
The Diary of a Public Man. Unpublished Passages of the Secret History of the American Civil War. Part II

Source: *The North American Review*, Sep., 1879, Vol. 129, No. 274 (Sep., 1879), pp. 259-273

Published by: University of Northern Iowa

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25100792>

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IV.

THE DIARY OF A PUBLIC MAN.

*UNPUBLISHED PASSAGES OF THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE
AMERICAN CIVIL WAR.*

PART II.

THE IGNOMINIOUS NIGHT-RIDE FROM HARRISBURG.

Washington, February 24th.—Since I sat and listened to the silvery but truly satanic speech of Senator Benjamin, on his taking leave of the Senate three weeks ago, nothing has affected me so painfully as this most unfortunate night-trip of Mr. Lincoln's from Harrisburg here. It is in every imaginable way a most distressing and ill-advised thing, and I can scarcely trust myself to think of it, even here alone in my room. Mr. Seward feels about it as I do, though he affects, with his usual and rather exasperating assumption of levity, to laugh it off. But it has shaken my confidence, and it will shake the confidence of a good many more people in the reality of his influence over this strange new man from the West. It gives a weight and importance of the most dangerous sort, too, to the stories which the opponents of a peaceful and satisfactory adjustment have been so sedulously putting about in regard to the disposition of the border States, and particularly of Maryland; and it can not fail to excite a most mischievous feeling of contempt for the personal character of Mr. Lincoln himself throughout the country, especially at the South, where it is most important that people should at this moment have been made to understand that the new Administration comes into power in the ordinary legitimate way, and will be presided over by a man of law and order, who has confidence in himself, in the people of the country, and in the innate loyalty of Americans to the law. I do not believe one word of the

cock-and-bull story of the Italian assassins, which Mr. Seward told me to-day had been communicated to Mr. Lincoln as coming from General Scott; and it was clear to me that Mr. Seward himself did not believe one word of it. Even with the brief glimpse I got in New York of Mr. Lincoln, I am slow to believe in his being so weak and vulgar a man as this performance indicates, and I am satisfied that some extraordinary pressure must have been exerted upon him to make him do a thing which, at any time, would have been deplorable and scandalous, and which appears to me, happening at this moment, to be nothing less than calamitous. I can think of nothing else. It really throws the whole machinery of our system off its center. Are we really drifting into the wake of Spanish America? This can not be; and yet, when we have reached a point at which an elected President of the United States consents to be smuggled through by night to the capital of the country, lest he should be murdered in one of the chief cities of the Union, who can blame the rest of the world for believing that we are a failure, or quarrel with desperadoes, like Wigfall, for taking it for granted? It is sickening.

THE BLAIRS AS MR. LINCOLN'S EVIL GENIUS.

Washington, February 25th.—A visit this morning from Senator Douglas, and who is as much concerned as I am at the turn affairs are taking. He feels exactly as I do over this wretched smuggling business; and both startles and shocks me by what he tells me of Mr. Seward's share in it, asserting positively, as of his own knowledge, that, at the urgent request of General Scott, Mr. Seward sent his son to Mr. Lincoln at Philadelphia, to impress upon him and his friends the imminent peril they would be in at Baltimore. I expressed my utter surprise, and asked him if he had spoken with Mr. Seward on the subject since Saturday. He had not. "But you must remember," he said, "that in all this business General Scott does with Seward as he pleases; and General Scott is an old woman in the hands of those born conspirators and makers of mischief—the Blairs." He went on from this to give me his reasons for believing that the Blairs were moving heaven and earth to get control of Mr. Lincoln's Administration; and that they have made more progress that way than is at all suspected, even by Mr. Seward. I do not like any of the Blairs, and indeed I know nobody who does. But of them all I like Montgomery least; and I can imagine nothing less to be desired than his entrance into the Cabinet, which

