

ILLUSTRATIONS FOR

Chapter XXXIII

- 1) Dress worn at the inaugural ball on March 4, 1861, now in the Ferry Museum of Tacoma, Wash.

(to go in Chapter XXXII with other costumes)

- 1) Table showing the relative rank of the states in the Union in 1790 and 1860.
Reproduced from Harpers' Weekly of April 6, 1861, by permission of Harper & Brothers.
- 2) Reads the Papers.
Cartoon from Harpers' Weekly of April 13, 1861, by permission of Harper and Brothers.
- 3) First mass meeting held in New York City in support of the Government.
From Harpers' Weekly of May 4, 1861, by permission of Harper and Brothers.
This meeting which was held in Union Square was declared by the press of the times to be the largest ever gathered in the city. There were five speaking stands, all in operation at once. Major Anderson was there, fresh from Fort Sumter, and passed from stand to stand. The flag of Fort Sumter, hoisted on the stump of the shaft which had been shot away in the bombardment, was in the hand of the statue of Washington.
- 4) Harper's Weekly of April 27, 1861, prints the above photograph of President Lincoln. It was made by Brady.

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- 1) As one Cartoonist saw Mr. Lincoln in the Spring of 1861.
- 2) Table showing the relative rank of the States in the Union in 1790 and 1860.

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1. Among the several printers who went to Springfield in 1860 - 1861 to make portraits of Mr. Lincoln, was Allen Jasper Conant. Before Mr. Conant left Mr. Lincoln gave to him the photograph from which the above picture is made. It was taken just before he went to Washington by C. S. German, and may be considered a fairly good picture of him at the time of his inaugural, though no doubt it is a more reposeful face than he carried on Inaugural Day.

(P. 16 of "Early Life" - first of the three portraits used as fronticepieces).

2. The above cartoon of Lincoln's entrance into the White House is from one of the series of cartoons pertaining to the Civil War which were published in sheets only, from 1856 to 1872 by Courier & Ives, of New York City. These plates were first published in book form in 1892 by Wright & Swasey of New York.

3. Before leaving Springfield Mr. Lincoln had his inaugural privately printed. It made seven sheets about 5 x 9" with margins. The above is a reproduction of the last page of the Inaugural as printed in Springfield and before the changes, which appear in the document as read on March 4th, 1861, were made.

Illustrations for Chapter XXXIII - Continued

4. A scene at Lincoln's first Inaugural, taken from Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, March 16th, 1861, and reproduced by courtesy of the Judge Leslie Company. Notice the condition of the dome of the Capitol.
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5. Gowns worn at the Inaugural Ball on March 4, 1861. Reproduced from Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper March 23, 1861, by courtesy of the Judge Leslie Company.
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IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

CHAPTER XXXIII

Who Was To Be President?

To be inaugurated President of the United States on the 4th of March 1861 was almost equivalent to setting one's foot inside a den of hungry and angry lions. The chances were that one would get you on the threshold. The feeble, irresolute, half-hearted support of the Union by the Buchanan administration in the four months after Lincoln was elected had thrown the North into a state of angry, humiliated uncertainty. Irritation and suspicion were on every side. A willingness to let secession have its way rather than to risk war had developed in unexpected quarters. This was the sense of the Abolitionists who, true to their type, shrank from the storm they had done so much to brew. A serious characteristic of the situation was the impatient intolerance among the factions of the Republican party. It seemed at moments that they were as ready to fall on one another as on the secessionists.

In humiliating contrast was the temper of the seceders. There was no hesitation among them. Confident, determined, contemptuous of the North, they had set up their government, elected their officers, were arranging to send commissions to Washington and abroad, asking recognition. Right and left they were laying hands on Federal property and calling to their service man after man trained for the Federal army or navy.

