

Chapter Nineteen

“The Man Does Not Live Who Is More Devoted to Peace Than I Am,
But It May Be Necessary to Put the Foot Down Firmly”:

From Springfield to Washington

(February 11-22, 1861)

The ever-obliging Lincoln agreed to take a 1900-mile train journey from Springfield to Washington in order to accommodate Republican friends in various states.¹ There were obvious drawbacks to the trip. Because the route would follow an indirect course – Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Columbus, and Pittsburgh, then a detour through Cleveland, Buffalo, Albany, New York, Trenton, Philadelphia, and Harrisburg – it would consume twelve days. Just how this itinerary was chosen is unclear. To demonstrate his indifference to assassination threats, Lincoln would have preferred to follow a more direct route than the roundabout one finally selected.

The journey would be tiring. He would be exposed to potential assassins. Though he would have to speak often, he could say little, for he wished to postpone until the inauguration revealing his plans for dealing with secession.² He was fully aware of the latter problem, for in September he said that it “will do very well to speak

¹ Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 27 January, Cincinnati Commercial, 1 February 1861.

² David M. Potter, The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861 (completed and edited by Don E. Fehrenbacher; New York: Harper & Row, 1976) 560.

extemporaneously when you wish to move only the feelings of your hearers; but it will not do to deliver unprepared a speech which is to be read by an entire nation.”³

Moreover, such a journey would not suit Lincoln’s taste for simplicity and his aversion to pomp and circumstance. He doubtless shared the view expressed by Thomas Jefferson, who during his second presidential term wrote: “I confess that I am not reconciled to the idea of a Chief Magistrate parading himself through the several States as an object of public gaze, and in quest of applause, which, to be valuable, should be purely voluntary. I had rather acquire silent good will by a faithful discharge of my duties, than owe expressions of it to my putting myself in the way of receiving them.”⁴

But Lincoln also believed “invitation coming from the Legislature of a State in their official capacity carries with it too great an authority to be disregarded.”⁵ John Hay offered another reason for Lincoln’s decision: “The progress of the President elect cannot but be fortunate in its influence upon the tone of public feeling in the Union. The devotion which men in general feel for their government is a rather vague and shadowy emotion. This will be intensified, and will receive form and coloring, by personal interviews of the people themselves with their constitutional head.”⁶ The trip would also divert attention away from the secession crisis and might enhance Lincoln’s legitimacy if

³ Springfield correspondence, 4 September, New York Evening Post, 8 September 1860.

⁴ Jefferson to James Sullivan, Washington, 19 June 1807, Andrew A. Lipscomb and Albert E. Bergh, eds., The Writings of Thomas Jefferson (memorial edition, 20 vols.; Washington, D.C.: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association of the United States, 1903-04), 11:238.

⁵ Springfield correspondence by John Hay, 22 January, Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 23 January 1861, Michael Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist: John Hay’s Anonymous Writings for the Press, 1860-1864 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998), 20.

⁶ Springfield correspondence by John Hay, 28 January, Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 29 January 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 21.

huge crowds turned out to welcome him.⁷ “It is important to allow full scope to the enthusiasm of the people just now,” Chase told Lincoln upon learning of his proposed itinerary.⁸

Other considerations doubtless influenced Lincoln as he contemplated a long, taxing, slow journey to the nation’s capital. In selecting a cabinet, he told Thurlow Weed, he “had been much embarrassed” because of “his want of acquaintance with the prominent men of the day.”⁹ The train trip would allow him to meet leading Republicans outside Illinois and consult with them about patronage and policy matters. Moreover, he might inspire the people he addressed in Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York with the same kind of confidence that he had inspired among juries and voters in the Prairie State.¹⁰ Lincoln understood that the voters who elected him were eager to see what he looked like, and he was willing to satisfy their curiosity.

Originally, Lincoln had intended to have his wife and younger sons to join him in New York for only the final leg of the trip.¹¹ He evidently wanted to spare them the fatigue of the longer, more circuitous journey.¹² On February 9, he changed plans,

⁷ Victor Searcher, Lincoln’s Journey to Greatness: A Factual Account of the Twelve-Day Inaugural Trip (Philadelphia: John C. Winston, 1960), 53.

⁸ Chase to Lincoln, Columbus, 28 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

⁹ Thurlow Weed Barnes, Life of Thurlow Weed including His Autobiography and a Memoir (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1884), 1:605-6.

¹⁰ Searcher, Lincoln’s Journey to Greatness, 14-15, 20.

¹¹ Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 28 January 1861; Springfield correspondence by John Hay, 28 January 1861, Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 29 January 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 21; Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 27 January, Cincinnati Commercial, 28 January, 1 February 1861.

¹² Springfield correspondence, 9 February, Chicago Press and Tribune, n.d., copied in the Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 12 February 1861. According to this report, Mary Lincoln “goes to St. Louis on Monday to remain a day or two. Mrs. E. L. Baker . . . goes with her to that city and will accompany her to Washington, and there be her companion and assistant in doing the honors of the White House.” Mrs. Baker was the niece of Mrs. Lincoln. Originally, Elizabeth Edwards, mother of Mrs. Baker and sister of Mrs. Lincoln, had been announced as the one slated to serve in that capacity.

evidently because General Winfield Scott advised that his wife’s “absence from the train might be regarded as proceeding from an apprehension of danger to the President.”¹³ This must have pleased her, for she was eager to accompany her husband.¹⁴ At the last minute, the plan was again altered for reasons not entirely clear, and Mrs. Lincoln was not aboard when the train left Springfield.¹⁵

On his journey from the Illinois capital to the U.S. capital, Lincoln ended months of public silence with a flurry of speeches foreshadowing his eagerly-awaited inaugural address.¹⁶ But as his train zigged and zagged its way eastward over two dozen different railroad lines, his rhetoric seemed to zig and zag between confrontation and conciliation. Some days he seemed to be a hawk, but on other days a dove. Did the nation face a truly grave crisis or merely an “artificial” one?

Lincoln began his oratorical marathon with some apolitical remarks, a brief farewell to Springfield, one of his most affecting prose masterpieces. In the immediately preceding days, he “exhibited much sadness at his approaching departure,” and his

¹³ Indianapolis correspondence, 11 February, New York World, 15 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 24; Indianapolis correspondence, 11 February, Chicago Tribune, 12 February 1861; Harry E. Pratt, ed., Concerning Mr. Lincoln, in which Abraham Lincoln Is Pictured As He Appeared to Letter Writers of His Time (Springfield: Abraham Lincoln Association, 1944), 49; Cincinnati correspondence by Henry Villard, 13 February, New York Herald, 14 February 1861; Thomas D. Jones to William Linn McMillen, Springfield, 11 February 1861, Lincoln Collection, Lilly Library, Indiana University. Hay speculated that “[s]o many vapory rumors of contemplated assault upon Mr. Lincoln have been current in Washington for months, that the general [Winfield Scott] may have come at last to regard such a contingency as at least possible.”

¹⁴ Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 9 February, New York Herald, 16 February 1861.

¹⁵ Springfield correspondence, 11 February, Chicago Tribune, 12 February 1861. The New York Herald reporter on February 9 wrote that Mary Lincoln would leave for St. Louis on the evening of February 11 “to make additional purchases for the white house.” Later she would travel to New York, escorted by E. L. Baker, to join the presidential entourage there. New York Herald, 16 February 1861.

¹⁶ A general overview of the trip can be found in Victor Seawright, Lincoln’s Journey to Greatness. The typescript of a detailed appendix to that volume, omitted from the published version, is available at the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress.

customary “hilarious good spirits” forsook him.¹⁷ A journalist noted that the “close approach of his departure has rendered him unusually grave and reflecting. The parting with this scene of his joys and sorrows during the last thirty years, and a large circle of old and faithful friends, apparently saddens him, and directs his thoughts to the cherished past rather than the uncertain future.”¹⁸ At the “rather dingy little railroad station” on the morning of February 11, he spent half an hour shaking hands with innumerable friends and neighbors. His “face was pale, and quivered with emotion so deep as to render him almost unable to utter a single word.” The mood was one of “subdued anxiety, almost of solemnity” as he mounted the platform of the train’s rear car. There, a friend noted, his “breast heaved with emotion and he could scarcely command his feelings sufficiently to commence.”¹⁹ For a few seconds he surveyed the crowd of a thousand well-wishers, Republicans and Democrats alike, as the cold wind blew a combination of snow and rain into their faces.²⁰ Only the locomotive’s steady hissing broke the silence.²¹

Finally “in a voice broken and tremulous with emotion and a most unutterable sadness, yet slow and measured and distinct,” he expressed his profound feelings: “My friends, No one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting.

¹⁷ Indianapolis correspondence by John Hay, 11 February, New York World, 15 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 24; Springfield correspondence, 9 February, New York Herald, 10 and 16 February 1861.

¹⁸ Springfield correspondence, 9 February, Philadelphia North American, 11 February 1861.

¹⁹ Indianapolis correspondence by John Hay, 11 February, New York World, 15 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 24; John G. Nicolay and John Hay, Abraham Lincoln: A History (10 vols.; New York: Century, 1890), 3:290; Springfield correspondence, 11 February, New York Herald, 12 February 1861; James C. Conkling to Clinton L. Conkling, Springfield, 12 February 1861, in Pratt, ed., Concerning Mr. Lincoln, 50; Paul M. Angle, “Here I Have Lived”: A History of Lincoln’s Springfield (Springfield: Abraham Lincoln Association, 1935), 260; Thomas D. Jones to William Linn McMillen, Springfield, 11 February 1861, Lincoln Collection, Lilly Library, Indiana University.

²⁰ Springfield correspondence, 11 February, Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 12 February 1861; John Cook to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 11 February 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

²¹ Illinois State Register (Springfield), 12 February 1861.

To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe every thing. 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 every where 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.”²²

“We will do it; we will do it,” responded many in the crowd, who, like the speaker, had tears in their eyes.²³ An editor of the Illinois State Journal called it “a most impressive scene. We have known Mr. Lincoln for many years; we have heard him speak upon a hundred different occasions; but we never saw him so profoundly affected, nor did he ever utter an address which seemed to us so full of simple and touching eloquence, so exactly adapted to the occasion, so worthy of the man and the hour. Although it was

²² Diary of Henry C. Latham, 11 February 1861, Bulletin of the Abraham Lincoln Association, June 1938, 8; Nicolay and Hay, Lincoln, 3:290; Newton Bateman, Abraham Lincoln: An Address (Galesburg, Illinois: Cadmus Club, 1899), 35; Ward Hill Lamon, The Life of Abraham Lincoln: From His Birth to His Inauguration as President (Boston: J. R. Osgood, 1872), 505; Roy P. Basler et al., eds., Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (8 vols. plus index; New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953-55), 4:190. This is the most polished version of the speech, and may represent Lincoln’s immediate revision of his remarks rather than what he actually said. Some newspaper accounts that differ from it were perhaps taken verbatim by shorthand reporters. The version given here, which is the one best known and most widely admired, was partially written and partially dictated by Lincoln on the train shortly after it left the station. The text is very similar to the version published by the Chicago Press and Tribune on February 12. According to Jonathan H. Cheney, who heard the speech, the Chicago paper gave the most accurate account of what Lincoln actually said. Walter B. Stevens, A Reporter’s Lincoln, ed. Michael Burlingame (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 142-43. For a thoughtful discussion of the various versions of the address, see Douglas L. Wilson, Lincoln’s Sword: The Presidency and the Power of Words (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 10-19.

²³ Springfield correspondence, 11 February, New York Tribune, 12 February 1861; James C. Conkling to Clinton L. Conkling, Springfield, 12 February 1861, Pratt, ed., Concerning Mr. Lincoln, 50; Springfield

raining fast when he began to speak, every hat was lifted, and every head bent forward to catch the last words of the departing chief.”²⁴ The New York World commented that nothing “could have been more appropriate and touching,” while the Chicago Press and Tribune accurately predicted that it “will become a part of the national history.”²⁵ Later, Isaac N. Arnold declared that there was “not a more simple, touching, and beautiful speech in the English language.”²⁶ After Lincoln took leave of his family and entered the car, the crowd gave three cheers and then stood silently as the train slowly pulled away from the depot.²⁷

That train contained three ordinary coaches and a baggage car, each warmed by a coal stove. Lincoln occupied the rear car, which no one was supposed to enter unless summoned by him.²⁸ The entourage included his eldest son and his two secretaries as well as journalists, political allies, and friends.²⁹ One of them, Norman B. Judd, was

correspondence, 11 February, New York Herald, 12 February 1861.

²⁴ “Departure of Mr. Lincoln – Parting Address,” Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 12 February 1861.

²⁵ New York World, 12 February 1861; “Lincoln’s Speeches,” Chicago Press and Tribune, 23 February 1861.

²⁶ Congressional Globe, 38th Congress, 1st session 1:198 (19 March 1864).

²⁷ Indianapolis correspondence by John Hay, 11 February, New York World, 15 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 24.

²⁸ Reminiscences of Edward F. Leonard in Walter B. Stevens, A Reporter’s Lincoln, ed. Michael Burlingame (1916; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 178.

²⁹ For a list of the passengers, see Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 352-53. The journalists included Henry Villard of the New York Herald, Henry Lovie of Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Magazine, Uriah H. Painter of the Philadelphia Inquirer, a Mr. Terrill of the Cincinnati Gazette, J. R. Drake of the Associated Press, O. H. Dutton of the New York Tribune, Joseph Howard of the New York Times, and Henry Martin Smith of the Chicago Tribune. Cleveland Plain Dealer, 16 February 1861. T. C. Evans said he was aboard covering the trip for a New York paper. T. C. Evans, Of Many Men (New York: American News, 1888), 94-95.

unimpressed by the roster, which he called “very badly made up.” He hoped that somehow it would “get through without especial discredit.”³⁰

For protection, a military escort was arranged, but to avoid a bellicose appearance, some members of it joined the party later.³¹ Among those guarding the president-elect were army officers who volunteered for that duty while on leave, including Colonel Edwin V. Sumner, Captain John Pope, Captain William B. Hazen, Major David Hunter, and Captain George Whitfield Hazzard.³² Lincoln invited Hunter to join him on what he predicted would be “a circuitous and rather tedious journey.”³³ In December, Colonel Sumner had spent several days with Lincoln discussing military matters.³⁴ Eleven years earlier in Chicago, Lincoln had met Pope, the son of a federal judge before whom he had once practiced.³⁵ Assisting them were James M. Burgess, whom the governor of Wisconsin detailed to Springfield as a bodyguard; Thomas Mather, adjutant general of Illinois; Ward Hill Lamon, Lincoln’s burly colleague at the bar and close personal friend; and Elmer E. Ellsworth, a young militia leader who had

³⁰ Judd to his wife Ada, 14 February 1861, Judd Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, in Holzer, Lincoln President-Elect: Abraham Lincoln and the Great Secession Winter, 1860-1861 (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 298.

³¹ Lincoln evidently accepted the offer of John Cook’s Springfield zouave unit to escort him on the train journey, but General Scott reportedly sent a telegram “saying it was inadvisable to enter Washington accompanied by any organization having a belligerent appearance.” Accordingly, Lincoln “recalled his assent.” John Cook’s reminiscences, Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 8 February 1909; John Cook’s undated reminiscences, Lincoln Centennial Association Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

³² Hazzard joined the party at Indianapolis, at Lincoln’s request. Indianapolis correspondence, 12 February, Philadelphia Inquirer, 13 February 1861. Pope did the same. Peter Cozzens, General John Pope: A Life for the Nation (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 28. Hunter and Sumner boarded at State Line, a stop on the Illinois-Indiana border. Edward A. Miller, Lincoln’s Abolitionist General: The Biography of David Hunter (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 52. Hazzard, who had graduated fifth in the West Point class of 1847, died of wounds suffered at the battle of White Oak Swamp in 1862. New York Tribune, 9 December 1862.

³³ Lincoln to Hunter, Springfield, 26 January 1861, Presidential and Other American Manuscripts from the Dr. Robert Small Trust, Southeby’s, 3 April 2008, in Holzer,* 280.

³⁴ George T. Brown to Lyman Trumbull, Alton, 10 December 1860, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

achieved national renown and was a surrogate son to Lincoln.³⁶ The president-elect denied the necessity for such an escort, saying “there was no danger whatsoever,” and tried to avoid appearing as though he traveled under guard.³⁷

In charge of all travel arrangements was William S. Wood, a one-time jeweler and hotel manager who came to Springfield in January 1861 at the suggestion of Seward, Weed, and their friend Erastus Corning, a railroad manager, leading New York Democrat, and relative of Wood. Seward “stated that Mr. Wood had had great experience in railroad transportation, and especially in organizing excursion trips over long distances” and “was well acquainted with railroad officials.”³⁸ Wood “was a man of comely appearance, greatly impressed with the importance of his mission and inclined to assume airs of consequence and condescension.”³⁹ The journalist-historian David Rankin Barbee deemed Wood “a scoundrel” who “was sent to Springfield by the Eastern Railroads to entice Lincoln to make that roundabout journey to Washington for the

³⁵ Cozzens, Pope, 28-29.

³⁶ Searcher, Lincoln’s Journey to Greatness, 8; Wisconsin Officials to Lincoln, Madison Wisconsin, January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Ruth Painter Randall, Colonel Elmer Ellsworth: A Biography of Lincoln’s Friend and First Hero of the Civil War (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960); Michael Burlingame, The Inner World of Abraham Lincoln (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 79-80.

³⁷ Reminiscences of Henry B. Carrington, Indianapolis News, 11 February 1908. A good friend of Salmon P. Chase, Carrington was adjutant general of Ohio and formed part of the entourage for a portion of the trip. He had been invited by Lincoln to accompany him on the journey. Frank L. Klement, “Carrington and the Golden Circle Legend in Indiana during the Civil War,” Indiana Magazine of History 61 (1955): 21; Meriden, Connecticut, Record, 24 February 1964.

³⁸ Reminiscences of Edward F. Leonard in Stevens, A Reporter’s Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 177; Edward F. Leonard to David P. Todd, New York, 4 February 1899, Miscellaneous Manuscript Collections, Library of Congress.

³⁹ Henry Villard, Memoirs of Henry Villard, Journalist and Financier: 1838-1900 (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1904), 1:148; Norma B. Cuthbert, ed., Lincoln and the Baltimore Plot, 1861: From Pinkerton Records and Related Papers (San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 1949), 68. A native of Pompey, N.Y., Wood had run a jewelry business in Syracuse before moving to New York in 1850. There he established a jewelry store on Broadway, where he prospered until a fire burnt him out, leaving him in debt. He became a clerk at Young, Stebbins, and Company. He also worked as the manager of a coffin company. New York Herald, 27 February 1861; Dunn and Bradstreet records, Baker Library, Business

inauguration. By lies and propaganda he worked on the imagination of Lincoln until Uncle Abe actually imagined that if he took the direct route to Washington, over the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, he would be assassinated.”⁴⁰ (John W. Garrett, president of that railroad company, asserted that Lincoln “abandoned the idea of coming to Washington via Wheeling [Virginia], in consequence of certain alleged threats of violence from parties in Virginia and Maryland.”)⁴¹ On the trip, Wood’s “attentions were devoted exclusively to the whims and caprices of Mrs. Lincoln.”⁴² (She could be difficult on trains. En route home from her shopping trip to New York earlier that winter, she used free passes on each leg of the journey. In Buffalo, she found herself without a pass for one stretch of road and indignantly protested when asked to pay. Her son Robert appealed to the superintendent of that company: “the old woman is in the cars raising h—l about her passes – I wish you would go and attend to her!”)⁴³

As the train rolled eastward that morning, Lincoln took a pencil and on a large pad wrote a speech that he was to deliver in Indianapolis later that day. As he filled the sheets, his secretaries, John G. Nicolay and John Hay, took them and made copies.⁴⁴ Hay

School, Harvard University; newspaper clippings in the W. S. Wood file, Onondaga Historical Association (courtesy of James O. Hall.)

⁴⁰ David Rankin Barbee to Mrs. James G. Randall, Washington, 27 April 1951, James G. Randall Papers, Library of Congress.

⁴¹ Garrett allegedly expressed this view in a letter to Mayor James G. Berret of Washington. Washington Globe, 7 February 1861. Though Lincoln preferred the more southerly route, Henry Villard reported that “there is a great pressure brought to bear on him in favor of a more northerly one, via Pittsburgh and Harrisburg.” Henry Villard, Lincoln on the Eve of '61: A Journalist's Story, ed. Harold G. & Oswald Garrison Villard (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1941), 49. Lincoln reportedly changed his mind about the route in late January. H. N. Gilbert to William Henry Seward, Washington, 28 January 1861, Seward Papers, University of Rochester.

⁴² Reminiscences of William P. Wood, Washington Sunday Gazette, 23 January 1887.

⁴³ Rochester Democrat, n.d., copied in the Baltimore Sun, 22 February 1861.

⁴⁴ Reminiscences of Edward F. Leonard in Stevens, A Reporter's Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 178; Edward F. Leonard to David P. Todd, New York, 4 February 1899, Miscellaneous Manuscript Collections, Library of Congress. The sculptor Thomas D. Jones recalled that during his sessions with Lincoln, the president-elect

reported that “[s]omething of the gloom of parting with neighbors and friends, bidding farewell to the community in the midst of which he has lived for a quarter of a century,” seemed to afflict him. “He was abstracted, sad, thoughtful, and spent much of his time in the private car appropriated to his use.” Lifting his spirits briefly were the large crowds cheering him as the train passed through hamlets like Cerro Gordo, Sadorous, and Iresdale, “at each of which clusters of several hundred people were assembled, all enthusiastic, vociferous, and fluttering with handkerchiefs and flags.” At Decatur, thousands had gathered to pay him honor. There he descended from the train, “moving rapidly through the crowd, shaking hands vigorously, and incurring embraces and blessings to an extent that must have given him a slight premonition of what was in store for him,” Hay noted. At the second stop (in Tolono) the crowd badgered him into giving a speech, which amounted to little more than a polite acknowledgement of their warm welcome. They responded “with as wild an intensity of delight as if it had been a condensed embodiment of the substance of his inaugural.”⁴⁵ The brakeman on the train found it “soul stirring to see these white whiskered old fellows, many of whom had known Lincoln in his humbler days, join in the cheering.”⁴⁶ Hay recalled that there “was something of religious fervor in the welcome everywhere extended to him, and the

“commenced preparing his addresses to be delivered in the different cities through which he was to pass from Springfield to Washington. His speeches or addresses were very deliberately composed, in my room. I sharpened all the Farbers [pencils] he required. He generally wrote with a small portfolio and paper resting on his knee, with his published speeches lying beside him for reference. After completing one of his compositions he would very modestly read it to me. At this time my studio was Lincoln’s only retreat from the pursuit of applicants for office, where he could compose his addresses in peace.” Sacramento Weekly Union, 4 November 1871, in Rufus Rockwell Wilson, Lincoln in Portraiture (New York: Press of the Pioneers, 1935), 148-49.

⁴⁵ Indianapolis correspondence by John Hay, 11 February, New York World, 15 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 25.

⁴⁶ Reminiscences of Thomas Ross in an unidentified newspaper article, [1903?], clipping collection, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne.

thronging crowds that came out under the harsh skies to bid him God-speed.”⁴⁷

Repeatedly Lincoln ascribed such enthusiasm to the office he would soon occupy and to the nation he would lead rather than to himself personally.