Senator Douglas regards as inevitable. He goes further than I can in his views as to the policy which he thinks the Blairs are bent on cajoling or compelling Mr. Lincoln to adopt. They are coöperating now for the moment, he thinks, with the extreme anti-Seward men both here and in New York. "What they really want," said Senator Douglas, "is a civil war. They are determined, first, on seeing slavery abolished by force, and then on expelling the whole negro race from the continent. That was old Blair's doctrine, sir, long ago; and that is Montgomery's doctrine, sir," he said, with even more than his usual emphasis; "and, if they can get and keep their grip on Lincoln, this country will never see peace or prosperity again, in your time, or in mine, or in our children's children's time. They will be the evil genius, sir, of the republic. They, and nobody else, you may depend upon it, will be found at the bottom of this abominable smuggling scheme." I asked Senator Douglas how it could have been possible for anybody to persuade Mr. Lincoln into such a suicidal act, unless he is a lamentably weak and pliable character. "No, he is not that, sir," was his reply; "but he is eminently a man of the atmosphere which surrounds him. He has not yet got out of Springfield, sir. He has Springfield people with him. He has his wife with him. He does not know that he is President-elect of the United States, sir. He does not see that the shadow he casts is any bigger now than it was last year. It will not take him long to find it out when he has got established in the White House. But he has not found it out yet. Besides, he knows that he is a minority President, and that breaks him down." Mr. Douglas then went on to give me some painful details as to Mr. Lincoln's domestic life and habitual associations in Illinois, which were very discouraging. He wound up by saying that he had made up his mind to see Mr. Lincoln at once and tell him the truth.

MR. STANTON'S ESTIMATE OF LINCOLN.

I called at Willard's Hotel, and left my card for Mr. Lincoln, who had gone out. But, as I was crossing Fourteenth Street, I met the Attorney-General, who stopped me to ask if I had seen the President-elect since he "crept into Washington." It is impossible to be more bitter or malignant than he is; every word was a suppressed and a very ill-suppressed sneer, and it cost me something to keep my temper in talking with him even for a few moments. When he found that I had only met Mr. Lincoln once,

to my recollection, he launched out into a downright tirade about him, saying he "had met him at the bar, and found him a low, cunning clown." I could not resist telling him as we parted, that I hoped the President would take an *official* and not a *personal* view of his successor in any relations he might have with him. I think he felt the thrust, for he bowed more civilly than he is apt to do, when he left me. But Mr. Stanton's insolence shows how very mischievous the effect of this wretched blunder has already been; and, while it appalls me even to suppose that Mr. Seward can have had any hand in it, it is not much more satisfactory to believe that he really has so little influence with Mr. Lincoln as would be implied in his not having been consulted as to such a step at such a juncture.

DID FLOYD ORDER ANDERSON TO FORT SUMTER?

Washington, February 26th.—At dinner to-day I sat next to Mr. —, who told me positively, as of his own knowledge, that Anderson's movement to Fort Sumter was made directly in pursuance of a discretion communicated to him as from the President himself, and he added an extraordinary assertion that he knew it to have been recommended by Floyd, and as he believed for the purpose, which of course Floyd was very careful not to betray to Mr. Buchanan, of creating a situation which should make an armed explosion inevitable, and should so force Virginia and the border States into secession. The withdrawal of Secretary Cass, he said to me (and his personal relations at the White House certainly ought to make him an authority, especially when speaking confidentially as he knew he was to-day), roused the President to a sense of the dangerous position in which he is placed by reason of his well-known political and personal good will toward the South and leading Southern men. "He has never been the same man that he was, since that day," said —. He was positive about the instructions sent to Anderson; and reiterated his assertion two or three times with an emphasis which I thought well to moderate, though, as Mr. Flores, a lively little South American Minister, sat next him on the other hand, there is no great danger, I think, of his having been understood by anybody but myself.

THE CONFUSION OVER MR. LINCOLN'S CABINET.

Later on in the evening — came over and sat by me to urge me to go with him to-morrow to see Mr. Lincoln in regard to the Cabi-

