution with slavery, strongly resembling the constitutions of our slave states. By still another rapid move, Texas, claiming a boundary much further west than when we parted with her in 1819, was brought back to the United States, and admitted into the Union as a slave state. Then there was little or no settlement in the northern part of Texas, a considerable portion of which lay north of the Missouri line; and in the resolutions admitting her into the Union, the Missouri restriction was expressly extended westward across her territory. This was in 1845, only nine years ago.

Thus originated the Missouri Compromise; and thus has it been respected down to 1845. And even four years later, in 1849, our distinguished senator, in a public address, held the following language in relation to it:

“The Missouri Compromise has been in practical operation for about a quarter of a century, and has received the sanction and approbation of men of all parties in every section of the Union. It has allayed all sectional jealousies and irritations growing out of this vexed question, and harmonized and tranquilized the whole country. It has given to Henry Clay, as its prominent champion, the proud sobriquet of the ‘Great Pacificator,’ and by that title, and for that service, his political friends had repeatedly appealed to the people to rally under his standard as a presidential candidate, as the man who had exhibited the patriotism and power to suppress an unholy and treasonable agitation, and preserve the Union. He was not aware that any man or any party, from any section of the Union, had ever urged as an objection to Mr. Clay that he was the great champion of the Missouri Compromise. On the contrary, the effort was made by the opponents of Mr. Clay to prove that he was not entitled to the exclusive merit of that great patriotic measure; and that the honor was equally due to others, as well as to him for securing its adoption—that it had its origin in the hearts of all patriotic men who desired to preserve and perpetuate the blessings of our glorious Union—an origin akin to that of the Constitution of the United States, conceived in the same spirit of fraternal affection, and calculated to remove forever the only danger which seemed to threaten, at some distant day, to sever the social bond of union. All the evidences of public opinion at that day seemed to indicate that this Compromise had been canonized in the hearts of the American people, as a sacred thing which no ruthless hand would ever be reckless enough to disturb.”

I do not read this extract to involve Judge Douglas in an inconsistency. If he afterwards thought he had been wrong, it was right for him to change. I bring this for-

ward merely to show the high estimate placed on the Missouri Compromise by all parties up to so late as the year 1849.

But going back a little in point of time. Our war with Mexico broke out in 1846. When Congress was about adjourning that session, President Polk asked them to place two millions of dollars under his control, to be used by him in the recess, if found practicable and expedient, in negotiating a treaty of peace with Mexico, and acquiring some part of her territory. A bill was duly gotten up for the purpose, and was progressing swimmingly in the House of Representatives, when a member by the name of David Wilmot, a Democrat from Pennsylvania, moved as an amendment, "Provided, that in any territory thus acquired there shall never be slavery."

This is the origin of the far-famed Wilmot proviso. It created a great flutter; but it stuck like wax, was voted into the bill, and the bill passed with it through the House. The Senate, however, adjourned without final action on it, and so both appropriation and proviso were lost for the time. The war continued, and at the next session, the President renewed his request for the appropriation, enlarging the amount, I think, to three millions. Again came the proviso, and defeated the measure. Congress adjourned again, and the war went on. In December, 1847, the new Congress assembled. I was in the lower House that term. The Wilmot proviso, or the principle of it, was constantly coming up in some shape or other, and I think I may venture to say I voted for it at least forty times during the short time I was there. The Senate, however, held it in check, and it never became a law. In the spring of 1848 a treaty of peace was made with Mexico, by which we obtained that portion of her country which now constitutes the Territories of New Mexico and Utah, and the present State of California. By this treaty the Wilmot proviso was defeated, in so far as it was intended to be a condition of the



acquisition of territory. Its friends, however, were still determined to find some way to restrain slavery from getting into the new country. This new acquisition lay directly west of our old purchase from France, and extended west to the Pacific Ocean, and was so situated that if the Missouri line should be extended straight west, the new country would be divided by such extended line, leaving some north and some south of it. On Judge Douglas's motion, a bill, or provision of a bill, passed the Senate to so extend the Missouri line. The proviso men in the House, including myself, voted it down, because, by implication, it gave up the southern part to slavery, while we were bent on having it all free.

In the fall of 1848 the gold mines were discovered in California. This attracted people to it with unprecedented rapidity, so that on, or soon after, the meeting of the new Congress in December, 1849, she already had a population of nearly a hundred thousand, had called a convention, formed a State Constitution excluding slavery, and was knocking for admission into the Union. The proviso men, of course, were for letting her in, but the Senate, always true to the other side, would not consent to her admission, and there California stood, kept out of the Union because she would not let slavery into her borders. Under all the circumstances, perhaps, this was not wrong. There were other points of dispute connected with the general question of slavery, which equally needed adjustment. The South clamored for a more efficient fugitive-slave law. The North clamored for the abolition of a peculiar species of slave-trade in the District of Columbia, in connection with which, in view from the windows of the Capitol, a sort of negro livery stable, where droves of negroes were collected, temporarily kept, and finally taken to Southern markets, precisely like droves of horses, had been openly maintained for fifty years. Utah and New Mexico needed territorial government; and whether slavery should or

should not be prohibited within them was another question. The indefinite western boundary of Texas was to be settled. She was a slave state, and consequently the farther west the slavery men could push the boundary, the more slave country could be secured; and the farther east the slavery opponents could thrust the boundary back, the less slave ground was secured. Thus this was just as clearly a slavery question as any of the others.

These points all needed adjustment, and they were held up, perhaps wisely, to make them help adjust one another. The Union now, as in 1820, was thought to be in danger, and devotion to the Union rightfully inclined men to yield somewhat in points, where nothing else could have so inclined them. A compromise was finally effected. The South got their new fugitive-slave law, and the North got California (by far the best part of our acquisition from Mexico) as a free state. The South got a provision that New Mexico and Utah, when admitted as states, may come in with or without slavery as they may then choose; and the North got the slave-trade abolished in the District of Columbia. The North got the western boundary of Texas thrown farther back eastward than the South desired; but, in turn, they gave Texas ten millions of dollars with which to pay her old debts. This is the compromise of 1850.

Preceding the presidential election of 1852, each of the great political parties, Democrats and Whigs, met in convention and adopted resolutions indorsing the compromise of '50, as a "finality," a final settlement, so far as these parties could make it so, of all slavery agitation. Previous to this, in 1851, the Illinois legislature had indorsed it.

During this long period of time, Nebraska had remained substantially an uninhabited country, but now emigration to and settlement within it began to take place. It is about one-third as large as the present United States, and its importance, so long overlooked,

begins to come to view. The restriction of slavery by the Missouri Compromise directly applies to it—in fact was first made, and has since been maintained, expressly for it. In 1853, a bill to give it a territorial government passed the House of Representatives, and, in the hands of Judge Douglas, failed of passing only for want of time. This bill contained no repeal of the Missouri Compromise. Indeed, when it was assailed because it did not contain such repeal, Judge Douglas defended it in its existing form. On January 4, 1854, Judge Douglas introduces a new bill to give Nebraska territorial government. He accompanies this bill with a report, in which last he expressly recommends that the Missouri Compromise shall neither be affirmed nor repealed. Before long the bill is so modified as to make two territories instead of one, calling the southern one Kansas.

Also, about a month after the introduction of the bill, on the Judge's own motion it is so amended as to declare the Missouri Compromise inoperative and void; and, substantially, that the people who go and settle there may establish slavery, or exclude it, as they may see fit. In this shape the bill passed both branches of Congress and became a law.

This is the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. The foregoing history may not be precisely accurate in every particular, but I am sure it is sufficiently so for all the use I shall attempt to make of it, and in it we have before us the chief material enabling us to judge correctly whether the repeal of the Missouri Compromise is right or wrong. I think, and shall try to show, that it is wrong—wrong in its direct effect, letting slavery into Kansas and Nebraska, and wrong in its prospective principle, allowing it to spread to every other part of the wide world where men can be found inclined to take it.

This declared indifference, but, as I must think, covert real zeal, for the spread of slavery, I cannot but hate.

I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world; enables the enemies of free institutions with plausibility to taunt us as hypocrites; causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity; and especially because it forces so many good men among ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty, criticizing the Declaration of Independence, and insisting that there is no right principle of action but self-interest.

Before proceeding let me say that I think I have no prejudice against the Southern people. They are just what we would be in their situation. If slavery did not now exist among them, they would not introduce it. If it did now exist among us, we should not instantly give it up. This I believe of the masses North and South. Doubtless there are individuals on both sides who would not hold slaves under any circumstances, and others who would gladly introduce slavery anew if it were out of existence. We know that some Southern men do free their slaves, go North and become tiptop abolitionists, while some Northern ones go South and become most cruel slave masters.

When Southern people tell us they are no more responsible for the origin of slavery than we are, I acknowledge the fact. When it is said that the institution exists, and that it is very difficult to get rid of it in any satisfactory way, I can understand and appreciate the saying. I surely will not blame them for not doing what I should not know how to do myself. If all earthly power were given me, I should not know what to do as to the existing institution. My first impulse would be to free all the slaves, and send them to Liberia, to their own native land. But a moment's reflection would convince me that whatever of high hope (as I think there is) there may be in this in the long run, its sudden execution is impossible. If they were all landed there in a day,

they would all perish in the next ten days; and there are not surplus shipping and surplus money enough to carry them there in many times ten days. What then? Free them all, and keep them among us as underlings? Is it quite certain that this betters their condition? I think I would not hold one in slavery at any rate, yet the point is not clear enough for me to denounce people upon. What next? Free them, and make them politically and socially our equals? My own feelings will not admit of this, and if mine would, we well know that those of the great mass of whites will not. Whether this feeling accords with justice and sound judgment is not the sole question, if indeed it is any part of it. A universal feeling, whether well or ill founded, cannot be safely disregarded. We cannot then make them equals. It does seem to me that systems of gradual emancipation might be adopted, but for their tardiness in this I will not undertake to judge our brethren of the South.

When they remind us of their constitutional rights, I acknowledge them—not grudgingly, but fully and fairly; and I would give them any legislation for the reclaiming of their fugitives which should not in its stringency be more likely to carry a free man into slavery than our ordinary criminal laws are to hang an innocent one.

But all this, to my judgment, furnishes no more excuse for permitting slavery to go into our own free territory than it would for reviving the African slave trade by law. The law which forbids the bringing of slaves from Africa, and that which has so long forbidden the taking of them into Nebraska, can hardly be distinguished on any moral principle, and the repeal of the former could find quite as plausible excuses as that of the latter.

The arguments by which the repeal of the Missouri Compromise is sought to be justified are these: First, That the Nebraska country needed a territorial government; Second, That in various ways the public had repudiated that compromise and demanded the repeal,

and therefore should not now complain of it; and, Lastly, That the repeal establishes a principle which is intrinsically right.

I will attempt an answer to each of them in its turn. First, then. If that country was in need of a territorial organization, could it not have had it as well without as with a repeal? Iowa and Minnesota, to both of which the Missouri restriction applied, had, without its repeal, each in succession, territorial organizations. And even the year before, a bill for Nebraska itself was within an ace of passing without the repealing clause, and this in the hands of the same men who are now the champions of repeal. Why no necessity then for repeal? But still later, when this very bill was first brought in, it contained no repeal. But, say they, because the people had demanded, or rather commanded, the repeal, the repeal was to accompany the organization whenever that should occur.

Now, I deny that the public ever demanded any such thing—ever repudiated the Missouri Compromise, ever commanded its repeal. I deny it, and call for the proof. It is not contended, I believe, that any such command has ever been given in express terms. It is only said that it was done in principle. The support of the Wilmot proviso is the first fact mentioned to prove that the Missouri restriction was repudiated in principle, and the second is the refusal to extend the Missouri line over the country acquired from Mexico. These are near enough alike to be treated together. The one was to exclude the chances of slavery from the whole new acquisition by the lump, and the other was to reject a division of it, by which one-half was to be given up to those chances. Now, whether this was a repudiation of the Missouri line in principle depends upon whether the Missouri law contained any principle requiring the line to be extended over the country acquired from Mexico. I contend it did not. I insist that it contained no general principle,

but that it was, in every sense, specific. That its terms limit it to the country purchased from France is undenied and undeniable. It could have no principle beyond the intention of those who made it. They did not intend to extend the line to country which they did not own. If they intended to extend it in the event of acquiring additional territory, why did they not say so? It was just as easy to say that "in all the country west of the Mississippi which we now own, or may hereafter acquire, there shall never be slavery," as to say what they did say; and they would have said it if they had meant it. An intention to extend the law is not only not mentioned in the law, but is not mentioned in any contemporaneous history. Both the law itself, and the history of the times, are a blank as to any principle of extension; and by neither the known rules of construing statutes and contracts, nor by common sense, can any such principle be inferred.

Another fact showing the specific character of the Missouri law—showing that it intended no more than it expressed, showing that the line was not intended as a universal dividing line between free and slave territory, present and prospective, north of which slavery could never go—is the fact that by that very law Missouri came in as a slave state, north of the line. If that law contained any prospective principle, the whole law must be looked to in order to ascertain what the principle was. And by this rule the South could fairly contend that inasmuch as they got one slave state north of the line at the inception of the law, they have the right to have another given them north of it occasionally, now and then, in the indefinite westward extension of the line. This demonstrates the absurdity of attempting to deduce a prospective principle from the Missouri Compromise line.

When we voted for the Wilmot proviso we were voting to keep slavery out of the whole Mexican acquisition,

and little did we think we were thereby voting to let it into Nebraska, lying several hundred miles distant. When we voted against extending the Missouri line, little did we think we were voting to destroy the old line, then of near thirty years' standing.

To argue that we thus repudiated the Missouri Compromise is no less absurd than it would be to argue that because we have so far forbore to acquire Cuba, we have thereby, in principle, repudiated our former acquisitions and determined to throw them out of the Union. No less absurd than it would be to say that because I may have refused to build an addition to my house, I thereby have decided to destroy the existing house! And if I catch you setting fire to my house, you will turn upon me and say I instructed you to do it!

The most conclusive argument, however, that while for the Wilmot proviso, and while voting against the extension of the Missouri line, we never thought of disturbing the original Missouri Compromise, is found in the fact that there was then, and still is, an unorganized tract of fine country, nearly as large as the State of Missouri, lying immediately west of Arkansas and south of the Missouri Compromise line, and that we never attempted to prohibit slavery as to it. I wish particular attention to this. It adjoins the original Missouri Compromise line by its northern boundary, and consequently is part of the country into which by implication slavery was permitted to go by that compromise. There it has lain open ever since, and there it still lies, and yet no effort has been made at any time to wrest it from the South. In all our struggles to prohibit slavery within our Mexican acquisitions, we never so much as lifted a finger to prohibit it as to this tract. Is not this entirely conclusive that at all times we have held the Missouri Compromise as a sacred thing, even when against ourselves as well as when for us?

Senator Douglas sometimes says the Missouri line



itself was in principle only an extension of the line of the ordinance of '87—that is to say, an extension of the Ohio River. I think this is weak enough on its face. I will remark, however, that, as a glance at the map will show, the Missouri line is a long way farther south than the Ohio, and that if our senator in proposing his extension had stuck to the principle of jogging southward, perhaps it might not have been voted down so readily.

But next it is said that the compromises of '50, and the ratification of them by both political parties in '52, established a new principle which required the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. This again I deny. I deny it, and demand the proof. I have already stated fully what the compromises of '50 are. That particular part of those measures from which the virtual repeal of the Missouri Compromise is sought to be inferred (for it is admitted they contain nothing about it in express terms) is the provision in the Utah and New Mexico laws which permits them when they seek admission into the Union as states to come in with or without slavery, as they shall then see fit. Now I insist this provision was made for Utah and New Mexico, and for no other place whatever. It had no more direct reference to Nebraska than it had to the territories of the moon. But, say they, it had reference to Nebraska in principle. Let us see. The North consented to this provision, not because they considered it right in itself, but because they were compensated—paid for it.

They at the same time got California into the Union as a free state. This was far the best part of all they had struggled for by the Wilmot proviso. They also got the area of slavery somewhat narrowed in the settlement of the boundary of Texas. Also they got the slave-trade abolished in the District of Columbia.

For all these desirable objects the North could afford to yield something; and they did yield to the South the

Utah and New Mexico provision. I do not mean that the whole North, or even a majority, yielded, when the law passed; but enough yielded, when added to the vote of the South, to carry the measure. Nor can it be pretended that the principle of this arrangement requires us to permit the same provision to be applied to Nebraska, without any equivalent at all. Give us another free state; press the boundary of Texas still farther back; give us another step toward the destruction of slavery in the District, and you present us a similar case. But ask us not to repeat, for nothing, what you paid for in the first instance. If you wish the thing again, pay again. That is the principle of the compromises of '50, if, indeed, they had any principles beyond their specific terms—it was the system of equivalents.

Again, if Congress, at that time, intended that all future territories should, when admitted as states, come in with or without slavery, at their own option, why did it not say so? With such a universal provision, all know the bills could not have passed. Did they, then—could they—establish a principle contrary to their own intention? Still further, if they intended to establish the principle that, whenever Congress had control, it should be left to the people to do as they thought fit with slavery, why did they not authorize the people of the District of Columbia, at their option, to abolish slavery within their limits?

I personally know that this has not been left undone because it was unthought of. It was frequently spoken of by members of Congress, and by citizens of Washington, six years ago; and I heard no one express a doubt that a system of gradual emancipation, with compensation to owners, would meet the approbation of a large majority of the white people of the District. But without the action of Congress they could say nothing; and Congress said "No." In the measures of 1850, Con-

gress had the subject of slavery in the District expressly on hand. If they were then establishing the principle of allowing the people to do as they please with slavery, why did they not apply the principle to that people?

Again, it is claimed that by the resolutions of the Illinois legislature, passed in 1851, the repeal of the Missouri Compromise was demanded. This I deny also. Whatever may be worked out by a criticism of the language of those resolutions, the people have never understood them as being any more than an indorsement of the compromises of 1850, and a release of our senators from voting for the Wilmot proviso. The whole people are living witnesses that this only was their view. Finally, it is asked, "If we did not mean to apply the Utah and New Mexico provision to all future territories, what did we mean when we, in 1852, indorsed the compromises of 1850?"

For myself I can answer this question most easily. I meant not to ask a repeal or modification of the fugitive-slave law. I meant not to ask for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. I meant not to resist the admission of Utah and New Mexico, even should they ask to come in as slave states. I meant nothing about additional territories, because, as I understood, we then had no territory whose character as to slavery was not already settled. As to Nebraska, I regarded its character as being fixed by the Missouri Compromise for thirty years—as unalterably fixed as that of my own home in Illinois. As to new acquisitions, I said, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." When we make new acquisitions, we will, as heretofore, try to manage them somehow. That is my answer; that is what I meant and said; and I appeal to the people to say each for himself, whether that is not also the universal meaning of the free states.

And now, in turn, let me ask a few questions. If, by any or all these matters, the repeal of the Missouri Com-

promise was commanded, why was not the command sooner obeyed? Why was the repeal omitted in the Nebraska bill of 1853? Why was it omitted in the original bill of 1854? Why in the accompanying report was such a repeal characterized as a departure from the course pursued in 1850? and its continued omission recommended?

I am aware Judge Douglas now argues that the subsequent express repeal is no substantial alteration of the bill. This argument seems wonderful to me. It is as if one should argue that white and black are not different. He admits, however, that there is a literal change in the bill, and that he made the change in deference to other senators who would not support the bill without. This proves that those other senators thought the change a substantial one, and that the Judge thought their opinions worth deferring to. His own opinions, therefore, seem not to rest on a very firm basis, even in his own mind; and I suppose the world believes, and will continue to believe, that precisely on the substance of that change this whole agitation has arisen.

I conclude, then, that the public never demanded the repeal of the Missouri Compromise.

I now come to consider whether the repeal, with its avowed principles, is intrinsically right. I insist that it is not. Take the particular case. A controversy had arisen between the advocates and opponents of slavery, in relation to its establishment within the country we had purchased of France. The southern, and then best, part of the purchase was already in as a slave state. The controversy was settled by also letting Missouri in as a slave state; but with the agreement that within all the remaining part of the purchase, north of a certain line, there should never be slavery. As to what was to be done with the remaining part south of the line, nothing was said; but perhaps the fair implication was, it should come in with slavery if it should so choose. The south-

ern part, except a portion heretofore mentioned, afterward did come in with slavery, as the State of Arkansas. All these many years, since 1820, the northern part had remained a wilderness. At length settlements began in it also. In due course Iowa came in as a free state, and Minnesota was given a territorial government, without removing the slavery restriction. Finally, the sole remaining part north of the line—Kansas and Nebraska—was to be organized; and it is proposed, and carried, to blot out the old dividing line of thirty-four years' standing, and to open the whole of that country to the introduction of slavery. Now this, to my mind, is manifestly unjust. After an angry and dangerous controversy, the parties made friends by dividing the bone of contention. The one party first appropriates her own share, beyond all power to be disturbed in the possession of it, and then seizes the share of the other party. It is as if two starving men had divided their only loaf; the one had hastily swallowed his half, and then grabbed the other's half just as he was putting it to his mouth.

Let me here drop the main argument, to notice what I consider rather an inferior matter. It is argued that slavery will not go to Kansas and Nebraska, in any event. This is a palliation, a lullaby. I have some hope that it will not; but let us not be too confident. As to climate, a glance at the map shows that there are five slave States—Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri, and also the District of Columbia, all north of the Missouri Compromise line. The census returns of 1850 show that within these there are eight hundred and sixty-seven thousand two hundred and seventy-six slaves, being more than one-fourth of all the slaves in the nation.

It is not climate, then, that will keep slavery out of these territories. Is there anything in the peculiar nature of the country? Missouri adjoins these territories by her entire western boundary, and slavery is

already within every one of her western counties. I have even heard it said that there are more slaves in proportion to whites in the northwestern county of Missouri, than within any other county in the state. Slavery pressed entirely up to the old western boundary of the state, and when rather recently a part of that boundary at the northwest was moved out a little farther west, slavery followed on quite up to the new line. Now when the restriction is removed, what is to prevent it from going still farther? Climate will not, no peculiarity of the country will, nothing in nature will. Will the disposition of the people prevent it? Those nearest the scene are all in favor of the extension. The Yankees who are opposed to it may be most numerous; but, in military phrase, the battlefield is too far from their base of operations.

But it is said, there now is no law in Nebraska on the subject of slavery, and that, in such case, taking a slave there operates his freedom. That is good book-law, but is not the rule of actual practice. Wherever slavery is, it has been first introduced without law. The oldest laws we find concerning it are not laws introducing it but regulating it as an already existing thing. A white man takes his slave to Nebraska now. Who will inform the negro that he is free? Who will take him before court to test the question of his freedom? In ignorance of his legal emancipation he is kept chopping, splitting, and plowing. Others are brought, and move on in the same track. At last, if ever the time for voting comes on the question of slavery, the institution already, in fact, exists in the country, and cannot well be removed. The fact of its presence, and the difficulty of its removal, will carry the vote in its favor. Keep it out until a vote is taken, and a vote in favor of it cannot be got in any population of forty thousand on earth, who have been drawn together by the ordinary motives of emigration and settlement. To get slaves into the territory

simultaneously with the whites in the incipient stages of settlement is the precise stake played for and won in this Nebraska measure.

The question is asked us: "If slaves will go in notwithstanding the general principle of law liberates them, why would they not equally go in against positive statute law—go in even if the Missouri restriction were maintained?" I answer, because it takes a much bolder man to venture in with his property in the latter case than in the former; because the positive congressional enactment is known to and respected by all, or nearly all, whereas the negative principle that no law is free law is not much known except among lawyers. We have some experience of this practical difference. In spite of the ordinance of '87, a few negroes were brought into Illinois, and held in a state of quasi-slavery, not enough, however, to carry a vote of the people in favor of the institution when they came to form a constitution. But into the adjoining Missouri country, where there was no ordinance of '87—was no restriction, they were carried ten times, nay a hundred times, as fast, and actually made a slave state. This is fact—naked fact.

Another lullaby argument is that taking slaves to new countries does not increase their number, does not make anyone slave who would otherwise be free. There is some truth in this, and I am glad of it; but it is not wholly true. The African slave-trade is not yet effectually suppressed; and if we make a reasonable deduction for the white people among us who are foreigners and the descendants of foreigners arriving here since 1808, we shall find the increase of the black population out-running that of the white to an extent unaccountable, except by supposing that some of them too, have been coming from Africa. If this be so, the opening of new countries to the institution increases the demand for and augments the price of slaves, and so does, in fact, make

slaves of freemen, by causing them to be brought from Africa and sold into bondage.

But however this may be, we know the opening of new countries to slavery tends to the perpetuation of the institution, and so does keep men in slavery who would otherwise be free. This result we do not feel like favoring, and we are under no legal obligation to suppress our feelings in this respect.

Equal justice to the South, it is said, requires us to consent to the extension of slavery to new countries. That is to say, inasmuch as you do not object to my taking my hog to Nebraska, therefore I must not object to your taking your slave. Now, I admit that this is perfectly logical, if there is no difference between hogs and negroes. But while you thus require me to deny the humanity of the negro, I wish to ask whether you of the South, yourselves, have ever been willing to do as much? It is kindly provided that of all those who come into the world, only a small percentage are natural tyrants. That percentage is no larger in the slave States than in the free. The great majority, South as well as North, have human sympathies, of which they can no more divest themselves than they can of their sensibility to physical pain. These sympathies in the bosoms of the Southern people manifest in many ways their sense of the wrong of slavery, and their consciousness that after all, there is humanity in the negro. If they deny this, let me address them a few plain questions. In 1820 you joined the North almost unanimously in declaring the African slave-trade piracy, and in annexing to it the punishment of death. Why did you do this? If you did not feel that it was wrong, why did you join in providing that men should be hung for it? The practice was no more than bringing wild negroes from Africa to such as would buy them. But you never thought of hanging men for catching and selling wild horses, wild buffaloes, or wild bears.



Again, you have among you a sneaking individual of the class of native tyrants known as the *slave-dealer*. He watches your necessities, and crawls up to buy your slave at a speculating price. If you cannot help it, you sell to him; but if you can help it, you drive him from your door. You despise him utterly; you do not recognize him as a friend, or even as an honest man. Your children must not play with his; they may rollic freely with the little negroes, but not with the slave-dealer's children. If you are obliged to deal with him, you try to get through the job without so much as touching him. It is common with you to join hands with the men you meet; but with the slave-dealer you avoid the ceremony—instantively shrinking from the snaky contact. If he grows rich and retires from business, you still remember him, and still keep up the ban of non-intercourse upon him and his family. Now, why is this? You do not so treat the man who deals in cotton, corn, or tobacco.

And yet again. There are in the United States and territories, including the District of Columbia, 433,643 free blacks. At five hundred dollars per head, they are worth over two hundred millions of dollars. How comes this vast amount of property to be running about without owners? We do not see free horses or free cattle running at large. How is this? All these free blacks are the descendants of slaves, or have been slaves themselves; and they would be slaves now but for something that has operated on their white owners, inducing them at vast pecuniary sacrifice to liberate them. What is that something? Is there any mistaking it? In all these cases it is your sense of justice and human sympathy continually telling you that the poor negro has some natural right to himself—that those who deny it and make mere merchandise of him deserve kickings, contempt, and death.

And now why will you ask us to deny the humanity of the slave, and estimate him as only the equal of the hog?

Why ask us to do what you will not do yourselves? Why ask us to do for nothing what two hundred millions of dollars could not induce you to do?

But one great argument in support of the repeal of the Missouri Compromise is still to come. That argument is "the sacred right of self-government." It seems our distinguished senator has found great difficulty in getting his antagonists, even in the Senate, to meet him fairly on this argument. Some poet has said—

"Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." \*

At a hazard of being thought one of the fools of this quotation, I meet that argument—I rush in—I take that bull by the horns. I trust I understand and truly estimate the right of self-government. My faith in the proposition that each man should do precisely as he pleases with all which is exclusively his own lies at the foundation of the sense of justice there is in me. I extend the principle to communities of men as well as to individuals. I so extend it because it is politically wise, as well as naturally just: politically wise in saving us from broils about matters which do not concern us. Here, or at Washington, I would not trouble myself with the oyster laws of Virginia, or the cranberry laws of Indiana. The doctrine of self-government is right—absolutely and eternally right—but it has no just application as here attempted. Or perhaps I should rather say that whether it has such application depends upon whether a negro is not or is a man. If he is not a man, in that case he who is a man may as a matter of self-government do just what he pleases with him. But if the negro is a man, is it not to that extent a total destruction of self-government to say that he too shall not govern himself? When the white man governs himself, that is self-government; but when he governs himself and also governs another man, that is more than self-government—that is despotism. If the negro is a man,

\* Alexander Pope in *Essay on Criticism*.

why then my ancient faith teaches me that "all men are created equal," and that there can be no moral right in connection with one man's making a slave of another.

Judge Douglas frequently, with bitter irony and sarcasm, paraphrases our argument by saying: "The white people of Nebraska are good enough to govern themselves, but they are not good enough to govern a few miserable negroes!"

Well! I doubt not that the people of Nebraska are and will continue to be as good as the average of people elsewhere. I do not say the contrary. What I do say is that no man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent. I say this is the leading principle, the sheet anchor of American republicanism. Our Declaration of Independence says:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, *deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.*"

I have quoted so much at this time merely to show that, according to our ancient faith, the just powers of governments are derived from the consent of the governed. Now the relation of master and slave is *pro tanto*,\* a total violation of this principle. The master not only governs the slave without his consent, but he governs him by a set of rules altogether different from those which he prescribes for himself. Allow all the governed an equal voice in the government, and that, and that only, is self-government.

Let it not be said I am contending for the establishment of political and social equality between the whites and blacks. I have already said the contrary. I am

\* By so much.

not combating the argument of necessity, arising from the fact that the blacks are already among us; but I am combating what is set up as moral argument for allowing them to be taken where they have never yet been—arguing against the extension of a bad thing, which, where it already exists, we must of necessity manage as we best can.

In support of his application of the doctrine of self-government, Senator Douglas has sought to bring to his aid the opinions and examples of our Revolutionary fathers. I am glad he has done this. I love the sentiments of those old-time men, and shall be most happy to abide by their opinions. He shows us that when it was in contemplation for the colonies to break off from Great Britain, and set up a new government for themselves, several of the states instructed their delegates to go for the measure, provided each state should be allowed to regulate its domestic concerns in its own way. I do not quote; but this in substance. This was right; I see nothing objectionable in it. I also think it probable that it had some reference to the existence of slavery among them. I will not deny that it had. But had it any reference to the carrying of slavery into new countries? That is the question, and we will let the fathers themselves answer it.

This same generation of men, and mostly the same individuals of the generation who declared this principle, who declared independence, who fought the War of the Revolution through, who afterward made the Constitution under which we still live—these same men passed the Ordinance of '87, declaring that slavery should never go to the Northwest Territory. I have no doubt Judge Douglas thinks they were very inconsistent in this. It is a question of discrimination between them and him. But there is not an inch of ground left for his claiming that their opinions, their example, their authority, are on his side in the controversy.

Again, is not Nebraska, while a territory, a part of us? Do we not own the country? And if we surrender the control of it, do we not surrender the right of self-government? It is part of ourselves. If you say we shall not control it, because it is only part, the same is true of every other part; and when all the parts are gone, what has become of the whole? What is then left of us? What use for the general government, when there is nothing left for it to govern?

But you say this question should be left to the people of Nebraska, because they are more particularly interested. If this be the rule, you must leave it to each individual to say for himself whether he will have slaves. What better moral right have thirty-one citizens of Nebraska to say that the thirty-second shall not hold slaves than the people of the thirty-one states have to say that slavery shall not go into the thirty-second state at all?

But if it is a sacred right for the people of Nebraska to take and hold slaves there, it is equally their sacred right to buy them where they can buy them cheapest; and that, undoubtedly, will be on the coast of Africa, provided you will consent not to hang them for going there to buy them. You must remove this restriction, too, from the sacred right of self-government. I am aware, you say, that taking slaves from the states to Nebraska does not make slaves of freemen; but the African slave-trader can say just as much. He does not catch free negroes and bring them here. He finds them already slaves in the hands of their black captors, and he honestly buys them at the rate of a red cotton handkerchief a head. This is very cheap, and it is a great abridgment of the sacred right of self-government to hang men for engaging in this profitable trade.

Another important objection to this application of the right of self-government is that it enables the first few to deprive the succeeding many of a free exercise of the

right of self-government. The first few may get slavery in, and the subsequent many cannot easily get it out. How common is the remark now in the slave states, "If we were only clear of our slaves, how much better it would be for us." They are actually deprived of the privilege of governing themselves as they would, by the action of a very few in the beginning. The same thing was true of the whole nation at the time our Constitution was formed.

Whether slavery shall go into Nebraska, or other new territories, is not a matter of exclusive concern to the people who may go there. The whole nation is interested that the best use shall be made of these territories. We want them for homes of free white people. This they cannot be, to any considerable extent, if slavery shall be planted within them. Slave states are places for poor white people to remove from, not to remove to. New free states are the places for poor people to go to, and better their condition. For this use the nation needs these territories.

Still further: there are constitutional relations between the slave and free states which are degrading to the latter. We are under legal obligations to catch and return their runaway slaves to them: a sort of dirty, disagreeable job, which, I believe, as a general rule, the slaveholders will not perform for one another. Then again, in the control of the government—the management of the partnership affairs—they have greatly the advantage of us. By the Constitution each state has two senators, each has a number of representatives in proportion to the number of its people, and each has a number of presidential electors equal to the whole number of its senators and representatives together. But in ascertaining the number of the people for this purpose, five slaves were counted as being equal to three whites. The slaves do not vote; they are only counted, and so used to swell the influence of the white people's

votes. The practical effect of this is more aptly shown by a comparison of the states of South Carolina and Maine. South Carolina has six representatives, and so has Maine; South Carolina has eight presidential electors, and so has Maine. This is precise equality so far; and, of course they are equal in senators, each having two. Thus in the control of the government the two states are equals precisely. But how are they in the number of their white people? Maine has 581,813, while South Carolina has 274,567; Maine has twice as many as South Carolina, and 32,679 over. Thus, each white man in South Carolina is more than the double of any man in Maine. This is all because South Carolina, besides her free people, has 384,984 slaves. The South Carolinian has precisely the same advantage over the white man in every other free state as well as in Maine. He is more than the double of any one of us in this crowd. The same advantage, but not to the same extent, is held by all the citizens of the slave states over those of the free; and it is an absolute truth, without an exception, that there is no voter in any slave state, but who has more legal power in the government than any voter in any free state. There is no instance of exact equality; and the disadvantage is against us the whole chapter through. This principle, in the aggregate, gives the slave states in the present Congress twenty additional representatives, being seven more than the whole majority by which they passed the Nebraska Bill.

Now all this is manifestly unfair; yet I do not mention it to complain of it, in so far as it is already settled. It is in the Constitution, and I do not for that cause, or any other cause, propose to destroy, or alter, or disregard the Constitution. I stand to it, fairly, fully, and firmly.

But when I am told I must leave it altogether to other people to say whether new partners are to be bred up and brought into the firm, on the same degrading terms

against me, I respectfully demur. I insist that whether I shall be a whole man, or only the half of one, in comparison with others, is a question in which I am somewhat concerned, and one which no other man can have a sacred right of deciding for me. If I am wrong in this—if it really be a sacred right of self-government in the man who shall go to Nebraska to decide whether he will be the equal of me or the double of me, then, after he shall have exercised that right, and thereby shall have reduced me to a still smaller fraction of a man than I already am, I should like for some gentleman, deeply skilled in the mysteries of sacred rights, to provide himself with a microscope, and peep about, and find out, if he can, what has become of my sacred rights. They will surely be too small for detection with the naked eye.

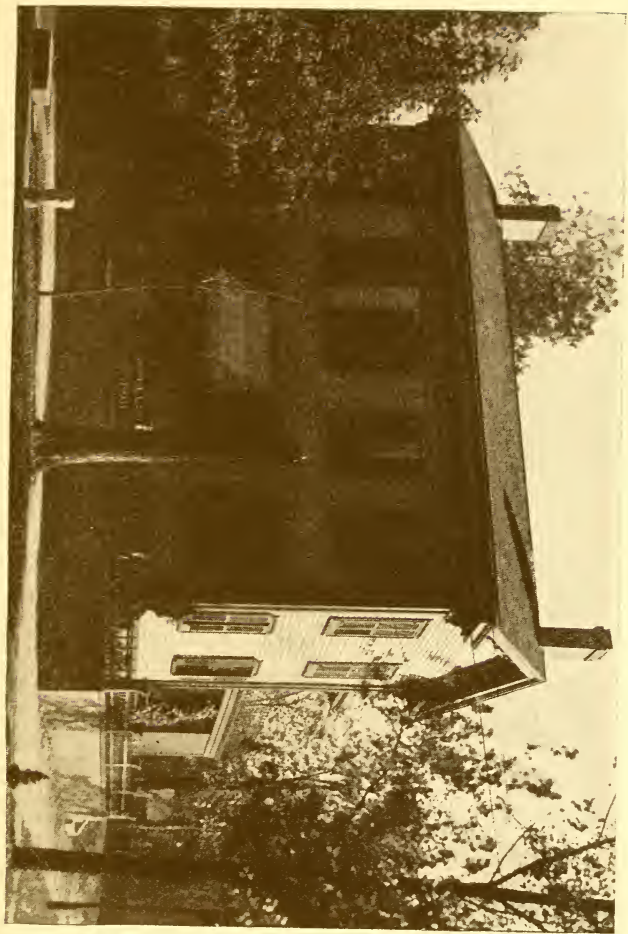
Finally, I insist that if there is anything which it is the duty of the whole people to never intrust to any hands but their own, that thing is the preservation and perpetuity of their own liberties and institutions. And if they shall think, as I do, that the extension of slavery endangers them more than any or all other causes, how recreant to themselves if they submit the question, and with it the fate of their country, to a mere handful of men bent only on self-interest. If this question of slavery extension were an insignificant one—one having no power to do harm—it might be shuffled aside in this way; and being, as it is, the great Behemoth \* of danger, shall the strong grip of the nation be loosened upon him, to intrust him to the hands of such feeble keepers?

I have done with this mighty argument of self-government. Go, sacred thing! Go in peace.

But Nebraska is urged as a great Union-saving measure. Well, I too go for saving the Union. Much as I hate slavery, I would consent to the extension of it rather than see the Union dissolved, just as I would

\* Job, xl, 15.





THE LINCOLN HOME, SPRINGFIELD



consent to any great evil to avoid a greater one. But when I go to Union-saving, I must believe, at least, that the means I employ have some adaptation to the end. To my mind, Nebraska has no such adaptation.

"It hath no relish of salvation in it."\*

It is an aggravation, rather, of the only one thing which ever endangers the Union. When it came upon us, all was peace and quiet. The nation was looking to the forming of new bonds of union, and a long course of peace and prosperity seemed to lie before us. In the whole range of possibility, there scarcely appears to me to have been anything out of which the slavery agitation could have been revived, except the very project of repealing the Missouri Compromise. Every inch of territory we owned already had a definite settlement of the slavery question, by which all parties were pledged to abide. Indeed, there was no uninhabited country on the continent which we could acquire, if we except some extreme northern regions which are wholly out of the question.

In this state of affairs the Genius of Discord himself could scarcely have invented a way of again setting us by the ears but by turning back and destroying the peace measures of the past. The counsels of that Genius seem to have prevailed. The Missouri Compromise was repealed; and here we are in the midst of a new slavery agitation, such, I think, as we have never seen before. Who is responsible for this? Is it those who resist the measure, or those who causelessly brought it forward and pressed it through, having reason to know, and in fact knowing, it must and would be resisted? It could not but be expected by its author that it would be looked upon as a measure for the extension of slavery, aggravated by a gross breach of faith.

Argue as you will and long as you will, this is the naked front and aspect of the measure. And in this

\* Hamlet, Act III, Scene iii. Not an exact quotation.

aspect it could not but produce agitation. Slavery is founded in the selfishness of man's nature—opposition to it in his love of justice. These principles are an eternal antagonism, and when brought into collision so fiercely as slavery extension brings them, shocks and throes and convulsions must ceaselessly follow. Repeal the Missouri Compromise, repeal all compromises, repeal the Declaration of Independence, repeal all past history, you still cannot repeal human nature. It still will be the abundance of man's heart that slavery extension is wrong, and out of the abundance of his heart his mouth will continue to speak.\*

The structure, too, of the Nebraska bill is very peculiar. The people are to decide the question of slavery for themselves; but when they are to decide or how they are to decide, or whether, when the question is once decided, it is to remain so or is to be subject to an indefinite succession of new trials, the law does not say. Is it to be decided by the first dozen settlers who arrive there, or is it to await the arrival of a hundred? Is it to be decided by a vote of the people or a vote of the legislature, or indeed, by a vote of any sort? To these questions the law gives no answer. There is a mystery about this; for when a member proposed to give the legislature express authority to exclude slavery, it was hooted down by the friends of the bill. This fact is worth remembering. Some Yankees in the East are sending emigrants to Nebraska to exclude slavery from it; and, so far as I can judge, they expect the question to be decided by voting in some way or other. But the Missourians are awake, too. They are within a stone's throw of the contested ground. They hold meetings and pass resolutions, in which not the slightest allusion to voting is made. They resolve that slavery already exists in the territory; that more shall go there; that they, remaining in Missouri, will protect it, and that

\* See Matthew, xii, 34; Luke, vi, 45.

Abolitionists shall be hung or driven away. Through all this bowie-knives and six-shooters are seen plainly enough, but never a glimpse of the ballot-box.

And really, what is the result of all this? Each party within having numerous and determined backers without, is it not probable that the contest will come to blows and bloodshed? Could there be a more apt invention to bring about collision and violence on the slavery question than this Nebraska project is? I do not charge or believe that such was intended by Congress; but if they had literally formed a ring and placed champions within it to fight out the controversy, the fight could be no more likely to come off than it is. And if this fight should begin, is it likely to take a very peaceful, Union-saving turn? Will not the first drop of blood so shed be the real knell of the Union?

The Missouri Compromise ought to be restored. For the sake of the Union, it ought to be restored. We ought to elect a House of Representatives which will vote its restoration. If by any means we omit to do this, what follows? Slavery may or may not be established in Nebraska. But whether it be or not, we shall have repudiated—discarded from the councils of the nation—the spirit of compromise; for who, after this, will ever trust in a national compromise? The spirit of mutual concession—that spirit which first gave us the Constitution, and which has thrice saved the Union—we shall have strangled and cast from us forever. And what shall we have in lieu of it? The South, flushed with triumph and tempted to excess; the North, betrayed as they believe, brooding on wrong and burning for revenge. One side will provoke, the other resent. The one will taunt, the other defy; one aggresses, the other retaliates. Already a few in the North defy all constitutional restraints, resist the execution of the fugitive-slave law, and even menace the institution of slavery in the states where it exists. Already a few in the South claim the

constitutional right to take and to hold slaves in the free states—demand the revival of the slave-trade—and demand a treaty with Great Britain by which fugitive slaves may be reclaimed from Canada. As yet they are but few on either side. It is a grave question for lovers of the Union, whether the final destruction of the Missouri Compromise, and with it the spirit of all compromise, will or will not embolden and embitter each of these, and fatally increase the number of both.

But restore the compromise, and what then? We thereby restore the national faith, the national confidence, the national feeling of brotherhood. We thereby reinstate the spirit of concession and compromise, that spirit which has never failed us in past perils, and which may be safely trusted for all the future. The South ought to join in doing this. The peace of the nation is as dear to them as to us. In memories of the past and hopes of the future, they share as largely as we. It would be on their part a great act—great in its spirit, and great in its effect. It would be worth to the nation a hundred years' purchase of peace and prosperity. And what of sacrifice would they make? They only surrender to us what they gave us for a consideration long, long ago; what they have not now asked for, struggled or cared for; what has been thrust upon them not less to their astonishment than to ours.

But it is said we cannot restore it; that though we elect every member of the lower House, the Senate is still against us. It is quite true that of the senators who passed the Nebraska bill, a majority of the whole Senate will retain their seats in spite of the elections of this and the next year. But if at these elections their several constituencies shall clearly express their will against Nebraska, will these Senators disregard their will? Will they neither obey nor make room for those who will?

But even if we fail to technically restore the com-

promise, it is still a great point to carry a popular vote in favor of the restoration. The moral weight of such a vote cannot be estimated too highly. The authors of Nebraska are not at all satisfied with the destruction of the compromise—an indorsement of this principle they proclaim to be the great object. With them, Nebraska alone is a small matter—to establish a principle for future use is what they particularly desire.

The future use is to be the planting of slavery wherever in the wide world local and unorganized opposition cannot prevent it. Now, if you wish to give them this indorsement, if you wish to establish this principle, do so. I shall regret it, but it is your right. On the contrary, if you are opposed to the principle—intend to give it no such indorsement—let no wheedling, no sophistry, divert you from throwing a direct vote against it.

Some men, mostly Whigs, who condemn the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, nevertheless hesitate to go for its restoration, lest they be thrown in company with the Abolitionists. Will they allow me, as an old Whig, to tell them, good-humoredly, that I think this is very silly? Stand with anybody that stands right. Stand with him while he is right, and part with him when he goes wrong. Stand with the Abolitionist in restoring the Missouri Compromise, and stand against him when he attempts to repeal the fugitive-slave law. In the latter case you stand with the Southern disunionist. What of that? You are still right. In both cases you are right. In both cases you expose the dangerous extremes. In both you stand on middle ground, and hold the ship level and steady. In both you are national, and nothing less than national. This is the good old Whig ground. To desert such ground because of any company, is to be less than a Whig—less than a man—less than an American.

I particularly object to the new position which the avowed principle of this Nebraska law gives to slavery

in the body politic. I object to it because it assumes that there can be moral right in the enslaving of one man by another. I object to it as a dangerous dalliance for a free people—a sad evidence that, feeling prosperity, we forget right; that liberty, as a principle, we have ceased to revere. I object to it because the fathers of the republic eschewed and rejected it. The argument of “necessity” was the only argument they ever admitted in favor of slavery; and so far, and so far only, as it carried them did it ever go. They found the institution existing among us, which they could not help, and they cast blame upon the British king for having permitted its introduction. Before the Constitution they prohibited its introduction into the Northwestern Territory, the only country we owned then free from it. At the framing and adoption of the Constitution, they forbore to so much as mention the word “slave” or “slavery” in the whole instrument. In the provision for the recovery of fugitives, the slave is spoken of as a “person held in service or labor.” In that prohibiting the abolition of the African slave-trade for twenty years, that trade is spoken of as “the migration or importation of such persons as any of the states now existing shall think proper to admit,” etc. These are the only provisions alluding to slavery. Thus the thing is hid away in the Constitution, just as an afflicted man hides away a wen or cancer which he dares not cut out at once, lest he bleed to death—with the promise, nevertheless, that the cutting may begin at a certain time. Less than this our fathers could not do, and more they would not do. Necessity drove them so far, and further they would not go. But this is not all. The earliest Congress under the Constitution took the same view of slavery. They hedged and hemmed it in to the narrowest limits of necessity.

In 1794 they prohibited an outgoing slave-trade—that is the taking of slaves from the United States to sell. In 1798 they prohibited the bringing of slaves from



Africa into the Mississippi Territory, this territory then comprising what are now the states of Mississippi and Alabama. This was ten years before they had the authority to do the same thing as to the states existing at the adoption of the Constitution. In 1800 they prohibited American citizens from trading in slaves between foreign countries, as, for instance, from Africa to Brazil. In 1803 they passed a law in aid of one or two slave-state laws, in restraint of the internal slave-trade. In 1807, in apparent hot haste, they passed the law, nearly a year in advance—to take effect the first day of 1808, the very first day the Constitution would permit—prohibiting the African slave-trade by heavy pecuniary and corporal penalties. In 1820, finding these provisions ineffectual, they declared the slave-trade piracy, and affixed to it the extreme penalty of death. While all this was passing in the General Government, five or six of the original slave states had adopted systems of gradual emancipation, by which the institution was rapidly becoming extinct within their limits. Thus we see that the plain, unmistakable spirit of that age toward slavery was hostility to the principle and toleration only by necessity.

But now it is to be transformed into a "sacred right." Nebraska brings it forth, places it on the highroad to extension and perpetuity, and with a pat on its back says to it, "Go, and God speed you." Henceforth it is to be the chief jewel of the nation—the very figurehead of the Ship of State. Little by little, but steadily as man's march to the grave, we have been giving up the old for the new faith. Near eighty years ago we began by declaring that all men are created equal; but now from that beginning we have run down to the other declaration, that for some men to enslave others is a "sacred right of self-government." These principles cannot stand together. They are as opposite as God and Mammon; and whoever holds to the one must despise

the other. When Pettit,\* in connection with his support of the Nebraska bill, called the Declaration of Independence "a self-evident lie," he only did what consistency and candor require all other Nebraska men to do. Of the forty-odd Nebraska senators who sat present and heard him, no one rebuked him. Nor am I apprised that any Nebraska newspaper, or any Nebraska orator, in the whole nation has ever yet rebuked him. If this had been said among Marion's men, Southerners though they were, what would have become of the man who said it? If this had been said to the men who captured André, the man who said it would probably have been hung sooner than André was. If it had been said in old Independence Hall seventy-eight years ago, the very doorkeeper would have throttled the man and thrust him into the street. Let no one be deceived. The spirit of seventy-six and the spirit of Nebraska are utter antagonisms; and the former is being rapidly displaced by the latter.

Fellow-countrymen, Americans, South as well as North, shall we make no effort to arrest this? Already the liberal party throughout the world express the apprehension "that the one retrograde institution in America is undermining the principles of progress, and fatally violating the noblest political system the world ever saw." This is not the taunt of enemies, but the warning of friends. Is it quite safe to disregard it—to despise it? Is there no danger to liberty itself in discarding the earliest practice and first precept of our ancient faith? In our greedy chase to make profit of the negro, let us beware lest we "cancel and tear in pieces" even the white man's charter of freedom.

Our republican robe is soiled and trailed in the dust. Let us re-purify it. Let us turn and wash it white in the spirit, if not the blood, of the Revolution. Let us turn slavery from its claims of "moral right" back upon its

\* John Pettit, senator from Indiana.

existing legal rights and its arguments of "necessity." Let us return it to the position our fathers gave it, and there let it rest in peace. Let us readopt the Declaration of Independence, and with it the practices and policy which harmonize with it. Let North and South—let all Americans—let all lovers of liberty everywhere join in the great and good work. If we do this, we shall not only have saved the Union, but we shall have so saved it as to make and to keep it forever worthy of the saving. We shall have so saved it that the succeeding millions of free, happy people, the world over, shall rise up and call us blessed to the latest generations.

At Springfield, twelve days ago, where I had spoken substantially as I have here, Judge Douglas replied to me; and as he is to reply to me here, I shall attempt to anticipate him by noticing some of the points he made there. He commenced by stating I had assumed all the way through that the principle of the Nebraska bill would have the effect of extending slavery. He denied that this was intended, or that this effect would follow.

I will not reopen the argument upon this point. That such was the intention the world believed at the start, and will continue to believe. This was the countenance of the thing, and both friends and enemies instantly recognized it as such. That countenance cannot now be changed by argument. You can as easily argue the color out of the negro's skin. Like the "bloody hand,"\* though you may wash it and wash it, the red witness of guilt still sticks and stares horribly at you.

Next he says that congressional intervention never prevented slavery anywhere; that it did not prevent it in the Northwestern Territory, nor in Illinois; that, in fact, Illinois came into the Union as a slave state; that the principle of the Nebraska bill expelled it from Illinois, from several old states, from everywhere.

Now this is mere quibbling all the way through. If

\* *Macbeth*, Act II, Scene ii.

the ordinance of '87 did not keep slavery out of the Northwest Territory, how happens it that the northwest shore of the Ohio River is entirely free from it, while the southeast shore, less than a mile distant, along nearly the whole length of the river, is entirely covered with it?

If that ordinance did not keep it out of Illinois, what was it that made the difference between Illinois and Missouri? They lie side by side, the Mississippi River only dividing them, while their early settlements were within the same latitude. Between 1810 and 1820, the number of slaves in Missouri increased 7,211, while in Illinois, in the same ten years they decreased 51. This appears by the census returns. During nearly all of that ten years both were territories, not states. During this time the ordinance forbade slavery to go into Illinois, and nothing forbade it to go into Missouri. It did go into Missouri, and did not go into Illinois. That is the fact. Can anyone doubt as to the reason of it? But he says Illinois came into the Union as a slave state. Silence, perhaps, would be the best answer to this flat contradiction of the known history of the country. What are the facts upon which this bold assertion is based? When we first acquired the country, as far back as 1787, there were some slaves within it held by the French inhabitants of Kaskaskia. The territorial legislation admitted a few negroes from the slave states as indentured servants. One year after the adoption of the first state constitution, the whole number of them was—what do you think? Just one hundred and seventeen, while the aggregate free population was 55,094—about four hundred and seventy to one. Upon this state of facts the people framed their constitution prohibiting the further introduction of slavery, with a sort of guarantee to the owners of the few indentured servants, giving freedom to their children to be born thereafter, and making no mention whatever of any supposed slave for life. Out

of this small matter the Judge manufactures his argument that Illinois came into the Union as a slave state. Let the facts be the answer to the argument.

The principles of the Nebraska bill, he says, expelled slavery from Illinois. The principle of that bill first planted it here—that is, it first came because there was no law to prevent it, first came before we owned the country; and finding it here, and having the ordinance of '87 to prevent its increasing, our people struggled along, and finally got rid of it as best they could.

But the principle of the Nebraska bill abolished slavery in several of the old states. Well, it is true that several of the old states, in the last quarter of the last century, did adopt systems of gradual emancipation by which the institution has finally become extinct within their limits; but it may or may not be true that the principle of the Nebraska bill was the cause that led to the adoption of these measures. It is now more than fifty years since the last of these states adopted its system of emancipation.

If the Nebraska bill is the real author of these benevolent works, it is rather deplorable that it has for so long a time ceased working altogether. Is there not some reason to suspect that it was the principle of the Revolution, and not the principle of the Nebraska bill, that led to emancipation in these old states? Leave it to the people of these old emancipating states, and I am quite certain they will decide that neither that nor any other good thing ever did or ever will come of the Nebraska bill.

In the course of my main argument, Judge Douglas interrupted me to say that the principle of the Nebraska bill was very old; that it originated when God made man, and placed good and evil before him, allowing him to choose for himself, being responsible for the choice he should make. At the time I thought this was merely playful, and I answered it accordingly. But in his reply

to me he renewed it as a serious argument. In seriousness, then, the facts of this proposition are not true as stated. God did not place good and evil before man, telling him to make his choice. On the contrary, he did tell him there was one tree of the fruit of which he should not eat, upon pain of certain death. I should scarcely wish so strong a prohibition against slavery in Nebraska.

But this argument strikes me as not a little remarkable in another particular—in its strong resemblance to the old argument for the “divine right of kings.” By the latter, the king is to do just as he pleases with his white subjects, being responsible to God alone. By the former, the white man is to do just as he pleases with his black slaves, being responsible to God alone. The two things are precisely alike, and it is but natural that they should find similar arguments to sustain them.

I had argued that the application of the principle of self-government, as contended for, would require the revival of the African slave-trade; that no argument could be made in favor of a man’s right to take slaves to Nebraska which could not be equally well made in favor of his right to bring them from the coast of Africa. The Judge replied that the Constitution requires the suppression of the foreign slave-trade, but does not require the prohibition of slavery in the territories. That is a mistake in point of fact. The Constitution does not require the action of Congress in either case, and it does authorize it in both. And so there is still no difference between the cases.

In regard to what I have said of the advantage the slave states have over the free in the matter of representation, the Judge replied that we in the free states count five free negroes as five white people, while in the slave states they count five slaves three whites only, and that the advantage, at last, was on the side of the free states.

Now, in the slave states they count free negroes just as we do; and it so happens that, besides their slaves, they have as many free negroes as we have, and thirty thousand over. Thus, their free negroes more than balance ours; and their advantage over us, in consequence of their slaves, still remains as I stated it.

In reply to my argument that the compromise measures of 1850 were a system of equivalents, and that the provisions of no one of them could fairly be carried to other subjects, without its corresponding equivalent being carried with it, the Judge denied outright that these measures had any connection with or dependence upon each other. This is mere desperation. If they had no connection, why are they always spoken of in connection? Why has he so spoken of them a thousand times? Why has he constantly called them a series of measures? Why does everybody call them a compromise? Why was California kept out of the Union six or seven months, if it was not because of its connection with the other measures? Webster's leading definition of the verb "to compromise" is "to adjust and settle a difference, by mutual agreement, with concessions of claims by the parties." This conveys precisely the popular understanding of the word "compromise."

We knew, before the Judge told us, that these measures passed separately, and in distinct bills, and that no two of them were passed by the votes of precisely the same members. But we also know, and so does he know, that no one of them could have passed both branches of Congress but for the understanding that the others were to pass also. Upon this understanding, each got votes which it could have got in no other way. It is this fact which gives to the measures their true character; and it is the universal knowledge of this fact that has given them the name of "compromises," so expressive of that true character.

