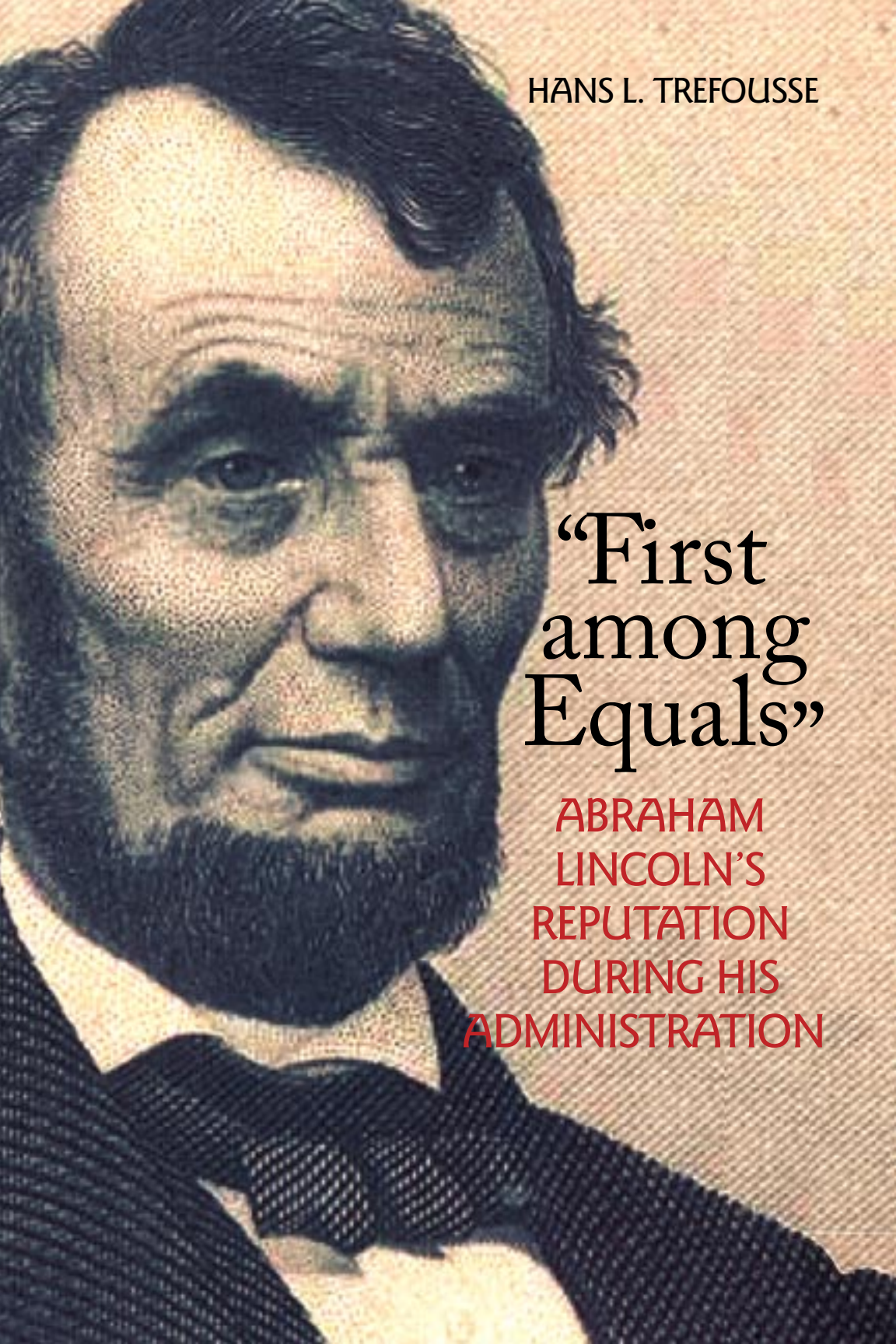

HANS L. TREFOUSSE

"First among Equals"

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S REPUTATION DURING HIS ADMINISTRATION

‘‘First Among Equals’’

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Abraham Lincoln's Reputation During His Administration

Hans L. Trefousse

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In memory of my dear wife
Rashelle F. Trefousse

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Introduction

In 1994, Merrill D. Peterson published his revealing book, *Lincoln in American Memory*. Most appropriately, he entitled his first chapter, "Apotheosis," and followed by tracing the deification of the Great Emancipator after his martyr's death.[1] Whether Lincoln's reputation was in any way comparable while he was still alive is a question that remans to be answered.