If the crowds were impressed, Henry Villard was not. “Lincoln always had an embarrassed air” on such occasions, Villard wrote, and he resembled “a country clodhopper appearing in fashionable society, and was nearly always stiff and unhappy in his off-hand remarks.”⁴⁸

At each stop committees greeted him on behalf of legislatures, governors, Wide Awakes, working men’s clubs, and many other organizations. Nicolay recalled that they “were all eager to see the President-elect, to shake his hand, to make speeches and ask him to reply, to invite him hither and thither; and all this in perfect sincerity, in that irrepressible enthusiasm which only those anomalous and exciting times could generate.” Lincoln’s friends, concerned for his safety and comfort, “were dismayed at the readiness with which, at the beginning, he placed himself under the leadership of such committees,” which “were often composed of men utterly without that quick executive judgment which knew when to start and where and how to go.” Amid “the push and crush of these dense throngs of people, in this rushing of trains, clanging of bells, booming of guns, shouting and huzzas of individuals and crowds, it was difficult to instantly determine which call was the more important or more proper, and a false start might not only bring on an irretrievable waste of time and a derangement of official programmes and processions, but a false step even might bring danger to life or limb

⁴⁷ John Hay, “The Heroic Age in Washington,” lecture of 1871, Michael Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln’s Side: John Hay’s Civil War Correspondence and Selected Writings (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 117.

⁴⁸ Villard, Memoirs, 1:152.

under wheels of locomotives or carriages.” The committees, “consumed by a demon of impatience,” occasionally would “tumble pell-mell into a car and almost drag Mr. Lincoln out before the train had even stopped, and habitually, after stoppage, before the proper police or military guards could be stationed about a depot or stopping place to secure necessary space and order for a comfortable open path to the waiting carriages.” For a while, Lincoln “could not resist the popular importunings,” because his “sympathy with and for the people made him shrink, not as a matter of reasoning but apparently upon some constitutional impulse, from any objection to or protest against the over eagerness and over officiousness of these first greetings.” Only “after some days of experience and several incidents of discomfort” did he conquer that impulse, “but having mastered it he kept it for the remainder of the journey under perfect control, and would remain seated in his car until he received the notice agreed upon that preparations outside had been deliberately completed.”⁴⁹

Mary Lincoln also found the committees a trial. Captain Hazzard, part of the military escort, reported that “Mr. & Mrs. Lincoln are worried almost out of their lives by visitors of both sexes. Every village sends a reception committee of twenty or thirty, and some of them bring their wives, so that not only are all the seats in the cars taken but the pass way is filled with people standing. Neither the President nor his wife have one moment’s respite and they are evidently tired of it.”⁵⁰ The Lincolns had no privacy “except when they went into their sleeping compartment. Everybody walked in or out,

⁴⁹ John G. Nicolay, “Some Incidents in Lincoln’s Journey from Springfield to Washington,” Michael Burlingame, ed., An Oral History of Abraham Lincoln: John G. Nicolay’s Interviews and Essays (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 113.

⁵⁰ George W. Hazzard to his wife, Buffalo, 17 February 1861, Lincoln Papers, Addendum 1, Library of Congress. Cf. “The Journey of President-Elect Lincoln from Springfield to Washington for His First Inauguration in 1861,” Baltimore and Ohio Magazine, February 1922, 10.

and talked or listened as he pleased. There was no ceremony, and Mr. Lincoln did not seem to care to inspire any personal respect. He told stories to the delegations that boarded the car, and the delegates told stories to him.”⁵¹

At Lafayette, Indiana, Lincoln offended some listeners with his impromptu remark that “we are bound together in Christianity, civilization, and patriotism.”⁵² The editor of a Jewish periodical took umbrage: “We do not believe there is a German infidel, American eccentric, spiritual rapper or atheist in the Northern States who did not vote for Mr. Lincoln. Let us see how much benefit he will derive from their Christianity.”⁵³

That evening at Indianapolis, where he was welcomed with a thirty-four-gun salute and thousands of vehemently hurraing Hoosiers, Lincoln gave a startling preview of his inaugural address which pleased stiff-backed opponents of appeasement.⁵⁴ He began his remarks, delivered from the balcony of the Bates House to an audience of 20,000, by analyzing the words coercion and invasion. “Would the marching of an army into South Carolina, for instance, without the consent of her people, and in hostility against them, be coercion or invasion?” he asked. (Though he did not mention it, Lincoln may well have been thinking of George Washington’s dispatch of 12,000 troops to crush the Pennsylvania Whiskey Rebellion in 1794.) Yes, he conceded, “it would be invasion, and it would be coercion too, if the people of that country were forced to submit.” On the other hand, if the federal government “simply insists upon holding its own forts, or retaking those forts which belong to it, – [cheers,] – or the enforcement of the laws of the

⁵¹ Stephen Fiske, “When Lincoln Was First Inaugurated,” Ladies’ Home Journal 14 (March 1897): 7. Fiske joined the party in New York toward the end of the journey.

⁵² Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:192.

⁵³ The Israelite (Cincinnati), 15 March 1861, in Bertram Wallace Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1951), 41.

United States in the collection of duties upon foreign importations, – [renewed cheers,] – or even the withdrawal of the mails from those portions of the country where the mails themselves are habitually violated; would any or all of these things be coercion? Do the lovers of the Union contend that they will resist coercion or invasion of any State, understanding that any or all of these would be coercing or invading a State? If they do, then it occurs to me that the means for the preservation of the Union they so greatly love, in their own estimation, is of a very thin and airy character. [Applause.]” If they became ill, “they would consider the little pills of the homoeopathist as already too large for them to swallow.” They regarded the Union not “like a regular marriage at all, but only as a sort of free-love arrangement, – [laughter,] – to be maintained on what that sect calls passionate attraction. [Continued laughter.]”

(Sarcastically a Southern paper queried: “Is not this a chaste and elevated comparison? Is it not on a level with the dignity of the subject?”⁵⁵ In later years, Lincoln might have likened the secessionists’ action to a no-fault divorce.)

Lincoln then asked: “What is the particular sacredness of a State? I speak not of that position which is given to a State in and by the Constitution of the United States, for that all of us agree to – we abide by; but that position assumed, that a State can carry with it out of the Union that which it holds in sacredness by virtue of its connection with the Union. I am speaking of that assumed right of a State, as a primary principle, that the Constitution should rule all that is less than itself, and ruin all that is bigger than itself. [Laughter.] But, I ask, wherein does consist that right? If a State, in one instance, and a

⁵⁴ George S. Cottman, “Lincoln in Indianapolis,” Indiana Magazine of History 24 (1928): 2-11.

⁵⁵ “Mr. Lincoln and His Speeches,” Charleston, S.C., Courier, 19 February 1861. Similar criticism appeared in the New Orleans Crescent, 21 February 1861.

county in another, should be equal in extent of territory, and equal in the number of people, wherein is that State any better than the county? Can a change of name change the right? By what principle of original right is it that one-fiftieth or one-ninetieth of a great nation, by calling themselves a State, have the right to break up and ruin that nation as a matter of original principle? Now, I ask the question – I am not deciding anything – [laughter,] – and with the request that you will think somewhat upon that subject and decide for yourselves, if you choose, when you get ready, – where is the mysterious, original right, from principle, for a certain district of country with inhabitants, by merely being called a State, to play tyrant over all its own citizens, and deny the authority of everything greater than itself. [Laughter.] I say I am deciding nothing, but simply giving something for you to reflect upon.”⁵⁶

This hard-line speech, though couched in mild terms, thrilled the crowd, which shouted “That’s the talk!” and “We’ve got a President now!” John Hay reported that Lincoln’s delivery was as impressive as the substance of his remarks. His voice was “clear” and “sonorous,” and his “colloquial” style “singularly effective.” There was, Hay said, “something inspiring in the individual presence of the man. His manners are simple almost to naiveté; he has always a friendly, sometime a jocose word for those who approach him; but beneath all this, the resolute, determined character of the man is apparent.”⁵⁷

The Northern press carried Lincoln’s address, which, the Baltimore American observed, “is regarded as indicating a determination to deny the right of secession,

⁵⁶ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:195-96.

⁵⁷ Indianapolis correspondence by John Hay, 11 February, New York World, 15 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 26, 27.

enforce the laws, protect the public property, recover that which has been seized, and collect the revenue.”⁵⁸ Members of Congress read the speech with keen interest. A Washington correspondent reported that it “produces a great effect here. It is regarded as an expression of the determination of the President-elect to retake the forts, collect the revenue in the ports of the seceding states, and stop the postal arrangements. The influence of these declarations of Mr. Lincoln upon the Republicans in Congress is very perceptible.”⁵⁹

So, too, was its effect on Southern lawmakers. From the House of Representatives Justin Morrill wrote that the speech “has roused the ire of members from the slave States and they will do all in their power now to prevent our passing any bills even to pay ordinary debts or for the support of [the] government.”⁶⁰ A journalist noted that Lincoln’s speech “had a bad effect” at the capitol. Because the president-elect “evidently means to enforce the federal laws in the seceding states by means of the army,” Southerners “assert that they hold no allegiance to the federal government, and any troops sent by it to their soil will be met as foreign invaders.”⁶¹ Southern papers were critical of the “reckless boldness” of speech, which “breathed of war” and amounted to “sporting with fire-balls in a powder magazine.”⁶² The Washington National Intelligencer sniffed that the “present is no time for the discussion of nice philological questions” but rather a time to devise

⁵⁸ Baltimore American, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 18 February 1861.

⁵⁹ Washington correspondence, 12 February, New York Evening Post, 13 February 1861.

⁶⁰ Justin S. Morrill to his wife, Washington, 13 February 1861, Morrill Papers, Library of Congress.

⁶¹ Washington correspondence, 12 February, Cincinnati Enquirer, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 15 February 1861.

⁶² Washington correspondence by Critick, 11 March, Charleston Courier, 14 March 1861; Baltimore Exchange, 12 March 1861; Louisville Journal, n.d., quoted in Cottman, “Lincoln in Indianapolis,” 9.

compromises to save the Union.⁶³ The New Orleans Crescent belittled Lincoln's use of rhetorical questions: "Mr. Lincoln betrays an utter inability to rise to the dignity of his subject. He resorts to the indirect and unsatisfactory and undignified expedient of asking question's of the populace before him, instead of coming out like a man, and saying flatly what he means. Too timid to express boldly his sentiments, he resorts to the roundabout way of putting interrogatories, thereby suggesting what he would not declare openly – and then, for fear of its being considered too great a committal, reminding the people that they must recollect he was only asking questions, not expressing opinions!"⁶⁴

Observing that Lincoln's stand differed little from that of Secretary of War Joseph Holt in his recent letter responding to the demand that Fort Sumter be surrendered, the Nashville Democrat cautioned fellow Tennesseans to "Beware . . . how you condemn now what you have clearly approved so very recently."⁶⁵

According to Henry Villard, Lincoln's speech at Indianapolis was "of the greatest significance, although it deals more in intimations than in definite assertions."⁶⁶ Some regarded his position as the only one that duty allowed. "Other ground than this the President elect could not take, if he would regard his oath 'to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution,' unless he were to regard it as in fact the rope of sand which another construction has seemed to make it," observed the Boston Daily Advertiser.⁶⁷ The New York Tribune hailed the speech as a welcome indication of Lincoln's resolve to insist that

⁶³ "Speech of the President Elect," Washington National Intelligencer, 14 February 1861.

⁶⁴ New Orleans Crescent, 21 February 1861.

⁶⁵ Nashville Democrat, n.d., copied in the Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 21 February 1861.

⁶⁶ New York Herald, 12 February 1861.

⁶⁷ "Coercion Defined," Boston Daily Advertiser, 16 February 1861.

if concessions were to be made, they must be made by the South.⁶⁸ Should Lincoln's implied insistence on collecting the revenues and retaking federal facilities lead to war, so be it, said the New York Evening Post: "if war comes, it must be made by the South; but let the South understand, when it does come, that eighty years of enterprise, of accumulation and of progress in all the arts of warfare have not been lost upon the North."⁶⁹

The New York Herald, on the other hand, condemned the speech for exhibiting "the obstinacy of an intractable partisan" and proclaiming "a line of policy adverse to union and to peace, and eminently adapted, not only to enlarge, strengthen and consolidate the new Southern republic, but to destroy the hopes of law and order of the North in a wasting civil war."⁷⁰ Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper worried that some passages were "capable of a terrible misconstruction."⁷¹ In Cincinnati, the speech "created an immense sensation," for it was "looked upon as a decided coercion pronunciamento" and a "declaration of war against the South."⁷²

Seward's friends, surprised by the belligerent tone of the Indianapolis address, sent a telegram asking if it were genuine. Thurlow Weed left Washington immediately after reading the text of Lincoln's remarks.⁷³ Cassius M. Clay warned that "Lincoln will have to modify his Indiana speech so as to hold onto the status quo – a blow struck to

⁶⁸ New York Tribune, 13 February 1861.

⁶⁹ "Mr. Lincoln's Policy," New York Evening Post, 16 February 1861

⁷⁰ New York Herald, 15 February 1861.

⁷¹ Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 23 February 1861.

⁷² Cincinnati correspondence, 12 February, Baltimore Sun, 14 February 1861; George W. Sanders to Stephen A. Douglas, Cincinnati, 12 February 1861, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

⁷³ Washington correspondence, 16 February, New York Journal of Commerce, n.d., copied in the New York Tribune, 20 February 1861; Washington correspondence, 17 February, Cincinnati Gazette, 18 February 1861.

regain lost forts will unite the South.”⁷⁴

Lincoln had evidently prepared the speech for delivery to the Indiana legislature on the following day, but that event was cancelled.⁷⁵ The “fatigue of the previous day’s proceedings” may have been responsible for the change in plans. That fatigue resulted from an evening reception at which the president-elect’s “coolness under the terrific infliction of several thousand hand-shakings” prompted Hay to remark that “he unites to the courage of Andrew Jackson the insensibility to physical suffering which is usually assigned to bronze statues.” The young assistant secretary judged that “the rack, the thumb screw, King James’s boot, the cap of silence, with all the other dark and recondite paraphernalia of torture, become instruments of cheerful and enlivening pastime, beside the ferocious grip and the demoniac wrench of the muscular citizen of the West. When it is not one citizen merely but a frantic succession of citizens, each more muscular and more wildly appreciative than the other, the result may, perhaps, be faintly conceived.”⁷⁶ Lincoln’s prankish son Robert made matters worse by standing outside the hotel where he “piloted scores of mischief-loving boys like himself again and again up to the unsuspecting President, who gave them the heartiest handshake imaginable with one hand and mopped his brow with the other.”⁷⁷ Because the ordeal almost prostrated Lincoln, his handlers resolved to keep future receptions short.⁷⁸

Things did not go smoothly at the Hoosier capital. Like many other committees in

⁷⁴ Clay to John A. Andrew, n.p., 18 February 1861, Andrew Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

⁷⁵ Indianapolis Daily Journal, 13 February 1861.

⁷⁶ Indianapolis correspondence by John Hay, 11 February, New York World, 15 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 26.

⁷⁷ William R. Holloway, “Lincoln’s Visit to Indianapolis,” typescript, Holloway Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis. Holloway’s source was Charles Dennis. Holloway became the editor of the Indianapolis Journal in 1864.

charge of arrangements, the Indianapolitans proved imperfect.⁷⁹ Outsiders appropriated the carriages designated for the presidential party, compelling most of the entourage to force their way through the crowds to the Bates House, clutching their luggage.⁸⁰ There Hay found that the “halls, passages, and rooms have been congested with turbulent congregations of men, all of whom had too many elbows, too much curiosity, and a perfectly gushing desire to shake hands with somebody – the President, if possible; if not, somebody who had shaken hands with him.” Chaos reigned in the dining room, where Lincoln had to wait twenty minutes before being served. Waiters mishandled orders, spilled sugar down patrons’ backs, brought biscuits to those ordering ham and pickles to those requesting tea. The mayhem amused Lincoln.⁸¹

The president-elect was emphatically not amused when his son misplaced a carpetbag containing the only copies of his inaugural address. Robert, not yet eighteen years old, had accepted an invitation by fellow adolescents to see the city’s sights and carelessly left the precious bag with a hotel desk clerk. In a tone of “bored and injured virtue, Robert replied to his father’s query about the location of that precious valise. A “look of stupefaction” came over Lincoln’s face as he heard what the lad had done, “and visions of that Inaugural in all the next morning’s newspapers floated through his imagination,” according to John G. Nicolay. “Without a word he opened the door of his room, forced his way through the crowded corridor down to the office, where, with a single stride of his long legs, he swung himself across the clerk’s counter, behind which a

⁷⁸ Cincinnati correspondence, 13 February, New York Tribune, 16 February 1861.

⁷⁹ Nicolay, “Some Incidents in Lincoln’s Journey,” Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 110-12.

⁸⁰ Unidentified Indianapolis newspaper, quoted in Weik, “Lincoln’s Last Visit to Indianapolis,” Indianapolis Star, 12 February 1911.

small mountain of carpetbags of all colors had accumulated.” With a little key, the president-elect began opening all the black bags, much to the surprised amusement of onlookers. Eventually he discovered his own carpetbag, which he took charge of thereafter. Ward Hill Lamon recalled that he “had never seen Mr. Lincoln so much annoyed, so much perplexed, and for the time so angry.” He added that Lincoln “seldom manifested a spirit of anger toward his children – this was the nearest approach to it I had ever witnessed.”⁸²

The next morning, Mrs. Lincoln arrived in Indianapolis shortly before the presidential train departed for Cincinnati.⁸³ On February 14, Norman B. Judd wrote his wife that “Mrs. L. behaves quite well – and the children have been reasonably good considering what they are. I have kept a respectful distance from the lady only paying my proper respects.”⁸⁴ Not every fellow passenger held such a high opinion of the first-lady-to-be. En route to the Queen City, she impressed one observer unfavorably. As a gentleman with a newspaper passed by her, she asked: “Is that a Cincinnati paper you have in your hand?” When assured that it was, she queried: “Does it say anything about us?” Taken aback by her self-importance, he was reminded of “an honest Dutchman, who had unexpectedly been elevated to the position of major of the militia. When the result of the election was known, the children wanted to know if they would now all be majors.

⁸¹ Indianapolis correspondence by John Hay, 11 February, New York World, 15 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 26.

⁸² Nicolay, “Some Incidents in Lincoln’s Journey,” Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 108-10; Ward Hill Lamon, Recollections of Abraham Lincoln, 1847–1865, ed. Dorothy Lamon Teillard (2d ed.; Washington, D.C.: Privately published, 1911), 35-36; Helen Nicolay, Lincoln’s Secretary: A Biography of John G. Nicolay (New York: Longmans, Green, 1949), 64; Ben: Perley Poore in Rice, ed., Reminiscences of Lincoln, 224; Robert Todd Lincoln to Judd Stewart, 8 January 1920, Judd Stewart Papers*Get

⁸³ Indianapolis correspondence, 12 February, New York Herald, 13 February 1861.

⁸⁴ Judd to his wife Ada, 14 February 1861, Judd Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, in Holzer, Lincoln President-Elect, 332.

‘No, you fools,’ indignantly replied the mother, ‘none but your daddie and me.’”⁸⁵

Lincoln’s gloom lifted this day, the fifty-second anniversary of his birth. “He has shaken off the despondency which was noticed during the first day’s journey,” John Hay informed readers of the New York World.⁸⁶ As the president-elect prepared to leave Indianapolis, some Illinois friends bade him farewell and returned home. Among them were Jesse K. Dubois and Ebenezer Peck, who “threw themselves upon Abraham’s bosom, and sought to macadamize him with hydraulic embraces. They then feloniously abstracted a lock of his hair, gravely divided the trophy between them, and disappeared,” urging him “to behave himself like a good boy in the White House.”⁸⁷ Illinois Democrats satirically recommended that the hair be preserved as a state treasure.⁸⁸

As the train sped along at thirty miles per hour, it “seemed to ride upon the crest of one continued wave of cheers.”⁸⁹ David Davis, who had joined the presidential party at Indianapolis, wrote that “thousands of people greeted Mr Lincoln with wild huzzas at every station.”⁹⁰ At one stop, Lincoln indulged the crowd with some brief remarks in which he took his customary modesty to extreme lengths. “You call upon me for a speech,” he told the residents of Lawrenceburg, Indiana. “I have none to give to you, and have not sufficient time to devote to it if I had. I suppose you are all Union men here,

⁸⁵ Cincinnati Gazette, n.d., copied in the Albany Atlas and Argus, n.d., clipping collection, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne.

⁸⁶ Cincinnati correspondence by John Hay, 12 February, New York World, 15 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 28.

⁸⁷ Cincinnati correspondence by John Hay, 12 February, New York World, 15 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 29.

⁸⁸ Illinois State Register (Springfield), 14 February 1861.

⁸⁹ Cincinnati correspondence by John Hay, 12 February, New York World, 15 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 29.

⁹⁰ David Davis to his wife, Buffalo, 17 February 1861, David Davis Family Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

(cheers and cries of ‘Right’) and I suppose that you are in favor of doing full justice to all, whether on that side of the river (pointing to the Kentucky shore), or on your own. (Loud cheering and cries of ‘We are.’) If the politicians and leaders of parties were as true as the PEOPLE, there would be little fear that the peace of the country would be disturbed. I have been selected to fill an important office for a brief period, and am now, in your eyes, invested with an influence which will soon pass away; but should my administration prove to be a very wicked one, or what is more probable, a very foolish one, if you, the PEOPLE, are but true to yourselves and to the Constitution, there is but little harm I can do, thank God!”⁹¹

Approaching Cincinnati in mid-afternoon, the train had to halt because a huge crowd had spilled onto the tracks. Police had to clear the way into the depot. As he proceeded to his hotel – a ride in an open carriage lasting two and a half hours – Lincoln was cheered by more than 50,000 people lining the streets. Rutherford B. Hayes reported that there “was a lack of comfort in the arrangements, but the simplicity, the homely character of all was in keeping with the nobility of this typical American.”⁹² Another witness described a source of that discomfort: Lincoln was “standing erect with uncovered head, and steadying himself by holding on to a board fastened to the front part of the vehicle. A more uncomfortable ride than this, over the bouldered streets of Cincinnati, cannot well be imagined. Perhaps a journey over the broken roads of Eastern Russia, in a tarantass, would secure to the traveler as great a degree of discomfort. Mr. Lincoln bore it with characteristic patience. His face was very sad, but he seemed to take

⁹¹ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:199.