I had asked "if, in carrying the Utah and New Mexico

laws to Nebraska, you could clear away other objection, how could you leave Nebraska 'perfectly free' to introduce slavery before she forms a constitution during her territorial government, while the Utah and New Mexico laws only authorize it when they form constitutions and are admitted into the Union?" To this Judge Douglas answered that the Utah and New Mexico laws also authorized it before; and to prove this he read from one of their laws, as follows: "That the legislative power of said territory shall extend to all rightful subjects of legislation, consistent with the Constitution of the United States and the provisions of this act."

Now it is perceived from the reading of this that there is nothing express upon the subject, but that the authority is sought to be implied merely for the general provision of "all rightful subjects of legislation." In reply to this I insist, as a legal rule of construction, as well as the plain, popular view of the matter, that the express provision for Utah and New Mexico coming in with slavery, if they choose, when they shall form Constitutions, is an exclusion of all implied authority on the same subject; that Congress, having the subject distinctly in their minds when they made the express provision, they therein expressed their whole meaning on that subject.

The Judge rather insinuated that I had found it convenient to forget the Washington territorial law passed in 1853. This was a division of Oregon organizing the northern part as the Territory of Washington. He asserted that by this act the ordinance of '87, theretofore existing in Oregon, was repealed; that nearly all the members of Congress voted for it, beginning in the House of Representatives with Charles Allen of Massachusetts, and ending with Richard Yates of Illinois; and that he could not understand how those who now oppose the Nebraska bill so voted there, unless it was because it was then too soon after both the great political parties



had ratified the compromises of 1850, and the ratification therefore was too fresh to be then repudiated.

Now I have seen the Washington act before, and I have carefully examined it since; and I aver that there is no repeal of the ordinance of '87, or of any prohibition of slavery, in it. In express terms, there is absolutely nothing in the whole law upon the subject—in fact, nothing to lead a reader to think of the subject. To my judgment it is equally free from everything from which repeal can be legally implied; but however this may be, are men now to be entrapped by a legal implication, extracted from covert language, introduced perhaps for the very purpose of entrapping them? I sincerely wish every man could read this law quite through, carefully watching every sentence and every line for a repeal of the ordinance of '87, or anything equivalent to it.

Another point on the Washington act. If it was intended to be modeled after the Utah and New Mexico acts, as Judge Douglas insists, why was it not inserted in it, as in them, that Washington was to come in with or without slavery as she may choose at the adoption of her constitution? It has no such provision in it; and I defy the ingenuity of man to give a reason for the omission, other than that it was not intended to follow the Utah and New Mexico laws in regard to the question of slavery.

The Washington act not only differs vitally from the Utah and New Mexico acts, but the Nebraska act differs vitally from both. By the later act the people are left "perfectly free" to regulate their own domestic concerns, etc.; but in all the former, all their laws are to be submitted to Congress, and if disapproved are to be null. The Washington act goes even further; it absolutely prohibits the territorial legislature, by very strong and guarded language, from establishing banks or borrowing money on the faith of the territory. Is this the sacred right of self-government we hear vaunted so much? No,

sir; the Nebraska bill finds no model in the acts of '50 or the Washington act. It finds no model in any law from Adam till today. As Phillips says of Napoleon, the Nebraska act is "grand, gloomy, and peculiar, wrapped in the solitude of its own originality, without a model and without a shadow upon the earth."

In the course of his reply Senator Douglas remarked in substance that he had always considered this government was made for the white people and not for the negroes. Why, in point of mere fact, I think so too. But in this remark of the Judge there is a significance which I think is the key to the great mistake (if there is any such mistake) which he has made in this Nebraska measure. It shows that the Judge has no very vivid impression that the negro is human, and consequently has no idea that there can be any moral question in legislating about him. In his view the question of whether a new country shall be slave or free, is a matter of as utter indifference as it is whether his neighbor shall plant his farm with tobacco or stock it with horned cattle. Now, whether this view is right or wrong, it is very certain that the great mass of mankind take a totally different view. They consider slavery a great moral wrong, and their feeling against it is not evanescent, but eternal. It lies at the very foundation of their sense of justice, and it cannot be trifled with. It is a great and durable element of popular action, and I think no statesman can safely disregard it.

Our senator also objects that those who oppose him in this matter do not entirely agree with one another. He reminds me that in my firm adherence to the constitutional rights of the slave states, I differ widely from others who are coöperating with me in opposing the Nebraska bill, and he says it is not quite fair to oppose him in this variety of ways. He should remember that he took us by surprise—astounded us by this measure. We were thunderstruck and stunned, and we reeled and

fell in utter confusion. But we rose, each fighting, grasping whatever he could first reach—a scythe, a pitchfork, a chopping-ax, or a butcher's cleaver. We struck in the direction of the sound, and we were rapidly closing in upon him. He must not think to divert us from our purpose by showing us that our drill, our dress, and our weapons are not entirely perfect and uniform. When the storm shall be past he shall find us still Americans, no less devoted to the continued union and prosperity of the country than heretofore.

Finally, the Judge invokes against me the memory of Clay and Webster. They were great men, and men of great deeds. But where have I assailed them? For what is it that their lifelong enemy shall now make profit by assuming to defend them against me, their lifelong friend? I go against the repeal of the Missouri Compromise; did they ever go for it? They went for the compromises of 1850; did I ever go against them? They were greatly devoted to the Union; to the small measure of my ability was I ever less so? Clay and Webster were dead before this question arose; by what authority shall our senator say they would espouse his side of it if alive? Mr. Clay was the leading spirit in making the Missouri Compromise; is it very credible that if now alive he would take the lead in the breaking of it? The truth is that some support from Whigs is now a necessity with the Judge, and for this it is that the names of Clay and Webster are invoked. His old friends have deserted him in such numbers as to leave too few to live by. He came to his own, and his own received him not; and lo! he turns unto the Gentiles.

A word now as to the Judge's desperate assumption that the compromises of 1850 had no connection with one another; that Illinois came into the Union as a slave state, and some other similar ones. This is no other than a bold denial of the history of the country. If we do not know that the compromises of 1850 were dependent

on each other; if we do not know that Illinois came into the Union as a free state—we do not know anything. If we do not know these things, we do not know that we ever had a Revolutionary war or such a chief as Washington. To deny these things is to deny our national axioms—or dogmas, at least—and it puts an end to all argument. If a man will stand up and assert, and repeat and reassert, that two and two do not make four, I know nothing in the power of argument that can stop him. I think I can answer the Judge so long as he sticks to the premises; but when he flies from them, I cannot work any argument into the consistency of a mental gag and actually close his mouth with it. In such a case I can only commend him to the seventy thousand answers just in from Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana.\*

After the Peoria speech Lincoln and Douglas came to an agreement not to continue the debate. The legislative elections resulted in a defeat for the Douglas adherents, who were in a minority. The majority was composed of Anti-Nebraska Democrats, Free-soilers, and Whigs, the last far outnumbering the others. Of this element Lincoln became the chosen candidate for the United States Senate and was compelled under the state law to resign from the legislature. He was certain of the Whigs and Free-soilers, but five Anti-Nebraska Democrats refused to vote for any Whig, and supported Lyman Trumbull. After nine ballots, Lincoln, in order to secure the election of an opponent of the Kansas-Nebraska act, withdrew in favor of Trumbull, who was elected.

All through the West the Anti-Nebraska men were organizing under various names. It soon developed that Republican was a favorite name, due to the fact that they claimed to be the followers of Thomas Jefferson, the founder of the original Republican party and formulator of its principles. A Republican state organization was perfected at Springfield in the autumn of 1854 and Lincoln was, without his knowledge, placed on the executive committee. He was not yet certain of where

\* These three states were all carried in the elections by Anti-Nebraska candidates. The allusion is to their combined majorities.

he stood politically. Was the Whig party dead? It seemed so, but there was no certainty of the fact. He suspected the Republicans of abolitionist sympathies and tendencies and knew that if this were true he did not belong in their fold. Even if it were not, it was uncertain if they would gain sufficient strength to accomplish anything. He therefore wrote this letter:

*TO I. CODDING*

Springfield, November 27, 1854

I. Coddig, Esq.

DEAR SIR: Your note of the 13th requesting my attendance at the Republican State Central Committee, on the 17th instant at Chicago, was, owing to my absence from home, received on the evening of that day (17th) only. While I have pen in hand allow me to say I have been perplexed some to understand why my name was placed on that committee. I was not consulted on the subject, nor was I apprised of the appointment until I discovered it by accident two or three weeks afterward. I suppose my opposition to the principle of slavery is as strong as that of any member of the Republican party; but I have also supposed that the extent to which I feel authorized to carry that opposition, practically, was not at all satisfactory to that party. The leading men who organized that party were present on the 4th of October at the discussion between Douglas and myself at Springfield, and had full opportunity to not misunderstand my position. Do I misunderstand them? Please write and inform me.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN

In the meantime he was reaching a more fixed opinion in respect to the significance of the slavery question. Soon after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska act he and Judge T. Lyle Dickey were on circuit together, sharing the same room. After an evening spent in discussing the question with others they went to their room and after undressing continued to argue

for some time. When Judge Dickey woke up, early the next morning, Lincoln was sitting up in bed and said, "Dickey, I tell you this nation cannot exist half slave and half free." He considered the idea further and in the following letter it is again expressed. George Robertson, to whom it is addressed, was a professor of law in Transylvania University who had been a member of Congress and Chief Justice of Kentucky.

*TO GEORGE ROBERTSON*

Springfield, Ill., August 15, 1855

Hon. George Robertson, Lexington, Kentucky.

MY DEAR SIR: The volume you left for me has been received. I am really grateful for the honor of your kind remembrance, as well as for the book. The partial reading I have already given it has afforded me much of both pleasure and instruction. It was new to me that the exact question which led to the Missouri Compromise had arisen before it arose in regard to Missouri, and that you had taken so prominent a part in it. Your short but able and patriotic speech upon that occasion has not been improved upon since by those holding the same views, and with all the lights you then had, the views you took appear to me as very reasonable.

You are not a friend of slavery in the abstract. In that speech you spoke of "the peaceful extinction of slavery" and used other expressions indicating your belief that the thing was, at some time, to have an end. Since then we have had thirty-six years of experience; and this experience has demonstrated, I think, that there is no peaceful extinction of slavery in prospect for us. The signal failure of Henry Clay and other good and great men, in 1849, to effect anything in favor of gradual emancipation in Kentucky, together with a thousand other signs, extinguished that hope utterly. On the question of liberty, as a principle, we are not what we have been. When we were the political slaves of King George, and wanted to be free, we called the maxim that

“all men are created equal” a self-evident truth, but now when we have grown fat, and have lost all dread of being slaves ourselves, we have become so greedy to be masters that we call the same maxim “a self-evident lie.” The Fourth of July has not quite dwindled away; it is still a great day—for burning fire-crackers!

That spirit which desired the peaceful extinction of slavery has itself become extinct with the occasion and the men of the Revolution. Under the impulse of that occasion, nearly half the states adopted systems of emancipation at once, and it is a significant fact that not a single state has done the like since. So far as peaceful, voluntary emancipation is concerned, the condition of the negro slave in America, scarcely less terrible to the contemplation of a free mind, is now as fixed and hopeless of change for the better as that of the lost souls of the finally impenitent. The Autocrat of all the Russias will resign his crown and proclaim his subjects free Republicans,\* sooner than will our American masters voluntarily give up their slaves.

Our political problem now is, “Can we as a nation continue together *permanently—forever*—half slave, and half free?” The problem is too mighty for me—may God in his mercy superintend the solution.

Your much obliged friend, and humble servant,

A. LINCOLN

Lincoln’s moderation at this time, as seen in his frank expression of belief in the necessity of protecting slave property where it existed, made him very unpopular with the Abolitionists who called him, “The Slave Hound of Illinois.” On the other hand the Illinois Whigs were afraid of his agitation against the Kansas-Nebraska act. His friend, Joshua Speed, wrote him, asking where he stood, and received this reply:

\* The Czar of Russia proclaimed the emancipation of the serfs the day before Lincoln was inaugurated President of the United States.

TO JOSHUA F. SPEED

Springfield, August 24, 1855

DEAR SPEED: You know what a poor correspondent I am. Ever since I received your very agreeable letter of the 22d of May I have been intending to write you an answer to it. You suggest that in political action now, you and I would differ. I suppose we would; not quite as much, however, as you may think. You know I dislike slavery, and you fully admit the abstract wrong of it. So far there is no cause of difference. But you say that sooner than yield your legal right to the slave, especially at the bidding of those who are not themselves interested, you would see the Union dissolved. I am not aware that anyone is bidding you yield that right; very certainly I am not. I leave that matter entirely to yourself. I also acknowledge your rights and my obligations under the Constitution in regard to your slaves. I confess I hate to see the poor creatures hunted down and caught and carried back to their stripes and unrequited toil; but I bite my lips and keep quiet. In 1841, you and I had together a tedious low-water trip on a steamboat, from Louisville to St. Louis. You may remember, as I well do, that from Louisville to the mouth of the Ohio, there were on board ten or a dozen slaves shackled together with irons. That sight was a continued torment to me, and I see something like it every time I touch the Ohio or any other slave border. It is not fair for you to assume that I have no interest in a thing which has, and continually exercises, the power of making me miserable. You ought rather to appreciate how much the great body of the Northern people do crucify their feelings in order to maintain their loyalty to the Constitution and the Union. I do oppose the extension of slavery, because my judgment and feeling so prompt me, and I am under no obligations to the contrary. If for this you and I must differ, differ we must. You say if you were President, you would



send an army and hang the leaders of the Missouri outrages upon the Kansas elections; still, if Kansas fairly votes herself a slave state she must be admitted, or the Union must be dissolved. But how if she votes herself a slave state unfairly; that is, by the very means for which you say you would hang men? Must she still be admitted, or the Union dissolved? That will be the phase of the question when it first becomes a practical one. In your assumption that there may be a fair decision of the slavery question in Kansas, I plainly see you and I would differ about the Nebraska law. I look upon that enactment, not as a law, but as a violence from the beginning. It was conceived in violence, is maintained in violence, and is being executed in violence. I say it was conceived in violence, because the destruction of the Missouri Compromise, under the circumstances, was nothing less than violence. It was passed in violence, because it could not have passed at all but for the votes of many members in violence of the known will of their constituents. It is maintained in violence, because the elections since clearly demand its repeal, and the demand is openly disregarded.

You say men ought to be hung for the way they are executing the law; I say that the way it is being executed is quite as good as any of its antecedents. It is being executed in the precise way which was intended from the first, else why does no Nebraska man express astonishment or condemnation? Poor Reeder \* is the only public man who has been silly enough to believe that anything like fairness was ever intended, and he has been bravely undeceived.

That Kansas will form a slave constitution, and with it will ask to be admitted into the Union, I take to be

\* Andrew H. Reeder was the first territorial governor of Kansas, by the appointment of President Pierce. He opposed the course of the Administration in respect to Kansas affairs and resigned, becoming a member of the free-state party in Kansas.

already a settled question, and so settled by the very means you so pointedly condemn. By every principle of law ever held by any court North or South, every negro taken to Kansas is free; yet in utter disregard of this—in the spirit of violence merely—that beautiful Legislature gravely passes a law to hang any man who shall venture to inform a negro of his legal rights. This is the subject and real object of the law. If, like Haman, they should hang upon the gallows of their own building, I shall not be among the mourners for their fate. In my humble sphere, I shall advocate the restoration of the Missouri Compromise so long as Kansas remains a territory, and when, by all these foul means, it seeks to come into the Union as a slave state, I shall oppose it. I am very loath in any case to withhold my assent to the enjoyment of property acquired or located in good faith; but I do not admit that good faith in taking a negro to Kansas to be held in slavery is a probability with any man. Any man who has sense enough to be the controller of his own property has too much sense to misunderstand the outrageous character of the whole Nebraska business. But I digress. In my opposition to the admission of Kansas, I shall have some company, but we may be beaten. If we are, I shall not, on that account, attempt to dissolve the Union. I think it probable, however, we shall be beaten. Standing as a unit among yourselves, you can, directly and indirectly, bribe enough of our men to carry the day, as you could on the open proposition to establish a monarchy. Get hold of some man in the North whose position and ability are such that he can make the support of your measure, whatever it may be, a Democratic-party necessity, and the thing is done. Apropos of this, let me tell you an anecdote. Douglas introduced the Nebraska bill in January. In February afterward, there was a called session of the Illinois legislature. Of the one hundred members composing the two branches of that body, about

seventy were Democrats. These latter held a caucus, in which the Nebraska bill was talked of, if not formally discussed. It was thereby discovered that just three, and no more, were in favor of the measure. In a day or two Douglas's orders came on to have resolutions passed approving the bill; and they were passed by large majorities ! ! ! The truth of this is vouched for by a bolting Democratic member. The masses, too, Democratic as well as Whig, were even nearer unanimous against it; but as soon as the party necessity of supporting it became apparent, the way the Democrats began to see the wisdom and justice of it was perfectly astonishing.

You say that if Kansas fairly votes herself a free state, as a Christian you will rejoice at it. All decent slaveholders talk that way, and I do not doubt their candor. But they never vote that way. Although in a private letter or conversation you will express your preference that Kansas should be free, you would vote for no man for Congress who would say the same thing publicly. No such man could be elected from any district in a slave state. You think Stringfellow\* and company ought to be hung; and yet at the next presidential election you will vote for the exact type and representative of Stringfellow. The slave breeders and slave traders are a small, odious, and detested class among you; and yet in politics they dictate the course of all of you, and are as completely your masters as you are the master of your own negroes. You inquire where I now stand. That is a disputed point. I think I am a Whig; but others say there are no Whigs, and that I am an Abolitionist. When I was at Washington, I voted for the Wilmot Proviso as good as forty times; and I never heard of anyone attempting to un-Whig me for that. I now do no more than oppose the extension of slavery.

\* B. F. Stringfellow, of Missouri, an active pro-slavery partisan in Kansas.

I am not a Know-Nothing;\* that is certain. How could I be? How can anyone who abhors the oppression of negroes be in favor of degrading classes of white people? Our progress in degeneracy appears to me to be pretty rapid. As a nation, we began by declaring that "*all men are created equal.*" We now practically read it, "*all men are created equal except negroes.*" When the Know-Nothings get control, it will read, "*all men are created equal except negroes and foreigners and Catholics.*" When it comes to this, I shall prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretense of loving liberty—to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, and without the base alloy of hypocrisy.

Mary will probably pass a day or two in Louisville in October. My kindest regards to Mrs. Speed. On the leading subject of this letter I have more of her sympathy than I have of yours; and yet let me say I am your friend forever.

A. LINCOLN

When the summer of 1856 came, Lincoln was all but convinced that he belonged in the Republican party. His partner, William H. Herndon, had already joined, and had had Lincoln appointed a delegate to the state convention. When the convention met, it was found that, owing to the variety of political opinions of the members, it was apparently impossible to unite on a statement of principles. Lincoln suggested, "Let us in building our new party, make our corner stone the Declaration of Independence. Let us build on this rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against us." The suggestion was approved and adopted in a resolution which embodies Lincoln's view of the slavery situation.

*Resolved*, That we hold, in accordance with the opinions and practices of all the great statesmen of all parties for the first sixty years of the administration of the government, that under the Constitution, Congress possesses full power to prohibit

\* A secret political party based upon opposition to the participation of those of foreign birth in the affairs of government. It was also generally hostile to Catholics.

slavery in the territories; and that, while we will maintain all constitutional rights of the South, we also hold that justice, humanity, the principles of freedom, as expressed in our Declaration of Independence and our national Constitution, and the purity and perpetuity of our government require that that power should be exerted to prevent the extension of slavery into territories heretofore free."

At the time of the meeting of the convention the country was in a fury of excitement over the situation in Kansas and the Brooks assault upon Sumner. Some of Lincoln's more conservative friends had tried to keep him away from the convention, but he and the Whig party had come to the parting of the ways, and in the convention he publicly gave his adherence to the new party in a speech which, made to an audience composed of men who differed on almost every public question except the extension of slavery, was one of the most fiery in his career.

This is known as the "Lost Speech," because all the reporters except one forgot to take any notes of it. From the notes of that one, written up many years later, we get a clear idea of its character and power. It has more fire and passion than any other of his addresses and it is to be regretted that the record is not wholly accurate. In it appears the second great point made in his speeches of this period, namely, that the progress of the world and of democracy demanded the preservation of the Union, and while the North would not fight on the slavery issue, it would for the Union. The close of the speech is notable for that and for its intense excitement:

"The conclusion of all is, that we must restore the Missouri Compromise. We must resolve that Kansas *shall be free*. We must reinstate the birthday promise of the Republic; we must affirm the Declaration of Independence; we must make good in essence as well as in form Madison's avowal that 'the word *slave* ought not to appear in the Constitution'; and we must even go further, and decree that only local law, and not that time-honored instrument, shall shelter a slave-holder. We must make this a land of liberty in fact, as it is in name. But in seeking to attain these results—so indispensable if the liberty which is our pride and boast shall endure—we will be loyal to the Constitution and to the 'flag of our Union,' and no matter what our grievance—even though Kansas shall come in as a

slave state—and no matter what theirs—even if we shall restore the Compromise—we will say to the *Southern disunionists, we won't go out of the Union, and you shan't! !*

“But let us, meanwhile, appeal to the sense and patriotism of the people, and not to their prejudices; let us spread the floods of enthusiasm here aroused all over these vast prairies so suggestive of freedom. . . . There is both a power and a magic in popular opinion. To that let us now appeal; and while, in all probability, no resort to force will be needed, our moderation and forbearance will stand us in good stead when, if ever, *we must make an appeal to battle and to the God of hosts! !*”

When the first National Republican Convention met, Lincoln received one hundred and ten votes for Vice President, but, fortunately for his future, was not nominated. In the campaign he headed the Republican electoral ticket and took a very active part in the canvass, making more than fifty speeches in Illinois and the adjoining states. He was convinced that, while the people in the country could be brought to see the evils and dangers of slavery extension, they were still conservative and would not give their confidence and support to a party tainted with abolition or radicalism. His speeches, therefore, were cool and restrained throughout the campaign. This was not mere self-restraint for a political end. It well represented his own view of the matter.

There were three parties in the field, the Democrats having nominated James Buchanan, the Republicans, John C. Frémont, and the remnant of the Whigs and Know-Nothings, ex-President Millard Fillmore. As an old Whig, Lincoln's influence with the doubtful Whigs was considerable. He was actively engaged in correspondence with many of these during the campaign, the letter which follows being typical:

TO J. A. BRITTENHAM

[Confidential]

Springfield, September 17, 1856

J. A. Brittenham, Esq.

DEAR SIR: I understand you are a Fillmore man. Let us prove to you that every vote withheld from Fré-

mont, and given to Fillmore, *in this state*, actually lessens Fillmore's chance of being President.

Suppose Buchanan gets *all* the slave states, and Pennsylvania, and *any other* one state besides; *then he is elected*, no matter who gets all the rest.

But suppose Fillmore gets the two slave states of Maryland and Kentucky; *then* Buchanan is *not* elected. Fillmore goes into the House of Representatives,\* and may be made President by a compromise.

But suppose again Fillmore's friends throw away a few thousand votes on him, in *Indiana* and *Illinois*; it will inevitably give these states to Buchanan, which will more than compensate him for the loss of Maryland and Kentucky, will elect him, and leave Fillmore no chance in the H. R. or out of it.

This is as plain as the adding up of the weights of three small hogs. As Mr. Fillmore has no possible chance to carry Illinois *for himself*, it is plainly his interest to let Frémont take it, and then keep it out of the hands of Buchanan. Be not deceived. *Buchanan* is the hard horse to beat in this race. Let him have Illinois, and nothing can beat him; *and he will get Illinois*, if men persist in throwing away votes upon Mr. Fillmore. Does some one persuade you that Mr. Fillmore can carry Illinois? Nonsense! There are over seventy newspapers in Illinois opposing Buchanan, only three or four of which support Mr. Fillmore, *see* the rest going for Frémont. Are not these newspapers a fair index of the proportion of the voters? If not, tell me why. Again, if these three or four Fillmore newspapers, *two* at least, are supported, in part, by the Buchanan men, as I understand, do not they know where the shoe pinches? They know the Fillmore movement

\* If no candidate for President receives a majority of the electoral vote, the election is thrown into the House of Representatives, where each state casts one vote and a majority of all the states is necessary to an election.

helps *them*, and therefore they help *it*. Do think these things over, and then act according to your judgment.

Yours very truly,

A. LINCOLN

Buchanan's election neither surprised nor discouraged Lincoln. He was fully accustomed to defeat. He devoted himself to holding in line those who were wavering. Immediately after the inauguration he was given a new line of argument. The Supreme Court of the United States, in its decision in the Dred Scott case, declared that a negro, descended from slave parents, could not be a citizen of the United States, and that neither Congress nor a territorial government could prohibit slavery in a territory, and that therefore the Missouri Compromise was null and void. The effect of the decision in the North was to produce a violent uproar, filled with denunciation of the Court. Douglas, on the invitation of the United States grand jury, came to Springfield on June 12, and spoke in defense of the decision, which he indorsed, declaring, however, that a territory was still able, by refraining from legislation friendly to slavery, to prevent its entrance. This was the first statement of what was later called the "Freeport Doctrine." He continued, "Their judicial decisions will stand in all future time, a proud monument to their greatness, the admiration of the good and wise, and a rebuke to the partisans of faction and lawless violence. If unfortunately any considerable portion of the people of the United States shall so far forget their obligations to society as to allow the partisan leaders to array them in violent resistance to the final decision of the highest tribunal on earth, it will become the duty of all the friends of order and constitutional government, without reference to past political differences, to organize themselves and marshal their forces under the glorious banner of the Union, in vindication of the Constitution and supremacy of the laws over the advocates of faction and the champions of violence."

Two weeks later Lincoln answered him in an address to the people of Springfield, notable for its discussion of the decision. It is one of the cleverest of Lincoln's stump speeches, abounding in wit and satire. In spite of its seriousness it is full of good-natured ridicule, notably in that part in which he discusses Douglas's interpretation of the Declaration of Independence.



*SPEECH IN REPLY TO SENATOR DOUGLAS, AT  
SPRINGFIELD, ILL., JUNE 26, 1857*

FELLOW-CITIZENS: I am here tonight, partly by the invitation of some of you, and partly by my own inclination. Two weeks ago Judge Douglas spoke here on the several subjects of Kansas, the Dred Scott decision, and Utah. I listened to the speech at the time, and have the report of it since. It was intended to controvert opinions which I think just, and to assail (politically, not personally) those men who, in common with me, entertain those opinions. For this reason I wished then, and still wish, to make some answer to it, which I now take the opportunity of doing.

I begin with Utah. If it prove to be true, as is probable, that the people of Utah are in open rebellion\* against the United States, then Judge Douglas is in favor of repealing their territorial organization, and attaching them to the adjoining states for judicial purposes. I say, too, if they are in rebellion, they ought to be somehow coerced to obedience; and I am not now prepared to admit or deny that the Judge's mode of coercing them is not as good as any. The Republicans can fall in with it without taking back anything they have ever said. To be sure, it would be a considerable backing down by Judge Douglas from his much-vaunted doctrine of self-government for the territories; but this is only additional proof of what was very plain from the beginning, that that doctrine was a mere deceitful pretense for the benefit of slavery. Those who could not see that much in the Nebraska act itself, which forced governors and secretaries and judges on the people of the territories without their choice or consent, could not be made to see, though one should rise from the dead.

\* In 1857 a rebellion occurred in Utah, brought on by the removal of Brigham Young from the office of territorial governor. The regular army soon suppressed it without bloodshed.

But in all this, it is very plain the Judge evades the only question the Republicans have ever pressed upon the Democracy in regard to Utah. That question the Judge well knew to be this: "If the people of Utah shall peacefully form a state constitution tolerating polygamy, will the Democracy admit them into the Union?" There is nothing in the United States Constitution or law against polygamy; and why is it not a part of the Judge's "sacred right of self-government" for the people to have it, or rather to keep it, if they choose? These questions, so far as I know, the Judge never answers. It might involve the Democracy to answer them either way, and they go unanswered.

#### KANSAS

As to Kansas. The substance of the Judge's speech on Kansas is an effort to put the free-state men in the wrong for not voting at the election of delegates to the constitutional convention. He says: "There is every reason to hope and believe that the law will be fairly interpreted and impartially executed, so as to insure to every *bona fide* inhabitant the free and quiet exercise of the elective franchise."

It appears extraordinary that Judge Douglas should make such a statement. He knows that, by the law, no one can vote who has not been registered; and he knows that the free-state men place their refusal to vote on the ground that but few of them have been registered. It is possible that this is not true, but Judge Douglas knows it is asserted to be true in letters, newspapers, and public speeches, and borne by every mail and blown by every breeze to the eyes and ears of the world. He knows it is boldly declared that the people of many whole counties, and many whole neighborhoods in others, are left unregistered; yet he does not venture to contradict the declaration; or to point out how they can vote without being registered; but he just slips along,

not seeming to know there is any such question of fact, and complacently declares: "There is every reason to hope and believe that the law will be fairly and impartially executed, so as to insure to every *bona fide* inhabitant the free and quiet exercise of the elective franchise."

I readily agree that if all had a chance to vote, they ought to have voted. If, on the contrary, as they allege, and Judge Douglas ventures not to particularly contradict, few only of the free-state men had a chance to vote, they were perfectly right in staying from the polls in a body.

By the way, since the Judge spoke, the Kansas election has come off. The Judge expressed his confidence that all the Democrats in Kansas would do their duty—including "free-state Democrats," of course. The returns received here as yet are very incomplete; but so far as they go, they indicate that only about one-sixth of the registered voters have really voted; and this, too, when not more, perhaps, than one-half of the rightful voters have been registered, thus showing the thing to have been altogether the most exquisite farce ever enacted. I am watching with considerable interest to ascertain what figure "the free-state Democrats" cut in the concern. Of course they voted—all Democrats do their duty—and of course they did not vote for slave-state candidates. We soon shall know how many delegates they elected, how many candidates they had pledged to a free state, and how many votes were cast for them.

Allow me to barely whisper my suspicion that there were no such things in Kansas as "free-state Democrats"—that they were altogether mythical, good only to figure in newspapers and speeches in the free states. If there should prove to be one real living free-state Democrat in Kansas, I suggest that it might be well to catch him, and stuff and preserve his skin as an interesting speci-

men of that soon-to-be-extinct variety of the genus Democrat.

### THE DRED SCOTT DECISION

And now as to the Dred Scott decision. That decision declares two propositions—first, that a negro cannot sue in the United States courts; and secondly, that Congress cannot prohibit slavery in the territories. It was made by a divided court—dividing differently on the different points. Judge Douglas does not discuss the merits of the decision, and in that respect I shall follow his example, believing I could no more improve on McLean \* and Curtis † than he could on Taney. ‡

He denounces all who question the correctness of that decision, as offering violent resistance to it. But who resists it? Who has, in spite of the decision, declared Dred Scott free, and resisted the authority of his master over him?

Judicial decisions have two uses—first, to absolutely determine the case decided; and secondly, to indicate to the public how other similar cases will be decided when they arise. For the latter use, they are called “precedents” and “authorities.”

We believe as much as Judge Douglas (perhaps more) in obedience to, and respect for, the judicial department of government. We think its decisions on constitutional questions, when fully settled, should control not only the particular cases decided, but the general policy of the country, subject to be disturbed only by amendments to the Constitution as provided in that instrument itself. More than this would be revolution. But we think the

\* John McLean, of Ohio, the Republican member of the Supreme Court, who wrote a dissenting opinion in the Dred Scott case.

† Benjamin R. Curtis, of Massachusetts, a Whig member of the Supreme Court, who wrote a most powerful dissenting opinion in the Dred Scott case.

‡ Roger B. Taney, of Maryland, Chief Justice of the United States, who wrote the opinion of the Court in the Dred Scott case.

Dred Scott decision is erroneous. We know the court that made it has often overruled its own decisions, and we shall do what we can to have it overrule this. We offer no resistance to it.

Judicial decisions are of greater or less authority as precedents according to circumstances. That this should be so accords both with common sense and the customary understanding of the legal profession.

If this important decision had been made by the unanimous concurrence of the judges, and without any apparent partisan bias, and in accordance with legal public expectation and with the steady practice of the departments throughout our history, and had been in no part based on assumed historical facts which are not really true; or, if wanting in some of these, it had been before the court more than once, and had there been affirmed and reaffirmed through a course of years, it then might be, perhaps would be, factious, nay, even revolutionary, not to acquiesce in it as a precedent.

But when, as is true, we find it wanting in all these claims to the public confidence, it is not resistance, it is not factious, it is not even disrespectful, to treat it as not having yet quite established a settled doctrine for the country. But Judge Douglas considers this view awful. Hear him:

“The courts are the tribunals prescribed by the Constitution and created by the authority of the people to determine, expound, and enforce the law. Hence, whoever resists the final decision of the highest judicial tribunal aims a deadly blow at our whole republican system of government—a blow which, if successful, would place all our rights and liberties at the mercy of passion, anarchy, and violence. I repeat, therefore, that if resistance to the decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States, in a matter like the points decided in the Dred Scott case, clearly within their jurisdiction

as defined by the Constitution, shall be forced upon the country as a political issue, it will become a distinct and naked issue between the friends and enemies of the Constitution—the friends and the enemies of the supremacy of the laws.”

Why, this same Supreme Court once decided a national bank to be constitutional; but General Jackson, as President of the United States, disregarded the decision, and vetoed a bill for a recharter, partly on constitutional ground, declaring that each public functionary must support the Constitution, “as he understands it.” But hear the General’s own words. Here they are, taken from his veto message:

“It is maintained by the advocates of the bank, that its constitutionality, in all its features, ought to be considered as settled by precedent, and by the decision of the Supreme Court. To this conclusion I cannot assent. Mere precedent is a dangerous source of authority, and should not be regarded as deciding questions of constitutional power, except where the acquiescence of the people and the states can be considered as well settled. So far from this being the case on this subject, an argument against the bank might be based on precedent. One Congress, in 1791, decided in favor of a bank; another, in 1811, decided against it. One Congress, in 1815, decided against a bank; another, in 1816, decided in its favor. Prior to the present Congress, therefore, the precedents drawn from that source were equal. If we resort to the states, the expressions of legislative, judicial, and executive opinions against the bank have been probably to those in its favor as four to one. There is nothing in precedent, therefore, which, if its authority were admitted, ought to weigh in favor of the act before me.”

I drop the quotations merely to remark that all there

ever was in the way of precedent up to the Dred Scott decision, on the points therein decided, had been against that decision. But hear General Jackson further:

“If the opinion of the Supreme Court covered the whole ground of this act, it ought not to control the coördinate authorities of this government. The Congress, the Executive, and the court must, each for itself, be guided by its own opinion of the Constitution. Each public officer who takes an oath to support the Constitution swears that he will support it as he understands it, and not as it is understood by others.”

Again and again have I heard Judge Douglas denounce that bank decision and applaud General Jackson for disregarding it. It would be interesting for him to look over his recent speech, and see how exactly his fierce philippics against us for resisting Supreme Court decisions fall upon his own head. It will call to mind a long and fierce political war in this country, upon an issue which, in his own language, and, of course, in his own changeless estimation, was “a distinct issue between the friends and the enemies of the Constitution,” and in which war he fought in the ranks of the enemies of the Constitution.

I have said, in substance, that the Dred Scott decision was in part based on assumed historical facts which were not really true, and I ought not to leave the subject without giving some reasons for saying this; I therefore give an instance or two, which I think fully sustain me. Chief Justice Taney, in delivering the opinion of the majority of the court, insists at great length that negroes were no part of the people who made, or for whom was made, the Declaration of Independence, or the Constitution of the United States.

On the contrary, Judge Curtis, in his dissenting opinion, shows that in five of the then thirteen states—to wit, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, New

Jersey, and North Carolina—free negroes were voters, and in proportion to their numbers had the same part in making the Constitution that the white people had. He shows this with so much particularity as to leave no doubt of its truth; and as a sort of conclusion on that point, holds the following language:

“The Constitution was ordained and established by the people of the United States, through the action, in each state, of those persons who were qualified by its laws to act thereon in behalf of themselves and all other citizens of the state. In some of the states, as we have seen, colored persons were among those qualified by law to act on the subject. These colored persons were not only included in the body of ‘the people of the United States’ by whom the Constitution was ordained and established; but in at least five of the states they had the power to act, and doubtless did act, by their suffrages, upon the question of its adoption.”

Again, Chief Justice Taney says:

“It is difficult at this day to realize the state of public opinion, in relation to that unfortunate race, which prevailed in the civilized and enlightened portions of the world at the time of the Declaration of Independence, and when the Constitution of the United States was framed and adopted.”

And again, after quoting from the Declaration, he says:

“The general words above quoted would seem to include the whole human family, and if they were used in a similar instrument at this day, would be so understood.”

In these the Chief Justice does not directly assert, but plainly assumes, as a fact, that the public estimate of the black man is more favorable now than it was in the



days of the Revolution. This assumption is a mistake. In some trifling particulars the condition of that race has been ameliorated; but as a whole, in this country, the change between then and now is decidedly the other way; and their ultimate destiny has never appeared so hopeless as in the last three or four years. In two of the five states—New Jersey and North Carolina—that then gave the free negro the right of voting, which right has since been taken away, and in a third—New York—it has been greatly abridged; while it has not been extended, so far as I know, to a single additional state, though the number of the states has more than doubled. In those days, as I understand, masters could, at their own pleasure, emancipate their slaves; but since then such legal restraints have been made upon emancipation as to amount almost to prohibition. In those days legislatures held the unquestioned power to abolish slavery in their respective states, but now it is becoming quite fashionable for state constitutions to withhold that power from the legislatures. In those days, by common consent, the spread of the black man's bondage to the new countries was prohibited, but now Congress decides that it will not continue the prohibition, and the Supreme Court decides that it could not if it would. In those days our Declaration of Independence was held sacred by all, and thought to include all; but now, to aid in making the bondage of the negro universal and eternal, it is assailed and sneered at and construed, and hawked at, and torn, till, if its framers could rise from their graves, they could not at all recognize it. All the powers of earth seem rapidly combining against him. Mammon is after him, ambition follows, philosophy follows, and the theology of the day is fast joining the cry. They have him in his prison-house; they have searched his person, and left no prying instrument with him. One after another they have closed the heavy iron doors upon him; and now they have him, as it were, bolted in

with a lock of a hundred keys, which can never be unlocked without the concurrence of every key—the keys in the hands of a hundred different men, and they scattered to a hundred different and distant places; and they stand musing as to what invention, in all the dominions of mind and matter, can be produced to make the impossibility of his escape more complete than it is.

It is grossly incorrect to say or assume that the public estimate of the negro is more favorable now than it was at the origin of the government.

Three years and a half ago, Judge Douglas brought forward his famous Nebraska bill. The country was at once in a blaze. He scorned all opposition, and carried it through Congress. Since then he has seen himself superseded in a presidential nomination by one indorsing the general doctrine of his measure, but at the same time standing clear of the odium of its untimely agitation and its gross breach of national faith; and he has seen that successful rival constitutionally elected, not by the strength of friends, but by the division of adversaries, being in a popular minority of nearly four hundred thousand votes. He has seen his chief aids in his own state, Shields\* and Richardson,† politically speaking, successively tried, convicted, and executed for an offense not their own, but his. And now he sees his own case standing next on the docket for trial.

There is a natural disgust in the minds of nearly all white people at the idea of an indiscriminate amalgamation of the white and black races; and Judge Douglas evidently is basing his chief hope upon the chances of

\* James Shields, senator from Illinois, 1849-1855; senator from Minnesota, 1857-1859. He was later senator from Missouri. So far as can be discovered he is the only man who has been senator from three states. He was defeated by Lyman Trumbull because of his advocacy of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill.

† William A. Richardson, member of Congress from Illinois, 1847-1856. Later he succeeded Douglas in the Senate. He was forced to resign from Congress because of the unpopularity of his support of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill.

his being able to appropriate the benefit of this disgust to himself. If he can, by much drumming and repeating, fasten the odium of that idea upon his adversaries, he thinks he can struggle through the storm. He therefore clings to this hope, as a drowning man to the last plank. He makes an occasion for lugging it in from the opposition to the Dred Scott decision. He finds the Republicans insisting that the Declaration of Independence includes *all* men, black as well as white, and forthwith he boldly denies that it includes negroes at all, and proceeds to argue gravely that all who contend it does, do so only because they want to vote, and eat, and sleep, and marry with negroes! He will have it that they cannot be consistent else. Now I protest against the counterfeit logic which concludes that, because I do not want a black woman for a slave I must necessarily want her for a wife. I need not have her for either. I can just leave her alone. In some respects she certainly is not my equal; but in her natural right to eat the bread she earns with her own hands without asking leave of anyone else, she is my equal, and the equal of all others.

Chief Justice Taney, in the opinion in the Dred Scott case, admits that the language of the Declaration is broad enough to include the whole human family, but he and Judge Douglas argue that the authors of that instrument did not intend to include negroes, by the fact that they did not at once actually place them on an equality with the whites. Now this grave argument comes to just nothing at all, by the other fact that they did not at once, or ever afterward, actually place all white people on an equality with one another. And this is the staple argument of both the Chief Justice and the Senator for doing this obvious violence to the plain, unmistakable language of the Declaration.

I think the authors of that notable instrument intended to include *all* men, but they did not intend to declare all men equal *in all respects*. They did not mean to

say all were equal in color, size, intellect, moral developments, or social capacity. They defined with tolerable distinctness in what respects they did consider all men created equal—equal with “certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” This they said, and this they meant. They did not mean to assert the obvious untruth that all were then actually enjoying that equality, nor yet that they were about to confer it immediately upon them. In fact, they had no power to confer such a boon. They meant simply to declare the right, so that enforcement of it might follow as fast as circumstances should permit.

They meant to set up a standard maxim for free society, which should be familiar to all, and revered by all; constantly looked to, constantly labored for, and even though never perfectly attained, constantly approximated, and thereby constantly spreading and deepening its influence and augmenting the happiness and value of life to all people of all colors everywhere. The assertion that “All men are created equal” was of no practical use in effecting our separation from Great Britain; and it was placed in the Declaration not for that, but for future use. Its authors meant it to be—as, thank God, it is now proving itself—a stumbling-block to all those who in after times might seek to turn a free people back into the hateful paths of despotism. They knew the proneness of prosperity to breed tyrants, and they meant when such should reappear in this fair land and commence their vocation, they should find left for them at least one hard nut to crack.

I have now briefly expressed my view of the meaning and object of that part of the Declaration of Independence which declares that “all men are created equal.”

Now let us hear Judge Douglas’s view of the same subject, as I find it in the printed report of his late speech. Here it is:

“No man can vindicate the character, motives, and conduct of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, except upon the hypothesis that they referred to the white race alone, and not to the African, when they declared all men to have been created equal; that they were speaking of British subjects on this continent being equal to British subjects born and residing in Great Britain; that they were entitled to the same inalienable rights, and among them were enumerated life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The Declaration was adopted for the purpose of justifying the colonists in the eyes of the civilized world in withdrawing their allegiance from the British crown, and dissolving their connection with the mother country.”

My good friends, read that carefully over some leisure hour, and ponder well upon it; see what a mere wreck—mangled ruin—it makes of our once glorious Declaration.

“They were speaking of British subjects on this continent being equal to British subjects born and residing in Great Britain.” Why, according to this, not only negroes but white people outside of Great Britain and America were not spoken of in that instrument. The English, Irish, and Scotch, along with white Americans, were included, to be sure, but the French, Germans, and other white people of the world are all gone to pot along with the Judge’s inferior races!

I had thought the Declaration promised something better than the condition of British subjects; but no, it only meant that we should be equal to them in their own oppressed and unequal condition. According to that, it gave no promise that, having kicked off the king and lords of Great Britain, we should not at once be saddled with a king and lords of our own.

I had thought the Declaration contemplated the progressive improvement in the condition of all men

everywhere; but no, it merely "was adopted for the purpose of justifying the colonists in the eyes of the civilized world in withdrawing their allegiance from the British crown, and dissolving their connection with the mother country." Why, that object having been effected some eighty years ago, the Declaration is of no practical use now—mere rubbish—old wadding left to rot on the battlefield after the victory is won.

I understand you are preparing to celebrate the "Fourth" tomorrow week. What for? The doings of that day had no reference to the present; and quite half of you are not even descendants of those who were referred to at that day. But I suppose you will celebrate, and will even go so far as to read the Declaration. Suppose, after you read it once in the old-fashioned way, you read it once more with Judge Douglas's version. It will then run thus: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all British subjects who were on this continent eighty-one years ago, were created equal to all British subjects born and then residing in Great Britain."

And now I appeal to all—to Democrats as well as others—are you really willing that the Declaration shall thus be frittered away?—thus left no more, at most, than an interesting memorial of the dead past?—thus shorn of its vitality and practical value, and left without the germ or even the suggestion of the individual rights of man in it?

. . . . .

I have said that the separation of the races is the only perfect preventive of amalgamation. I have no right to say all the members of the Republican party are in favor of this, nor to say that as a party they are in favor of it. There is nothing in their platform directly on the subject. But I can say a very large proportion of its members are for it, and that the chief plank in their

platform—opposition to the spread of slavery—is most favorable to that separation.

Such separation, if ever effected at all, must be effected by colonization;\* and no political party, as such, is now doing anything directly for colonization. Party operations at present only favor or retard colonization incidentally. The enterprise is a difficult one; but “where there is a will there is a way,” and what colonization needs most is a hearty will. Will springs from the two elements of moral sense and self-interest. Let us be brought to believe it is morally right, and at the same time favorable to, or at least not against, our interest to transfer the African to his native clime, and we shall find a way to do it, however great the task may be. The children of Israel, to such numbers as to include four hundred thousand fighting men, went out of Egyptian bondage in a body.

How differently the respective courses of the Democratic and Republican parties incidentally bear on the question of forming a will—a public sentiment—for colonization, is easy to see. The Republicans inculcate, with whatever of ability they can, that the negro is a man, that his bondage is cruelly wrong, and that the field of his oppression ought not to be enlarged. The Democrats deny his manhood; deny, or dwarf to insignificance, the wrong of his bondage; so far as possible, crush all sympathy for him, and cultivate and excite hatred and disgust against him; compliment themselves as Union-savers for doing so; and call the indefinite outspreading of his bondage “a sacred right of self-government.”

The plainest print cannot be read through a gold eagle; and it will be ever hard to find many men who will send a slave to Liberia, and pay his passage, while they can send him to a new country—Kansas, for instance—and sell him for \$1500 and the rise.

\* Lincoln's belief in colonization of the negro as a practical solution of the question never faltered. It was a major policy of his during the war in connection with emancipation.

Douglas's term in the Senate was to expire in 1859, and it was fairly clear that Lincoln would be the Republican candidate against him. But early in 1858, Douglas broke with the Buchanan administration on the question of the so-called Lecompton Constitution of Kansas, by which the administration sought to have the state admitted with slavery. Douglas did not believe that the constitution had been fairly adopted, and by his opposition he was able to defeat its acceptance by Congress. Many Republicans in the East, notably Horace Greley, Samuel Bowles, Henry Wilson, Schuyler Colfax, N. P. Banks, and Anson Burlingame favored Republican support of Douglas in his fight for reelection. This greatly discouraged Lincoln but without reason. For when the Republican convention met in Springfield in June, 1858, it unanimously declared him its choice for the Senate.

On the evening after his nomination Lincoln appeared before the convention with a speech which had been prepared more carefully than any he had made thus far, and which, contrary to custom, he read from the manuscript. He had read it to a group of party friends who had severely criticised it as too radical in its fundamental statement, contained in the first paragraph, and too sectional. It was radical for its time, but it was also clever politics to say it, for the time was ripe. It was a clever speech also in the way it forced Douglas, in the contest which followed, to fight on ground that he had not chosen and that he did not like, to discuss the Kansas-Nebraska act, the Dred Scott decision, and the character of slavery. It is probably the most partisan of all his addresses.

### *THE SPRINGFIELD SPEECH*

[June 16, 1858]

MR. PRESIDENT, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE CONVENTION:  
If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do, and how to do it. We are now far into the fifth year since a policy was initiated with the avowed object and confident promise of putting an end to slavery agitation.\* Under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only

\* The reference is to the adoption of the Kansas-Nebraska act with popular sovereignty.





LINCOLN AND HIS SON TAD



not ceased, but has constantly augmented. In my opinion, it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. "A house divided against itself cannot stand."\* I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in all the states, old as well as new—North as well as South.

Have we no tendency to the latter condition?

Let any one who doubts carefully contemplate that now almost complete legal combination—piece of machinery, so to speak—compounded of the Nebraska doctrine and the Dred Scott decision.† Let him consider not only what work the machinery is adapted to do, and how well adapted; but also let him study the history of its construction, and trace, if he can, or rather fail, if he can, to trace the evidences of design and concert of action among its chief architects, from the beginning.

The new year of 1854 found slavery excluded from more than half the states by state constitutions, and from most of the national territory by Congressional prohibition.‡ Four days later commenced the struggle which ended in repealing that Congressional prohibition.\*\*

\* Matthew, xii, 25; Mark, iii, 25.

† The Nebraska doctrine upheld the right of the people of a territory to decide, when it was admitted as a state, whether it should be free or slave. According to the Dred Scott decision, neither Congress nor the people of a territory could exclude slavery from a territory. Lincoln contended that this would make slavery in the state a certainty.

‡ There were at this time sixteen free and fifteen slave states. By the Missouri Compromise slavery had been forbidden in most of the territory of the United States.

\*\* By the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska act.

This opened all the national territory to slavery, and was the first point gained.

But, so far, Congress only had acted, and an indorsement by the people, real or apparent, was indispensable, to save the point already gained, and give chance for more.

This necessity had not been overlooked, but had been provided for, as well as might be, in the notable argument of "squatter sovereignty," otherwise called "sacred right of self-government," which latter phrase, though expressive of the only rightful basis of any government, was so perverted in this attempted use of it as to amount to just this: That if any *one* man choose to enslave *another*, no *third* man shall be allowed to object. That argument was incorporated into the Nebraska bill itself, in the language which follows: "It being the true intent and meaning of this act not to legislate slavery into any territory or state, nor to exclude it therefrom; but to leave the people thereof perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way, subject only to the Constitution of the United States." Then opened the roar of loose declamation in favor of "squatter sovereignty" and "sacred right of self-government." "But," said opposition members, "let us amend the bill so as to expressly declare that the people of the territory may exclude slavery." "Not we," said the friends of the measure; and down they voted the amendment.

While the Nebraska bill was passing through Congress, a law case involving the question of a negro's freedom, by reason of his owner having voluntarily taken him first into a free state and then into a territory covered by the congressional prohibition, and held him as a slave for a long time in each, was passing through the United States Circuit Court for the District of Missouri; and both Nebraska bill and lawsuit were brought to a decision in the same month of May, 1854. The negro's name was Dred Scott, which name now designates the decision

finally made in the case. Before the then next presidential election, the law case came to and was argued in the Supreme Court of the United States; but the decision of it was deferred until after the election. Still, before the election, Senator Trumbull, on the floor of the Senate, requested the leading advocate of the Nebraska bill to state his opinion whether the people of a territory can constitutionally exclude slavery from their limits; and the latter answered: "That is a question for the Supreme Court."

The election came. Mr. Buchanan was elected, and the indorsement, such as it was, secured. That was the second point gained. The indorsement, however, fell short of a clear popular majority by nearly four hundred thousand votes, and so, perhaps, was not overwhelmingly reliable and satisfactory. The outgoing President, in his last annual message, as impressively as possible echoed back upon the people the weight and authority of the indorsement! The Supreme Court met again; did not announce their decision, but ordered a reargument. The presidential inauguration came, and still no decision of the court; but the incoming President in his inaugural address fervently exhorted the people to abide by the forthcoming decision, whatever it might be. Then, in a few days, came the decision.\*

The reputed author of the Nebraska bill finds an early occasion to make a speech at this capital indorsing the Dred Scott decision, and vehemently denouncing all opposition to it. The new President, too, seizes the early occasion of the Silliman letter† to indorse and strongly construe that decision, and to express his astonishment that any different view had ever been entertained!

\* The decision was handed down on March 6, 1857.

† Soon after the inauguration of President Buchanan, a committee of citizens of Connecticut, headed by Professor Benjamin Silliman of Yale, sent a memorial to him, asking for comment on the Dred Scott decision and the state of affairs in Kansas. He replied, declaring that slavery existed legally in Kansas, and added, "How it could have ever been seriously doubted is a mystery."

At length a squabble springs up between the President and the author of the Nebraska bill, on the mere question of fact, whether the Lecompton constitution was or was not, in any just sense, made by the people of Kansas; and in that quarrel, the latter declares that all he wants is a fair vote for the people, and that he cares not whether slavery be voted down or voted up. I do not understand his declaration that he cares not whether slavery be voted down or up, to be intended by him other than as an apt definition of the policy he would impress upon the public mind—the principle for which he declares he has suffered so much, and is ready to suffer to the end. And well may he cling to that principle. If he has any parental feeling, well may he cling to it. That principle is the only shred left of his original Nebraska doctrine. Under the Dred Scott decision, “squatter sovereignty” squatted out of existence, tumbled down like temporary scaffolding; like the mold at the foundry, it served through one blast, and fell back into loose sand—helped to carry an election, and then was kicked to the winds. His late joint struggle with the Republicans against the Lecompton constitution, involves nothing of the original Nebraska doctrine. That struggle was made on a point—the right of a people to make their own constitution—upon which he and the Republicans have never differed.

The several points of the Dred Scott decision, in connection with Senator Douglas’s “care not” policy, constitute the piece of machinery in its present state of advancement. This was the third point gained. The working points of that machinery are:

(1) That no negro slave, imported as such from Africa, and no descendant of such slave, can ever be a citizen of any state, in the sense of that term as used in the Constitution of the United States. This point is made in order to deprive the negro, in every possible event, of the benefit of that provision of the United States Constitution which declares that “the citizens of each

state shall be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of citizens in the several states."

(2) That, "subject to the Constitution of the United States," neither Congress nor a territorial legislature can exclude slavery from any United States territory. This point is made in order that individual men may fill up the territories with slaves, without danger of losing them as property, and thus enhance the chances of permanency to the institution through all the future.

(3) That whether the holding a negro in actual slavery in a free state makes him free as against the holder, the United States courts will not decide, but will leave to be decided by the courts of any slave state the negro may be forced into by the master. This point is made, not to be pressed immediately; but, if acquiesced in for a while, and apparently indorsed by the people at an election, then to sustain the logical conclusion that what Dred Scott's master might lawfully do with Dred Scott, in the free state of Illinois, every other master may lawfully do with any other one, or one thousand slaves, in Illinois, or in any other free state.

Auxiliary to all this, and working hand in hand with it, the Nebraska doctrine, or what is left of it, is to educate and mold public opinion, at least Northern public opinion, not to care whether slavery is voted down or voted up. This shows exactly where we now are; and partially, also, whither we are tending.

It will throw additional light on the latter, to go back and run the mind over the string of historical facts already stated. Several things will now appear less dark and mysterious than they did when they were transpiring. The people were to be left "perfectly free," "subject only to the Constitution." What the Constitution had to do with it outsiders could not then see. Plainly enough now, it was an exactly fitted niche for the Dred Scott decision to afterward come in, and declare the perfect freedom of the people to be just no freedom at all. Why

was the amendment, expressly declaring the right of the people, voted down? Plainly enough now, the adoption of it would have spoiled the niche for the Dred Scott decision. Why was the court decision held up? Why even a Senator's individual opinion withheld till after the presidential election? Plainly enough now, the speaking out then would have damaged the perfectly free argument upon which the election was to be carried. Why the outgoing President's felicitation on the indorsement? Why the delay of a reargument? Why the incoming President's advance exhortation in favor of the decision? These things look like the cautious patting and petting of a spirited horse preparatory to mounting him, when it is dreaded that he may give the rider a fall. And why the hasty after-indorsement of the decision by the President and others?

We cannot absolutely know that all these exact adaptations are the result of preconcert. But when we see a lot of framed timbers, different portions of which we know have been gotten out at different times and places and by different workmen—Stephen, Franklin, Roger, and James,\* for instance—and we see those timbers joined together, and see they exactly make the frame of a house or a mill, all the tenons and mortises exactly fitting, and all the lengths and proportions of the different pieces exactly adapted to their respective places, and not a piece too many or too few, not omitting even scaffolding—or, if a single piece be lacking, we see the place in the frame exactly fitted and prepared yet to bring such piece in—in such a case we find it impossible not to believe that Stephen and Franklin and Roger and James all understood one another from the beginning, and all

\* Stephen, Franklin, Roger, and James. Senator Stephen A. Douglas, former President Franklin Pierce, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, and President James Buchanan are here alluded to. Lincoln's charge, though doubtless sincere, was entirely unjustified and unworthy of him even in the midst of partisan heat. It has never been sustained and there is no reason to believe it true. He is also unjust to Douglas in his whole treatment of his position on the Lecompton Constitution.



worked upon a common plan or draft drawn up before the first blow was struck.