Some fifty years earlier, J. G. Randall, the famous Lincoln biographer, in an article entitled, "The Unpopular Mr. Lincoln," concluded that his hero was largely unappreciated during his lifetime. He wrote:

> For in the eyes of contemporaries Lincoln was a President who offended conservatives without satisfying radicals, who issued a tardy and incomplete emancipation proclamation after showing his willingness to conserve slavery, who had little if any success with Congress, who suppressed civil rights, headed a government marred by corruption, bungled the war, and then lost the peace, his post-war policy being blocked by congressional regional leaders in his lifetime before being wrecked in the reconstruction period.

He concluded that if Lincoln, like Woodrow Wilson, were to be remembered by what his enemies said, his reputation would be very different.[2]

It is of course true that Lincoln had many enemies who denigrated him throughout his career. In the South, this feeling was widespread, as was to be expected; in the North, Democrats

attacked him incessantly for being too radical and too antislavery, while radical Republicans faulted him for being too slow in freeing the slaves. He was viewed as hesitant, wavering, and indecisive. The hostile press marked him as a baboon and a gorilla, and no terms seemed too demeaning to downgrade the Civil War president.[3]

Yet, there is another side to the picture. Surprisingly enough, any number of observers became aware of Lincoln's greatness at an early time. Nor was he totally unknown—another mistaken assertion. Ever since his election to the Illinois legislature as a Whig in 1836, Lincoln's reputation had steadily grown. Even during the election campaign, an observer wrote to the *Sangamon Journal* "A girl might be born and become a mother before the Van Buren men [the Democrats] forget Mr. Lincoln."[4] Toasting Lincoln at Athens on August 3, 1837, E. D. Baker, one of the volunteers present, called him "The people's choice," adding, "They will glory in sustaining him while he serves them faithfully." Others, mentioning his faithful carrying out of his friends' expectations, called him one of "nature's nobility."[5] Of course, his opponents charged him with dictatorial ambitions and clownishness, accusations that Democrats continuously repeated whenever the occasion seemed ripe.[6] Yet his friends, stressing his "great talents, services, and high standing," referred to him as a most suitable candidate for governor.[7] In 1846, Lincoln was nominated for a seat in Congress. At a meeting in Petersburg, the Whigs of Menard County, endorsing Lincoln for the nomination, resolved that in integrity and character they considered him equal to any, while in respect to services rendered, they thought his claims "superior to all."[7] After his election, the *Chicago Daily Journal*, welcoming his presence at the Harbor and River Convention at the Windy City, aired its faith in the congressman-elect. It had no doubt that its expectations would be realized, "for never was reliance placed in a nobler heart, and a sounder judgment." Once he had taken his seat, the

New York Tribune characterized his remarks favoring internal improvements as "a very sensible speech," while favorably comparing his intellectual endowments with his great physical height. During the War with Mexico, Lincoln's Spot Resolutions, which called on President James K. Polk to indicate the exact spot on American soil where Mexican attacks had allegedly taken place, received wide publicity, with the *New York Herald* highlighting his remarks and the St. Louis *Missouri Republican* labeling his speech one "of great power and replete with strongest and most conclusive arguments." When, after campaigning for the election of Zachary Taylor, Lincoln was not rewarded with a desirable position, Illinois friends angrily characterized the administration's course toward "our able & faithful representative" as highly reprehensible, while Bloomington Judge David Davis emphasized his belief in Lincoln's great legal ability.[8]

He was not forgotten after his term had ended. In 1854, the *Quincy Whig,* cited in the Springfield *Illinois State Journal,* expressed its regret that Lincoln did not fill Douglas's seat in the Senate, which it argued would have been better for the West and the peace of the Union. Correspondents praised him for his firmness and integrity, and even Joshua Giddings, the antislavery leader, said he would walk to Illinois to elect Lincoln to the Senate.[9] As Elihu Washburne, the influential Illinois congressman, wrote to Lincoln from Washington in January 1855, "You would feel flattered at the great interest that is felt for you here by all who know you, either by reputation or personally." In 1856, mentioned for vice president on the Republican ticket, he was called a "soldier tried and true." Then, at the Republican convention in Springfield in June of 1858, he was nominated for the Senate against the longtime Democratic Senator Stephen A. Douglas. It was on this occasion that he delivered his famous "House Divided Against Itself" speech, declaring that "this government cannot endure, permanently half *slave* and half *free*, a

speech that the *Chicago Tribune* referred to as "a powerful summing up of the issues for the people—clear, concise, argumentative, unimpassioned and courteous."[10] Speaking at Joliet on June 30, 1858, the radical antislavery leader Owen Lovejoy said, "I am for Lincoln . . . because he is a true hearted man, and that, come what will, unterrified by power, unseduced by ambition, he will remain true to the great principles upon which the Republican Party is organized." More conservative observers were equally impressed, the *New York Times* reporting that "all the old Whig feeling is aroused in favor of Mr. Lincoln."[11]