⁹² Rutherford B. Hayes to Sardis Birchard, Cincinnati, 15 February 1861, Charles Richard Williams, ed., Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes (5 vols.; Columbus: Ohio State Archeological and Historical Society, 1922-26), 2:5.

a deep interest in everything.”⁹³ Hay noted that along the route all windows were thronged, “every balcony glittered with bright colors and fluttered with handkerchiefs; the sidewalks were packed; even the ledges and cornices of the houses swarmed with intrepid lookers-on.” There “were flags everywhere where there were not patriots; and patriots everywhere there were not flags.”⁹⁴ Adorning hotels and other buildings were large signs with such hawkish mottos as “The Union Must and Shall Be Preserved,” “Welcome to the President of Thirty-Four States,” “The Time Has Come When Demagogues Must Go Under,” and “The Security of a Republic Is in the Maintenance of the Laws.”⁹⁵ As the carriage slowly proceeded, a heavy-set German sitting atop a gigantic beer barrel hoisted his stein of lager and said to the president-elect: “God be with you. Enforce the laws and save our country. Here’s your health.”⁹⁶ A bookkeeper noted that the “people were perfectly wild to see the face of an honest man such as they believe Old Abe to be. The people look [to] him as the saviour of this country.”⁹⁷

From the balcony of his hotel, Lincoln gave a much less confrontational speech than the one he had delivered at Indianapolis. (Indeed, for most of the trip he toned down his rhetoric, perhaps because of the unfavorable press response to his remarks at the

⁹³ William Henry Smith in Francis Fisher Brown, The Every-Day Life of Abraham Lincoln (New York: N. D. Thompson, 1886), 382-83.

⁹⁴ Cincinnati correspondence by John Hay, 12 February, New York World, 15 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 29-30.

⁹⁵ Cincinnati Gazette, 13 February 1861.

⁹⁶ William T. Coggeshall, Lincoln Memorial: The Journeys of Abraham Lincoln from Springfield to Washington, 1861, as President Elect, and from Washington to Springfield, 1865, as President Martyred, Comprising an Account of Public Ceremonies on the Entire Route, and Full Details of Both Journeys (Columbus: Ohio State Journal, 1865), 35. Coggeshall witnessed the scene.

⁹⁷ David W. Schaeffer to his brother, Cincinnati, 16 February 1861, in Lloyd Ostendorf, Mr. Lincoln Came to Dayton: A Centennial Account of Abraham Lincoln’s Visit to Dayton, Ohio, 1859 (Dayton: Otterbein Press, 1959), 38.

Indiana capital.)⁹⁸ In the course of his remarks, he quoted the conciliatory words he had addressed to Kentuckians when he spoke at Cincinnati two years earlier: “When we do, as we say, beat you [in an election], 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 with 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 to interfere with your institution; 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.” He declared that “in my new position, I see no occasion, and feel no inclination, to retract a word of this.”⁹⁹

These conciliatory remarks pleased compromise enthusiasts. “Every word is so carefully selected with direct reference to the affairs of Government that their soothing, quieting influence cannot fail to be felt,” predicted an Indiana woman.¹⁰⁰ The Philadelphia Pennsylvanian approved of the “different tone” of this speech compared with his Indianapolis address, although the paper thought he was rather condescending

⁹⁸ Kenneth M. Stampp, “Lincoln and the Secession Crisis,” in Stampp, The Imperiled Union: Essays on the Background of the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 170-71.

⁹⁹ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:199.

¹⁰⁰ Annie U. P. Jay to J. G. Wright, Raysville, 17 February 1861, Anna W. Wright Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis.

toward Kentuckians.¹⁰¹ To a local rabbi, Lincoln seemed like “a country squire for the first time in the city” who would “look queer in the white house, with his primitive manner.”¹⁰²

That evening Lincoln dodged an opportunity to address the secession crisis when he received a serenade from more than 2000 German workingmen who emphatically urged him not to compromise his antislavery principles. “We trust, that you, the self-reliant because self made man, will uphold the Constitution and the laws against secret treachery and avowed treason.”¹⁰³ Instead of focusing on that touchy subject, Lincoln addressed immigration, homestead laws, and the American dream. He began by explaining why he would avoid talking about the subject on everyone’s mind: “I deem it my duty – a duty which I owe to my constituents – to you, gentlemen, that I should wait until the last moment, for a development of the present national difficulties, before I express myself decidedly what course I shall pursue. I hope, then, not to be false to anything that you have to expect of me.” Such reticence contrasted sharply with the spirit of his Indianapolis speech. Lincoln then waxed philosophical, endorsing the cardinal principle of the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham: “I hold that while man exists, it is his duty to improve not only his own condition, but to assist in ameliorating mankind; and therefore, without entering upon the details of the question, I will simply say, that I am for those means which will give the greatest good to the greatest number.” Turning to a subject that he seldom treated, he praised homestead legislation, to which the German delegation had alluded in its address: “in so far as the Government lands can be disposed

¹⁰¹ Philadelphia Morning Pennsylvanian, 14 February 1861.

¹⁰² The Israelite (Cincinnati), 15 February 1861, in Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War, 41.

¹⁰³ Cincinnati, Ohio, German Workmen to Lincoln, February 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

of, I am in favor of cutting up the wild lands into parcels, so that every poor man may have a home.” In dealing with a favorite theme – the meaning of the Declaration of Independence – he spoke about his vision of the just society and the role of immigrants in it: “In regard to the Germans and foreigners, I esteem them no better than other people, nor any worse. [Cries of good.] It is not my nature, when I see a people borne down by the weight of their shackles – the oppression of tyranny – to make their life more bitter by heaping upon them greater burdens; but rather would I do all in my power to raise the yoke, than to add anything that would tend to crush them. Inasmuch as our country is extensive and new, and the countries of Europe are densely populated, if there are any abroad who desire to make this the land of their adoption, it is not in my heart to throw aught in their way, to prevent them from coming to the United States.”¹⁰⁴

The evening reception in Cincinnati was “a terrible affair.” Lincoln “shook hands constantly for three-quarters of an hour, and then, jumping upon a chair, begged to be excused.”¹⁰⁵ On the whole, the event in the Queen City was a success. Rutherford B. Hayes told a relative that he made a good impression: “He undoubtedly is shrewd, able, and possesses strength in reserve.” Prophetically Hayes added, “This will be tested soon.”¹⁰⁶

On February 13, the train proceeded to Columbus, where Lincoln was scheduled to address the state legislature. Although quite tired and feeling somewhat ill, he conversed freely with other passengers. Speaking of the demands that the South made on

¹⁰⁴ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:202.

¹⁰⁵ Cincinnati correspondence, 12 February, New York Times, 14 February 1861; Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:201-3.

¹⁰⁶ Rutherford B. Hayes to Sardis Birchard, Cincinnati, 15 February 1861, Williams, ed., Diary and Letters of Hayes, 2:6.

the North, he was reminded of a squabble between his two younger sons. “One of them had a toy that the other wanted and demanded in terms emphatic and boisterous. At length he was told to let his brother have it in order to quiet him. ‘No, sir,’ was the sturdy response, ‘I must have it to quiet myself.’”¹⁰⁷

Because he was a bit hoarse from speaking outdoors so often, his friends tried to keep him from further unnecessary oratory, but he could not resist saying a few words at stops along the way. In Xenia, a large crowd, including many blacks, greeted him with intense enthusiasm. After his remarks, he found it difficult to return to the train as the crowd pressed forward to touch his hand.¹⁰⁸

Upon arriving at the Ohio capital, Lincoln found the city jammed with people swarming in from countryside. At the depot many thousands boisterously welcomed the train with loud huzzahs.¹⁰⁹ John Hay invited his New York readers to imagine “a quiet inland city of the second class suddenly transformed into your own bustling, jostling Broadway, with – and here the comparison fails – smiling faces and holiday attire, stores and dwellings gaily decorated, the pavements neither muddy nor dusty, the atmosphere balmy as spring, music falling upon the ear and military display greeting the eye.”¹¹⁰ The local Republican paper noted that Lincoln’s manner “told how deeply he was affected by the enthusiasm of the people.”¹¹¹

At the capitol, the reception of the president-elect by the legislature “presented a most solemn and touching scene, and all that witnessed it felt the deepest emotion. Mr.

¹⁰⁷ Columbus correspondence, 13 February, Cincinnati [Gazette](#), 14 February 1861.

¹⁰⁸ Columbus correspondence, 13 February, New York [Herald](#), 14 February 1861.

¹⁰⁹ [Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper](#), 2 March 1861.

¹¹⁰ Columbus correspondence, 13 February, New York [World](#), 18 February 1861.

¹¹¹ [Ohio State Journal](#) in Coggeshall, [Lincoln Memorial](#), 48.

Lincoln was so profoundly moved as to be hardly able to do himself justice in his reply to the address of the President of the Senate; but the earnestness and conscientiousness that plainly shone on his face effected more with the audience than words could.”¹¹² The words he chose were unfortunate, for he clumsily tried to play down the seriousness of the crisis: “there is nothing going wrong. It is a consoling circumstance that when we look out there is nothing that really hurts anybody. We entertain different views upon political questions, but nobody is suffering anything.”¹¹³

Critics jumped on these remarks. An indignant New York congressman asked rhetorically: “Have not our forts and vessels been seized, our arsenals invaded, our mints robbed, by men and States in arms?”¹¹⁴ The president was “a fool” for uttering “sheer nonsense,” wrote a Philadelphian; “everybody about here is ‘hurt,’ and ‘suffering,’ and everything is ‘wrong’ in they [sic] eyes of everyone except these robber republicans, who have ruined the country and now pretend that all is right, when 6 states are forming an independent government.”¹¹⁵ Conservative newspapers scolded Lincoln for betraying “a most lamentable degree of ignorance touching the revolutionary evils of the day.” How could he possibly ignore the “sweeping bankruptcy of our merchants, the stoppage of our manufactories, the universal stagnation of trade, and the tens of thousands of poor laboring people thrown out of employment by the unrest of the times”?¹¹⁶ Not all journals

¹¹² Cincinnati correspondence, 13 February, New York Herald, 14 February 1861.

¹¹³ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:204.

¹¹⁴ The Constitution As It Is: Speech of the Hon. E. R. Reynolds of New York Delivered in the House of Representatives, February 18, 1861 (Washington: National Republican, 1861).

¹¹⁵ C. Carter to William Overton Winston, Philadelphia, 16 February 1861, Winston Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

¹¹⁶ New York Herald, 15 February 1861; “A Cheerful View of Matters,” New York Daily News, 15 February 1861. On 15 February, similar editorials appeared in the Baltimore Exchange and the New York Morning Express.

were so harsh. The Philadelphia Press charitably speculated that Lincoln must have been thinking of the rural West rather than the urban East.¹¹⁷

Some interpreted the president-elect's remarks as a stiff-back declaration. Henry M. Smith reported that Lincoln "left the inference very strong on the minds of his hearers that there was nothing to compromise – as the North had done no wrong to any man or section, and proposed doing nothing worse than maintaining the Union, upholding the Constitution and executing the laws."¹¹⁸ At least one Columbus resident who did not so interpret the speech told Lincoln, "you've got to give them rebels a hotter shot than that before they're licked."¹¹⁹

At the reception afterward, held in the recently-completed state capitol, an immense crowd streamed into the building from three directions. Among his well-wishers was a gentleman holding aloft a baby, which Lincoln kissed. When the infant's mother asked the president-elect to name him, he smiled and said: "Abraham is too big for such a wee atom of humanity. I will name him Lincoln." He kissed the babe again and returned it to its mother, who replied: "We will add the Abraham, for he saved his people." The crowd cheered lustily.¹²⁰

Lax security arrangements at the capitol imperiled Lincoln's safety. The rotunda area was bisected by two wide corridors, perpendicular to each other, one of which was designated to channel callers toward the president and then away from him to the exit on the opposite side of the building; the other corridor was to be closed. The guards shutting

¹¹⁷ Philadelphia Press, 14 February 1861.

¹¹⁸ Washington correspondence, 23 February, Chicago Tribune, 27 February 1861.

¹¹⁹ A leading Columbus banker in Searcher, Lincoln's Journey to Greatness, 134.

¹²⁰ Undated memo in the papers of William T. Coggeshall, Ohio Historical Society. Coggeshall was present at the reception.

off the transverse corridor allowed people to enter through three doors, with only one exit provided. As Nicolay recalled, “before anyone was well aware of the occurrence there was a concentric jam of the crowd toward the President-elect which threatened to crush him and those about him.” Luckily Ward Hill Lamon, “a man of extraordinary size and Herculean strength, was able to place himself before him and by formidable exertion to hold back the advancing pressure until Mr. Lincoln could be hurried to a more secure place behind the corner of a pilaster which projected a little more than the thickness of his person, and which thus formed a protecting barrier on two sides until the inflow at the entrance could be checked and regulated.”¹²¹ There, “exhausted by the exercise and heat,” Lincoln “desisted from shaking hands, merely bowing to the surging tide of heads as they were jostled along.” Hay remarked that if “royalty was ever more effectually pushed about, punctured with elbows, shouted at, and gazed at, than the President elect on this occasion, why then – royalty is greatly to be pitied; and if royalty ever took it all with half the grace Mr. Lincoln did, why – royalty must be very good natured.” When informed that the electoral votes had been counted in Congress and he was declared duly elected, Lincoln, with palpable gratitude and relief, declared emotionally: “’Tis well.”¹²²

Future president James A. Garfield had mixed feelings about the Lincolns. “In some respects I was disappointed in Lincoln,” the young Ohio legislator wrote, “but in most he surpasses expectation. He has raised a pair of whiskers, but notwithstanding all their beautifying effects he is distressingly homely. But through all his awkward homeliness there is a look of transparent, genuine goodness, which at once reaches your

¹²¹ Nicolay, “Some Incidents in Lincoln’s Journey,” Burlingame, ed., [Oral History of Lincoln](#), 113-14. Coggeshall, who witnessed the event, published a similar account. Coggeshall, [Lincoln Memorial](#), 49-50.

¹²² Columbus correspondence, 13 February, New York [World](#), 18 February 1861; Columbus correspondence, 13 February, Chicago [Tribune](#), 14 February 1861.

heart, and makes you trust and love him. His visits are having a fine effect on the country. He has the tone and bearing of a fearless, firm man.” Garfield detected in Lincoln “no touch of affectation” and called him “frank – direct – and thoroughly honest.” The president-elect’s “remarkable good sense – simple and condensed style of expression – and evident marks of indomitable will – give me great hopes for the country. . . . After the long dreary period of Buchanan’s weakness and cowardly imbecility the people will hail a strong and vigorous leader.” Garfield depicted Mary Lincoln as a “stocky, sallow, pug-nosed plain lady” with “much of the primitiveness of western life. He stands higher on the whole in my estimation than ever. She considerably lower.”¹²³ Lincoln’s host in Columbus, Governor William Dennison, thought that he seemed “worn out from the fatigues of his journey.”¹²⁴

On Valentine’s Day, as the presidential party headed toward Pittsburgh, torrents of rain fell, inspiring hope in Lincoln that he might not have to address crowds along the way. Henry Villard reported that “the business of frequent speech-making, and exhibiting himself to the public gaze, has already lost the charm of novelty, and is a source of annoyance rather than entertainment.”¹²⁵ Another journalist noted that Lincoln seemed “entirely recovered from the slight indisposition from which he suffered yesterday, and is in excellent health and spirits.”¹²⁶ Lincoln “stated that he had determined to make, for the

¹²³ James A. Garfield to his wife, Columbus, 17 February 1861, in John Shaw, ed., Crete and James: Personal Letters of Lucretia and James Garfield (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), 107; Garfield to B. A. Hinsdale, Columbus, 17 February 1861, Garfield Papers, Library of Congress.

¹²⁴ William Dennison to Francis P. Blair, Columbus, 19 February 1861, Blair Family Papers, Library of Congress.

¹²⁵ Pittsburgh correspondence, 14 February, New York Herald, 15 February 1861.

¹²⁶ Pittsburgh correspondence, 14 February, Cincinnati Gazette, 15 February 1861.

rest of the trip, as few speeches as possible, thus avoiding much fatigue.”¹²⁷ To Ward Hill Lamon, the president-elect complained that “he had done much hard work in his life, but to make speeches day after day, with the object of speaking and saying nothing, was the hardest work he ever had done. ‘I wish,’ said he, ‘that this thing were through with, and I could find peace and quiet somewhere.’”¹²⁸ Despite the bad weather, huge crowds turned out at the stopping points and insisted on a speech. On more than one occasion he told an anecdote by way of an apology for not complying. He knew of a man, he said, who had a good chance of winning his party’s nomination for a county office. He rented a horse to canvass extensively throughout the county. On the morning of the party convention, he mounted the nag and headed toward the county seat, but even though he used whip and spurs energetically, his horse made such slow progress that by the time he arrived, the convention had adjourned and he had lost the nomination. Upon returning the nag to its owner, the man asked him what such a horse was good for. “Why, a good horse for a funeral, I guess!” came the reply.

“No, my friend,” said the would-be candidate; “never hire that horse out for a funeral.”

“Why not?”

“Because if that horse pulls the hearse, the Judgment Day will come before the corpse gets to the graveyard!”

So, said Lincoln, that was just his case, for “if he stopped at every station to make a stump speech he would not arrive at Washington until the inauguration was over.”¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Columbus correspondence, 13 February, New York Tribune, 18 February 1861.

¹²⁸ Lamon, Recollections, 33-34.

¹²⁹ This is a composite of two versions of the story, told in Indiana and later in New York. Basler, ed.,

Lincoln devised another clever stratagem for handling demands for a speech. He “would remain inside until the conductor of the train should notify him that he was ready to start, so that when Mr. Lincoln stepped out of the door only time would be left to make two or three bows in different directions when the moving train would bear him away from his enthusiastic admirers while he was standing, hat in hand, upon the platform.”¹³⁰ When a committee from Steubenville, where a half-hour stop was scheduled, asked him to speak, he replied jocularly that he felt like an old rooster belonging to a peripatetic Illinois farmer who tied up his fowls before making each of his many moves. Whenever the farmer began loading furniture into his wagon, the rooster would fling himself down on his back and cross his legs, ready to be tied up. Emulating that rooster, Lincoln said he would accommodate the committee by giving an address.¹³¹ To the crowd of 20,000, including not only Buckeyes but also Virginians who had crossed the ice-choked Ohio River, he offered a preview of an argument he would spell out more fully in his inaugural address: “Though the people have made me by electing me, the instrument to carry out the wishes expressed in the address, I greatly fear that I shall not be the repository of the ability to do so. Indeed I know I shall not, more than in purpose, unless sustained by the great body of the people, and by the Divine Power, without whose aid we can do nothing. We everywhere express devotion to the Constitution. I believe there is no difference in this respect, whether on this or on the other side of this majestic stream [the Ohio River].

Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:193; Fiske, “When Lincoln Was First Inaugurated,” 7. For other versions, see Paul M. Zall, ed., Abe Lincoln Laughing: Humorous Anecdotes from Original Sources by and about Abraham Lincoln (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 123, and the diary of Nathan Allen, entry for 1 February 1861, Missouri Historical Society.

¹³⁰ Nicolay, “Some Incidents in Lincoln’s Journey,” Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 113.

¹³¹ Reminiscences of the Rev. A. M. Reid, Steubenville Herald, 11 February 1931. In 1862, Lincoln told a variation of the chicken story. See Joshua Speed, Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln and Notes of a Visit to California: Two Lectures (Louisville: John P. Morton, 1884), 30.

I understand that on the other side, among our dissatisfied brethren, they are satisfied with the Constitution of the United States, if they can have their rights under the Constitution. The question is, as to what the Constitution means – ‘What are their rights under the Constitution?’ That is all. To decide that, who shall be the judge? Can you think of any other, than the voice of the people? If the majority does not control, the minority must – would that be right? Would that be just or generous? Assuredly not! Though the majority may be wrong, and I will not undertake to say that they were not wrong in electing me, yet we must adhere to the principle that the majority shall rule. By your Constitution you have another chance in four years. No great harm can be done by us in that time – in that time there can be nobody hurt. If anything goes wrong, however, and you find you have made a mistake, elect a better man next time. There are plenty of them.”¹³² A Democrat in the audience found Lincoln’s delivery “rather quizzical,” and thought that while his face “indicates good humor” and “fine social qualities,” it lacked “the higher order of intellectual developments, so necessary for the position he is called to occupy.” The president-elect’s remarks he considered non-committal, containing little “either to approve or disapprove, unless we are much gratified or dissatisfied with the ‘day of small things.’”¹³³

At Rochester, Pennsylvania, a member of the crowd shouted out, “What will you do with the secessionists?” Lincoln replied evasively, “My friend, that is a matter which I have under very grave consideration.”¹³⁴

¹³² David Davis to his wife, Buffalo, 17 February 1861, David Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield; Pittsburgh correspondence, 15 February, Chicago Tribune, 25 February 1861; Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:207.

¹³³ John M. Cook to Stephen A. Douglas, Steubenville, 15 February 1861, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

¹³⁴ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:208.

Thanks to a delay caused by a freight train accident, Lincoln arrived two hours late in Pittsburgh.¹³⁵ Nicolay told his fiancée that “we hardly expected to see a soul at the depot. It was a vain illusion. The depot and grounds were literally jammed full of people.”¹³⁶ Later Nicolay described the terrifying confusion at the depot: “The local committee had provided carriages, as usual, for the President and his party, but had somewhat complicated matters by stationing them, together with a small cavalry escort, entirely too near the tracks. When the train with its rush and noise, its steam whistle going, its bell ringing, moved into its place, the carriage and cavalry horses, many of them entirely unaccustomed to such a din, were seized with fright and a commotion among these animals took place which amounted to almost a stampede; and in the darkness and confusion the President-elect was compelled to find his carriage. His immediate friends clustered about him to render all possible assistance, under the gravest apprehension for his safety, themselves running much danger of personal injury from what at the moment was an absolutely uncontrollable mêlée of moving wheels and hoofs, of noise and shouting, in a half light that confused correct judgment and baffled caution, permitting only the single vivid and realistic impression that chaos had come.” Mercifully, no one was hurt.¹³⁷ “We finally got Mr. Lincoln into a carriage,” Nicolay reported, “but having accomplished that, it looked for a while as if we would never get

¹³⁵ Pittsburgh correspondence by “Wilkins” (Uriah Painter), 15 February, Philadelphia Inquirer, 16 February 1861.

¹³⁶ Nicolay to Theresia Bates, Pittsburgh, 15 February 1861, Michael Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House: Letters, Memoranda, and Other Writings of John G. Nicolay, 1860-1865 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 27.

¹³⁷ Nicolay, “Some Incidents in Lincoln’s Journey,” Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 114.

the carriage out of the crowd that was pushing and pulling and yelling all around us.”¹³⁸

When Lincoln finally reached the hotel, another crowd awaited him. Standing on a chair in the lobby, he made brief remarks to his unusually good-natured well-wishers.¹³⁹ He thanked them for supporting the Republican cause in the election: “By a mere accident, and not through any merit of mine, it happened that I was the representative of that cause, and I acknowledge with all sincerity the high honor you have conferred on me. [‘Three cheers for Honest Abe,’ and a voice saying, ‘It was no accident that elected you, but your own merits, and the worth of the cause.’] I thank you, my fellow citizen, for your kind remark, and trust that I feel a becoming sense of the responsibility resting upon me. [‘We know you do.’] I could not help thinking, my friends, as I traveled in the rain through your crowded streets, on my way here, that if all those people were in favor of the Union, it can certainly be in no great danger – it will be preserved. [A voice – ‘We are all Union men.’ Another voice – ‘That’s so.’ A third voice – ‘No compromise.’ A fourth – ‘Three cheers for the Union.’] But I am talking too long, longer than I ought. [‘Oh, no! go on; split another rail.’ Laughter.] You know that it has not been my custom, since I started on the route to Washington, to make long speeches; I am rather inclined to silence, [‘That’s right’] and whether that be wise or not, it is at least more unusual now-a-days to find a man who can hold his tongue than to find one who cannot. [Laughter, and a voice – ‘No railery Abe.’]” He promised to speak to them more fully in the morning.¹⁴⁰

One of Lincoln’s principal aims in that address on February 15, delivered to 5000

¹³⁸ Nicolay to Therenia Bates, Pittsburgh, 15 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 27.