It should not be overlooked that, by the Nebraska bill, the people of a state as well as territory were to be left "perfectly free," "subject only to the Constitution." Why mention a state? They were legislating for territories, and not for or about states. Certainly the people of a state are and ought to be subject to the Constitution of the United States; but why is mention of this lugged into this merely territorial law? Why are the people of a territory and the people of a state therein lumped together, and their relation to the Constitution therein treated as being precisely the same? While the opinion of the court by Chief Justice Taney, in the Dred Scott case, and the separate opinions of all the concurring judges, expressly declare that the Constitution of the United States neither permits Congress nor a territorial legislature to exclude slavery from any United States territory, they all omit to declare whether or not the same Constitution permits a state, or the people of a state, to exclude it. Possibly, this is a mere omission; but who can be quite sure, if McLean or Curtis had sought to get into the opinion a declaration of unlimited power in the people of a state to exclude slavery from their limits, just as Chase\* and Mace† sought to get such declaration, in behalf of the people of a territory, into the Nebraska bill—I ask, who can be quite sure that it would not have been voted down in the one case as it had been in the other? The nearest approach to the point of declaring the power of a state over slavery is made by Judge Nelson.‡ He approaches it more than once, using the precise idea, and almost the language, too,

\* Salmon P. Chase, Senator from Ohio, who led the opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Bill. He was later Secretary of the Treasury in Lincoln's cabinet, and in 1864 was appointed by Lincoln Chief Justice of the Supreme Court to succeed Taney.

† Daniel Mace, a Democratic Senator from Indiana, who was one of the leading opponents of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill.

‡ Samuel Nelson, of New York, one of the Justices of the Supreme Court.

of the Nebraska act. On one occasion his exact language is "except in cases where the power is restrained by the Constitution of the United States, the law of the state is supreme over the subject of slavery within its jurisdiction." In what cases the power of the state is so restrained by the United States Constitution is left an open question, precisely as the same question, as to the restraint on the power of the territories, was left open in the Nebraska act. Put this and that together, and we have another nice little niche, which we may, ere long, see filled with another Supreme Court decision, declaring that the Constitution of the United States does not permit a *state* to exclude slavery from its limits. And this may especially be expected if the doctrine of "care not whether slavery be voted down or voted up" shall gain upon the public mind sufficiently to give promise that such a decision can be maintained when made.

Such a decision is all that slavery now lacks of being alike lawful in all the states. Welcome, or unwelcome, such decision is probably coming, and will soon be upon us, unless the power of the present political dynasty shall be met and overthrown. We shall lie down pleasantly dreaming that the people of Missouri are on the verge of making their state free, and we shall awake to the reality instead that the Supreme Court has made Illinois a slave state. To meet and overthrow the power of that dynasty is the work now before all those who would prevent that consummation. That is what we have to do. How can we best do it?

There are those who denounce us openly to their own friends, and yet whisper us softly that Senator Douglas is the aptest instrument\* there is with which to effect that object. They wish us to infer all this from the fact that he now has a little quarrel with the present head of the dynasty; and that he has regularly voted

\* The reference was to the Eastern Republicans like Horace Greeley, who favored support of Douglas on the ground of his opposition to the Lecompton Constitution.

with us on a single point, upon which he and we have never differed. They remind us that he is a great man, and that the largest of us are very small ones. Let this be granted. But "a living dog is better than a dead lion."\* Judge Douglas, if not a dead lion for this work, is at least a caged and toothless one. How can he oppose the advances of slavery? He don't care anything about it. His avowed mission is impressing the "public heart" to care nothing about it. A leading Douglas Democratic newspaper thinks Douglas's superior talent will be needed to resist the revival of the African slave-trade. Does Douglas believe an effort to revive that trade is approaching? He has not said so. Does he really think so? But if it is, how can he resist it? For years he has labored to prove it a sacred right of white men to take negro slaves into the new territories. Can he possibly show that it is less a sacred right to buy them where they can be bought cheapest? And unquestionably they can be bought cheaper in Africa than in Virginia. He has done all in his power to reduce the whole question of slavery to one of a mere right of property; and, as such, how can he oppose the foreign slave-trade—how can he refuse that trade in that "property" shall be "perfectly free"—unless he does it as a protection to the home production? And as the home producers will probably not ask the protection, he will be wholly without a ground of opposition.

Senator Douglas holds, we know, that a man may rightfully be wiser today than he was yesterday—that he may rightfully change when he finds himself wrong. But can we, for that reason, run ahead, and infer that he will make any particular change, of which he himself has given no intimation? Can we safely base our action upon any such vague inference? Now, as ever, I wish not to misrepresent Judge Douglas's position, question his motives, or do aught that can be personally offensive to

\* Ecclesiastes, ix, 4.

him. Whenever, if ever, he and we can come together on principle so that our great cause may have assistance from his great ability, I hope to have interposed no adventitious obstacle. But clearly he is not now with us—he does not pretend to be—he does not promise ever to be.

Our cause, then, must be intrusted to, and conducted by, its own undoubted friends—those whose hands are free, whose hearts are in the work, who do care for the result. Two years ago the Republicans of the nation mustered over thirteen hundred thousand strong. We did this under the single impulse of resistance to a common danger, with every external circumstance against us. Of strange, discordant, and even hostile elements, we gathered from the four winds, and formed and fought the battle through, under the constant hot fire of a disciplined, proud, and pampered enemy. Did we brave all then to falter now—now, when that same enemy is wavering, dissevered, and belligerent? The result is not doubtful. We shall not fail—if we stand firm, we shall not fail. Wise counsels may accelerate or mistakes delay it, but, sooner or later, the victory is sure to come.

Lincoln, almost unknown to the world outside of Illinois, now faced one of the ablest and certainly the most brilliant political leaders of the day. Douglas had had almost phenomenal success in political life. He had been a member of the legislature at twenty-three, a judge of the state supreme court at twenty-eight, a member of Congress at thirty, senator at thirty-four, and a prominent candidate for the presidency at thirty-nine. He was possessed of marvelous magnetism and charm of personality, was fearless, resourceful, and eloquent in debate, and from long-continued and unbroken success was full of self-confidence. Lincoln himself compared them thus:

“His name fills the nation, and is not unknown even in foreign lands. I affect no contempt for the high eminence he has reached. So reached that the oppressed of my species might have shared with me in the elevation, I would rather stand on that eminence than wear the richest crown that ever pressed a monarch’s brow.

"With me the race of ambition has been a failure—a flat failure. With him it has been one of splendid success. Senator Douglas is of world-wide renown. All the anxious politicians of his party, or who have been of his party for years past, have been looking upon him as certainly, at no distant day, to be the President of the United States. . . . On the contrary nobody has ever expected me to be President. . . . We have to fight this battle upon principle and upon principle alone."

In the last sentence is found the source of all the confidence that Lincoln could muster in the struggle. He was convinced after hard study that in this struggle against the spread of slavery he had right, justice, history, the Constitution, good politics, and the enlightened opinion of mankind on his side. On that he had to rest his case.

Most people thought that the victory would be an easy one for Douglas. Lincoln was popular, and his ability was known and respected, but he was nowhere regarded as a man of destiny. Douglas probably underestimated him as an opponent less than even most of Lincoln's friends. He well knew that he was more difficult to meet on the stump in Illinois than were Seward, Chase, and Sumner on the floor of the United States Senate. He said when he heard of Lincoln's nomination: "I shall have my hands full. He is the strongest man of his party—full of wit, facts, dates—and the best stump speaker, with his droll ways and dry jokes, in the West. He is as honest as he is shrewd; and if I beat him my victory will be hardly won."

Upon his return from Washington in July, Douglas in a speech in Chicago, replied to Lincoln, condemning his acceptance speech as sectional and his house-divided doctrine as calculated to lead to civil war. He further condemned his attitude on the Dred Scott decision as an assault upon the Supreme Court, and accused him of being an abolitionist. His speech went well with his crowd, and Lincoln's reply the next night was a distinct failure. Each made other addresses with the tide clearly turning to Douglas, and then Lincoln challenged him to a joint debate. From the standpoint of his friends it was a rash and unwise decision; but it was excellent strategy. At a stroke, it placed the two upon a common level, greatly to Lincoln's advantage, and emphasized his power. He had less

to lose than Douglas and infinitely more to win. As events proved, it had large effects upon the future, but it is well to emphasize here the fact that Lincoln, with all his power, was seeking to defeat Douglas for the Senate and to replace him there.

Douglas accepted the challenge with secret reluctance, and seven debates were arranged and held. They were at Ottawa on August 21; Freeport, August 27; Jonesboro, September 15; Charleston, September 18; Galesburg, October 7; Quincy, October 13; and Alton, October 15. In this way almost every part of the state was touched.

In the debates Lincoln showed himself a master politician and an able and shrewd debater, but the speeches are not in the class with such speeches as, for instance, his acceptance speech. He was not at his best in the debates. Disapproving of Douglas and actively disliking him, he was not as a rule as courteous as his opponent, nor are his speeches as clean-cut, logical, and convincing as others before and after. Nor was he as frank as usual. It has been the fashion years later to say that Lincoln overwhelmed Douglas in the debates, but this was not thought at the time. Lincoln's great victory was indicated in the amazement of the world that he had been able to hold his own with Douglas at all and that he had come so close to defeating him. That was what made him known to the whole country.

One thing connected with the debate that bore fruit later needs comment here. At Freeport Lincoln insisted upon asking Douglas the question: "Can the people of a United States territory in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits prior to the formation of a State Constitution?" He knew in advance what would be Douglas's answer, for the latter had already stated it repeatedly, but with public attention outside the state directed as it was to the debate, it seemed a good time to secure a reiteration of his opinion. Douglas answered it substantially as he had stated his position in 1857:

"Mr. Lincoln knew that I had answered that question over and over again. He heard me argue the Nebraska bill on that principle all over the state in 1854, in 1855, and in 1856, and he has no excuse for pretending to be in doubt as to my position on that question. It matters not what way the Supreme

Court may hereafter decide as to the abstract question whether slavery may or may not go into a territory under the Constitution, the people have the lawful means to introduce it or exclude it as they please, for the reason that slavery cannot exist a day or an hour anywhere unless it is supported by local regulations. Those police regulations can only be established by the local legislature, and if the people are opposed to slavery they will elect representatives to that body who will by unfriendly legislation effectually prevent the introduction of it into their midst. If, on the contrary, they are for it, their legislation will favor its extension. Hence, no matter what the decision of the Supreme Court may be on that abstract question, still the right of the people to make a slave territory or a free territory is perfect and complete under the Nebraska bill. I hope Mr. Lincoln deems my answer satisfactory on that point."

The following letter of Lincoln, written shortly before the Freeport debate, indicates Lincoln's ideas of Douglas's position:

*TO HENRY ASBURY*

Springfield, July 31, 1858

Henry Asbury, Esq.

MY DEAR SIR: Yours of the 28th is received. The points you propose to press upon Douglas he will be very hard to get up to, but I think you labor under a mistake when you say no one cares how he answers. This implies that it is equal with him whether he is injured here or at the South. That is a mistake. He cares nothing for the South; he knows he is already dead there. He only leans Southward more to keep the Buchanan party from growing in Illinois. You shall have hard work to get him directly to the point whether a territorial legislature has or has not the power to exclude slavery. But if you succeed in bringing him to it—though he will be compelled to say it possesses no such power—he will instantly take ground that slavery cannot actually exist in the territories unless the people desire it, and so give

it protection by territorial legislation. If this offends the South, he will let it offend them, as at all events he means to hold on to his chances in Illinois. You will soon learn by the papers that both the Judge and myself are to be in Quincy on the 13th of October, when and where I expect the pleasure of seeing you.

Yours very truly,

A. LINCOLN

Three other documents of this period throw light on Lincoln.

#### AUTOBIOGRAPHY

[Written for *Dictionary of Congress*, June, 1858]

Born, February 12, 1809, in Hardin County, Kentucky.

Profession, a lawyer.

Education defective.

Have been a captain of volunteers in Black Hawk War.

Postmaster at a very small office.

Four times a member of the Illinois legislature, and was a member of the lower house of Congress.

Yours, etc.,

A. LINCOLN

#### DEFINITION OF DEMOCRACY

[August 1 (?), 1858]

As I would not be a *slave*, so I would not be a *master*. This expresses my idea of a democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy.

A. LINCOLN

#### TO J. N. BROWN

Springfield, October 18, 1858

MY DEAR SIR: I do not perceive how I can express myself more plainly than I have done in the foregoing extracts.\* In four of them I have expressly disclaimed

\* Lincoln had enclosed him newspaper clippings containing extracts from his speeches.



all intentions to bring about social and political equality between the white and black races, and, in all the rest, I have done the same thing by clear implication.

I have made it equally plain that I think the negro is included in the "men" used in the Declaration of Independence.

I believe the declaration that "all men are created equal" is the great fundamental principle upon which our free institutions rest; that negro slavery is violative of that principle; but that, by our form of government, that principle has not been made one of legal obligation; that by our form of government, the states which have slavery are to retain it, or surrender it at their own pleasure; and that all others—individuals, free states, and national government—are constitutionally bound to leave them alone about it.

I believe our government was thus framed because of the necessity springing from the actual presence of slavery, when it was framed.

That such necessity does not exist in the territories, where slavery is not present.

In his Mendenhall speech Mr. Clay says:

"Now, as an abstract principle, there is no doubt of the truth of that declaration (all men are created equal) and it is desirable, in the original construction of society, and in organized societies, to keep it in view as a great fundamental principle."

Again, in the same speech Mr. Clay says:

"If a state of nature existed, and we were about to lay the foundation of society, no man would be more strongly opposed than I would to incorporate the institutions of slavery among its elements."

Exactly so. In our new free territories, a state of nature *does* exist. In them Congress lays the foundations of society; and, in laying those foundations, I say, with

Mr. Clay, it is desirable that the declaration of the equality of all men shall be kept in view, as a great fundamental principle; and that Congress, which lays the foundations of society, should, like Mr. Clay, be strongly opposed to the incorporation of slavery among its elements.

But it does not follow that social and political equality between white and black *must* be incorporated, because slavery must *not*. The declaration does not so require.

Yours as ever,

A. LINCOLN

The election was close, but Douglas had a safe majority in the legislature and was elected. In spite of the strength he had shown, Lincoln was hurt by his defeat. He wrote a friend that he was "like the boy that stumped his toe. It hurt too bad to laugh, and he was too big to cry." Again he wrote that he would rather have a full term in the Senate than to be President of the United States. But against his defeat he could set the fact that he had won great reputation and that he had much advanced the Republican cause. He was now a national figure.

This letter indicates his attitude after the election.

TO H. D. SHARPE

Springfield, December 8, 1858

H. D. Sharpe, Esq.

DEAR SIR: Your very kind letter of November 9th was duly received. I do not know that you expected or desired an answer; but glancing over the contents of yours again, I am prompted to say that, while I desired the result of the late canvass to have been different, I still regard it as an exceedingly small matter. I think we have fairly entered upon a durable struggle as to whether this nation is to ultimately become all slave or all free, and though I fall early in the contest, it is nothing if I shall have contributed, in the least degree, to the final rightful result.

Respectfully yours,

A. LINCOLN

One of the first indications of the reputation gained by Lincoln in the debates was the flood of letters and invitations which poured in on him. He declined most of these because his law practice had suffered severely in the four years since 1854 and he felt compelled to make money. One of these invitations he thus declined:

*TO H. L. PIERCE AND OTHERS*

Springfield, Ill., April 6, 1859

GENTLEMEN: Your kind note inviting me to attend a festival in Boston, on the 28th instant, in honor of the birthday of Thomas Jefferson, was duly received. My engagements are such that I cannot attend.

Bearing in mind that about seventy years ago two great political parties were first formed in this country, that Thomas Jefferson was the head of one of them and Boston the headquarters of the other, it is both curious and interesting that those supposed to descend politically from the party opposed to Jefferson should now be celebrating his birthday in their own original seat of empire,\* while those claiming political descent from him have nearly ceased to breathe his name everywhere.

Remembering, too, that the Jefferson party was formed upon its supposed superior devotion to the personal rights of men, holding the rights of property to be secondary only, and greatly inferior, and assuming that the so-called Democracy of today are the Jefferson, and their opponents the anti-Jefferson party, it will be equally interesting to note how completely the two have changed hands as to the principle upon which they were originally supposed to be divided. The Democracy of today hold the liberty of one man to be absolutely nothing, when in conflict with another man's right of property; Republicans, on the contrary, are for both the man and the dollar, but in case of conflict the man before the dollar.

\* Boston had been a center of Federalism.

I remember being once much amused at seeing two partially intoxicated men engaged in a fight with their greatcoats on, which fight, after a long and rather harmless contest, ended in each having fought himself out of his own coat and into that of the other. If the two leading parties of this day are really identical with the two in the days of Jefferson and Adams, they have performed the same feat as the two drunken men.

But, soberly, it is now no child's play to save the principles of Jefferson from total overthrow in this nation. One would state with great confidence that he could convince any sane child that the simpler propositions of Euclid are true; but nevertheless he would fail, utterly, with one who should deny the definitions and axioms. The principles of Jefferson are the definitions and axioms of free society. And yet they are denied and evaded, with no small show of success. One dashinglly calls them "glittering generalities." Another bluntly calls them "self-evident lies." And others insidiously argue that they apply to "superior races." These expressions, differing in form, are identical in object and effect—the supplanting the principles of free government, and restoring those of classification, caste, and legitimacy. They would delight a convocation of crowned heads plotting against the people. They are the vanguard, the miners and sappers of returning despotism. We must repulse them or they will subjugate us. This is a world of compensation; and he who would be no slave must consent to have no slave. Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves, and, under a just God, cannot long retain it. All honor to Jefferson—to the man who, in the concrete pressure of a struggle for national independence by a single people, had the coolness, forecast, and capacity to introduce into a merely revolutionary document an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times, and so to embalm it there that today and in all coming days it shall be a

rebuke and a stumbling-block to the very harbingers of reappearing tyranny and oppression.

Your obedient servant,

A. LINCOLN

Two of the calls he felt compelled to answer favorably. During the state campaign of 1859 in Ohio, Douglas made several speeches, and Lincoln was invited to reply. He spoke at Columbus and Cincinnati in September. The Cincinnati speech was a very clever stump speech, marked by its good humor and genial wit. On account of its being made just across the river from Kentucky he addressed much of his speech to the Kentuckians. After expressing the firm purpose of the Republicans to beat Douglas and the Southern Democrats, he said:

“When we do as we say—beat you—you perhaps want to know what we will do with you.

“I will tell you, so far as I am authorized to speak for the opposition, what we mean to do to you. We mean to treat you, as near as we possibly can, as Washington, Jefferson, and Madison treated you. We mean to leave you alone, and in no way interfere with your institutions; to abide by all and every compromise of the Constitution, and in a word, coming back to the original proposition, to treat you, so far as degenerated men (if we have degenerated) may, according to the examples of those noble fathers—Washington, Jefferson, and Madison. We mean to remember that you are as good as we; that there is no difference between us other than the difference of circumstances. We mean to recognize and bear in mind always that you have as good hearts in your bosoms as other people, or as we claim to have, and treat you accordingly. We mean to marry your girls, when we have a chance—the white ones, I mean—and I have the honor to inform you that I once did have a chance in that way.”

The Columbus speech ranks as one of Lincoln's great political addresses, linking up his former position with the finished position of the Cooper Union speech of 1860. In it he defines once more his position toward the negro. Douglas and the Democrats were accusing him persistently of preaching social and political equality, and here he replies.

## THE COLUMBUS SPEECH

[September 16, 1859]

FELLOW-CITIZENS OF THE STATE OF OHIO: I cannot fail to remember that I appear for the first time before an audience in this now great state—an audience that is accustomed to hear such speakers as Corwin,\* and Chase, and Wade,† and many other renowned men; and remembering this, I feel that it will be well for you, as for me, that you should not raise your expectations to that standard to which you would have been justified in raising them had one of these distinguished men appeared before you. You would perhaps be only preparing a disappointment for yourselves, and, as a consequence of your disappointment, mortification to me. I hope, therefore, that you will commence with very moderate expectations; and, perhaps, if you will give me your attention, I shall be able to interest you to a moderate degree.

Appearing here for the first time in my life, I have been somewhat embarrassed for a topic by way of introduction to my speech; but I have been relieved from that embarrassment by an introduction which the *Ohio Statesman* newspaper gave me this morning. In this newspaper I have read an article in which, among other statements, I find the following:

“In debating with Senator Douglas during the memorable contest last fall, Mr. Lincoln declared in favor of negro suffrage, and attempted to defend that vile conception against the Little Giant.”

I mention this now, at the opening of my remarks, for the purpose of making three comments upon it. The first I have already announced—it furnished me an introductory topic; the second is to show that the gentleman is mistaken; thirdly, to give him an opportunity to correct it.

\* Thomas Corwin, of Ohio.

† Benjamin F. Wade, of Ohio.

In the first place, in regard to this matter being a mistake. I have found that it is not entirely safe, when one is misrepresented under his very nose, to allow the misrepresentation to go uncontradicted. I therefore propose, here at the outset, not only to say that this is a misrepresentation, but to show conclusively that it is so; and you will bear with me while I read a couple of extracts from that very "memorable" debate with Judge Douglas last year, to which this newspaper refers. In the first pitched battle which Senator Douglas and myself had, at the town of Ottawa, I used the language which I will now read. Having been previously reading an extract, I continued as follows:

"Now, gentlemen, I don't want to read at any greater length, but this is the true complexion of all I have ever said in regard to the institution of slavery and the black race. This is the whole of it, and anything that argues me into his idea of perfect social and political equality with the negro is but a specious and fantastic arrangement of words, by which a man can prove a horse-chestnut to be a chestnut horse. I will say here, while upon this subject, that I have no purpose either directly or indirectly to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so. I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and the black races. There is a physical difference between the two which, in my judgment, will probably forever forbid their living together upon the footing of perfect equality, and inasmuch as it becomes a necessity that there must be a difference, I, as well as Judge Douglas, am in favor of the race to which I belong having the superior position. I have never said anything to the contrary, but I hold that, notwithstanding all this, there is no reason in the world why the negro is not entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the

Declaration of Independence, the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I hold that he is as much entitled to these as the white man. I agree with Judge Douglas, he is not my equal in many respects—certainly not in color, perhaps not in moral or intellectual endowments. But in the right to eat the bread, without leave of anybody else, which his own hand earns, he is my equal, and the equal of Judge Douglas, and the equal of every living man.”

Upon a subsequent occasion, when the reason for making a statement like this occurred, I said:

“While I was at the hotel today an elderly gentleman called upon me to know whether I was really in favor of producing a perfect equality between the negroes and white people. While I had not proposed to myself on this occasion to say much on that subject, yet as the question was asked me I thought I would occupy perhaps five minutes in saying something in regard to it. I will say, then, that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and the black races—that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say in addition to this, that there is a physical difference between the white and the black races, which, I believe, will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I, as much as any other man, am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race. I say upon this occasion I do not perceive that because the white man is to have the superior position, the negro should be denied everything. I do not understand that because I do not want a negro woman for a slave, I must necessarily want



her for a wife. My understanding is that I can just let her alone. I am now in my fiftieth year; and I certainly never have had a black woman for either a slave or a wife. So it seems to me quite possible for us to get along without making either slaves or wives of negroes. I will add to this, that I have never seen to my knowledge a man, woman, or child, who was in favor of producing a perfect equality, social and political, between negroes and white men. I recollect of but one distinguished instance that I ever heard of so frequently as to be entirely satisfied of its correctness—and that is the case of Judge Douglas's old friend, Colonel Richard M. Johnson. I will also add to the remarks I have made (for I am not going to enter at large upon this subject), that I have never had the least apprehension that I or my friends would marry negroes, if there were no law to keep them from it; but as Judge Douglas and his friends seem to be in great apprehension that they might, if there were no law to keep them from it, I give him the most solemn pledge that I will to the very last stand by the law of the state, which forbids the marrying of white people with negroes."

There, my friends, you have briefly what I have, upon former occasions, said upon the subject to which this newspaper, to the extent of its ability, has drawn the public attention. In it you not only perceive, as a probability, that in that contest I did not at any time say I was in favor of negro suffrage; but the absolute proof that twice—once substantially and once expressly—I declared against it. Having shown you this, there remains but a word of comment upon that newspaper article. It is this: that I presume the editor of that paper is an honest and truth-loving man, and that he will be greatly obliged to me for furnishing him thus early an opportunity to correct the misrepresentation he has made, before it has run so long that malicious people can call him a liar.

The giant himself has been here recently. I have seen a brief report of his speech. If it were otherwise unpleasant to me to introduce the subject of the negro as a topic for discussion, I might be somewhat relieved by the fact that he dealt exclusively in that subject while he was here. I shall, therefore, without much hesitation or diffidence, enter upon this subject.

The American people, on the first day of January, 1854, found the African slave-trade prohibited by a law of Congress. In a majority of the states of this Union, they found African slavery, or any other sort of slavery, prohibited by state constitutions. They also found a law existing, supposed to be valid, by which slavery was excluded from almost all the territory the United States then owned. This was the condition of the country, with reference to the institution of slavery, on the first of January, 1854. A few days after that, a bill was introduced into Congress, which ran through its regular course in the two branches of the national legislature, and finally passed into a law in the month of May, by which the act of Congress prohibiting slavery from going into the territories of the United States was repealed. In connection with the law itself, and, in fact, in the terms of the law, the then existing prohibition was not only repealed, but there was a declaration of a purpose on the part of Congress never thereafter to exercise any power that they might have, real or supposed, to prohibit the extension or spread of slavery. This was a very great change; for the law thus repealed was of more than thirty years' standing. Following rapidly upon the heels of this action of Congress, a decision of the Supreme Court is made, by which it is declared that Congress, if it desires to prohibit the spread of slavery into the territories, has no constitutional power to do so. Not only so, but that decision lays down principles, which, if pushed to their logical conclusion—I say pushed to their logical conclusion—would decide that the constitutions of free

states, forbidding slavery, are themselves unconstitutional. Mark me, I do not say the judges said this, and let no man say I affirm the judges used these words; but I only say it is my opinion that what they did say, if pressed to its logical conclusion, will inevitably result thus.

Looking at these things, the Republican party, as I understand its principles and policy, believes that there is great danger of the institution of slavery being spread out and extended, until it is ultimately made alike lawful in all the states of this Union; so believing, to prevent that incidental and ultimate consummation is the original and chief purpose of the Republican organization. I say "chief purpose" of the Republican organization; for it is certainly true that if the national house shall fall into the hands of the Republicans, they will have to attend to all the other matters of national housekeeping as well as this. The chief and real purpose of the Republican party is eminently conservative. It proposes nothing save and except to restore this government to its original tone in regard to this element of slavery, and there to maintain it, looking for no further change in reference to it than that which the original framers of the government themselves expected and looked forward to.

The chief danger to this purpose of the Republican party is not just now the revival of the African slave-trade, or the passage of a congressional slave-code, or the declaring of a second Dred Scott decision, making slavery lawful in all the states. These are not pressing us just now. They are not quite ready yet. The authors of these measures know that we are too strong for them; but they will be upon us in due time, and we will be grappling with them hand to hand, if they are not now headed off. They are not now the chief danger to the purpose of the Republican organization; but the most imminent danger that now threatens that purpose is that insidious Douglas popular sovereignty. This is the

miner and sapper. While it does not propose to revive the African slave-trade, nor to pass a slave-code, nor to make a second Dred Scott decision, it is preparing us for the onslaught and charge of these ultimate enemies when they shall be ready to come on, and the word of command for them to advance shall be given. I say this Douglas popular sovereignty—for there is a broad distinction, as I now understand it, between that article and a genuine popular sovereignty.

I believe there is a genuine popular sovereignty. I think a definition of genuine popular sovereignty, in the abstract, would be about this: That each man shall do precisely as he pleases with himself, and with all those things which exclusively concern him. Applied to government, this principle would be, that a general government shall do all those things which pertain to it, and all the local governments shall do precisely as they please in respect to those matters which exclusively concern them. I understand that this government of the United States, under which we live, is based upon this principle; and I am misunderstood if it is supposed that I have any war to make upon that principle.

Now, what is Judge Douglas's popular sovereignty? It is, as a principle, no other than that if one man chooses to make a slave of another man, neither that other man nor anybody else has a right to object. Applied in government, as he seeks to apply it, it is this: If, in a new territory into which a few people are beginning to enter for the purpose of making their homes, they choose to either exclude slavery from their limits or to establish it there, however one or the other may affect the persons to be enslaved, or the infinitely greater number of persons who are afterward to inhabit that territory, or the other members of the families of communities, of which they are but an incipient member, or the general head of the family of states as parent of all—however their action may affect one or the other of these, there is

no power or right to interfere. That is Douglas's popular sovereignty applied.

He has a good deal of trouble with popular sovereignty. His explanations explanatory of explanations explained are interminable. The most lengthy and, as I suppose, the most maturely considered of his long series of explanations is his great essay in *Harper's Magazine*.\* I will not attempt to enter on any very thorough investigation of his argument as there made and presented. I will nevertheless occupy a good portion of your time here in drawing your attention to certain points in it. Such of you as may have read this document will have perceived that the Judge, early in the document, quotes from two persons as belonging to the Republican party, without naming them, but who can readily be recognized as being Governor Seward,† of New York, and myself. It is true that exactly fifteen months ago this day, I believe, I for the first time expressed a sentiment upon this subject, and in such a manner that it should get into print, that the public might see it beyond the circle of my hearers, and my expression of it at that time is the quotation that Judge Douglas makes. He has not made the quotation with accuracy, but justice to him requires me to say that it is sufficiently accurate not to change its sense.

The sense of that quotation condensed is this—that this slavery element is a durable element of discord among us, and that we shall probably not have perfect peace in this country with it until it either masters the free principle in our government, or is so far mastered by the free principle as for the public mind to rest in the belief that it is going to its end. That sentiment

\* Douglas published in *Harper's Monthly* of September, 1859, an article entitled "The Dividing Line Between Federal and Local Authority. Popular Sovereignty in the Territories."

† William H. Seward, former Governor of New York and, at the time of Lincoln's speech, United States Senator. He had made a speech in which he spoke of the "irrepressible conflict" between slavery and freedom, which excited great hostility in the South.

which I now express in this way was, at no great distance of time, perhaps in different language, and in connection with some collateral ideas, expressed by Governor Seward. Judge Douglas has been so much annoyed by the expression of that sentiment that he has constantly, I believe, in almost all his speeches since it was uttered, been referring to it. I find he alluded to it in his speech here, as well as in the copyright essay. I do not now enter upon this for the purpose of making an elaborate argument to show that we were right in the expression of that sentiment. I only ask your attention to this matter for the purpose of making one or two points upon it.

If you will read the copyright essay, you will discover that Judge Douglas himself says a controversy between the American colonies and the government of Great Britain began on the slavery question in 1699, and continued from that time until the Revolution; and, while he did not say so, we all know that it has continued with more or less violence ever since the Revolution.

Then we need not appeal to history, to the declaration of the framers of the government, but we know from Judge Douglas himself that slavery began to be an element of discord among the white people of this country as far back as 1699, or one hundred and sixty years ago, or five generations of men—counting thirty years to a generation. Now it would seem to me that it might have occurred to Judge Douglas, or to anybody who had turned his attention to these facts, that there was something in the nature of that thing, slavery, somewhat durable for mischief and discord.

There is another point I desire to make in regard to this matter before I leave it. From the adoption of the Constitution down to 1820 is the precise period of our history when we had comparative peace upon this question—the precise period of time when we came nearer

to having peace about it than any other time of that entire one hundred and sixty years, in which he says it began, or of the eighty years of our own Constitution. Then it would be worth our while to stop and examine into the probable reason of our coming nearer to having peace then than at any other time. This was the precise period of time in which our fathers adopted, and during which they followed, a policy restricting the spread of slavery, and the whole Union was acquiescing in it. The whole country looked forward to the ultimate extinction of the institution. It was when a policy had been adopted, and was prevailing, which led all just and right-minded men to suppose that slavery was gradually coming to an end, and that they might be quiet about it, watching it as it expired. I think Judge Douglas might have perceived that too, and, whether he did or not, it is worth the attention of right-minded men, here and elsewhere, to consider whether that is not the truth of the case. If he had looked at these two facts, that this matter has been an element of discord for one hundred and sixty years among this people, and that the only comparative peace we have had about it was when that policy prevailed in this government, which he now wars upon, he might then, perhaps, have been brought to a more just appreciation of what I said fifteen months ago—that “a house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind will rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward, until it shall become alike lawful in all the states, old as well as new, North as well as South.”

That was my sentiment at that time. In connection with it, I said:

“We are now far into the fifth year since a policy was initiated with the avowed object and confident promise of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only not ceased, but has constantly augmented.”

I now say to you here that we are advanced still farther into the sixth year since that policy of Judge Douglas—that popular sovereignty of his for quieting the slavery question—was made the national policy. Fifteen months more have been added since I uttered that sentiment, and I call upon you, and all other right-minded men, to say whether those fifteen months have belied or corroborated my words.

While I am here upon this subject, I cannot but express gratitude that the true view of this element of discord among us—as I believe it is—is attracting more and more attention. I do not believe that Governor Seward uttered that sentiment because I had done so before, but because he reflected upon this subject, and saw the truth of it. Nor do I believe, because Governor Seward or I uttered it, that Mr. Hickman,\* of Pennsylvania, in different language, since that time, has declared his belief in the utter antagonism which exists between the principles of liberty and slavery. You see we are multiplying. Now, while I am speaking of Hickman, let me say I know but little about him. I have never seen him, and know scarcely anything about the man; but I will say this much about him: Of all the anti-Lecompton Democracy that have been brought to my notice, he alone has the true, genuine ring of the metal. And now, without indorsing anything else he has said, I will ask this audience to give three cheers for Hickman. [*The audience responded with three rousing cheers for Hickman.*]

\* John Hickman, a member of Congress from Pennsylvania.



Another point in the copyright essay to which I would ask your attention is rather a feature to be extracted from the whole thing, than from any express declaration of it at any point. It is a general feature of that document, and indeed, of all of Judge Douglas's discussions of this question, that the territories of the United States and the states of this Union are exactly alike—that there is no difference between them at all—that the Constitution applies to the territories precisely as it does to the states—and that the United States Government, under the Constitution, may not do in a state what it may not do in a territory, and what it must do in a state, it must do in a territory. Gentlemen, is that a true view of the case? It is necessary for this squatter sovereignty; but is it true?

Let us consider. What does it depend upon? It depends altogether upon the proposition that the states must, without the interference of the General Government, do all those things that pertain exclusively to themselves—that are local in their nature, that have no connection with the General Government. After Judge Douglas has established this proposition, which nobody disputes or ever has disputed, he proceeds to assume, without proving it, that slavery is one of those little, unimportant, trivial matters, which are of just about as much consequence as the question would be to me whether my neighbor should raise horned cattle or plant tobacco; that there is no moral question about it, but that it is altogether a matter of dollars and cents; that when a new territory is opened for settlement, the first man who goes into it may plant there a thing which, like the Canada thistle, or some other of those pests of the soil, cannot be dug out by the millions of men who will come thereafter; that it is one of those little things that is so trivial in its nature that it has no effect upon anybody save the few men who first plant upon the soil; that it is not a thing which in any way affects the family of communi-

ties composing these states, nor any way endangers the General Government. Judge Douglas ignores altogether the very well-known fact that we have never had a serious menace to our political existence, except it sprang from this thing, which he chooses to regard as only upon a par with onions and potatoes.

Turn it, and contemplate it in another view. He says that, according to his popular sovereignty, the General Government may give to the territories governors, judges, marshals, secretaries, and all the other chief men to govern them, but they must not touch upon this other question. Why? The question of who shall be governor of a territory for a year or two, and pass away, without his track being left upon the soil, or an act which he did for good or for evil being left behind, is a question of vast national magnitude. It is so much opposed in its nature to locality that the nation itself must decide it; while this other matter of planting slavery upon a soil—a thing which, once planted, cannot be eradicated by the succeeding millions who have as much right there as the first comers, or if eradicated, not without infinite difficulty and a long struggle—he considers the power to prohibit it as one of these little, local, trivial things that the nation ought not to say a word about; that it affects nobody save the few men who are there.

Take these two things and consider them together, present the question of planting a state with the institution of slavery by the side of a question of who shall be governor of Kansas for a year or two, and is there a man here—is there a man on earth—who would not say the governor question is the little one, and the slavery question is the great one? I ask any honest Democrat if the small, the local, and the trivial and temporary question is not, Who shall be governor?—while the durable, the important, and the mischievous one is, Shall this soil be planted with slavery?

This is an idea, I suppose, which has arisen in Judge

Douglas's mind from his peculiar structure. I suppose the institution of slavery really looks small to him. He is so put up by nature that a lash upon his back would hurt him, but a lash upon anybody else's back does not hurt him. That is the build of the man, and consequently he looks upon the matter of slavery in this unimportant light.

Judge Douglas ought to remember, when he is endeavoring to force this policy upon the American people, that while he is put up in that way, a good many are not. He ought to remember that there was once in this country a man by the name of Thomas Jefferson, supposed to be a Democrat—a man whose principles and policy are not very prevalent amongst Democrats today, it is true; but that man did not take exactly this view of the insignificance of the element of slavery which our friend Judge Douglas does. In contemplation of this thing, we all know he was led to exclaim, "I tremble for my country when I remember that God is just!" We know how he looked upon it when he thus expressed himself. There was danger to this country, danger of the avenging justice of God, in that little, unimportant popular-sovereignty question of Judge Douglas. He supposed there was a question of God's eternal justice wrapped up in the enslaving of any race of men, or any man, and that those who did so braved the arm of Jehovah—that when a nation thus dared the Almighty, every friend of that nation had cause to dread His wrath. Choose ye between Jefferson and Douglas as to what is the true view of this element among us.

There is another little difficulty about this matter of treating the territories and states alike in all things, to which I ask your attention, and I shall leave this branch of the case. If there is no difference between them, why not make the territories states at once? What is the reason that Kansas was not fit to come into the Union when it was organized into a territory, in Judge Douglas's

view? Can any of you tell any reason why it should not have come into the Union at once? They are fit, as he thinks, to decide upon the slavery question—the largest and most important with which they could possibly deal; what could they do by coming into the Union that they are not fit to do, according to his view, by staying out of it? Oh, they are not fit to sit in Congress and decide upon the rates of postage, or questions of *ad valorem* or specific duties on foreign goods, or live-oak timber contracts; they are not fit to decide these vastly important matters, which are national in their import, but they are fit, “from the jump,” to decide this little negro question. But, gentlemen, the case is too plain; I occupy too much time on this head, and I pass on.

Near the close of the copyright essay, the Judge, I think, comes very near kicking his own fat into the fire. I did not think when I commenced these remarks that I would read from that article, but I now believe I will:

“This exposition of the history of these measures shows conclusively that the authors of the compromise measures of 1850, and of the Kansas-Nebraska act of 1854, as well as the members of the Continental Congress in 1774, and the founders of our system of government subsequent to the Revolution, regarded the people of the territories and colonies as political communities which were entitled to a free and exclusive power of legislation in their provincial legislatures, where their representation could alone be preserved, in all cases of taxation and internal polity.”

When the Judge saw that putting in the word “slavery” would contradict his own history, he put in what he knew would pass as synonymous with it—“internal polity.” Whenever we find *that* in one of his speeches, the substitute is used in this manner; and I can tell you the reason. It would be too bald a contradiction to say slavery, but

“internal polity” is a general phrase which would pass in some quarters, and which he hopes will pass with the reading community, for the same thing.

“This right pertains to the people collectively, as a law-abiding and peaceful community, and not to the isolated individuals who may wander upon the public domain in violation of law. It can only be exercised where there are inhabitants sufficient to constitute a government, and capable of performing its various functions and duties, a fact to be ascertained and determined by——” Whom do you think? Judge Douglas says, “By Congress.”

“Whether the number shall be fixed at ten, fifteen, or twenty thousand inhabitants does not affect the principle.”

Now I have only a few comments to make. Popular sovereignty, by his own words, does not pertain to the few persons who wander upon the public domain in violation of law. We have his words for that. When it does pertain to them is when they are sufficient to be formed into an organized political community, and he fixes the minimum for that at 10,000, and the maximum at 20,000. Now I would like to know what is to be done with the 9,000? Are they all to be treated, until they are large enough to be organized into a political community, as wanderers upon the public land in violation of law? And if so treated and driven out, at what point of time would there ever be ten thousand? If they were not driven out, but remained there as trespassers upon the public land in violation of the law, can they establish slavery there? No; the Judge says popular sovereignty don't pertain to them then. Can they exclude it then? No; popular sovereignty don't pertain to them then. I would like to know, in the case covered by the essay, what condition the people of the territory are in before they reach the number of ten thousand.

But the main point I wish to ask attention to is that the question as to when they shall have reached a sufficient number to be formed into a regular organized community is to be decided "by Congress." Judge Douglas says so. Well, gentlemen, that is about all we want. No; that is all the Southerners want. That is what all those who are for slavery want. They do not want Congress to prohibit slavery from coming into the new territories, and they do not want popular sovereignty to hinder it; and as Congress is to say when they are ready to be organized, all that the South has to do is to get Congress to hold off. Let Congress hold off until they are ready to be admitted as a state, and the South has all it wants in taking slavery into and planting it in all the territories that we now have, or hereafter may have. In a word, the whole thing, at a dash of the pen, is at last put in the power of Congress; for if they do not have this popular sovereignty until Congress organizes them, I ask if it at last does not come from Congress? If, at last, it amounts to anything at all, Congress gives it to them. I submit this rather for your reflection than for comment. After all that is said, at last, by a dash of the pen, everything that has gone before is undone, and he puts the whole question under the control of Congress. After fighting through more than three hours, if you will undertake to read it, he at last places the whole matter under the control of that power which he had been contending against, and arrives at a result directly contrary to what he had been laboring to do. He at last leaves the whole matter to the control of Congress.

There are two main objects, as I understand it, of this *Harper's Magazine* essay. One was to show, if possible, that the men of our Revolutionary times were in favor of his popular sovereignty; and the other was to show that the Dred Scott decision had not entirely squelched out this popular sovereignty. I do not propose, in regard to this argument drawn from the history of former times,

to enter into a detailed examination of the historical statements he has made. I have the impression that they are inaccurate in a great many instances; sometimes in positive statement, but very much more inaccurate by the suppression of statements that really belong to the history. But I do not propose to affirm that this is so to any very great extent, or to enter into a very minute examination of his historical statement. I avoid doing so upon this principle—that if it were important for me to pass out of this lot in the least period of time possible, and I came to that fence and saw by a calculation of my own strength and agility that I could clear it at a bound, it would be folly for me to stop and consider whether I could or could not crawl through a crack. So I say of the whole history contained in his essay, where he endeavored to link the men of the Revolution to popular sovereignty. It only requires an effort to leap out of it—a single bound to be entirely successful. If you read it over, you will find that he quotes here and there from documents of the Revolutionary times, tending to show that the people of the colonies were desirous of regulating their own concerns in their own way; that the British Government should not interfere; that at one time they struggled with the British Government to be permitted to exclude the African slave-trade; if not directly, to be permitted to exclude it indirectly by taxation sufficient to discourage and destroy it. From these and many things of this sort, Judge Douglas argues that they were in favor of the people of our own territories excluding slavery if they wanted to, or planting it there if they wanted to, doing just as they pleased from the time they settled upon the territory. Now, however his history may apply, and whatever of his argument there may be that is sound and accurate or unsound and inaccurate, if we can find out what these men did themselves do upon this very question of slavery in the territories, does it not end the whole thing? If, after all this labor and

effort to show that the men of the Revolution were in favor of his popular sovereignty and his mode of dealing with slavery in the territories, we can show that these very men took hold of that subject, and dealt with it, we can see for ourselves how they dealt with it. It is not a matter of argument or inference, but we know what they thought about it.

It is precisely upon that part of the history of the country that one important omission is made by Judge Douglas. He selects parts of the history of the United States upon the subject of slavery, and treats it as the whole, omitting from his historical sketch the legislation of Congress in regard to the admission of Missouri, by which the Missouri Compromise was established, and slavery excluded from a country half as large as the present United States. All this is left out of his history, and in no wise alluded to by him, so far as I can remember, save once, when he makes a remark, that upon his principle the Supreme Court was authorized to pronounce a decision that the act called the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional. All that history has been left out. But this part of the history of the country was not made by the men of the Revolution.

There was another part of our political history made by the very men who were the actors in the Revolution, which has taken the name of the Ordinance of '87. Let me bring that history to your attention. In 1784, I believe, this same Mr. Jefferson drew up an ordinance for the government of the country upon which we now stand; or rather a frame or draft of an ordinance for the government of this country, here in Ohio, our neighbors in Indiana, us who live in Illinois, and our neighbors in Wisconsin and Michigan. In that ordinance, drawn up not only for the government of that territory, but for the territories south of the Ohio River, Mr. Jefferson expressly provided for the prohibition of slavery. Judge Douglas says, and perhaps he is right, that that provision



was lost from that ordinance. I believe that is true. When the vote was taken upon it, a majority of all present in the Congress of the Confederation voted for it; but there were so many absentees that those voting for it did not make the clear majority necessary, and it was lost. But three years after that the Congress of the Confederation were together again, and they adopted a new ordinance for the government of this Northwest Territory, not contemplating territory south of the river, for the states owning that territory had hitherto refrained from giving it to the General Government; hence they made the ordinance to apply only to what the government owned. In that, the provision excluding slavery was inserted and passed unanimously, or at any rate it passed and became a part of the law of the land. Under that ordinance we live. First, here, in Ohio, you were a territory, then an enabling act was passed, authorizing you to form a constitution and state government, provided it was Republican, and not in conflict with the ordinance of '87. When you framed your constitution and presented it for admission, I think you will find the legislation upon the subject will show that, "whereas you had formed a constitution that was Republican, and not in conflict with the ordinance of '87," therefore you were admitted upon equal footing with the original states. The same process in a few years was gone through with Indiana, and so with Illinois, and the same substantially with Michigan and Wisconsin.

Not only did that ordinance prevail, but it was constantly looked to whenever a step was taken by a new territory to become a state. Congress always turned their attention to it, and in all their movements upon this subject they traced their course by that ordinance of '87. When they admitted new states they advertised them of this ordinance as a part of the legislation of the country. They did so because they had traced the ordinance of '87 throughout the history of this country. Begin with the

men of the Revolution, and go down for sixty entire years, and until the last scrap of that territory comes into the Union in the form of the state of Wisconsin, everything was made to conform to the ordinance of '87, excluding slavery from that vast extent of country.

I omitted to mention in the right place that the Constitution of the United States was in process of being framed when that ordinance was made by the Congress of the Confederation; and one of the first acts of Congress itself, under the new Constitution itself, was to give force to that ordinance by putting power to carry it out into the hands of new officers under the Constitution, in the place of the old ones, who had been legislated out of existence by the change in the government from the Confederation to the Constitution. Not only so, but I believe Indiana once or twice, if not Ohio, petitioned the General Government for the privilege of suspending that provision and allowing them to have slaves. A report made by Mr. Randolph, of Virginia, himself a slaveholder, was directly against it, and the action was to refuse them the privilege of violating the ordinance of '87.

This period of history, which I have run over briefly, is, I presume, as familiar to most of the assembly as any other part of the history of our country. I suppose that few of my hearers are not as familiar with that part of history as I am, and I only mention it to recall your attention to it at this time. And hence I ask how extraordinary a thing it is that a man who has occupied a position upon the floor of the Senate of the United States, who is now in his third term, and who looks to see the government of this whole country fall into his own hands, pretending to give a truthful and accurate history of the slavery question in this country, should so entirely ignore the whole of that portion of our history—the most important of all. Is it not a most extraordinary spectacle, that a man should stand up and ask for any confidence in his statements, who sets out as he does

with portions of history, calling upon the people to believe that it is a true and fair representation, when the leading part and controlling feature of the whole history is carefully suppressed?

But the mere leaving out is not the most remarkable feature of this most remarkable essay. His proposition is to establish that the leading men of the Revolution were for his great principle of non-intervention by the government in the question of slavery in the territories; while history shows that they decided in the cases actually brought before them in exactly the contrary way, and he knows it. Not only did they so decide at that time, but they stuck to it during sixty years, through thick and thin, as long as there was one of the Revolutionary heroes upon the stage of political action. Through their whole course, from first to last, they clung to freedom. And now he asks the community to believe that the men of the Revolution were in favor of his great principle, when we have the naked history that they themselves dealt with this very subject-matter of his principle, and utterly repudiated his principle, acting upon a precisely contrary ground. It is as impudent and absurd as if a prosecuting attorney should stand up before a jury, and ask them to convict A as the murderer of B, while B was walking alive before them.

I say again, if Judge Douglas asserts that the men of the Revolution acted upon principles by which, to be consistent with themselves, they ought to have adopted his popular sovereignty, then, upon a consideration of his own argument, he had a right to make you believe that they understood the principles of government, but misapplied them—that he has arisen to enlighten the world as to the just application of this principle. He has a right to try to persuade you that he understands their principles better than they did, and therefore he will apply them now, not as they did, but as they ought to have done. He has a right to go before the community,

and try to convince them of this; but he has no right to attempt to impose upon anyone the belief that these men themselves approved of his great principle. There are two ways of establishing a proposition. One is by trying to demonstrate it upon reason, and the other is to show that great men in former times have thought so and so, and thus to pass it by the weight of pure authority. Now if Judge Douglas will demonstrate somehow that this is popular sovereignty—the right of one man to make a slave of another, without any right in that other, or anyone else, to object—demonstrate it as Euclid demonstrated propositions—there is no objection. But when he comes forward, seeking to carry a principle by bringing to it the authority of men who themselves utterly repudiated that principle, I ask that he shall not be permitted to do it.

I see, in the Judge's speech here, a short sentence in these words: "Our fathers, when they formed this government under which we live, understood this question just as well and even better than we do now." That is true; I stick to that. I will stand by Judge Douglas in that to the bitter end. And now, Judge Douglas, come and stand by me, and truthfully show how they acted, understanding it better than we do. All I ask of you, Judge Douglas, is to stick to the proposition that the men of the Revolution understood this subject better than we do now, and with that better understanding they acted better than you are trying to act now.

I wish to say something now in regard to the Dred Scott decision, as dealt with by Judge Douglas. In that "memorable debate" between Judge Douglas and myself, last year, the Judge thought fit to commence a process of catechizing me, and at Freeport I answered his questions, and propounded some to him. Among others propounded to him was one that I have here now. The substance, as I remember it, is: "Can the people of a United States territory, under the Dred Scott decision,

in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits, prior to the formation of a state constitution?" He answered that they could lawfully exclude slavery from the United States territories, notwithstanding the Dred Scott decision. There was something about that answer that has probably been a trouble to the Judge ever since.

The Dred Scott decision expressly gives every citizen of the United States a right to carry his slaves into the United States territories. And now there was some inconsistency in saying that the decision was right, and saying, too, that the people of the territory could lawfully drive slavery out again. When all the trash, the words, the collateral matter, was cleared away from it—all the chaff was fanned out of it—it was a bare absurdity: no less than that a thing may be lawfully driven away from where it has a lawful right to be. Clear it of all the verbiage, and that is the naked truth of his proposition—that a thing may be lawfully driven from the place where it has a lawful right to stay. Well, it was because the Judge couldn't help seeing this that he has had so much trouble with it; and what I want to ask your especial attention to, just now, is to remind you, if you have not noticed the fact, that the Judge does not any longer say that the people can exclude slavery. He does not say so in the copyright essay; he did not say so in the speech that he made here; and, so far as I know, since his reelection to the Senate, he has never said, as he did at Freeport, that the people of the territories can exclude slavery. He desired that you, who wish the territories to remain free, should believe that he stands by that position, but he does not say it himself. He escapes, to some extent, the absurd position I have stated by changing his language entirely. What he says now is something different in language, and we will consider whether it is not different in sense too. It is now that the Dred Scott decision, or rather the Constitution under that decision,

does not carry slavery into the territories beyond the power of the people of the territories to control it as other property. He does not say the people can drive it out, but they can control it as other property. The language is different; we should consider whether the sense is different. Driving a horse out of this lot is too plain a proposition to be mistaken about it; it is putting him on the other side of the fence. Or it might be a sort of exclusion of him from the lot if you were to kill him and let the worms devour him; but neither of these things is the same as "controlling him as other property." That would be to feed him, to pamper him, to ride him, to use and abuse him, to make the most money out of him, "as other property"; but, please you, what do the men who are in favor of slavery want more than this? What do they really want, other than that slavery, being in the territories, shall be controlled as other property?

If they want anything else, I do not comprehend it. I ask your attention to this, first, for the purpose of pointing out the change of ground the Judge has made; and, in the second place, the importance of the change—that that change is not such as to give you gentlemen who want his popular sovereignty the power to exclude the institution or drive it out at all. I know the Judge sometimes squints at the argument that in controlling it as other property by unfriendly legislation they may control it to death, as you might in the case of a horse, perhaps, feed him so lightly and ride him so much that he would die. But when you come to legislative control, there is something more to be attended to. I have no doubt, myself, that if the territories should undertake to control slave property as other property—that is, control it in such a way that it would be the most valuable as property, and make it bear its just proportion in the way of burdens as property—really deal with it as property—the Supreme Court of the United States will say, "God speed you, and amen." But I undertake to

give the opinion, at least, that if the territories attempt by any direct legislation to drive the man with his slave out of the territory, or to decide that his slave is free because of his being taken in there, or to tax him to such an extent that he cannot keep him there, the Supreme Court will unhesitatingly decide all such legislation unconstitutional, as long as that Supreme Court is constructed as the Dred Scott Supreme Court is. The first two things they have already decided, except that there is a little quibble among lawyers between the words *dicta* and decision.\* They have already decided that a negro cannot be made free by territorial legislation.

What is that Dred Scott decision? Judge Douglas labors to show that it is one thing, while I think it is altogether different. It is a long opinion, but it is all embodied in this short statement:

“The Constitution of the United States forbids Congress to deprive a man of his property without due process of law; the right of property in slaves is distinctly and expressly affirmed in that Constitution; therefore, if Congress shall undertake to say that a man’s slave is no longer his slave when he crosses a certain line into a territory, that is depriving him of his property without due process of law, and is unconstitutional.”

There is the whole Dred Scott decision. They add that if Congress cannot do so itself, Congress cannot confer any power to do so, and hence any effort by the territorial legislature to do either of these things is absolutely decided against. It is a foregone conclusion by that court.

Now, as to this indirect mode by “unfriendly legislation,” all lawyers here will readily understand that such

\* A decision of a court is its finding upon a question of law or fact arising in a case. A *dictum* is a judicial opinion expressed by judges on points that do not necessarily arise in the case, and are not involved in it. A *dictum* does not have the binding force upon subsequent or inferior courts that is accorded to a decision.

a proposition cannot be tolerated for a moment, because a legislature cannot indirectly do that which it cannot accomplish directly. Then I say any legislation to control this property, as property, for its benefit as property, would be hailed by this Dred Scott Supreme Court, and fully sustained; but any legislation driving slave property out, or destroying it as property, directly or indirectly, will most assuredly by that court be held unconstitutional.

Judge Douglas says that if the Constitution carries slavery into the territories, beyond the power of the people of the territories to control it as other property, then it follows logically that everyone who swears to support the Constitution of the United States must give that support to that property which it needs. And if the Constitution carries slavery into the territories beyond the power of the people to control it as other property, then it also carries it into the states, because the Constitution is the supreme law of the land. Now, gentlemen, if it were not for my excessive modesty I would say that I told that very thing to Judge Douglas quite a year ago. This argument is here in print, and if it were not for my modesty, as I said, I might call your attention to it. If you read it, you will find that I not only made that argument, but made it better than he has made it since.

There is, however, this difference. I say now, and said then, there is no sort of question that the Supreme Court has decided that it is the right of the slaveholder to take his slave and hold him in the territory; and, saying this, Judge Douglas himself admits the conclusion. He says if that is so, this consequence will follow; and because this consequence would follow, his argument is, the decision cannot therefore be that way—"that would spoil my popular sovereignty, and it cannot be possible that this great principle has been squelched out in this extraordinary way. It might be, if it were not for the extraordinary consequences of spoiling my humbug."



Another feature of the Judge's argument about the Dred Scott case is an effort to show that that decision deals altogether in declarations of negatives; that the Constitution does not affirm anything as expounded by the Dred Scott decision, but it only declares a want of power, a total absence of power, in reference to the territories. It seems to be his purpose to make the whole of that decision to result in a mere negative declaration of a want of power in Congress to do anything in relation to this matter in the territories. I know the opinion of the judges states that there is a total absence of power; but that is, unfortunately, not all it states; for the judges add that the right of property in a slave is distinctly and expressly affirmed in the Constitution. It does not stop at saying that the right of property in a slave is recognized in the Constitution, is declared to exist somewhere in the Constitution, but says it is affirmed in the Constitution. Its language is equivalent to saying that it is embodied and so woven in that instrument that it cannot be detached without breaking the Constitution itself. In a word, it is part of the Constitution.