net appointments. He was much agitated and concerned about them, having gotten into his head, for reasons which he gave me, that Mr. Lincoln, in his despair of harmonizing the Seward men with the Chase men, has concocted or had concocted for him a plan of putting Corwin into the State Department, sending Seward to England, and giving the Treasury to New York. I listened to him patiently, and I own I was startled by some of the facts he told me; but I have pointed out to him that, however close might be the ties between Mr. Corwin and Mr. Lincoln, Mr. Chase could not be counted out in this way unless with his own consent, which I did not believe could be got, and that I am beginning to think that Mr. Chase holds the new President a good deal more tightly in his hand than Mr. Seward does. I declined peremptorily to call upon Mr. Lincoln in the business; though I said I should certainly call upon him as a matter of respect, and that, if he gave me any reason or opportunity to speak of his Cabinet, I should tell him frankly what I thought. I found — quite as strongly impressed as Mr. Douglas by the machinations of the Blairs, and quite as fearful of their success. He showed me a letter he had received a fortnight ago from Mr. Draper, in New York, expressing great anxiety as to Mr. Seward's position in the Cabinet in case of the nomination of Mr. Chase, and intimating an intention of visiting Washington with several other gentlemen for the purpose of making Mr. Lincoln understand that he must absolutely drop the idea of putting Mr. Chase into the Treasury. I told him that Mr. Weed had to-day expressed the same ideas to me, and I asked him if he did not know that a counter-pressure was putting on Mr. Lincoln to exclude Mr. Seward. "Suppose," I said, "they should both be excluded?"

We were very late, and while the whist was going on I had a very interesting talk with — about Mr. Benjamin, in the course of which he told me a story so characteristic of all the persons so concerned in it that I must jot it down. We happened to speak of Soulé and the curious letter which he published the other day. "I dined with Benjamin," said —, "in January, a day or two after that letter appeared, and calling his attention to what seemed to me the nut of it, being the passage in which Soulé eloquently calls upon Louisiana, if she must leave the Union, not to follow the leadership of men who, with the Federal power at their back, had not been able to protect her rights within the Union, I said to him, '*C'est de vous et de Slidell qu'il a voulu parler*'?" Ben-

jamin laughed, as did St. Martin and Hoemelle of the French Legation, who were also of the company, and replied: "Of course" (he was speaking of us), "that is the ruin of poor Soulé, that he can not conceal his morbid hatred of both of us—that, and his congenital incapacity of telling the truth; he loves lying, loves it more than anything else; loves it *jusqu'à la folie!*" Then Benjamin went on to tell a story of an encounter between himself and Soulé, on the way to Mexico, whither Soulé was going to prevent, if possible, the carrying out of the Tehuantepec scheme. When he found Benjamin on board of the boat, which he had not expected, he volunteered the absurd statement to Benjamin that he was only going to Vera Cruz *en route pour Tampico!* Of course he did not go to Tampico, but to the capital; and, when he got to the capital, he opened his batteries on Tehuantepec, by informing the Mexican President that he had been specially deputed by President Buchanan to advise with him on the international relations of the two countries; though he might have ascertained, with tact and a very little trouble, that Mr. Forsyth had already cautioned the Mexican Government, by direction of President Buchanan, against having any dealings with Soulé at all! I did not say to —, though I was on the point of saying it, that I was not at all sure whether this curious story best illustrated the innate mendacity of Soulé, or the innate duplicity of a more exalted personage. — is very bitter now against Benjamin, though still under the glamour, as I must confess myself to be in a measure, of his charming personal ways, and his rare and lucid intelligence. At this very dinner to which he referred early in January, — tells me Benjamin spoke of the arrangements and projects of the Confederate organizers, with an apparent intimate knowledge of them all; saying that the Confederate Congress would assemble at Montgomery before February 15th, and choose a President, so that Lincoln should find himself confronted, when he took the oath in March, by a complete government, extending at least over eight States, and offering peace or war to his choice. — does not believe the story about Yancey from Montgomery to-day. He thinks Benjamin will be sent as Confederate Commissioner to Europe, to seek recognition; and certainly a more dangerous one could not be selected. He would hurt us abroad as much as Yancey would help us. On reaching home, I found a note from —, full of hopes for to-morrow, which I can see no reason for sharing, and another from Mr. Weed to the same effect, telling me that Mr. Douglas would see Mr. Lincoln to-night. I do not see that

the Peace Conferences have advanced us one step from the point where we were in January, when Mr. Ledyard came to see me, telling me that General Cass had been electrified into better spirits, ill as he then was, by the absolute certainty that Mr. Seward and Mr. Crittenden had so got their heads together as to insure a satisfactory settlement "the very next day." How many days have since gone by with no such result; and what is before us now but imbecility if not worse, in the government we have, and utter distraction in the councils of a government we are to have? Poor General Cass! I bade him good-by yesterday, and I suspect for ever. I should not be surprised if the journey brings him to the end, and I hope he has not been allowed to carry out his purpose of seeking an interview with Mr. Lincoln. He is not strong enough to bear the excitement, and it can do no good, I fear.