¹³⁹ Pittsburgh correspondence by “Wilkins” (Uriah Painter), 15 February, Philadelphia Inquirer, 16 February 1861.

¹⁴⁰ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:209.

people standing beneath a sea of umbrellas, was to assure Pennsylvanians of his soundness on the tariff issue.¹⁴¹ He first explained his reluctance to discuss the secession crisis: “It is naturally expected that I should say something upon this subject, but to touch upon it all would involve an elaborate discussion of a great many questions and circumstances, would require more time than I can at present command, and would perhaps unnecessarily commit me upon matters which have not yet fully developed themselves. [Immense cheering, and cries of ‘good!’ ‘that’s right!’] The condition of the country, fellow-citizens, is an extraordinary one, and fills the mind of every patriot with anxiety and solicitude. My intention is to give this subject all the consideration which I possibly can before I speak fully and definitely in regard to it – so that, when I do speak, I may be as nearly right as possible.”

As he had done in Columbus, Lincoln played down the dangers of the secession movement: “there is really no crisis except an artificial one! What is there now to warrant the condition of affairs presented by our friends ‘over the river?’ Take even their own view of the questions involved, and there is nothing to justify the course which they are pursuing. I repeat it, then – there is no crisis, excepting such a one as may be gotten up at any time by designing politicians. My advice, then, under such circumstances, is to keep cool. If the great American people will only keep their temper, on both sides of the line, the troubles will come to an end, and the question which now distracts the country will be settled just as surely as all other difficulties of like character which have originated in this government have been adjusted. Let the people on both sides keep their self-possession, and just as other clouds have cleared away in due time, so will this, and this great nation

¹⁴¹ Cleveland correspondence by Henry Villard, 15 February, Cincinnati Commercial, 16 February 1861.

shall continue to prosper as heretofore.”

Somewhat lamely he addressed the tariff issue which, he admitted, he did not fully comprehend: “I must confess that I do not understand this subject in all its multiform bearings, but I promise you that I will give it my closest attention.” Equally lamely, he admitted his ignorance of pending Morrill Tariff: “The tariff bill now before Congress may or may not pass at the present session. I confess I do not understand the precise provisions of this bill, and I do not know whether it can be passed by the present Congress or not.” He promised to abide by the rather vague protectionist plank of the Republican platform, which he had Nicolay read to the crowd. “We should do neither more nor less than we gave the people reason to believe we would, when they gave us their votes,” he said. Reverting to arguments he had made sixteen years earlier, Lincoln stressed the wastefulness of transporting goods across the Atlantic when those goods could be produced domestically at roughly the same cost. He endorsed the traditional Whig proposition that the executive should defer to the legislature and suggested that he would carry out whatever tariff policy Congress adopted.¹⁴² Later in the journey he would declare that these remarks “were rather carefully worded. I took pains that they should be so.”¹⁴³

Ignoring his protectionist statement, the New York World praised Lincoln’s explanation of his silence on secession as “the wise utterance of a statesman who realizes the full weight of his responsibility to the nation for the preservation of its government; who feels bound to deliberate before he acts; who will not stultify himself by unnecessary committals to a line of proceeding with a new state of facts or the arguments of his

¹⁴² Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:210-15.

constitutional advisers might prove to be unwise; and who is too self-contained to assume the part of President before he is invested with the office.”¹⁴⁴ The New York Tribune took heart from his statement that “[w]e should do neither more nor less than we gave the people reason to believe we would, when they gave us their votes,” interpreting that as a pledge to carry out the Chicago platform plank on slavery expansion.¹⁴⁵

With good reason, Henry Villard judged this speech the “least creditable performance” of the trip, calling it “nothing but crude, ignorant twaddle, without point or meaning.” It “proved him to be the veriest novice in economic matters” and strengthened Villard’s “doubts as to his capacity for the high office he was to fill.”¹⁴⁶ His view was shared by the Baltimore Exchange, which thought the speech “shows an ignorance so gross that school-boys might laugh at him,” by the Washington States and Union, which deemed it “a lamentable though brief rigmarole of confusion and contradiction,” and by the Pittsburgh Post, which remarked that although the Morrill tariff bill had been under consideration by Congress for three sessions, Lincoln “does not seem to be thoroughly informed on it – any more than he is upon the geography of Pittsburgh, when he speaks of the South as ‘across the river.’”¹⁴⁷ The Springfield, Massachusetts, Republican was more charitable, finding it “not strange that Mr. Lincoln should have been somewhat puzzled” by the tariff plank of the Republican platform, for “it was built diplomatically, to satisfy both protectionists and free traders, and is capable of a great variety of

¹⁴³ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:245.

¹⁴⁴ “Mr. Lincoln at Pittsburgh,” New York World, 16 February 1861.

¹⁴⁵ “Mr. Lincoln’s Position,” New York Tribune, 16 February 1861.

¹⁴⁶ Villard, Memoirs, 1:152.

¹⁴⁷ Baltimore Exchange, 20 February 1861; Washington States and Union, 16 February 1861; Pittsburgh Post, 16 February 1861.

interpretations.”¹⁴⁸

In Washington, some Republicans speculated that “if Mr. Lincoln endorses the Chicago platform in toto, as he intimated in his Pittsburg[h] remarks, he and Mr. Seward must be at issue.”¹⁴⁹

At the depot, Lincoln “was again subject to uncomfortable crowding by the absence of all police force and the inefficiency of his military guard. But he stood in the rain for a long while, and endured the pressure of the curious without any signs of impatience,” according to Villard.¹⁵⁰ Among the soaked spectators were “hundreds of ladies, determined not to miss seeing a live President.”¹⁵¹ The train pulled out at 10 a.m., zigging westward toward the next stop, Cleveland. When it halted briefly on the outskirts of Pittsburgh, hundreds of railway workers “gave Mr. Lincoln a warm welcome in most unmistakable terms.”¹⁵² The president-elect “was deeply affected by these manifestations of confidence and affection,” as “his quivering lip and moistened eye more than once plainly showed.”¹⁵³ En route to the Forest City, he and his family rested quietly in their car. Afflicted with a bad cold, the president-elect said little and was “mostly engaged in reading newspapers and silent reflections.” The quiet was shattered at Ravenna, where well-wishers fired a celebratory cannon so near the train that a window shattered,

¹⁴⁸ “Mr. Lincoln’s Speeches on the Road,” Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 18 February 1861.

¹⁴⁹ Washington correspondence, 16 February 1861, an unidentified clipping enclosed in John Perkins to S. S. Cox, [New York], Sunday [n.d.], Cox Papers, Brown University.

¹⁵⁰ Cleveland correspondence by Henry Villard, 15 February, Cincinnati Commercial, 16 February 1861.

¹⁵¹ Cleveland correspondence by “Wilkins” (Uriah Painter), 16 February, Philadelphia Inquirer, 18 February 1861.

¹⁵² Cleveland correspondence by Henry Villard, 15 February, Cincinnati Commercial, 16 February 1861; Cleveland correspondence, 15 February, Chicago Tribune, 16 February 1861; Cleveland correspondence by “Wilkins” (Uriah Painter), 16 February, Philadelphia Inquirer, 18 February 1861.

¹⁵³ Cleveland correspondence, 15 February, Cincinnati Gazette, 16 February 1861.

covering Mrs. Lincoln with shards of glass and frightening her badly.¹⁵⁴ The sentiments expressed by the crowds grew more hawkish as the train proceeded through western Pennsylvania and the Western Reserve of Ohio.¹⁵⁵

At Ashtabula, after listening to the president-elect's brief remarks, the crowd demanded to see Mrs. Lincoln. Her husband "said he didn't believe he could induce her to come out. In fact he could say that he never succeeded very well in getting her to do anything she didn't want to do."¹⁵⁶

In Cleveland, despite snow, rain, and mud, 30,000 people lined the two-mile stretch of Euclid Avenue connecting the depot and the city center. They manifested the "wildest enthusiasm" and rushed "recklessly to and fro in endeavors to obtain a glimpse of the President."¹⁵⁷ The superabundance of flags prompted one newspaperman to marvel that a "Vesuvian eruption of Stars and Stripes in the immediate vicinity could not have more completely covered the buildings."¹⁵⁸ David Davis wrote that "the appointments were the finest & the displays & enthusiasm as great as anywhere." He was especially impressed with the palaces and mansions along what he termed the "the handsomest street, I ever saw."¹⁵⁹ Nicolay informed his fiancée that "for the first time we found the crowd tolerably well controlled by the police and military, and got through without any

¹⁵⁴ Cleveland correspondence by Henry Villard, 15 February, Cincinnati Commercial, 16 February 1861; Cleveland correspondence, 15 February, Chicago Tribune, 16 February 1861; Cleveland correspondence by "Wilkins" (Uriah Painter), 16 February, Philadelphia Inquirer, 18 February 1861.

¹⁵⁵ Cleveland correspondence, 15 February, Cincinnati Gazette, 16 February 1861; John H. Cramer, "Lincoln in Ohio," The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly 54 (1945): 161-68.

¹⁵⁶ Cleveland Plain Dealer, 18 February 1861.

¹⁵⁷ Cleveland correspondence by Henry Villard, 15 February, Cincinnati Commercial, 16 February 1861; Cleveland correspondence, 15 February, Chicago Tribune, 16 February 1861; Cleveland correspondence by "Wilkins" (Uriah Painter), 16 February, Philadelphia Inquirer, 18 February 1861.

¹⁵⁸ Cleveland correspondence, 15 February, Cincinnati Gazette, 16 February 1861.

jam, though there was again a great crowd at the hotel.” In general, the arrangements proved better than those at any previous stop.¹⁶⁰ Standing in a carriage, Lincoln “acknowledged the greetings on all sides in his unaffected hearty manner. The expression of his face showed plainly that he meant much more than he could convey by bowing and waving his hat.”¹⁶¹

From the balcony of the Weddell House, the president-elect assured his audience of 10,000 that the secession furor “is altogether an artificial crisis. In all parts of the nation there are differences of opinion and politics. There are differences of opinion even here. You did not all vote for the person who now addresses you. What is happening now will not hurt those who are farther away from here. Have they not all their rights now as they ever have had? Do they not have their fugitive slaves returned now as ever? Have they not the same constitution that they have lived under for seventy odd years? Have they not a position as citizens of this common country, and have we any power to change that position? (Cries of ‘No.’) What then is the matter with them? Why all this excitement? Why all these complaints? As I said before, this crisis is all artificial. It has no foundation in facts. It was not argued up, as the saying is, and cannot, therefore, be argued down. Let it alone and it will go down of itself (Laughter).” He apologized for cutting short his remarks, pleading a sore throat as justification.¹⁶² At a reception that evening, Lincoln’s “arms and hands had got so much worn from the wear on previous

¹⁵⁹ David Davis to wife, Buffalo, 17 February 1861, Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

¹⁶⁰ Nicolay to Therenia Bates, Buffalo, 17 February 1861, and Pittsburgh, 15 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 28, 27.

¹⁶¹ Cleveland correspondence by Henry Villard, 15 February, Cincinnati Commercial, 16 February 1861.

¹⁶² Cleveland correspondence, 15 February, Chicago Tribune, 16 February 1861; Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:215-16.

occasions that he made the thousands that came to look at him defile past him at a comfortable distance.”¹⁶³ Congressman Albert Gallatin Riddle noted that while he seemed totally unselfconscious around males, “he was constrained and ill at ease, surrounded, as he several times was, by well-dressed ladies.”¹⁶⁴

This manner of receiving guests was soon abandoned. Nicolay remembered that “hand-shakings of two or three hours’ duration added to the day’s fatigue of travel and official ceremony, were found to be a serious tax” on Lincoln’s strength, so much so that many friends “urged him to stand where he might simply bow to the passers by and omit the handshaking. The experiment was tried two or three times but always with unsatisfactory results. To the curious individuals who were passing it seemed a performance and created an impression, ranging from the feeling on the one hand that they were assisting at an animal show, to that on the other, that they were engaged in a grotesque ceremony of mock adulation.” In Lincoln “it produced a consciousness not only of being on exhibition, but as if he were separated by an abyss from those with whom as fellow-citizens and constituents it was more than ever an imperative duty to be brought into closer relations and sympathy.” Thus “the crowd could only pass by him, either with a meaningless smirk or an open-mouthed stare; no talk either of earnestness or pleasantry was possible. This was infinitely worse than the utmost fatigue, and Mr. Lincoln returned to the old custom where a cordial grasp of the hand and a fitting word formed an instantaneous circuit of personal communion.”¹⁶⁵ His awkward appearance when bowing amused Rutherford B. Hayes, who said it could not “be caricatured. . . . His

¹⁶³ Cleveland correspondence by Henry Villard, 15 February, Cincinnati Commercial, 16 February 1861.

¹⁶⁴ Riddle in Browne, Every-Day Life of Lincoln, 387.

¹⁶⁵ Nicolay, “Some Incidents in Lincoln’s Journey,” Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 112.

chin rises – his body breaks in two at the hips – there is a bend of the knees at a queer angle.”¹⁶⁶

A local paper called Lincoln “a clever man” and “a well disposed gentleman,” but thought him “not equal to the present emergency.” It feared that his “triumphal procession to the Capital will prove a funeral procession to his reputation.” He had won praise for his campaign against Douglas two years earlier, but the Lincoln of 1861 failed to live up to the promise of 1858: “The Douglas Lincoln was certainly a better speaker than President Lincoln and a much smarter man in every respect.”¹⁶⁷

Leaving Cleveland on the morning of February 16, the presidential cavalcade hugged the shore of Lake Erie as it proceeded to Buffalo. Lincoln “still labored under the effect of the fatigues of the previous day, and was rather reserved.” Because of his hoarseness, he spoke less than he had earlier on the trip. At Girard, to everyone’s surprise, Horace Greeley boarded, mistakenly thinking it was the regular train. Nicolay marched him into the presidential car, where he greeted the Lincolns. Embarrassed by his blunder, the eccentric editor detrained at the next station (Erie). There, at a lunch break, the city magistrates urged Lincoln to try some of their wine. “I have lived fifty years without the use of any liquors, and I do not wish to change my habits now,” he replied.¹⁶⁸ A resident of Erie thought the president-elect “has been materially improved, in appearance, by the growth of whiskers, and though somewhat hoarse, and suffering

¹⁶⁶ Hayes to Laura Platt Mitchell, Cincinnati, 13 February 1861, Ari A. Hoogenboom, Rutherford B. Hayes: Warrior and President (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 113.

¹⁶⁷ “Is it the Same Lincoln?” Cleveland Plain Dealer, 18 February 1861.

¹⁶⁸ Buffalo correspondence by “Wilkins” (Uriah Painter), 17 February, Philadelphia Inquirer, 20 February 1861.

slightly from fatigue, seemed to be in good health and spirits.”¹⁶⁹ Because of his fatigue and hoarseness, Lincoln “excused himself from speaking at any length.” A local journalist detected in the president-elect’s eyes “a blending of gravity and goodness” which “wins confidence and affection, and satisfies one of his fitness for the great office.” His smile conveyed “much evident sincerity” and his bow “real courtesy.”¹⁷⁰

At Westfield, New York, Lincoln asked if there were a little girl in the audience who had written him in October suggesting that he grow a beard. (Earlier, Gurdon Hubbard had told Lincoln that such a change would lend him dignity.)¹⁷¹ The girl, Grace Bedell, “resented the slurs” and “unkind comments” that schoolmates had made about the candidate’s appearance. Responding to those slurs and to the unflattering poster image of Lincoln that her father had brought home, she told the candidate: “I have got 4 brother's and part of them will vote for you any way and if you will let your whiskers grow I will try and get the rest of them to vote for you[.] you would look a great deal better for your face is so thin. All the ladies like whiskers and they would tease their husband's to vote for you and then you would be President. My father is a going to vote for you and if I was a man I would vote for you to but I will try and get every one to vote for you that I can.” Lincoln, who was glad to receive letters having nothing to do with politics or patronage, asked in reply: “As to the whiskers, having never worn any, do you not think people would call it a piece of silly affection if I were to begin it now?”¹⁷² But he took her

¹⁶⁹ “Semi-occasional” to Thurlow Weed, Erie, 20 February 1861, Weed Papers, University of Rochester.

¹⁷⁰ Erie Weekly Gazette, 21 February 1861, in J. H. Cramer, “A President-elect in Western Pennsylvania,” Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 71 (1947): 216-17.

¹⁷¹ Lloyd Wendt, “Swift Walker”: An Informal Biography of Gurdon Saltonstall Hubbard (Chicago: Regnery Books, 1986), 441.

¹⁷² Grace Bedell Billings to J. W. Walton, Delphos, Kansas, 30 October 1911, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland; Grace Bedell Billings to William E. Barton, Delphos, Kansas, 1 March 1923, Lincoln

advice anyway, and by January it was reported that “a vigorous growth of comely whiskers has entirely changed his facial appearance. The improvement is remarkable. The gaunt, hollow cheeks, and long, lank jawbone are so enveloped as to give fullness and rotundity to the entire face.”¹⁷³ A young woman in Springfield wrote that the “whiskers are a great improvement.”¹⁷⁴ In response to his query to the Westfield crowd, a young boy shouted: “there she is, Mr. Lincum,” pointing out Grace Bedell, “a beautiful girl, with black eyes, who was blushing all over her fair face.”¹⁷⁵ Her elderly father led the girl to the train, where Lincoln gave her a kiss and said: “You see, I let these whiskers grow for you, Grace.”¹⁷⁶ His gesture confused the youngster, who thought only of returning home to her mother.¹⁷⁷

At Dunkirk, Lincoln electrified the crowd of 12,000 with a brief, stirring declaration. On a platform adorned with a flagstaff, he said simply: “Standing as I do, with my hand upon this staff, and under the folds of the American flag, I ask you to stand by me so long as I stand by it.”¹⁷⁸ John Hay wrote that it was “impossible to describe the applause and the acclamation with which this Jacksonian peroration was greeted. The

Miscellaneous Collection, University of Chicago; Grace Bedell to Lincoln, Westfield, N.Y., 15 September 1860, and Lincoln to Grace Bedell, Springfield, 19 October 1860, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4: 129-30; Grace Bedell Billings to John Carroll Power, n.p., n.d., unidentified clipping, Edward McPherson Papers, Library of Congress. Two of her brothers were Democrats. “Lincoln’s Beard,” Washington Post, 14 October 1910.

¹⁷³ Springfield correspondence, 28 January, New York Evening Post, 1 February 1861.

¹⁷⁴ Ann Ridgeley diary, 6 February 1861, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

¹⁷⁵ Buffalo correspondence by “Wilkins” (Uriah Painter), 17 February, Philadelphia Inquirer, 20 February 1861.

¹⁷⁶ Buffalo correspondence by John Hay, 16 February, New York World, 19 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 32; Grace Bedell Billings to E. B. Briggs, Delphos, Kansas, 1 March 1939, Westfield, New York, Republican, 14 May 1939; “Lincoln’s Beard,” Washington Post, 14 October 1910.

¹⁷⁷ Grace Bedell Billings to William E. Barton, Delphos, Kansas, 1 March 1923, Lincoln Miscellaneous Collection, University of Chicago.

¹⁷⁸ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:219-20.

arches of the depot echoed and re-echoed with the ring of countless cheers. Men swung their hats wildly, women waved their handkerchiefs, and, as the train moved on, the crowd, animated by a common impulse, followed, as if they intended to keep it company to the next station. Inside the cars the enthusiasm created by the conclusion of the speech was scarcely less than the outside assemblage had exhibited. The company evinced a general disposition to intone hurrahs and sing patriotic songs out of tune.”¹⁷⁹

On the afternoon of February 16, the presidential party encountered chaos at Buffalo, where 75,000 people welcomed it. As the train pulled into the station, the wildly cheering crowd tried to compress itself to catch a glimpse of the president-elect. A company of soldiers, with heroic effort, cleared a path for Lincoln, who was greeted briefly by ex-President Millard Fillmore. No sooner had the former and future presidents made their way to an awaiting carriage than the crowd “in its crazed eagerness to get nearer to the distinguished visitor . . . became an ungoverned mob, making an irresistible rush towards him which swept the soldiers from their lines, and threw everything into the wildest confusion.” The scene “was awful. Men were overcome with the pressure to the point of fainting.” Some were badly injured, including an elderly gentleman whose ribs were broken, and Major David Hunter, who suffered a dislocated collarbone.¹⁸⁰ Only through “the most strenuous and persevering elbowing” were Nicolay and the other members of the entourage able to reach the coaches.¹⁸¹ Hay reported that Lincoln “narrowly escaped unpleasant personal contact with the crowd. An intrepid body-guard,

¹⁷⁹ Buffalo correspondence by John Hay, 16 February, New York World, 19 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln's Journalist, 33.

¹⁸⁰ Nicolay, “Some Incidents in Lincoln's Journey,” Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 115-16.

¹⁸¹ Nicolay to Therenia Bates, Buffalo, 17 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 28.

composed partly of soldiers and partly of members of his suite, succeeded, however, in protecting him from maceration, but only at the expense of incurring themselves a pressure to which the hug of Barnum's grizzly bear would have been a tender and fraternal embrace."¹⁸² Not surprisingly, Lincoln's companions insisted that he "should decline all further public receptions, in case no better protection could be guaranteed."¹⁸³

Things were not much better at the hotel, where, Nicolay complained, "all was confusion – the committee not only did nothing but didn't know and didn't seem to care what to do. We took the matter into our own hands and finally arranged pretty much everything."¹⁸⁴ The throng "was so dense that the cortege found it extremely difficult to approach" the hotel.¹⁸⁵ The mayor welcomed Lincoln with a little speech, to which he responded with sentiments he had expressed many times earlier. Understandably, his voice was starting to show signs of fatigue; during some passages he could hardly be heard.¹⁸⁶ With customary modesty, Lincoln insisted that "I am unwilling, on any occasion, that I should be so meanly thought of, as to have it supposed for a moment that I regard these demonstrations as tendered to me personally. They should be tendered to no individual man. They are tendered to the country, to the institutions of the country, and to the perpetuity of the [liberties of the] country for which these institutions were made and created." Employing a firmer tone than he had used earlier on the journey, he

¹⁸² Buffalo correspondence by John Hay, 18 February, New York World, 19 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln's Journalist, 34.

¹⁸³ Buffalo correspondence, 16 February, New York Herald, 18 February 1861.

¹⁸⁴ Nicolay to Therenia Bates, Buffalo, 17 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 28.

¹⁸⁵ Buffalo correspondence by John Hay, 18 February, New York World, 19 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln's Journalist, 34.