Douglas is singularly unfortunate in his effort to make out that decision to be altogether negative, when the express language at the vital part is that this is distinctly affirmed in the Constitution. I think myself, and I repeat it here, that this decision does not merely carry slavery into the territories, but by its logical conclusion it carries it into the states in which we live. One provision of that Constitution is that it shall be the supreme law of the land—I do not quote the language—any constitution or law of any state to the contrary notwithstanding. This Dred Scott decision says that the right of property in a slave is affirmed in that Constitution which is the supreme law of the land, any state constitution or law notwithstanding. Then I say that to destroy a thing which is distinctly affirmed and supported by the supreme law of the land, even by a state constitution or law, is a violation

of that supreme law, and there is no escape from it. In my judgment there is no avoiding that result, save that the American people shall see that state constitutions are better construed than our Constitution is construed in that decision. They must take care that it is more faithfully and truly carried out than it is there expounded.

I must hasten to a conclusion. Near the beginning of my remarks I said that this insidious Douglas popular sovereignty is the measure that now threatens the purpose of the Republican party to prevent slavery from being nationalized in the United States. I propose to ask your attention for a little while to some propositions in affirmance of that statement. Take it just as it stands, and apply it as a principle; extend and apply that principle elsewhere, and consider where it will lead you. I now put this proposition, that Judge Douglas's popular sovereignty applied will reopen the African slave-trade; and I will demonstrate it by any variety of ways in which you can turn the subject or look at it.

The Judge says that the people of the territories have the right, by his principle, to have slaves if they want them. Then I say that the people in Georgia have the right to buy slaves in Africa if they want them, and I defy any man on earth to show any distinction between the two things—to show that the one is either more wicked or more unlawful; to show, on original principles, that one is better or worse than the other; or to show by the Constitution that one differs a whit from the other. He will tell me, doubtless, that there is no constitutional provision against people taking slaves into the new territories, and I tell him that there is equally no constitutional provision against buying slaves in Africa. He will tell you that a people in the exercise of popular sovereignty ought to do as they please about that thing, and have slaves if they want them; and I tell you that the people of Georgia are as much entitled to

popular sovereignty, and to buy slaves in Africa, if they want them, as the people of the territory are to have slaves if they want them. I ask any man, dealing honestly with himself, to point out a distinction.

I have recently seen a letter of Judge Douglas's, in which, without stating that to be the object, he doubtless endeavors to make a distinction between the two. He says he is unalterably opposed to the repeal of the laws against the African slave-trade. And why? He then seeks to give a reason that would not apply to his popular sovereignty in the territories. What is that reason? "The abolition of the African slave-trade is a compromise of the Constitution." I deny it. There is no truth in the proposition that the abolition of the African slave-trade is a compromise of the Constitution. No man can put his finger on anything in the Constitution, or on the line of history, which shows it. It is a mere barren assertion, made simply for the purpose of getting up a distinction between the revival of the African slave-trade and his "great principle."

At the time the Constitution of the United States was adopted it was expected that the slave-trade would be abolished. I should assert, and insist upon that, if Judge Douglas denied it. But I know that it was equally expected that slavery would be excluded from the territories, and I can show by history that in regard to these two things public opinion was exactly alike, while in regard to positive action, there was more done in the ordinance of '87 to resist the spread of slavery than was ever done to abolish the foreign slave-trade. Lest I be misunderstood, I say again that at the time of the formation of the Constitution, public expectation was that the slave-trade would be abolished, but no more so than that the spread of slavery in the territories should be restrained. They stand alike, except that in the ordinance of '87 there was a mark left by public opinion, showing that it was more committed against the spread

of slavery in the territories than against the foreign slave-trade.

Compromise! What word of compromise was there about it? Why, the public sense was then in favor of the abolition of the slave-trade; but there was at the time a very great commercial interest involved in it, and extensive capital in that branch of trade. There were doubtless the incipient stages of improvement in the South in the way of farming, dependent on the slave-trade, and they made a proposition to Congress to abolish the trade after allowing it twenty years, a sufficient time for the capital and commerce engaged in it to be transferred to other channels. They made no provision that it should be abolished in twenty years; I do not doubt that they expected it would be; but they made no bargain about it. The public sentiment left no doubt in the minds of any that it would be done away. I repeat, there is nothing in the history of those times in favor of that matter being a compromise of the Constitution. It was the public expectation at the time, manifested in a thousand ways, that the spread of slavery should also be restricted.

Then I say if this principle is established, that there is no wrong in slavery, and whoever wants it has a right to have it; that it is a matter of dollars and cents; a sort of question as to how they shall deal with brutes; that between us and the negro here there is no sort of question, but that at the South the question is between the negro and the crocodile;\* that it is a mere matter of policy; that there is a perfect right, according to interest, to do just as you please—when this is done, where this doctrine prevails, the miners and sappers will

\* After his election in 1858, Douglas made a tour through a part of the South, possibly with a view to undoing any damage that he had done his popularity there during the debate with Lincoln. In a speech at Memphis he said that on the Louisiana sugar plantations, it was "not a question between the white man and the negro, but between the negro and the crocodile. Between the negro and the crocodile, I take the side of the negro; but between the negro and the white man, I go for the white man."

have formed public opinion for the slave-trade. They will be ready for Jeff Davis and Stephens,\* and other leaders of that company, to sound the bugle for the revival of the slave-trade, for the second Dred Scott decision, for the flood of slavery to be poured over the free states, while we shall be here tied down and helpless, and run over like sheep.

It is to be a part and parcel of this same idea to say to men who want to adhere to the Democratic party, who have always belonged to that party, and are only looking about for some excuse to stick to it, but nevertheless hate slavery, that Douglas's popular sovereignty is as good a way as any to oppose slavery. They allow themselves to be persuaded easily, in accordance with their previous dispositions, into this belief, that it is about as good a way of opposing slavery as any, and we can do that without straining our old party ties or breaking up old political associations. We can do so without being called negro-worshippers. We can do that without being subjected to the gibes and sneers that are so readily thrown out in place of argument where no argument can be found. So let us stick to this popular sovereignty—this insidious popular sovereignty. Now let me call your attention to one thing that has really happened, which shows this gradual and steady debauching of public opinion, this course of preparation for the revival of the slave-trade, for the territorial slave-code, and the new Dred Scott decision that is to carry slavery into the free states. Did you ever, five years ago, hear of anybody in the world saying that the negro had no share in the Declaration of National Independence; that it did not mean negroes at all, and when "all men" were spoken of, negroes were not included?

I am satisfied that five years ago that proposition was

\* Jefferson Davis, of Mississippi, who was at this time the Southern leader in the Senate, and Alexander H. Stephens, of Georgia, who had served in Congress with Lincoln. They were later the President and Vice President of the Confederacy.

not put upon paper by any living being anywhere. I have been unable at any time to find a man in an audience who would declare that he had ever known of anybody saying so five years ago. But last year there was not a "Douglas popular sovereignty" man in Illinois who did not say it. Is there one in Ohio but declares his firm belief that the Declaration of Independence did not mean negroes at all? I do not know how this is; I have not been here much; but I presume you are very much alike everywhere. Then I suppose that all now express the belief that the Declaration of Independence never did mean negroes. I call upon one of them to say that he said it five years ago.

If you think that now, and did not think it then, the next thing that strikes me is to remark that there has been a change wrought in you, and a very significant change it is, being no less than changing the negro, in your estimation, from the rank of a man to that of a brute. They are taking him down, and placing him, when spoken of, among reptiles and crocodiles, as Judge Douglas himself expresses it.

Is not this change wrought in your minds a very important change? Public opinion in this country is everything. In a nation like ours this popular sovereignty and squatter sovereignty have already wrought a change in the public mind to the extent I have stated. There is no man in this crowd who contradicts it.

Now, if you are opposed to slavery honestly, as much as anybody, I ask you to note that fact, and the like of which is to follow, to be plastered on, layer after layer, until very soon you are prepared to deal with the negro everywhere as with the brute. If public sentiment has not been debauched already to this point, a new turn of the screw in that direction is all that is wanting; and this is constantly being done by the teachers of this insidious popular sovereignty. You need but one or two turns further until your minds, now ripening under these

teachings, will be ready for all these things, and you will receive and support, or submit to, the slave-trade revived with all its horrors, a slave-code enforced in our territories, and a new Dred Scott decision to bring slavery up into the very heart of the free North.\* This, I must say, is but carrying out those words prophetically spoken by Mr. Clay many, many years ago—I believe more than thirty years—when he told an audience that if they would repress all tendencies to liberty and ultimate emancipation, they must go back to the era of our independence and muzzle the cannon which thundered its annual joyous return on the Fourth of July; they must blow out the moral lights around us; they must penetrate the human soul, and eradicate the love of liberty; but until they did these things, and others eloquently enumerated by him, they could not repress all tendencies to ultimate emancipation.

I ask attention to the fact that in a preëminent degree these popular sovereigns are at this work: blowing out the moral lights around us; teaching that the negro is no longer a man, but a brute; that the Declaration has nothing to do with him; that he ranks with the crocodile and the reptile; that man, with body and soul, is a matter of dollars and cents. I suggest to this portion of the Ohio Republicans, or Democrats, if there be any present, the serious consideration of this fact, that there is now going on among you a steady process of debauching public opinion on this subject. With this, my friends, I bid you adieu.

In the winter of 1858 J. W. Fell, of Bloomington, Illinois, realizing the curiosity prevailing in the East about Lincoln, asked him to publish a sketch of himself. In 1859 he renewed the suggestion and Lincoln replied:

\* Lincoln insisted that if the principle of the Dred Scott decision was accepted, it would logically lead to a decision declaring that the Constitution of the United States guaranteed the right of a slaveholder to take his slaves to free states as well.

TO J. W. FELL

Springfield, December 20, 1859

J. W. Fell, Esq.

MY DEAR SIR: Herewith is a little sketch, as you requested. There is not much of it, for the reason, I suppose, that there is not much of me. If anything be made out of it, I wish it to be modest, and not to go beyond the material. If it were thought necessary to incorporate anything from any of my speeches, I suppose there would be no objection. Of course it must not appear to have been written by myself.

Yours very truly,

A. LINCOLN

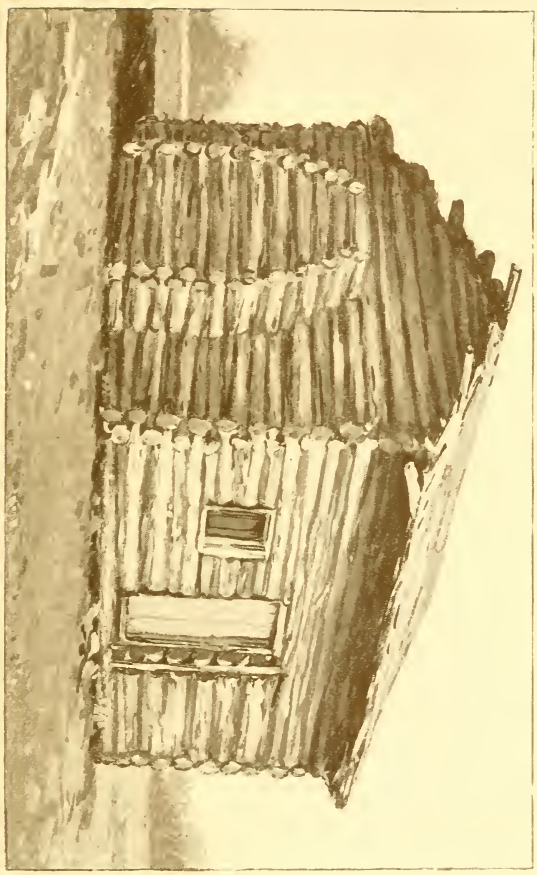
#### AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I was born February 12, 1809, in Hardin County, Kentucky. My parents were both born in Virginia, of undistinguished families—second families, perhaps I should say. My mother, who died in my tenth year, was of a family of the name of Hanks, some of whom now reside in Adams, and others in Macon County, Illinois. My paternal grandfather, Abraham Lincoln, emigrated from Rockingham County, Virginia, to Kentucky about 1781 or 1782, where a year or two later he was killed by the Indians, not in battle, but by stealth, when he was laboring to open a farm in the forest. His ancestors, who were Quakers, went to Virginia from Berks County, Pennsylvania. An effort to identify them with the New England family of the same name ended in nothing more definite than a similarity of Christian names in both families, such as Enoch, Levi, Mordecai, Solomon, Abraham, and the like.

My father, at the death of his father, was but six years of age, and he grew up literally without education. He removed from Kentucky to what is now Spencer County, Indiana, in my eighth year. We reached our new home



THE BIRTHPLACE OF LINCOLN, HODGENSVILLE, KENTUCKY





about the time the state came into the Union. It was a wild region, with many bears and other wild animals still in the woods. There I grew up. There were some schools, so called, but no qualification was ever required of a teacher beyond "readin', writin', and cipherin'," to the rule of three. If a straggler supposed to understand Latin happened to sojourn in the neighborhood, he was looked upon as a wizard. There was absolutely nothing to excite ambition for education. Of course, when I came of age I did not know much. Still, somehow, I could read, write, and cipher to the rule of three, but that was all. I have not been to school since. The little advance I now have upon this store of education, I have picked up from time to time under the pressure of necessity.

I was raised to farm work, which I continued till I was twenty-two. At twenty-one I came to Illinois, Macon County. Then I got to New Salem, at that time in Sangamon, now in Menard County, where I remained a year as a sort of clerk in a store. Then came the Black Hawk War; and I was elected a captain of volunteers, a success which gave me more pleasure than any I have had since. I went the campaign, was elated, ran for the legislature the same year (1832), and was beaten—the only time I ever have been beaten by the people. The next and three succeeding biennial elections I was elected to the legislature. I was not a candidate afterward. During this legislative period I had studied law, and removed to Springfield to practice it. In 1846 I was once elected to the lower House of Congress. Was not a candidate for reelection. From 1849 to 1854, both inclusive, practiced law more assiduously than ever before. Always a Whig in politics; and generally on the Whig electoral tickets, making active canvasses. I was losing interest in politics when the repeal of the Missouri Compromise aroused me again. What I have done since that is pretty well known.

If any personal description of me is thought desirable, it may be said I am, in height, six feet four inches, nearly; lean in flesh, weighing on an average one hundred and eighty pounds; dark complexion, with coarse black hair and gray eyes. No other marks or brands recollected.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN

In the winter of 1859 Lincoln spoke five times in Kansas, and in February, 1860, he made his famous speech in Cooper Union. He had been invited, in the fall of 1859, by Henry Ward Beecher and the Young Men's Republican Union to speak in Brooklyn at the Plymouth Church and had accepted. When he reached New York he found that he was to speak in Cooper Union, which had only recently been opened. He was nervous for fear that his speech was not adapted to the sort of audience he would face there, and he spent two days in the most careful revision and preparation of his address. Quite the best description of the occasion is that of Joseph Choate:

"He appeared in every sense of the word like one of the plain people among whom he loved to be counted. At first sight there was nothing impressive or imposing about him—except that his great stature singled him out from the crowd; his clothes hung awkwardly on his giant frame, his face was of a dark pallor, without the slightest tinge of color; his seamed and rugged features bore the furrows of hardship and struggle; his deep-set eyes looked sad and anxious; his countenance in repose gave little evidence of that brain power which raised him from the lowest to the highest station among his countrymen; as he talked to me before the meeting, he seemed ill at ease, with that sort of apprehension which a young man might feel before presenting himself to a new and strange audience, whose critical disposition he dreaded. It was a great audience, including all the noted men—all the learned and cultured—of his party in New York: editors, clergymen, statesmen, lawyers, merchants, critics. They were all very curious to hear him. His fame as a powerful speaker had preceded him, and exaggerated rumor of his wit—the worst fore-runner of an orator—had reached the East. When Mr. Bryant \*

\* William Cullen Bryant, the distinguished poet and author, then editor of the *Evening Post*.

presented him, on the high platform of the Cooper Institute, a vast sea of eager upturned faces greeted him, full of intense curiosity to see what this rude child of the people was like. He was equal to the occasion. When he spoke he was transformed; his eye kindled, his voice rang, his face shone and seemed to light up the whole assembly. For an hour and a half he held his audience in the hollow of his hand. His style of speech and manner of delivery were severely simple. What Lowell called 'the grand simplicities of the Bible,' with which he was so familiar, were reflected in his discourse. With no attempt at ornament or rhetoric, without parade or pretense, he spoke straight to the point. If any came expecting the turgid eloquence or the ribaldry of the frontier, they must have been startled at the earnest and sincere purity of his utterances. It was marvelous to see how this untutored man, by mere self-discipline and the chastening of his own spirit, had outgrown all meretricious arts, and found his own way to the grandeur and strength of absolute simplicity.

"He spoke upon the theme which he had mastered so thoroughly. He demonstrated by copious historical proofs and masterly logic that the fathers who created the Constitution in order to form a more perfect union, to establish justice, and to secure the blessings of liberty to themselves and their posterity, intended to empower the Federal Government to exclude slavery from the territories. In the kindest spirit, he protested against the avowed threat of the Southern States to destroy the Union if, in order to secure freedom in these vast regions out of which future states were to be carved, a Republican President were elected. He closed with an appeal to his audience, spoken with all the fire of his aroused and kindling conscience, with a full outpouring of his love of justice and liberty, to maintain their political purpose on that lofty and unassailable issue of right and wrong which alone could justify it, and not to be intimidated from their high resolve and sacred duty by any threats of destruction to the government or of ruin to themselves. He concluded with this telling sentence, which drove the whole argument home to all our hearts: 'Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it.' That night the great hall, and the next day the whole city, rang with delighted applause and con-

gratulations, and he who had come as a stranger departed with the laurels of a great triumph."

The speech made a profound impression. It was published in pamphlet form and widely printed in the newspapers. Even Greeley's *Tribune*, not particularly friendly to Lincoln, said of it, "No man ever before made such an impression on his first appeal to a New York audience." The speech brought Lincoln before the East in a new way and made him a presidential possibility. For it must be remembered, as James Ford Rhodes says, "Before Lincoln made his Cooper Institute speech, the mention of his name as a possible nominee for President would have been considered as a joke anywhere except in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Iowa."

The Cooper Union speech is Lincoln's last great political address and is his best. His thesis was that the men who framed the Constitution of the United States believed that slavery was an evil, that it should not be extended, and that the federal government had power to prohibit it in the territories. In his proof of this he showed close investigation of the historical sources, a fine literary style, power as an orator, and power of the clearest and most logical reasoning. It has none of the things that jar as they are read in the debates with Douglas, but was pitched on the highest plane Lincoln had yet reached. The statesman was beginning to emerge from the chrysalis of the politician. It was a fitting climax to the period of the struggle against slavery extension.

### THE COOPER UNION SPEECH

[February 27, 1860]

MR. PRESIDENT AND FELLOW CITIZENS OF NEW YORK: The facts with which I shall deal this evening are mainly old and familiar; nor is there anything new in the general use I shall make of them. If there shall be any novelty, it will be in the mode of presenting the facts, and the inferences and observations following that presentation. In his speech last autumn at Columbus, Ohio, as reported in the *New York Times*, Senator Douglas said:

“Our fathers, when they framed the government under which we live, understood this question just as well, and even better, than we do now.”

I fully indorse this, and I adopt it as a text for this discourse. I so adopt it because it furnishes a precise and an agreed starting-point for a discussion between Republicans and that wing of the Democracy headed by Senator Douglas. It simply leaves the inquiry: What was the understanding those fathers had of the question mentioned?

What is the frame of government under which we live? The answer must be, “The Constitution of the United States.” That Constitution consists of the original, framed in 1787, and under which the present government first went into operation, and twelve subsequently framed amendments, the first ten of which were framed in 1789.

Who were our fathers that framed the Constitution? I suppose the “thirty-nine” who signed the original instrument may be fairly called our fathers who framed that part of the present government. It is almost exactly true to say they framed it, and it is altogether true to say they fairly represented the opinion and sentiment of the whole nation at that time. Their names, being familiar to nearly all, and accessible to quite all, need not now be repeated.

I take these “thirty-nine,” for the present, as being “our fathers who framed the government under which we live.” What is the question which, according to the text, those fathers understood “just as well, and even better, than we do now”?

It is this: Does the proper division of local from federal authority, or anything in the Constitution, forbid our federal government to control as to slavery in our federal territories?

Upon this, Senator Douglas holds the affirmative, and Republicans the negative. This affirmation and denial form an issue; and this issue—this question—is precisely

what the text declares our fathers understood "better than we." Let us now inquire whether the "thirty-nine," or any of them, ever acted upon this question; and if they did, how they acted upon it—how they expressed that better understanding. In 1784, three years before the Constitution, the United States then owning the Northwestern Territory, and no other, the Congress of the Confederation had before them the question of prohibiting slavery in that territory;\* and four of the "thirty-nine" who afterward framed the Constitution were in that Congress, and voted on that question. Of these, Roger Sherman, Thomas Mifflin, and Hugh Williamson voted for the prohibition, thus showing that, in their understanding, no line dividing local from federal authority, nor anything else, properly forbade the federal government to control as to slavery in federal territory. The other of the four, James McHenry, voted against the prohibition, showing that for some cause he thought it improper to vote for it.

In 1787, still before the Constitution, but while the convention was in session framing it, and while the Northwestern Territory still was the only territory owned by the United States, the same question of prohibiting slavery in the territory again came before the Congress of the Confederation; and two more of the "thirty-nine" who afterward signed the Constitution were in that Congress, and voted on the question. They were William Blount and William Few; and they both voted for the prohibition—thus showing that in their understanding no line dividing local from federal authority, nor anything else, properly forbade the federal government to control as to slavery in federal territory. This time the prohibition became a law, being part of what is now well known as the Ordinance of '87.

The question of federal control of slavery in the terri-

\* Jefferson's proposed ordinance of 1784 for the government of the Northwest Territory prohibited slavery. It failed, but the ordinance of 1787 was modeled on it.



ories seems not to have been directly before the convention which framed the original Constitution; and hence it is not recorded that the "thirty-nine," or any of them, while engaged on that instrument, expressed any opinion on that precise question.

In 1789, by the first Congress which sat under the Constitution, an act was passed to enforce the Ordinance of '87, including the prohibition of slavery in the North-western Territory. The bill for this act was reported by one of the "thirty-nine"—Thomas Fitzsimmons, then a member of the House of Representatives from Pennsylvania. It went through all its stages without a word of opposition, and finally passed both branches without ayes and nays,\* which is equivalent to a unanimous passage. In this Congress there were sixteen of the thirty-nine fathers who framed the original Constitution. They were John Langdon, Nicholas Gilman, William S. Jolinson, Roger Sherman, Robert Morris, Thomas Fitzsimmons, William Few, Abraham Baldwin, Rufus King, William Paterson, George Clymer, Richard Bassett, George Read, Pierce Butler, Daniel Carroll, and James Madison.

This shows that, in their understanding, no line dividing local from federal authority, nor anything in the Constitution, properly forbade Congress to prohibit slavery in the federal territory; else both their fidelity to correct principle, and their oath to support the Constitution would have constrained them to oppose the prohibition.

Again, George Washington, another of the "thirty-nine," was then President of the United States, and as such approved and signed the bill, thus completing its validity as a law, and thus showing that, in his understanding, no line dividing local from federal authority, nor anything in the Constitution, forbade the federal government to control as to slavery in federal territory.

No great while after the adoption of the original Con-

\* A roll-call vote.

stitution, North Carolina ceded to the federal government the country now constituting the state of Tennessee; and a few years later Georgia ceded that which now constitutes the states of Mississippi and Alabama. In both deeds of cession it was made a condition by the ceding states that the federal government should not prohibit slavery in the ceded country.\* Besides this, slavery was then actually in the ceded country. Under these circumstances, Congress, on taking charge of these countries, did not absolutely prohibit slavery within them. But they did interfere with it—take control of it—even there, to a certain extent. In 1798 Congress organized the territory of Mississippi. In the act of organization they prohibited the bringing of slaves into the territory from any place without the United States, by fine, and giving freedom to slaves so brought. This act passed both branches of Congress without yeas and nays. In that Congress were three of the “thirty-nine” who framed the original Constitution. They were John Langdon, George Read, and Abraham Baldwin. They all probably voted for it. Certainly they would have placed their opposition to it upon record if, in their understanding, any line dividing local from federal authority, or anything in the Constitution, properly forbade the federal government to control as to slavery in federal territory.

In 1803 the federal government purchased the Louisiana country. Our former territorial acquisitions came from certain of our own states; but this Louisiana country was acquired from a foreign nation. In 1804 Congress gave a territorial organization to that part of it which now constitutes the state of Louisiana. New Orleans, lying within that part, was an old and comparatively large city. There were other considerable towns and settlements, and slavery was extensively and thoroughly intermingled with the people. Congress did not, in the Territorial Act, prohibit slavery; but they

\* This indicated the prevailing recognition of the power of Congress over slavery in the territories.

did interfere with it—take control of it—in a more marked and extensive way than they did in the case of Mississippi. The substance of the provision therein made in relation to slaves was:

1st. That no slave should be imported into the territory from foreign parts.

2d. That no slave should be carried into it who had been imported into the United States since the first day of May, 1798.

3d. That no slave should be carried into it, except by the owner, and for his own use as a settler; the penalty in all the cases being a fine upon the violator of the law, and freedom to the slave.

This act also was passed without ayes or nays. In the Congress which passed it there were two of the "thirty-nine." They were Abraham Baldwin and Jonathan Dayton. As stated in the case of Mississippi, it is probable they both voted for it. They would not have allowed it to pass without recording their opposition to it if, in their understanding, it violated either the line properly dividing local from federal authority, or any provision of the constitution.

In 1819-20 came and passed the Missouri question. Many votes were taken, by yeas and nays, in both branches of Congress, upon the various phases of the general question. Two of the "thirty-nine"—Rufus King and Charles Pinckney—were members of that Congress. Mr. King steadily voted for slavery prohibition and against all compromises, while Mr. Pinckney as steadily voted against slavery prohibition and against all compromises. By this, Mr. King showed that, in his understanding, no line dividing local from federal authority, nor anything in the Constitution, was violated by Congress prohibiting slavery in federal territory; while Mr. Pinckney, by his votes, showed that, in his understanding, there was some sufficient reason for opposing such prohibition in that case.

The cases I have mentioned are the only acts of the "thirty-nine," or of any of them, upon the direct issue, which I have been able to discover.

To enumerate the persons who thus acted as being four in 1784, two in 1787, seventeen in 1789, three in 1798, two in 1804, and two in 1819-20, there would be thirty of them. But this would be counting John Langdon, Roger Sherman, William Few, Rufus King, and George Read each twice, and Abraham Baldwin three times. The true number of those of the "thirty-nine" whom I have shown to have acted upon the question which, by the text, they understood better than we, is twenty-three, leaving sixteen not shown to have acted upon it in any way.

Here, then, we have twenty-three out of our thirty-nine fathers "who framed the government under which we live," who have, upon their official responsibility and their corporal oaths,\* acted upon the very question which the text affirms they "understood just as well, and even better than we do now"; and twenty-one of them—a clear majority of the whole "thirty-nine"—so acting upon it as to make them guilty of gross political impropriety and willful perjury if, in their understanding, any proper division between local and federal authority, or anything in the Constitution they had made themselves, and sworn to support, forbade the federal government to control as to slavery in the federal territories. Thus the twenty-one acted; and, as actions speak louder than words, so actions under such responsibility speak still louder.

Two of the twenty-three voted against congressional prohibition of slavery in the federal territories, in the instances in which they acted upon the question. But for what reasons they so voted is not known. They may have done so because they thought a proper division

\* It was an ancient custom to take a particularly binding oath with the hand upon the "corporal-cloth," or cloth covering the altar at the celebration of the Communion. In time the term "corporal oath" was applied to any oath taken with the hand upon a sacred object.

of local from federal authority, or some provision or principle of the Constitution, stood in the way; or they may, without any such question, have voted against the prohibition on what appeared to them to be sufficient grounds of expediency. No one who has sworn to support the Constitution can conscientiously vote for what he understands to be an unconstitutional measure, however expedient he may think it; but one may and ought to vote against a measure which he deems constitutional if, at the same time, he deems it inexpedient. It, therefore, would be unsafe to set down even the two who voted against the prohibition as having done so because, in their understanding, any proper division of local from federal authority, or anything in the Constitution, forbade the federal government to control as to slavery in federal territory.

The remaining sixteen of the "thirty-nine," so far as I have discovered, have left no record of their understanding upon the direct question of federal control of slavery in the federal territories. But there is much reason to believe that their understanding upon that question would not have appeared different from that of their twenty-three compeers, had it been manifested at all.

For the purpose of adhering rigidly to the text, I have purposely omitted whatever understanding may have been manifested by any person, however distinguished, other than the thirty-nine fathers who framed the original Constitution; and, for the same reason, I have also omitted whatever understanding may have been manifested by any of the "thirty-nine" even on any other phase of the general question of slavery. If we should look into their acts and declarations on those other phases, as the foreign slave-trade, and the morality and policy of slavery generally, it would appear to us that on the direct question of federal control of slavery in federal territories, the sixteen, if they had acted at all, would probably have acted just as the twenty-three

did. Among that sixteen were several of the most noted anti-slavery men of those times—as Dr. Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, and Gouverneur Morris—while there was not one now known to have been otherwise, unless it may be John Rutledge, of South Carolina.

The sum of the whole is that of our thirty-nine fathers who framed the original Constitution, twenty-one—a clear majority of the whole—certainly understood that no proper division of local from federal authority, nor any part of the Constitution, forbade the federal government to control slavery in the federal territories; while all the rest had probably the same understanding. Such, unquestionably, was the understanding of our fathers who framed the original Constitution; and the text affirms that they understood the question “better than we.”

But, so far, I have been considering the understanding of the question manifested by the framers of the original Constitution. In and by the original instrument, a mode was provided for amending it; and, as I have already stated, the present frame of “the government under which we live” consists of that original, and twelve amendatory articles framed and adopted since. Those who now insist that federal control of slavery in federal territories violates the Constitution, point us to the provisions which they suppose it thus violates; and, as I understand, they all fix upon provisions in these amendatory articles, and not in the original instrument. The Supreme Court, in the Dred Scott case, plant themselves upon the Fifth Amendment, which provides that no person shall be deprived of “life, liberty, or property without due process of law”; while Senator Douglas and his peculiar adherents plant themselves upon the Tenth Amendment, providing that “the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution” “are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.”

Now, it so happens that these amendments were framed by the first Congress which sat under the Constitution—

the identical Congress which passed the act, already mentioned, enforcing the prohibition of slavery in the Northwestern Territory. Not only was it the same Congress, but they were the identical, same individual men who, at the same session, and at the same time within the session, had under consideration, and in progress toward maturity, these constitutional amendments, and this act prohibiting slavery in all the territory the nation then owned. The constitutional amendments were introduced before, and passed after, the act enforcing the Ordinance of '87; so that, during the whole pendency of the act to enforce the ordinance, the constitutional amendments were also pending.

The seventy-six members of that Congress, including sixteen of the framers of the original Constitution, as before stated, were preëminently our fathers who framed that part of "the government under which we live" which is now claimed as forbidding the federal government to control slavery in the federal territories.

Is it not a little presumptuous in anyone at this day to affirm that the two things which that Congress deliberately framed, and carried to maturity at the same time, are absolutely inconsistent with each other? And does not such affirmation become impudently absurd when coupled with the other affirmation, from the same mouth, that those who did the two things alleged to be inconsistent, understood whether they really were inconsistent better than we—better than he who affirms that they are inconsistent?

It is surely safe to assume that the thirty-nine framers of the original Constitution, and the seventy-six members of the Congress which framed the amendments thereto, taken together, do certainly include those who may be fairly called "our fathers who framed the government under which we live." And so assuming, I defy any man to show that any one of them ever, in his whole life, declared that, in his understanding, any proper division

of local from federal authority, or any part of the Constitution, forbade the federal government to control as to slavery in the federal territories. I go a step further. I defy anyone to show that any living man in the whole world ever did, prior to the beginning of the present century (and I might almost say prior to the beginning of the last half of the present century), declare that, in his understanding, any proper division of local from federal authority, or any part of the Constitution, forbade the federal government to control as to slavery in the federal territories. To those who now so declare I give not only "our fathers who framed the government under which we live," but with them all other living men within the century in which it was framed, among whom to search, and they shall not be able to find the evidence of a single man agreeing with them.

Now, and here, let me guard a little against being misunderstood. I do not mean to say we are bound to follow implicitly in whatever our fathers did. To do so would be to discard all the lights of current experience—to reject all progress, all improvement. What I do say is that if we would supplant the opinions and policy of our fathers in any case, we should do so upon evidence so conclusive, and argument so clear, that even their great authority, fairly considered and weighed, cannot stand; and most surely not in a case whereof we ourselves declare they understood the question better than we.

If any man at this day sincerely believes that a proper division of local from federal authority, or any part of the Constitution, forbids the federal government to control as to slavery in the federal territories, he is right to say so, and to enforce his position by all truthful evidence and fair argument which he can. But he has no right to mislead others who have less access to history, and less leisure to study it, into the false belief that "our fathers who framed the government under



which we live" were of the same opinion—thus substituting falsehood and deception for truthful evidence and fair argument. If any man at this day sincerely believes "our fathers who framed the government under which we live" used and applied principles, in other cases, which ought to have led them to understand that a proper division of local from federal authority, or some part of the Constitution, forbids the federal government to control as to slavery in the federal territories, he is right to say so. But he should, at the same time, brave the responsibility of declaring that, in his opinion, he understands their principles better than they did themselves; and especially should he not shirk that responsibility by asserting that they "understood the question just as well, and even better, than we do now."

But enough! Let all who believe that "our fathers who framed the government under which we live understood this question just as well, and even better, than we do now," speak as they spoke, and act as they acted upon it. This is all Republicans ask—all Republicans desire—in relation to slavery. As those fathers marked it, so let it be again marked, as an evil not to be extended, but to be tolerated and protected only because of and so far as its actual presence among us makes that toleration and protection a necessity. Let all the guaranties those fathers gave it be not grudgingly, but fully and fairly, maintained. For this Republicans contend, and with this, so far as I know or believe, they will be content.

And now, if they would listen—as I suppose they will not—I would address a few words to the Southern people.

I would say to them: You consider yourselves a reasonable and a just people; and I consider that in the general qualities of reason and justice you are not inferior to any other people. Still, when you speak of us Republicans, you do so only to denounce us as reptiles, or, at the best, as no better than outlaws. You will

grant a hearing to pirates or murderers, but nothing like it to "Black Republicans." \* In all your contentions with one another, each of you deems an unconditional condemnation of "Black Republicanism" as the first thing to be attended to. Indeed, such condemnation of us seems to be an indispensable prerequisite—license, so to speak—among you to be admitted or permitted to speak at all. Now can you or not be prevailed upon to pause and to consider whether this is quite just to us, or even to yourselves? Bring forward your charges and specifications, and then be patient long enough to hear us deny or justify.

You say we are sectional. We deny it. That makes an issue; and the burden of proof is upon you.† You produce your proof; and what is it? Why, that our party has no existence in your section—gets no votes in your section. The fact is substantially true; but does it prove the issue? If it does, then in case we should, without change of principle, begin to get votes in your section, we should thereby cease to be sectional. You cannot escape this conclusion; and yet, are you willing to abide by it? If you are, you will probably soon find that we have ceased to be sectional, for we shall get votes in your section this very year. You will then begin to discover, as the truth plainly is, that your proof does not touch the issue. The fact that we get no votes in your section is a fact of your making, and not of ours. And if there be fault in that fact, that fault is primarily yours, and remains so until you show that we repel you by some wrong principle or practice. If we do repel you by any wrong principle or practice, the fault is ours; but this brings you to where you ought to have started—to a discussion of the right or wrong of our

\* A term of reproach employed in the country by the opponents of the new party.

† Under the law a person is innocent until he is proved guilty. The accuser thus has upon him what is called the burden of proof, that is, the necessity of proving the guilt of the accused.

principle. If our principle, put in practice, would wrong your section for the benefit of ours, or for any other object, then our principle, and we with it, are sectional, and are justly opposed and denounced as such. Meet us, then, on the question of whether our principle, put in practice, would wrong your section; and so meet us as if it were possible that something may be said on our side. Do you accept the challenge? No! Then you really believe that the principle which "our fathers who framed the government under which we live" thought so clearly right as to adopt it, and indorse it again and again, upon their official oaths, is in fact so clearly wrong as to demand your condemnation without a moment's consideration.

Some of you delight to flaunt in our faces the warning against sectional parties given by Washington in his Farewell Address. Less than eight years before Washington gave that warning, he had, as President of the United States, approved and signed an act of Congress enforcing the prohibition of slavery in the Northwestern Territory, which act embodied the policy of the government upon that subject up to and at the very moment he penned that warning; and about one year after he penned it, he wrote Lafayette that he considered that prohibition a wise measure, expressing in the same connection his hope that we should at some time have a confederacy of free states.

Bearing this in mind, and seeing that sectionalism has since arisen upon this same subject, is that warning a weapon in your hands against us, or in our hands against you? Could Washington himself speak, would he cast the blame of that sectionalism upon us, who sustain his policy, or upon you, who repudiate it? We respect that warning of Washington, and we commend it to you, together with his example pointing to the right application of it.

But you say you are conservative—eminently con-

servative—while we are revolutionary, destructive, or something of the sort. What is conservatism? Is it not adherence to the old and tried, against the new and untried? We stick to, contend for, the identical old policy on the point in controversy which was adopted by “our fathers who framed the government under which we live”; while you with one accord reject, and scout, and spit upon that old policy, and insist upon substituting something new. True, you disagree among yourselves as to what that substitute shall be. You are divided on new propositions and plans, but you are unanimous in rejecting and denouncing the old policy of the fathers. Some of you are for reviving the foreign slave-trade; some for a congressional slave-code for the territories; some for Congress forbidding the territories to prohibit slavery within their limits; some for maintaining slavery in the territories through the judiciary; some for the “gur-reat pur-rinciple” that “if one man would enslave another, no third man should object,” fantastically called “popular sovereignty”; but never a man among you is in favor of federal prohibition of slavery in federal territories, according to the practice of “our fathers who framed the government under which we live.” Not one of all your various plans can show a precedent or an advocate in the century within which our government originated. Consider, then, whether your claim of conservatism for yourselves, and your charge of destructiveness against us, are based on the most clear and stable foundations.

Again, you say we have made the slavery question more prominent than it formerly was. We deny it. We admit that it is more prominent, but we deny that we made it so. It was not we, but you, who discarded the old policy of the fathers. We resisted, and still resist, your innovation; and thence comes the greater prominence of the question. Would you have that question reduced to its former proportions? Go back to that old

policy. What has been will be again, under the same conditions. If you would have the peace of the old times, readopt the precepts and policy of the old times.

You charge that we stir up insurrections among your slaves. We deny it; and what is your proof? Harpers Ferry! John Brown!!\* John Brown was no Republican; and you have failed to implicate a single Republican in his Harpers Ferry enterprise. If any member of our party is guilty in that matter, you know it, or you do not know it. If you do know it, you are inexcusable for not designating the man and proving the fact. If you do not know it, you are inexcusable for asserting it, and especially for persisting in the assertion after you have tried and failed to make the proof. You need not be told that persisting in a charge which one does not know to be true, is simply malicious slander.

Some of you admit that no Republican designedly aided or encouraged the Harpers Ferry affair, but still insist that our doctrines and declarations necessarily lead to such results. We do not believe it. We know we hold no doctrine, and make no declaration, which were not held to and made by "our fathers who framed the government under which we live." You never dealt fairly by us in relation to this affair. When it occurred, some important state elections were near at hand, and you were in evident glee with the belief that, by charging the blame upon us, you could get an advantage of us in those elections. The elections came, and your expectations were not quite fulfilled. Every Republican man knew that, as to himself at least, your charge was a slander, and he was not much inclined by it to cast his vote in your favor. Republican doctrines and declarations are accompanied with a continual protest against any interference with your slaves, or with you about your slaves.

\* The John Brown raid on Harpers Ferry had occurred four months before this speech. He was supported by Abolitionists in the North, but no Republican was proved to be involved in the plot.

Surely, this does not encourage them to revolt. True, we do, in common with "our fathers who framed the government under which we live," declare our belief that slavery is wrong; but the slaves do not hear us declare even this. For anything we say or do, the slaves would scarcely know there is a Republican party. I believe they would not, in fact, generally know it but for your misrepresentations of us in their hearing. In your political contests among yourselves, each faction charges the other with sympathy with Black Republicanism; and then, to give point to the charge, defines Black Republicanism to simply be insurrection, blood, and thunder among the slaves.

Slave insurrections are no more common now than they were before the Republican party was organized. What induced the Southampton insurrection,\* twenty-eight years ago, in which at least three times as many lives were lost as at Harpers Ferry? You can scarcely stretch your very elastic fancy to the conclusion that Southampton was "got up by Black Republicanism." In the present state of things in the United States, I do not think a general, or even a very extensive, slave insurrection is possible. The indispensable concert of action cannot be attained. The slaves have no means of rapid communication; nor can incendiary freemen, black or white, supply it. The explosive materials are everywhere in parcels; but there neither are, nor can be supplied, the indispensable connecting trains.

Much is said by Southern people about the affection of slaves for their masters and mistresses; and a part of it, at least, is true. A plot for an uprising could scarcely be devised and communicated to twenty individuals before some one of them, to save the life of a favorite master or mistress, would divulge it. This is

\* The Southampton insurrection, led by Nat Turner, occurred in Southampton, Virginia, in 1831, and caused the death of more than sixty persons, nearly all of whom were women and children. The South regarded it as a direct result of abolitionist teachings.

the rule; and the slave revolution in Haiti \* was not an exception to it, but a case occurring under peculiar circumstances. The gunpowder plot of British history, † though not connected with slaves, was more in point. In that case, only about twenty were admitted to the secret; and yet one of them, in his anxiety to save a friend, betrayed the plot to that friend, and, by consequence, averted the calamity. Occasional poisonings from the kitchen, and open or stealthy assassinations in the field, and local revolts extending to a score or so, will continue to occur as the natural results of slavery; but no general insurrection of slaves, as I think, can happen in this country for a long time. Whoever much fears, or much hopes, for such an event, will be alike disappointed.

In the language of Mr. Jefferson, uttered many years ago, "It is still in our power to direct the process of emancipation and deportation peaceably, and in such slow degrees, as that the evil will wear off insensibly; and their places be, *pari passu*, ‡ filled up by free white laborers. If, on the contrary, it is left to force itself on, human nature must shudder at the prospect held up."

Mr. Jefferson did not mean to say, nor do I, that the power of emancipation is in the federal government. He spoke of Virginia; and, as to the power of emancipation, I speak of the slaveholding states only. The federal government, however, as we insist, has the power of restraining the extension of the institution—the power to insure that a slave insurrection shall never occur on any American soil which is now free from slavery.

John Brown's effort was peculiar. It was not a slave insurrection. It was an attempt by white men to get up a revolt among slaves, in which the slaves refused

\* The insurrection, which began in 1791, and resulted in the overthrow of French power. It was led by Toussaint L'Ouverture.

† The famous Gunpowder Plot occurred in England in 1604, when it was planned to blow up the Parliament while the king was present.

‡ With equal step, that is, in a like degree.

to participate. In fact, it was so absurd that the slaves, with all their ignorance, saw plainly enough it could not succeed. That affair, in its philosophy, corresponds with the many attempts, related in history, at the assassination of kings and emperors. An enthusiast broods over the oppression of a people till he fancies himself commissioned by Heaven to liberate them. He ventures the attempt, which ends in little else than his own execution. Orsini's attempt on Louis Napoleon,\* and John Brown's attempt at Harpers Ferry, were, in their philosophy, precisely the same. The eagerness to cast blame on old England in the one case, and on New England in the other, does not disprove the sameness of the two things.

And how much would it avail you, if you could, by the use of John Brown, Helper's book,† and the like, break up the Republican organization? Human action can be modified to some extent, but human nature cannot be changed. There is a judgment and a feeling against slavery in this nation, which cast at least a million and a half of votes. You cannot destroy that judgment and feeling—that sentiment—by breaking up the political organization which rallies around it. You can scarcely scatter and disperse an army which has been formed into order in the face of your heaviest fire; but if you could, how much would you gain by forcing the sentiment which created it out of the peaceful channel of the ballot box into some other channel? What would that other channel probably be? Would the number of John Browns be lessened or enlarged by the operation?

But you will break up the Union rather than submit to a denial of your constitutional rights.

\* Orsini was an Italian fanatic who plotted the assassination of Napoleon III of France in 1858. He lived in England and was acquitted by an English jury. He was later executed in France.

† Hinton Rowan Helper, a North Carolinian, had written in 1857 *The Impending Crisis in the South*, designed to show the economic ills of the South due to slavery by a contrast with the free states.



That has a somewhat reckless sound; but it would be palliated, if not fully justified, were we proposing, by the mere force of numbers, to deprive you of some right plainly written down in the Constitution. But we are proposing no such thing.

When you make these declarations you have a specific and well-understood allusion to an assumed constitutional right of yours to take slaves into the federal territories, and to hold them there as property. But no such right is specifically written in the Constitution. That instrument is literally silent about any such right. We, on the contrary, deny that such a right has any existence in the Constitution, even by implication.

Your purpose, then, plainly stated, is that you will destroy the government, unless you be allowed to construe and force the Constitution as you please, on all points in dispute between you and us. You will rule or ruin in all events.

This, plainly stated, is your language. Perhaps you will say the Supreme Court has decided the disputed constitutional question in your favor. Not quite so. But waiving the lawyer's distinction between *dictum* and decision, the court has decided the question for you in a sort of way. The court has substantially said it is your constitutional right to take slaves into the federal territories, and to hold them there as property. When I say the decision was made in a sort of way, I mean it was made in a divided court, by a bare majority of the judges, and they not quite agreeing with one another in the reasons for making it; that it is so made as that its avowed supporters disagree with one another about its meaning, and that it was mainly based upon a mistaken statement of fact—the statement in the opinion that “the right of property in a slave is distinctly and expressly affirmed in the Constitution.”

An inspection of the Constitution will show that the right of property in a slave is not “distinctly and ex-

pressly affirmed" in it. Bear in mind, the judges do not pledge their judicial opinion that such right is impliedly affirmed in the Constitution; but they pledge their veracity that it is "distinctly and expressly" affirmed there—"distinctly," that is, not mingled with anything else—"expressly," that is, in words meaning just that, without the aid of any inference, and susceptible of no other meaning.

If they had only pledged their judicial opinion that such right is affirmed in the instrument by implication, it would be open to others to show that neither the word "slave" nor "slavery" is to be found in the Constitution, nor the word "property" even, in any connection with language alluding to the things slave, or slavery; and that wherever in that instrument the slave is alluded to, he is called a "person"; and wherever his master's legal right in relation to him is alluded to, it is spoken of as "service or labor which may be due"—as a debt payable in service or labor. Also it would be open to show, by contemporaneous history, that this mode of alluding to slaves and slavery, instead of speaking of them, was employed on purpose to exclude from the Constitution the idea that there could be property in man.

To show all this is easy and certain.

When this obvious mistake of the judges shall be brought to their notice, is it not reasonable to expect that they will withdraw the mistaken statement, and reconsider the conclusion based upon it?

And then it is to be remembered that "our fathers who framed the government under which we live"—the men who made the Constitution—decided this same constitutional question in our favor long ago: decided it without division among themselves when making the decision; without division among themselves about the meaning of it after it was made, and, so far as any

evidence is left, without basing it upon any mistaken statement of facts.

Under all these circumstances, do you really feel yourselves justified to break up this government unless such a court decision as yours is shall be at once submitted to as a conclusive and final rule of political action? But you will not abide the election of a Republican President! In that supposed event, you say, you will destroy the Union; and then, you say, the great crime of having destroyed it will be upon us! That is cool. A highwayman holds a pistol to my ear, and mutters through his teeth, "Stand and deliver, or I shall kill you, and then you will be a murderer!"

To be sure, what the robber demanded of me—my money—was my own; and I had a clear right to keep it; but it was no more my own than my vote is my own; and the threat of death to me, to extort my money, and the threat of destruction to the Union, to extort my vote, can scarcely be distinguished in principle.

A few words now to Republicans. It is exceedingly desirable that all parts of this great confederacy shall be at peace, and in harmony one with another. Let us Republicans do our part to have it so. Even though much provoked, let us do nothing through passion and ill temper. Even though the Southern people will not so much as listen to us, let us calmly consider their demands, and yield to them if, in our deliberate view of our duty, we possibly can. Judging by all they say and do, and by the subject and nature of their controversy with us, let us determine, if we can, what will satisfy them.

Will they be satisfied if the territories be unconditionally surrendered to them? We know they will not. In all their present complaints against us, the territories are scarcely mentioned. Invasions and insurrections are the rage now. Will it satisfy them if, in the future,

we have nothing to do with invasions and insurrections? We know it will not. We so know, because we know we never had anything to do with invasions and insurrections; and yet this total abstaining does not exempt us from the charge and the denunciation.

The question recurs, What will satisfy them? Simply this: we must not only let them alone, but we must somehow convince them that we do let them alone. This, we know by experience, is no easy task. We have been so trying to convince them from the very beginning of our organization, but with no success. In all our platforms and speeches we have constantly protested our purpose to let them alone; but this has had no tendency to convince them. Alike unavailing to convince them is the fact that they have never detected a man of us in any attempt to disturb them.

These natural and apparently adequate means all failing, what will convince them? This, and this only: cease to call slavery wrong, and join them in calling it right. And this must be done thoroughly—done in acts as well as in words. Silence will not be tolerated—we must place ourselves avowedly with them. Senator Douglas's new sedition law \* must be enacted and enforced, suppressing all declarations that slavery is wrong, whether made in politics, in presses, in pulpits, or in private. We must arrest and return their fugitive slaves with greedy pleasure. We must pull down our free-state constitutions. The whole atmosphere must be disinfected from all taint of opposition to slavery, before they will cease to believe that all their troubles proceed from us.

I am quite aware they do not state their case precisely in this way. Most of them would probably say to us, "Let us alone; do nothing to us, and say what you please

\* Senator Douglas had introduced in the Senate a resolution instructing the report by the judiciary committee of a bill to protect each state and territory against conspiracies or combinations made in other states with the purpose of molesting the government, inhabitants, property, and institutions.

about slavery." But we do let them alone—have never disturbed them—so that, after all, it is what we say which dissatisfies them. They will continue to accuse us of doing, until we cease saying.

I am also aware they have not as yet in terms demanded the overthrow of our free-state constitutions. Yet those constitutions declare the wrong of slavery with more solemn emphasis than do all other sayings against it; and when all these other sayings shall have been silenced, the overthrow of these constitutions will be demanded, and nothing be left to resist the demand. It is nothing to the contrary that they do not demand the whole of this just now. Demanding what they do, and for the reason they do, they can voluntarily stop nowhere short of this consummation. Holding, as they do, that slavery is morally right and socially elevating, they cannot cease to demand a full national recognition of it as a legal right and a social blessing.

Nor can we justifiably withhold this on any ground save our conviction that slavery is wrong. If slavery is right, all words, acts, laws, and constitutions against it are themselves wrong, and should be silenced and swept away. If it is right, we cannot justly object to its nationality—its universality; if it is wrong, they cannot justly insist upon its extension—its enlargement. All they ask we could readily grant, if we thought slavery right; all we ask they could as readily grant, if they thought it wrong. Their thinking it right and our thinking it wrong is the precise fact upon which depends the whole controversy. Thinking it right, as they do, they are not to blame for desiring its full recognition as being right; but thinking it wrong, as we do, can we yield to them? Can we cast our votes with their view, and against our own? In view of our moral, social, and political responsibilities, can we do this?

Wrong as we think slavery is, we can yet afford to let it alone where it is, because that much is due to the

necessity arising from its actual presence in the nation; but can we, while our votes will prevent it, allow it to spread into the national territories, and to overrun us here in these free states?

If our sense of duty forbids this, then let us stand by our duty fearlessly and effectively. Let us be diverted by none of those sophistical contrivances wherewith we are so industriously plied and belabored—contrivances such as groping for some middle ground between the right and the wrong; vain as the search for a man who should be neither a living man nor a dead man; such as a policy of “don’t care” \* on a question about which all true men do care; such as Union appeals beseeching true Union men to yield to Disunionists, reversing the divine rule, and calling, not the sinners, but the righteous to repentance; † such as invocations to Washington, imploring men to unsay what Washington said and undo what Washington did.

Neither let us be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to the government, nor of dungeons to ourselves. Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it. ‡

After the Cooper Union speech Lincoln stayed in New York for almost a week, enjoying heartily the association with the leading men of the community which came to him. He then went to New Hampshire, where he spoke at Concord, Manchester, Exeter, and Dover and made a great impression. In Connecticut he spoke at Hartford, New Haven, Woonsocket, and Norwich. When he returned to Illinois he was at last an important national figure.

\* Douglas had said he did not care whether slavery was voted up or voted down.

† Matthew, ix, 13; Mark, ii, 17; Luke, v, 32.

‡ This is one of the finest and most effective of Lincoln’s phrases.

III  
SAVING THE UNION

Stanton

Lincoln

Seward

Bates



FROM A PAINTING BY F. B. CARPENTER.

FIRST READING OF THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION, SEPT. 20, 1862



### III

## SAVING THE UNION

In Illinois there had been scattered suggestions of Lincoln as a presidential candidate ever since 1856. His debates with Douglas stimulated these, and after his Cooper Union speech a definite movement to secure his nomination began. Lincoln was at first uninterested, not from lack of ambition, but from lack of hope. But as the movement grew, he found himself in the field. Regardless of whether or not he should be nominated, he felt that he must have the support of his own state. As he wrote Norman B. Judd, "I am not in a position where it would hurt much for me to not be nominated on the national ticket, but I am where it would hurt some for me to not get the Illinois delegates."

Nomination seemed really a hopeless thing. The East, in spite of the Cooper Union speech, scarcely knew him. In various lists of possible nominees his name was not even mentioned, and where it occurred, it was usually down toward the bottom of the list. But on May 18, 1861, the Republican convention at Chicago nominated him on the third ballot over William H. Seward, Salmon P. Chase, Edward Bates, and Simon Cameron. The Democratic party in convention at Charleston split into two parts, the Cotton States refusing to accept Douglas or his platform because of the distrust they had formed of him on account of his Freeport interpretation of the Dred Scott decision.\* The Northern Democrats nominated Douglas, and the Southern wing nominated John C. Breckinridge, the Vice President of the United States. The remnant of the Whigs nominated John Bell of Tennessee.

The campaign was actively carried on, but Lincoln took no part in it other than meeting the visitors who thronged to Springfield to see him. Constantly pressed to restate his opinions on the issues of the campaign he would reply in a form

\* See page 170.

letter through a secretary to those he did not know. To those with whom he was acquainted he wrote personally. The following is a typical letter of this kind:

TO WILLIAM S. SPEER

[*Confidential*]

Springfield, Ill., October 23, 1860

William S. Speer, Esq.

MY DEAR SIR: Yours of the 13th was duly received. I appreciate your motive when you suggest the propriety of my writing for the public something disclaiming all intention to interfere with slaves or slavery in the states; but in my judgment it would do no good. I have already done this many, many times; and it is in print, and open to all who will read. Those who will not read or heed what I have already publicly said would not read or heed a repetition of it. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." \*

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN

Lincoln watched the progress of the campaign with the normal interest of a candidate. He did not at all believe the assurance which had been given by Southern leaders since 1856 that the election of a sectional President would be followed by the secession of the Southern states, so as yet he did not realize that the task of his presidency would be the preservation of the Union of the states. Nor did the North have any conception of what would be the result of his election. He was growing in the estimation of the country, but the vast majority, even of the Republicans, thought his nomination had been one purely of expediency and that there were men in the party far better qualified to be President.

The election resulted in the choice of Lincoln, the electoral vote standing: Lincoln, 180; Breckinridge, 72; Bell, 39; and Douglas, 12. The popular vote stood: Lincoln, 1,857,610;

\* Luke xvi, 31.

Douglas, 1,291,574; Breckinridge, 850,082; and Bell, 646,124. He thus had against him nearly a million majority of the voters, and in ten states he had received not a single vote.

Soon after his election he began to make up his cabinet. The most interesting letter on the subject was to William H. Seward.

TO WILLIAM H. SEWARD

Springfield, Ill., December 8, 1860

MY DEAR SIR: With your permission I shall at the proper time nominate you to the Senate for confirmation as Secretary of State for the United States. Please let me hear from you at your own earliest convenience.

Your friend and obedient servant,

A. LINCOLN

TO WILLIAM H. SEWARD

[*Private and Confidential*]

MY DEAR SIR: In addition to the accompanying and more formal note inviting you to take charge of the State Department, I deem it proper to address you this. Rumors have got into the newspapers to the effect that the department named above would be tendered you as a compliment, and with the expectation that you would decline it. I beg you to be assured that I have said nothing to justify these rumors. On the contrary, it has been my purpose, from the day of the nomination at Chicago, to assign you, by your leave, this place in the administration. I have delayed so long to communicate that purpose in deference to what appeared to me a proper caution in the case. Nothing has been developed to change my view in the premises; and I now offer you the place in the hope that you will accept it; and with the belief that your position in the public eye, your integrity, ability, learning, and great experience, all combine to render it an appointment preëminently fit to be made.

One word more. In regard to the patronage sought with so much eagerness and jealousy, I have prescribed for myself the maxim, "Justice to all"; and I earnestly beseech your coöperation in keeping the maxim good.