The senatorial campaign involved a series of debates with Douglas in all parts of the state. During these, his fame spread throughout the country, the contest being called the "campaign of the year." As he heard from Pennsylvania five days before the first debate at Ottawa, "The eyes of freemen here are on you." In its account of that meeting, the New York *Evening Post* published a summary of Lincoln's life. Stressing his rise from poverty and deprivation, its reporter exulted, "At first a laborer, splitting rails for a living—deficient in education, and applying himself even to the rudiments of knowledge—he, too, felt the expanding power of his American manhood, and began to achieve the greatness to which he has succeeded. . . . I was convinced he has no superior as a stump speaker." The *New York Tribune*, edited by the radical Horace Greeley, agreed that he had the advantage over Douglas. It found his doctrines better and more correct than those of his antagonist and believed he stated them with more propriety and cogency and an infinitely better temper. He was urged to accept an invitation to speak in Danville, Illinois because his popularity with the masses would give him more influence in the right direction than the oratory of any other man. Following the Freeport debate, in which he challenged Douglas to reconcile his views on "popular sovereignty"—the idea of letting territorial settlers decide the slavery question—with the Dred Scott decision denying congressional

power to outlaw slavery in the territories, the New York *Evening Post* commented upon his ability to appeal to both left and right, while Samuel Galloway, the Ohio educator and legislator, commenting on the debates at Ottawa and Freeport, wrote to him, "You have sustained yourself at both places, but especially at Freeport."[12] Highlighting the fact that his popularity was not confined to the West, a Rochester, New York correspondent wrote that the New York Republicans who were in love with Douglas were now rather more inclined to take a different view. They had found much to admire and praise in Lincoln's conduct of the campaign so that he had made many warm friends in the East,[13] and Judge David Davis considered his final, somewhat conservative, speech at Charleston "most admirable." At the conclusion of the contest, when he lost the senatorship but gained a popular majority, a number of correspondents predicted that his way was now clear for the 1860 presidency.

The prediction was not far from the mark. As Lincoln heard from Pennsyvania, the defeat was not a defeat, and people would not forget him until they put him into the White House. By March of 1859, the *New York Times* reported that the Rockford, Illinois *Republican* was proposing Lincoln for the vice presidency, and it was said that some of Old Abe's friends were looking still higher for him. In April, T. J. Pickett of Rock Island offered to start his drive for the office, and Ethelbert Oliphant of Uniontown, Pennsylvania insisted that Lincoln must be president.[14]

His popularity as an orator had become so pronounced that in 1859 he delivered speeches all over the Midwest. After his address in Dayton, Ohio, in September, the local newspaper characterized him as "remarkable for vigor of intellect, clearness of perception, and power of argumentation, and for fairness and honesty in the presentation of facts," while the editor Horace Rublee reported from Madison, "You have many friends in Wisconsin who want to see you and hear you." Members of

the Ohio Republican State Central Committee ordered several thousand extra copies of his speeches at Columbus and Cincinnati and assured him that they had attracted general attention from the thinking minds of the state. "I believe you are the man for the times," a fellow townsman wrote him, while a Kansan informed him that his name was a household word in that state.[15]

Of course, opponents had made charges against him from the moment he entered public life, accusations that were very similar to those that pursued him throughout his career. He was alleged to be dictatorial and in 1839 was accused of dictating who should be elected from Menard County. When he was a candidate for elector for Harrison in November that year, the Springfield Democratic *Illinois State Register* wrote that he could not meet the arguments of his opponent, Stephen A. Douglas, and had responded with stale anecdotes—a favorite theme of critics ever after, and in 1848, after he had introduced the Spot resolutions, he was called a Benedict Arnold.[16] In the course of his campaign, Douglas brought up all the points that were to be made incessantly during the presidency—the accusation of defying the Supreme Court because of the Dred Scott Decision, of endangering the Union in the "House Divided Against Itself" speech, his opposition to the Mexican War, his alleged love for the Negroes, and a a purported plot to destroy the Democratic and Whig parties with the new Republican organization.[17] While the conservatives thought Lincoln was an abolitionist, the radicals considered him too mild on slavery. The Columbus, Ohio *Statesman* opined that he was so bad a speaker that it would be good for the Democrats if he spoke every day until the election, as he was allegedly not an orator and could hardly be classed as a third-rate debater, an opinion shared by the *Cincinnati Enquirer,* which repeated it in 1859.[18] Although it has been said that he was less known than any previous candidate, by 1860, despite Democratic assertions to the contrary,[19] Lincoln was hardly an obscure figure.