¹⁸⁶ Buffalo correspondence by "Wilkins" (Uriah Painter), 17 February, Philadelphia Inquirer, 20 February 1861.

urged the crowd: “Stand up to your sober convictions of right, to your obligations to the Constitution, act in accordance with those sober convictions, and the clouds which now arise on the horizon will be dispelled, and we shall have a bright and glorious future; and when this generation has passed away, tens of thousands will inhabit this country where only thousands inhabit [it] now.”¹⁸⁷ In Washington, this speech gave “much better satisfaction than his former speeches delivered since he left Springfield.”¹⁸⁸

Those earlier addresses had disappointed many in the nation’s capital. Benjamin Brown French, who would serve as chief marshal at Lincoln’s inaugural and later as the commissioner of public buildings, told his brother that “[w]e all like . . . old Abe but wish he would leave off making little speeches. He has not the gift of language, though he may have of western gab.”¹⁸⁹ The Washington correspondent of the Democratic Cincinnati Enquirer reported that “Lincoln’s harangues are received very unfavorably,” and Republicans “are restive under the charge of having elected an ignoramus for a president.” They “now see their leader’s weakness, and are striving to cover it up by all the means in their power.”¹⁹⁰ Another Washington correspondent of a Democratic paper alleged that the “mortification of the republicans at Mr. Lincoln’s recent speeches increases with every fresh emanation from the presidential tripod.”¹⁹¹ Several

¹⁸⁷ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:220-21.

¹⁸⁸ Washington correspondence, 18 February, New York Herald, 19 February 1861.

¹⁸⁹ Benjamin Brown French to Henry Flagg French, Washington, 6 March 1861, French Family Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁹⁰ Washington correspondence, 19, 20 February, Cincinnati Enquirer, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 22, 23 February 1861. Similar points was made in both the Washington correspondence, 17 February, and in the editorials in the Baltimore American, 18 February 1861.

¹⁹¹ Washington correspondence, n.d., New York Express, 20 February 1861. But a Washington correspondent for a Republican paper reported that Lincoln’s speeches “exercised a most salutary influence among the Republicans, both in and out of Congress.” Washington correspondence, 18 February, Chicago Tribune, 21 February 1861.

Republicans condemned “his declarations as unnecessarily irritating and impolitic.”¹⁹²

Yet another averred that Lincoln “has fallen immensely in the estimation of even his own party,” for his speeches “are regarded as failures.”¹⁹³

One disenchanted Republican was Charles Francis Adams, who told a friend that Lincoln’s “speeches have fallen like a wet blanket here. They put to flight all notions of greatness. But he may yet prove true and honest and energetic, which will cover a multitude of minor deficiencies.”¹⁹⁴ In his diary Adams lamented that “in this lottery we may have drawn a blank,” for the speeches “betray a person unconscious of his own position as well as of the nature of the contest around him. Good natured, kindly, honest, but frivolous and uncertain. . . . I confess I am gloomy about him. His beginning is inauspicious. It indicates the absence of the heroic qualities which he most needs.” On February 19, Adams told his family that “ten days before, the whole game was in Seward’s hands; but now it was surrendered again to the chapter of accidents. The difficulty was wholly owing to Lincoln’s folly in not consulting with his official advisers, but saying whatever came into his head. Thus he was dividing his party deplorably – destroying the chance of union in action. Seward’s position had thus been made lamentable; for, with his strength exhausted, he was surrounded by opponents, friends and foes; and here now was Lincoln, without consultation or understanding with Seward, and with no apparent regard for the policy indicated by him, showing an ignorance as complete as lamentable of the position of public affairs, fomenting dissensions and

¹⁹² Washington correspondence, 14 February, Baltimore American, 15 February 1861.

¹⁹³ Washington correspondence, 16 February 1861, in an unidentified clipping enclosed in John Perkins to S. S. Cox, [New York], Sunday [n.d.], Cox Papers, Brown University.

¹⁹⁴ Charles Francis Adams to Richard Henry Dana, Washington, 18 February 1861, Dana Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

jealousies already too formidable. Jeopardizing, in fact, the only hope of the country's salvation." Presciently, Adams speculated that war would break out within two months.¹⁹⁵

Another Republican Congressman, Samuel R. Curtis of Iowa, deplored Lincoln's journey as "unfortunately prolonged" and "foolishly performed." Curtis especially regretted that the president-elect "made light of grave questions."¹⁹⁶ He did, however, praise the Indianapolis speech as "judicious," even though he would have preferred that Lincoln wait until March 4 before making any policy pronouncements.¹⁹⁷ An Indiana Democrat, Representative William S. Holman, thought that the president elect's "speeches, & even willingness to receive the triumphal receptions along the line of his journey in the present perils of his country, argues forcably against his possessing the qualities necessary for the crisis."¹⁹⁸

The unsuccessful vice-presidential candidate of the Constitutional Union party, Edward Everett, judged that Lincoln's speeches "have been of the most ordinary kind, destitute of every thing not merely of felicity & grace, but of common pertinence. He is evidently a person of very inferior cast of character, wholly unequal to the crisis."¹⁹⁹ One

¹⁹⁵ Charles Francis Adams, Jr., to John A. Andrew, Washington, 22 February 1861, Andrew Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Charles Francis Adams diary, 16, 20, 21 February 1861, Adams Family Papers; Charles Francis Adams, paraphrased in Charles Francis Adams, Jr., diary entry for 19 February 1861, in Charles Francis Adams, 1835-1915: An Autobiography (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), 77; Charles Francis Adams, jr., to Richard Henry Dana, Washington, 21 February [misdated January] 1861, Dana Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹⁹⁶ Samuel R. Curtis to his wife, Washington, 24 February 1861, Kenneth E. Colton, ed., "The Irrepressible Conflict of 1861': The Letters of Samuel Ryan Curtis," Annals of Iowa 3rd series 24 (1942): 32-33.

¹⁹⁷ Samuel R. Curtis, manuscript journal, 13 February 1861, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

¹⁹⁸ William S. Holman to Allen Hamilton, Washington, 18 February 1861, Hamilton Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis.

¹⁹⁹ Edward Everett, diary, 15 February 1861, Everett Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

wag quipped that his best speech “was that in which he said he had ‘nothing to say.’”²⁰⁰ The editor of the Springfield, Massachusetts, Republican called Lincoln a “simple Susan” and speculated that “the men who fought a week at Chicago to nominate him have probably got their labor for their pains.”²⁰¹ John Bigelow wryly observed that the president-elect’s “forensic performances have not raised the standard of American oratory materially” and that Lincoln “does not yet begin to apprehend the difficulties of his position.”²⁰² Lincoln’s undignified manner offended a Rhode Island Republican, who complained that it was “with unfeigned mortification I have read his jokes & the accounts of his kissing young women. Imagine Washington on a journey to the Federal Capital, joking, kissing women. When the Queen of England on her throne, in dignified terms expresses her solicitude for our welfare at this critical and anomalous period, Mr. Lincoln sees no danger & is reported to have said ‘No one is hurt,’ and jokes, & kisses the women.”²⁰³ The Philadelphia Public Ledger deplored Lincoln’s “flippancy,” while the Argus of that city remarked that he “dispatches the most serious subjects with a joke, and asserts, with a smile, that the present crisis is purely ‘artificial.’ The tariff and other kindred subjects, which should be familiar to every one aspiring to statesmanship, he acknowledges he does not understand. No definite plan of action seems to have been matured for his administration, but everything is to be left to chance. The humiliating spectacle is thus presented of the President elect of this great confederacy indulging in the merest clap-trap of the politician, thanking the people for voting for him, flattering their

²⁰⁰ James R. Roche to Edward Harrick, New York, 20 February 1861, Harrick Papers, New-York Historical Society.

²⁰¹ Samuel Bowles to Henry L. Dawes, Springfield, 26 February 1861, Dawes Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁰² Bigelow to William Hargreaves, [New York], 21 February 1861, Bigelow Papers, New York Public Library.

local pride, and appealing to their sectional animosities.” The Washington correspondent of the Democratic New York Express noted that the “tone of levity and frivolity, which characterizes the speeches of Mr. Lincoln, causes the hearts of our citizens to sink within them. They perceive already that he is not the man for the crisis.”²⁰⁴

Even some admirers of Lincoln’s speeches believed he should not have delivered them. The president-elect, wrote George Templeton Strong, “has said some things that are sound and creditable,” but “I should have been better pleased with him had he held his tongue altogether.”²⁰⁵ The New York World protested that even though Lincoln’s speeches had been “wise,” the journey “after the manner of princes and conquerors, is in bad taste,” as well as “useless,” undignified,” and “foolish.” He should have remained silent until March 4, the editors declared.²⁰⁶

Some regretted that Lincoln’s itinerary did not include the Upper South, for it was believed that he could relieve anxieties about his policies by a personal appearance.²⁰⁷ But in fact many residents of the Border States were taken aback by Lincoln’s seeming belligerence and unfounded optimism. In Baltimore, criticism of Lincoln’s journey was common. Newspapers there decried the “mortifying spectacle” he was making of himself with speeches that were “contradictory and frivolous in substance and delivered in a style that is painfully wanting in the dignity that should belong to the President elect when

²⁰³ Lewis P. W. Balch to Seward, Newport, 23 February 1861, Seward Papers, University of Rochester.

²⁰⁴ Philadelphia Public Ledger, 16 February 1861; Philadelphia Argus, n.d., and the New York Express, n.d., copied in the Baltimore Sun, 18 February 1861.

²⁰⁵ Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas, eds., The Diary of George Templeton Strong, 1835-1875 (4 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1952), 3:100 (entry for 18 February 1861).

²⁰⁶ New York World, 15 February 1861.

²⁰⁷ “The Pre-presidential Progress,” Philadelphia News, 21 February 1861.

discussing topics upon which the existence of the Republic depends.”²⁰⁸ The Sun scornfully observed that there “is that about his speechification which, if it were not for the gravity of the occasion would be ludicrous to the destruction of buttons. Indeed, we heard his Columbus speech read yesterday amidst irresistible bursts of laughter. And it was suggested, in the language of Dr. [Oliver Wendell] Holmes, that Mr. Lincoln is a man who never ought to be as funny as he can.”²⁰⁹ Baltimore’s literary lion, John Pendleton Kennedy, exclaimed: “Those speeches of his by the way side! – what awful promises of a President!”²¹⁰ In western Virginia, a leading Unionist lamented that “Mr. Lincoln, by his speeches in the North, has done us vast harm. If he will not be guided by Mr. Seward but puts himself in the hands of Chase and the ultra republicans, nothing can save the cause of the Union in the South.”²¹¹ A Kentuckian scorned the president-elect’s “puerile and narrow minded, heartless speeches” and the “debased populace, who are cheering him on in his Union-dooming policy.”²¹² In neighboring Tennessee, a Unionist protested that “it will not do to allow the impression to remain on the minds of Northern people that the Southern people or their leaders are engaged in the producing of this terrible disturbance of all the elements of Society, commerce and government, for mere political effect . . . that ‘it is only artificial,’ as the President elect has so often recently said, – and that it ‘will soon pass away,’ – ‘and nobody be harmed.’”²¹³ Melodramatically

²⁰⁸ Baltimore Exchange, 20 February 1861; Baltimore American, 16 February 1861.

²⁰⁹ Baltimore Sun, 15 February 1861.

²¹⁰ Kennedy to Abraham Comingo, Baltimore, 9 March 1861, Civil War Papers, Maryland Historical Society.

²¹¹ Sherrard Clemens to John C. Underwood, Richmond, 18 February 1861, enclosed in Underwood to Seward, Washington, 23 February 1861, Seward Papers, University of Rochester.

²¹² Thomas S. Kennedy to John J. Crittenden, Louisville, 16 February 1861, Crittenden Papers, Library of Congress.

²¹³ A. Waldo Putnam to Andrew Johnson, Nashville, 18 February 1861, LeRoy P. Graf et al., eds., The

the Louisville Democrat complained that while “the nation is writhing and groaning in its terrible agony, Mr. Lincoln smiles and jests. While in the very depths of its tribulation and despair, it stretches out its bleeding arms to him for words of hope and assurance, he offers them his cant and his slang, and perpetrates his shallow and disgusting witticisms.”²¹⁴

Lincoln’s speeches convinced residents of the Lower South that they faced no weak-willed clone of James Buchanan but rather a firm leader resolved to maintain the Union. They assumed his policies would lead to war, which they confidently assumed they would win.²¹⁵

Norman B. Judd, who was part of Lincoln’s entourage, disagreed with such criticism. Writing from Buffalo, he reported that “the demonstrations at all points have been very imposing, and whatever doubts may have existed as to the expediency of this kind of journey . . . would be entirely dispelled if the doubters could see what I have seen and whatever opinion may be formed by persons only reading about Mr. L. [and his train journey]. I can say that it has been effective in the extreme.” The “excursion will do an immense Service politically,” he predicted.²¹⁶ James A. Garfield also thought the “tour is having a very fine effect in strengthening the hopes of the union men – and the back-bones of ‘Emasculates.’”²¹⁷

Lincoln was winning the affection as well as the respect of his auditors. “Each of

Papers of Andrew Johnson (18 vols.; Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1967-), 4:130.

²¹⁴ Louisville Democrat, 24 February 1861.

²¹⁵ Charleston correspondence, 16 February, Providence Journal, 23 February 1861.

²¹⁶ Judd to Lyman Trumbull, Buffalo, 17 February 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress; Judd to his wife Ada, Buffalo, 18 February 1861, Judd Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library.

²¹⁷ Garfield to B. A. Hinsdale, Columbus, 17 February 1861, Garfield Papers, Library of Congress.

the million men whom he meets will have deeper interest in his success, for having seen him, and heard him,” predicted the Ohio State Journal.²¹⁸ O. H. Dutton of the New York Tribune noted that Lincoln’s power lay “not in his presence or in his speech, but in the honesty and gloriously refreshing sincerity of the Man. In him there is no guile; but he has not the weakness which is often the characteristic of what the Yankees call cleverness. Look at his mouth, and, while you will see nothing dogmatic or overbearing there, you will know that he to whom it belongs is not to be trifled with, and that any trust committed to his keeping will be guarded with unflinching honor. His passage through the country has been like the return of grateful sunshine after a cloudy Winter’s day. The people breathe more freely, and hope revives in all hearts.”²¹⁹ While acknowledging that the president-elect did not seem to be a particularly gifted extemporaneous speaker, the Springfield, Massachusetts, Republican praised his “distrust of his own capacity for the important position he is about to take, his confidence in the divine guidance and protection, his fraternal and conciliatory spirit towards all parties and all sections, and his firm adherence to essential principles.” Though his addresses contained clichés about upholding the Constitution and enforcing the laws, the Republican noted that “from a man of trusted sincerity and integrity even these common-places have had significance and power, and have increased the general confidence that the government has fallen into safe hands at the great crisis in its history.”²²⁰ Thurlow Weed’s Albany Evening Journal aptly observed that it “is no easy matter to talk so much and to do so little harm in talking. . . . Very few men have the faculty to say nothing, and fewer still to speak at all

²¹⁸ Ohio State Journal (Columbus), 16 February 1861.

²¹⁹ Buffalo correspondence, 17 February, New York Tribune, 19 February 1861.

under circumstances like those which surround Mr. Lincoln, without doing mischief.”²²¹

The Providence Journal declared that the president-elect’s speeches were “fully justifying the confidence which has been placed in him.”²²²

Tiring though it was, the journey had a salutary effect on Lincoln’s spirits, which rose dramatically. The “encouragement he has received, [and] the hearty support he has been promised, have more than counterbalanced the fatigues of way,” noted reporter traveling with the president.²²³

The presidential party spent a quiet Sunday in Buffalo.²²⁴ He and his companions were glad for the much-needed respite. Lincoln had shaken hands for two hours at a reception Saturday night. The New York Tribune correspondent explained why the president-elect was especially tired after such an ordeal: “It is absolutely impossible for Mr. Lincoln to be a formalist in anything. If he makes a speech, he must say what he thinks; and when he shakes hands, he does it with a hearty will, in which his entire body joins. The consequence is that he is more weary after receiving a hundred people than some public men we could all name after being shaken by a thousand.”²²⁵ As Nicolay recalled, it “is hard for anyone who has not had the chance of personal observation to realize the mingled excitement and apprehension, elation and fatigue which Mr. Lincoln and his suite underwent, almost without intermission for the period of nearly two weeks

²²⁰ Mr. Lincoln’s Speeches on the Road,” “Mr. Lincoln at Washington,” Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 18, 25 February 1861.

²²¹ Albany Evening Journal, 21 February 1861.

²²² Providence Journal, 15 February 1861.

²²³ Albany correspondence, 18 February, New York Tribune, 19 February 1861.

²²⁴ Buffalo correspondence, 16 February, Philadelphia Daily Evening Bulletin, 18 February 1861.

²²⁵ Buffalo correspondence, 17 February, New York Tribune, 19 February 1861.

during this memorable trip from Springfield to Washington.”²²⁶ With ex-president Millard Fillmore, he attended church services presided over by Father John Beason, a noted American Indian preacher.²²⁷ Afterwards Fillmore hosted Lincoln and his wife for lunch. The rest of that cold, damp day they spent resting at their hotel.²²⁸

In order to depart for Albany at the scheduled time of 5:45 a.m., the entourage arose at 4 o’clock on Monday, February 18. It was a “grey, cold, dull winter morning, with snow on the ground,” Nicolay recollected. The “spectral dawn outside, and gloom and ominous shadows dimly penetrated by a few feeble lamp-rays inside the depot” gave “an air of unreality to the muffled or flitting forms.” Adding to the spooky effect were “the clanging and hissing sounds that came back in hollow echoes from walls and arches.”²²⁹ John Hay, who deeply resented having to awake so early, called down maledictions on the organizer of the trip, William S. Wood. The young secretary summarized the journey across the Empire State in three words – “crowds, cannon, and cheers” – and painted a composite picture of the day’s images: “Such crowds – surging through long arches, cursing the military and blessing Old Abe; swinging hats, banners, handkerchiefs, and every possible variety of festival bunting, and standing with open mouths as the train, relentlessly punctual, moved away. The history of one is the history of all; depots in waves, as if the multitudinous seas had been let loose, and its billows transformed into patriots, clinging across roofs and balconies and pillars, fringing long embankments, swarming upon adjacent trains of motionless cars, shouting, bellowing,

²²⁶ Nicolay, “Some Incidents in Lincoln’s Journey,” Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 117.

²²⁷ John Beason to Henry W. Bellows, Philadelphia, [1862], Bellows Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

²²⁸ Buffalo correspondence, 17 February, New York Herald, 18 February 1861.

²²⁹ Nicolay, “Some Incidents in Lincoln’s Journey,” Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 117.

shrieking, howling, all were boisterous; all bubbling with patriotism. The enthusiasm for the President was spontaneous and universal; and when we reached Albany, everybody present congratulated himself that he had been a witness of one of the most memorable of triumphal processions which this or any other country has ever witnessed.”²³⁰

En route, newspapers ran stories about an “undignified and absurd” squabble between Governor Morgan and the New York state legislature over arrangements for Lincoln’s visit to Albany. The bickering became “a topic of discussion in Presidential circles, and much disgust was expressed that the affair assumed such large proportions.”²³¹ The governor wanted to be Lincoln’s host exclusively; the lawmakers desired that he be more accessible to all.²³² At Buffalo, a persistent staffer of Morgan’s had importuned Lincoln to stay and dine at the governor’s house; the president-elect agreed to do so because he understood that no other arrangements had been made. A while later, at Utica, members of the New York state legislative special committee on arrangements boarded the train and urged the president-elect not to spend all his time at the governor’s mansion but to attend a public reception at the Delavan House. When told that arrangements were already settled in keeping with Morgan’s request, Lincoln ordered that a telegram be sent to the governor indicating that he would attend the public reception. When a representative of the governor protested that Morgan “would be very

²³⁰ Albany correspondence by John Hay, 18 February, New York World, 21 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 36-39.

²³¹ Utica correspondence, 18 February, New York Herald, 19 February 1861; “The Wild Hunt for Office,” New York Daily News, 20 February 1861.

²³² Albany Atlas and Argus, 19 February 1861; Albany correspondence, 19 February, New York Daily News, 21 February 1861.

angry at this change,” Lincoln replied: “I can’t help it.”²³³ (Lincoln accommodated both parties, dining at the governor’s and then attending the hotel reception.)²³⁴

Rested after his Sabbath in Buffalo, though still suffering from hoarseness and a sore chest, Lincoln was pleased by the support that was pledged to him en route to Albany.²³⁵ His wife was not pleased, however, with his appearance. He had been wearing a “shocking bad hat” and “very thin old over-coat.” A visiting member of the Albany reception committee was appalled at his dust-covered headgear and the trousers that failed to reach his unshined shoes. Mrs. Lincoln ordered William Johnson, the black servant accompanying them, to fetch the president-elect’s new hat and coat, which made him look “fifty per cent better.”²³⁶ (A journalist described Johnson as “a likely mulatto” and “a very useful member of the party.” His “untiring vigilance” as “he took care of the Presidential party is entitled to high credit.”²³⁷ In Washington, Lincoln arranged jobs for Johnson at the treasury department and also in the White House, where his dark complexion made him unpopular with the light-skinned blacks on the staff.)²³⁸ Joseph Howard, Jr., reported that “Mr. Lincoln seemed physically better than at any time since leaving Springfield. The new hat and coat produce an effect that is very perceptible, and

²³³ Albany correspondence, 18 February, New York Herald, 19 February 1861; reminiscences of Andrew J. Provost, “Lincoln as He Knew Him,” New York Times, 12 February 1922, p. 73.

²³⁴ Albany correspondence, 19 February, New York World, 21 February 1861.

²³⁵ Utica correspondence, 18 February 1861, New York Tribune, 19 February 1861; Albany correspondence, 18 February, New York Times, 19 February 1861.

²³⁶ Utica correspondence, 18 February 1861, New York Tribune, 19 February 1861; Albany correspondence, 18 February, New York Times, 19 February 1861.

²³⁷ Albany correspondence, 18 February, New York Times, 19 February 1861; reminiscences of Andrew J. Provost, “Lincoln as He Knew Him,” New York Times, 12 February 1922, p. 73.

²³⁸ John E. Washington, They Knew Lincoln (New York: Dutton, 1942), 127-34; Lincoln to whom it may concern, Washington, 7 March 1861, to Gideon Welles, Washington, 16 March 1861, and to Salmon P. Chase, Washington, 29 November 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:277, 288, 5:33; Basler, “Did President Lincoln Give the Smallpox to William Johnson?” Huntington Library Quarterly 35 (1972): 279-84.

at the same time beneficial, though it is very doubtful if the wearer of them knows or cares anything about it.”*

Meanwhile, as the train sped through a snowstorm past Batavia, Rochester, Utica, Syracuse, and Schenectady, the recently-resigned senator from Mississippi, Jefferson Davis, was being inaugurated as provisional president of the Confederate States of America in Montgomery, the capital of both Alabama and the newly-proclaimed nation.