Your friend and obedient servant,

A. LINCOLN

HON. WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Washington, D. C.

Lincoln was anxious to select a Southern man for a place in the cabinet, and considered a number of names. Among these was that of John A. Gilmer, a leading North Carolina Whig, who was a member of Congress. He asked him to come to Springfield for an interview, but Gilmer did not care to commit himself thus far and wrote asking information as to Lincoln's position on a number of questions. Lincoln thus replied:

TO JOHN A. GILMER

[*Strictly confidential*]

Springfield, Ill., December 15, 1860

Hon. John A. Gilmer.

MY DEAR SIR: Yours of the 10th is received. I am greatly disinclined to write a letter on the subject embraced in yours; and I would not do so, even privately as I do, were it not that I fear you might misconstrue my silence. Is it desired that I shall shift the ground upon which I have been elected? I cannot do it. You need only to acquaint yourself with that ground, and press it on the attention of the South. It is all in print and easy of access. May I be pardoned if I ask whether even you have ever attempted to procure the reading of the Republican platform, or my speeches, by the Southern people? If not, what reason have I to expect that any additional production of mine would meet a better fate? It would make me appear as if I repented for the crime of having been elected, and was anxious to apologize and beg forgiveness. To so represent me would be the principal use made of any letter I might now thrust upon

the public. My old record cannot be so used; and that is precisely the reason that some new declaration is so much sought.

Now, my dear sir, be assured that I am not questioning your candor; I am only pointing out that while a new letter would hurt the cause which I think a just one, you can quite as well effect every patriotic object with the old record. Carefully read pages 18, 19, 74, 75, 88, 89, and 267 of the volume of joint debates between Senator Douglas and myself, with the Republican platform adopted at Chicago, and all your questions will be substantially answered. I have no thought of recommending the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, nor the slave-trade among the slave states, even on the conditions indicated; and if I were to make such recommendation, it is quite clear Congress would not follow it.

As to employing slaves in arsenals and dock-yards, it is a thing I never thought of in my life, to my recollection, till I saw your letter; and I may say of it precisely as I have said of the two points above.

As to the use of patronage in the slave states, where there are few or no Republicans, I do not expect to inquire for the politics of the appointee, or whether he does or does not own slaves. I intend in that matter to accommodate the people in the several localities, if they themselves will allow me to accommodate them. In one word, I never have been, am not now, and probably never shall be in a mood of harassing the people either North or South.

On the territorial question I am inflexible, as you see my position in the book. On that there is a difference between you and us; and it is the only substantial difference. You think slavery is right and ought to be extended; we think it is wrong and ought to be restricted. For this neither has any just occasion to be angry with the other.

As to the state laws, mentioned in your sixth question, I really know very little of them. I never have read one. If any of them are in conflict with the fugitive-slave clause, or any other part of the Constitution, I certainly shall be glad of their repeal; but I could hardly be justified, as a citizen of Illinois, or as President of the United States, to recommend the repeal of a statute of Vermont or South Carolina.\*

With the assurance of my highest regards, I subscribe myself,

Your obedient servant,

A. LINCOLN

P. S.—The documents referred to I suppose you will readily find in Washington.

A. L.

It became evident soon after the results of the election were known that the Southern leaders had been entirely in earnest in their announcement of the intention of the Southern states to withdraw from the Union. South Carolina still chose her presidential electors through the legislature, which met on election day for that purpose. Instead of adjourning as usual the legislature had remained in session, and as soon as Lincoln's election was certain, had called a convention of the people to meet in December. On December 20 this convention passed an ordinance of secession, which was in form merely the repeal of the ordinance of 1788 by which the state had ratified the Constitution of the United States and entered the Union. Her example was followed by Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas. In February, 1861, delegates from these states, meeting in Montgomery, Alabama, formed a new government, called the Confederate States of America, and elected Jefferson Davis President, and Alexander H. Stephens Vice President.

Under the view of the Constitution and the nature of the

\* In this reference to the personal liberty laws of the Northern states, passed to hinder the execution of the Fugitive Slave Law, Lincoln ignored a deep-seated cause of the Southern belief that the North was not willing to grant them their constitutional rights. He does this by a clever application of state rights doctrine which, clever as it was, was more worthy of the politician than the statesman.

Union which generally prevailed in the South at this time, the withdrawal of these states was an exercise of an undoubted right. When the Constitution of the United States was adopted, almost all the states which ratified it had already a longer history of separate existence than the time which had elapsed from then until 1861. Each had its own laws and institutions; each was intolerant of outside power. They had come together in the Revolution under the pressure of a common need, but they had refused even then to consent to any stronger tie than was to be found in the weak Articles of Confederation, by which each state retained its "sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right" not expressly delegated to the United States. The weakness of the government under the Articles became apparent, and a convention, composed of delegates from the states, adopted the Constitution, which was ratified by the states, North Carolina and Rhode Island declining at first to ratify and remaining as separate states for a time. If the Constitution had forbidden withdrawal, it is not likely that any of the states would have ratified it. As it was, New York, Rhode Island, and Virginia, at the time of ratification, stated their right to withdraw, Virginia declaring "that the powers granted under the Constitution, being truly derived from the people of the United States, may be resumed by them whenever the same shall be perverted to their injury or oppression." Nobody questioned the right. As Mr. Henry Cabot Lodge says,

"When the Constitution was adopted by the votes of the states in convention at Philadelphia, and accepted by the votes of the states in popular convention, it is safe to say there was not a man in the country, from Washington and Hamilton on the one side, to George Clinton and George Mason on the other, who regarded the new system as anything but an experiment entered upon by the states and from which each and every state had the right peaceably to withdraw, a right which was very likely to be exercised."

Secession, as a possibility, had been accepted from the beginning. New England, with Massachusetts as a leader, had often threatened it. But as time passed, the political theory of the North began to change, and an increasing number of the people denied the right. The rise of manufacturing, the

increasing flood of immigration, the absence of slavery as a peculiar institution which had to be protected against the hostility of a majority, all contributed to allow the growth of national feeling. Not the least important element in the development of national feeling was the rise of the West. Every western state had been made by the Union and had little or no history apart from it. The North and the South talked of secession and such states as Massachusetts and Virginia were proudly conscious of their noble history as individual entities, but the great West, with its face to the future, thought only in terms of the Union and claimed the glories of all the states as the common heritage of all Americans.

When the Cotton states seceded, public opinion in the North was divided in opinion as to the proper course to pursue. Many people favored peaceable separation, General Scott phrasing a common opinion when he said, "Let the wayward sisters depart in peace." Horace Greeley held this view also.

South Carolina, and later the Confederacy, through commissioners, sought to negotiate with the Buchanan administration for the surrender of Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor and of Fort Pickens below Pensacola. All these attempts failed, as Buchanan declined to receive them officially or unofficially. In his annual message, President Buchanan denied the right of secession, but declared that Congress had not given the President the power to enforce the laws against state action and that there was no power under the Constitution for the coercion of a state. Both North and South then settled down to wait for something to happen. Buchanan has been harshly criticized for his failure to act, but the division of sentiment alluded to would have probably prevented his receiving the support of the country in any active measure. It is well to remember, too, that Lincoln followed for a month substantially the same policy of waiting.

The truth of the whole matter was that the country looked to compromise for a settlement, and several attempts at compromise were made. To any compromise that involved the surrender of the fundamental Republican doctrine of opposition to the extension of slavery, Lincoln was steadfastly opposed and made known his opposition. The following letter sets forth this position:



## TO THURLOW WEED

Springfield, Ill., December 17, 1860

Thurlow Weed, Esq.

MY DEAR SIR: Yours of the 11th was received two days ago. Should the convocation of governors of which you speak seem desirous to know my views on the present aspect of things, tell them you judge from my speeches that I will be inflexible on the territorial question; that I probably think either the Missouri line extended, or Douglas's and Eli Thayer's popular sovereignty, would lose us everything we gain by the election; that filibustering for all south of us and making slave states of it would follow, in spite of us, in either case; also that I probably think all opposition, real and apparent, to the fugitive-slave clause of the Constitution ought to be withdrawn.

I believe you can pretend to find but little, if anything, in my speeches about secession. But my opinion is that no state can in any way lawfully get out of the Union without the consent of the others; and that it is the duty of the President and other government functionaries to run the machine as it is.

Truly yours,

A. LINCOLN

By his letters of this period it is clear that these were Lincoln's views on the immediate issues before the country:

Slavery is wrong and must not be extended.

No proposition for the extension of slavery must be even entertained.

No state can in any way lawfully get out of the Union, without the consent of the others. It is the duty of the President and the other government functionaries to run the machine as it is.

If the Southern forts still in the possession of the United States fall, they must be retaken.

With these views settled in his mind he came to the presidency.

When the time came to start for Washington, Lincoln bade farewell to his Springfield friends, many of whom he was not to see again, in these simple words:

*FAREWELL ADDRESS AT SPRINGFIELD*

[February 11, 1861]

MY FRIENDS: No one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe everything. Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born, and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance, I cannot fail. Trusting in Him who can go with me, and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell.

On the way to Washington he made short addresses at Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Columbus, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Buffalo, Albany, New York, Philadelphia, and Harrisburg. The most notable of these was the address delivered in Independence Hall on February 22.

*ADDRESS IN INDEPENDENCE HALL,  
PHILADELPHIA*

[February 22, 1861]

MR. CUYLER: I am filled with deep emotion at finding myself standing in this place, where were collected together the wisdom, the patriotism, the devotion to principle, from which sprang the institutions under which we live. You have kindly suggested to me that

in my hands is the task of restoring peace to our distracted country. I can say in return, sir, that all the political sentiments I entertain have been drawn, so far as I have been able to draw them, from the sentiments which originated in and were given to the world from this hall. I have never had a feeling, politically, that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence. I have often pondered over the dangers which were incurred by the men who assembled here and framed and adopted that Declaration. I have pondered over the toils that were endured by the officers and soldiers of the army who achieved that independence. I have often inquired of myself what great principle or idea it was that kept this Confederacy so long together. It was not the mere matter of separation of the colonies from the motherland, but that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty not alone to the people of this country, but hope to all the world, for all future time. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weights would be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that all should have an equal chance. This is the sentiment embodied in the Declaration of Independence. Now, my friends, can this country be saved on that basis? If it can, I will consider myself one of the happiest men in the world if I can help to save it. If it cannot be saved upon that principle, it will be truly awful. But if this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle, I was about to say I would rather be assassinated on this spot than surrender it. Now, in my view of the present aspect of affairs, there is no need of bloodshed and war. There is no necessity for it. I am not in favor of such a course; and I may say in advance that there will be no bloodshed unless it is forced upon the government. The government will not use force, unless force is used against it.

My friends, this is wholly an unprepared speech. I

did not expect to be called on to say a word when I came here. I supposed I was merely to do something toward raising a flag. I may, therefore, have said something indiscreet. But I have said nothing but what I am willing to live by, and, if it be the pleasure of Almighty God, to die by.

Lincoln was inaugurated on March 4, 1861, in accordance with custom, upon the east portico of the Capitol. Among those present were Stephen A. Douglas, one of his unsuccessful opponents, who held his hat while he delivered his inaugural address, Roger B. Taney, who as Chief Justice of the United States administered the oath of office, former President Franklin Pierce, and the outgoing President, James Buchanan, the "Stephen, Roger, Franklin, and James" of his Springfield speech.\*

The inaugural had been prepared in Springfield in January and had later been submitted to Seward for comment. The latter made certain suggestions which Lincoln accepted. It made, at the time of its delivery, no profound impression. Many Republicans were disappointed, and Lincoln's political opponents found little in it to approve. The New York *Herald* said of it, "It is not a crude performance, it abounds in traits of craft and cunning, it is neither candid nor statesmanlike, nor does it possess any essential of dignity or patriotism. It would have caused a Washington to mourn, and would have inspired Jefferson, Madison, or Jackson, with contempt." As time passed, however, men began to see under its calm pleading language a firm determination to preserve the Union at any hazard. Even at the time its evident sincerity struck deeply those who heard it delivered. Horace Greeley said, "The man evidently believed with all his soul that if he could but convince the South that he would arrest and return her fugitive slaves, and offered slavery every support required by comity or by the letter of the Constitution, he would avert her hostility—dissolve the Confederacy, and restore throughout the Union the sway of the federal authority."

Today the inaugural ranks high among Lincoln's addresses for the literary excellence of its simple, direct, and dignified words.

\* See page 164



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RAISING THE FLAG AT INDEPENDENCE HALL, 1861



## FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS

[March 4, 1861]

FELLOW CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES: In compliance with a custom as old as the government itself, I appear before you to address you briefly, and to take in your presence the oath prescribed by the Constitution of the United States to be taken by the President "before he enters on the execution of his office."

I do not consider it necessary at present for me to discuss those matters of administration about which there is no special anxiety or excitement.

Apprehension seems to exist among the people of the Southern states that by the accession of a Republican administration their property and their peace and personal security are to be endangered. There has never been any reasonable cause for such apprehension. Indeed, the most ample evidence to the contrary has all the while existed and been open to their inspection. It is found in nearly all the published speeches of him who now addresses you. I do but quote from one of those speeches when I declare that "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so." Those who nominated and elected me did so with full knowledge that I had made this and many similar declarations, and had never recanted them. And, more than this, they placed in the platform for my acceptance, and as a law to themselves and to me, the clear and emphatic resolution which I now read:

*"Resolved, That the maintenance inviolate of the rights of the states, and especially the right of each state to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively, is essential to that balance of power on which the perfection and endurance*

of our political fabric depend, and we denounce the lawless invasion by armed force of the soil of any state or territory, no matter under what pretext, as among the gravest of crimes."

I now reiterate these sentiments; and, in doing so, I only press upon the public attention the most conclusive evidence of which the case is susceptible, that the property, peace, and security of no section are to be in any wise endangered by the now incoming administration. I add, too, that all the protection which, consistently with the Constitution and the laws, can be given, will be cheerfully given to all the states when lawfully demanded, for whatever cause—as cheerfully to one section as to another.

There is much controversy about the delivering up of fugitives from service or labor. The clause I now read is as plainly written in the Constitution as any other of its provisions:

"No person held to service or labor in one state, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall in consequence of any law or regulation therein be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due."

It is scarcely questioned that this provision was intended by those who made it for the reclaiming of what we call fugitive slaves; and the intention of the law-giver is the law. All members of Congress swear their support to the whole Constitution—to this provision as much as to any other. To the proposition, then, that slaves whose cases come within the terms of this clause "shall be delivered up," their oaths are unanimous. Now, if they would make the effort in good temper, could they not with nearly equal unanimity frame and



pass a law by means of which to keep good that unanimous oath?

There is some difference of opinion whether this clause should be enforced by national or by state authority; but surely that difference is not a very material one. If the slave is to be surrendered, it can be of but little consequence to him or to others by which authority it is done. And should anyone in any case be content that his oath shall go unkept on a merely unsubstantial controversy as to how it shall be kept?

Again, in any law upon this subject, ought not all the safeguards of liberty known in civilized and humane jurisprudence to be introduced, so that a free man be not, in any case, surrendered as a slave? And might it not be well at the same time to provide by law for the enforcement of that clause in the Constitution which guarantees that "the citizen of each state shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several states"?

I take the official oath today with no mental reservations, and with no purpose to construe the Constitution or laws by any hypercritical rules. And while I do not choose now to specify particular acts of Congress as proper to be enforced, I do suggest that it will be much safer for all, both in official and private stations, to conform to and abide by all those acts which stand unrepealed, than to violate any of them, trusting to find impunity in having them held to be unconstitutional.

It is seventy-two years since the first inauguration of a president under our national Constitution. During that period fifteen different and greatly distinguished citizens have, in succession, administered the executive branch of the government. They have conducted it through many perils, and generally with great success. Yet, with all this scope of precedent, I now enter upon the same task for the brief constitutional term of four

years under great and peculiar difficulty. A disruption of the federal Union, heretofore only menaced,\* is now formidably attempted.

I hold that, in contemplation of universal law and of the Constitution, the union of these states is perpetual. Perpetuity is implied, if not expressed, in the fundamental law of all national governments. It is safe to assert that no government proper ever had a provision in its organic law for its own termination. Continue to execute all the express provisions of our national Constitution, and the Union will endure forever—it being impossible to destroy it except by some action not provided for in the instrument itself.

Again, if the United States be not a government proper, but an association of states in the nature of contract merely, can it, as a contract, be peaceably unmade by less than all the parties who made it? One party to a contract may violate it—break it, so to speak; but does it not require all to lawfully rescind it?

Descending from these general principles, we find the proposition that in legal contemplation the Union is perpetual confirmed by the history of the Union itself. The Union is much older than the Constitution. It was formed, in fact, by the Articles of Association in 1774. It was matured and continued by the Declaration of Independence in 1776. It was further matured, and the faith of all the then thirteen states expressly plighted and engaged that it should be perpetual, by the Articles of Confederation in 1778. And, finally, in 1787 one of the declared objects for ordaining and establishing the Constitution was “to form a more perfect Union.”

But if the destruction of the Union by one or by a part only of the states be lawfully possible, the Union

\* The reference is to the persistence of secession in New England from 1801 to its culmination in the Hartford Convention of 1814, to nullification in South Carolina in 1832, and to the threat of South Carolina and other Southern states at the time of the compromise of 1850.

is less perfect than before the Constitution, having lost the vital element of perpetuity.\*

It follows from these views that no state upon its own mere motion can lawfully get out of the Union; that resolves and ordinances to that effect are legally void; and that acts of violence, within any state or states, against the authority of the United States, are insurrectionary or revolutionary, according to circumstances.†

I therefore consider that, in view of the Constitution and the laws, the Union is unbroken; and to the extent of my ability I shall take care, as the Constitution itself expressly enjoins upon me, that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the states. Doing this I deem to be only a simple duty on my part; and I shall perform it so far as practicable, unless my rightful masters, the American people, shall withhold the requisite means, or in some authoritative manner direct the contrary. I trust this will not be regarded as a menace, but only as the declared purpose of the Union that it will constitutionally defend and maintain itself.

In doing this there needs to be no bloodshed or violence; and there shall be none, unless it be forced upon the national authority. The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imposts; but beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion, no using of force against or among the people anywhere. Where hostility to the United States, in any interior locality, shall be so great and universal as to prevent competent

\* Lincoln here speaks as the representative of the West, which had never held any doctrine of state sovereignty. He ignores opinions of the right of secession such as Hamilton expressed at the time of the adoption of the Constitution. A similar historical view is that of Lodge quoted on page 249. Scarcely anywhere prior to 1860 was the right seriously questioned in the thirteen original states.

† Lincoln here states first his doctrine of the indestructibility of the Union on which he was to fight the war and plan reconstruction.

resident citizens from holding the federal offices, there will be no attempt to force obnoxious strangers among the people for that object. While the strict legal right may exist in the government to enforce the exercise of these offices, the attempt to do so would be so irritating, and so nearly impracticable withal, that I deem it better to forego for the time the uses of such offices.

The mails, unless repelled, will continue to be furnished in all parts of the Union. So far as possible, the people everywhere shall have that sense of perfect security which is most favorable to calm thought and reflection. The course here indicated will be followed unless current events and experience shall show a modification or change to be proper, and in every case and exigency my best discretion will be exercised according to circumstances actually existing, and with a view and a hope of a peaceful solution of the national troubles and the restoration of fraternal sympathies and affections.

That there are persons in one section or another who seek to destroy the Union at all events, and are glad of any pretext to do it, I will neither affirm nor deny; but if there be such, I need address no word to them. To those, however, who really love the Union may I not speak?

Before entering upon so grave a matter as the destruction of our national fabric, with all its benefits, its memories, and its hopes, would it not be wise to ascertain precisely why we do it? Will you hazard so desperate a step while there is any possibility that any portion of the ills you fly from\* have no real existence? Will you, while the certain ills you fly to are greater than all the real ones you fly from—will you risk the commission of so fearful a mistake?

All profess to be content in the Union if all constitutional rights can be maintained. Is it true, then, that any right, plainly written in the Constitution, has been

\* Hamlet, Act iii, Scene i.

denied? I think not. Happily the human mind is so constituted that no party can reach to the audacity of doing this. Think, if you can, of a single instance in which a plainly written provision of the Constitution has ever been denied. If by the mere force of numbers a majority should deprive a minority of any clearly written constitutional right, it might, in a moral point of view, justify revolution—certainly would if such a right were a vital one. But such is not our case. All the vital rights of minorities and of individuals are so plainly assured to them by affirmations and negations, guaranties and prohibitions, in the Constitution, that controversies never arise concerning them. But no organic law can ever be framed with a provision specifically applicable to every question which may occur in practical administration. No foresight can anticipate, nor any document of reasonable length contain, express provisions for all possible questions. Shall fugitives from labor be surrendered by national or by state authority? The Constitution does not expressly say. *May* Congress prohibit slavery in the territories? The Constitution does not expressly say. *Must* Congress protect slavery in the territories? The Constitution does not expressly say.\*

From questions of this class spring all our constitutional controversies, and we divide upon them into majorities and minorities. If the minority will not acquiesce, the majority must, or the government must cease. There is no other alternative; for continuing the government is acquiescence on one side or the other.

If a minority in such case will secede rather than acquiesce, they make a precedent which in turn will divide and ruin them; for a minority of their own will secede from them whenever a majority refuses to be controlled by such minority. For instance, why may not any portion of a new confederacy a year or two hence arbitrarily

\* Lincoln fails to discuss here the personal liberty laws or the insistent refusal of the North to accept the Dred Scott decision, both grave causes of Southern dissatisfaction.

secede again, precisely as portions of the present Union now claim to secede from it? All who cherish disunion sentiments are now being educated to the exact temper of doing this.

Is there such perfect identity of interests among the states to compose a new Union, as to produce harmony only, and prevent renewed secession?

Plainly, the central idea of secession is the essence of anarchy. A majority held in restraint by constitutional checks and limitations, and always changing easily with deliberate changes of popular opinions and sentiments, is the only true sovereign of a free people. Whoever rejects it does, of necessity, fly to anarchy or to despotism. Unanimity is impossible; the rule of a minority, as a permanent arrangement, is wholly inadmissible; so that, rejecting the majority principle, anarchy or despotism in some form is all that is left.\*

I do not forget the position, assumed by some, that constitutional questions are to be decided by the Supreme Court; nor do I deny that such decisions must be binding, in any case, upon the parties to a suit, as to the object of that suit, while they are also entitled to very high respect and consideration in all parallel cases by all other departments of the government. And while it is obviously possible that such decision may be erroneous in any given case, still the evil effect following it, being limited to that particular case, with the chance that it may be overruled and never become a precedent for other cases, can better be borne than could the evils of a different practice. At the same time, the candid citizen must confess that if the policy of the government, upon vital questions affecting the whole people, is to be irrevocably fixed by decisions of the Supreme Court, the instant they are made, in ordinary litigation between parties in personal actions, the people will have ceased to be their own rulers, having to that extent practically resigned their govern-

\* This is a splendid statement of the fundamental principle on which majority rule in government is based.

ment into the hands of that eminent tribunal. Nor is there in this view any assault upon the court or the judges. It is a duty from which they may not shrink to decide cases properly brought before them, and it is no fault of theirs if others seek to turn their decisions to political purposes.

One section of our country believes slavery is right, and ought to be extended, while the other believes it is wrong, and ought not to be extended. This is the only substantial dispute. The fugitive-slave clause of the Constitution, and the law for the suppression of the foreign slave-trade, are each as well enforced, perhaps, as any law can ever be in a community where the moral sense of the people imperfectly supports the law itself. The great body of the people abide by the dry legal obligation in both cases, and a few break over in each. This, I think, cannot be perfectly cured; and it would be worse in both cases after the separation of the sections than before. The foreign slave-trade, now imperfectly suppressed, would be ultimately revived, without restriction, in one section, while fugitive slaves, now only partially surrendered, would not be surrendered at all by the other.\*

Physically speaking, we cannot separate. We cannot remove our respective sections from each other, nor build an impassable wall between them. A husband and wife may be divorced, and go out of the presence and beyond the reach of each other; but the different parts of our country cannot do this. They cannot but remain face to face, and intercourse, either amicable or hostile, must continue between them. Is it possible, then, to make that intercourse more advantageous or more satisfactory after separation than before? Can aliens make treaties easier than friends can make laws? Can treaties be

\* Lincoln constantly asserted that secession would be followed by the reopening of the African slave trade. But the Confederate constitution forbade its reopening, and there was little or no sentiment in the South in favor of such action.

more faithfully enforced between aliens than laws can among friends? Suppose you go to war, you cannot fight always; and when, after much loss on both sides, and no gain on either, you cease fighting, the identical old questions as to terms of intercourse are again upon you.

This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it. I cannot be ignorant of the fact that many worthy and patriotic citizens are desirous of having the national Constitution amended. While I make no recommendation of amendments, I fully recognize the rightful authority of the people over the whole subject, to be exercised in either of the modes prescribed in the instrument itself; and I should, under existing circumstances, favor rather than oppose a fair opportunity being afforded the people to act upon it. I will venture to add that to me the convention mode seems preferable, in that it allows amendments to originate with the people themselves, instead of only permitting them to take or reject propositions originated by others not especially chosen for the purpose, and which might not be precisely such as they would wish to either accept or refuse. I understand a proposed amendment to the Constitution—which amendment, however, I have not seen—has passed Congress, to the effect that the federal government shall never interfere with the domestic institutions of the states, including that of persons held to service. To avoid misconstruction of what I have said, I depart from my purpose not to speak of particular amendments so far as to say that, holding such a provision to now be implied constitutional law, I have no objection to its being made express and irrevocable.

The chief magistrate derives all his authority from the people, and they have conferred none upon him to fix terms for the separation of the states. The people them-



selves can do this also if they choose; but the Executive, as such, has nothing to do with it. His duty is to administer the present government, as it came to his hands, and to transmit it, unimpaired by him, to his successor.

Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better or equal hope in the world? In our present differences is either party without faith of being in the right? If the Almighty Ruler of Nations, with His eternal truth and justice, be on your side of the North, or on yours of the South, that truth and that justice will surely prevail by the judgment of this great tribunal of the American people.

By the frame of the government under which we live, this same people have wisely given their public servants but little power for mischief; and have, with equal wisdom, provided for the return of that little to their own hands at very short intervals. While the people retain their virtue and vigilance, no administration, by any extreme of wickedness or folly, can very seriously injure the government in the short space of four years.

My countrymen, one and all, think calmly and well upon this whole subject. Nothing valuable can be lost by taking time. If there be an object to hurry any of you in hot haste to a step which you would never take deliberately, that object will be frustrated by taking time; but no good object can be frustrated by it. Such of you as are now dissatisfied, still have the old Constitution unimpaired, and, on the sensitive point, the laws of your own framing under it; while the new administration will have no immediate power, if it would, to change either. If it were admitted that you who are dissatisfied hold the right side in the dispute, there still is no single good reason for precipitate action. Intelligence, patriotism, Christianity, and a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land, are still competent to adjust in the best way all our present difficulty.

In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to "preserve, protect, and defend it."\*

I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.†

Immediately after his inauguration Lincoln was overwhelmed by the throng of office seekers that attend any new administration, particularly large at this time because a new party was coming into power. To them he was compelled to give the major part of his time, regardless of the crisis in the affairs of the nation. So far as the South was concerned, he submitted to the cabinet the question of whether it was politically advisable to relieve Fort Sumter. Five answered that it was not. He himself was quite uncertain what to do. He thought it all-important to save to the Union the Border slave states which had not seceded, and so he did what Buchanan had done—let things drift for the time being.

There was much criticism like that of General John A. Dix, "When I left Washington Saturday last (March 23) I do not think the administration had any settled policy. It was merely drifting with the current, at a loss to know whether it were better to come to anchor or set sail."

\*Constitution, Art. 2, Sec. 1, 8.

† Seward suggested the last paragraph of the address. He wrote it, "I close. We are not, we must not be, aliens or enemies, but fellow-countrymen and brethren. Although passion may have strained our bonds of affection too hardly, they must not, I am sure they will not, be broken. The mystic chords which, proceeding from so many battlefields and so many patriot graves, pass through all the hearts and hearths in this broad continent of ours, will yet again harmonize in their ancient music when breathed upon by the guardian angel of the nation." Contrast the two statements of the same idea.

In the meantime Secretary Seward, on his own account, was in communication with the Confederate commissioners through Justice John A. Campbell of the Supreme Court, and was assuring them that it was almost certain that Fort Sumter would be evacuated. He had accepted the post of Secretary of State with the firm conviction that he would save the country. As he wrote his wife on the day he accepted the appointment, "I will try to save freedom and my country." On another occasion he wrote, "I know that I can save the country, and I know no other man can." He believed in all sincerity and honesty that Lincoln was unable to save the situation and on April 1, wrote the following remarkable note:

"SOME THOUGHTS FOR THE PRESIDENT'S CONSIDERATION

*First.* We are at the end of a month's administration, and yet without a policy either domestic or foreign.

*Second.* This, however, is not culpable, and it has even been unavoidable. The presence of the Senate, with the need to meet applications for patronage, have prevented attention to other and more grave matters.

*Third.* But further delay to adopt and prosecute our policies for both domestic and foreign affairs would not only bring scandal on the administration, but danger upon the country.

*Fourth.* To do this we must dismiss the applicants for office. But how? I suggest that we make the local appointments forthwith, leaving foreign or general ones for ulterior and occasional action.

*Fifth.* The policy at home. I am aware that my views are singular, and perhaps not sufficiently explained. My system is built upon this idea as a ruling one, namely, that we must

*Change the question before the public from one upon slavery, or about slavery, for a question upon union or disunion:*

"In other words, from what would be regarded as a party question, to one of patriotism or union.

"The occupation or evacuation of Fort Sumter, although not in fact a slavery or a party question, is so regarded. Witness the temper manifested by the Republicans in the free states, and even by the Union men in the South.

"I would therefore terminate it as a safe means for changing the issue. I deem it fortunate that the last administration created the necessity.

"For the rest, I would simultaneously defend and reënforce all the ports in the gulf, and have the navy recalled from

foreign stations to be prepared for a blockade. Put the island of Key West under martial law.

"This will raise distinctly the question of union or disunion. I would maintain every fort and possession in the South.

*For Foreign Nations*

"I would demand explanations from Spain and France, categorically, at once.

"I would seek explanations from Great Britain and Russia, and send agents into Canada, Mexico, and Central America to rouse a vigorous continental spirit of independence on this continent against European intervention.\*

"And, if satisfactory explanations are not received from Spain and France, would convene Congress and declare war against them.

"But whatever policy we adopt, there must be energetic prosecution of it.

"For this purpose it must be somebody's business to pursue and direct it incessantly.

"Either the President must do it himself, and be all the while active in it, or

"Devolve it on some member of his Cabinet. Once adopted, debates on it must end, and all agree and abide. It is not in my especial province. But I neither seek to evade nor to assume responsibility."

On the same day Lincoln replied with a note which forever set at rest the doubt in Seward's mind as to who was to be President in fact. Seward was thoroughly frank and generous and not a great while later wrote his wife, "Executive force and vigor are rare qualities; the President is the best of us." Henceforth he gave Lincoln the most faithful and complete support.

The reply was on the part of Lincoln a fine example of self-restraint and selflessness, combined with a firm dignity.

TO WILLIAM H. SEWARD

Executive Mansion, April 1, 1861

Hon. W. H. Seward.

MY DEAR SIR: Since parting with you I have been considering your paper dated this day, and entitled "Some

\* These European nations had been active in making demonstrations against Mexico in the hope of forcing the payment of debts due them. Seward's proposed device of uniting the country by a foreign war was an old trick of politico-statesmen.

Thoughts for the President's Consideration." The first proposition in it is, "First, We are at the end of a month's administration, and yet without a policy either domestic or foreign."

At the beginning of that month, in the inaugural, I said: "The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imposts." This had your distinct approval at the time; and, taken in connection with the order I immediately gave General Scott, directing him to employ every means in his power to strengthen and hold the forts, comprises the exact domestic policy you now urge, with the single exception that it does not propose to abandon Fort Sumter.

Again, I do not perceive how the reënforcement of Fort Sumter would be done on a slavery or a party issue, while that of Fort Pickens would be on a more national and patriotic one.

The news received yesterday in regard to St. Domingo\* certainly brings a new item within the range of our foreign policy; but up to that time we have been preparing circulars and instructions to ministers and the like, all in perfect harmony, without even a suggestion that we had no foreign policy.

Upon your closing propositions—that "whatever policy we adopt, there must be an energetic prosecution of it.

"For this purpose it must be somebody's business to pursue and direct it incessantly.

"Either the President must do it himself, and be all the while active in it, or

"Devolve it on some member of his cabinet. Once adopted, debates on it must end, and all agree and abide"—I remark that if this must be done, I must do it. When a general line of policy is adopted, I apprehend there is no danger of its being changed without good reason, or

\* San Domingo had just requested Spain to assume again complete sovereignty over her.

continuing to be a subject of unnecessary debate; still, upon points arising in its progress I wish, and suppose I am entitled to have, the advice of all the cabinet.

Your obedient servant,

A. LINCOLN

Late in March Lincoln again submitted the question of Sumter to his cabinet. This time the vote stood five to two in favor of its relief. A little later he decided to attempt the relief of both Sumter and Pickens, with the full knowledge that it meant the opening of war, since notice had been given by the Confederate authorities that any attempt to relieve Sumter would result in its reduction. Seward had promised that notice of any expedition would be given, and Lincoln carried out the pledge. A prompt attack on the fort forced its fall on April 13.

On the same day a committee from the Virginia convention, which had been in session since the winter, visited Lincoln. He had been most anxious to secure Virginia's support against war, and had gone so far as to offer to abandon Sumter if the convention would adjourn *sine die*, but the message had never been delivered to the convention. Now it was too late for negotiation. He replied to the committee in these words:

*REPLY TO A COMMITTEE FROM THE  
VIRGINIA CONVENTION*

[April 13, 1861]

Hon. William Ballard Preston, Alexander H. H. Stuart,  
George W. Randolph, Esq.

GENTLEMEN: As a committee of the Virginia Convention now in session, you present me a preamble and resolution in these words:

*"Whereas*, in the opinion of this Convention, the uncertainty which prevails in the public mind as to the policy which the Federal Executive intends to pursue toward the seceded states is extremely injurious to the industrial and commercial interests of the country, tends to keep up an excitement which is unfavorable to the adjustment

of pending difficulties, and threatens a disturbance of the public peace; therefore

*Resolved*, that a committee of three delegates be appointed by this Convention to wait upon the President of the United States, present to him this preamble and resolution, and respectfully ask him to communicate to this Convention the policy which the Federal Executive intends to pursue in regard to the Confederate States.

“Adopted by the Convention of the State of Virginia, Richmond, April 8, 1861.”

In answer I have to say that, having at the beginning of my official term expressed my intended policy as plainly as I was able, it is with deep regret and some mortification I now learn that there is great and injurious uncertainty in the public mind as to what that policy is, and what course I intend to pursue. Not having as yet seen occasion to change, it is now my purpose to pursue the course marked out in the inaugural address. I commend a careful consideration of the whole document as the best expression I can give of my purposes.

As I then and therein said, I now repeat: “The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imposts; but beyond what is necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion, no using of force against or among the people anywhere.” By the words “property and places belonging to the government,” I chiefly allude to the military posts and property which were in the possession of the government when it came to my hands.

But if, as now appears to be true, in pursuit of a purpose to drive the United States authority from these places, an unprovoked assault has been made upon Fort Sumter, I shall hold myself at liberty to repossess, if I can, like places which had been seized before the government was devolved upon me. And in every event I shall, to the extent of my ability, repel force by force. In

case it proves true that Fort Sumter has been assaulted, as is reported, I shall perhaps cause the United States mails to be withdrawn from all the states which claim to have seceded, believing that the commencement of actual war against the government justifies and possibly demands this.

I scarcely need to say that I consider the military posts and property situated within the states which claim to have seceded as yet belonging to the government of the United States as much as they did before the supposed secession.

Whatever else I may do for the purpose, I shall not attempt to collect the duties and imposts by any armed invasion of any part of the country; not meaning by this, however, that I may not land a force deemed necessary to relieve a fort upon a border of the country.

From the fact that I have quoted a part of the inaugural address, it must not be inferred that I repudiate any other part, the whole of which I reaffirm, except so far as what I now say of the mails may be regarded as a modification.

On April 15 Lincoln called upon the governors of the states for 75,000 men to suppress what he termed "unlawful combinations" in the seceded states. Every care was taken from the beginning of the war not to make any move against a state as such, for the Border states and many people in the North, like Buchanan, did not believe that the United States had any power to coerce a state.

With the call for troops, uncertainty ended in the North and South, and the people rushed to arms. Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina seceded. Missouri and Maryland were prevented from doing so only by force. Kentucky declared herself neutral in the impending conflict. The struggle for the preservation of the Union had begun.

With the outbreak of actual war, Lincoln's one aim became the preservation of the Union. All else disappeared from view, and to that end he gave his undivided attention. His letters



show this. The people of Maryland at this time objected to the passage of troops across the state to Washington for the invasion of Virginia. The Sixth Massachusetts was attacked by a mob as it crossed Baltimore, with resulting bloodshed on both sides. Reverdy Johnson, a distinguished Maryland lawyer, wrote Lincoln a letter on the subject, which brought this reply:

TO REVERDY JOHNSON

[Confidential]

Executive Mansion, April 24, 1861

Hon. Reverdy Johnson.

MY DEAR SIR: Your note of this morning is just received. I forbore to answer yours of the 22d because of my aversion (which I thought you understood) to getting on paper and furnishing new grounds for misunderstanding. I do say the sole purpose of bringing troops here is to defend this capital. I do say I have no purpose to invade Virginia with them or any other troops, as I understand the word invasion. But, suppose Virginia sends her troops, or admits others through her borders, to assail this capital, am I not to repel them even to the crossing of the Potomac, if I can? Suppose Virginia erects, or permits to be erected, batteries on the opposite shore to bombard the city, are we to stand still and see it done? In a word, if Virginia strikes us, are we not to strike back, and as effectively as we can? Again, are we not to hold Fort Monroe (for instance) if we can? I have no objection to declare a thousand times that I have no purpose to invade Virginia or any other state, but I do not mean to let them invade us without striking back.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN

Gustavus V. Fox, later Assistant Secretary of the Navy, had planned the expedition to relieve Sumter. This letter to him from the President is interesting because of the view it gives of the latter's purpose in relieving Fort Sumter.

## TO GUSTAVUS V. FOX

Washington, D. C., May 1, 1861

Captain G. V. Fox.

MY DEAR SIR: I sincerely regret that the failure of the late attempt to provision Fort Sumter should be the source of any annoyance to you.

The practicability of your plan was not, in fact, brought to a test. By reason of a gale, well known in advance to be possible and not improbable, the tugs, an essential part of the plan, never reached the ground; while, by an accident for which you were in no wise responsible, and possibly I to some extent was, you were deprived of a war vessel,\* with her men, which you deemed of great importance to the enterprise.

I most cheerfully and truly declare that the failure of the undertaking has not lowered you a particle, while the qualities you developed in the effort have greatly heightened you in my estimation.

For a daring and dangerous enterprise of a similar character you would today be the man of all my acquaintances whom I would select. You and I both anticipated that the cause of the country would be advanced by making the attempt to provision Fort Sumter, even if it should fail; and it is no small consolation now to feel that our anticipation is justified by the result.

Very truly your friend,

A. LINCOLN

Colonel E. E. Ellsworth, who had been a law student in Lincoln's office, was killed in Alexandria while hauling down the Confederate flag. This letter to his parents is the first of the many letters of condolence Lincoln wrote during the war. It is particularly interesting in comparison with the letter to Mrs. Bixby written three years later.

\* The *Powhatan* was detached from the Sumter expedition and sent to Fort Pickens without the knowledge of the officers in charge of the expedition.

*TO COLONEL ELLSWORTH'S PARENTS*

Washington, D. C., May 25, 1861

To the Father and Mother of Colonel Elmer E. Ellsworth.

MY DEAR SIR AND MADAM: In the untimely loss of your noble son, our affliction here is scarcely less than your own. So much of promised usefulness to one's country, and of bright hopes for oneself and friends, have rarely been so suddenly dashed as in his fall. In size, in years, and in youthful appearance a boy only, his power to command men was surpassingly great. This power, combined with a fine intellect, an indomitable energy, and a taste altogether military, constituted in him, as seemed to me, the best natural talent in that department I ever knew.

And yet he was singularly modest and deferential in social intercourse. My acquaintance with him began less than two years ago; yet through the latter half of the intervening period it was as intimate as the disparity of our ages and my engrossing engagements would permit. To me he appeared to have no indulgences or pastimes; and I never heard him utter a profane or an intemperate word. What was conclusive of his good heart, he never forgot his parents. The honors he labored for so laudably, and for which in the sad end he so gallantly gave his life, he meant for them no less than for himself.

In the hope that it may be no intrusion upon the sacredness of your sorrow, I have ventured to address you this tribute to the memory of my young friend and your brave and early fallen child.

May God give you that consolation which is beyond all earthly power.

Sincerely your friend in a common affliction,

A. LINCOLN

At the same time that he called for troops, Lincoln summoned Congress to meet in special session on July 4. When it assembled he stated the existing situation in a special message. It is an exceedingly able document and is worth careful study as one of the strongest statements of the national position in the war. It is, however, in its spirit and in its ignoring of undisputed historical facts, a lawyer's presentation and far more partisan than one is accustomed to find from Lincoln.

*MESSAGE TO CONGRESS IN SPECIAL SESSION*

[July 4, 1861]

FELLOW-CITIZENS OF THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES: Having been convened on an extraordinary occasion, as authorized by the Constitution, your attention is not called to any ordinary subject of legislation.

At the beginning of the present presidential term, four months ago, the functions of the Federal Government were found to be generally suspended within the several states of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Florida, excepting only those of the Post Office Department.

Within these states all the forts, arsenals, dockyards, custom-houses, and the like, including the movable and stationary property in and about them, had been seized, and were held in open hostility to this government, excepting only Forts Pickens, Taylor, and Jefferson, on and near the Florida coast, and Fort Sumter, in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina. The forts thus seized had been put in improved condition, new ones had been built, and armed forces had been organized and were organizing, all avowedly with the same hostile purpose.

The forts remaining in the possession of the Federal Government in and near these states were either besieged or menaced by warlike preparations, and especially Fort Sumter was nearly surrounded by well-protected hostile batteries, with guns equal in quality to the best of its

own, and outnumbering the latter as perhaps ten to one. A disproportionate share of the Federal muskets and rifles had somehow found their way into these states, and had been seized to be used against the government. Accumulations of the public revenue lying within them had been seized for the same object. The navy was scattered in distant seas, leaving but a very small part of it within immediate reach of the government. Officers of the Federal army and navy resigned in great numbers; and of those resigning a large proportion had taken up arms against the government. Simultaneously, and in connection with all this, the purpose to sever the Federal Union was openly avowed. In accordance with this purpose, an ordinance had been adopted in each of these states, declaring the states respectively to be separated from the National Union. A formula for instituting a combined government of these states had been promulgated; and this illegal organization, in the character of confederate states, was already invoking recognition, aid, and intervention from foreign powers.

Finding this condition of things, and believing it to be an imperative duty upon the incoming Executive to prevent, if possible, the consummation of such attempt to destroy the Federal Union, a choice of means to that end became indispensable. This choice was made and was declared in the inaugural address. The policy chosen looked to the exhaustion of all peaceful measures before a resort to any stronger ones. It sought only to hold the public places and property not already wrested from the government, and to collect the revenue, relying for the rest on time, discussion, and the ballot-box. It promised a continuance of the mails at government expense, to the very people who were resisting the government; and it gave repeated pledges against any disturbance to any of the people, or any of their rights. Of all that which a President might constitutionally and justifiably do in such a case, everything was forborne

without which it was believed possible to keep the government on foot.

On the 5th of March (the present incumbent's first full day in office), a letter of Major Anderson, commanding at Fort Sumter, written on the 28th day of February and received at the War Department on the 4th of March, was by that department placed in his hands. This letter expressed the professional opinion of the writer that reënforcements could not be thrown into that fort within the time for his relief, rendered necessary by the limited supply of provisions, and with a view of holding possession of the same, with a force of less than twenty thousand good and well-disciplined men. This opinion was concurred in by all the officers of his command, and their memoranda on the subject were made inclosures of Major Anderson's letter. The whole was immediately laid before Lieutenant-General Scott, who at once concurred with Major Anderson in opinion. On reflection, however, he took full time, consulting with other officers, both of the army and the navy, and at the end of four days came reluctantly but decidedly to the same conclusion as before. He also stated at the same time that no such sufficient force was then at the control of the government, or could be raised and brought to the ground within the time when the provisions in the fort would be exhausted. In a purely military point of view, this reduced the duty of the administration in the case to the mere matter of getting the garrison safely out of the fort.

It is believed, however, that to so abandon that position, under the circumstances, would be utterly ruinous; that the necessity under which it was to be done would not be fully understood; that by many it would be construed as a part of a voluntary policy; that at home it would discourage friends of the Union, embolden its adversaries, and go far to insure to the latter a recognition abroad; that, in fact, it would be our national

destruction consummated. This could not be allowed. Starvation was not yet upon the garrison, and ere it would be reached, Fort Pickens might be reënforced. This last would be a clear indication of policy, and would better enable the country to accept the evacuation of Fort Sumter as a military necessity. An order was at once directed to be sent for the landing of the troops from the steamship *Brooklyn* into Fort Pickens. This order could not go by land, but must take the longer and slower route by sea. The first return news from the order was received just one week before the fall of Fort Sumter. The news itself was that the officer commanding the *Sabine*, to which vessel the troops had been transferred from the *Brooklyn*, acting upon some quasi armistice of the late administration (and of the existence of which the present administration, up to the time the order was dispatched, had only too vague and uncertain rumors to fix attention), had refused to land the troops. To now reënforce Fort Pickens before a crisis would be reached at Fort Sumter was impossible—rendered so by the near exhaustion of provisions in the latter-named fort. In precaution against such a conjuncture, the government had, a few days before, commenced preparing an expedition as well adapted as might be to relieve Fort Sumter, which expedition was intended to be ultimately used, or not, according to circumstances. The strongest anticipated case for using it was now presented, and it was resolved to send it forward. As had been intended in this contingency, it was also resolved to notify the Governor of South Carolina that he might expect an attempt would be made to provision the fort; and that, if the attempt should not be resisted, there would be no effort to throw in men, arms, or ammunition, without further notice, or in case of an attack upon the fort. This notice was accordingly given; whereupon the fort was attacked and bombarded to its fall, without even awaiting the arrival of the provisioning expedition.

It is thus seen that the assault upon and reduction of Fort Sumter was in no sense a matter of self-defense on the part of the assailants.\* They well knew that the garrison in the fort could by no possibility commit aggression upon them. They knew—they were expressly notified—that the giving of bread to a few brave and hungry men of the garrison was all which would on that occasion be attempted, unless themselves, by resisting so much, should provoke more. They knew that this government desired to keep the garrison in the fort, not to assail them, but merely to maintain visible possession, and thus to preserve the Union from actual and immediate dissolution—trusting, as hereinbefore stated, to time, discussion, and the ballot-box for final adjustment; and they assailed and reduced the fort for precisely the reverse object—to drive out the visible authority of the Federal Union, and thus force it to immediate dissolution. That this was their object the Executive well understood; and having said to them in the inaugural address, "You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors," he took pains not only to keep this declaration good, but also to keep the case so free from the power of ingenious sophistry that the world should not be able to misunderstand it. By the affair at Fort Sumter, with its surrounding circumstances, that point was reached. Then and thereby the assailants of the government began the conflict of arms, without a gun in sight or in expectancy to return their fire, save only the few in the fort sent to that harbor years before for their own protection, and still ready to give that protection in whatever was lawful. In this act, discarding all else, they have forced upon the country the distinct issue, "immediate dissolution or blood."

And this issue embraces more than the fate of the United States. It presents to the whole family of man

\* Lincoln of course did not see that from the standpoint of the South the retention of Fort Sumter, even without any attempt to relieve it, was an act of aggression.



the question whether a constitutional republic or democracy—a government of the people by the same people—can or cannot maintain its territorial integrity against its own domestic foes. It presents the question whether discontented individuals, too few in number to control administration according to organic law in any case, can always, by the pretenses made in this case, or on any other pretenses, or arbitrarily without any pretense, break up their government, and thus practically put an end to free government upon the earth. It forces us to ask: “Is there, in all republics, this inherent and fatal weakness?” “Must a government, of necessity, be too strong for the liberties of its own people, or too weak to maintain its own existence?”

So viewing the issue, no choice was left but to call out the war power of the government; and so to resist force employed for its destruction, by force for its preservation.

The call was made, and the response of the country was most gratifying, surpassing in unanimity and spirit the most sanguine expectation. Yet none of the states commonly called slave states, except Delaware, gave a regiment through regular state organization. A few regiments have been organized within some others of those states by individual enterprise, and received into the government service. Of course the seceded states, so called (and to which Texas had been joined about the time of the inauguration), gave no troops to the cause of the Union. The border states, so called, were not uniform in their action, some of them being almost for the Union, while in others—as Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas—the Union sentiment was nearly repressed and silenced. The course taken in Virginia was the most remarkable—perhaps the most important. A convention elected by the people of that state to consider the very question of disrupting the Federal Union was in session at the capital of Virginia when Fort Sumter fell. To this body the people had chosen a large majority of professed

Union men. Almost immediately after the fall of Sumter, many members of that majority went over to the original disunion minority, and with them adopted an ordinance for withdrawing the state from the Union. Whether this change was wrought by their great approval of the assault upon Sumter or their great resentment at the government's resistance to that assault, is not definitely known. Although they submitted the ordinance for ratification to a vote of the people, to be taken on a day then somewhat more than a month distant, the convention and the legislature (which was also in session at the same time and place), with leading men of the state not members of either, immediately commenced acting as if the state were already out of the Union. They pushed military preparations vigorously forward all over the state. They seized the United States armory at Harpers Ferry, and the navy-yard at Gosport, near Norfolk. They received—perhaps invited—into their state large bodies of troops, with their warlike appointments, from the so-called seceded states. They formally entered into a treaty of temporary alliance and coöperation with the so-called "Confederate States," and sent members to their congress at Montgomery. And, finally, they permitted the insurrectionary government to be transferred to their capital at Richmond.

The people of Virginia have thus allowed this giant insurrection to make its nest within her borders; and this government has no choice left but to deal with it where it finds it. And it has the less regret as the loyal citizens have, in due form, claimed its protection. Those loyal citizens this government is bound to recognize and protect, as being Virginia.

In the border states, so called—in fact, the Middle States—there are those who favor a policy which they call "armed neutrality"; that is, an arming of those states to prevent the Union forces passing one way, or the disunion the other, over their soil. This would be disunion

completed. Figuratively speaking, it would be the building of an impassable wall along the line of separation—and yet not quite an impassable one, for under the guise of neutrality it would tie the hands of Union men and freely pass supplies from among them to the insurrectionists, which it could not do as an open enemy. At a stroke it would take all the trouble off the hands of secession, except only what proceeds from the external blockade. It would do for the disunionists that which, of all things, they most desire—feed them well, and give them disunion without a struggle of their own. It recognizes no fidelity to the Constitution, no obligation to maintain the Union; and while very many who have favored it are doubtless loyal citizens, it is, nevertheless, very injurious in effect.

Recurring to the action of the government, it may be stated that at first a call was made for 75,000 militia, and, rapidly following this, a proclamation was issued for closing the ports of the insurrectionary district by proceedings in the nature of blockade.\* So far all was believed to be strictly legal. At this point the insurrectionists announced their purpose to enter upon the practice of privateering.

Other calls were made for volunteers to serve for three years, unless sooner discharged, and also for large additions to the regular army and navy. These measures, whether strictly legal or not, were ventured upon, under what appeared to be a popular demand and a public necessity; trusting then, as now, that Congress would readily ratify them. It is believed that nothing has been done beyond the constitutional competency of Congress.

Soon after the first call for militia, it was considered a duty to authorize the commanding general in proper cases, according to his discretion, to suspend the privilege

\* Lincoln's proclamation of the blockade of the Southern ports was held by many to be a recognition of the separation of the seceded states from the Union, since the President could not blockade home ports without an act of Congress.

of the writ of *habeas corpus*,\* or, in other words, to arrest and detain, without resort to the ordinary processes and forms of law, such individuals as he might deem dangerous to the public safety. This authority has purposely been exercised but very sparingly. Nevertheless, the legality and propriety of what has been done under it are questioned, and the attention of the country has been called to the proposition that one who has sworn to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed" should not himself violate them. Of course some consideration was given to the questions of power and propriety before this matter was acted upon. The whole of the laws which were required to be faithfully executed were being resisted and failing of execution in nearly one-third of the states. Must they be allowed to finally fail of execution, even had it been perfectly clear that by the use of the means necessary to their execution some single law, made in such extreme tenderness of the citizen's liberty that, practically, it relieves more of the guilty than of the innocent, should to a very limited extent be violated? To state the question more directly, are all the laws but one to go unexecuted, and the government itself go to pieces, lest that one be violated? Even in such a case, would not the official oath be broken if the government should be overthrown, when it was believed that disregarding the single law would tend to preserve it? But it was not believed that this question was presented. It was not believed that any law was violated. The provision of the Constitution that "the privilege of the writ of *habeas corpus* shall not be suspended, unless when, in cases of rebellion or invasion, the public safety may require it," is equivalent to a provision—is a provision—

\* The acts of the President thus described marked the beginning of the military dictatorship which prevailed throughout the war, based upon the war powers of the President. They were without authority of law. Never in the history of an English-speaking people, from the first *Habeas Corpus* Act, had the suspension of the privilege of the writ of *habeas corpus* been claimed as an executive power. In the Constitution the provision for its suspension appears in the legislative article.

that such privilege may be suspended when, in case of rebellion or invasion, the public safety does require it. It was decided that we have a case of rebellion, and that the public safety does require the qualified suspension of the privilege of the writ which was authorized to be made. Now it is insisted that Congress, and not the Executive, is vested with this power. But the Constitution itself is silent as to which or who is to exercise the power; and as the provision was plainly made for a dangerous emergency, it cannot be believed the framers of the instrument intended that in every case the danger should run its course until Congress could be called together, the very assembling of which might be prevented, as was intended in this case, by the rebellion.

No more extended argument is now offered, as an opinion at some length will probably be presented by the Attorney General. Whether there shall be any legislation upon the subject, and if any, what, is submitted entirely to the better judgment of Congress.

The forbearance of this government had been so extraordinary and so long continued as to lead some foreign nations to shape their action as if they supposed the early destruction of our National Union was probable. While this, on discovery, gave the Executive some concern, he is now happy to say that the sovereignty and rights of the United States are now everywhere practically respected by foreign powers; and a general sympathy with the country is manifested throughout the world.

The reports of the Secretaries of the Treasury, War, and the Navy will give the information in detail deemed necessary and convenient for your deliberation and action; while the Executive and all the departments will stand ready to supply omissions, or to communicate new facts considered important for you to know.

It is now recommended that you give the legal means for making this contest a short and decisive one; that

you place at the control of the government for the work at least four hundred thousand men and \$400,000,000. That number of men is about one-tenth of those of proper ages within the regions where, apparently, all are willing to engage; and the sum is less than a twenty-third part of the money value owned by the men who seem ready to devote the whole. A debt of \$600,000,000 now is a less sum per head than was the debt of our Revolution when we came out of that struggle; and the money value in the country now bears even a greater proportion to what it was then than does the population. Surely each man has as strong a motive now to preserve our liberties as each had then to establish them.

A right result at this time will be worth more to the world than ten times the men and ten times the money. The evidence reaching us from the country leaves no doubt that the material for the work is abundant, and that it needs only the hand of legislation to give it legal sanction, and the hand of the Executive to give it practical shape and efficiency. One of the greatest perplexities of the government is to avoid receiving troops faster than it can provide for them. In a word, the people will save their government if the government itself will do its part only indifferently well.

It might seem, at first thought, to be of little difference whether the present movement at the South be called "secession" or "rebellion." The movers, however, will understand the difference. At the beginning they knew they could never raise their treason to any respectable magnitude by any name which implies violation of law. They knew their people possessed as much of moral sense, as much of devotion to law and order, and as much pride in and reverence for the history and government of their common country as any other civilized and patriotic people. They knew they could make no advancement directly in the teeth of these strong and noble sentiments. Accordingly, they commenced by an insidious

debauching of the public mind. They invented an ingenious sophism which, if conceded, was followed by perfectly logical steps, through all the incidents, to the complete destruction of the Union. The sophism itself is that any state of the Union may consistently with the National Constitution, and therefore lawfully and peacefully, withdraw from the Union without the consent of the Union or of any other state. The little disguise, that the supposed right is to be exercised only for just cause, themselves to be the sole judges of its justice, is too thin to merit any notice.\*

With rebellion thus sugar-coated they have been drugging the public mind of their section for more than thirty years, until at length they have brought many good men to a willingness to take up arms against the government the day after some assemblage of men have enacted the farcical pretense of taking their state out of the Union, who could have been brought to no such thing the day before.