‘‘First Among Equals’’

1 Nomination and Election: 1860–1861

Thus, while Lincoln's comparative lack of recognition in the East has often been asserted, he had long been a source of interest for those who watched political developments. When Springfield Republicans in January 1860 organized a Lincoln Club in order to further his quest for the presidential nomination and passed a resolution asserting that they regarded Abraham Lincoln as the "expounder and defender of sound National Republican principles," they were not merely promoting a local celebrity.[1] Two weeks later, Lincoln heard from a Washington friend that his candidacy for either president or vice president was very much alive in that city, while a Juneau, Wisconsin correspondent wrote that Lincoln's name was a "tower of strength" in the state. He was asked to come to various cities in different parts of the country and traveled extensively. Then, in December 1859, he consented to write a brief account of his life, which was widely reprinted as a campaign biography.[2] How his reputation was enhanced by the Cooper Union speech, which skillfully set forth his antislavery views to New Yorkers, has often been mentioned. "Mr. Lincoln is one of Nature's orators, using his rare powers solely and effectively to elucidate and to convince, though their inevitable effect is to delight and electrify as well," stated the radical *New York Tribune* on February 28, the following day. The famous poet and editor William Cullen Bryant thought Lincoln "made quite a stir" in New York, and James A. Briggs, who had been on a committee inviting him there, sent him a check for $200 and wrote that he wished it were $200,000, "for you are worth it."

He added, "You hit the nail on the head fine & long, very long will your speech be remembered in this City." The Ohio legislator Samuel Galloway stated to John Covode, the Pennsylvania congressman, that Lincoln was the best man for the Republicans in the West because all the elements of the opposition could be united upon him. "The heart of the masses of our people is ardent for Lincoln," he asserted.

After his visit to New York, Lincoln embarked on a visit to New England to visit his son Bob, then at school at the Philips Exeter Academy. The fact that "our noble Lincoln" was "making a fine impression in his tour East" encouraged his fellow Illinoisans, who expressed the hope that he would be their standard bearer.[3] His trip to New England also convinced Republicans that he would be a better candidate than New York Senator—and former governor—William H. Seward, the party's front runner. An Indiana correspondent wrote to the prospective nominee that he had walked twenty miles to hear him speak, and when he heard his name mentioned for the presidency, it aroused feelings that he could not put down on paper. He wanted to see Lincoln nominated, "not only on personal grounds, but because there are few men who stand exactly in the right position to combine the whole vote of the opposition in the North."[4] In presenting Abraham Lincoln to the Chicago Republican National Convention as a candidate for the presidency, the *Chicago Tribune* explained that it was actuated "by a profound and well matured conviction that his unexceptional record, his position between the extremes of opposition in the party, his spotless character as a citizen, and his acknowledged ability as a statesman" would give him an advantage before the people that no other candidate could claim.[5]

His nomination brought forth many new encomiums. The *New York Tribune* commented, "Mr. Lincoln's romantic personal history, his eloquence as an orator, and his firm personal integrity, give augury of a successful campaign. . . ." The people

of the Northwest were wont to designate him," HONEST OLD ABE!" the article continued, pointing out that this rude designation expressed the entire and confident affection which the heart of the masses felt for Lincoln wherever he was known. It declared the popular certainty that his was "a nature of sterling stuff, which may always be relied upon for perfect integrity, and constant fidelity to duty. . . ." The New York *Evening Post* called him "a man of high-toned character, noted for his probity and benevolence," who would, if elected, administer the government with frugality, independence, and honor. In the House of Representatives, Illinois Republican Elihu Washburne not only enthusiastically praised Lincoln's rise from common laborer to "his present exalted position," but also declared, "He stands today, as a private citizen and public man, unassailed, and unassailable—An HONEST MAN, the noblest work of God." Washburne's Ohio colleague, Harrison Gray Otis Blake, joined him by asserting that the Republican party had nominated "one of the noblest scions" of the West, a fit representative of the battle between slavery and freedom.[6] Other commentators expressed their satisfaction at his alleged conservatism, his former activities as a Whig, and his bold and determined oratory, while radicals like Benjamin F. Wade and Joshua Giddings were also satisfied. The radical antislavery journal, The *Independent,* though unhappy about Lincoln's endorsement of the Fugitive Slave law, predicted he would run well because he had spoken boldly against slavery. As Giddings put it in a letter to Lincoln, his selection was made on two grounds: "1. That you are an honest man, 2nd That you are not in the hands of corrupt or dishonest men."[7] Rutherford B. Hayes, later president, noted that the nominee was taking well in Ohio. Hannibal Hamlin, the vice-presidential nominee, was informed that a stronger ticket could not have been nominated, while the leading antislavery senator, Charles Sumner, though worried that the nominee had very little acquaintance with government and was

uninformed on foreign affairs, characterized him as a "good, honest Anti-Slavery man," and wrote to the Duchess of Argyll that those who knew Lincoln spoke of him as a person of "real goodness."[8] Although the conservative Republican, George Templeton Strong, considered the candidate an unknown, and William H. Seward and his friends were less than happy with the nominee, even they conceded that he had popular appeal.[9]

Thus, the nomination was generally well received.