WITH MR. LINCOLN IN WASHINGTON.

Washington, February 28th.—Half an hour with Mr. Lincoln to-day, which confirms all my worst fears. I should say he is at his wits' ends, if he did not seem to me to be so thoroughly aware of the fact that some other people are in that condition. I told him frankly, on his own provocation to the subject, what I thought would be the advantages to his Administration, and to the country, of putting — into the Cabinet, and gave him to understand, as plainly as I thought becoming, that he must not look on me as acting in concert with any set of men to urge that nomination, or any other nomination, upon him. I think he saw that I was in earnest; and, at all events, he advised me to write to — in the terms in which I wished to write to him.

I was sorry to find him anxious about the safety of Washington, and he asked me some questions about Captain Stone, which surprised me a little, and annoyed me more. I told him what I knew of Stone personally, and what had been said to me about him, by the most competent men in the army, at the time when he first came here, by General Scott's wish, to reorganize the militia of the District. He seemed very glad to hear of this, and was very much taken with a story which I told him, and for the accuracy of which I could vouch, that when Captain Stone, upon an urgent recommendation of General Scott, was appointed to the command of the District militia, in January, Governor Floyd was excessively enraged, and tried to get his own nephew, "Charley Jones," who had been previously nominated for the post, and who

is a desperate fellow, to insult Stone, pick a quarrel with him, and shoot him. Mr. Lincoln's melancholy countenance lighted up with a twinkle in his eye. "That was not such a bad idea of Floyd's," he said, in a slow, meditative sort of way. "Of course, I'm glad Stone wasn't shot, and that there wasn't any breach of the peace; but—if the custom could be generally introduced, it might lubricate matters in the way of making political appointments!" After a little, he recurred to the dangerous condition of Washington. I then spoke very earnestly, for it was clear to me that he must be still under the pressure of the same evil counsels which had led him into that dreadful business of the night-ride from Harrisburg; and I urged him to put absolute confidence in the assurances of Captain Stone. I told him, what I believe to be perfectly true, that the worst stories about the intended incursions into Washington, and the like, all originate with men like George Saunders, of New York, and Arnold Harris, of Tennessee, once a particular follower of President Buchanan, but now a loud and noisy secessionist—men who came into my mind because I had passed them in the hall of the very hotel in which we were talking, and in which they have been telling wonderful stories of conspiracy and assassination, from the hotel porches, to anybody who will listen to them for weeks past. He listened to me very attentively, and, suddenly stretching out his hand, picked up and handed me a note to look at. I recognized Senator Sumner's handwriting as I took it, and was not, therefore, particularly surprised to find it alarmish and mysterious in tone, bidding Mr. Lincoln, for particular reasons, to be very careful how he went out alone at night. I saw that Mr. Lincoln watched me while I read the note, and I perhaps may have expressed in my countenance an opinion of the communication which I did not think it civil to put into words, merely reiterating, as I laid it back on the table, my own conviction that there was nothing to fear in Washington, and no occasion for measures likely to influence the public mind unfavorably in other parts of the country. As I arose to go, Mr. Lincoln pulled himself together up out of the rocking-chair, into which he had packed himself, and, scanning me good-naturedly for a moment, said, very abruptly, "You never put backs with Sumner, did you?" I suppose I looked as much surprised as I felt; but I laughed and said that I did not think I ever had done so. "Well, I supposed not," he said; and then, hesitating a moment, went on: "When he was in here I asked him to measure with me, and do you know he made a little speech about