This sophism derives much, perhaps the whole, of its currency from the assumption that there is some omnipotent and sacred supremacy pertaining to a state—to each state of our Federal Union. Our states have neither more nor less power than that reserved to them in the Union by the Constitution—no one of them ever having been a state out of the Union.† The original ones passed into the Union even before they cast off their British colonial dependence; and the new ones each came into the Union directly from a condition of dependence, excepting Texas. And even Texas, in its temporary independence, was never designated a state. The new ones only took the designation of states on coming into the Union, while that name was first adopted for the

\* With due respect for the influence of the heat of war, Lincoln must be accused of special pleading here. He was too well acquainted with American history and with the feeling of the country not to be aware of the absolute hold of the doctrine of state sovereignty upon the Southern people.

† North Carolina and Rhode Island both occupied this position.

old ones in and by the Declaration of Independence. Therein the "United Colonies" were declared to be "free and independent states"; but even then the object plainly was not to declare their independence of one another or of the Union, but directly the contrary, as their mutual pledge and their mutual action before, at the time, and afterward, abundantly show. The express plighting of faith by each and all of the original thirteen in the Articles of Confederation, two years later, that the Union shall be perpetual, is most conclusive. Having never been states either in substance or in name outside of the Union, whence this magical omnipotence of "State Rights," asserting a claim of power to lawfully destroy the Union itself? Much is said about the "sovereignty" of the states; but the word even is not in the National Constitution, nor, as is believed, in any of the state constitutions. What is "sovereignty" in the political sense of the term? Would it be far wrong to define it "a political community without a political superior"? Tested by this, no one of our states except Texas ever was a sovereignty. And even Texas gave up the character on coming into the Union; by which act she acknowledged the Constitution of the United States, and the laws and treaties of the United States made in pursuance of the Constitution, to be for her the supreme law of the land. The states have their status in the Union, and they have no other legal status. If they break from this, they can only do so against law and by revolution. The Union, and not themselves separately, procured their independence and their liberty. By conquest or purchase the Union gave each of them whatever of independence or liberty it has. The Union is older than any of the states, and, in fact, it created them as states. Originally some dependent colonies made the Union, and, in turn, the Union threw off their old dependence for them, and made them states, such as they are. Not one of them ever had a state constitution independent of the Union. Of course,



it is not forgotten that all the new states framed their constitutions before they entered the Union—nevertheless, dependent upon and preparatory to coming into the Union.\*

Unquestionably the states have the powers and rights reserved to them in and by the National Constitution; but among these surely are not included all conceivable powers, however mischievous or destructive, but, at most, such only as were known in the world at the time as governmental powers; and certainly a power to destroy the government itself had never been known as a governmental, as a merely administrative power. This relative matter of national power and state rights, as a principle, is no other than the principle of generality and locality. Whatever concerns the whole should be confided to the whole—to the General Government; while whatever concerns only the state should be left exclusively to the state. This is all there is of the original principle about it. Whether the National Constitution in defining boundaries between the two has applied the principle with exact accuracy, is not to be questioned. We are all bound by that defining, without question.

What is now combated is the position that secession is consistent with the Constitution—is lawful and peaceful. It is not contended that there is any express law for it; and nothing should ever be implied as law which leads to unjust or absurd consequences. The nation purchased with money the countries out of which several of these states were formed. Is it just that they shall go off without leave and without refunding? The nation paid very large sums (in the aggregate, I believe, nearly a hundred millions) to relieve Florida of the aboriginal tribes. Is it just that she shall now be off without consent or without making any return? The nation is now in debt for money applied to the benefit of these so-called

\* This is a remarkably able statement of the theory of the Union, comparatively new at that time.

seceding states in common with the rest. Is it just either that creditors shall go unpaid or the remaining states pay the whole?\* A part of the present national debt was contracted to pay the old debts of Texas.† Is it just that she shall leave and pay no part of this herself?

Again, if one state may secede, so may another; and when all shall have seceded, none is left to pay the debts. Is this quite just to creditors? Did we notify them of this sage view of ours when we borrowed their money? If we now recognize this doctrine by allowing the seceders to go in peace, it is difficult to see what we can do if others choose to go or to extort terms upon which they will promise to remain.

The seceders insist that our Constitution admits of secession. They have assumed to make a national constitution of their own, in which of necessity they have either discarded or retained the right of secession as they insist it exists in ours. If they have discarded it, they thereby admit that on principle it ought not to be in ours. If they have retained it by their own construction of ours, they show that to be consistent they must secede from one another whenever they shall find it the easiest way of settling their debts, or effecting any other selfish or unjust object. The principle itself is one of disintegration, and upon which no government can possibly endure.

If all the states save one should assert the power to drive that one out of the Union, it is presumed the whole class of seceder politicians would at once deny the power and denounce the act as the greatest outrage upon state rights. But suppose that precisely the same act, instead of being called "driving the one out," should be called "the seceding of the others from that one," it would be exactly what the seceders claim to do, unless, indeed,

\* The Southern states in their attempt to negotiate with the United States had as one declared purpose the adjustment of the national debt.

† Texas surrendered her claims upon a large part of New Mexico in exchange for this payment.

they make the point that the one, because it is a minority, may rightfully do what the others, because they are a majority, may not rightfully do. These politicians are subtle and profound on the rights of minorities. They are not partial to that power which made the Constitution and speaks from the preamble, calling itself "We, the People."

It may well be questioned whether there is today a majority of the legally qualified voters of any state, except perhaps South Carolina, in favor of disunion. There is much reason to believe that the Union men are the majority in many, if not in every other one, of the so-called seceded states. The contrary has not been demonstrated in any one of them. It is ventured to affirm this even of Virginia and Tennessee; for the result of an election held in military camps, where the bayonets are all on one side of the question voted upon, can scarcely be considered as demonstrating popular sentiment. At such an election, all that large class who are at once for the Union and against coercion would be coerced to vote against the Union.

It may be affirmed without extravagance that the free institutions we enjoy have developed the powers and improved the condition of our whole people beyond any example in the world. Of this we now have a striking and impressive illustration. So large an army as the government has now on foot was never before known, without a soldier in it but who has taken his place there of his own free choice. But more than this, there are many single regiments whose members, one and another, possess full practical knowledge of all the arts, sciences, professions, and whatever else, whether useful or elegant, is known in the world; and there is scarcely one from which there could not be selected a president, a cabinet, a congress, and perhaps a court, abundantly competent to administer the government itself. Nor do I say this is not true also in the army of our late friends.

now adversaries in this contest; but if it is, so much better the reason why the government which has conferred such benefits on both them and us should not be broken up. Whoever in any section proposes to abandon such a government would do well to consider in deference to what principle it is that he does it—what better he is likely to get in its stead—whether the substitute will give, or be intended to give, so much of good to the people. There are some foreshadowings on this subject. Our adversaries have adopted some declarations of independence in which, unlike the good old one, penned by Jefferson, they omit the words “all men are created equal.” Why? They have adopted a temporary national constitution, in the preamble of which, unlike our good old one, signed by Washington, they omit “We, the People,” and substitute, “We, the deputies of the sovereign and independent states.” Why? Why this deliberate pressing out of view the rights of men and the authority of the people?

This is essentially a people's contest. On the side of the Union it is a struggle for maintaining in the world that form and substance of government whose leading object is to elevate the condition of men—to lift artificial weights from all shoulders; to clear the paths of laudable pursuit for all; to afford all an unfettered start, and a fair chance in the race of life. Yielding to partial and temporary departures, from necessity, this is the leading object of the government for whose existence we contend.

I am most happy to believe that the plain people understand and appreciate this. It is worthy of note that while in this, the government's hour of trial, large numbers of those in the army and navy who have been favored with the offices have resigned and proved false to the hand which had pampered them, not one common soldier or common sailor is known to have deserted his flag.

Great honor is due to those officers who remained

true, despite the example of their treacherous associates; but the greatest honor, and most important fact of all, is the unanimous firmness of the common soldiers and common sailors. To the last man, so far as known, they have successfully resisted the traitorous efforts of those whose commands, but an hour before, they obeyed as absolute law. This is the patriotic instinct of the plain people. They understand, without an argument, that the destroying of the government which was made by Washington means no good to them.

Our popular government has often been called an experiment. Two points in it our people have already settled—the successful establishing and the successful administering of it. One still remains—its successful maintenance against a formidable internal attempt to overthrow it. It is now for them to demonstrate to the world that those who can fairly carry an election can also suppress a rebellion; that ballots are the rightful and peaceful successors of bullets; and that when ballots have fairly and constitutionally decided, there can be no successful appeal back to bullets; that there can be no successful appeal, except to ballots themselves, at succeeding elections. Such will be a great lesson of peace; teaching men that what they cannot take by an election, neither can they take it by a war; teaching all the folly of being the beginners of a war.

Lest there be some uneasiness in the minds of candid men as to what is to be the course of the government toward the Southern states after the rebellion shall have been suppressed, the Executive deems it proper to say it will be his purpose then, as ever, to be guided by the Constitution and the laws; and that he probably will have no different understanding of the powers and duties of the Federal Government relatively to the rights of the states and the people, under the Constitution, than that expressed in the inaugural address.

He desires to preserve the government, that it may

be administered for all as it was administered by the men who made it. Loyal citizens everywhere have the right to claim this of their government, and the government has no right to withhold or neglect it. It is not perceived that in giving it there is any coercion, any conquest, or any subjugation, in any just sense of those terms.

The Constitution provides, and all the states have accepted the provision, that "the United States shall guarantee to every state in this Union a republican form of government." But if a state may lawfully go out of the Union, having done so, it may also discard the republican form of government; so that to prevent its going out is an indispensable means to the end of maintaining the guaranty mentioned; and when an end is lawful and obligatory, the indispensable means to it are also lawful and obligatory.

It was with the deepest regret that the Executive found the duty of employing the war power in defense of the government forced upon him. He could but perform this duty or surrender the existence of the government. No compromise by public servants could, in this case, be a cure; not that compromises are not often proper, but that no popular government can long survive a marked precedent that those who carry an election can only save the government from immediate destruction by giving up the main point upon which the people gave the election. The people themselves, and not their servants, can safely reverse their own deliberate decisions.

As a private citizen the Executive could not have consented that these institutions shall perish; much less could he, in betrayal of so vast and so sacred a trust as the free people have confided to him. He felt that he had no moral right to shrink, nor even to count the chances of his own life in what might follow. In full view of his great responsibility he has, so far, done what he has deemed his duty. You will now, according to

your own judgment, perform yours. He sincerely hopes that your views and your actions may so accord with his as to assure all faithful citizens who have been disturbed in their rights of a certain and speedy restoration to them, under the Constitution and the laws.

And having thus chosen our course, without guile and with pure purpose, let us renew our trust in God, and go forward without fear and with manly hearts.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Soon after the opening of the war, anti-slavery sentiment in the North began to grow very rapidly. As it grew stronger, suggestions of emancipation increased in number. Lincoln saw clearly that emancipation at this time would almost certainly result in the loss to the Union of Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri, with the additional loss of the support of those in the North who were opposed to a war of emancipation. He therefore set his face against any of the suggestions. In August, General John C. Frémont, who was in command of the Department of the West, proclaimed the emancipation of all slaves of Confederate supporters in Missouri. Lincoln at once sent him this letter by special messenger:

TO GENERAL JOHN C. FRÉMONT

Washington, D. C., September 2, 1861  
Major-General Frémont.

MY DEAR SIR: Two points in your proclamation of August 30 give me some anxiety.

*First.* Should you shoot a man, according to the proclamation,\* the Confederates would very certainly shoot our best men in their hands in retaliation; and so, man for man, indefinitely. It is, therefore, my order that you allow no man to be shot under the proclamation without first having my approbation or consent.

\*In his emancipation proclamation, General Frémont announced his intention of trying by court-martial all persons found with arms in their hands in opposition to the Union cause, and shooting them upon conviction.

*Second.* I think there is great danger that the closing paragraph, in relation to the confiscation of property and the liberating slaves of traitorous owners, will alarm our Southern Union friends and turn them against us; perhaps ruin our rather fair prospect for Kentucky. Allow me, therefore, to ask that you will, as of your own motion, modify that paragraph so as to conform to the first and fourth sections of the act of Congress entitled, "An act to confiscate property used for insurrectionary purposes," approved August 6, 1861, and a copy of which act I herewith send you.

This letter is written in a spirit of caution, and not of censure. I send it by special messenger, in order that it may certainly and speedily reach you.

Yours very truly,

A. LINCOLN

Frémont's proclamation had caused great enthusiasm in the North. Lincoln's reply to it caused an equal burst of denunciation. There was talk of impeachment. Frémont became a popular idol, which may have been his intention in issuing the proclamation. Lowell wrote: "How many times are we to save Kentucky and lose self-respect?" Even Lincoln's close friends in many cases opposed his attitude, as is indicated by this letter to O. H. Browning, who was now filling the vacancy in the Senate from Illinois caused by the death of Stephen A. Douglas.

TO O. H. BROWNING

[*Private and Confidential*]

Executive Mansion,

Washington, September 22, 1861

Hon. O. H. Browning.

MY DEAR SIR: Yours of the 17th is just received; and coming from you, I confess it astonishes me. That you should object to my adhering to a law which you had assisted in making and presenting to me less than



a month before is odd enough. But this is a very small part. General Frémont's proclamation as to confiscation of property and the liberation of slaves is purely political and not within the range of military law or necessity. If a commanding general finds a necessity to seize the farm of a private owner for a pasture, an encampment, or a fortification, he has the right to do so, and to so hold it as long as the necessity lasts; and this is within military law, because within military necessity. But to say the farm shall no longer belong to the owner, or his heirs forever, and this as well when the farm is not needed for military purposes as when it is, is purely political, without the savor of military law about it. And the same is true of slaves. If the general needs them, he can seize them and use them; but when the need is past, it is not for him to fix their permanent future condition. That must be settled according to laws made by lawmakers, and not by military proclamations. The proclamation in the point in question is simply "dictatorship." It assumes that the general may do anything he pleases—confiscate the lands and free the slaves of loyal people, as well as of disloyal ones. And going the whole figure, I have no doubt, would be more popular with some thoughtless people than that which has been done! But I cannot assume this reckless position, nor allow others to assume it on my responsibility.

You speak of it as being the only means of saving the government. On the contrary, it is itself the surrender of the government. Can it be pretended that it is any longer the Government of the United States—any government of constitution and laws—wherein a general or a president may make permanent rules of property by proclamation? I do not say Congress might not with propriety pass a law on the point, just such as General Frémont proclaimed. I do not say I might not, as a member of Congress, vote for it. What I object to is, that I, as President, shall expressly or impliedly seize

and exercise the permanent legislative functions of the government.

So much as to principle. Now as to policy. No doubt the thing was popular in some quarters, and would have been more so if it had been a general declaration of emancipation. The Kentucky legislature would not budge till that proclamation was modified; and General Anderson telegraphed me that on the news of General Frémont having actually issued deeds of manumission, a whole company of our volunteers threw down their arms and disbanded. I was so assured as to think it probable that the very arms we had furnished Kentucky would be turned against us. I think to lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game. Kentucky gone, we cannot hold Missouri, nor, as I think, Maryland. These all against us, and the job on our hands is too large for us. We would as well consent to separation at once, including the surrender of this capital. On the contrary, if you will give up your restlessness for new positions, and back me manfully on the grounds upon which you and other kind friends gave me the election and have approved in my public documents, we shall go through triumphantly. You must not understand I took my course on the proclamation because of Kentucky. I took the same ground in a private letter to General Frémont before I heard from Kentucky.

You think I am inconsistent because I did not also forbid General Frémont to shoot men under the proclamation. I understand that part to be within military law, but I also think, and so privately wrote General Frémont, that it is impolitic in this, that our adversaries have the power, and will certainly exercise it, to shoot as many of our men as we shoot of theirs. I did not say this in the public letter, because it is a subject I prefer not to discuss in the hearing of our enemies.

There has been no thought of removing General Frémont on any ground connected with his proclamation,

and if there has been any wish for his removal on any ground, our mutual friend Sam. Glover can probably tell you what it was. I hope no real necessity for it exists on any ground.

Your friend, as ever,

A. LINCOLN

In the midst of the growing burden of the war, Lincoln found solace in his sense of humor which appeared not only in his famous anecdotes but also crept into his letters.

*TO MAJOR RAMSEY*

Executive Mansion, October 17, 1861

MY DEAR SIR: The lady bearer of this says she has two sons who want to work. Set them at it if possible. Wanting to work is so rare a want that it should be encouraged.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN

When Congress met in regular session in December, 1861, Lincoln in his message made a preliminary suggestion of a plan very dear to his heart, that of compensated emancipation with the colonization of the negroes. Later this was much more developed. With all his horror of slavery, Lincoln had no illusions about the negroes in the mass. He stated his opinion on the subject clearly in the debates with Douglas and there is no indication that he ever changed it. At Ottawa he said:

"I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and the black races. There is a physical difference between the two, which, in my judgment, will probably forever forbid their living together upon the footing of perfect equality; and inasmuch as it becomes a necessity that there must be a difference, I, as well as Judge Douglas, am in favor of the race to which I belong having the superior position. I have never said anything to the contrary, but I hold that, notwithstanding all this, there is no reason in the world

why the negro is not entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence—the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I hold that he is as much entitled to these as the white man. I agree with Judge Douglas he is not my equal in many respects—certainly not in color, perhaps not in moral or intellectual endowment. But in the right to eat the bread, without the leave of anybody else, which his own hand earns, he is my equal and the equal of Judge Douglas, and the equal of every living man.” At Charleston he said: “I will say that I am not, or ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races—that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality.”

It was Lincoln's hope by this plan of colonization, which he had first suggested in 1857, to settle not only the question of slavery, but also the race question which he clearly foresaw.

*EXTRACT FROM ANNUAL MESSAGE TO CONGRESS*

[December 3, 1861]

FELLOW-CITIZENS OF THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES: In the midst of unprecedented political troubles we have cause of great gratitude to God for unusual good health and most abundant harvests.

Under and by virtue of the act of Congress entitled “An act to confiscate property used for insurrectionary purposes,” approved August 6, 1861, the legal claims of certain persons to the labor and service of certain other persons have become forfeited; and numbers of the latter, thus liberated, are already dependent on the United States, and must be provided for in some way. Besides this, it is not impossible that some of the states

will pass similar enactments for their own benefit respectively, and by operation of which persons of the same class will be thrown upon them for disposal. In such case I recommend that Congress provide for accepting such persons from such states, according to some mode of valuation, in lieu, *pro tanto*,\* of direct taxes, or upon some other plan to be agreed on with such states respectively, that such persons, on such acceptance by the General Government, be at once deemed free; and, that, in any event, steps be taken for colonizing both classes (or the one first mentioned, if the other shall not be brought into existence) at some place or places in a climate congenial to them. It might be well to consider, too, whether the free colored people already in the United States could not, so far as individuals may desire, be included in such colonization.

To carry out the plan of colonization may involve the acquiring of territory, and also the appropriation of money beyond that to be expended in the territorial acquisition. Having practiced the acquisition of territory for nearly sixty years, the question of constitutional power to do so is no longer an open one with us. The power was questioned at first by Mr. Jefferson, who, however, in the purchase of Louisiana, yielded his scruples on the plea of great expediency. If it be said that the only legitimate object of acquiring territory is to furnish homes for white men, this measure effects that object; for the emigration of colored men leaves additional room for white men remaining or coming here. Mr. Jefferson, however, placed the importance of procuring Louisiana more on political and commercial grounds than on providing room for population.

On this whole proposition, including the appropriation of money with the acquisition of territory, does not the expediency amount to absolute necessity—that without which the government itself cannot be perpetuated?

\* To that extent.

The war continues. In considering the policy to be adopted for suppressing the insurrection, I have been anxious and careful that the inevitable conflict for this purpose shall not degenerate into a violent and remorseless revolutionary struggle. I have, therefore, in every case thought it proper to keep the integrity of the Union prominent as the primary object of the contest on our part, leaving all questions which are not of vital military importance to the more deliberate action of the legislature.

In the exercise of my best discretion I have adhered to the blockade of the ports held by the insurgents, instead of putting in force, by proclamation, the law of Congress enacted at the last session for closing ports.\*

So also, obeying the dictates of prudence as well as the obligations of law, instead of transcending I have adhered to the act of Congress to confiscate property used for insurrectionary purposes. If a new law upon the same subject shall be proposed, its propriety will be duly considered. The Union must be preserved; and hence all indispensable means must be employed. We should not be in haste to determine that radical and extreme measures, which may reach the loyal as well as the disloyal, are indispensable.

The inaugural address at the beginning of the administration, and the message to Congress at the late special session, were both mainly devoted to the domestic controversy out of which the insurrection and consequent war have sprung. Nothing now occurs to add or subtract, to or from, the principles or general purposes stated and expressed in those documents.

The last ray of hope for preserving the Union peaceably expired at the assault upon Fort Sumter; and a

\* As has been noted (see page 283) Lincoln's action in proclaiming a blockade of the Southern ports was regarded by many people in the North as a recognition of secession as a legal and accomplished fact. Accordingly Congress passed a law closing the ports, which Lincoln ignored, as he here explains.

general review of what has occurred since may not be unprofitable. What was painfully uncertain then is much better defined and more distinct now; and the progress of events is plainly in the right direction. The insurgents confidently claimed a strong support from north of Mason and Dixon's line; and the friends of the Union were not free from apprehension on the point. This, however, was soon settled definitely, and on the right side. South of the line, noble little Delaware led off right from the first. Maryland was made to seem against the Union. Our soldiers were assaulted, bridges were burned, and railroads torn up within her limits, and we were many days, at one time, without the ability to bring a single regiment over her soil to the capital. Now her bridges and railroads are repaired and open to the government; she already gives seven regiments to the cause of the Union and none to the enemy; and her people, at a regular election, have sustained the Union by a larger majority and a larger aggregate vote than they ever before gave to any candidate or any question. Kentucky, too, for some time in doubt, is now decidedly, and, I think, unchangeably, ranged on the side of the Union. Missouri is comparatively quiet, and, I believe, cannot again be overrun by the insurrectionists. These three states of Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri, neither of which would promise a single soldier at first, have now an aggregate of not less than forty thousand in the field for the Union, while of their citizens certainly not more than a third of that number, and they of doubtful whereabouts and doubtful existence, are in arms against it. After a somewhat bloody struggle of months, winter closes on the Union people of western Virginia, leaving them masters of their own country.

It continues to develop that the insurrection is largely, if not exclusively, a war upon the first principle of

popular government—the rights of the people. Conclusive evidence of this is found in the most grave and maturely considered public documents as well as in the general tone of the insurgents. In those documents we find the abridgment of the existing right of suffrage and the denial to the people of all right to participate in the selection of public officers except the legislative, boldly advocated, with labored arguments to prove that large control of the people in government is the source of all political evil. Monarchy itself is sometimes hinted at as a possible refuge from the power of the people.\*

In my present position I could scarcely be justified were I to omit raising a warning voice against this approach of returning despotism.

It is not needed nor fitting here that a general argument should be made in favor of popular institutions; but there is one point, with its connections, not so hackneyed as most others, to which I ask a brief attention. It is the effort to place capital on an equal footing with, if not above, labor, in the structure of government. It is assumed that labor is available only in connection with capital; that nobody labors unless somebody else, owning capital, somehow by the use of it induces him to labor. This assumed, it is next considered whether it is best that capital shall hire laborers, and thus induce them to work by their own consent, or buy them and drive them to it without their consent. Having proceeded thus far, it is naturally concluded that all laborers are either hired laborers or what we call slaves. And, further, it is assumed that whoever is once a hired laborer is fixed in that condition for life.

Now, there is no such relation between capital and labor as assumed, nor is there any such thing as a free man being fixed for life in the condition of a hired

\* Lincoln was mistaken in this. The Confederate government was as clearly popular as that of the United States.



laborer. Both these assumptions are false, and all inferences from them are groundless.

Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration. Capital has its rights, which are as worthy of protection as any other rights. Nor is it denied that there is, and probably always will be, a relation between labor and capital producing mutual benefits. The error is in assuming that the whole labor of the community exists within that relation. A few men own capital, and that few avoid labor themselves, and with their capital hire or buy another few to labor for them. A large majority belong to neither class—neither work for others nor have others working for them. In most of the Southern states a majority of the whole people, of all colors, are neither slaves nor masters; while in the Northern a large majority are neither hirers nor hired. Men with their families—wives, sons, and daughters—work for themselves, on their farms, in their houses, and in their shops, taking the whole product to themselves, and asking no favors of capital on the one hand, nor of hired laborers or slaves on the other. It is not forgotten that a considerable number of persons mingle their own labor with capital—that is, they labor with their own hands and also buy or hire others to labor for them; but this is only a mixed and not a distinct class. No principle stated is disturbed by the existence of this mixed class.

Again, as has already been said, there is not, of necessity, any such thing as the free hired laborer being fixed to that condition for life. Many independent men everywhere in these states, a few years back in their lives, were hired laborers. The prudent, penniless beginner in the world labors for wages a while, saves a surplus with which to buy tools or land for himself, then labors on his own account another while, and at length hires

another new beginner to help him. This is the just and generous and prosperous system which opens the way to all—gives hope to all, and consequent energy and progress and improvement of condition to all. No men living are more worthy to be trusted than those who toil up from poverty—none less inclined to take or touch aught which they have not honestly earned. Let them beware of surrendering a political power which they already possess, and which, if surrendered, will surely be used to close the door of advancement against such as they, and to fix new disabilities and burdens upon them, till all of liberty shall be lost.

From the first taking of our national census to the last are seventy years; and we find our population at the end of the period eight times as great as it was at the beginning. The increase of those other things which men deem desirable has been even greater. We thus have, at one view, what the popular principle, applied to government, through the machinery of the states and the Union has produced in a given time; and also what, if firmly maintained, it promises for the future. There are already among us those who, if the Union be preserved, will live to see it contain 250,000,000.\* The struggle of today is not altogether for today—it is for a vast future also. With a reliance on Providence all the more firm and earnest, let us proceed in the great task which events have devolved upon us.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The message was generally approved. The following comment from *Harper's Weekly* is an interesting example. "The President is an honest, plain, shrewd magistrate. He is not a brilliant orator; he is not a great leader."

All during the war Lincoln had, in addition to his other burdens, the necessity of soothing and healing the tender sensibilities of jealous military men. It was not a pleasant task, as may be judged from this letter:

\* This was of course greatly overestimated.

## TO GENERAL DAVID HUNTER

Executive Mansion,  
Washington, December 31, 1861

Major-General Hunter.

DEAR SIR: Yours of the 23d is received, and I am constrained to say it is difficult to answer so ugly a letter in good temper. I am, as you intimate, losing much of the great confidence I placed in you, not from any act or omission of yours touching the public service, up to the time you were sent to Leavenworth, but from the flood of grumbling dispatches and letters I have seen from you since. I knew you were being ordered to Leavenworth at the time it was done; and I aver that with as tender a regard for your honor and your sensibilities as I had for my own, it never occurred to me that you were being "humiliated, insulted, and disgraced!" nor have I, up to this day, heard an intimation that you have been wronged, coming from anyone but yourself. No one has blamed you for the retrograde movement from Springfield, nor for the information you gave General Cameron; and this you could readily understand, if it were not for your unwarranted assumption that the ordering you to Leavenworth must necessarily have been done as a *punishment* for some *fault*. I thought then, and think yet, the position assigned to you is as responsible, and as honorable, as that assigned to Buell—I know that General McClellan expected more important results from it. My impression is that at the time you were assigned to the new Western Department, it had not been determined to replace General Sherman in Kentucky; but of this I am not certain, because the idea that a command in Kentucky was very desirable, and one in the farther West undesirable, had never occurred to me. You constantly speak of being placed in command of only 3,000. Now tell me, is this not mere impatience? Have you not known all the while that you are to command four or five times that many?

I have been, and am sincerely your friend; and if, as such, I dare to make a suggestion, I would say you are adopting the best possible way to ruin yourself. "Act well your part, there all the honor lies." \* He who does *something* at the head of one regiment, will eclipse him who does *nothing* at the head of a hundred.

Your friend, as ever,

A. LINCOLN

In addition, he was compelled to take part in the framing of military plans and was constantly in correspondence with General George B. McClellan, who commanded the Army of the Potomac, and whom Lincoln was trying to induce to become more aggressive. The following is a characteristic letter:

TO GENERAL GEORGE B. McCLELLAN

Executive Mansion,

Washington, February 3, 1862

Major-General McClellan.

MY DEAR SIR: You and I have distinct and different plans for a movement of the Army of the Potomac—yours to be down the Chesapeake, up the Rappahannock to Urbana, and across land to the terminus of the railroad on the York River; mine to move directly to a point on the railroad southwest of Manassas.

If you will give me satisfactory answers to the following questions, I shall gladly yield my plan to yours.

*First.* Does not your plan involve a greatly larger expenditure of time and money than mine?

*Second.* Wherein is a victory more certain by your plan than mine?

*Third.* Wherein is a victory more valuable by your plan than mine?

\* Pope, *Essay on Man*, Ep. IV, Line 193.

"Honor and shame from no condition rise,  
Act well your part, there all the honor lies."

*Fourth.* In fact, would it not be less valuable in this, that it would break no great line of the enemy's communications, while mine would?

*Fifth.* In case of disaster, would not a retreat be more difficult by your plan than mine?

Yours truly,

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

*Memorandum Accompanying Letter of President Lincoln to General McClellan, Dated February 3, 1862*

*First.* Suppose the enemy should attack us in force before we reach the Occoquan, what?

*Second.* Suppose the enemy in force shall dispute the crossing of the Occoquan, what? In view of this, might it not be safest for us to cross the Occoquan at Colchester, rather than at the village of Occoquan? This would cost the enemy two miles more of travel to meet us, but would, on the contrary, leave us two miles farther from our ultimate destination.

*Third.* Suppose we reach Maple Valley without an attack, will we not be attacked there in force by the enemy marching by the several roads from Manassas; and if so, what?

In March, 1862, satisfied that he had public support behind him, Lincoln renewed his suggestion for compensated emancipation in a special message to Congress.

*SPECIAL MESSAGE TO CONGRESS*

[March 6, 1862]

FELLOW-CITIZENS OF THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES: I recommend the adoption of a joint resolution by your honorable bodies, which shall be substantially as follows:

*Resolved,* That the United States ought to coöperate with any state which may adopt gradual abolishment of

slavery, giving to such state pecuniary aid, to be used by such state, in its discretion, to compensate for the inconveniences, public and private, produced by such change of system.

If the proposition contained in the resolution does not meet the approval of Congress and the country, there is the end; but if it does command such approval, I deem it of importance that the states and people immediately interested should be at once distinctly notified of the fact, so that they may begin to consider whether to accept or reject it. The federal government would find its highest interest in such a measure, as one of the most efficient means of self-preservation. The leaders of the existing insurrection entertain the hope that this government will ultimately be forced to acknowledge the independence of some part of the disaffected region, and that all the slave states north of such part will then say, "The Union for which we have struggled being already gone, we now choose to go with the Southern section." To deprive them of this hope substantially ends the rebellion; and the initiation of emancipation completely deprives them of it as to all the states initiating it. The point is not that all the states tolerating slavery would very soon, if at all, initiate emancipation; but that while the offer is equally made to all, the more Northern shall, by such initiation, make it certain to the more Southern that in no event will the former ever join the latter in their proposed confederacy. I say "initiation" because, in my judgment, gradual and not sudden emancipation is better for all. In the mere financial or pecuniary view, any member of Congress, with the census tables and treasury reports before him, can readily see for himself how very soon the current expenditures of this war would purchase, at fair valuation, all the slaves in any named state. Such a proposition on the part of the general government sets up no claim of a right by federal authority to interfere with

slavery within state limits, referring, as it does, the absolute control of the subject in each case to the state and its people immediately interested. It is proposed as a matter of perfectly free choice with them.

In the annual message, last December, I thought fit to say, "The Union must be preserved, and hence all indispensable means must be employed." I said this not hastily, but deliberately. War has been made, and continues to be, an indispensable means to this end. A practical reacknowledgment of the national authority would render the war unnecessary, and it would at once cease. If, however, resistance continues, the war must also continue; and it is impossible to foresee all the incidents which may attend and all the ruin which may follow it. Such as may seem indispensable, or may obviously promise great efficiency, toward ending the struggle, must and will come.

The proposition now made, though an offer only, I hope it may be esteemed no offense to ask whether the pecuniary consideration tendered would not be of more value to the states and private persons concerned than are the institution and property in it, in the present aspect of affairs?

While it is true that the adoption of the proposed resolution would be merely initiatory, and not within itself a practical measure, it is recommended in the hope that it would soon lead to important practical results. In full view of my great responsibility to my God and to my country, I earnestly beg the attention of Congress and the people to the subject.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The proposition proved popular; Lincoln received many letters of endorsement, and newspaper comment was generally favorable. The following letter to the editor of the *New York Times* shows how Lincoln kept behind any plan he was desirous of carrying through:

TO HENRY J. RAYMOND

[Private]

Executive Mansion,  
Washington, March 9, 1862

Hon. Henry J. Raymond.

MY DEAR SIR: I am grateful to the New York journals, and not less so to the *Times* than to others, for their kind notices of the late special message to Congress.

Your paper, however, intimates that the proposition, though well intentioned, must fail on the score of expense. I do hope you will reconsider this. Have you noticed the facts that less than one-half day's cost of this war would pay for all the slaves in Delaware at \$400 per head—that eighty-seven days' cost of this war would pay for all in Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Kentucky, and Missouri at the same price? Were those states to take the step, do you doubt that it would shorten the war more than eighty-seven days, and thus be an actual saving of expense?

Please look at these things and consider whether there should not be another article in the *Times*.

Yours very truly,

A. LINCOLN

The difficulties with General McClellan continued as the spring advanced. Lincoln was very patient, but at times even his patience was strained.

TO GENERAL GEORGE B. McCLELLAN

Washington, April 9, 1862

Major-General McClellan.

MY DEAR SIR: Your dispatches, complaining that you are not properly sustained, while they do not offend me, do pain me very much.

Blenker's division was withdrawn from you before



you left here, and you knew the pressure under which I did it, and, as I thought, acquiesced in it—certainly not without reluctance.

After you left I ascertained that less than 20,000 unorganized men, without a single field-battery, were all you designed to be left for the defense of Washington and Manassas Junction, and part of this even was to go to General Hooker's old position; General Bank's corps, once designed for Manassas Junction, was divided and tied up on the line of Winchester and Strasburg, and could not leave it without again exposing the upper Potomac and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. This presented (or would present, when McDowell and Sumner should be gone) a great temptation to the enemy to turn back from the Rappahannock and sack Washington. My explicit order that Washington should, by the judgment of all the commanders of corps, be left entirely secure, had been neglected. It was precisely this that drove me to detain McDowell.

I do not forget that I was satisfied with your arrangement to leave Banks at Manassas Junction; but when that arrangement was broken up and nothing was substituted for it, of course I was not satisfied. I was constrained to substitute something for it myself.

And now allow me to ask, do you really think I should permit the line from Richmond via Manassas Junction to this city to be entirely open, except what resistance could be presented by less than 20,000 unorganized troops? This is a question which the country will not allow me to evade.

There is a curious mystery about the number of the troops now with you. When I telegraphed you on the 6th, saying you had over 100,000 with you, I had just obtained from the Secretary of War a statement, taken as he said from your own returns, making 108,000 then with you and en route to you. You now say you will have but 85,000 when all en route to you shall have

reached you. How can this discrepancy of 23,000 be accounted for?

As to General Wool's command, I understand it is doing for you precisely what a like number of your own would have to do if that command was away. I suppose the whole force which has gone forward to you is with you by this time; and if so, I think it is the precise time for you to strike a blow. By delay the enemy will relatively gain upon you—that is, he will gain faster by fortifications and reënforcements than you can by reënforcements alone.

And once more let me tell you it is indispensable to you that you strike a blow. I am powerless to help this. You will do me the justice to remember I always insisted that going down the bay in search of a field, instead of fighting at or near Manassas, was only shifting and not surmounting a difficulty; that we would find the same enemy and the same or equal entrenchments at either place. The country will not fail to note—is noting now—that the present hesitation to move upon an entrenched enemy is but the story of Manassas repeated.

I beg to assure you that I have never written you or spoken to you in greater kindness of feeling than now, nor with a fuller purpose to sustain you, so far as in my most anxious judgment I consistently can; but you must act.

Yours very truly,

A. LINCOLN

The pressure for military appointments, tremendous at the opening of the war, was replaced in 1862 by a similar one for promotion. General John Pope, who was in command of a Union force in Missouri had forced the Confederates to abandon strong defenses at New Madrid and to surrender Island No. 10. This made much easier the task of obtaining control of the Mississippi. Instant demand for the promotion of General Pope was made, and Lincoln thus replied:

TO R. YATES AND WILLIAM BUTLER

[Telegram]

Washington, April 10, 1862

Hon. R. Yates and William Butler, Springfield, Illinois:

I fully appreciate General Pope's splendid achievements, with their invaluable results; but you must know that major-generalships in the regular army are not as plenty as blackberries.

A. LINCOLN

In May, General David Hunter, a personal friend of Lincoln's, who was commander of the Department of the East, in spite of his intimate knowledge of what had befallen Frémont, issued an order declaring, "Slavery and martial law in a free country are altogether incompatible; the persons in . . . Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina, heretofore held as slaves, are therefore declared forever free."

Lincoln first heard of this through the newspapers. He at once issued the following proclamation:

*PROCLAMATION REVOKING GENERAL HUNTER'S  
ORDER OF MILITARY EMANCIPATION*

[May 19, 1862]

Whereas there appears in the public prints what purports to be a proclamation of Major-General Hunter, in the words and figures following, to wit:

"Headquarters Department of the South.

"Hilton Head, Port Royal, S. C., May 9, 1862

"The three states of Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina, comprising the military department of the South, having deliberately declared themselves no longer under the protection of the United States of America, and having taken up arms against the said United States, it became a military necessity to declare martial law. This was accordingly done on the 25th day of April, 1862. Slavery and martial law in a free

country are altogether incompatible; the persons in these three States—Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina—heretofore held as slaves, are therefore declared forever free.

“By command of Major-General D. Hunter:

“(Official.) Ed. W. Smith, Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.”

And whereas the same is producing some excitement and misunderstanding: therefore,

I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, proclaim and declare that the Government of the United States had no knowledge, information, or belief of an intention on the part of General Hunter to issue such a proclamation; nor has it yet any authentic information that the document is genuine. And further, that neither General Hunter, nor any other commander or person, has been authorized by the Government of the United States to make a proclamation declaring the slaves of any state free; and that the supposed proclamation now in question, whether genuine or false, is altogether void so far as respects such a declaration.

I further make known that, whether it be competent for me, as commander-in-chief of the army and navy, to declare the slaves of any state or states free, and whether, at any time, in any case, it shall have become a necessity indispensable to the maintenance of the government to exercise such supposed power, are questions which, under my responsibility, I reserve to myself, and which I cannot feel justified in leaving to the decision of commanders in the field. These are totally different questions from those of police regulations in armies and camps.

On the sixth day of March last, by special message, I recommended to Congress the adoption of a joint resolution, to be substantially as follows:

“Resolved, That the United States ought to coöperate with any state which may adopt gradual abolishment of slavery, giving to such state pecuniary aid, to be used by such state, in its discretion, to compensate for the inconvenience, public and private, produced by such change of system.”

The resolution, in the language above quoted, was adopted by large majorities in both branches of Congress, and now stands an authentic, definite, and solemn proposal of the nation to the states and people most immediately interested in the subject-matter. To the people of those states I now earnestly appeal. I do not argue—I beseech you to make arguments for yourselves. You cannot, if you would, be blind to the signs of the times. I beg of you a calm and enlarged consideration of them, ranging, if it may be, far above personal and partisan politics. This proposal makes common cause for a common object, casting no reproaches upon any. It acts not the Pharisee. The change it contemplates would come gently as the dews of heaven, not rending or wrecking anything. Will you not embrace it? So much good has not been done, by one effort, in all past time, as in the providence of God it is now your high privilege to do. May the vast future not have to lament that you have neglected it.

In witness, etc.,

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

By the President:

William H. Seward, Secretary of State

To Lincoln's sorrow and disappointment the senators and representatives from the Border states paid no attention to his suggestion for compensated emancipation. In July he asked them to the White House and addressed them briefly on the subject.

*APPEAL TO THE BORDER STATE  
REPRESENTATIVES FOR COMPENSATED  
EMANCIPATION*

[July 12, 1862]

GENTLEMEN: After the adjournment of Congress, now very near, I shall have no opportunity of seeing you for several months. Believing that you of the Border states hold more power for good than any other equal number of members, I feel it a duty which I cannot justifiably waive to make this appeal to you. I intend no reproach or complaint when I assure you that, in my opinion, if you all had voted for the resolution in the gradual-emanicipation message of last March, the war would now be substantially ended. And the plan therein proposed is yet one of the most potent and swift means of ending it. Let the states which are in rebellion see definitely and certainly that in no event will the states you represent ever join their proposed confederacy, and they cannot much longer maintain the contest. But you cannot divest them of their hope to ultimately have you with them so long as you show a determination to perpetuate the institution within your own states. Beat them at elections, as you have overwhelmingly done, and, nothing daunted, they still claim you as their own. You and I know what the lever of their power is. Break that lever before their faces, and they can shake you no more forever. Most of you have treated me with kindness and consideration, and I trust you will not now think I improperly touch what is exclusively your own, when, for the sake of the whole country, I ask, Can you, for your states, do better than to take the course I urge? Discarding punctilio and maxims adapted to more manageable times, and looking only to the unprecedentedly stern facts of our case, can you do better in any possible event? You prefer that the constitutional relation of the states to the nation shall be

practically restored without disturbance of the institution; and if this were done, my whole duty in this respect, under the Constitution and my oath of office, would be performed. But it is not done, and we are trying to accomplish it by war. The incidents of the war cannot be avoided. If the war continues long, as it must if the object is not sooner attained, the institution in your states will be extinguished by mere friction and abrasion—by the mere incidents of war. It will be gone and you will have nothing valuable in lieu of it. Much of its value is gone already. How much better for you and for your people to take the step which at once shortens the war and secures substantial compensation for that which is sure to be wholly lost in any other event! How much better to thus save the money which else we sink forever in the war! How much better to do it while we can, lest the war ere long render us pecuniarily unable to do it! How much better for you as seller, and the nation as buyer, to sell out and buy out that without which the war could have never been, than to sink both the thing to be sold and the price of it in cutting one another's throats!

I do not speak of emancipation at once, but of a decision at once to emancipate gradually. Room in South America for colonization can be obtained cheaply and in abundance, and when numbers shall be large enough to be company and encouragement for one another, the freed people will not be so reluctant to go.

I am pressed with a difficulty not yet mentioned—one which threatens division among those who, united, are none too strong. An instance of it is known to you. General Hunter is an honest man. He was, and I hope, still is, my friend. I valued him none the less for his agreeing with me in the general wish that all men everywhere could be free. He proclaimed all men free within certain states, and I repudiated the proclamation. He expected more good and less harm from the measure

than I could believe would follow. Yet, in repudiating it, I gave dissatisfaction, if not offense, to many whose support the country cannot afford to lose. And this is not the end of it. The pressure in this direction is still upon me, and is increasing. By conceding what I now ask, you can relieve me, and, much more, can relieve the country, in this important point. Upon these considerations I have again begged your attention to the message of March last. Before leaving the capital, consider and discuss it among yourselves. You are patriots and statesmen, and as such I pray you consider this proposition, and at the least commend it to the consideration of your states and people. As you would perpetuate popular government for the best people in the world, I beseech you that you do in no wise omit this. Our common country is in great peril, demanding the loftiest views and boldest action to bring it speedy relief. Once relieved, its form of government is saved to the world, its beloved history and cherished memories are vindicated, and its happy future fully assured and rendered inconceivably grand. To you, more than to any others, the privilege is given to assure that happiness and swell that grandeur, and to link your own names therewith forever.

His audience was entirely friendly to him but unsympathetic toward his plan, possibly because they knew that sentiment at home would be opposed. In the meantime Congress had emancipated the slaves in the District of Columbia, appropriating one million dollars for the compensation of loyal owners, and one hundred thousand dollars to pay the expenses of such of the freedmen as wished to go to Liberia or Haiti. This was as far as Lincoln's plan was ever successful.

In 1862 Lincoln appointed Colonel George F. Shepley, Andrew Johnson, and Edward Stanley military governors of Louisiana, Tennessee, and North Carolina respectively, with the hope of so stimulating Union sentiment in those states that governments loyal to the United States might be estab-



LINCOLN AND HIS FAMILY





lished. It was the beginning of his policy of reconstruction. Almost immediately he received numerous protests against the policy followed in Louisiana. The situation there was discussed in several notable letters.

TO REVERDY JOHNSON

[*Private*]

Executive Mansion,  
Washington, July 26, 1862

Hon. Reverdy Johnson.

MY DEAR SIR: Yours of the 16th, by the hand of Governor Shepley, is received. It seems the Union feeling in Louisiana is being crushed out by the course of General Phelps.\* Please pardon me for believing that is a false pretense. The people of Louisiana—all intelligent people everywhere—know full well that I never had a wish to touch the foundations of their society, or any right of theirs. With perfect knowledge of this they forced a necessity upon me to send armies among them, and it is their own fault, not mine, that they are annoyed by the presence of General Phelps. They also know the remedy—know how to be cured of General Phelps. Remove the necessity for his presence. And might it not be well for them to consider whether they have not already had time enough to do this? If they can conceive of anything worse than General Phelps within my power, would they not better be looking out for it? They very well know the way to avert all this is simply to take their place in the Union upon the old terms. If they will not do this, should they not receive harder blows rather than lighter ones? You are ready to say I apply to friends what is due only to enemies. I distrust the wisdom if not the sincerity of friends who would hold my hands while my enemies stab me. This appeal of professed friends has paralyzed me

\* General J. W. Phelps was actively engaged in recruiting negro troops in Louisiana without authority of law.

more in this struggle than any other one thing. You remember telling me, the day after the Baltimore mob in April, 1861, that it would crush all Union feeling in Maryland for me to attempt bringing troops over Maryland soil to Washington. I brought the troops notwithstanding, and yet there was Union feeling enough left to elect a legislature the next autumn, which in turn elected a very excellent Union United States senator!\* I am a patient man—always willing to forgive on the Christian terms of repentance, and also to give ample time for repentance. Still, I must save this government, if possible. What I cannot do, of course I will not do, but it may as well be understood, once for all, that I shall not surrender this game leaving any available card unplayed.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN

TO CUTHBERT BULLITT

[*Private*]

Washington, D. C., July 28, 1862

Cuthbert Bullitt, Esq., New Orleans, La.

SIR: The copy of a letter addressed to yourself by Mr. Thomas J. Durant has been shown to me. The writer appears to be an able, a dispassionate, and an entirely sincere man. The first part of the letter is devoted to an effort to show that the secession ordinance of Louisiana was adopted against the will of a majority of the people. This is probably true, and in that fact may be found some instruction. Why did they allow the ordinance to go into effect? Why did they not assert themselves? Why stand passive and allow themselves to be trodden down by a minority? Why did they not hold popular meetings and have a convention of their own to express and enforce the true sentiment

\* Reverdy Johnson himself.

of the state? If preorganization was against them then, why not do this now that the United States army is present to protect them? The paralysis—the dead palsy—of the government in this whole struggle is that this class of men will do nothing for the government, nothing for themselves, except demanding that the government shall not strike its open enemies lest they be struck by accident.

Mr. Durant complains that in various ways the relation of master and slave is disturbed by the presence of our army, and he considers it particularly vexatious that this, in part, is done under cover of an act of Congress, while constitutional guaranties are suspended on the plea of military necessity. The truth is that what is done and omitted about slaves is done and omitted on the same military necessity. It is a military necessity to have men and money; and we can get neither in sufficient numbers or amounts if we keep from or drive from our lines slaves coming to them. Mr. Durant cannot be ignorant of the pressure in this direction, nor of my efforts to hold it within bounds till he and such as he shall have time to help themselves.

I am not posted to speak understandingly on all the police regulations of which Mr. Durant complains. If experience shows any one of them to be wrong, let them be set right. I think I can perceive in the freedom of trade which Mr. Durant urges that he would relieve both friends and enemies from the pressure of the blockade. By this he would serve the enemy more effectively than the enemy is able to serve himself. I do not say or believe that to serve the enemy is the purpose of Mr. Durant, or that he is conscious of any purpose other than national and patriotic ones. Still, if there were a class of men who, having no choice of sides in the contest, were anxious only to have quiet and comfort for themselves while it rages, and to fall in with the victorious side at the end of it without loss to themselves, their

advice as to the mode of conducting the contest would be precisely such as his is. He speaks of no duty—apparently thinks of none—resting upon Union men. He even thinks it injurious to the Union cause that they should be restrained in trade and passage without taking sides. They are to touch neither a sail nor a pump, but to be merely passengers—deadheads at that—to be carried snug and dry throughout the storm, and safely landed right side up. Nay, more: even a mutineer is to go untouched, lest these sacred passengers receive an accidental wound. Of course the rebellion will never be suppressed in Louisiana if the professed Union men there will neither help to do it nor permit the government to do it without their help. Now, I think the true remedy is very different from what is suggested by Mr. Durant. It does not lie in rounding the rough angles of the war, but in removing the necessity for the war. The people of Louisiana who wish protection to person and property, have but to reach forth their hands and take it. Let them in good faith reinaugurate the national authority, and set up a state government conforming thereto under the Constitution. They know how to do it, and can have the protection of the army while doing it. The army will be withdrawn as soon as such government can dispense with its presence, and the people of the state can then, upon the old constitutional terms, govern themselves to their own liking. This is very simple and easy.

If they will not do this, if they prefer to hazard all for the sake of destroying the government, it is for them to consider whether it is probable that I will surrender the government to save them from losing all. If they decline what I suggest, you will scarcely need to ask what I will do. What would you do in my position? Would you drop the war where it is, or would you prosecute it in future with elder-stalk squirts charged with

rosewater? Would you deal lighter blows rather than heavier ones? Would you give up the contest, leaving any available means unapplied?

I am in no boastful mood. I shall not do more than I can; and I shall do all I can to save the government, which is my sworn duty as well as my personal inclination. I shall do nothing in malice. What I deal with is too vast for malicious dealing.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN

*TO AUGUST BELMONT\**

[July 31, 1862]

DEAR SIR: You send to Mr. W—— an extract from a letter written at New Orleans the 9th instant, which is shown to me. You do not give the writer's name; but plainly he is a man of ability, and probably of some note. He says: "The time has arrived when Mr. Lincoln must take a decisive course. Trying to please everybody, he will satisfy nobody. A vacillating policy in matters of importance is the very worst. Now is the time, if ever, for honest men who love their country to rally to its support. Why will not the North say officially that it wishes for the restoration of the Union as it was?"

And so, it seems, this is the point on which the writer thinks I have no policy. Why will he not read and understand what I have said?

The substance of the very declaration he desires is in the inaugural, in each of the two regular messages to Congress, and in many, if not all, the minor documents issued by the Executive since the Inauguration.

Broken eggs cannot be mended; but Louisiana has nothing to do now but to take her place in the Union as

\*A prominent New York Democrat.

it was, barring the already broken eggs. The sooner she does so, the smaller will be the amount of that which will be past mending. This government cannot much longer play a game in which it stakes all, and its enemies stake nothing. Those enemies must understand that they cannot experiment for ten years trying to destroy the government, and if they fail, still come back into the Union unharmed. If they expect in any contingency to ever have the Union as it was, I join with the writer in saying, "Now is the time."

How much better it would have been for the writer to have gone at this, under the protection of the army at New Orleans, than to have sat down in a closet writing complaining letters northward!

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN

In the summer of 1862 the cause of the Union was at its lowest ebb. The military campaign in Virginia, which was the only one in which the country was deeply interested, had been a disastrous failure. Dissatisfied with the plan for compensated emancipation, the radical opponents of slavery now demanded immediate emancipation by proclamation. The demand was very strong and the denunciation of the President by his opponents increasingly bitter. Lincoln had hinted to Seward and Welles, the day after the conference with the Border state representatives, that he might emancipate the slaves as a military measure by proclamation, and finally on July 22 he read to his cabinet a proclamation announcing that he would on January 1, 1863, as a measure of war, free the slaves in any states not then recognizing the authority of the United States. His amazed cabinet approved, but Seward suggested that if it were issued at the time it would be considered the "last shriek" of the Government, and that it would be better tactics to wait for a military victory. Lincoln agreed, and a long wait for a victory followed.

On August 20, Horace Greeley published in the editorial columns of the *Tribune* an open letter to President Lincoln, called "The Prayer of Twenty Million." It began:



"To Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States:

"Dear Sir: I do not intrude to tell you—for you must know already—that a great proportion of those who triumphed in your election, and of all who desire the unqualified suppression of the rebellion now desolating our country, are sorely disappointed and deeply pained by the policy you seem to be pursuing with regard to the slaves of rebels. I write you only to set succinctly and unmistakably before you what we require, what we think we have a right to expect, and of what we complain."

The letter continued with a mixture of demands and accusations. Demanding that the President execute the laws, it accused him of being "strangely remiss" in the discharge of official and imperative duty with regard to the emancipation provisions of the confiscation acts; of being unduly influenced by the counsels, the representations, and the menaces of certain "fossil politicians" of the Border states, and warned him that timid counsels were perilous, and that the Union cause was suffering from mistaken deference to "rebel slavery." It went so far as to say, "You never give a direction to your military subordinates which does not appear to have been conceived in the interest of Slavery rather than that of Freedom." It closed, "I entreat you to render hearty and unequivocal obedience to the laws of the land."

Lincoln's reply is one of the most remarkable letters of history, not only for its dignity and restraint, its effectiveness and logic, but also for the power of its expression and its revelation of his purpose. It is all the more remarkable when it is remembered that the Emancipation Proclamation was all the while in his desk.

TO HORACE GREELEY

Executive Mansion,  
Washington, August 22, 1862

Hon. Horace Greeley.

DEAR SIR: I have just read yours of the 19th, addressed to myself through the *New York Tribune*. If there be in it any statements or assumptions of fact which I may know to be erroneous, I do not, now and

here, controvert them. If there be in it any inferences which I may believe to be falsely drawn, I do not, now and here, argue against them. If there be perceptible in it an impatient and dictatorial tone, I waive it in deference to an old friend, whose heart I have always supposed to be right.

As to the policy I "seem to be pursuing," as you say, I have not meant to leave any one in doubt.

I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored, the nearer the Union will be "the Union as it was." If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do more whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause. I shall try to correct errors when shown to be errors, and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be true views. I have here stated my purpose according to my view of official duty, and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men, everywhere, could be free.

Yours,

A. LINCOLN

Another remarkable document is an address in reply to a demand for emancipation.

*REPLY TO A CHICAGO COMMITTEE ASKING  
FOR EMANCIPATION*

[September 13, 1862]

The subject presented in the memorial is one upon which I have thought much for weeks past, and I may even say for months. I am approached with the most opposite opinions and advice, and that by religious men who are equally certain that they represent the Divine Will. I am sure that either the one or the other class is mistaken in that belief, and perhaps in some respects both. I hope it will not be irreverent for me to say that if it is probable that God would reveal His will to others on a point so connected with my duty, it might be supposed He would reveal it directly to me; for, unless I am more deceived in myself than I often am, it is my earnest desire to know the will of Providence in this matter. And if I can learn what it is, I will do it. These are not, however, the days of miracles, and I suppose it will be granted that I am not to expect a direct revelation. I must study the plain physical facts of the case, ascertain what is possible, and learn what appears to be wise and right.

The subject is difficult, and good men do not agree. For instance, the other day four gentlemen of standing and intelligence from New York called as a delegation on business connected with the war; but, before leaving, two of them earnestly beset me to proclaim general emancipation, upon which the other two at once attacked them. You know also that the last session of Congress had a decided majority of anti-slavery men, yet they could not unite on this policy. And the same is true of the religious people. Why, the rebel soldiers are praying with a great deal more earnestness, I fear, than

our own troops, and expecting God to favor their side; for one of our soldiers who had been taken prisoner told Senator Wilson a few days since that he met with nothing so discouraging as the evident sincerity of those he was among in their prayers. But we will talk over the merits of the case.