Of course the Democrats, collaborating with Southerners, disagreed. The Albany *Atlas and Argus* was certain that the nomination of Lincoln emasculated the Republican party: "He represents no principle and no sentiment except hostility to Seward," it wrote, insisting that he was "a man unnamed and unknown in three-fourth of the States."[10] The *Philadelphia Evening Journal* thought his record as a statesman was blank, that there was nothing in the history of his life to show any intellectual ability, and that his rise from rail-splitter to lawyer did not qualify him for the presidency. And Congressman Charles Drake Martin of Ohio denounced him as the "avowed author of that treasonable heresy," the doctrine of the irrepressible conflict between North and South, because of his "House Divided Against Itself" speech. Samuel Tilden, the Democratic New York politician and later governor and presidential candidate, however, heard from a correspondent that the Republicans had made the very best nomination they could have made.[11]

That Southerners found fault was not surprising. The *Louisville Daily Courier* characterized Lincoln's doctrines as "the most subtle and dangerous form of anti-slaveryism," and the New Orleans *Daily Crescent*, in line with most of the Southern press, was certain that he was a "thorough radical abolitionist without exception or qualification.[12] Some Southerners, however, were less critical. Judah P. Benjamin, the Louisiana senator and later Confederate cabinet member, referred to him as more conservative than Stephen Douglas, while the New Orleans *Bee*

called him "a man of agreeable manners, a ready and forcible speaker, self-made and self-taught, and personally popular among the burly sons of the West."[13]

Foreign opinion varied. The British envoy, Lord Richard B. Lyons, thought of Lincoln as "a man unknown, a rough Westerner of the lowest origin and little education." When he heard more about the candidate, he learned that "he was a rough farmer who began life as a farm laborer and got on by talent for stump speaking," whose election, because of Republican high tariff policies, would affect Great Britain adversely.[14] The *Edinburgh Review* was more complimentary. As it wrote in October, "Mr. Lincoln, of fair fame in his own State, and not unknown in Congress, as a shrewd and sensible politician of a homely sort, prudently keeps quiet. . . ." But the French traveling scion of the noted banking family, Salomon de Rothschild, considered him an extremist who would improve Stephen Douglas's chances.[15]

It was natural that favorable characterizations continued during the following presidential campaign. Confessing that he was worried that somebody with bad associates might be nominated, William Cullen Bryant expressed his relief in a letter to the candidate. As he put it, "It is fortunate that you have never gathered about you a kind of political confidants who have their own interests to look after."[16] New York was a crucial state, with its large electoral vote, and Lincoln's increasing popularity in the Empire State—in spite of disappointment with the defeat of William H. Seward—was a good omen. Expressing his regret at the favorite son's failure, the local politician George W. Pratt nevertheless exhorted fellow Republicans at a Rochester ratification meeting to "give to 'honest Abraham Lincoln' the same enthusiastic support which we gave to the gallant Fremont in 1856." In the House, Ohio Congressman Harrison G. Blake called the nominee "a fit representative of this great battle between *freedom* and *slavery* . . . a truly representative man . . . ;"

and the Indiana representative and later vice president Schuyler Colfax in Washington, quoting fellow congressmen from Buffalo and Chautauqua, had heard that in New York Lincoln would obtain one thousand more votes than Seward.[17] There were similar reports about Vermont, Missouri, and Minnesota, as well as other states. Lincoln was praised for being a true follower of Henry Clay, for being steadfast and incorruptible.[18]

Because the Democratic party, unable to coalesce in June, had nominated two tickets—one favoring Douglas and popular sovereignty, and the other favoring Vice President John C. Breckinridge and a federal slave code for the territories—Lincoln's probable success became more and more likely. Cartoons appeared showing the party breakup as "The Last Rail Split by Honest Old Abe," and a Republican triumph was now generally expected. "You will be elected President, my friend," wrote the Boston antislavery advocate Edward L. Pierce, "and I trust you will be found equal to the responsibility."[19] Other antislavery agitators were equally satisfied. "You have the advantage of being without entanglements and go into the White House as free I trust as you are now," wrote Owen Lovejoy. "It would be a treat such as the nation has not enjoyed for a long time to have the office seek the man rather than have the man seek the office." Charles Sumner assured the candidate that he was looking forward with joy "to the opportunity of mingling with your fellow citizens in welcome to you here at the national capital next 4th March." Frederick Douglass, the famous black abolitionist, praising Lincoln's great firmness of will, industriousness and honesty, and considering him a radical and not a compromiser, called him "a man of unblemished private character, a lawyer standing near the front rank of the bar of his own State."[20]At the same time, conservatives continued to picture him as "not dangerously ultra," and as "a sound, safe, national man, who could not be sectional if he tried."[21] Lengthy accounts of his life appeared, and he was shown to be a true