it." I tried to look civilly curious, and Mr. Lincoln, with an indescribable glimmer all over his face, continued: "Yes," he said, "he told me he thought 'this was a time for uniting our fronts and not our backs before the enemies of the country,' or something like that. It was very fine. But I reckon the truth was"—and at this point I was compelled against my will to laugh aloud—"I reckon the truth was, he was—afraid to measure!" And with this he looked down with some complacency on his own really indescribable length of limb. "He is a good piece of a man, though—Sumner," he added, half quizzically, half apologetically, "and a good man. I have never had much to do with bishops down where we live; but, do you know, Sumner is just my idea of a bishop." At that moment a door opened, and a lady came in, in not a very ceremonious way, I thought, dressed as if either just about to go into the street, or having just come in. Mr. Lincoln presented me to her as his wife, and I exchanged a few words with her. Perhaps I looked at her through the mist of what Senator Douglas had intimated to me; but certainly she made a disagreeable impression on me. She is not ill-looking, and, though her manners are not those of a well-bred woman of the world, there would be nothing particularly repulsive about them, were it not for the hard, almost coarse tone of her voice, and for something very like cunning in the expression of her face. With the recollection of Mr. Douglas's account of her relations with her husband, the thought involuntarily occurred to me of the contrast between his own beautiful and most graceful wife and this certainly dowdy and to me most unprepossessing little woman. I think if the wives had been voted for, even by the women, Mr. Douglas would be President-elect to-day.

The passages were thronged as I came out. On the stairs I met Mr. Bell, who stepped aside with me for a moment to tell me how much he was impressed with the conservative tone of Mr. Lincoln's mind, and to go over the story I had yesterday heard of the interview of Tuesday night. I did not think it worth while to dampen his feelings by hinting what judgments I had formed of it all from Senator Douglas's account of it, nor to ask him what hope there could be from these propositions of the Peace Congress after what took place yesterday in the New York delegation. But the truth is, I am losing all heart and hope; there has been more Cabinet-making than peace-making in the Peace Congress; and I am beginning to be afraid that the Virginia secessionists are trifling designedly with Mr. Seward and all our friends.

THE RELATIONS OF MR. SEWARD WITH MR. LINCOLN.

Mr. Douglas came to see me late this evening. He has been some time with Mr. Lincoln it seems—last night again, not of course at the jam and “reception,” but in a private earnest talk about the Peace Congress and the efforts of the extreme men in Congress to make it abortive. He was more agitated and distressed than I have ever seen him ; and it is impossible not to feel that he really and truly loves his country in a way not too common, I fear now, in Washington ; but I really can not make out what he expected Mr. Lincoln to do. He told me he had urged Mr. Lincoln to recommend the instant calling of a national convention, upon which point Mr. Seward agrees with him, as his motion in the Senate shows to-day. But he admitted that he had no success in getting Mr. Lincoln to a point on the subject, and this led us to a question of what Mr. Lincoln really means to say in his inaugural. I found that Senator Douglas knew just as well as I knew that Mr. Lincoln has not confided this yet, even to Mr. Seward ; but I could not get him to feel as I do how strangely compromising this is to all our hopes of a settlement through the influence of Mr. Seward. How is it possible that Mr. Lincoln can intend to put Mr. Seward at the head of his Administration, if he leaves him thus in the dark as to the purport of the first great act of his official life, now only four days off ! I can not even reconcile Mr. Seward’s acquiescence in such a course with the respect I would like to feel for him as a man ; and it seems to me absolutely discouraging as to the outlook for the country.

MR. LINCOLN HIS OWN PRIVY COUNCIL.

Senator Douglas could not or would not see this, even though he admitted that he knew the inaugural address to have been prepared by Mr. Lincoln himself, without consulting anybody, so far as it appears, at Springfield ; and though he could give me no good reason for believing that Mr. Lincoln has so much as shown it to Mr. Seward or anybody else since he reached Washington. Everything seems to me to be at sixes and sevens among the very men who ought to be consulting and acting together with united efforts to force the conservative will of the country on all the desperate intriguers of both sections. Senator Douglas tells me to-night that an effort is making now to get, not Corwin, but Sumner, into the State Department, but that Mr. Adams has refused to have anything to do with it. It is only what was to have been expected of

a man of Mr. Adams's good sense ; it only illustrates the desperation of the rule or ruin faction in the Republican party ; and that, I can not help but feeling, is a very formidable force to deal with, especially when brought to bear upon such a man as Mr. Lincoln, with his executive inexperience, and in the presence of the unprecedented difficulties with which he is to deal.