The presidential party reached the capital of New York in mid-afternoon amid much “confusion, hurry, disorder, mud, riot, and discomfort.” Because the police and the military were late in arriving, a huge crowd was able to surge unimpeded against the cars. After tardy soldiers finally cleared a path to the speakers platform, Lincoln and the mayor emerged to faint cheering. The crowd at first did not recognize the “much wearied & care worn” president-elect who stood before them, for he was “sunburned, adorned with huge whiskers,” and thus “looked so unlike the hale, smooth, shaven, red cheeked individual who is represented upon the popular prints and dubbed the ‘rail-splitter,’ that it is no wonder that the people did not recognize him until his extreme height distinguished him unmistakably.” On the platform, “uncomfortably jammed” by the crowd, Lincoln listened to the welcoming speech of the mayor, to which he responded briefly. “The crowd was still an aggravation and annoyance and the committee . . . were ashamed of the tumult.” As Lincoln proceeded to the capitol, the public showed less enthusiasm than Westerners had displayed. Standing before Governor Morgan, he “appeared pale and worn” and replied briefly to the welcoming remarks in a “low but steady voice.”²³⁹ A local

²³⁹ Adoniram J. Blakely to Dan Blakely, Albany, 18 February 1861, in Pratt, ed., Concerning Mr. Lincoln, 53; Albany correspondence, 18 February, New York Herald, 19 February 1861; Albany correspondence, 18 February, New York Times, 19 February 1861; reminiscences of Andrew J. Provost, “Lincoln as He Knew Him,” New York Times, 12 February 1922, p. 73. A Democratic paper said he looked “nervous, and worn,

Democratic paper remarked that the president-elect “does not look as if he had the bodily vigor to stand the pressure upon him. He evidently has not the superiority of nature which compels respect and commands isolation, even amid crowds. Rude hands jostled him and his underlings commanded him; and all about him the struggle was who was to control him, no one feeling too low for the task!”²⁴⁰

In the Hall of the New York Assembly, Lincoln took his customary self-deprecation to unusual lengths, expressing gratitude to the legislature for its invitation: “It is with feelings of great diffidence, and I may say with feelings of awe, perhaps greater than I have recently experienced, that I meet you here in this place. The history of this great State, the renown of those great men who have stood here, and spoke here, and been heard here, all crowd around my fancy, and incline me to shrink from any attempt to address you. . . . It is true that while I hold myself without mock modesty, the humblest of all individuals that have ever been elevated to the Presidency, I have a more difficult task to perform than any one of them.”²⁴¹

After dining with Governor Morgan and some of his friends, Lincoln attended a reception at the Delavan House, where 1000 people shook his hand. According to a legislator in attendance, “Mrs. Lincoln, although nearly forty [actually forty-two], was dressed like a girl of 18 with little loops over her shoulders, her arms bare. She wore white kid gloves, and outside of her gloves she wore every ring she possessed. One of the ladies on the Reception Committee on meeting her asked if she didn’t find life much

and anxious, and irresolute.” Albany Atlas and Argus, 19 February 1861. THIS NEEDS THOROUGH CHECKING*

²⁴⁰ Albany Atlas and Argus, 20 February 1861, in George Sands Bryan, The Great American Myth (New York: Carrick & Evans, 1940), 22.

²⁴¹ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:226.

gayer in the East. And Mrs. Lincoln replied ‘Oh no, we have always been used to this.’”²⁴²

Henry Villard judged that the “whole reception has been a sort of failure – a miserable botch, characterized by snobbery throughout. The only part that passed off in any decent manner was the proceedings in the House. The whole affair has opened up developments and heart burnings that will make hereafter a bitter fight in the republican party.”²⁴³

At Albany, Thurlow Weed took charge of arranging a place for the Lincolns to stay in Washington prior to the inauguration.²⁴⁴ He was acting on behalf of Seward, who had invited the president-elect to stay with him.²⁴⁵ Lincoln, at the prompting of his wife, wrote to Washburne on February 15: “I have decided to stop at a public, rather than a private house, when I reach Washington; and Mrs. L. objects to the National [Hotel] on account of the sickness four years ago.” (In 1857, at that establishment president-elect Buchanan, along with several other guests, had taken gravely ill. Some thought assassins had tried to murder Old Buck.) “With this to guide you, please call to your assistance all

²⁴² Andrew J. Provost, “Lincoln as He Knew Him,” New York Times, 12 February 1922, p. 73.

²⁴³ New York Herald, 20 February 1861.

²⁴⁴ Lamon, Recollections, 34-35. On the 18th, Lamon and David Davis stayed overnight with Weed, who met with Lincoln the following morning. Weed to Seward, Albany, 19 February 1861, Seward Papers, University of Rochester. Weed praised Davis, calling him “wise, discreet and efficient.” He urged Seward to confide in Davis “as you do in me.” Same to same, New York, 20 February 1861, ibid.

²⁴⁵ Albany correspondence, 18 February, New York Herald, 19 February 1861. “Mr. Lincoln will not stop at a hotel in this city, but will accept the invitation tendered to him by Mr. Seward, who has taken General Cass’ house, to become his guest until after his inauguration.” Washington correspondence, 16 February, New York Herald, 17 February 1861. Cf. Washington correspondence, 18 February, Chicago Tribune, 21 February 1861; Albany correspondence, 18 February, New York Herald, 19 February 1861. But Seward decided not to take Cass’s house after all and, it was reported, “may not have his new residence in condition to receive the President elect.” Washington correspondence, 19 February, New York Herald, 20 February 1861.

our Republican members from Illinois, and select and engage quarters for us.”²⁴⁶ The following day, he telegraphed Seward about the changed plans.²⁴⁷ On February 19, Weed informed Willards Hotel that the president-elect and his aides would be staying there.²⁴⁸ But that very day Washburne, after consulting with Trumbull and his fellow Republican congressmen from Illinois, had rented a furnished house for the Lincolns.²⁴⁹ (“Opinion is much divided as to the choice of a hotel or private house for his temporary stay,” according to one Washington journalist. “The former is so manifestly in accordance with propriety, and the accepted usage of his predecessors, that there ought to be no hesitation concerning it.”)²⁵⁰ The following day, Lord Thurlow read in the press about Washburne’s arrangements and informed Willards of the fact. Lincoln had supposed that Washburne, who had not received the president-elect’s letter till late on the 18th, had chosen Willards.²⁵¹ On February 21, Weed and Ward Hill Lamon explained to Willards that the presidential entourage would be their guests as of the 23rd.²⁵² Simultaneously Lamon informed Washburne that “Mr. Lincoln desires me to say to you that Mrs Lincoln objects to going to a private house. It is decided to go ‘Willards Hotel[.]’ It will be explained to you on our arrival.”²⁵³ The hotel management, understandably confused by the flurry of

²⁴⁶ Lincoln to Washburne, Cleveland, 15 February 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:217.

²⁴⁷ Washington correspondence, 18 February, New York Tribune, 19 February 1861.

²⁴⁸ Weed to Willards, Albany, 19 February 1861, Lamon Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

²⁴⁹ Elihu B. Washburne to Lincoln, Washington, 19 February 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁵⁰ Washington correspondence by James E. Harvey, 18 February, Philadelphia North American and United States Gazette, 19 February 1861; Washington correspondence, 18 February, Chicago Tribune, 21 February 1861.

²⁵¹ Weed to Willards, New York, 20 February 1861, Willard Family Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁵² Weed to Willards, New York, 21 February 1861; Lamon to Willards, Philadelphia, 21 February 1861, Willard Family Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁵³ Lamon to Washburne, Philadelphia, 21 February 1861, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

contradictory messages, asked Col. Sumner to specify in writing what was wanted.²⁵⁴

When told of this switch in plans, Lincoln said: “This arrangement, I fear, will give mortal offense to our friends, but I think the arrangement a good one. I can readily see that many other well-meant plans will ‘gang alee,’ but I am sorry. The truth is, I suppose I am now public property and a public inn is the place where people can have access to me.”²⁵⁵ The upshot was that when the party arrived in the capital, William E. Dodge hurriedly vacated an elegant suite to make way for the Lincolns, but the presidential entourage had to settle for what Nicolay called “sorry accommodations.”²⁵⁶ The confusion stemmed from Washburne’s misreading of Lincoln’s letter and the president-elect’s tardy decision about the kind of accommodations he wanted.

The time spent in Albany, though disagreeable, had not been wasted. A journalist covering the New York capital reported that “the impression made upon the masses here by the appearance and demeanor of the President elect has been unexpectedly favorable. So much has been said in disparagement of the personal appearance of Mr. Lincoln that imagination had depicted him with ogre-like lineaments; but, his face having been much improved by the beard, . . . he is found, on actual inspection, to be a perfectly presentable man, and in his frank and open features the people read at once the sure indications of a kind, generous and truthful nature.”²⁵⁷ (An artist disagreed about the beard, arguing that

²⁵⁴ J. C. and H. A. Willard to Sumner, Washington, 21 February 1861, Willard Family Papers, Library of Congress. Sumner seems to have been in charge of the details, for he received word from Erastus Corning that the “Willards have their rooms all connected and in order for their reception.” Corning to Sumner, n.p., n.d., Lamon Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California, in Hamand, “Ward Hill Lamon,” 151.

²⁵⁵ Lamon, “Recollections of Abraham Lincoln, Drafts and Anecdotes,” folder 2, Lamon Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California, in Don Edward Fehrenbacher and Virginia Fehrenbacher, eds., Recollected Words of Abraham Lincoln (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 283.

²⁵⁶ Nicolay to Theresia Bates, Washington, 24 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 28.

²⁵⁷ Albany correspondence, 20 February, New York World, 21 February 1861.

“no man who ever understood the singular form & character of Lincoln’s chin & lower jaws would dream of covering them.”²⁵⁸ One favorably-impressed Albany resident said of Lincoln: “I think ninety five percent more of him, than before I saw him. . . . He will put his foot down pretty firmly in time I like Mr. Linco[l]n much. He is in the hearts of the people who have seen him more than any other man.”²⁵⁹ A Massachusetts man who traveled to Albany said Lincoln “looked 100 per cent better than I was led to suppose from any picture etc I had seen.”²⁶⁰ At the next stop (Troy), an abolitionist in the audience thought “Mr. Lincoln is a better looking man than his portraits represent him.”²⁶¹

Lincoln felt relieved to depart Albany after a most disagreeable sojourn there. As the train rolled toward New York City, he was so tired and feeling so poorly that he took little interest in the political discussions of his fellow passengers.²⁶² Upon reaching Hudson, he was surprised and gratified by the special new car put at his disposal. It featured the latest heating and ventilating technology, plush carpets, luxurious ottomans and sofas, elegant upholstery, national flags suspended at each end, and star-spangled coverings for the walls and ceiling.²⁶³ He spoke at several stops, including Poughkeepsie, where he addressed a crowd of 10,000. “It is with your aid, as the people, that I think we shall be able to preserve – not the country, for the country will preserve itself, (cheers),

²⁵⁸ Truman H. Bartlett to Charles W. McLellan, Chocorua, New Hampshire, 3 November 1907, Lincoln Collection, Brown University.

²⁵⁹ T. R. Rawson to his brother, Albany, 23 February 1861.

²⁶⁰ E. R. Tinker to Henry L. Dawes, North Adams, 24 February 1861, Dawes Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁶¹ Diary of Samuel J. May, entry for 19 February 1861, May Papers, Cornell University.

²⁶² New York Herald, New York Times, 20 February 1861.

²⁶³ Hudson correspondence, 19 February, New York Tribune, 19 February 1861; New York Tribune, 20 February 1861.

but the institutions of the country – (great cheering); those institutions which have made us free, intelligent and happy – the most free, the most intelligent and the happiest people on the globe. (Tremendous applause.) I see that some, at least, of you are of those who believe that an election being decided against them is no reason why they should sink the ship. (“Hurrah.”) I believe with you, I believe in sticking to it, and carrying it through; and, if defeated at one election, I believe in taking the chances next time. (Great laughter and applause.)” He did not think that the voters “have chosen the best man to conduct our affairs, now – I am sure they did not – but acting honestly and sincerely, and with your aid, I think we shall be able to get through the storm.”²⁶⁴ At Peekskill, he was glad to be welcomed by a former colleague in the U.S. House, William Nelson.²⁶⁵

Stephen R. Fiske, a journalist who replaced Henry Villard as the New York Herald’s correspondent covering the president-elect’s journey, was struck by the unpretentious quality of Lincoln and his wife, whom he described as “common sense, home-like folks, unused to the glitter and gutter of society. Towering above all, with his face and forehead furrowed by a thousand wrinkles, his hair unkempt, his new whiskers looking as if not yet naturalized, his clothing illy arranged, Mr. Lincoln sat towards the rear of the saloon car.” Despite his unprepossessing appearance, Fiske said, the president-elect was obviously “a man of immense power and force of character and natural talent. He seems so sincere, so conscientious, so earnest, so simple hearted, that one cannot help liking him, and esteeming any disparagement of his abilities or desire to do right as a

²⁶⁴ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:228.

²⁶⁵ Carlton B. Schofield, “When the Immortal Lincoln Came to Peekskill in 1861,” unidentified clipping, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne.

personal insult.”²⁶⁶

Arriving in Manhattan, Lincoln was relieved to find 1300 police efficiently controlling the crowds (the largest of the entire journey) along the route from the train station to the Astor House.²⁶⁷ “Such a crowd as greeted his arrival I have never seen,” wrote an observer. “A distance of probably six miles, on the route from the Depot to the Hotel, the streets were positively jammed with human beings, of all sizes, sexes, and colors.”²⁶⁸ During the ride he occasionally stood to acknowledge cheers, but for the most part he sat, manifestly drained by the rigors of the trip.²⁶⁹ George William Curtis reported that “he looked at the people with a weary, melancholy air, as if he felt already the heavy burden of his duty.”²⁷⁰ Despite his pallid appearance, he seemed to one journalist “firm, self-possessed, and . . . equal to the stupendous task before him.” The crowds lining the street sensed these qualities from the look on “his plain, straightforward, honest face, so full of deep, earnest thought, of direct singleness of purpose, of thorough purity of motive and patriotic impulse.”²⁷¹

Accounts of the public’s reaction varied. Some sources reported that onlookers, who were mostly men, cheered him cordially but not enthusiastically.²⁷² The crowd’s

²⁶⁶ Stephen R. Fiske, “Lincoln’s Trip to the White House,” The Metropolis, n.d, copied in the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 28 July 1891; New York Herald, 20 February 1861.

²⁶⁷ Nicolay, “Some Incidents in Lincoln’s Journey,” Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 118.

²⁶⁸ James R. Roche to Edward Harrick, New York, 20 February 1861, Harrick Papers, New-York Historical Society.

²⁶⁹ New York Herald, 20 February 1861.

²⁷⁰ Curtis in William Hayes Ward, ed., Abraham Lincoln: Tributes from His Associates, Reminiscences of Soldiers, Statesmen and Citizens (New York: T.Y. Crowell, 1895), 1.

²⁷¹ Report of M. B. [Kate Warne] for Allan Pinkerton, New York, 19 February 1861, in Cuthbert, ed., Lincoln and the Baltimore Plot, 41; New York Tribune, 20 February 1861.

²⁷² New York Journal of Commerce, n.d., copied in the Baltimore Sun, 21 February 1861; *harpers weekly. One Democratic paper reported that there was hardly any cheering at all. New York Daily News, 21 February 1861.

reaction, John Pope recalled, “was not encouraging and seemed a chilly welcome.”²⁷³

George William Curtis noted “very little cheering.”²⁷⁴ But one woman who observed the procession recorded in her diary that there was “great enthusiasm,” and another wrote that Lincoln “was obliged to ride with his hat off, so continual was the cheering and waving of handkerchiefs.”²⁷⁵

At the Astor House, Walt Whitman observed Lincoln descend from his carriage. The poet was impressed with the president-elect’s “perfect composure and coolness – his unusual and uncouth height, his dress of complete black, stovepipe hat push’d back on the head, dark-brown complexion, seam’d and wrinkled yet canny-looking face, black, bushy head of hair, disproportionately long neck, and his hands held behind as he stood observing the people.”²⁷⁶ During a reception Lincoln met the superintendent of police, John A. Kennedy, whom he greeted warmly: “I am happy to express my thanks and acknowledgements to you, Sir, for the admirable arrangements for the preservation of order. I can assure you that they were much appreciated.” When Kennedy replied that he was merely doing his duty, Lincoln said: “Yes; but a man should be thanked for doing his duty right well.”²⁷⁷ Importuned by the crowd outside, he stepped to the balcony and made

²⁷³ John Pope, “War Reminiscences, IX,” National Tribune (Washington), 5 February 1891, in The Military Memoirs of General John Pope, ed. Peter Cozzens and Robert I. Girardi (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 179.

²⁷⁴ Curtis in Ward, ed., Abraham Lincoln: Tributes from His Associates, Reminiscences of Soldiers, Statesmen and Citizens, 1.

²⁷⁵ Louisa Lee Schuyler diary, Hamilton-Schuyler Papers, Clements Library, University of Michigan (entry for 19 February 1861); Lavinia Goodell to his sister Maria Goodell Frost, Brooklyn, 25 February 1861, Goodell Papers, Berea College, in Elizabeth S. Peck, ed., “Lincoln in New York,” Lincoln Herald 60 (1958): 129.

²⁷⁶ Whitman, “Death of Abraham Lincoln,” lecture delivered in New York, April 14, 1879, Whitman, Prose Works (2 vols.; Philadelphia: David McKay, 1892), 2:500-1. Most of Whitman’s account of Lincoln in New York, written eighteen years after the event, is untrustworthy. Daniel Mark Epstein, Lincoln and Whitman: Parallel Lives in Civil War Washington (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004), 65-68.

²⁷⁷ New York Times, 20 February 1861.

his customary non-speech, during which he betrayed no signs of hoarseness and seemed remarkably self-possessed.²⁷⁸ When complimented on his brief statement, he replied: “There was not much harm in it at any rate.”²⁷⁹

The Lincolns dined with Hannibal Hamlin and his wife, who were also en route to Washington. When oysters on the half-shell were served, the president-elect regarded them with some puzzlement and said ingenuously: “Well, I don’t know that I can manage these things, but I guess I can learn.”²⁸⁰

After dinner Lincoln consulted with leading politicians and businessmen. When queried about his plans to deal with secession, he said he never crossed a river until he reached it.²⁸¹ Weed and others eager to placate the South were “much crosser than bears” at Lincoln’s unwillingness to endorse a compromise.²⁸² Disappointed at his interview with the president-elect, Weed told Seward: “The conversation was confined to a single point, in relation to which I have no reason to suppose that he listened with profit. . . . My solicitude in reference to the Country is not diminished.”²⁸³

The next morning, Lincoln breakfasted with Moses Grinnell and twenty-nine other business leaders, who urged the appointment of Cameron as secretary of the

²⁷⁸ New York Journal of Commerce, n.d., copied in the Baltimore Sun, 21 February 1861.

²⁷⁹ New York Tribune, 20 February 1861.

²⁸⁰ Charles Eugene Hamlin, The Life and Times of Hamlin Hamlin (2 vols.; Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1899), 2:387-88.

²⁸¹ Horace Greeley, Recollections of a Busy Life (New York: J. B. Ford, 1869), 405.

²⁸² New York correspondence, n.d., Boston Courier, n.d., copied in the New York Daily News, 5 March 1861.

²⁸³ Weed to Seward, New York, 21 February 1861, Seward Papers, University of Rochester. Members of the New York state legislature reported that “Weed was active at work bringing all the appliances he could bear on Lincoln to compromise.” E. R. Tinker to Henry L. Dawes, North Adams, 24 February 1861, Dawes Papers, Library of Congress.

treasury.²⁸⁴ The stock market rose because the president-elect chose to hobnob with conservative Wall Streeters rather than with Radicals.²⁸⁵ Grinnell hoped “it may do some good; at all events, I kept him from having the Greel[e]y clique around him.”²⁸⁶

Further raising the hopes of compromisers was Lincoln’s response to the official welcome extended by Mayor Fernando Wood, a Democrat who wished to appease secessionists and had openly called for New York follow their lead and declare itself a “free city.”²⁸⁷ A member of the presidential entourage was struck by the contrast between the two men: Lincoln, “tall, gaunt and rugged, with angular, rough-hewn features, but a kindly expression, unpolished in manner and ungraceful in speech, but evidently sincere and genuine,” little resembled Wood, “erect and agile, with a perfectly smooth face, easy graceful manners and fine address, but with a countenance as devoid of any indication of his thoughts and as free from the least sign of impulse or genuineness of any kind, smooth and soft, with the undulating gait of an animal of the feline tribe.”²⁸⁸ At 11 a.m. Lincoln visited City Hall, where Wood, with customary blandness, delivered a jeremiad about the woeful condition of business in the city: “All her material interests are paralyzed. Her commercial greatness is endangered. She is the child of the American Union. She has grown up under its maternal care, and been fostered by its paternal

²⁸⁴ Moses Grinnell to Seward, [New York], 20 February [1861], Seward Papers, University of Rochester; Washington correspondence, 6 March, New York Herald, 9 March 1861. An elaborate account of this breakfast appears in a highly suspect source that careful scholars avoid using: “The Diary of a Public Man: Unpublished Passages of the Secret History of the American Civil War,” an anonymous series which appeared in the North American Review in 1879. See Frank Maloy Anderson, The Mystery of ‘A Public Man’: A Historical Detective Story (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1948).

²⁸⁵ New York Journal of Commerce, 21 February 1861, in Philip S. Foner, Business and Slavery (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 272.

²⁸⁶ Grinnell to Seward, [New York,] 20 February [1861], Seward Papers, University of Rochester.

²⁸⁷ Foner, Business and Slavery, 288-89.

²⁸⁸ John Pope, “War Reminiscences, IX,” National Tribune (Washington), 5 February 1891, in Military Memoirs of Pope, ed. Cozzens and Girardi, 179-80.

bounty, and we fear that if the Union dies, the present supremacy of New-York may perish with it. To you, therefore, . . . we look for a restoration of fraternal relations between the States – only to be accomplished by peaceful and conciliatory means.”²⁸⁹

Observers murmured disapproval of Wood’s rudeness, but Lincoln took no offense.²⁹⁰ Seemingly preoccupied, he listened to these remarks with a dreamy look in his eye, smiled pleasantly when Wood finished, drew himself up to his full height, and replied in a voice weakened by a cold: “In reference to the difficulties that confront us at this time, and of which you have seen fit to speak so becomingly, and so justly, as I suppose, I can only say that I agree with the sentiments expressed by the Mayor. In my devotion to the Union, I hope I am behind no man in the nation . . . There is nothing that could ever bring me to consent – willingly to consent – to the destruction of this Union, (in which not only the great City of New-York, but the whole country has acquired its greatness,) unless it would be that thing for which the Union itself was made. I understand the ship is made for the carrying and preservation of the cargo, and so long as the ship is safe with the cargo it shall not be abandoned. This Union shall never be abandoned unless the possibility of its existence shall cease to exist, without the necessity of throwing passengers and cargo overboard. So long, then, as it is possible that the prosperity and liberties of this people can be preserved within this Union, it shall be my purpose at all times to preserve it.”²⁹¹ (Upon arriving in New York, Lincoln had admitted, a propos of his scheduled meeting with the mayor: “I haven’t any speech ready. I shall

²⁸⁹ Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, 2 March 1861.

²⁹⁰ Jerome Mushkat, Fernando Wood: A Political Biography (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1990), 114.

²⁹¹ Philadelphia Inquirer, 21 February 1861; Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:232-33.

have to say just what comes into my head at the time.”)²⁹²

When the doors were opened to admit the general public, people tumbled in pell-mell, reminding onlookers of the onrush of a breached reservoir, the tapping of a beer barrel, or the popping of a champagne cork. As these well-wishers pressed toward him, Lincoln tossed off a characteristic pun: “They are members of the Press.” After shaking many hands, he backed off and merely bowed to the multitude as it passed by. He made an exception for women, explaining that “their hands don’t hurt me,” and for veterans of the War of 1812. (He shook 2000 hands and bowed 2600 times in two hours.) When a gentleman suggested that he might be unanimously reelected, Lincoln replied: “I think when the clouds look as dark as they do now, one term might satisfy any man.” Said another: “I must shake hands with you, because they say I look like you,” prompting Lincoln to quip: “I take it that that settles that you are a good looking man.”