American, having risen from rags to riches. His moderation and kindliness were frequently mentioned, as were his oratorical skills. On October 19, Alexander K. McClure, the Pennsylvania politician, congratulated Lincoln on the confidence with which the country hailed his certain election.[22] Even some Southerners still had good things to say about him. The Georgian Alexander H. Stephens, the later vice president of the Confederacy, who knew Lincoln well, wrote that his election would not cause him to favor disunion. "In point of merit," he wrote, "I have no doubt Lincoln is just as good, safe, and sound a man as Buchanan, and would administer the Government as far as he is individually concerned just as safely for the South and as honestly and faithfully in every particular." Various North Carolina newspapers expressed the hope that the presidency would make Lincoln careful, and pointed out his lack of power should the Senate remain Democratic, while even the hostile *Richmond Enquirer* admitted that he was honest and resolute. Thus, it was left to members of the Northern opposition and the Southern majority to attempt to denigrate him.[23]

They tried hard. Alleging that no conservative could vote for Lincoln, the *Providence Daily Post* insisted that he was "the true representative of the Radicalism which Rhode Island repudiated last April" and that his record was that of "an abolitionist from beginning to end." The Alban*y Atlas and Argus* continued its attacks, asserting that Seward had never been defeated while Lincoln had never succeeded.[24] Southern observers naturally opposed him from the beginning. The *Louisville Daily Journal,* conceding that it had a favorable opinion of Lincoln's personal and even political integrity, but, stressing his "House Divided Against Itself" speech, asserted that he was "a sectional candidate and only a sectional candidate."[25] The *Richmond Enquirer*, though admitting that he was no disunionist, maintained that he wanted gradually to build up the Republican party in the South, which would lead to the eventual end of slavery and the

loss of property in Negroes. It criticized him for openly asserting eternal hatred of slavery and for allegedly preaching Negro equality.[26] The Montgomery, Alabama *Weekly Mail*, decrying what it considered the horrors of miscegenation, maintained that Lincoln's nomination showed that the North believed in it. *The Charleston Mercury* was more outspoken: "A horrid looking wretch he is, sooty and scoundrely in aspect, a cross between the nutmeg dealer, the horse swapper, and night man, a creature fit evidently for petty treason, small stratagems, and all sort of spoils. He is a lank sided Yankee of the uncomeliest visage, and of the dirtiest complexion. Faugh! After him, what decent white man would be President?"[27]

On November 7, 1860, Lincoln, with 39 percent of the popular ballots, won a majority of the electoral votes and thus the election. His triumph naturally brought out triumphant expressions of delight from his supporters. "THE GREAT VICTORY. . . . HONEST OLD ABE ELECTED," headlined the *Chicago Tribune.* The *New York Tribune* reprinted a letter from a Springfield professional gentleman to a friend in Boston, who wrote, "Mr. Lincoln is a man whom all will respect and love who know him. There is goodness of soul, generous nature, and, above all, great simplicity of character which deeply impresses everyone who hears his voice." Iowa Senator James M. Grimes thought the triumph was achieved more because of Lincoln's respected honesty than because of the Negro question. Papers all over the North praised his integrity, wisdom, and patriotism; private observers were delighted, and the New York Republican Preston King assured his Democratic friend Samuel Tilden that the benefits of the victory would be a gain for the whole country.[28]

Many radicals were also pleased. In a speech at Concord on November 7, Charles Sumner expressed his satisfaction that Lincoln had all the characteristics to weather the crisis because he was calm, prudent, wise, and also brave. The *Independent* exulted in "A Victory Gained for Freedom," and Ben Wade was

told that Lincoln's honesty and good common sense would enable him "to manage the ship of state." In Congress, in December, the Senator defended the president against Southern attacks by calling attention to his conduct and character from his youth on to prove that he would not trespass on the rights of any man.[29] William S. Thayer, the later consul in Alexandria, was reassured by Senator Lyman Trumbull of Illinois that Lincoln was against compromise and as much opposed to Thurlow Weed's program of yielding as Trumbull himself. Even Wendell Phillips, the extreme Boston abolitionist, valued the moral effect of the victory, because Lincoln, hardly thought of as an antislavery man, consented to represent an anti-slavery idea. And even though William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator* refused to back Lincoln because of his alleged support of the Fugitive Slave Law, it admitted that, given the choice between him and his opponents, his election was "a great and encouraging triumph."[30]