Still I can not think he will let go his hold on Mr. Seward and the great body of strong, sound opinion which Mr. Seward now undoubtedly represents. My chief fear, and as to this Senator Douglas agrees with me, is from Mr. Seward's own friends and representatives here. These New-Yorkers are the most singular combinations of arrogance and timidity in politics I have ever heard or read of. I do not wonder that the Western men dislike them ; they are almost as much of a mystery to their nearest neighbors. Before going, Senator Douglas had a word to say about President Buchanan and the South Carolina Commissioners. He tells me that it has now been ascertained that the President nominated his Pennsylvania Collector at Charleston on the very day, almost at the very moment, when he was assuring Colonel Orr, through one of his retainers, that he was disposed to accede to the demands of South Carolina if they were courteously and with proper respect presented to him. They rewrote their letter accordingly, submitted it to the President's agents, who approved it and sent it to the White House. This, Senator Douglas says, was on January 3d, in the morning. The Commissioners spent the afternoon in various places, and dined out early. On coming in, they found their letter to the President awaiting them. It had been returned to them by a messenger from the White House, about three o'clock P. M. ; and on the back was an endorsement, not signed by any one, and in a clerkly handwriting, to the effect that the President declined to receive the communication ! They ordered their trunks packed at once, and left for home by way of Richmond on the four-o'clock morning train, feeling, not unreasonably, that they had been both duped and insulted.

LORD LYONS ON THE SITUATION.

Washington, Friday, March 1st.—I had a most interesting but gloomy conversation with Lord Lyons this morning, having to call on him in relation to ——'s business with those vexatious people in Barbadoes and Antigua. We fell into conversation after getting through with this ; and, though he is the most discreet of men, he

pretty plainly intimated to me that he was more concerned as to the outlook than most of our own people here seemed to be. He has old American blood in his veins, which does not perhaps count for much ; but his family have had trouble enough with the emancipation business to make him grave, he says, when he contemplates the possible complications of the negro question to arise out of the conflict here, and he put the prospect as to that in quite a new light to me, I am ashamed to say, when he said that, to him, the question of peace or war did not appear to be in the least contingent upon anything that might or might not be said or enacted here in Washington. "How are you going to dispose of the actual occupation, unlawfully, or by force, of United States premises in these seceded States?" he said. "How can the new President acquiesce in that occupation? And, if he does not acquiesce in it, how will he put an end to it?" I really could make no answer to these questions, and they haunt me now as they have not before. How can any negotiations with Virginia affect the situation actually created for us in South Carolina, and Georgia, and Texas, and Florida? Can Mr. Lincoln pass over this difficulty in his inaugural? And yet how can he deal with it as things now stand without bringing the shadow of war over the land? Another thing that Lord Lyons said struck me, which was that, while England could not possibly have anything to gain by a real rupture of the Union, the case was clearly different with France, under her present policy and engagements on this side of the water.

I left the British Minister, feeling as if I had just landed at Washington, and come in contact with the seething peril of the day for the first time. I can not but think that his opinion of the situation is affected by his European training and ideas, and that he under-estimates the force here of that sober second thought of the people which has saved us so often, and I must hope will save us again now.

INCREASING BUSINESS TROUBLES AND COMPLICATIONS.

Washington, March 2d.—The distress at home grows hourly worse and worse. And this preposterous tariff which they have assumed to establish at Montgomery points to a still worse state of things. If there are many at Montgomery bent, like some of the worst men we have here, on really driving the two sections into war, they are taking the direct way to their horrible purpose. I can get no positive light as to the actual state of things in regard

to Fort Sumter; though — writes to me from New York that he is positive Mr. Holt has taken measures to secure reënforcements for the fort, and that it will not be evacuated certainly before Mr. Buchanan retires. The news that the Confederates have made Mr. Toombs their Secretary of State is very ominous. There is no wilder or more unsafe man alive; and his last speech in the Senate was as detestable in point of spirit as the maiden speech, on the other side, of that noisy and vulgar cockney Orator Puff, Senator Baker, who came here heralded as such a wonder of eloquence, and who went to pieces so completely in his first effort under the close and withering fire of Benjamin. I met the man again to-day as I passed into the National, and I really could hardly speak to him civilly. It is such men as he who play into the hands of the worst enemies of the country and of common sense at the South.

MR. LINCOLN MAKES HIS OWN CABINET.