What good would a proclamation of emancipation from me do, especially as we are now situated? I do not want to issue a document that the whole world will see must necessarily be inoperative, like the Pope's bull against the comet.\* Would my word free the slaves, when I cannot even enforce the Constitution in the rebel states? Is there a single court, or magistrate, or individual that would be influenced by it there? And what reason is there to think it would have any greater effect upon the slaves than the late law of Congress, which I approved, and which offers protection and freedom to the slaves of rebel masters who come within our lines? Yet I cannot learn that that law has caused a single slave to come over to us. And suppose they could be induced by a proclamation of freedom from me to throw themselves upon us, what should we do with them? How can we feed and care for such a multitude? General Butler wrote me a few days since that he was issuing more rations to the slaves who have rushed to him than to all the white troops under his command. They eat, and that is all; though it is true General Butler is feeding the whites also by the thousand, for it nearly amounts

\* In 1456 the Turks had taken Constantinople and established themselves in Europe. A comet appeared. According to a contemporary historian Pope Calixtus III "decreed several days of prayer for the averting of the wrath of God, that whatever calamity impended might be turned from the Christians and against the Turks." At the same time the plea, "From the Turk and the comet, good Lord, deliver us," was added to the litany. This intercession of the Pope was unavailing, as the Turks still hold Constantinople, and the comet, known to the modern world as Halley's, still appears at intervals. A tradition arose that Calixtus had issued a bull (edict) excommunicating the comet, but no such bull is to be found among those published. See Andrew D. White, *The Theories of the Comet*.

to a famine there. If, now, the pressure of the war should call off our forces from New Orleans to defend some other point, what is to prevent the masters from reducing the blacks to slavery again? For I am told that whenever the rebels take any black prisoners, free or slave, they immediately auction them off. They did so with those they took from a boat that was aground in the Tennessee River a few days ago. And then I am very ungenerously attacked for it! For instance, when after the late battles at and near Bull Run, an expedition went out from Washington under a flag of truce to bury the dead and bring in the wounded, and the rebels seized the blacks who went along to help, and sent them into slavery, Horace Greeley said in his paper that the government would probably do nothing about it. What could I do?

Now, then, tell me if you please, what possible result of good would follow the issuing of such a proclamation as you desire? Understand, I raise no objections against it on legal or constitutional grounds; for, as commander-in-chief of the army and navy, in time of war I suppose I have a right to take any measure which may best subdue the enemy; nor do I urge objections of a moral nature, in view of possible consequences of insurrection and massacre at the South. I view this matter as a practical war measure, to be decided on according to the advantages or disadvantages it may offer to the suppression of the rebellion.

I admit that slavery is the root of the rebellion, or at least its *sine qua non*.\* The ambition of politicians may have instigated them to act, but they would have been impotent without slavery as their instrument. I will also concede that emancipation would help us in Europe, and convince them that we are incited by something

\* Literally, without which not; in other words, something absolutely necessary, or an indispensable condition.

more than ambition. I grant, further, that it would help somewhat at the North, though not so much, I fear, as you and those you represent imagine. Still, some additional strength would be added in that way to the war; and then, unquestionably, it would weaken the rebels by drawing off their laborers, which is of great importance; but I am not so sure we could do much with the blacks. If we were to arm them, I fear that in a few weeks the arms would be in the hands of the rebels; and, indeed, thus far we have not had arms enough to equip our white troops. I will mention another thing, though it meet only your scorn and contempt. There are fifty thousand bayonets in the Union armies from the border slave states. It would be a serious matter if, in consequence of a proclamation such as you desire, they should go over to the rebels. I do not think they all would—not so many, indeed, as a year ago, or as six months ago—not so many today as yesterday. Every day increases their Union feeling. They are also getting their pride enlisted, and want to beat the rebels. Let me say one thing more: I think you should admit that we already have an important principle to rally and unite the people, in the fact that constitutional government is at stake. This is a fundamental idea going down about as deep as anything.

Do not misunderstand me because I have mentioned these objections. They indicate the difficulties that have thus far prevented my action in some such way as you desire. I have not decided against a proclamation of liberty to the slaves, but hold the matter under advisement; and I can assure you that the subject is on my mind, by day and night, more than any other. Whatever shall appear to be God's will, I will do. I trust that in the freedom with which I have canvassed your views I have not in any respect injured your feelings.

After the battle of Antietam, the preliminary emancipation proclamation\* was issued. It was done with the utmost hesitation, for Lincoln was doubtful of its expediency. A day or so later, in speaking of it, he said, "I can only trust in God that I have made no mistake." Its reception was not such as to encourage Lincoln, nor did the military situation help him. His bitter disappointment at McClellan's failure to crush Lee after Antietam is reflected in this message:

*TO GENERAL GEORGE B. McCLELLAN*

[Telegram]

War Department,  
Washington City, October 24, 1862

MAJOR-GENERAL McCLELLAN:

I have just read your dispatch about sore-tongued and fatigued horses. Will you pardon me for asking what the horses of your army have done since the battle of Antietam that fatigues anything?

A. LINCOLN

In the meantime stocks fell, recruiting grew more difficult, and when the autumn elections came, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois all went Democratic in state and congressional elections. On November 8, General Carl Schurz, a native of Germany and a resident of Wisconsin, whom Lincoln had appointed, first, Minister to Spain, and later, a brigadier general, wrote Lincoln a most interesting letter. Always candid in the expression of his opinions, and ready to give advice, he wrote stating that the Republican defeat was not due to the emancipation proclamation, nor to the financial policy of the government, nor to a desire for peace at any price. It was due, he argued, to the admission of political opponents of the administration into its councils, and the placing of its political enemies in control of the army. He demanded energy and success. His letter was hasty, preju-

\* By this preliminary proclamation of September 22, 1862, Lincoln announced that he would on January 1, 1863, declare the slaves free in all the parts of the Southern states then in the hands of the Confederates, unless the states had by that time returned to their allegiance to the United States.

diced, and opinionated. Lincoln replied with great restraint, but evidently in much haste.

TO GENERAL CARL SCHURZ

[*Private and Confidential*]

Executive Mansion,  
Washington, November 10, 1862

Gen. Schurz.

MY DEAR SIR: Yours of the 8th was, today, read to me by Mrs. Schurz. We have lost the elections; and it is natural that each of us will believe, and say, it has been because his peculiar views was not made sufficiently prominent. I think I know what it was, but I may be mistaken. Three main causes told the whole story. 1. The Democrats were left in a majority by our friends going to the war. 2. The Democrats observed this and determined to reinstate themselves in power, and 3. Our newspapers, by vilifying and disparaging the administration, furnished them all the weapons to do it with. Certainly the ill-success of the war had much to do with this.

You give a different set of reasons. If you had not made the following statements, I should not have suspected them to be true. "The defeat of the administration is the administration's own fault." (Opinion.) "It admitted its professed opponents to its counsels." (Asserted as a fact.) "It placed the Army, now a great power in this Republic, into the hands of its enemies." (Asserted as a fact.) "In all personal questions to be hostile to the party of the government, seemed to be a title to consideration." (Asserted as a fact.) "If to forget the great rule, that if you are true to your friends, your friends will be true to you, and that you make your enemies stronger by placing them upon an equality with your friends." "Is it surprising that the opponents of the administration should have got into their hands the



government of the principal states, after they have had for a long time the principal management of the war, the great business of the national government?"

I cannot dispute about the matter of opinion. On the three matters (stated as facts) I shall be glad to have your evidence upon them when I shall meet you. The plain facts, as they appear to me, are these. The administration came into power, very largely in a minority of the popular vote. Notwithstanding this, it distributed to its party friends as nearly all the civil patronage as any administration ever did. The war came. The administration could not even start in this, without assistance outside of its party. It was mere nonsense to suppose a minority could put down a majority in rebellion. Mr. Schurz (now Gen. Schurz) was about here then, and I do not recollect that he then considered all who were not Republicans were enemies of the government, and that none of them must be appointed to military positions. He will correct me if I am mistaken. It so happened that very few of our friends had a military education or were of the profession of arms. It would have been a question whether the war should be conducted on military knowledge, or on political affinity, only that our own friends (I think Mr. Schurz included) seemed to think that such a question was inadmissible. Accordingly I have scarcely appointed a Democrat to a command who was not urged by many Republicans and opposed by none. It was so as to McClellan. He was first brought forward by the Republican governor of Ohio, and claimed and contended for at the same time by the Republican governor of Pennsylvania. I received recommendations from the Republican delegations in Congress, and I believe every one of them recommended a majority of Democrats. But, after all many Republicans were appointed; and I mean no disparagement to them when I say I do not see that their superiority of success has been so

marked as to throw great suspicion on the good faith of those who are not Republicans.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN

A military order of this period gives an excellent example of the deep reverence of attitude which is not always attributed to Lincoln.

#### ORDER FOR SABBATH OBSERVANCE

[November 15, 1862]

The President, commander-in-chief of the army and navy, desires and enjoins the orderly observance of the Sabbath by the officers and men in the military and naval service. The importance for man and beast of the prescribed weekly rest, the sacred rights of Christian soldiers and sailors, a becoming deference to the best sentiment of a Christian people, and a due regard for the Divine Will, demand that Sunday labor in the army and navy be reduced to the measure of strict necessity. The discipline and character of the national forces should not suffer, nor the cause they defend be imperiled, by the profanation of the day or name of the Most High. "At this time of public distress"—adopting the words of Washington in 1776—"men may find enough to do in the service of God and their country without abandoning themselves to vice and immorality." The first general order issued by the Father of his Country after the Declaration of Independence indicates the spirit in which our institutions were founded and should ever be defended. "The General hopes and trusts that every officer and man will endeavor to live and act as becomes a Christian soldier, defending the dearest rights and liberties of his country."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

*Official:* E. D. Townsend, Assistant Adjutant General

In November General N. P. Banks was placed in command of an expedition to go to New Orleans by sea. He was dilatory, and Lincoln wrote him this characteristic letter:

*TO GENERAL N. P. BANKS*

Executive Mansion,

Washington, November 22, 1862

MY DEAR GENERAL BANKS: Early last week you left me in high hope with your assurance that you would be off with your expedition at the end of that week, or early in this. It is now the end of this, and I have just been overwhelmed and confounded with the sight of a requisition made by you which, I am assured, cannot be filled and got off within an hour short of two months. I inclose you a copy of the requisition, in some hope that it is not genuine—that you have never seen it. My dear General, this expanding and piling up of impedimenta has been, so far, almost our ruin, and will be our final ruin if it is not abandoned. If you had the articles of this requisition upon the wharf, with the necessary animals to make them of any use, and forage for the animals, you could not get vessels together in two weeks to carry the whole, to say nothing of your twenty thousand men; and, having the vessels, you could not put the cargoes aboard in two weeks more. And, after all, where you are going you have no use for them. When you parted with me you had no such idea in your mind. I know you had not, or you could not have expected to be off so soon as you said. You must get back to something like the plan you had then, or your expedition is a failure before you start. You must be off before Congress meets. You would be better off anywhere, and especially where you are going, for not having a thousand wagons doing nothing but hauling forage to feed the animals that draw them, and taking at least two thousand men to care for the wagons and animals, who otherwise might be two thousand good soldiers.

Now, dear General, do not think this is an ill-natured letter; it is the very reverse. The simple publication of this requisition would ruin you.

Very truly your friend,

A. LINCOLN

Carl Schurz was not convinced or silenced by Lincoln's reply to his first letter, and on November 20 he replied with another, in which he reiterated his former arguments. Lincoln's reply is remarkably terse and effective.

*TO GENERAL CARL SCHURZ*

Executive Mansion,

Washington, November 24, 1862

General Carl Schurz.

MY DEAR SIR: I have just received and read your letter of the 20th. The purport of it is that we lost the late elections and the administration is failing because the war is unsuccessful, and that I must not flatter myself that I am not justly to blame for it. I certainly know that if the war fails, the administration fails, and that I will be blamed for it, whether I deserve it or not. And I ought to be blamed if I could do better. You think I could do better; therefore you blame me already. I think I could not do better; therefore I blame you for blaming me. I understand you now to be willing to accept the help of men who are not Republicans, provided they have "heart in it." Agreed. I want no others. But who is to be the judge of hearts, or of "heart in it"? If I must discard my own judgment and take yours, I must also take that of others; and by the time I should reject all I should be advised to reject, I should have none left, Republicans or others—not even yourself. For be assured, my dear sir, there are men who have "heart in it" that think you are performing your part as poorly as you think I am performing mine. I certainly have been dissatisfied with the slowness of Buell and McClellan; but before I relieved them I had great

fears I should not find successors to them who would do better; and I am sorry to add that I have seen little since to relieve those fears.

I do not clearly see the prospect of any more rapid movements. I fear we shall at last find out that the difficulty is in our case rather than in particular generals. I wish to disparage no one—certainly not those who sympathize with me; but I must say I need success more than I need sympathy, and that I have not seen the so much greater evidence of getting success from my sympathizers than from those who are denounced as the contrary. It does seem to me that in the field the two classes have been very much alike in what they have done and what they have failed to do. In sealing their faith with their blood, Baker and Lyon and Bohlen and Richardson, Republicans, did all that men could do; but did they any more than Kearny and Stevens and Reno and Mansfield, none of whom were Republicans, and some at least of whom have been bitterly and repeatedly denounced to me as secession sympathizers? I will not perform the ungrateful task of comparing cases of failure.

In answer to your question, "Has it not been publicly stated in the newspapers, and apparently proved as a fact, that from the commencement of the war the enemy was continually supplied with information by some of the confidential subordinates of as important an officer as Adjutant-General Thomas?" I must say "No," as far as my knowledge extends. And I add that if you can give any tangible evidence upon the subject, I will thank you to come to this city and do so.

Very truly your friend,

A. LINCOLN

In his annual message to Congress of 1862, Lincoln again brought up the question of compensated emancipation in an even more advanced form, and again urged the colonization of the freedmen. The message is notable for the beauty and elevation of its concluding paragraph.

*EXTRACT FROM ANNUAL MESSAGE TO CONGRESS*

[December 1, 1862]

FELLOW-CITIZENS OF THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES: Since your last annual assembling, another year of health and bountiful harvests has passed; and while it has not pleased the Almighty to bless us with a return of peace, we can but press on, guided by the best light He gives us, trusting that in His own good time and wise way, all will yet be well.

The correspondence, touching foreign affairs, which has taken place during the last year, is herewith submitted, in virtual compliance with a request to that effect made by the House of Representatives near the close of the last session of Congress.

If the condition of our relations with other nations is less gratifying than it has usually been at former periods, it is certainly more satisfactory than a nation so unhappily distracted as we are, might reasonably have apprehended. In the month of June last, there were some grounds to expect that the maritime powers, which, at the beginning of our domestic difficulties, so unwisely and unnecessarily, as we think, recognized the insurgents as a belligerent, would soon recede from that position, which has proved only less injurious to themselves than to our own country. But the temporary reverses which afterward befell the national arms, and which were exaggerated by our own disloyal citizens abroad, have hitherto delayed that act of simple justice.

On the 22d day of September last a proclamation was issued by the Executive, a copy of which is herewith submitted. In accordance with the purpose expressed in the second paragraph of that paper, I now respectfully recall your attention to what may be called "compensated emancipation."

A nation may be said to consist of its territory, its people, and its laws. The territory is the only part

which is of certain durability. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth forever." \* It is of the first importance to duly consider and estimate this ever-enduring part. That portion of the earth's surface which is owned and inhabited by the people of the United States is well adapted to be the home of one national family, and it is not well adapted for two or more. Its vast extent and its variety of climate and productions are of advantage in this age for one people, whatever they might have been in former ages. Steam, telegraphs, and intelligence have brought these to be an advantageous combination for one united people.

In the Inaugural Address I briefly pointed out the total inadequacy of disunion as a remedy for the differences between the people of the two sections. I did so in language which I cannot improve and which, therefore, I beg to repeat:

"One section of our country believes slavery is right and ought to be extended, while the other believes it is wrong and ought not to be extended. This is the only substantial dispute. The fugitive-slave cause of the Constitution and the law for the suppression of the foreign slave-trade are each as well enforced, perhaps, as any law can ever be in a community where the moral sense of the people imperfectly supports the law itself. The great body of the people abide by the dry legal obligation in both cases, and a few break over in each. This, I think, cannot be perfectly cured; and it would be worse in both cases after the separation of the sections than before. The foreign slave-trade, now imperfectly suppressed, would be ultimately revived without restriction in one section; while fugitive slaves, now only partially surrendered, would not be surrendered at all by the other.

"Physically speaking, we cannot separate. We cannot remove our respective sections from each other, nor build

\* Ecclesiastes, i, 4.

an impassable wall between them. A husband and wife may be divorced and go out of the presence and beyond the reach of each other; but the different parts of our country cannot do this. They cannot but remain face to face; and intercourse, either amicable or hostile, must continue between them. Is it possible, then, to make that intercourse more advantageous or more satisfactory after separation than before? Can aliens make treaties easier than friends can make laws? Can treaties be more faithfully enforced between aliens than laws can among friends? Suppose you go to war, you cannot fight always; and when, after much loss on both sides and no gain on either, you cease fighting, the identical old questions as to terms of intercourse are again upon you."

There is no line, straight or crooked, suitable for a national boundary upon which to divide. Trace through, from east to west, upon the line between the free and slave country, and we shall find a little more than one-third of its length are rivers, easy to be crossed, and populated, or soon to be populated, thickly upon both sides; while nearly all its remaining length are merely surveyors' lines, over which people may walk back and forth without any consciousness of their presence. No part of this line can be made any more difficult to pass, by writing it down on paper or parchment as a national boundary. The fact of separation, if it comes, gives up, on the part of the seceding section, the fugitive-slave clause, along with all other constitutional obligations upon the section seceded from, while I should expect no treaty stipulation would be ever made to take its place.

But there is another difficulty. The great interior region bounded east by the Alleghenies, north by the British dominions, west by the Rocky Mountains, and south by the line along which the culture of corn and cotton meets, and which includes part of Virginia, part of Tennessee, all of Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan,



Wisconsin, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Minnesota, and the Territories of Dakota, Nebraska, and part of Colorado, already has above ten millions of people, and will have fifty millions within fifty years, if not prevented by any political folly or mistake. It contains more than one-third of the country owned by the United States—certainly more than one million of square miles. Once half as populous as Massachusetts already is, it would have more than seventy-five millions of people. A glance at the map shows that, territorially speaking, it is the great body of the republic. The other parts are but marginal borders to it, the magnificent region sloping west from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific being the deepest, and also the richest, in undeveloped resources. In the production of provisions, grains, grasses, and all which proceed from them, this great interior region is naturally one of the most important in the world. Ascertain from the statistics the small proportion of the region which has, as yet, been brought into cultivation, and also the large and rapidly increasing amount of its products, and we shall be overwhelmed with the magnitude of the prospect presented. And yet this region has no seacoast, touches no ocean anywhere. As part of one nation, its people now find, and may forever find, their way to Europe by New York, to South America and Africa by New Orleans, and to Asia by San Francisco. But separate our common country into two nations, as designed by the present rebellion, and every man of this great interior region is thereby cut off from some one or more of the outlets—not perhaps by a physical barrier, but by embarrassing and onerous trade regulations.

And this is true, wherever a dividing or boundary line may be fixed. Place it between the now free and slave country, or place it south of Kentucky, or north of Ohio, and still the truth remains that none south of it can trade to any port or place north of it, except upon terms dictated by a government foreign to them. These

outlets, east, west, and south, are indispensable to the well-being of the people inhabiting, and to inhabit, this vast interior region. Which of the three may be the best, is no proper question. All are better than either; and all of right belong to that people and their successors forever. True to themselves, they will not ask where a line of separation shall be, but will vow rather that there shall be no such line. Nor are the marginal regions less interested in these communications to and through them to the great outside world. They too, and each of them, must have access to this Egypt\* of the west, without paying toll at the crossing of any national boundary.

Our national strife springs not from our permanent part, not from the land we inhabit, not from our national homestead. There is no possible severing of this but would multiply and not mitigate evils among us. In all its adaptations and aptitudes it demands union and abhors separation. In fact it would ere long force reunion, however much of blood and treasure the separation might have cost.

Our strife pertains to ourselves—to the passing generations of men; and it cannot without convulsion be hushed forever with the passing of one generation.

In this view I recommend the adoption of the following resolution and articles amendatory to the Constitution of the United States:

“Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled (two-thirds of both houses concurring), That the following articles be proposed to the legislatures (or conventions) of the several states as amendments to the Constitution of the United States, all or any of which articles when ratified by three-fourths of the said

\* Egypt was the granary of the ancient eastern world. Lincoln is of course referring to the great grain-producing West.

legislatures (or conventions) to be valid as part or parts of the said Constitution, viz.:

“Article —

“Every state wherein slavery now exists which shall abolish the same therein at any time or times before the first day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand and nine hundred, shall receive compensation from the United States as follows, to wit:

“The President of the United States shall deliver to every such state bonds of the United States, bearing interest at the rate of — per cent per annum, to an amount equal to the aggregate sum of ———, for each slave shown to have been therein by the eighth census of the United States, said bonds to be delivered to such state by installments, or in one parcel at the completion of the abolishment, according as the same shall have been gradual or at one time within such state; and interest shall begin to run upon any such bond only from the proper time of its delivery as aforesaid. Any state having received bonds as aforesaid, and afterward reintroducing or tolerating slavery therein, shall refund to the United States the bonds so received, or the value thereof, and all interest paid thereon.

“Article —

“All slaves who shall have enjoyed actual freedom by the chances of the war at any time before the end of the rebellion, shall be forever free; but all owners of such who shall not have been disloyal shall be compensated for them at the same rates as are provided for states adopting abolishment of slavery, but in such way that no slave shall be twice accounted for.

“Article —

“Congress may appropriate money and otherwise provide for colonizing free colored persons, with their own consent, at any place or places without the United States.”

I beg indulgence to discuss these proposed articles at some length. Without slavery the rebellion could never have existed; without slavery it could not continue.

Among the friends of the Union there is great diversity of sentiment and of policy in regard to slavery and the African race amongst us. Some would perpetuate slavery; some would abolish it suddenly, and without compensation; some would abolish it gradually and with compensation; some would remove the freed people from us, and some would retain them with us; and there are yet other minor diversities. Because of these diversities we waste much strength in struggles among ourselves. By mutual concession we should harmonize and act together. This would be compromise; but it would be compromise among the friends, and not with the enemies, of the Union. These articles are intended to embody a plan of such mutual concessions. If the plan shall be adopted, it is assumed that emancipation will follow at least in several of the states.

As to the first article, the main points are: first, the emancipation; secondly, the length of time for consummating it—thirty-seven years; and, thirdly, the compensation.

The emancipation will be unsatisfactory to the advocates of perpetual slavery; but the length of time should greatly mitigate their dissatisfaction. The time spares both races from the evils of sudden derangement—in fact, from the necessity of any derangement; while most of those whose habitual course of thought will be disturbed by the measure will have passed away before its consummation. They will never see it. Another class will hail the prospect of emancipation, but will deprecate the length of time. They will feel that it gives too little to the now living slaves. But it really gives them much. It saves them from the vagrant destitution which must largely attend immediate emancipation in localities where their numbers are very great;

and it gives the inspiring assurance that their posterity shall be free forever. The plan leaves to each state choosing to act under it to abolish slavery now, or at the end of the century, or at any intermediate time, or by degrees extending over the whole or any part of the period; and it obliges no two states to proceed alike. It also provides for compensation, and generally the mode of making it. This, it would seem, must further mitigate the dissatisfaction of those who favor perpetual slavery, and especially of those who are to receive the compensation. Doubtless some of those who are to pay, and not to receive, will object. Yet the measure is both just and economical. In a certain sense the liberation of slaves is the destruction of property—property acquired by descent or by purchase, the same as any other property. It is no less true for having been often said, that the people of the South are not more responsible for the original introduction of this property than are the people of the North; and when it is remembered how unhesitatingly we all use cotton and sugar and share the profits of dealing in them, it may not be quite safe to say that the South has been more responsible than the North for its continuance. If, then, for a common object this property is to be sacrificed, is it not just that it be done at a common charge?

And if, with less money, or money more easily paid, we can preserve the benefits of the Union by this means than we can by the war alone, is it not also economical to do it? Let us consider it, then. Let us ascertain the sum we have expended in the war since compensated emancipation was proposed last March, and consider whether, if that measure had been promptly accepted by even some of the slave states, the same sum would not have done more to close the war than has been otherwise done. If so, the measure would save money, and in that view would be a prudent and economical measure. Certainly it is not so easy to pay something as it is to

pay nothing; but it is easier to pay a large sum than it is to pay a larger one. And it is easier to pay any sum when we are able, than it is to pay it before we are able. The war requires large sums, and requires them at once. The aggregate sum necessary for compensated emancipation of course would be large. But it would require no ready cash, nor the bonds even, any faster than the emancipation progresses. This might not, and probably would not, close before the end of the thirty-seven years. At that time we shall probably have 100,000,000 of the people to share the burden, instead of 31,000,000 as now. And not only so, but the increase of our population may be expected to continue for a long time after that period, as rapidly as before, because our territory will not have become full. I do not state this inconsiderately. At the same ratio of increase which we have maintained, on an average, from our first national census in 1790 until that of 1860, we should in 1900 have a population of 103,208,415. And why may we not continue that ratio far beyond that period? Our abundant room—our broad national homestead—is our ample resource. Were our territory as limited as are the British Isles, very certainly our population could not expand as stated. Instead of receiving the foreign-born as now, we should be compelled to send part of the native-born away. But such is not our condition. We have 2,963,000 square miles. Europe has 3,800,000, with a population averaging  $73\frac{1}{3}$  persons to the square mile. Why may not our country, at the same time, average as many? Is it less fertile? Has it more waste surface, by mountains, rivers, lakes, deserts, or other causes? Is it inferior to Europe in any natural advantage? If, then, we are at some time to be as populous as Europe, how soon? As to when this may be, we can judge by the past and the present; as to when it will be, if ever, depends much on whether we maintain the Union. Several of our states are already above the average of

Europe— $73\frac{1}{3}$  to the square mile. Massachusetts has 157; Rhode Island, 133; Connecticut, 99; New York and New Jersey, each 80. Also two other great states, Pennsylvania and Ohio, are not far below, the former having 63 and the latter 59. The states already above the European average, except New York, have increased in as rapid a ratio since passing that point as ever before, while no one of them is equal to some other parts of our country in natural capacity for sustaining a dense population.

Taking the nation in the aggregate, we find its population and ratio of increase for the several decennial periods to be as follows:

1790.....	3,929,827			
1800.....	5,305,937	35.02	per cent	ratio of increase
1810.....	7,239,814	36.45	“	“
1820.....	9,638,131	33.13	“	“
1830.....	12,866,020	33.49	“	“
1840.....	17,069,453	32.67	“	“
1850.....	23,191,876	35.87	“	“
1860.....	31,443,790	35.58	“	“

This shows an average decennial increase of 34.60 per cent in population through the seventy years from our first to our last census yet taken. It is seen that the ratio of increase at no one of these seven periods is either two per cent below or two per cent above the average, thus showing how inflexible, and consequently how reliable, the law of increase in our case is. Assuming that it will continue, gives the following results:

1870.....	42,323,341
1880.....	56,967,216
1890.....	76,677,872
1900.....	103,208,415
1910.....	138,918,526
1920.....	186,984,335

These figures show that our country may be as populous as Europe now is at some point between 1920 and 1930—say about 1925—our territory, at  $73\frac{1}{3}$  persons to the square mile, being of capacity to contain 217,186,000.\*

And we will reach this, too, if we do not ourselves relinquish the chance by the folly and evils of disunion, or by long and exhausting war springing from the only great element of national discord among us. While it cannot be foreseen exactly how much one huge example of secession, breeding lesser ones indefinitely, would retard population, civilization, and prosperity, no one can doubt that the extent of it would be very great and injurious.

The proposed emancipation would shorten the war, perpetuate peace, insure this increase of population, and proportionately the wealth of the country. With these, we should pay all the emancipation would cost, together with our other debt, easier than we should pay our other debt without it. If we had allowed our old national debt to run at six per cent per annum, simple interest, from the end of our Revolutionary struggle until today, without paying anything on either principle or interest, each man of us would owe less upon that debt now than each man owed upon it then; and this because our increase of men, through the whole period, has been greater than six per cent—has run faster than the interest upon the debt. Thus, time alone relieves a debtor nation, so long as its population increases faster than unpaid interest accumulates on its debt.

This fact would be no excuse for delaying payment of what is justly due; but it shows the great importance of time in this connection—the great advantage of a policy by which we shall not have to pay, until we number a

\* Lincoln again overestimated the future growth of population in the United States. The actual figures have been:

1870.....	38,818,449	1900.....	76,303,387
1880.....	50,155,783	1910.....	91,972,266
1890.....	63,069,756	1920.....	105,683,108



hundred millions, what by a different policy we would have to pay now, when we number but thirty-one millions. In a word, it shows that a dollar will be much harder to pay for the war than will be a dollar for emancipation on the proposed plan. And then the latter will cost no blood, no precious life. It will be a saving of both.

As to the second article, I think it would be impracticable to return to bondage the class of persons therein contemplated. Some of them doubtless, in the property sense, belong to loyal owners; and hence provision is made in this article for compensating such.

The third article relates to the future of the freed people. It does not oblige, but merely authorizes, Congress to aid in colonizing such as may consent. This ought not to be regarded as objectionable, on the one hand or on the other, insomuch as it comes to nothing unless by the mutual consent of the people to be deported, and the American voters through their representatives in Congress.

I cannot make it better known than it already is, that I strongly favor colonization. And yet I wish to say there is an objection urged against free colored persons remaining in the country which is largely imaginary, if not sometimes malicious.

It is insisted that their presence would injure and displace white labor and white laborers. If there ever could be a proper time for mere catch arguments, that time surely is not now. In times like the present, men should utter nothing for which they would not willingly be responsible through time and in eternity. Is it true, then, that colored people can displace any more white labor by being free than by remaining slaves? If they stay in their old places, they jostle no white laborers; if they leave their old places, they leave them open to white laborers. Logically, there is neither more nor less of it. Emancipation, even without deportation,

would probably enhance the wages of white labor, and very surely would not reduce them. Thus, the customary amount of labor would still have to be performed; the freed people would surely not do more than their old proportion of it, and very probably for a time would do less, leaving an increased part to white laborers, bringing their labor into greater demand, and consequently enhancing the wages of it. With deportation, even to a limited extent, enhanced wages to white labor is mathematically certain. Labor is like any other commodity in the market—increase the demand for it, and you increase the price of it. Reduce the supply of black labor by colonizing the black laborer out of the country, and by precisely so much you increase the demand for, and wages of, white labor.

But it is dreaded that the freed people will swarm forth and cover the whole land? Are they not already in the land? Will liberation make them any more numerous? Equally distributed among the whites of the whole country, and there would be but one colored to seven whites. Could the one in any way greatly disturb the seven? There are many communities now having more than one free colored person to seven whites, and this without any apparent consciousness of evil from it. The District of Columbia, and the states of Maryland and Delaware, are all in this condition. The District has more than one free colored to six whites; and yet in its frequent petitions to Congress I believe it has never presented the presence of free colored persons as one of its grievances. But why should emancipation South send the free people North? People of any color seldom run unless there be something to run from. Heretofore colored people, to some extent, have fled North from bondage; and now, perhaps, from both bondage and destitution. But if gradual emancipation and deportation be adopted, they will have neither to flee from. Their old masters will give them wages at

least until new laborers can be procured; and the freedmen, in turn, will gladly give their labor for the wages till new homes can be found for them in congenial climes and with people of their own blood and race. This proposition can be trusted on the mutual interests involved. And, in any event, cannot the North decide for itself whether to receive them?

Again, as practice proves more than theory, in any case, has there been any irruption of colored people northward because of the abolishment of slavery in this District last spring?

What I have said of the proportion of free colored persons to the whites in the District is from the census of 1860, having no reference to persons called contrabands, nor to those made free by the acts of Congress abolishing slavery there.

The plan consisting of these articles is recommended, not but that a restoration of the national authority would be accepted without its adoption.

Nor will the war, nor proceedings under the proclamation of September 22, 1862, be stayed because of the recommendation of this plan. Its timely adoption, I doubt not, would bring restoration, and thereby stay both.

And, notwithstanding this plan, the recommendation that Congress provide by law for compensating any state which may adopt emancipation before this plan shall have been acted upon, is hereby earnestly renewed. Such would be only an advance part of the plan, and the same arguments apply to both.

This plan is recommended as a means, not in exclusion of, but additional to, all others for restoring and preserving the national authority throughout the Union. The subject is presented exclusively in its economical aspect. The plan would, I am confident, secure peace more speedily, and maintain it more permanently, than can be done by force alone; while all it would cost, con-

sidering amounts, and manner of payment, and times of payment, would be easier paid than will be the additional cost of the war if we rely solely upon force. It is much—very much—that it would cost no blood at all.

The plan is proposed as permanent constitutional law. It cannot become such without the concurrence of, first, two-thirds of Congress and, afterward, three-fourths of the states. The requisite three-fourths of the states will necessarily include seven of the slave states. Their concurrence, if obtained, will give assurance of their severally adopting emancipation at no very distant day upon the new constitutional terms. This assurance would end the struggle now, and save the Union forever.

I do not forget the gravity which should characterize a paper addressed to the Congress of the nation by the Chief Magistrate of the nation. Nor do I forget that some of you are my seniors, nor that many of you have more experience than I in the conduct of public affairs. Yet I trust that in view of the great responsibility resting upon me, you will perceive no want of respect to yourselves in any undue earnestness I may seem to display.

Is it doubted, then, that the plan I propose, if adopted, would shorten the war, and thus lessen its expenditure of money and of blood? Is it doubted that it would restore the national authority and national prosperity, and perpetuate both indefinitely? Is it doubted that we here—Congress and Executive—can secure its adoption? Will not the good people respond to a united and earnest appeal from us? Can we, can they, by any other means so certainly or so speedily assure these vital objects? We can succeed only by concert. It is not “Can any of us imagine better?” but, “Can we all do better?” Object whatsoever is possible, still the question occurs, “Can we do better?” The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The

occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.

Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance or insignificance can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation. We say we are for the Union. The world will not forget that we say this. We know how to save the Union. The world knows we do know how to save it. We—even we here—hold the power and bear the responsibility. In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free—honorable alike in what we give and what we preserve. We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last, best hope of earth. Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just—a way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud, and God must forever bless.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

A group of radical leaders in the Senate in December, with the full knowledge of Secretary Chase, demanded the resignation of Secretary Seward, whom Chase disliked and opposed. Seward at once placed his resignation in Lincoln's hands. Lincoln did not want to lose either officer, but he did not want to appear to lean to either side. He and his cabinet, Seward being absent, met the group of senators, and Chase was forced into a most uncomfortable and humiliating position. He offered to resign, holding the letter closely in his hands as he did so. To his surprise Lincoln held out his hand and took it. He exclaimed a few moments later to one of his secretaries, "I can ride now, for I have a pumpkin in each end of the sack." He then wrote the following letter, which he sent to both men:

TO WILLIAM H. SEWARD AND SALMON P. CHASE

Executive Mansion,

Washington, December 20, 1862

Hon. William H. Seward and Hon. Salmon P. Chase.

GENTLEMEN: You have respectively tendered me your resignations as Secretary of State and Secretary of the Treasury of the United States. I am apprised of the circumstances which may render this course personally desirable to each of you; but after most anxious consideration my deliberate judgment is that the public interest does not admit of it. I therefore have to request that you will resume the duties of your departments respectively.

Your obedient servant,

A. LINCOLN

On January 1, 1863, in spite of a widespread belief that he would not do so, Lincoln issued the promised Emancipation Proclamation.

### EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

[January 1, 1863]

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

“That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any state, or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to

repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

“That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the states and parts of states, if any, in which the people thereof respectively shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any state, or the people thereof, shall on that day be in good faith represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such state shall have participated, shall in the absence of strong countervailing testimony be deemed conclusive evidence that such state and the people thereof are not then in rebellion against the United States.”

Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the United States, in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do, publicly proclaimed for the full period of 100 days from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the states and parts of states wherein the people thereof, respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana (except the parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terre Bonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the city of New Orleans), Mississipi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkeley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess

Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth), and which excepted parts are for the present left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated states and parts of states are, and henceforward shall be, free; and that the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defense; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known that such persons of suitable condition will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity,\* I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness, etc.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

*By the President:* WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State.†

The opposition to emancipation did not cease, as the following letter to his Springfield friend, General McClelland, shows:

\* Upon military necessity. This phrase was suggested by Secretary Chase as making clear the authority upon which the proclamation rested.

† As a military document this should have been countersigned by Secretary Stanton. Lincoln said Seward's signing it was the result of a compromise. It was probably done to satisfy those who contended that he had the right to issue the proclamation as President as well as in the capacity of commander-in-chief.



TO GENERAL JOHN A. McCLEARNAND

Executive Mansion,  
Washington, January 8, 1863

Major-General McClelland.

MY DEAR SIR: Your interesting communication by the hand of Major Scates is received. I never did ask more, nor ever was willing to accept less, than for all the states, and the people thereof, to take and hold their places and their rights in the Union, under the Constitution of the United States. For this alone have I felt authorized to struggle, and I seek neither more nor less now. Still, to use a coarse but an expressive figure, "broken eggs cannot be mended." I have issued the Emancipation Proclamation, and I cannot retract it. After the commencement of hostilities, I struggled nearly a year and a half to get along without touching the "institution"; and when finally I conditionally determined to touch it, I gave a hundred days' fair notice of my purpose to all the states and people, within which time they could have turned it wholly aside by simply again becoming good citizens of the United States.

They chose to disregard it, and I made the peremptory proclamation on what appeared to me to be a military necessity. And being made, it must stand. As to the states not included in it, of course they can have their rights in the Union as of old. Even the people of the states included, if they choose, need not to be hurt by it. Let them adopt systems of apprenticeship for the colored people, conforming substantially to the most approved plans of gradual emancipation; and with the aid they can have from the General Government they may be nearly as well off, in this respect, as if the present trouble had not occurred, and much better off than they can possibly be if the contest continues persistently.

As to any dread of my having a "purpose to enslave or exterminate the whites of the South," I can scarcely believe that such dread exists. It is too absurd. I

believe you can be my personal witness that no man is less to be dreaded for undue severity in any case.

If the friends you mention really wish to have peace upon the old terms, they should act at once. Every day makes the case more difficult.

They can so act with entire safety, so far as I am concerned.

I think you had better not make this letter public; but you may rely confidently on my standing by whatever I have said in it. Please write me if anything more comes to light.

Yours very truly,

A. LINCOLN

In the English cotton manufacturing sections, the war, by cutting off the supply of cotton, had caused great distress. Thousands were without employment, and suffering was widespread. It was among this very group, however, that the North found its staunchest English friends. On account of their hatred of slavery, they bitterly opposed any action on the part of the British government favorable to the South. At Manchester, one of the centers of the cotton industry, a mass meeting of six thousand workingmen was held on New Year's Eve to celebrate the Emancipation Proclamation. An address and resolutions were adopted and sent to Lincoln, who thus answered it:

*REPLY TO THE WORKINGMEN OF MANCHESTER*

Executive Mansion,

Washington, January 19, 1863

TO THE WORKINGMEN OF MANCHESTER:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the address and resolutions which you sent me on the eve of the New Year. When I came, on the 4th of March, 1861, through a free and constitutional election, to preside in the government of the United States, the country was found at the verge of civil war. Whatever might have been the cause, or whosoever the fault,

one duty paramount to all others was before me; namely, to maintain and preserve at once the Constitution and the integrity of the Federal Republic. A conscientious purpose to perform this duty is the key to all the measures of administration which have been, and to all which will hereafter be, pursued. Under our frame of government and my official oath, I could not depart from this purpose if I would. It is not always in the power of governments to enlarge or restrict the scope of moral results which follow the policies that they may deem it necessary for the public safety from time to time to adopt.

I have understood well that the duty of self-preservation rests solely with the American people; but I have at the same time been aware that favor or disfavor of foreign nations might have a material influence in enlarging or prolonging the struggle with disloyal men in which the country is engaged. A fair examination of history has served to authorize a belief that the past actions and influences of the United States were generally regarded as having been beneficial toward mankind. I have therefore reckoned upon the forbearance of nations. Circumstances, to some of which you kindly allude, induce me especially to expect that if justice and good faith should be practiced by the United States, they would encounter no hostile influence on the part of Great Britain. It is now a pleasant duty to acknowledge the demonstration you have given of your desire that a spirit of amity and peace toward this country may prevail in the councils of your queen, who is respected and esteemed in your own country only more than she is by the kindred nation which has its home on this side of the Atlantic.

I know and deeply deplore the sufferings which the workingmen at Manchester, and in all Europe, are called to endure in this crisis. It has been often and studiously represented that the attempt to overthrow this govern-

ment, which was built upon the foundation of human rights, and to substitute for it one which should rest exclusively on the basis of human slavery, was likely to obtain the favor of Europe. Through the action of our disloyal citizens, the workingmen of Europe have been subjected to severe trials, for the purpose of forcing their sanction to that attempt. Under the circumstances, I cannot but regard your decisive utterances upon the question as an instance of sublime Christian heroism, which has not been surpassed in any age or in any country. It is indeed an energetic and reinspiring assurance of the inherent power of truth, and of the ultimate and universal triumph of justice, humanity, and freedom. I do not doubt that the sentiments you have expressed will be sustained by your great nation; and, on the other hand, I have no hesitation in assuring you that they will excite admiration, esteem, and the most reciprocal feelings of friendship among the American people. I hail this interchange of sentiment, therefore, as an augury that whatever else may happen, whatever misfortune may befall your country or my own, the peace and friendship which now exist between the two nations will be, as it shall be my desire to make them, perpetual.

In November Lincoln removed General McClellan from command of the Army of the Potomac, replacing him with General Ambrose E. Burnside, who was crushingly defeated at Fredericksburg in December and was unable thereafter to restore the morale of his army. On January 25, Lincoln, over the protest of Secretary Stanton and General Halleck, ordered General Joseph Hooker to relieve General Burnside. Hooker had been a corps commander under McClellan and Burnside, and had been very open in his scathing criticism of both. The next day Lincoln followed the appointment with this remarkable letter:

## TO GENERAL JOSEPH HOOKER

Executive Mansion,  
Washington, D. C., January 26, 1863

Major-General Hooker.

GENERAL: I have placed you at the head of the Army of the Potomac. Of course I have done this upon what appear to me to be sufficient reasons, and yet I think it best for you to know that there are some things in regard to which I am not quite satisfied with you. I believe you to be a brave and skillful soldier, which of course I like. I also believe you do not mix politics with your profession, in which you are right. You have confidence in yourself, which is a valuable if not an indispensable quality. You are ambitious, which, within reasonable bounds, does good rather than harm; but I think that during General Burnside's command of the army you have taken counsel of your ambition and thwarted him as much as you could, in which you did a great wrong to the country and to a most meritorious and honorable brother officer. I have heard, in such a way as to believe it, of your recently saying that both the army and the government needed a dictator. Of course it was not for this, but in spite of it, that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain successes can set up dictators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship. The government will support you to the utmost of its ability, which is neither more nor less than it has done and will do for all commanders. I much fear that the spirit which you have aided to infuse into the army, of criticizing their commander and withholding confidence from him, will now turn upon you. I shall assist you as far as I can to put it down. Neither you nor Napoleon, if he were alive again, could get any good out of an army

while such a spirit prevails in it; and now beware of rashness. Beware of rashness, but with energy and sleepless vigilance go forward and give us victories.

Yours very truly,

A. LINCOLN

Stanton and Halleck had wanted the command of the Army of the Potomac given to a promising Western general, then in command of the Army of the Cumberland, William S. Rosecrans. This letter of Lincoln, notable for its frankness, combined with tact and patience, indicates that Lincoln was wise in declining to take their advice.

*TO GENERAL WILLIAM ROSECRANS*

Executive Mansion,

Washington, March 17, 1863

Major-General Rosecrans.

MY DEAR SIR: I have just received your telegram saying that the "Secretary of War telegraphed after the Battle of Stone River, 'Anything you and your command want you can have,'" and then specifying several things you have requested and have not received.

The promise of the Secretary, as you state it, is certainly pretty broad, nevertheless it accords with the feeling of the whole government here toward you. I know not a single enemy of yours here. Still the promise must have a reasonable construction. We know you will not purposely make an unreasonable request, nor persist in one after it shall appear to be such. Now, as to the matter of a paymaster, you desired one to be permanently attached to your army, and, as I understand, desired that Major Larned should be the man. This was denied you; and you seem to think it was denied partly to disoblige you and partly to disoblige Major Larned—the latter, as you suspect, at the instance of Paymaster-General Andrews. On the contrary, the Secretary of War assures me the request was refused on no

personal ground whatever, but because to grant it would derange, and substantially break up, the whole pay system as now organized, and so organized on very full consideration and sound reason, as believed. There is powerful temptation in money; and it was and is believed that nothing can prevent the paymasters speculating upon the soldiers but a system by which each is to pay certain regiments so soon after he has notice that he is to pay those particular regiments that he has no time or opportunity to lay plans for speculating upon them. This precaution is all lost if paymasters respectively are to serve permanently with the same regiments, and pay them over and over during the war. No special application of this has been intended to be made to Major Larned or to your army. And as to General Andrews, I have in another connection felt a little aggrieved at what seemed to be his implicit following the advice and suggestions of Major Larned—so ready are we all to cry out and ascribe motives when our own toes are pinched.

Now as to your request that your commission should date from December, 1861. Of course you expected to gain something by this; but you should remember that precisely so much as you should gain by it others would lose by it. If the thing you sought had been exclusively ours, we would have given it cheerfully; but, being the right of other men, we having a merely arbitrary power over it, the taking it from them and giving it to you became a more delicate matter and more deserving of consideration. Truth to speak, I do not appreciate this matter of rank on paper as you officers do. The world will not forget that you fought the Battle of Stone River, and it will never care a fig whether you rank General Grant on paper, or he so ranks you.

As to the appointment of an aide contrary to your wishes, I knew nothing of it until I received your dispatch; and the Secretary of War tells me he has known

nothing of it, but will trace it out. The examination of course will extend to the case of R. S. Thomas, whom you say you wish appointed.

And now be assured you wrong both yourself and us when you even suspect there is not the best disposition on the part of us all here to oblige you.

Yours very truly,

A. LINCOLN

The attitude of the New York state government was, of course, most important to the Union. Horatio Seymour, a War Democrat, had been elected governor in 1862. Lincoln wrote him this letter in the hope of establishing close relations with him.

TO GOVERNOR HORATIO SEYMOUR

[*Private and Confidential*]

Executive Mansion,

Washington, March 23, 1863

His Excellency Governor Seymour.

DEAR SIR: You and I are substantially strangers, and I write this chiefly that we may become better acquainted. I, for the time being, am at the head of a nation which is in great peril, and you are at the head of the greatest state of that nation. As to maintaining the nation's life and integrity, I assume and believe there cannot be a difference of purpose between you and me. If we should differ as to the means, it is important that such difference should be as small as possible; that it should not be enhanced by unjust suspicions on one side or the other. In the performance of my duty the cooperation of your state, as that of others, is needed—in fact, is indispensable. This alone is a sufficient reason why I should wish to be at a good understanding with you. Please write me at least as long a letter as this, of course saying in it just what you think fit.

Yours very truly,

A. LINCOLN



The following proclamation is notable for its expression of deep and reverent feeling, clothed in the most appropriate language.

*PROCLAMATION FOR A NATIONAL FAST DAY*

[March 30, 1863]

Whereas, the Senate of the United States, devoutly recognizing the supreme authority and just government of Almighty God in all the affairs of men and of nations, has by a resolution requested the President to designate and set apart a day for national prayer and humiliation:

And whereas, it is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God; to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord:

And insomuch as we know that, by His divine law, nations, like individuals, are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war which now desolates the land may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people? We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown; but we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of

our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us:

It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness:

Now, therefore, in compliance with the request, and fully concurring in the views, of the Senate, I do by this my proclamation designate and set apart Thursday, the 30th day of April, 1863, as a day of national humiliation, fasting, and prayer. And I do hereby request all the people to abstain on that day from their ordinary secular pursuits, and to unite at their several places of public worship and their respective homes in keeping the day holy to the Lord, and devoted to the humble discharge of the religious duties proper to that solemn occasion. All this being done in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the divine teachings, that the united cry of the nation will be heard on high, and answered with blessings no less than the pardon of our national sins, and the restoration of our now divided and suffering country to its former happy condition of unity and peace.

In witness, etc.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

By the President:

WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State

General Hooker learned little from Lincoln's first letter, and he showed little of the quality desired by Lincoln, who had constantly to urge him on. These two later communications give interesting views of Lincoln's hard common sense and of his opinions as to the proper military strategy.

*TO GENERAL JOSEPH HOOKER*

[Telegram]

Washington, June 5, 1863. 4 P. M.

MAJOR GENERAL HOOKER: Yours of today was received an hour ago. So much of professional military skill is requisite to answer it that I have turned the task over to General Halleck. He promises to perform it with his utmost care. I have but one idea which I think worth suggesting to you, and that is, in case you find Lee coming to the north of the Rappahannock, I would by no means cross to the south of it. If he should leave a rear force at Fredericksburg, tempting you to fall upon it, it would fight in entrenchments and have you at disadvantage, and so, man for man, worst you at that point, while his main force would in some way be getting an advantage of you northward. In one word, I would not take any risk of being entangled upon the river, like an ox jumped half over a fence and liable to be torn by dogs front and rear without a fair chance to gore one way or kick the other. If Lee would come to my side of the river, I would keep on the same side, and fight him or act on the defense, according as might be my estimate of his strength relatively to my own. But these are mere suggestions which I desire to be controlled by the judgment of yourself and General Halleck.

A. LINCOLN

*TO GENERAL JOSEPH HOOKER*

[Telegram]

Washington, June 10, 1863

MAJOR GENERAL HOOKER: Your long dispatch of today is just received. If left to me I would not go south of the Rappahannock upon Lee's moving north of it. If you had Richmond invested today, you would

not be able to take it in twenty days; meanwhile your communications, and with them your army, would be ruined. I think Lee's army, and not Richmond, is your true objective point. If he comes toward the upper Potomac, follow on his flank and on his inside track, shortening your lines while he lengthens his. Fight him, too, when opportunity offers. If he stays where he is, fret him and fret him.

A. LINCOLN

Another characteristic message to General Hooker follows:

*TO GENERAL JOSEPH HOOKER*

[Telegram]

Washington, June 14, 1863

MAJOR GENERAL HOOKER: So far as we can make out here, the enemy have Milroy surrounded at Winchester, and Tyler at Martinsburg. If they could hold out a few days, could you help them? If the head of Lee's army is at Martinsburg and the tail of it on the plank road between Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, the animal must be very slim somewhere. Could you not break him?

A. LINCOLN

The tide of the war turned in July, 1863, with the victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg. Lincoln's letter of acknowledgment to General U. S. Grant is characteristic.

*TO GENERAL U. S. GRANT*

Executive Mansion,  
Washington, July 13, 1863

Major General Grant.

MY DEAR GENERAL: I do not remember that you and I ever met personally. I write this now as a grateful acknowledgment for the almost inestimable service you

have done the country. I wish to say a word further. When you first reached the vicinity of Vicksburg, I thought you should do what you finally did—march the troops across the neck, run the batteries with the transports, and thus go below; and I never had any faith, except a general hope that you knew better than I, that the Yazoo Pass expedition and the like could succeed. When you got below and took Port Gibson, Grand Gulf, and vicinity, I thought you should go down the river and join General Banks, and when you turned northward, east of the Big Black, I feared it was a mistake. I now wish to make the personal acknowledgment that you were right and I was wrong.

Yours very truly,

A. LINCOLN

In August he wrote a note to James H. Hackett, a well-known actor, in which he expressed his preferences among the plays of Shakespeare.

*TO JAMES H. HACKETT*

Executive Mansion,

Washington, August 17, 1863

James H. Hackett, Esq.

MY DEAR SIR: Months ago I should have acknowledged the receipt of your book and accompanying kind note; and I now have to beg your pardon for not having done so.

For one of my age I have seen very little of the drama. The first presentation of Falstaff I ever saw was yours here, last winter or spring. Perhaps the best compliment I can pay is to say, as I truly can, I am very anxious to see it again. Some of Shakespeare's plays I have never read; while others I have gone over perhaps as frequently as any unprofessional reader.

Among the latter are "Lear," "Richard III," "Henry VIII," "Hamlet," and especially "Macbeth." I think nothing equals "Macbeth." It is wonderful.

Unlike you gentlemen of the profession, I think the soliloquy in "Hamlet" commencing "Oh, my offense is rank" surpasses that commencing "To be or not to be." But pardon this small attempt at criticism. I should like to hear you pronounce the opening speech of Richard III. Will you not soon visit Washington again? If you do, please call and let me make your personal acquaintance.

Yours truly,  
A. LINCOLN

In June, before the victories at Vicksburg and Gettysburg, a meeting had been held in Springfield to censure the administration and to discuss the possibility of seceding and establishing a Northwestern Confederacy. In August, James C. Conkling, a close friend of Lincoln's, invited him to come to Springfield to speak at a meeting of unconditional Union men to be held in the interest of "law and order and constitutional government." Lincoln replied with a rather remarkable argument which he called a "stump speech." It won instant approval from the whole country.

TO JAMES C. CONKLING

[*Private*]

War Department,  
Washington City, D. C., August 17, 1863

MY DEAR CONKLING: I cannot leave here now. Herewith is a letter instead. You are one of the best public readers. I have but one suggestion—read it very slowly. And now God bless you, and all good Union men.

Yours as ever,  
A. LINCOLN

## TO JAMES C. CONKLING

Executive Mansion,  
Washington, August 26, 1863

Hon. James C. Conkling.

MY DEAR SIR: Your letter inviting me to attend a mass meeting of unconditional Union men, to be held at the capital of Illinois on the 3d day of September, has been received. It would be very agreeable to me to thus meet my old friends at my own home, but I cannot just now be absent from here so long as a visit there would require.

The meeting is to be of all those who maintain unconditional devotion to the Union; and I am sure my old political friends will thank me for tendering, as I do, the nation's gratitude to those and other noble men whom no partisan malice or partisan hope can make false to the nation's life.

There are those who are dissatisfied with me. To such I would say: You desire peace, and you blame me that we do not have it. But how can we attain it? There are but three conceivable ways: First, to suppress the rebellion by force of arms. This I am trying to do. Are you for it? If you are, so far we are agreed. If you are not for it, a second way is to give up the Union. I am against this. Are you for it? If you are, you should say so plainly. If you are not for force, nor yet for dissolution, there only remains some imaginable compromise. I do not believe any compromise embracing the maintenance of the Union is now possible. All I learn leads to a directly opposite belief. The strength of the rebellion is its military, its army. That army dominates all the country and all the people within its range. Any offer of terms made by any man or men within that range, in opposition to that army, is simply nothing for the present, because such man or men have no power whatever to enforce their side of a compromise if one were made with them.

To illustrate: Suppose refugees from the South and peace men of the North get together in convention, and frame and proclaim a compromise embracing a restoration of the Union. In what way can that compromise be used to keep Lee's army out of Pennsylvania? Meade's army can keep Lee's army out of Pennsylvania, and, I think, can ultimately drive it out of existence. But no paper compromise to which the controllers of Lee's army are not agreed can at all affect that army. In an effort at such compromise we should waste time which the enemy would improve to our disadvantage; and that would be all. A compromise, to be effective, must be made either with those who control the rebel army, or with the people first liberated from the domination of that army by the success of our own army. Now, allow me to assure you that no word or intimation from that rebel army, or from any of the men controlling it, in relation to any peace compromise, has ever come to my knowledge or belief. All charges and insinuations to the contrary are deceptive and groundless. And I promise you that if any such proposition shall hereafter come, it shall not be rejected and kept a secret from you. I freely acknowledge myself the servant of the people, according to the bond of service—the United States Constitution—and that, as such, I am responsible to them.

But to be plain. You are dissatisfied with me about the negro. Quite likely there is a difference of opinion between you and myself upon that subject. I certainly wish that all men could be free, while I suppose you do not. Yet, I have neither adopted nor proposed any measure which is not consistent with even your view, provided you are for the Union. I suggested compensated emancipation, to which you replied you wished not to be taxed to buy negroes. But I had not asked you to be taxed to buy negroes, except in such way as to save you from greater taxation to save the Union exclusively by other means.



You dislike the Emancipation Proclamation, and perhaps would have it retracted. You say it is unconstitutional. I think differently. I think the Constitution invests its commander-in-chief with the law of war in time of war. The most that can be said—if so much—is that slaves are property. Is there—has there ever been—any question that, by the law of war, property, both of enemies and friends, may be taken when needed? And is it not needed whenever taking it helps us, or hurts the enemy? Armies, the world over, destroy enemies' property when they cannot use it; and even destroy their own to keep it from the enemy. Civilized belligerents do all in their power to help themselves or hurt the enemy, except a few things regarded as barbarous or cruel. Among the exceptions are the massacre of vanquished foes and noncombatants, male and female.

But the Proclamation, as law, either is valid or is not valid. If it is not valid, it needs no retraction. If it is valid, it cannot be retracted any more than the dead can be brought to life. Some of you profess to think its retraction would operate favorably for the Union. Why better after the retraction than before the issue? There was more than a year and a half of trial to suppress the rebellion before the proclamation issued; the last one hundred days of which passed under an explicit notice that it was coming, unless averted by those in revolt returning to their allegiance. The war has certainly progressed as favorably for us since the issue of the proclamation as before.

I know, as fully as one can know the opinions of others, that some of the commanders of our armies in the field, who have given us our most important successes, believe the emancipation policy and the use of the colored troops constitute the heaviest blow yet dealt to the rebellion, and that at least one of these important successes could not have been achieved when it was, but for the aid of black soldiers. Among the commanders holding these

views are some who have never had any affinity with what is called abolitionism, or with Republican party politics, but who hold them purely as military opinions. I submit these opinions as being entitled to some weight against the objections often urged that emancipation and arming the blacks are unwise as military measures, and were not adopted as such in good faith.