Democrats and Southerners judged the result from vastly different points of view. The Albany *Atlas and Argus* conceded that Lincoln's position was not an enviable one. But the newspaper predicted that he could do little and would carry on much like his predecessor. William Medill, the former Democratic governor of Ohio, thought that abolitionism had at length done its work, while Senator George E. Pugh of Ohio, asserting that Lincoln was totally unknown to most people, questioned why the government could not exist half slave and half free; and John Logan of Illinois, the later radical but then still a Democrat, questioned whether it was possible that Lincoln, opposed as he was to the Mexican War, could possibly attempt a policy that would bring on civil war.[31]

Southerners were much more vehement. Extremists, like the leading elements in South Carolina, considered Lincoln's election grounds for secession, and the Palmetto State took immediate steps toward that end. The New Orleans *Daily Crescent*, quoting various of his antislavery speeches, insisted that they

proved him to be a "radical Abolitionist, without exception or qualification." Howell Cobb, the outgoing secretary of the treasury, in a letter to the people of Georgia, while admitting that without a majority in Congress, Lincoln could not do any harm to the South "at present," nevertheless warned that he was a representative of the Republican party, organized on antislavery principles and allegedly favoring Negro equality.[32] Senator Thomas L. Clingman of North Carolina asserted that the Illinoisan had been elected because he was known to be a dangerous man who would make war upon the South until its social system was destroyed; and Jefferson Davis, soon to be president of the Confederacy, thought that by following the policies of his predecessor, Lincoln would bring about a civil war while leaving a Democratic administration responsible for it. The Georgia fire-eater Robert Toombs, convinced that the president-elect's object was to abolish slavery, declared that he would inaugurate emancipation in the territories and then turn to the states; and Senator Alfred Iverson of the same state opined that while Lincoln would not commit any overt acts, the power of the government would be so extended against slavery that the institution would not last ten years. The Democratic Tennessee politician A. O. P. Nicholson called the election of Lincoln on the Republican platform a declaration of war against the South, and the Texas extremist Louis T. Wigfall accused Northern Republicans of nominating "two of the most fanatical of your sect as candidates for President and Vice President."[33]

Moderates, however, both Southerners and Northern Democrats, stressed Lincoln's conservatism and his inability to accomplish anything in view of the continued Democratic control of the Senate. "In a minority in both Houses of Congress, with the Supreme Court to expound the laws and restrain all illegal and unconstitutional acts, the President will be utterly powerless for evil, if he should have the disposition to do wrong," said Douglas on November 13. The following day, Alexander H. Ste-

phens told the Georgia legislature, "I do not anticipate that Mr. Lincoln will do anything to jeopardize our safety and security, whatever may be his spirit to do it; for he is bound by the constitutional checks which are thrown around him; which at this time render him powerless to do any great mischief. . . ." Supreme Court Justice John Campbell, entertaining the same opinion, went further. Writing that Lincoln was chosen because he was more conservative than his opponent, he said he had been assured by reliable gentlemen who knew the president-elect that "he is not the object of fear."[34]

As the secession crisis worsened, these views did not change much. Representative John Sherman, the general's brother, believed that the new administration would do much to dissipate Southern feeling against the North, and the former Know-Nothing leader Daniel Ullman heard from one of his correspondents in upstate New York that the rebellion needed a man of indomitable will who would act prudently and with decision. Such a man, he thought, was Mr. Lincoln. A New York female supporter was so impressed with him that she sent him two hats, "As a slight testimonial of my admiration for you as a man, a patriot, and a statesman." [35] On December 11, Washburne informed Lincoln that Seward was expressing the greatest confidence in his "wisdom and ability" in office, and a week later assured him that General Winfield Scott wished that he were already in office. He was not alone; the New York banker George Worthington Dow, wrote the same thing a week later. Carl Schurz, the famous German-American leader, assured his wife on December 17 that he had complete confidence in Lincoln's honesty as well as in his courage, and Charles Sumner lost none of his regard for the president-elect: "All that we hear of the new President—who lives 800 miles from Washington—is favorable," he stated. "He is calm & decided."[36] On the day after the secession of South Carolina, the Springfield, Illinois *State Journal* pointed out that the Founding Fathers would

be found on Lincoln's side because they believed as he did in freedom preferable to slavery-free territories and the ultimate extinction of the institution. Trumbull was repeatedly informed that Lincoln was the best man for the times, that he was another Jackson, and that Illinois was proud of its "old Abe."[37]