Upon leaving City Hall, Lincoln reportedly told the mayor “that, without intending any disparagement of others, he considered his (Mr. Wood’s) speech the most appropriate and statesmanlike yet made on a like occasion, and that he (Mr. Lincoln) indorsed every word of it.” Among political leaders of the city, this well-publicized comment was viewed as one of his most meaningful statements, for in conjunction with his formal reply to the mayor, it indicated that the president-elect might support compromise.²⁹³ Lincoln seemed to be distancing himself from his Indianapolis speech.²⁹⁴

When one of the mayor’s staff suggested to Lincoln that he might don a mask and

²⁹² Fiske, “When Lincoln Was First Inaugurated,” 7.

²⁹³ New York Times, 21 February 1861; New York Herald, 22 February 1861; New York correspondence by B., 24 February, Boston Journal, 26 February 1861.

²⁹⁴ “The President and the Mayor – A Glimpse of Light,” New York Daily News, 21 February 1861; Baltimore Exchange, 21 February 1861.

participate incognito in the party scene from Verdi's opera Un Ballo in Maschera, then playing in town, the president-elect replied: "No, I thank you. The papers say I wear a mask already."²⁹⁵ That evening the president-elect attended a performance of Verdi's work, ironically the only opera in the standard repertory about the assassination of an American political leader.²⁹⁶ Arriving after the overture had begun, he quietly slipped into his seat unnoticed by the crowd. As the music proceeded, however, his presence was detected and all eyes turned from the stage to his box, where he sat stroking his freshly-grown whiskers. At the end of the opening act, the large audience cheered him lustily, shouting his name, waving hats and handkerchiefs. Calm and collected, he rose, bowed, and "gave one the idea of power, stern, rugged and uncompromising; but still there was in the smile something gentle, benevolent and kindly, giving the assurance that justice would be tempered with mercy, and that stern principle would be leavened with that wisdom which springs from a knowledge of the human heart and a sympathy with human weakness."²⁹⁷ When the curtain rose on act two, the cast and chorus interpolated a spirited rendition of the Star Spangled Banner, at the close of which a huge American flag descended from the flies, touching off a frenzy of patriotic enthusiasm. Lincoln was deeply moved. Back at the Astor House, he was treated to more music by Verdi when a band serenaded him with selections from "Nabucco" and "Il Trovatore." Too fatigued and unwell to respond, Lincoln asked Hannibal Hamlin, who had joined him that

²⁹⁵ New York Herald, 22 February 1861.

²⁹⁶ In the version of the work commonly given in those days, "the governor of Boston" is murdered. In the original libretto, the King of Sweden is the victim, but European censors forbade stage works featuring regicide, so Verdi and his librettist moved the scene to colonial Massachusetts.

²⁹⁷ Frank Leslie's Illustrated Magazine, 2 March 1861.

afternoon, to do the honors.²⁹⁸ Adding to the decibel level at the Astor House was a clutch of men who stood in the hallway near Lincoln’s room bellowing throughout the night. In the morning he appeared quite tired, saying “he had slept scarcely at all.”²⁹⁹

In New York, Lincoln impressed some leading Democrats, among them an alderman who “said he had seen Lincoln & liked the man, said he was much better looking & a finer man than he expected to see; and that he kept aloof from old politicians here & seemed to have a mind of his own.” A judge remarked that the president-elect “has an eye that shows power of mind & will & he thinks he will carry us safely.”³⁰⁰ At the other end of the political spectrum, an abolitionist minister deemed Lincoln “a clever man, & not so bad looking as they say.” He “is not stiff; has a pleasant face, is amiable & determined,” and should “deliver our country from the thralldom of imbecility, knavery & slavery.”³⁰¹ Some men in the Astor House discussed the president-elect:

“We have now a President who will show that he is at the head of a Government, not a political committee.”

“He isn’t a handsome man, but he don’t look weak.”

“If his backbone is strong as his arm, we shall have someone to rely on.”³⁰²

Less enthusiastic was a guest at another leading hotel, who told a friend that Lincoln “is making an ass of himself.” It was “disgusting, and exceedingly humiliating . . . that we have become so degenerate, as to forward an obscure ignoramus like the

²⁹⁸ New York Herald, 22 February 1861.

²⁹⁹ New York correspondence by B., 24 February, Boston Journal, 26 February 1861.

³⁰⁰ Bronson Murray to Ward Hill Lamon, New York, 20 February 1861, in Pratt, ed., Concerning Mr. Lincoln, 54.

³⁰¹ George C. Shepard to Mr. and Mrs. Lucius M. Boltwood, New York, 21 February 1861, in Pratt, ed., Concerning Mr. Lincoln, 56.

³⁰² Philadelphia Inquirer, 21 February 1861.

President Elect – to the highest position in the known world.”³⁰³

The morning of February 21, the presidential entourage crossed the Hudson River into New Jersey, where Lincoln dashed the hopes of soft-liners who had found encouragement in his previous day’s remarks to Mayor Wood. En route to Trenton, he appeared moody as he sat silent amid the elegant surroundings of his special car. In Newark he took note of the effigy of a black-bearded man, whip in hand, hanging from a beam and bearing a label, “The Doom of Traitors.”³⁰⁴

At the state capitol, he addressed the General Assembly, emphasizing a theme he had hinted at in his Indianapolis speech ten days earlier. Speaking in a soft, conversational voice, he said: “I shall do all that may be in my power to promote a peaceful settlement of all our difficulties. The man does not live who is more devoted to peace than I am. [Cheers.] None who would do more to preserve it. But it may be necessary to put the foot down firmly.” John Hay reported that while delivering that last sentence, “with great deliberation and with a subdued intensity of tone,” he “lifted his foot lightly, and pressed it with a quick, but not violent, gesture upon the floor.” Another observer noted that as he delivered that line, “his shoulders seemed to straighten, and his eye to kindle.” Hay wrote that he “evidently meant it. The hall rang long and loud with acclamations. It was some minutes before Mr. Lincoln was able to proceed.”³⁰⁵ This extraordinary response may have convinced Lincoln that the North ached for a president

³⁰³ Horace Randal to “My dear Captain,” New York, 20 February 1861, Schoff Civil War Collection, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

³⁰⁴ Philadelphia Press, 22 February 1861.

³⁰⁵ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:236-37; Philadelphia correspondence by John Hay, 21 February, New York World, 25 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 40; Philadelphia Press, 22 February 1861. See also John Pope, “War Reminiscences, VIII,” National Tribune (Washington), 29 January 1891, in Military Memoirs of Pope, ed. Cozzens and Girardi, 178.

who would deal firmly with secessionists, especially since Jefferson Davis had been inaugurated in Montgomery just three days earlier.³⁰⁶ George Alfred Townsend recalled that in “the shouts and cheers and yells and shrieks,” one “could hear not only the resolution of battle, but the belief that there was now going to be a fight. The South had bluffed so long” that the Republicans were finally “resolved on a war, and did not mean to waste any time about taking up the gage of battle.”³⁰⁷ When the cheering died down, Lincoln “bent forward, and with a smile and manner that is both inimitable and indescribable,” asked the legislators, “if I do my duty, and do right, you will sustain me, will you not?”³⁰⁸ Hay noted that there “was a peculiar naiveté in his manner and voice, which produced a strange effect upon the audience. It was hushed for a moment to a silence which was like that of the dead. I have never seen an assemblage more thoroughly captivated and entranced by a speaker than were his listeners.”³⁰⁹

These bold remarks seemed to clash with the more moderate tone Lincoln had adopted since his Indianapolis address. Evidently the reception he had received over the past few days convinced him that the North favored the hard-line policy that he himself preferred. He seemed to believe that if troops were dispatched to restore federal authority in the Lower South, the Upper South and Border States would not resist.³¹⁰

Before the New Jersey State Senate Lincoln reminisced about his youth: “away back in my childhood, the earliest days of my being able to read, I got hold of a small

³⁰⁶ Nicolay, “Some Incidents in Lincoln’s Journey,” Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 120.

³⁰⁷ Undated clipping from the San Francisco Chronicle, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne.

³⁰⁸ New York Herald, 22 February 1861.

³⁰⁹ Philadelphia correspondence by John Hay, 21 February, New York World, 25 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 40.

³¹⁰ William C. Harris, Lincoln’s Rise to the Presidency (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 320.

book, such a one as few of the younger members have ever seen, ‘Weem's Life of Washington.’ I remember all the accounts there given of the battle fields and struggles for the liberties of the country, and none fixed themselves upon my imagination so deeply as the struggle here at Trenton, New-Jersey. The crossing of the river; the contest with the Hessians; the great hardships endured at that time, all fixed themselves on my memory more than any single revolutionary event; and you all know, for you have all been boys, how these early impressions last longer than any others. I recollect thinking then, boy even though I was, that there must have been something more than common that those men struggled for. I am exceedingly anxious that that thing which they struggled for; that something even more than National Independence; that something that held out a great promise to all the people of the world to all time to come; I am exceedingly anxious that this Union, the Constitution, and the liberties of the people shall be perpetuated in accordance with the original idea for which that struggle was made, and I shall be most happy indeed if I shall be an humble instrument in the hands of the Almighty, and of this, his almost chosen people, for perpetuating the object of that great struggle.”³¹¹

As he prepared to leave the capitol, Lincoln was mobbed and “set upon as if by a pack of good natured bears, pawed, caressed, punched, jostled, crushed, cheered, and placed in imminent danger of leaving the chamber of the assembly in his shirt sleeves, and unceremoniously at that.”*source? After lunching at a collation (referred to as a “cold collision” by one New Jersey legislator), the entourage left for Philadelphia, where it arrived at 4 p.m. to find a crowd of 100,000 exuberant people braving the extreme cold

³¹¹ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:235-36.

and disregarding the threat of a snowstorm.³¹² Upon detraining, Lincoln and his party quickly became caught up in extreme confusion, for the local committee, like so many of its counterparts in other cities, proved inept, bustling about hastily and aimlessly. Chaos reigned as the party tried to enter the waiting carriages. Poor Lincoln, sitting in an open barouche, had to shiver for over half an hour as the flustered committeemen yanked his traveling companions from vehicles to which they had not been assigned.³¹³ At the Continental Hotel, he reiterated his earlier remarks about the artificiality of the crisis, though he carefully added: “I do not mean to say that this artificial panic has not done harm.”³¹⁴

That night, after the customary reception, which he left “completely exhausted,” Lincoln received the alarming news that assassins planned to kill him as he passed through Baltimore on February 23.³¹⁵ The bearer of this warning, Allan Pinkerton, a well-known Chicago detective and friend of Norman B. Judd, had been hired by the head of the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad, Samuel M. Felton, to investigate rumors that his line would be sabotaged as Lincoln proceeded to Washington along its tracks. An unnamed resident of Baltimore had alerted Felton and others that a group in that city planned to set fire to a bridge as Lincoln’s train approached it, then attack the cars and kill the president-elect. Earlier Felton had received similar warnings from Dorothea Dix.³¹⁶

³¹² Philadelphia Inquirer, Press, and Daily Evening Bulletin, 22 February 1861; Trenton correspondence, 22 February, New York World, 25 February 1861.

³¹³ New York Herald, 22 February 1861.

³¹⁴ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:238-39.

³¹⁵ Philadelphia Daily Evening Bulletin, 22 February 1861.

³¹⁶ George Stearns to Thomas H. Hicks, Annapolis, 7 February 1861, Hicks Papers, Maryland Historical Society; Enoch Pratt to Felton, Baltimore, 22, 23 January 1861, Felton Papers, Historical Society of

Baltimore was known as “Mobtown” for its bloody history of political violence.³¹⁷ In the fall of 1856, fourteen people were killed and 300 injured as Know-Nothing clubs battled their Democratic opponents. Thereafter the Blood Tubs and Plug Uglies maintained the tradition of partisan mayhem in that “murder-haunted town,” as Oliver Wendell Holmes called it.³¹⁸ When President-elect Buchanan passed through it en route to his inauguration in 1857, he “was exposed to insult from the ruffian ascendancy of the time.”³¹⁹

While in Baltimore with some of his agents, Pinkerton inadvertently learned of serious plots to assassinate Lincoln while the presidential party was changing trains. (The entourage was scheduled to arrive at the depot of the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore line and depart from the depot of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, over a mile distant. As it made its way between the two stations, conspirators planned to create a disturbance drawing off the police and then, as a crowd surged around the carriages, kill Lincoln.) On February 12, Pinkerton had written to Judd, informing him of the danger and recommending a change in the itinerary. In Philadelphia, Judd met with Pinkerton

Pennsylvania; Pinkerton to Felton, Chicago, 19 March, 30 April 1861, ibid.; Felton to Pinkerton, 31 December 1867, in Allan Pinkerton, History and Evidence of the Passage of Abraham Lincoln from Harrisburg, Pa., to Washington, D.C., on the 22d and 23d of February, 1861 (Chicago: Republican, 1868), 15-16; Felton to Lossing, n.p., 15 November 1867, Emanuel Hertz, Abraham Lincoln: A New Portrait (2 vols.; New York: H. Liveright, 1931) 1:243; Felton to Francis Tiffany, Philadelphia, 8 May 1888, in Francis Tiffany, Life of Dorothea Lynde Dix (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1918), 333-34; John Bigelow to Weed, Buttermilk Falls, New York, 5 April 1861, Weed Papers, University of Rochester; statement by Felton prepared at the request of the librarian of Harvard, begun in 1862 and completed by 1868, in William Schouler, A History of Massachusetts in the Civil War (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1871), 1:59-62.

³¹⁷ Frank Towers, “Ruffians on the Urban Border: Labor, Politics, and Race in Baltimore” (Ph. D. dissertation, University of California, Irvine, 1993), 150-94.

³¹⁸ Gary Lawson Browne, Baltimore in the Nation, 1789-1861 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 213; David Grimsted, American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 236-38.

³¹⁹ Baltimore Sun, 23 February 1861.

and Felton, who laid out the substantial evidence they had accumulated about the Baltimore plot. Convinced by their presentation, Judd summoned Lincoln to hear Pinkerton's case. Judd, who recalled that Lincoln "liked Pinkerton – had the utmost confidence in him as a gentleman – and a man of sagacity," warned that the president-elect risked becoming an object of ridicule. "The world will laugh at you," he said; "prepare to meet the charge of cowardice and [be] laughed at even by friends." The president-elect, according to Pinkerton, "listened very attentively, but did not say a word, nor did his countenance . . . show any emotion. He appeared thoughtful and serious, but decidedly firm."³²⁰ He quizzed the detective about the details of the plot and asked his opinion. Referring to the murderous expressions of reckless men prepared to sacrifice their lives to kill a supposed tyrant, the disloyalty of police superintendent George P. Kane, and the dangers presented by large crowds (such as the one in Buffalo that injured Major Hunter, or the one in Columbus that nearly crushed the president-elect), Pinkerton predicted that a deadly assault would be made. Lincoln remained silent for a while. When Judd and Pinkerton urged him to take the train to Washington that very night, the president-elect insisted that he must fulfill his obligation to raise a flag over Independence Hall the next morning and then address the Pennsylvania state legislature in Harrisburg. Judd cautioned that "the proofs that have now been laid before you cannot be published" lest they compromise Pinkerton's agents. "If you follow the course suggested – of proceeding to Washington to-night – you will necessarily be subjected to the scoffs and sneers of your enemies, and the disapproval of your friends, who cannot be made to believe in the existence of so desperate a plot." Lincoln replied firmly: "I've

³²⁰ Cuthbert, ed., Lincoln and the Baltimore Plot, 64.

Known Pinkerton for years and have Known and tested his truthfulness and sagacity and my judgement co-incides with yours.” Authorizing Pinkerton to make all necessary arrangements, he agreed to return to Philadelphia that evening and take the late train to Washington surreptitiously. Cool and calm, Lincoln predicted that he would face no danger once he reached Washington.³²¹ (In fact, he did receive death threats after his arrival at the capital, and Judd asked Felton to continue investigating rumors of assassination plots.)³²²

Later that night, William Henry Seward’s son Frederick reported a similar tale to Lincoln. General Scott had learned from the newly-appointed inspector general of the District of Columbia, Colonel Charles P. Stone, that conspirators planned to assassinate the president-elect as he passed through the Monumental City. Stone’s informant was a New York detective who had been snooping about Baltimore for three weeks. On the morning of February 21, as Lincoln left New York, the detective told Stone “that there is serious danger of violence to and the assassination of Mr Lincoln in his passage through

³²¹ Judd*, Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants: Letters, Interviews, and Statements about Abraham Lincoln (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), pp?*; Judd to Pinkerton, Chicago, 3 November 1867, in Pinkerton, History and Evidence, 19; Judd in Henry Clay Whitney, The Life of Lincoln (2 vols.; New York: Baker & Taylor, 1908), 1:300-6*?; Pinkerton, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants;* Felton to Lossing, n.p., 15 November 1867, Hertz, New Portrait, 1:243; felton in scouler, mass., 1:62-63. Among those reckless men was William Byrne, president of the National Volunteers, a military volunteer corps which had originally been a pro-Breckinridge political club. Cuthbert, ed., Lincoln and the Baltimore Plot, 49, 136. During the Civil War, Byrne was arrested in Richmond for running a gambling emporium and for alleged disloyalty to the Confederacy. Louis T. Wigfall, a fire-eating former Senator from Texas, testified on his behalf that “he was the captain of the gang who swore to kill Mr. Lincoln” when he passed through Baltimore. Washington Republican, 31 March, copied in the Chicago Tribune, 3 April 1862. Another leader of the National Volunteers, a barber named Cypriano Fernandini, fiercely vowed to assassinate Lincoln. Pinkerton was especially worried about O. K. Hillard, a hot-blooded young secessionist of high social rank. Cuthbert, ed., Lincoln and the Baltimore Plot, 46-47; Allan Pinkerton, The Spy of the Rebellion: Being a True History of the Spy System of the United States Army during the Late Rebellion (New York: G.W. Carleton, 1883), 62-80.

³²² J. H. Hutcheson to Felton, Baltimore, 25 February 1861, Felton Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. One correspondent warned Lincoln that if he did not recommend a conciliatory policy in his inaugural, he would be killed by grenades like the one Orsini threw at Napoleon III. Anonymous to Lincoln, Washington, 2 March 1861, Lincoln Collection, Brown University.

that city should the time of that passage be known. He states that there are banded rowdies holding secret meetings, and that he has heard threats of mobbing and violence, and has himself heard men declare that if Mr Lincoln was to be assassinated they would like to be the men. He states further that it is only within the past few days that he has considered there was any danger, but now he deems it imminent. He deems the danger one which the authorities & people in Baltimore cannot guard against. All risk might be easily avoided by a change in the travelling arrangements which would bring Mr Lincoln & a portion of his party through Baltimore by a night train without previous notice.”³²³

General Scott reported this information to Seward, who wrote Lincoln urging him to change his travel plans.³²⁴ When the senator’s son handed him that letter, the president-elect inquired about the sources of Stone’s information, explaining that there “were stories or rumours some time ago, before I left home, about people who were intending to do me mischief. I never attached much importance to them – never wanted to believe any such thing. So I never would do anything about them, in the way of taking precautions and the like.” But Stone’s warning, based on sources different from Pinkerton’s, convinced Lincoln to take the threat seriously.³²⁵

The president-elect had received other such warnings, most notably from Captain George W. Hazzard, part of his military escort. In an undated memorandum, probably

³²³ Charles P. Stone, “Washington on the Eve of the War,” in Clarence Clough Buel and Robert Underwood Johnson, eds., Battles and Leaders of the Civil War (4 vols.; New York: Century, 1887-88), 1:21-24; memorandum by Stone, 21 February 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Stone, “Washington in March and April, 1861,” Magazine of History 14 (1885): 1-24; John A. Kennedy to Benson J. Lossing, New York, 13 August 1866, W. P. Palmer Collection, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland. The detective was David S. Bookstaver of the New York police, who had been sent to Baltimore by police commissioner John A. Kennedy.

³²⁴ Seward to Lincoln, Washington, 21 February 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Scott to Seward, Washington, 21 February 1861, ibid.*Check

³²⁵ Frederick Seward, Reminiscences of a War-Time Statesman and Diplomat, 1830-1915 (New York: G.

composed on board the train, Hazzard, who had spent several years in Baltimore, recommended that Lincoln avoid passing through that city as originally scheduled. He alleged that police chief Kane lacked integrity and had not controlled the city's notoriously violent gangs; that the chief would not provided adequate protection; that several thugs in Baltimore would gladly sacrifice their own lives "for having stabbed a 'black republican president;'" and that the leading citizens and newspapers favored secession. To support his argument, Hazzard cited "the violent assaults made, in the presence of the whole police force commanded by Marshal Kane in person, on the republican procession in that city last summer" and "the murder of one policeman by a rowdy, for attempting to arrest another rowdy for an assault – and the shooting of a second policeman by a couple of assassins while standing at his own fireside for swearing to the identity of the individual who had killed the first policeman." To avoid danger, Hazzard urged Lincoln to bypass Baltimore altogether or to travel through the town incognito.³²⁶ (Nowhere in the reminiscences of people involved in this affair is Hazzard's memo referred to, but it seems unlikely that it would have been ignored.)

On December 30, a Bostonian sojourning in Baltimore warned Lincoln that "it will be madness for you to attempt to reach Washington at any time," for the citizens of the Monumental City were such rabid secessionists that they had threatened his own life for merely suggesting that the president-elect was a gentleman.³²⁷ An anonymous woman similarly wrote that she had been assured "that there existed in Baltimore, a league of ten

P. Putnam's Sons, 1916), 134-38.

³²⁶ George W. Hazzard to Lincoln, [January 1861?], Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

³²⁷ Thomas Cadwallender to Lincoln, Baltimore, 31 December 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

persons, who had sworn that you should never pass through that city alive.”³²⁸

Ominously, the city fathers planned no official greeting or reception for the president-elect, nor did the governor or the legislature. All these warning signs made it seem prudent to heed the advice of Pinkerton, Felton, Judd, Hazzard, et al. and avoid passing through Baltimore as originally planned. Later Lincoln told Congressman Isaac N.

Arnold: “I did not then, nor do I now, believe I should have been assassinated, had I gone through Baltimore, as first contemplated; but I thought it wise to run no risk, where no risk was necessary.”³²⁹

On February 24, police chief Kane retroactively confirmed the wisdom of the itinerary change, saying: “There would have been a riot if Mr. Lincoln had crossed the city according to the original program. The Plugs on the one hand were determined on giving him a rousing reception, and the Tubs (a democratic organization) were equally determined to prevent the Plugs from giving the president elect any reception at all. The feeling was so violent between these two parties that a fight would certainly have attended Lincoln’s passage through the city. Now, gentlemen, you know that a mob of club men, when blood has once been shed, are not controllable. In the row, Mr. Lincoln would have been grossly insulted and probably killed.”³³⁰ The Baltimore correspondent of the New Orleans Picayune reached the same conclusion.³³¹ Others believed that an

³²⁸ “A Lady” to Lincoln, February 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

³²⁹ John G. Nicolay and John Hay, Abraham Lincoln: A History (10 vols.; New York: Century, 1890), 3:307; Loring, Pictorial History, 1:279; Isaac N. Arnold, The History of Abraham Lincoln, and the Overthrow of Slavery (Chicago: Clarke, 1866), 171. Cf. Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 306.