There can be no doubt about it any longer. This man from Illinois is not in the hands of Mr. Seward. Heaven grant that he may not be in other hands—not to be thought of with patience! These New York men have done just what they have been saying they would do, and with just the result which I have from the first expected; though I own there are points in the upshot which puzzle me. I can not feel even sure now that Mr. Seward will be nominated at all on Tuesday: and certainly he neither is nor after this can be the real head of the Administration, even if his name is on the list of the Cabinet. Such folly on the part of those who assume to be the especial friends of the one man in whose ability and moderation the conservative people at the North have most confidence; and such folly at this moment might almost indeed make one despair of the republic!

— has just left me. He was one of the party who called on Mr. Lincoln to-day to bring matters to a head, and prevent the nomination of Chase at all hazards. A nice mess they have made of it! Mr. Lincoln received them civilly enough, and listened to all they had to say. Speaking one after another, they all urged the absolutely essential importance of the presence of Mr. Seward in the Cabinet, to secure for it either the support of the North or any hearing at the South; and they all set forth the downright danger to the cause of the Union of putting into the Cabinet a man like Mr. Chase, identified with and supported by men who did not desire to see the Union maintained on its existing and original basis at all,

and who would rather take their chances with a Northern republic, extending itself to Canada, than see the Union of our fathers kept up on the principles of our fathers. After they had all said their say in this vein, Mr. Lincoln, who had sat watching them one after another, and just dropping in a word here and there, waited a moment, and then asked what they wanted him to do, or to forbear. They all replied that they wished him to forbear from nominating Mr. Chase as a member of his Cabinet, because it would not be possible for Mr. Seward to sit in the same Administration with Mr. Chase. He wouldn't wish it, and his friends and his State would not tolerate it—couldn't tolerate it—it must not be.

Then Mr. Lincoln sat looking very much distressed for a few moments, after which he began speaking in a low voice, like a man quite oppressed and worn down, saying, it was very hard to reconcile conflicting claims and interests; that he only desired to form an Administration that would command the confidence of the country and the party; that he had the deepest respect for Mr. Seward, his services, his genius, and all that sort of thing; that Mr. Chase has great claims also, which no one could contest—perhaps not so great as Mr. Seward; but what the party and country wanted was the hearty coöperation of all good men and of all sections, and so on, and so on, for some time. They all thought he was weakening, and they were sure of it, when after a pause he opened a table-drawer and took out a paper, saying: "I had written out my choice here of Secretaries in the Cabinet after a great deal of pains and trouble; and now you tell me I must break the slate and begin all over!"

He went on then to admit, which still more encouraged them, that he had sometimes feared that it would be as they said it was—that he might be forced to reconsider his matured and he thought judicious conclusions. In view of that possibility, he said he had constructed an alternative list of his Cabinet. He did not like it half as well as the one of his own deliberate preference, in which he would frankly say he had hoped to see Mr. Seward sitting as Secretary of State, and Mr. Chase sitting as Secretary of the Treasury—not half as well; but he could not expect to have things exactly as he liked them; and much more to the same effect, which set the listeners quite agog with suppressed expectations of carrying their great point.

"This being the case, gentlemen," he said, finally, after giving the company time to drink in all he had said—"this being the case,

gentlemen, how would it do for us to agree upon a change like this?" Everybody, of course, was all attention. "How would it do to ask Mr. Chase to take the Treasury, and to offer the State Department to Mr. William F. Dayton, of New Jersey?"

— told me you could have knocked him or any man in the room down with a feather. Not one of them could speak. Mr. Lincoln went on in a moment, expatiating on his thoughtfulness about Mr. Seward. Mr. Dayton, he said, was an old Whig, like himself and like Mr. Seward. He was from New Jersey, which "is next door to New York." He had been the Vice-Presidential candidate with General Fremont, and was a most conservative, able, and sensible man. Mr. Seward could go as Minister to England, where his genius would find great scope in keeping Europe straight as to the troubles here, and so on, and so forth, for twenty minutes.

When he got through, one of the company spoke, and said he thought they had better thank him for his kindness in listening to them, and retire for consultation, which they did. But I fear from the tone and the language of — that there is more cursing than consultation going on just now. I must own that I heard him with something like consternation. Whether this prefigures an exclusion of Mr. Seward from the Cabinet, who can tell? Nor does that possibility alone make it alarming. It does not prefigure—it proves that the new Administration will be pitched on a dangerous and not on a safe key. It makes what was dark enough before, midnight black. What is to come of it all?