As the inauguration drew nearer, this praise continued. Andrew Johnson, the most famous Southern Unionist, heard from a fellow townsman on January 2, 1861, that the administration of Lincoln would be all that could be asked for by all good citizens because he was no abolitionist but a patriot who would anxiously care for the perpetuity of the Union. C. H. Ray of the *Chicago Tribune* wrote to Washburne that he could trust Old Abe. "He is rising every day in the estimation of all who know him," he wrote. "He is wiser and more sagacious than I thought he could ever be. Our Const. Is dearer to him than anything else!"[38] He was praised as firm, steadfast, and a man of principle, and, as the New York *Commercial Advertiser* pointed out, he would administer the government with vigor and discretion. At any rate, Charles Case of Indiana reminded his fellow legislators, his ideas were originally Jefferson's, and J. F. Farnsworth of Illinois added that Lincoln would rather die than make concessions as the price of his inauguration.[39]

Lincoln's cabinet choices received mixed reviews. The *Cincinnati Gazette* found that it showed his conservatism, and labeled stories of his indecisiveness ridiculous, and the *Cincinnati Commercial* believed that his choosing a cabinet without going to Washington would please the people because it indicated "a timely disposition to accept responsibilities." On the contrary, however, Senator Lyman Trumbull, unhappy about the inclusion of Simon Cameron among the president's advisers, thought Lincoln ought to come to the capital to assert public sentiment. Illinois attorney Leonard Swett, usually a firm supporter, criticized the idea of uniting all the elements of the party in the cabinet.[40]

Southerners, of course, continued their attacks. The St. Louis *Missouri Republican* challenged Lincoln to accept the Crittenden Compromise, an arrangement that would have permitted slavery south of 36°30', both in the existing territory of the United States and areas that might thereafter be acquired. George W. Hughes of Maryland declared that it was not the election of the individual, Abraham Lincoln, that had created the excitement in the South, but "the election of the representative man, Mr. Lincoln, representing principles hostile to the rights, the honor, and the interest of the slave-holding states." Albert Rust of Arkansas pointed out that obviously the Illinoisan thought personal rights more important than property rights, and William T. Avery of Tennessee again accused the president-elect of favoring racial equality. The Virginian John S. Millson avowed that Virginia would never submit to Lincoln, and James M. Leach of North Carolina again warned that what Lincoln had in mind was the ultimate extinction of slavery.[41]

In view of complaints about Lincoln's silence since the election, when he finally spoke on his trip to Washington, his remarks and activities were widely reported. His Farewell Address in Springfield appeared most impressive to the Springfield *Illinois State Journal.* "We have heard him speak on a hundred different occasions" the article said, "but 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." Francis Springer, the Springfield superintendent of schools, wrote him, "When the train bearing you passed my residence this morning, my heart said, God bless Lincoln, & make him second to none but Washington!" James Garfield, the later president, saw Lincoln for the first time in Columbus and, while he was disappointed in some aspects, he felt that in general Lincoln surpassed expectations. Ovations greeted him wherever he traveled and, according to the *Cincinnati Gazette*, the people be-

lieved that he was the second savior of his country—one of the first public comparisons of Lincoln to George Washington. The New York *Sun* praised the "the frank and hearty manner" in which he expressed himself and believed that his assurances of noninterference with the domestic institutions of the South ought to be satisfactory to Southerners who trusted their fellow men.[42] He was widely criticized, however, when, because of threats against his life in Baltimore, he went to the capital in secret. *Harper's Weekly* published a hostile cartoon, "The Flight of Abraham," although his safe arrival in Washington greatly reassured many. According to the *New York Times,* the country had avoided the lasting disgrace of a presidential assassination, an assessment shared by the *Chicago Tribune*. In the House of Representatives, Ohio Republican Congressman Benjamin Stanton called attention to the fact that the president-elect was a prudent and sensible man who would not resort to the use of force if it could possibly be avoided.[43]

Southerners, however, still charged him with advocating racial equality and the eventual eradication of slavery. Reporting that his speeches showed that he would use force to uphold the government, they insisted that the talks revealed him as a stump orator.[44] The Kentuckian, Henry C. Burnett, maintaining that, in his Cincinnati speech, Lincoln had told Kentuckians to prepare for war, shouted, "What fatuity! What madness!" The Virginian Muscoe R. H. Garnett accused the president-elect of having made warlike statements, while his colleague, Thomas S. Bocock, charged that the Illinoisan refused to see the problems facing the country, that he was refusing to yield, and that there was not anyone who took a more repulsive position than he. The *Charleston Mercury,* radical as ever, thought the secret trip to Washington was the last straw. "Everybody here is disgusted at this cowardly undignified entry" (into Washington), it wrote. The fire-eater Louis T. Wigfall, during the last days of the 36th Congress, still taunted the Republicans with having taken up a

man because he was "an ex-rail-splitter, an ex-grocery keeper, and ex-flatboat captain, and an ex-Abolitionist" from whom he could not expect any great information as to the government which he was to administer.[45] It is therefore evident that at the eve of his inauguration, Lincoln was neither totally unknown nor unpopular, and was the object of praise as well as of denigration.