³³⁰ Washington correspondence, 25 February, Cincinnati Gazette, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 28 February 1861; Washington correspondence by Van [D. W. Bartlett], 27 February, Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 1 March 1861.

³³¹ New Orleans Picayune, n.d., in Bryan, Great American Myth, 44.

attack was planned on Republicans greeting the train rather than on its passengers.³³²

Subsequent events justified Kane's alarm, for in April, Mobtown secessionists burned bridges, rioted, and committed murder as they executed plans hatched in January by some of the men accused of conspiring against the president-elect.

At sunrise on February 22, Lincoln stood in Independence Hall, where he was to hoist the new American flag containing thirty-four stars. (Kansas had been admitted to the Union a few weeks earlier). Clearly the warnings of Pinkerton and the others were on his mind, for in an impromptu address inside the historic building he alluded to assassination as well as to the Declaration of Independence: "all the political sentiments I entertain have been drawn, so far as I have been able to draw them, from the sentiments which originated, and were given to the world from this hall in which we stand. I have never had a feeling politically that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence. (Great cheering.) I have often pondered over the dangers which were incurred by the men who assembled here and adopted that Declaration of Independence – I have pondered over the toils that were endured by the officers and soldiers of the army, who achieved that Independence. (Applause.) 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 the separation of the colonies from the mother land; but something in that Declaration giving liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but hope to the world for all future time. (Great applause.) It was that which gave promise that in due time the weights should be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that all should have an equal chance. (Cheers.) This is the sentiment embodied in that

³³² Baltimore American, 23 February, copied in the Cincinnati Gazette, 26 February 1861.

Declaration of Independence. Now, my friends, can this country be saved upon 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 can't 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 to surrender it. (Applause.)” He assured the crowd that he sought to avoid war, but declared that if the South attacked Northern facilities, his administration would retaliate: “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, there will be no blood shed unless it be forced upon the Government. The Government will not use force unless force is used against it. (Prolonged applause and cries of ‘That's the proper sentiment.’)” He closed his brief remarks with another allusion to his possible death: “I have said nothing but what I am willing to live by, and, in the pleasure of Almighty God, die by.”³³³

Outside, before a vast assemblage braving the winter chill, he removed his coat and firmly tugged the halyards, hoisting the large flag up the pole to unfurl and float majestically in the breeze as the newly-risen sun illuminated it. Enhancing the patriotic tableau, a band played the national anthem and the militia fired a salute.³³⁴ The crowd of 30,000 cheered wildly, reminding one observer “of some of the storied shouts which rang among the Scottish hills, in the days of clans and clansmen.”³³⁵ A newspaperman who had been with the presidential party all along wrote that at “no time has so popular an incident occurred during the trip. All things combined to make it not only impressively

³³³ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:240-41.

³³⁴ Philadelphia Daily News, 23 February 1861.

³³⁵ Philadelphia Daily Evening Bulletin, 22 February 1861; Philadelphia Press, 22 February 1861.

grand, but emphatically popular.”³³⁶ A local Democratic paper scorned Lincoln’s talk of “an equal chance” as a disguised plea for the emancipation and enfranchisement of blacks and called the president-elect “obscure, rude, ignorant, vulgar and boorish.”³³⁷

According to Samuel Francis Du Pont of the U.S. Navy, Lincoln “made a very favorable impression” in Philadelphia. “Younger and much finer looking than his portraits,” the president-elect, according to Du Pont, “created always at first pleasurable surprise – tall, gaunt like Clay and without the latter’s grace, he is still very pleasing and evidently self reliant and far above the crew who composed his suite.”³³⁸

At 8:30 a.m. Lincoln departed for Harrisburg; en route, Judd filled him in on the details of the altered itinerary. In the evening, he would return on a special train to Philadelphia, board the 10:50 p.m. regular train for Washington, accompanied only by Lamon, Pinkerton, and one of Pinkerton’s agents; they would arrive in the nation’s capital at 6 a.m.; telegraph wires from Harrisburg would be cut. In the Pennsylvania capital, Lincoln discussed the plan with a few of the entourage, emphasizing the need for secrecy.³³⁹ Yet he insisted that his wife be informed, for, he said, “otherwise she would be very much excited at his absence.”³⁴⁰ He was right. When told of the changed plans, Mrs. Lincoln “became very unmanageable,” according to Alexander K. McClure, who observed the scene. She demanded that she be allowed to accompany her husband on the new route and, McClure recalled, “spoke publicly about it in disregard of the earnest

³³⁶ Harrisburg correspondence, 23 February, New York Times, 25 February 1861.

³³⁷ Philadelphia Morning Pennsylvanian, 25 February, 4 March 1861.

³³⁸ John Daniel Hayes, ed., Samuel Francis Du Pont: A Selection from His Civil War Letters (3 vols.; Ithaca: published for the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library by the Cornell University Press, 1969), 1:38-39.

³³⁹ Judd to Pinkerton, Chicago, 3 November 1867, in Pinkerton, History and Evidence, 13-20.

³⁴⁰ Pinkerton?*

appeals to her for silence. Prompt action was required in such an emergency, and several of us simply hustled her into her room with Col. Sumner and Norman Judd . . . and locked the door on the outside. The men with her explained what was to be done and forced her to silence as she could not get out of the door.” McClure “thought Mrs. Lincoln was simply a hopeless fool and was so disgusted with her conduct that evening” that he never spoke to her again.³⁴¹

The trip to Harrisburg that morning was ominous. “All along the route from Philadelphia,” John Hay reported, “receptions seemed more the result of curiosity than enthusiasm. Even at Harrisburg, not one man in a hundred cheered. The crowd everywhere were uniformly rough, unruly, and ill bred.” Lincoln “was so unwell he could hardly be persuaded to show himself.” In Lancaster, he declined the opportunity to address a crowd gathered at a hotel, stating that “it is well known that the more a man speaks the less he is understood – the more he says one thing, his adversaries contend he meant something else.”³⁴² At the state capital, according to Hay, the “arrangements were unprecedentedly bad; some of the suite and party were unaccommodated with rooms; several in one bed, and others had no rooms at all. The crowd, and the fatiguing ceremonies of the day, and the annoyances and vexation at the badly conducted hotel, proved too much for the patience of the party, who vented their disgust loudly. The committee did nothing, and were in every one’s way.”³⁴³

³⁴¹ A. K. McClure to Alonzo Rothschild, Philadelphia, 9 May 1907, Lincoln Contemporaries Collection, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne.

The New York Herald reported that “Mrs. Lincoln’s agitation nearly discovered [i.e., revealed] the whole secret.” Harrisburg correspondence 23 February, New York Herald, 24 February 1861.

³⁴² Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:242.

³⁴³ Harrisburg correspondence by John Hay, 22 February, New York World, 23 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 41-42.

Also ominous were Lincoln's remarks in response to a welcoming speech by Governor Andrew G. Curtin. Alluding to a review he had witnessed earlier in the day, the president-elect declared: "While I have been proud to see to-day the finest military array, I think, that I have ever seen, allow me to say in regard to those men that they give hope of what may be done when war is inevitable." He did not say if war was inevitable, but when it was inevitable. To offset the apparent belligerence of this remark, he expressed the hope that no blood would be shed. He took pains in his later address to the state legislature to underscore his peaceable intentions.³⁴⁴

Even more ominously, a man on the street asked Lincoln: "How soon are you going to send us down South?" He replied "that there would be no occasion for such a course, but that he was glad to see that there was one ready to act, if the cause of his country should demand him. At this a number cried out, 'we will all go, if you want us.'"³⁴⁵

At the hotel that afternoon, Lincoln had Judd summon Curtin and the most prominent members of the entourage, saying: "I reckon they will laugh at us, Judd, but you had better get them together." When they were assembled, the president-elect told them: "I have thought over this matter considerably since I went over the ground with Pinkerton last night. The appearance of Mr. Frederick Seward, with warning from another source, confirms my belief in Mr. Pinkerton's statement. Unless there are some other reasons, besides fear of ridicule, I am disposed to carry out Judd's plan."³⁴⁶ Colonel Sumner, who "almost wept with anger," exclaimed: "That proceeding will be a d-d piece

³⁴⁴ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:243-45.

³⁴⁵ Harrisburg correspondence, 22 February, Philadelphia Inquirer, 23 February 1861.

³⁴⁶ Judd to Pinkerton, * History and Evidence, 22.

of cowardice.” Indignantly he added, “I’ll get a Squad of cavalry Sir, cut our way to Washington Sir.” Judd replied, “Probably before that day comes, the inauguration day will have passed.” The president-elect named the flamboyant Lamon to be his sole bodyguard on the trip, for in the East, Lamon – unlike Hunter and Sumner – was little known; as a native Virginian, he had a Southern accent; he was 6’ 2” tall, muscular, courageous, devoted to Lincoln, and armed with a pair of revolvers, two derringers, brass knuckles, and a huge bowie knife.³⁴⁷ Sumner protested that he had undertaken to escort Lincoln all the way to Washington, but Judd managed to distract the colonel long enough so that Lamon and Lincoln could depart by themselves, much to Sumner’s displeasure. (“When we get to Washington, Mr. Lincoln shall determine what apology is due to you,” Judd assured the colonel.)³⁴⁸ They boarded the special train around 7 p.m., at which time all telegraph lines from Harrisburg were cut.³⁴⁹

At 10 o’clock Lamon and Lincoln, accompanied by two railroad officials, reached West Philadelphia, where they were met by Pinkerton and another railroad executive. The men rode about in a carriage to kill time before the 10:50 departure of the regularly scheduled train to Washington. When it pulled into the station, Lincoln, stooping over to disguise his great height, climbed aboard through the sleeping car’s rear door,

³⁴⁷ Alexander K. McClure, Abraham Lincoln and Men of War-Times (Philadelphia: Times, 1892), p.?* Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 304; Lincoln in Lossing*; Swett, unidentified clipping, 7 December 1887, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne; New York World, n.d., copied in the Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 28 February 1861; Lavern M. Hamand, “Lincoln’s Particular Friend,” in Donald F. Tingley, ed., Essays in Illinois History: In Honor of Glenn Huron Seymour (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), 18-36.

³⁴⁸ Judd in HI;* Judd to Pinkerton*; Lamon, Recollections, 41-43; McClure, Lincoln and Men of War-Times, p.?*; J. Howard Wert, “Lincoln in Harrisburg,” unidentified clipping, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne; *al’s version in Lossing.

³⁴⁹ Richard R. Gladish, John Pitcairn, Uncommon Entrepreneur: A Biography (Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania: Academy of the New Church, 1989), 18-20; Claude R. Flory, “Garman, Black, and the ‘Baltimore Plot,’” Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 94 (1970): 101-3; A. K. McClure, Our Presidents and How We Make Them (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1900), 181-82.

accompanied by Lamon and Pinkerton. The president-elect, who was described to the conductor as an invalid, promptly entered his berth and drew the curtains. “Well, old fellow,” remarked the conductor to Lincoln, it is lucky for you that our president [Felton] detained the train to send a package, or you would have been left.”³⁵⁰ During the ride to Baltimore, Lincoln told a joke or two sotto voce, but otherwise the three men remained silent. At 3:30 a.m. they reached Baltimore, where horses dragged the car to the Washington Branch depot, little more than a mile distant. After a long layover, they departed for Washington, arriving at 6 a.m. As Lincoln and his two companions strode through the depot, E. B. Washburne, who had been alerted by Frederick Seward, emerged from behind a huge pillar, saying: “Abe you can’t play that on me.”³⁵¹ Washburne reported to his wife that Lincoln “is very well considering how much he has been jaded and worn down.”³⁵² Years later he recalled that the president-elect resembled “a well-to-do farmer from one of the back towns of Jo Daviess County coming to Washington to see the city, take out his land warrant and get the patent for his farm.” With an elbow, Pinkerton jabbed the Congressman and, as the detective raised his fist, Lincoln exclaimed: “Don’t strike him Allan, don’t strike him – that is my friend Washburne. – don’t you recognize him?” All four took a hack to Willards Hotel, where two minutes after their arrival they were met by Seward, who had overslept and was thus unable to greet the party at the station.³⁵³ (He had been slated to meet and accompany Lincoln to his hotel; Washburne was originally assigned to perform the same office for Mrs. Lincoln

³⁵⁰ Schouler mass 1 64*

³⁵¹ Washburne in Rice, ed., Reminiscences of Lincoln, 38.

³⁵² Washburne to his wife, Sunday morning [24 February 1861], Washburn Family Papers, Washburn Memorial Library, Norlands, Maine.

³⁵³ Washburne in Rice, ed., Reminiscences of Lincoln, 38. Lamon told a slightly different version of this

in a separate carriage.)³⁵⁴ The senator, out of breath, said he “had in his possession conclusive evidence showing that there was a large organization in Baltimore to prevent the passage of Mr. Lincoln through that City and he felt confident that Mr. Lincoln could not have come through in any other manner without blood-shed: that this knowledge was what induced him after consultation with General Scott to send his son to Philadelphia to meet Mr. Lincoln with these letters and to urge a change of route; that this change would doubtless create quite a ‘Furore’, but that he (Seward) would defend it, and endorse it, and that had Mr. Lincoln not taken this step – Genl. Scott was so plainly convinced of the danger to Mr. Lincoln that in all probability he would have sent United States Troops to Baltimore to-day to receive and escort the President Elect.” Pinkerton protested that his sources reported no such grandiose threat. Explaining that he was tired, Lincoln repaired to his room.³⁵⁵

Shortly after Pinkerton notified Judd and others that Lincoln had arrived safely, he encountered Lamon, who “was very much excited” and wanted to telegraph the Chicago Journal an account of the trip and his role in it. Pinkerton urged him to do nothing without Lincoln’s approval and stressed the importance of shaping the story favorably. Lamon “was determined to make a ‘Splurge’ and have his name figure largely in it.” Pinkerton said he “talked so foolishly that I lost patience with him and set him down in my own mind as a brainless egotistical fool.”³⁵⁶

Seward’s prediction about a “furore” was accurate. Newspaper descriptions of the

story. New York Times, 1 November 1877*CHECK

³⁵⁴ E. G. Spaulding to Weed, Washington, 21 February 1861, Weed Papers, University of Rochester.

³⁵⁵ Cuthbert?, ed., Lincoln and the Baltimore Plot *?

³⁵⁶ Cuthbert, ed., Lincoln and the Baltimore Plot *

“undignified and ridiculous flight by night” proved most embarrassing.³⁵⁷ Joseph Howard, Jr., of the New York Times wrote a highly colored account, describing Lincoln’s garb as a cowardly disguise: “He wore a Scotch plaid cap and a very long military cloak, so that he was entirely unrecognizable.”³⁵⁸ In fact, the president-elect had on an old overcoat and a new soft wool hat that he had been given in New York.³⁵⁹ (Three years later, Howard was jailed for drafting a fake presidential proclamation about the draft and having it published in two New York papers.)³⁶⁰ The “fact that the President elect has sneaked & skulked into the Federal Capitol as if he were an absconding felon, has occasioned the most profound mortification among the Republicans here,” New Hampshire Senator John P. Hale reported from Washington.³⁶¹ Iowa Congressman Samuel R. Curtis found it “humiliating to have a President smuggled into the capital by night.”³⁶² Curtis’s colleague, Henry L. Dawes, recalled that Howard’s story touched off “a sudden and painful revulsion of feeling” toward Lincoln “which waited for neither reason nor explanation.” The “outcry came near being ‘away with him, crucify him.’ ‘He had sneaked into Washington,’ ‘he was a coward,’ ‘the man afraid to come through Baltimore was unfit to be president,’ ‘Frightened at his own shadow.’” Those “and worse epithets” greeted the president-elect.³⁶³ “These are not times for a high public officer to play the woman,” sneered some Philadelphians, who predicted that his “flight was a

³⁵⁷ New York Daily News, 26, 28 February 1861.

³⁵⁸ *New York Times

³⁵⁹ Lincoln in Lossing, 1:279-80.check* Pinkerton described it as a Kossuth hat.*

³⁶⁰ Robert S. Harper, Lincoln and the Press (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951), 295-303.

³⁶¹ Hale to his wife, Washington, 24 February 1861, Hale Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society.

³⁶² Samuel R. Curtis, manuscript journal, 23 February 1861, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

³⁶³ Dawes, “Mr. Lincoln’s Arrival in Washington,” undated manuscript, Dawes Papers Library of Congress. This was published, with slight variations, in Dawes, “Washington in the Winter before the

disgrace from which he can never recover.”³⁶⁴ Caricaturists ridiculed Lincoln mercilessly.³⁶⁵ George Templeton Strong rightly feared that “this surreptitious nocturnal dodging or sneaking of the President-elect into his capital city, under cloud of night, will be used to damage his moral position and throw ridicule on his Administration.”³⁶⁶ One correspondent claimed that the journey had ruined “the reputation Mr. Lincoln enjoyed for Jackson-like firmness and boldness that the people were anxious once again to see in an occupant of the Presidency.”³⁶⁷ An Indiana Republican leader opined that Lincoln “was in the hands of cowardly men” and that “the Republican cause has thereby been greatly damaged.” The president-elect “had better died in the transit” than ignominiously sneaking through Baltimore.³⁶⁸ The New York World expressed disbelief that “a man of his bold and open bearing, who has hewn his way with strength of arm, and will, and force of character to his present high position, would blench at the first show of danger, and of his own choice, travel by night into the capitol.”³⁶⁹ Republican journalists who had been accompanying Lincoln called his change in plans “cowardly” and unfavorably compared his action to that of the South Carolinians: “They say nothing can excuse or justify such conduct. . . . Ill-advised, injudicious, indeed every epithet is showered upon

War,” The Atlantic Monthly 72 (August 1893): 160-67.

³⁶⁴ Philadelphia correspondence by “Rittenhouse,” 25 February, Washington States and Union, 27 February 1861; “Mr. Lincoln’s Hegira – He Seeks Safety in Flight,” Philadelphia Morning Pennsylvanian, 25 February 1861.

³⁶⁵ Rufus Rockwell Wilson, Lincoln in Caricature (Elmira, N.Y.: Primavera Press, 1945), 102-9; Gary L. Bunker, From Rail-Splitter to Icon: Lincoln’s Image in Illustrated Periodicals, 1860-1865 (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2001), 90-95; Harper’s Weekly, 9 March 1861.

³⁶⁶ Nevins and Thomas, eds., Strong Diary, 3:102 (entry for 23 February 1861).

³⁶⁷ Washington correspondence, n.d., Louisville Journal, n.d., in the Washington States and Union, 4 March 1861.

³⁶⁸ Gayle Thornbrough, ed., The Diary of Calvin Fletcher (7 vols.; Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972-81), 7:54 (entry for 25 February 1861).

³⁶⁹ New York World, 25 February 1861.

the movement.” W. G. Snethen, a leading Baltimore Republican and a member of the disappointed welcoming committee, complained that “this was a shameful way to treat men who had risked their lives to vote for Lincoln, and that it would have been perfectly safe for Lincoln to have walked through the city. The movement was a blunder.”³⁷⁰ In Michigan, the Republican governor expressed indignation: “We feel humiliated in the last degree. . . . I am ashamed when I think of what derision it will be received in the South. If Lincoln don’t take the reins vigorously in his own hands smite these villains ‘hip & thigh’ then the concern is not worth running any longer.”³⁷¹ The Illinois State Register scolded Lincoln: “the dignity of his station, and regard for the character of the country, should have forbidden that he should sneak to the nation’s capital incog., like a refugee from justice.”³⁷² Elsewhere in Illinois people had “a deep feeling of shame, mortification, sorrow & indignation.”³⁷³ Southern papers denounced Lincoln “as a coward, a more than coward, because of his sending his wife and family over a railroad and in a train in which he was afraid to travel himself.”³⁷⁴

Some Republicans defended Lincoln’s action. The Cincinnati Gazette speculated that if he had been killed, “civil war would have broken out immediately, for an enraged North would have blamed the South for the crime and taken swift revenge.” If Seward, Scott, Pinkerton, Judd and the others had any doubts about Lincoln’s safety, “it was their

³⁷⁰ Dispatch from the train between Harrisburg and Baltimore, 23 February, New York Herald, 24 February 1861.

³⁷¹ Austin Blair to Zachariah Chandler, Jefferson, Ohio, 27 February 1861, Chandler Papers, Library of Congress. *CHECK agasint Xerox copy

³⁷² Illinois State Register (Springfield), 25 February 1861.

³⁷³ James Marsh to Elihu B. Washburne, Rockford, 27 February 1861, Washburne Papers Library of Congress.

³⁷⁴ Washington correspondence, 25 February, Cincinnati Enquirer, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 28 February 1861; Louisville Courier in sandbur 1 84

imperative duty to urge upon him to forego the Baltimore reception.”³⁷⁵ An Indiana Republican thought Lincoln had shown “true courage,” for had he ignored the warnings and been attacked, “he would have been, in some degree, responsible for any acts of violence, outrage, or bloodshed” in Baltimore.³⁷⁶ “Who does not remember,” asked John W. Forney in the course of justifying Lincoln’s action, “only a few years ago, when, in broad daylight, some of these fiends in human shape murdered or wounded, or struck down, in the streets, a number of the most respected and influential citizens?”³⁷⁷ The Baltimore American called Lincoln’s action “a simple and practical avoidance of what might have been an occasion of disorder and of mortification to all interested in the preservation of the good name of our city.”³⁷⁸

Lincoln may have overreacted to a threat that was perhaps exaggerated, but given the bloody history of Baltimore mobs and the fatal attack they were to make on Union troops passing through that city on April 19, his decision seems in retrospect like a reasonable precaution, especially since the warnings came from two independent sources.³⁷⁹ Yet he came to rue that decision, telling friends that he considered it one of the worst mistakes he ever made.³⁸⁰ His embarrassment at appearing weak and fearful may have disposed him in the momentous coming weeks to avoid steps that might deepen

³⁷⁵ “Mr. Lincoln’s Secret Journey,” Cincinnati Gazette, 26 February 1861.

³⁷⁶ John B. Dillon to Henry S. Lane, Indianapolis, 1 March 1861, Lane Papers, Indiana University.

³⁷⁷ Washington correspondence by Forney, 25 February, Philadelphia Press, 26 February 1861.

³⁷⁸ Baltimore American, n.d., copied in the Providence Journal, 28 February 1861.

³⁷⁹ For a different view, see Edward Stanley Lanis, “Allan Pinkerton and the Baltimore ‘Assassination’ Plot Against Lincoln,” Maryland Historical Magazine 45 (1950): 1-13.

³⁸⁰ McClure, Our Presidents, and How We Make Them, 48; James G. Blaine, Twenty Years of Congress, from Lincoln to Garfield (2 vols.; Norwich, Connecticut: Henry Bill, 1884-86), 1:280; Lamon, Recollections, 266*CHECK.

that unfortunate impression.³⁸¹

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