You say you will not fight to free negroes. Some of them seem willing to fight for you; but no matter. Fight you, then, exclusively, to save the Union. I issued the Proclamation on purpose to aid you in saving the Union. Whenever you shall have conquered all resistance to the Union, if I shall urge you to continue fighting, it will be an apt time then for you to declare you will not fight to free negroes.

I thought that in your struggle for the Union, to whatever extent the negroes should cease helping the enemy, to that extent it weakened the enemy in his resistance to you. Do you think differently? I thought that whatever negroes can be got to do as soldiers, leaves just so much less for white soldiers to do in saving the Union. Does it appear otherwise to you? But negroes, like other people, act upon motives. Why should they do anything for us if we will do nothing for them? If they stake their lives for us they must be prompted by the strongest motive, even the promise of freedom. And the promise, being made, must be kept.

The signs look better. The Father of Waters again goes unvexed to the sea. Thanks to the great Northwest for it. Nor yet wholly to them. Three hundred miles up they met New England, Empire, Keystone, and Jersey, hewing their way right and left. The sunny South, too, in more colors than one, also lent a hand. On the spot, their part of the history was jotted down in black and white. The job was a great national one, and let none be banned who bore an honorable part in

it. And while those who have cleared the great river may well be proud, even that is not all. It is hard to say that anything has been more bravely and well done than at Antietam, Murfreesboro, Gettysburg, and on many fields of lesser note. Nor must Uncle Sam's webfeet be forgotten. At all the watery margins they have been present. Not only on the deep sea, the broad bay, and the rapid river, but also up the narrow, muddy bayou, and wherever the ground was a little damp, they have been and made their tracks. Thanks to all: for the great republic—for the principle it lives by and keeps alive—for man's vast future—thanks to all.

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

Still, let us not be oversanguine of a speedy final triumph. Let us be quite sober. Let us diligently apply the means, never doubting that a just God, in His own good time, will give us the rightful result.

Yours very truly,

A. LINCOLN

Secretary Chase had never learned the lesson Seward had in regard to Lincoln and consequently was never satisfied with his official acts. The following is the reply of Lincoln to one of Chase's radical suggestions:

*TO SALMON P. CHASE*

[Draft of a Letter]

Executive Mansion,  
Washington, September 2, 1863

Hon. Salmon P. Chase.

MY DEAR SIR: Knowing your great anxiety that the Emancipation Proclamation shall now be applied to certain parts of Virginia and Louisiana which were exempted from it last January, I state briefly what appear to me to be difficulties in the way of such a step. The original proclamation has no constitutional or legal justification, except as a military measure. The exemptions were made because the military necessity did not apply to the exempted localities. Nor does that necessity apply to them now any more than it did then. If I take the step, must I not do so without the argument of military necessity, and so without any argument except the one that I think the measure politically expedient and morally right? Would I not thus give up all footing upon the Constitution or law? Would I not thus be in the boundless field of absolutism? Could this pass unnoticed or unresisted? Could it fail to be perceived that without any further stretch I might do the same in Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri, and even change any law in any state? Would not many of our own friends shrink away appalled? Would it not lose us the elections, and with them the very cause we seek to advance?

[A. LINCOLN]

The following proclamation is notable for its establishment of a precedent for a National Thanksgiving Day. Prior to this, it had been celebrated only after the proclamations of governors of some of the states:

*PROCLAMATION FOR THANKSGIVING*

[October 3, 1863]

The year that is drawing toward its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God.

In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign states to invite and provoke their aggressions, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere, except in the theater of military conflict; while that theater has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense have not arrested the plow, the shuttle, or the ship; the ax has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege, and the battlefield, and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom.

No human counsel hath devised, nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the most high God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should

be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American people. I do, therefore, invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a day of Thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens. And I recommend to them that, while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners, or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty hand to heal the wounds of the nation, and to restore it, as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes, to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility, and union.

In testimony, etc.

A. LINCOLN

By the President:

WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State

Hackett published the President's letter\* and the *New York Herald* took occasion to make a savage comment upon it, sneering at the President and ridiculing his taste. This was imitated by other papers. They hurt Lincoln considerably, but he wrote Hackett:

TO JAMES H. HACKETT

[Private]

Executive Mansion,

Washington, November 2, 1863

James H. Hackett.

MY DEAR SIR: Yours of October 22 is received, as also was in due course that of October 3. I look for-

\*See page 371.

ward with pleasure to the fulfillment of the promise made in the former.

Give yourself no uneasiness on the subject mentioned in that of the 22d.

My note to you I certainly did not expect to see in print; yet I have not been much shocked by the newspaper comments upon it. Those comments constitute a fair specimen of what has occurred to me through life. I have endured a great deal of ridicule without much malice; and have received a great deal of kindness, not quite free from ridicule. I am used to it.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN

Soon after the battle of Gettysburg it was determined to set aside a part of the battlefield for a national cemetery. Edward Everett, noted as a great orator, was invited to make the address, and on November 2, Lincoln was invited to "set apart these grounds to their sacred use by a few appropriate remarks."

Lincoln was so oppressed by his duties during the intervening time that he was unable to finish his address until he was on the way to Gettysburg, when he jotted down with a pencil part of the speech. Mary R. S. Andrews in "The Perfect Tribute" strikingly describes the occasion:

"At eleven o'clock on the morning of . . . November 19, 1863, a vast, silent multitude billowed like waves of the sea over what had been not long before the battlefield of Gettysburg. There were wounded soldiers there who had beaten their way four months before through a singing fire across these quiet fields, who had seen the men die who were buried here; there were troops, grave and responsible, who must soon go again into battle; there were the rank and file of an everyday American gathering in surging thousands; and above them all, on the open-air platform, there were the leaders of the land, the pilots who today lifted a hand from the wheel of the ship of state to salute the memory of those gone down in the storm. Most of the men in that group of honor are now passed over to the majority, but their names are not dead in American

history—great ghosts who walk still in the annals of their country, their flesh-and-blood faces were turned attentively that bright, still November afternoon toward the orator of the day, whose voice held the audience.”

Everett spoke for two hours, delivering a polished, able, and impressive oration of the type then admired in the United States. Nearly all the newspapers gave extended editorial comment to it the next day. Lincoln followed with the immortal words which scarcely affected the vast crowd except with a general feeling of disappointment. Everett alone seems to have seen the speech in the light that it has later been viewed. When read, it was received very differently and in time was recognized for the masterpiece that it really is.

### *THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS*

[Delivered at the dedication of the National Cemetery,  
November 19, 1863]

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war; testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here



dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

From the very beginning of the war Lincoln had pondered over the question of reconstruction. As has been seen, he took steps in the direction of reconstruction in 1862 when he appointed military governors for several Southern states where he thought there was sufficient Union sentiment to warrant it. Now, in a number of the seceded states, notably Louisiana, Arkansas, and Tennessee, the Union forces controlled enough territory to make an attempt at restoration really worth while.

He had two main reasons for his anxiety to get reconstruction started. One was his belief that the moral effect upon the rest of the South would be great enough to shorten the war. The other was his desire to get it under way before those in the North who desired to impose harsh terms could formulate a policy and gain any popular support.

On December 8, 1863, he issued a proclamation of amnesty and reconstruction, and on the same day, outlined his plan in his annual message to Congress.

*PROCLAMATION OF AMNESTY AND  
RECONSTRUCTION*

[December 8, 1863]

Whereas, in and by the Constitution of the United States, it is provided that the President "shall have power to grant reprieves and pardons for offenses against the United States, except in cases of impeachment"; and

Whereas a rebellion now exists whereby the loyal state governments of several states have for a long time been subverted, and many persons have committed, and are now guilty of, treason against the United States; and

Whereas, with reference to said rebellion and treason, laws have been enacted by Congress, declaring forfeitures and confiscation of property and liberation of slaves, all upon terms and conditions therein stated, and also declaring that the President was thereby authorized at any time thereafter, by proclamation, to extend to persons who may have participated in the existing rebellion, in any state or part thereof, pardon and amnesty, with such exceptions and at such times and on such conditions as he may deem expedient for the public welfare; and

Whereas the congressional declaration for limited and conditional pardon accords with well-established judicial exposition of the pardoning power; and

Whereas, with reference to said rebellion, the President of the United States has issued several proclamations, with provisions in regard to the liberation of slaves; and

Whereas it is now desired by some persons heretofore engaged in said rebellion to resume their allegiance to the United States, and to reinaugurate loyal state governments within and for their respective states; therefore

I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do proclaim, declare, and make known to all persons who have, directly or by implication, participated in the existing rebellion, except as hereinafter excepted, that a full pardon is hereby granted to them and each of them, with restoration of all rights of property, except as to slaves, and in property cases where rights of third parties shall have intervened, and upon the condition that every such person shall take and subscribe an oath, and thenceforward keep and maintain said oath inviolate; and which oath shall be registered for permanent preservation, and shall be of the tenor and effect following, to wit:

“I, . . . ., do solemnly swear, in presence of Almighty God, that I will henceforth faithfully support, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States, and the union of the states thereunder; and that I will, in like manner, abide by and faithfully support all acts of Congress passed during the existing rebellion with reference to slaves, so long and so far as not repealed, modified, or held void by Congress, or by decision of the Supreme Court; and that I will in like manner, abide by and faithfully support all proclamations of the President made during the existing rebellion having reference to slaves, so long and so far as not modified or declared void by decision of the Supreme Court. So help me God.”

The persons exempted from the benefits of the foregoing provisions are all who are, or shall have been civil or diplomatic officers or agents of the so-called Confederate Government; all who have left judicial stations under the United States to aid the rebellion; all who are or shall have been military or naval officers of said so-called Confederate Government above the rank of colonel in the army or of lieutenant in the navy; all who have left seats in the United States Congress to aid the rebellion; all who resigned commissions in the army or navy of the United States and afterward aided the rebellion; and all who have engaged in any way in treating colored persons, or white persons in charge of such, otherwise than lawfully as prisoners of war, and which persons may have been found in the United States service as soldiers, seamen, or in any other capacity.

And I do further proclaim, declare, and make known that whenever in any of the states of Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, and North Carolina, a number of persons, not less than one-tenth in number of the

votes cast in such state at the presidential election of the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty, each having taken the oath aforesaid and not having since violated it, and being a qualified voter by the election law of the state existing immediately before the so-called act of secession, and excluding all others, shall reëstablish a state government which shall be republican, and in no wise contravening said oath, such shall be recognized as the true government of the state, and the state shall receive thereunder the benefits of the constitutional provision which declares that "The United States shall guarantee to every state in this Union a republican form of government, and shall protect each of them against invasion; and, on application of the legislature, or the executive (when the legislature cannot be convened), against domestic violence."

And I do further proclaim, declare, and make known, that any provision which may be adopted by such state government in relation to the freed people of such state, which shall recognize and declare their permanent freedom, provide for their education, and which may yet be consistent as a temporary arrangement with their present condition as a laboring, landless, and homeless class, will not be objected to by the national Executive.

And it is suggested as not improper that, in constructing a loyal state government in any state, the name of the state, the boundary, the subdivisions, the constitution, and the general code of laws, as before the rebellion, be maintained, subject only to the modifications made necessary by the conditions hereinbefore stated, and such others, if any, not contravening said conditions, and which may be deemed expedient by those framing the new state government.

To avoid misunderstanding, it may be proper to say that this proclamation, so far as it relates to state governments, has no reference to states wherein loyal state governments have all the while been maintained.

And, for the same reason, it may be proper to further

say, that whether members sent to Congress from any state shall be admitted to seats, constitutionally rests exclusively with the respective houses, and not to any extent with the Executive. And still further, that this proclamation is intended to present the people of the states wherein the national authority has been suspended, and loyal state governments have been subverted, a mode in and by which the national authority and loyal state governments may be reëstablished within said states, or in any of them; and while the mode presented is the best the Executive can suggest, with his present impressions, it must not be understood that no other possible mode would be acceptable.

Given under my hand, etc.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

By the President:

William H. Seward, Secretary of State

*EXTRACT FROM ANNUAL MESSAGE TO CONGRESS*

[December 8, 1863]

When Congress assembled a year ago, the war had already lasted nearly twenty months, and there had been many conflicts on both land and sea with varying results. The rebellion had been pressed back into reduced limits; yet the tone of public feeling and opinion, at home and abroad, was not satisfactory. With other signs, the popular elections, then just past, indicated uneasiness among ourselves, while, amid much that was cold and menacing, the kindest words coming from Europe were uttered in accents of pity that we were too blind to surrender a hopeless cause. Our commerce was suffering greatly by a few armed vessels built upon, and furnished from, foreign shores, and we were threatened with such additions from the same quarter as would sweep our trade from the sea and raise our blockade. We had failed to elicit from European governments

anything hopeful upon this subject. The preliminary emancipation proclamation, issued in September, was running its assigned period to the beginning of the new year. A month later the final proclamation came, including the announcement that colored men of suitable condition would be received into the war service.

The policy of emancipation, and of employing black soldiers, gave to the future a new aspect, about which hope, and fear, and doubt contended in uncertain conflict. According to our political system, as a matter of civil administration, the general government had no lawful power to effect emancipation in any state, and for a long time it had been hoped that the rebellion could be suppressed without resorting to it as a military measure. It was all the while deemed possible that the necessity for it might come, and that if it should, the crisis of the contest would then be presented. It came, and, as was anticipated, it was followed by dark and doubtful days. Eleven months having now passed, we are permitted to take another review. The rebel borders are pressed still further back, and, by the complete opening of the Mississippi, the country dominated by the rebellion is divided into distinct parts, with no practical communication between them. Tennessee and Arkansas have been substantially cleared of insurgent control, and influential citizens in each, owners of slaves and advocates of slavery at the beginning of the rebellion, now declare openly for emancipation in their respective states. Of those states not included in the Emancipation Proclamation, Maryland and Missouri, neither of which three years ago would tolerate any restraint upon the extension of slavery into new territories, only dispute now as to the best mode of removing it within their own limits.

Of those who were slaves at the beginning of the rebellion, full one hundred thousand are now in the United States military service, about one-half of which

number actually bear arms in the ranks; thus giving the double advantage of taking so much labor from the insurgent cause, and supplying the places which otherwise must be filled with so many white men. So far as tested, it is difficult to say they are not as good soldiers as any. No servile insurrection, or tendency to violence or cruelty has marked the measures of emancipation and arming the blacks. These measures have been much discussed in foreign countries, and contemporary with such discussion the tone of public sentiment there is much improved. At home the same measures have been fully discussed, supported, criticized, and denounced, and the annual elections following are highly encouraging to those whose official duty it is to bear the country through this great trial. Thus we have the new reckoning. The crisis which threatened to divide the friends of the Union is past.

Looking now to the present and future, and with reference to a resumption of the national authority within the states wherein that authority has been suspended, I have thought fit to issue a proclamation, a copy of which is herewith transmitted. On examination of this proclamation it will appear, as is believed, that nothing is attempted beyond what is amply justified by the Constitution. True, the form of an oath is given, but no man is coerced to take it. The man is only promised a pardon in case he voluntarily takes the oath. The Constitution authorizes the Executive to grant or withhold the pardon at his own absolute discretion; and this includes the power to grant on terms, as is fully established by judicial and other authorities.

It is also proffered that if, in any of the states named, a state government shall be, in the mode prescribed, set up, such government shall be recognized and guaranteed by the United States, and that under it the state shall, on the constitutional conditions, be protected against invasion and domestic violence. The constitutional obli-

gation of the United States to guarantee to every state in the Union a republican form of government, and to protect the state in the cases stated, is explicit and full. But why tender the benefits of this provision only to a state government set up in this particular way? This section of the Constitution contemplates a case wherein the element within a state favorable to republican government in the Union may be too feeble for an opposite and hostile element external to, or even within, the state; and such are precisely the cases with which we are now dealing.

An attempt to guarantee and protect a revived state government, constructed in whole, or in preponderating part, from the very element against whose hostility and violence it is to be protected, is simply absurd. There must be a test by which to separate the opposing elements, so as to build only from the sound; and that test is a sufficiently liberal one which accepts as sound whoever will make a sworn recantation of his former unsoundness.

But if it be proper to require, as a test of admission to the political body, an oath of allegiance to the Constitution of the United States, and to the Union under it, why also to the laws and proclamations in regard to slavery? Those laws and proclamations were enacted and put forth for the purpose of aiding in the suppression of the rebellion. To give them their fullest effect, there had to be a pledge for their maintenance. In my judgment they have aided, and will further aid, the cause for which they were intended. To now abandon them would be not only to relinquish a lever of power, but would also be a cruel and an astounding breach of faith. I may add, at this point, that while I remain in my present position I shall not attempt to retract or modify the Emancipation Proclamation; nor shall I return to slavery any person who is free by the terms of that proclamation, or by any of the acts of Congress.



For these and other reasons it is thought best that support of these measures shall be included in the oath; and it is believed the Executive may lawfully claim it in return for pardon and restoration of forfeited rights, which he has clear constitutional power to withhold altogether, or grant upon the terms which he shall deem wisest for the public interest. It should be observed, also, that this part of the oath is subject to the modifying and abrogating power of legislation and supreme judicial decision.

The proposed acquiescence of the national Executive in any reasonable temporary state arrangement for the freed people is made with the view of possibly modifying the confusion and destitution which must at best attend all classes by a total revolution of labor throughout whole states. It is hoped that the already deeply afflicted people in those states may be somewhat more ready to give up the cause of their affliction, if, to this extent, this vital matter be left to themselves; while no power of the national Executive to prevent an abuse is abridged by the proposition.

The suggestion in the proclamation as to maintaining the political framework of the states on what is called reconstruction is made in the hope that it may do good without danger of harm. It will save labor, and avoid great confusion.

But why any proclamation now upon this subject? This question is beset with the conflicting views that the step might be delayed too long or be taken too soon. In some states the elements for resumption seem ready for action, but remain inactive apparently for want of a rallying point—a plan of action. Why shall A adopt the plan of B, rather than B that of A? And if A and B should agree, how can they know but that the general government here will reject their plan? By the proclamation a plan is presented which may be accepted by them as a rallying point, and which they are assured in

advance will not be rejected here. This may bring them to act sooner than they otherwise would.

The objection to a premature presentation of a plan by the national Executive consists in the danger of commitments on points which could be more safely left to further developments. Care has been taken to so shape the document as to avoid embarrassments from this source. Saying that, on certain terms, certain classes will be pardoned, with rights restored, it is not said that other classes, or other terms, will never be included. Saying that reconstruction will be accepted if presented in a specified way, it is not said it will never be accepted in any other way.

The movements, by state action, for emancipation in several of the states not included in the Emancipation Proclamation, are matters of profound gratulation. And while I do not repeat in detail what I have heretofore so earnestly urged upon this subject, my general views and feelings remain unchanged; and I trust that Congress will omit no fair opportunity of aiding these important steps to a great consummation.

In the midst of other cares, however important, we must not lose sight of the fact that the war power is still our main reliance. To that power alone can we look, yet for a time, to give confidence to the people in the contested regions that the insurgent power will not again overrun them. Until that confidence shall be established, little can be done anywhere for what is called reconstruction. Hence our chiefest care must still be directed to the army and navy, who have thus far borne their harder part so nobly and well. And it may be esteemed fortunate that in giving the greatest efficiency to these indispensable arms, we do also honorably recognize the gallant men, from commander to sentinel, who compose them, and to whom, more than to others, the world must stand indebted for the home of freedom disenthralled, regenerated, enlarged, and perpetuated.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

In February, 1864, it became necessary to call for a new draft.\* Lincoln issued the call, which was very unpopular. The feeling in Chicago was particularly intense. The city had already furnished a large number of troops and there was a general desire to secure some modification of the order. A group of prominent citizens went to Washington to attempt to bring it about. Lincoln heard the War Department and the Chicago delegation present the opposing sides of the question, and at the close burst out with darkened face and angry voice:

"Gentlemen, after Boston, Chicago has been the chief instrument in bringing this war on the country. The Northwest has opposed the South as New England has opposed the South. It is you who are largely responsible for making blood flow as it has. You called for war until we had it. You called for emancipation, and I have given it to you. Whatever you have asked for you have had. Now you come here begging to be let off from the call for men which I have made to carry out the war you have demanded. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. I have a right to expect better things of you. Go home and raise your 6000 extra men."

With the opening of the year 1864, the question of the presidential election became an important one. Secretary Chase never recovered from his belief that he, and not Lincoln, should have been nominated for President in 1860. As time passed, he became very anxious to receive the nomination in 1864. The Republican platform of 1860 had committed the party to a single presidential term, and in the fall of 1863 most of the party leaders failed to agree with Lincoln that it was "unsafe to swap horses while crossing a stream." He had against him the bitter hostility of the radical wing of the party and also a large part of the conservative leaders, who doubted his ability and were quietly seeking an abler man.

Chase was doing all he could to win the radical group and finally "consented" that his name should be submitted to the party. In February, 1864, Senator Pomeroy of Kansas sent out a "confidential" circular, calling for organization in behalf of Chase's candidacy. Lincoln was aware of every step taken, but of course did not mention the movement to Chase. When the Pomeroy circular appeared, Chase wrote him that he had

\*As the war progressed, volunteering ceased, and it became necessary to draft or conscript men for the army.

known nothing of it until he saw it in the newspapers, but admitted that he had consented to the use of his name, and added that, if Lincoln felt this would interfere with his usefulness as Secretary of the Treasury, he would resign. Lincoln thus replied:

*TO SALMON P. CHASE*

Executive Mansion,  
Washington, February 23, 1864

Hon. Secretary of the Treasury.

MY DEAR SIR: Yours of yesterday in relation to the paper issued by Senator Pomeroy was duly received; and I write this note merely to say I will answer a little more fully when I can find time to do so.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN

*TO SALMON P. CHASE*

Executive Mansion,  
Washington, February 29, 1864

Hon. Secretary of the Treasury.

MY DEAR SIR: I would have taken time to answer yours of the 2d sooner, only that I did not suppose any evil could result from the delay, especially as, by a note, I promptly acknowledged the receipt of yours, and promised a fuller answer. Now, on consideration, I find there is really very little to say. My knowledge of Mr. Pomeroy's letter having been made public came to me only the day you wrote, but I had, in spite of myself, known of its existence several days before. I have not yet read it, and I think I shall not. I was not shocked or surprised by the appearance of the letter, because I had had knowledge of Mr. Pomeroy's committee, and of secret issues which I supposed came from it, and of secret agents who I supposed were sent out by it, for several weeks. I have known just as little of these things as my friends have allowed me to know.

They bring the documents to me, but I do not read them; they tell me what they think fit to tell me, but I do not inquire for more. I fully concur with you that neither of us can be justly held responsible for what our respective friends may do without our instigation or countenance; and I assure you, as you have assured me, that no assault has been made upon you by my instigation or with my countenance. Whether you shall remain at the head of the Treasury Department is a question which I will not allow myself to consider from any standpoint other than my judgment of the public service, and, in that view, I do not perceive occasion for a change.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN

A few days later the Republican members of the Ohio legislature declared for Lincoln's renomination and, with his own state against him, there was nothing for Chase to do but to withdraw. Later in the year he resigned, as he had done several times before, and, to his surprise, Lincoln accepted the resignation. When Chief Justice Taney died in the autumn, Lincoln, after long consideration, appointed Chase to succeed him.

In March, 1864, reconstruction under Lincoln's plan had proceeded far enough in Louisiana for the election of a governor. He was inaugurated on March 4, and Lincoln wrote this letter of congratulation, which is chiefly interesting for its suggestion of limited negro suffrage, intended, without doubt, to forestall radical opposition.

TO MICHAEL HAHN

[*Private*]

Executive Mansion,  
Washington, March 13, 1864

Hon. Michael Hahn.

MY DEAR SIR: I congratulate you on having fixed your name in history as the first free state governor of Louisiana. Now you are about to have a convention,

which among other things, will probably define the elective franchise. I barely suggest for your private consideration, whether some of the colored people may not be let in—as, for instance, the very intelligent, and especially those who have fought gallantly in our ranks. They would probably help, in some trying time to come, to keep the jewel of liberty within the family of freedom. But this is only a suggestion, not to the public, but to you alone.\*

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN

In March, Governor Thomas E. Bramlette of Kentucky was in Washington to confer about the execution of the draft in his state and to protest against the enrollment of negro soldiers. With Colonel Albert Gallatin Hodges, a prominent Kentucky editor, and former Senator Archibald Dixon, he called upon the President. The following letter resulted from that interview. It will be noted that in the concluding paragraph appears a foreshadowing of his second inaugural.

*TO A. G. HODGES*

Executive Mansion,  
Washington, April 4, 1864

A. G. Hodges, Esq.,  
Frankfort, Kentucky

MY DEAR SIR: You ask me to put in writing the substance of what I verbally said the other day in your presence, to Governor Bramlette and Senator Dixon. It was about as follows:

“I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think and feel, and yet 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,

\* Negro suffrage was not granted by the constitution adopted, but the legislature was empowered to grant it.

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. When, early in the war, General Frémont attempted military emancipation, I forbade it, because I did not then think it an indispensable necessity. When, a little later, General Cameron, then Secretary of War, suggested the arming of the blacks, I objected because I did not yet think it an indispensable necessity. When still later, General Hunter attempted military emancipation, I again forbade it, because I did not yet think the indispensable necessity had come. When in March and May and July, 1862, I made earn-

est and successive appeals to the border states to favor compensated emancipation, I believed the indispensable necessity for military emancipation and arming the blacks would come, unless averted by that measure. They declined the proposition, and I was, in my best judgment, 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. In choosing it, I hoped for greater gain than loss; but of this, I was not entirely confident. More than a year of trial now shows no loss by it in our foreign relations, none in our home popular sentiment, none in our white military force—no loss by it anyhow or anywhere. 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 caviling. We have the men; and we could not have had them without the measure.

“And now let any Union man who complains of the measure 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 cannot face his case so stated, it is only because he cannot face the truth.”

I add a word which was not in the verbal conversation. 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 com-



plicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein new cause to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN

In February, General Grant was made a lieutenant general and was called to Washington to receive his commission. While there he was placed in command of the armies of the United States. Lincoln met him for the first time and urged upon him the capture of Richmond as a thing of supreme importance, promising him, at the same time, full support. Grant impressed Lincoln with great confidence, which is reflected in this letter:

*TO GENERAL U. S. GRANT*

Executive Mansion,  
Washington, April 30, 1864

LIEUTENANT GENERAL GRANT: Not expecting to see you again before the spring campaign opens, I wish to express in this way my entire satisfaction with what you have done up to this time, so far as I understand it. The particulars of your plans I neither know nor seek to know. You are vigilant and self-reliant; and, pleased with this, I wish not to obtrude any constraints or restraints upon you. While I am very anxious that any great disaster or capture of our men in great numbers shall be avoided, I know these points are less likely to escape your attention than they would be mine. If there is anything wanting which is within my power to give, do not fail to let me know it. And now, with a brave army and a just cause, may God sustain you.

Yours very truly,

A. LINCOLN

Beginning with the suspension of the privilege of the writ of *habeas corpus* by the President in 1861, there was constant

and steadily growing interference by the military authorities, acting under the war power of the President, with the freedom of individuals. "Not only in Maryland, and the regions near the seat of war, but in the most distant parts of the land, from Maine to California, men were seized without any information as to the charges against them, and were confined in forts and prison camps."\* During 1863 this military dictatorship, in which "all the powers of government were virtually concentrated in a single department, and that the department whose energies were directed by the will of a single man,"† became more stringent than ever. Arbitrary arrests were increasingly frequent, the trial of citizens not in the military service of the country by military commissions, a form of court unknown to the Constitution and the laws of the United States, ceased to be any novelty, and newspapers were compelled to suspend publication because their opinions did not coincide with those of military officers. Civil liberty as guaranteed under the Constitution no longer existed, for freedom of speech, of the press, and of the person had disappeared. Lincoln had sunk every other consideration in the winning of the war, and was justified in his policy by his legal advisers, who held that as commander-in-chief of the army, exercising the war power, he was practically unhampered by any legal restrictions.

These things were bitterly unpopular at the time, but with the final success of the Union cause it became usual to condemn those who opposed the interference with constitutional rights by the military power as unpatriotic. A sounder and saner view is that of Carl Schurz, who said:

"Nobody should be blamed who, when such things are done, in good faith and from patriotic motives, protests against them. In a republic, arbitrary stretches of power, even when demanded by necessity, should never be permitted to pass without a protest on the one hand and an apology on the other. It is well they did not so pass during our civil war.

"That arbitrary measures were resorted to, is true. . . . No American President ever wielded such power as that which was thrust into Lincoln's hands. It is to be hoped that no American President ever will have to be intrusted with such power again."

\*Dunning, *Essays on Civil War and Reconstruction*, page 38.

†*Ibid.*, page 21.

One of the most remarkable examples of the operations of the military dictatorship\* occurred in May, 1864. A new call for a draft was generally expected, and everyone knew that it would cause stocks to fall, and result in business and financial depression. Certain stock speculators managed to imitate very cleverly the press telegrams from Washington with a forged proclamation from the President calling for troops. It came very late and the *World* and *Journal of Commerce*, not doubting its authenticity, published it. The *Tribune* would have done so had not its edition already gone to press. The incident called forth the action described in this proclamation:

TO GENERAL JOHN A. DIX

Executive Mansion,

Washington, D. C., May 18, 1864

MAJOR GENERAL DIX, Commanding at New York: Whereas there has been wickedly and traitorously printed and published this morning in the New York *World* and New York *Journal of Commerce*, newspapers printed and published in the city of New York, a false and spurious proclamation, purporting to be signed by the President and to be countersigned by the Secretary of State, which publication is of a treasonable nature designed to give aid and comfort to the enemies of the United States and to the rebels now at war against the government, and their aiders and abettors; you are therefore hereby commanded forthwith to arrest and imprison, in any fort or military prison in your command, the editors, proprietors, and publishers of the aforesaid newspapers, and all such persons as, after public notice has been given of the falsehood of said publication, print and publish the same with intent to give aid and comfort to the enemy; and you will hold the persons so arrested in close custody until they can be brought to trial before a military commission for their offense. You will also take possession by military force, of the printing establishments of the New York

\*See footnote, page 284.

*World and Journal of Commerce*, and hold the same until further orders, and prevent any further publication therefrom.

A. LINCOLN

President of the United States

By the President:

William H. Seward, Secretary of State

When the presidential campaign of 1864 came, Lincoln was renominated by the National Union Convention, which met in Baltimore. Through his influence, Andrew Johnson of Tennessee was nominated for Vice President. This choice was dictated by a desire to show the outside world, by the selection of a Southerner, that the seceded states were still a part of the Union, and a desire to express to the country, by the nomination of a Democrat, the reality of the name Union party, which the Republicans assumed in this campaign. It is not at all improbable that a third reason influenced Lincoln. The problem of the reconstruction of the seceded states was in his opinion of first magnitude. It is more than probable that Johnson's known agreement with his own views, and his connection as military governor with his plan, may have been a leading cause of the decision.

The radical elements, still dissatisfied with Lincoln, had acted before the Baltimore convention. At a mass convention held in Cleveland they nominated John C. Frémont for President. The convention was a farce and, instead of the thousands expected, only four hundred were in attendance. When this was mentioned to Lincoln, he reached for the Bible which was always on his desk, and read this verse from the second chapter of the First Book of Samuel: "And everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them; and there were with him about four hundred men."

The Democrats nominated General George B. McClellan on a platform which declared,

*Resolved*, That this convention does explicitly declare, as the sense of the American people, that after four years of failure to restore the Union by the experiment of war, during which under the pretense of a military necessity, or war power

higher than the Constitution, the Constitution itself has been disregarded in every part, and public liberty and private right alike trodden down and the material prosperity of the country essentially impaired, justice, humanity, liberty, and the public welfare demand that immediate efforts be made for a cessation of hostilities, with a view to an ultimate convention of 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."

At the beginning of the campaign all the signs pointed to Lincoln's defeat. A serious Republican revolt was in progress which might mean a further split in the party. He himself thought that defeat could not be avoided, and a week before the Democratic convention, he wrote this memorandum which he showed folded up to his cabinet, getting all the members to sign it on the back and not mentioning its contents. After the election, he showed it to them, saying, "At least, I should have done my duty and have stood clear before my own conscience."

#### MEMORANDUM

[August 23, 1864]

This morning, as for some days past, it seems exceedingly probable that this administration will not be reelected. Then it will be my duty to so cooperate with the President-elect as to save the Union between the election and the inauguration; as he will have secured his election on such ground that he cannot possibly save it afterward.

#### A. LINCOLN

Frémont withdrew in September and, the military successes of the autumn giving the administration renewed strength, Lincoln was reelected by a large majority.

The losses in human life of the war were terrific, and Lincoln's tender heart was wrung by the suffering of those bereaved. His tenderness and kindness of heart were more apt to be displayed in action than in words, but a few of his letters are full of these qualities, and the one which follows

abounds in them. It is further, in its loftiness of spirit, its severe self-restraint, and its simplicity of style, one of the most perfect of letters of condolence.

*TO MRS. BIXBY*

Executive Mansion,  
Washington, November 21, 1864

Mrs. Bixby, Boston, Mass.

DEAR MADAM: I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant-General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours very sincerely and respectfully,

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

By 1864, Lincoln was convinced that the time had come for the abolition of slavery by an amendment to the Constitution. In his annual message he discusses this point and also the progress of his plan of reconstruction in Louisiana, Arkansas, and Tennessee.

*EXTRACT FROM ANNUAL MESSAGE TO CONGRESS*

[December 6, 1864]

FELLOW-CITIZENS OF THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES: Again the blessings of health and abundant harvests claim our profoundest gratitude to Almighty God.

. . . . .

The war continues. Since the last annual message, all the important lines and positions then occupied by our forces have been maintained, and our arms have steadily advanced, thus liberating the regions left in the rear; so that Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, and parts of other states have again produced reasonably fair crops.

The most remarkable feature in the military operations of the year is General Sherman's attempted march of three hundred miles, directly through the insurgent region. It tends to show a great increase in our relative strength, that our general-in-chief should feel able to confront and hold in check every active force of the enemy, and yet to detach a well-appointed large army to move on such an expedition. The result not being yet known, conjecture in regard to it is not here indulged.

Important movements have also occurred during the year to the effect of molding society for durability in the Union. Although short of complete success, it is much in the right direction that 12,000 citizens in each of the states of Arkansas and Louisiana have organized loyal state governments, with free constitutions, and are earnestly struggling to maintain and administer them. The movements in the same direction, more extensive though less definite, in Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee, should not be overlooked. But Maryland presents the example of complete success. Maryland is secure to liberty and Union for all the future. The genius of rebellion will no more claim Maryland. Like another foul spirit, being driven out, it may seek to tear her, but it will woo her no more.\*

At the last session of Congress a proposed amendment to the Constitution, abolishing slavery throughout the United States, passed the Senate, but failed for lack of the requisite two-thirds vote in the House of Represen-

\* Mark ix, 17-26.

tatives. Although the present is the same Congress, and nearly the same members, and without questioning the wisdom or patriotism of those who stood in opposition, I venture to recommend the reconsideration and passage of the measure at the present session. Of course the abstract question is not changed, but an intervening election shows, almost certainly, that the next Congress will pass the measure if this does not. Hence there is only a question of time as to when the proposed amendment will go to the states for their action. And as it is to so go, at all events, may we not agree that the sooner the better? It is not claimed that the election has imposed a duty on members to change their views or their votes any further than as an additional element to be considered, their judgment may be affected by it. It is the voice of the people now for the first time heard upon the question. In a great national crisis like ours, unanimity of action among those seeking a common end is very desirable—almost indispensable. And yet no approach to such unanimity is attainable unless some deference shall be paid to the will of the majority, simply because it is the will of the majority. In this case the common end is the maintenance of the Union, and among the means to secure that end, such will, through the election, is most clearly declared in favor of such constitutional amendment.

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 has 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.

The election has exhibited another fact, not less valuable to be known—the fact that we do not approach exhaustion in the most important branch of national resources—that of living men. While it is melancholy to reflect that the war has filled so many graves, and carried mourning to so many hearts, it is some relief to know that compared with the surviving, the fallen have been so few. While corps, and divisions, and brigades, and regiments have formed, and fought, and dwindled, and gone out of existence, a great majority of the men who composed them are still living. The same is true of the naval service. The election returns prove this. So many voters could not else be found. The states regularly holding elections, both now and four years ago—to wit: California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin—cast 3,982,011 votes now, against 3,870,222 cast then; showing an aggregate now of 3,982,011. To this is to be added 33,762 cast now in the new states of Kansas and Nevada, which states did not vote in 1860; thus swelling the aggregate to 4,015,773, and the net

increase during the three years and a half of war, to 145,551. A table is appended, showing particulars. To this again should be added the number of all soldiers in the field from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Delaware, Indiana, Illinois, and California, who by the laws of those states could not vote away from their homes, and which number cannot be less than 90,000. Nor yet is this all. The number in organized territories is triple now what it was four years ago, while thousands, white and black, join us as the national arms press back the insurgent lines. So much is shown, affirmatively and negatively, by the election.

It is not material to inquire how the increase has been produced, or to show that it would have been greater but for the war, which is probably true. The important fact remains demonstrated that we have more men now than we had when the war began; that we are not exhausted, nor in process of exhaustion; that we are gaining strength, and may, if need be, maintain the contest indefinitely. This as to men. Material resources are now more complete and abundant than ever.

The national resources, then, are unexhausted, and, as we believe, inexhaustible. The public purpose to re-establish and maintain the national authority is unchanged, and, as we believe unchangeable. The manner of continuing the effort remains to choose. On careful consideration of all the evidence accessible, it seems to me that no attempt at negotiation with the insurgent leader could result in any good. He would accept nothing short of severance of the Union—precisely what we will not and cannot give. His declarations to this effect are explicit and oft repeated. He does not attempt to deceive us. He affords us no excuse to deceive ourselves. He cannot voluntarily reaccept the Union; we cannot voluntarily yield it.

Between him and us the issue is distinct, simple, and inflexible. It is an issue which can only be tried by war,

and decided by victory. If we yield, we are beaten; if the Southern people fail him, he is beaten. Either way it would be the victory and defeat following war. What is true, however, of him who heads the insurgent cause, is not necessarily true of those who follow. Although he cannot reaccept the Union, they can. Some of them, we know, already desire peace and reunion. The number of such may increase.

They can at any moment have peace simply by laying down their arms and submitting to the national authority under the Constitution. After so much the government could not, if it would, maintain war against them. The loyal people would not sustain or allow it. If questions should remain, we would adjust them by the peaceful means of legislation, conference, courts, and votes, operating only in constitutional and lawful channels. Some certain, and other possible, questions are, and would be, beyond the executive power to adjust; as, for instance, the admission of members into Congress, and whatever might require the appropriation of money. The executive power itself would be greatly diminished by the cessation of actual war. Pardons and remissions of forfeitures, however, would still be within executive control. In what spirit and temper this control would be exercised, can be fairly judged of by the past.

A year ago general pardon and amnesty, upon specified terms, were offered to all except certain designated classes, and it was at the same time made known that the excepted classes were still within contemplation of special clemency. During the year many availed themselves of the general provision, and many more would, only that the signs of bad faith in some led to such precautionary measures as rendered the practical process less easy and certain. During the same time, also, special pardons have been granted to individuals of the excepted classes, and no voluntary application has been denied.

Thus, practically, the door has been for a full year open to all, except such as were not in condition to make free choice—that is, such as were in custody or under constraint. It is still so open to all; but the time may come—probably will come—when public duty shall demand that it be closed; and that in lieu more rigorous measures than heretofore shall be adopted.

In presenting the abandonment of armed resistance to the national authority on the part of the insurgents as the only indispensable condition to ending the war on the part of the government, I retract nothing heretofore said as to slavery. I repeat the declaration made a year ago, that “while I remain in my present position I shall not attempt to retract or modify the Emancipation Proclamation, nor shall I return to slavery any person who is free by the terms of that proclamation, or by any of the acts of Congress.”

If the people should, by whatever mode or means, make it an executive duty to reënslave such persons, another, and not I, must be their instrument to perform it.

In stating a single condition of peace, I mean simply to say that the war will cease on the part of the government whenever it shall have ceased on the part of those who began it.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

When on March 4, 1865, Lincoln delivered his second inaugural address, the end of the war was in sight. The marks of the four years in the all-consuming furnace of war had been stamped upon his face as upon his soul as revealed in the speech he was about to make. Through all these years he had been growing in patience and in hopefulness; in justice and in understanding; in tenderness and in mercy; in capacity and in strength. With his growth in greatness he had grown in modesty. For whatever he may have been in 1861, now, after the fiery furnace through which he had passed, he was su-

premely great, though not as yet had his people come to see it. But with it all he was bowed with the griefs of his people, and his face showed the truth of his words at the time, "I think I shall never be glad again." As Lord Charnwood says: "This man had stood alone in the dark. He had done justice; he had loved mercy; he had walked humbly with his God."

The second inaugural ranks with the Gettysburg address in its simple yet wonderfully felicitous language and style, its deep feeling, and its "high seriousness." It was not generally so regarded at the time, judging by the comment of the newspapers. Like his other addresses, it was to come into its own after a time. One of the most striking commentaries upon it is that of the *London Spectator* at a much later day.

"In three or four hundred words that burn with the heat of their compression he tells the history of the war and reads its lesson. No nobler thoughts were ever conceived. No man ever found words more adequate to his desire. Here is the whole tale of the nation's shame and the misery of her heroic struggles to free herself therefrom and of her victory. Had Lincoln written a hundred times as much more, he would not have said more fully what he desired to say. Every thought receives its complete expression, and there is no word employed which does not directly and manifestly contribute to the development of the central thought.

"We cannot read it without a renewed conviction that it is the noblest political document known to history, and should have for the nation and the statesmen he left behind him something of a sacred and almost prophetic character."

### SECOND INAUGURAL ADDRESS

[March 4, 1865]

FELLOW COUNTRYMEN: At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued, seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the

attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself; and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it—all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it.

Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other.

It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask

a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not, that we be not judged.\* The prayers of both could not be answered—that of neither has been answered fully.

The Almighty has his own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh." † If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope—ferverently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. ‡ Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."\*\*

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.

\* Matthew, vii, 1.

† Matthew, xviii, 7.

‡ The unintentional rime has been frequently criticised.

\*\* Psalms, xix, 9.

Lincoln's own opinion of the address is expressed in a note to Thurlow Weed.

*TO THURLOW WEED*

Executive Mansion,  
Washington, March 15, 1865

DEAR MR. WEED:

Every one likes a compliment. Thank you for yours on my little notification speech and on the recent inaugural address. I expect the latter to wear as well as—perhaps better than—anything I have produced; but I believe it is not immediately popular. Men are not flattered by being shown that there has been a difference of purpose between the Almighty and them. To deny it, however, in this case, is to deny that there is a God governing the world. It is a truth which I thought needed to be told, and, as whatever of humiliation there is in it falls most directly on myself, I thought others might afford for me to tell it.

Truly yours,

A. LINCOLN

As has been seen, Lincoln had very definite views on the question of the reconstruction of the seceded states. These were rather generally accepted after his message of 1863, but, before the session of Congress ended, radical opposition, led by Henry Winter Davis of Maryland and Benjamin F. Wade of Ohio, had developed, resulting in the passage of a bill prescribing more severe terms of restoration, and ignoring the President in the process required. Lincoln vetoed it, and, so far as could be seen, he had the backing of the country, the convention of 1864 making no mention of the question, and the session of Congress which ended on March 4, 1865, also ignoring it.

Lincoln was not only determined upon the acceptance of the Southern states as still in the Union; he was no less determined that there should be, so far as such a thing was possible,



a genuine reconciliation of the sections. He, almost alone of public men in the North, had refrained from harsh expressions toward the South. An illustration of his attitude is to be seen in a happening in one of the Washington military hospitals during the war. He started to go into a ward filled with prisoners, and the attendant said, "Mr. President! You won't want to go in there; they are only rebels." Lincoln laid his hand on the attendant's shoulder and said, "You mean Confederates," and went on in. He allowed food to go to Savannah in 1865 when Stanton refused the ships clearance for the purpose and again and again indicated the sort of policy he had in mind concerning the Southern people. When someone in conversation said that Jefferson Davis ought to be hanged, he quoted, "Let us judge not, that we be not judged," and repeated, "Let us judge not, that we be not judged." R. M. T. Hunter, in company with Judge J. A. Campbell and Alexander H. Stephens, met Lincoln and Seward on February 3, 1865, at the Hampton Roads Conference, where they discussed the possibility of peace. He felt clearly this attitude of Lincoln and said smilingly, "Well, Mr. Lincoln, we have about concluded that we shall not be hanged as long as you are President, if we behave ourselves."

It was entirely true that he wanted no policy of retribution. He gave orders to facilitate the escape of Davis and his cabinet, and said, "No one need expect I will take any part in hanging or killing these men, even the worst of them. Frighten them out of the country, open the gates, let down the bars, scare them off. Enough lives have been sacrificed; we must extinguish our resentments if we expect harmony and union." It was clear that he believed that the new order of things should be established without bitterness and without reproaches, and, as Hapgood says, by treating the Confederate as if he were a beloved brother who had just been convinced in an argument.

After the fall of Richmond, Lincoln visited the city. There he met Judge John A. Campbell, who had been at the Hampton Roads Conference, and they discussed the restoration of order. Lincoln gave him the following unsigned memorandum on the subject of the terms of peace:

*MEMORANDUM ON TERMS OF PEACE*

[April 5, 1865]

As to peace, I have said before, and now repeat, that three things are indispensable:

1. The restoration of the national authority throughout the United States.

2. No receding by the Executive of the United States on the slavery question from the position assumed thereon in the late annual message, and in preceding documents.

3. No cessation of hostilities short of an end of the war, and the disbanding of all forces hostile to the government. That all propositions coming from those now in hostility to the government, not inconsistent with the foregoing, will be respectfully considered and passed upon in a spirit of sincere liberality.

I now add that it seems useless for me to be more specific with those who will not say that they are ready for the indispensable terms, even on conditions to be named by themselves. If there be any who are ready for these indispensable terms, on any conditions whatever, let them say so, and state their conditions, so that the conditions can be known and considered. It is further added, that the remission of confiscation being within the executive power, if the war be now further persisted in by those opposing the government, the making of confiscated property at the least to bear the additional cost will be insisted on, but that confiscations (except in case of third-party intervening interests) will be remitted to the people of any state which shall now promptly and in good faith withdraw its troops from further resistance to the government. What is now said as to the remission of confiscation has no reference to supposed property in slaves.

He then sent General Grant the following account of what he had done:

*TO GENERAL U. S. GRANT*

[Telegram]

Headquarters, Armies of the United States,  
City Point, April 6, 1865, 12 M.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL GRANT, IN THE FIELD:

Secretary Seward was thrown from his carriage yesterday and seriously injured. This, with other matters, will take me to Washington soon. I was at Richmond yesterday and the day before, when and where Judge Campbell, who was with Messrs. Hunter and Stephens in February, called on me, and made such representations as induced me to put in his hands an informal paper, repeating the propositions in my letter of instructions to Mr. Seward, which you remember, and adding that if the war be now further persisted in by the rebels, confiscated property shall at the least bear the additional cost, and that confiscation shall be remitted to the people of any state which will now promptly and in good faith withdraw its troops and other support from resistance to the government.

Judge Campbell thought it not impossible that the rebel legislature of Virginia would do the latter if permitted; and accordingly I addressed a private letter to General Weitzel with permission to Judge Campbell to see it, telling him (General Weitzel) that if they attempt this, to permit and protect them, unless they attempt something hostile to the United States, in which case to give them notice and time to leave, and to arrest any remaining after such time.

I do not think it very probable that anything will come of this, but I have thought best to notify you, so that if you should see signs you may understand them.

From your recent despatches it seems that you are pretty effectually withdrawing the Virginia troops from opposition to the government. Nothing that I have done, or probably shall do, is to delay, hinder, or interfere with your work.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN

A few days later when preparations were being made for the assembling of the Virginia legislature, so much hostile opposition appeared in the North that Lincoln retracted the offer, saying that the situation had been changed by Lee's surrender, which had taken place at Appomattox on April 9.

When the news reached Washington of Lee's surrender, a large crowd went to the White House and called for Lincoln. He asked them to come back the next night and promised that he would speak to them then. In the meantime he prepared with great care an address which proved to be his last public utterance. He read it from one of the windows of the White House to an immense crowd outside, by whom it was enthusiastically received. It is notable for its dealing with the question of reconstruction, "the binding up of the nation's wounds." It was no easy task that lay before him, particularly in view of the bitter hatred of him and his policy on the part of the radical leaders in Congress. The following extract from George W. Julian's *Recollections*\* will indicate the extent of this. Speaking of Lincoln's death he wrote:

"I spent most of the afternoon in a political caucus, held for the purpose of considering the necessity for a new cabinet and a line of policy less conciliatory than that of Mr. Lincoln; and while everybody was shocked at his murder, the feeling was nearly universal that the accession of Johnson to the Presidency would prove a godsend to the country."

#### LAST PUBLIC ADDRESS

[April 11, 1865]

We meet this evening not in sorrow, but in gladness of heart. The evacuation of Petersburg and Richmond, and the surrender of the principal insurgent army give hope of a righteous and speedy peace, whose joyous

\*Julian, *Political Recollections*, page 255.

expression cannot be restrained. In the midst of this, however, He from whom all blessings flow must not be forgotten. A call for a national thanksgiving is being prepared, and will be duly promulgated. Nor must those whose harder part give us the cause of rejoicing be overlooked. Their honors must not be parceled out with others. I myself was near the front, and had the high pleasure of transmitting much of the good news to you; but no part of the honor for plan or execution is mine. To General Grant, his skillful officers and brave men, all belongs. The gallant navy stood ready, but was not in reach to take active part. By these recent successes the reinauguration of the national authority—reconstruction—which has had a large share of thought from the first, is pressed much more closely upon our attention. It is fraught with great difficulty. Unlike a case of war between independent nations, there is no authorized organ for us to treat with—no one man has authority to give up the rebellion for any other man. We simply must begin with and mold from disorganized and discordant elements. Nor is it a small additional embarrassment that we, the loyal people, differ among ourselves as to the mode, manner, and measure of reconstruction. As a general rule, I abstain from reading the reports of attacks upon myself, wishing not to be provoked by that to which I cannot properly offer an answer. In spite of this precaution, however, it comes to my knowledge that I am much censured for some supposed agency in setting up and seeking to sustain the new state government of Louisiana. In this I have done just so much as, and no more than, the public knows. In the Annual Message of December, 1863, and in the accompanying proclamation, I presented a plan of reconstruction, as the phrase goes, which I promised, if adopted by any state, should be acceptable to and sustained by the executive government of the nation. I distinctly stated that this was not the only plan which might possibly be acceptable, and I also

distinctly protested that the Executive claimed no right to say when or whether members should be admitted to seats in Congress from such states. This plan was in advance submitted to the then cabinet, and distinctly approved by every member of it. One of them suggested that I should then and in that connection apply the Emancipation Proclamation to the theretofore excepted parts of Virginia and Louisiana; that I should drop the suggestion about apprenticeship for freed people, and that I should omit the protest against my own power in regard to the admission of members to Congress. But even he approved every part and parcel of the plan which has since been employed or touched by the action of Louisiana.

The new constitution of Louisiana, declaring emancipation for the whole state, practically applies the proclamation to the part previously excepted. It does not adopt apprenticeship for freed people, and it is silent, as it could not well be otherwise, about the admission of members to Congress. So that, as it applied to Louisiana, every member of the cabinet fully approved the plan. The message went to Congress, and I received many commendations of the plan, written and verbal, and not a single objection to it from any professed emancipationist came to my knowledge until after the news reached Washington that the people of Louisiana had begun to move in accordance with it. From about July, 1862, I had corresponded with different persons supposed to be interested [in] seeking a reconstruction of a state government for Louisiana. When the message of 1863, with the plan before mentioned, reached New Orleans, General Banks wrote me that he was confident that the people, with his military coöperation, would reconstruct substantially on that plan. I wrote to him and some of them to try it. They tried it, and the result is known. Such has been my only agency in getting up the Louisiana government. As to sustaining it,

my promise is out, as before stated. But as bad promises are better broken than kept, I shall treat this as a bad promise, and break it whenever I shall be convinced that keeping it is adverse to the public interest; but I have not yet been so convinced. I have been shown a letter on this subject, supposed to be an able one, in which the writer expresses regret that my mind has not seemed to be definitely fixed on the question whether the seceded states, so called, are in the Union or out of it. It would perhaps add astonishment to his regret were he to learn that since I have found professed Union men endeavoring to make that question, I have purposely forborne any public expression upon it. As appears to me, that question has not been, nor yet is, a practically material one, and that any discussion of it, while it thus remains practically immaterial, could have no effect other than the mischievous one of dividing our friends. As yet, whatever it may hereafter become, that question is bad as the basis of a controversy, and good for nothing at all—a merely pernicious abstraction. We all agree that the seceded states, so called, are out of their proper practical relation with the Union, and that the sole object of the government, civil and military, in regard to those states is to again get them into that proper practical relation. I believe that it is not only possible, but in fact easier, to do this without deciding or even considering whether these states have ever been out of the Union, than with it. Finding themselves safely at home, it would be utterly immaterial whether they had ever been abroad. Let us all join in doing the acts necessary to restoring the proper practical relations between these states and the Union, and each forever after innocently indulge his own opinion whether in doing the acts he brought the states from without into the Union, or only gave them proper assistance, they never having been out of it. The amount of constituency, so to speak, on which the new Louisiana government rests, would

be more satisfactory to all if it contained 50,000 or 30,000, or even 20,000, instead of only about 12,000, as it does. It is also unsatisfactory to some that the elective franchise is not given to the colored man. I would myself prefer that it were now conferred on the very intelligent, and on those who serve our cause as soldiers. Still, the question is not whether the Louisiana government, as it stands, is quite all that is desirable. The question is, Will it be wiser to take it as it is and help to improve it, or to reject and disperse it? Can Louisiana be brought into proper practical relation with the Union sooner by sustaining or by discarding her new state government? Some 12,000 voters in the heretofore slave state of Louisiana have sworn allegiance to the Union, assumed to be the rightful political power of the state, held elections, organized a state government, adopted a free state constitution, giving the benefit of public schools equally to black and white, and empowering the legislature to confer the elective franchise upon the colored man. Their legislature has already voted to ratify the constitutional amendment recently passed by Congress, abolishing slavery throughout the nation. These 12,000 persons are thus fully committed to the Union and to perpetual freedom in the state—committed to the very things, and nearly all the things, the nation wants—and they ask the nation's recognition and its assistance to make good their committal.

Now, if we reject and spurn them, we do our utmost to disorganize and disperse them. We, in effect, say to the white man: You are worthless, or worse; we will neither help you nor be helped by you. To the blacks we say: This cup of liberty which these, your old masters, hold to your lips we will dash from you, and leave you to the chances of gathering the spilled and scattered contents in some vague and undefined when, where, and how. If this course, discouraging and paralyzing both white and black, has any tendency to



bring Louisiana into proper practical relations with the Union, I have so far been unable to perceive it. If, on the contrary, we recognize and sustain the new government of Louisiana, the converse of all this is made true. We encourage the hearts and nerve the arms of the 12,000 to adhere to their work, and argue for it, and proselyte for it, and fight for it, and feed it, and grow it, and ripen it to a complete success. The colored man, too, in seeing all united for him, is inspired with vigilance, and energy, and daring, to the same end. Grant that he desires the elective franchise, will he not attain it sooner by saving the already advanced steps toward it than by running backward over them? Concede that the new government of Louisiana is only to what it should be as the egg is to the fowl, we shall sooner have the fowl by hatching the egg than by smashing it.

Again, if we reject Louisiana we also reject one vote in favor of the proposed amendment to the national Constitution. To meet this proposition it has been argued that no more than three-fourths of those states which have not attempted secession are necessary to validly ratify the amendment. I do not commit myself against this further than to say that such a ratification would be questionable, and sure to be persistently questioned, while a ratification by three-fourths of all the states would be unquestioned and unquestionable. I repeat the question: Can Louisiana be brought into proper practical relation with the Union sooner by sustaining or by discarding her new state government? What has been said of Louisiana will apply generally to other states. And yet so great peculiarities pertain to each state, and such important and sudden changes occur in the same state, and withal so new and unprecedented is the whole case that no exclusive and inflexible plan can safely be prescribed as to details and collaterals. Such exclusive and inflexible plan would surely become a new entanglement. Important prin-

ciples may and must be inflexible. In the present situation, as the phrase goes, it may be my duty to make some new announcement to the people of the South. I am considering, and shall not fail to act when satisfied that action will be proper.

The last letter Lincoln wrote was filled with the same thought of reconciliation.

*TO GENERAL VAN ALLEN*

Executive Mansion,  
Washington, April 14, 1865

GENERAL VAN ALLEN: I intend to adopt the advice of my friends and use due precautions. . . . I thank you for the assurance you give me that I shall be supported by conservative men like yourself, in the efforts I may make to restore the Union, so as to make it, to use your language, a Union of hearts and hands as well as of states.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN

On the same night he was shot in Ford's Theater, and in the early morning of April 15, he was, in Stanton's expressive words, "with the ages."









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