Washington was the storm centre of this unhappy exhibition. There hopelessness, suspicion, divided sympathies combined to make a

bleak and distressing atmosphere. There was a pessimistic conviction abroad that Mr. Lincoln would not be allowed to read his inaugural. If Mr. Lincoln had not been a very busy as well as a very clear headed man, his nerves would certainly have been stretched to the breaking point by the hedge of bayonets and rifles surrounding the carriage in which he and President Buchanan drove down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol at noon on March 4th. This force hemmed their carriage fore and aft, flanked them on each side, and they could see the housetops, trees and windows beyond filled with sharpshooters. If there had been a murderer in the crowd as clever and determined as the man who finally did take Lincoln's life, all this array of force would not have prevented the bullet from finding its way into his brain or heart; and the tragedy would have caused a panic of frightful proportions, for Washington was crowded as it had never been before for an inauguration.

Nothing happened throughout the ceremony to alarm the crowd. There was but one incident which startled Mr. Lincoln. He was well on in the reading of his speech when there was a crash in front of him. There was confusion, something which looked like a struggle. Those watching him closely saw that he was agitated and indeed so were others near him, but the noise turned out to be only the breaking of the limb of a tree under the weight of a spectator, and the confusion, the scramble of those beneath to save their heads.

As soon as it was known that the inauguration had gone off without disturbance, the waiting country turned to Mr. Lincoln's speech - did it square with what he had been saying in the past? Following him as we have been doing through the past few years, it is quite clear that there were two points on which he had been fixed. First, there was to be no extension of slavery, although no interference with it in the States where the Constitution allowed it. Second, disunion would not be tolerated.

Now, this platform of his had already driven several States out of the Union. They had, as he put it, "set up house-keeping" and had announced that any attempt to "coerce" them into their old relation would be resisted by force. However Mr. Lincoln might try to believe that those people who assured him that this was a mere political threat and never would be carried out, he was too wise not to realize that there was a strong probability of their doing what they threatened. If he could have acted four months before when elected, he might have held to his platform - but now? Here was a new situation. Did it confuse his mind on the two points at stake? bend his purpose as to the proper way to deal with them?

As we have seen, he had refused to entertain any of the various plans for further compromise on slavery extension which had been brought to him in Springfield. But how about disunion? Did he still mean it as he had said in 1856, "We won't go out of the Union, and you shan't." Did he still think, as he told the Kansans in 1859: "If you undertake to destroy the Union contrary

to law, if you commit treason against the United States, our duty will be to deal with you as John Brown has been dealt with. We shall try to do our duty." In all these months since he had been elected he had refused to talk, pointing men who wanted to know what he intended to do to the speeches he had been making in the last six years. Would he translate them into acts? That was what the crowd before him - what the people of the country, watching so anxiously for the report of his words, wanted to find out.

What the politicians of the country wanted to know, however, was whether the speech he was about to read was his or William H. Seward's. Seward, every body knew, was for meeting secession by non-action, soothing words. "Do nothing," was his counsel, "the South is unionist at heart. Give her time. Do nothing threatening, say nothing positive, and these excited countrymen of ours will become ashamed of their outbreak, and will disband their organization, call home their commissioners, turn back to us the property they have seized, and things will be as ever."

What the politicians wanted to know was how much of this doctrine Seward had been able to write into the inaugural. He had written more of it in than the actual situation of affairs justified, but no more probably than was wise for a man who had not been on the ground as Seward had and who meant to work, if possible, with a chosen adviser.

Soon after Lincoln reached Washington, on February 23, he had given Seward a copy of his inaugural to read and criticise. The Senator no doubt thought that he was the only person of whom such a

request had been made, but he was wrong there, for Lincoln showed it to Carl Schurz in Springfield. Judge Davis, O. H. Browning and one or two others had read it. One vital change he had accepted from Browning, a cautious Republican, leaning towards inaction at the present crisis. It was a statement which would have horrified Mr. Seward, for Mr. Lincoln had said, "All the power at my disposal will be used to reclaim the public property and places which have fallen, to hold, occupy and possess these and all other property and places belonging to the Government."

This was nothing more than what he had been claiming was his duty all along, but it frightened Browning, and he persuaded Lincoln to drop the first phrase because, he argued, it would sound to the Confederates like a declaration of war. Although the teeth had been drawn from the sentence it was still altogether too definite to please Seward, and he offered a vague and evasive substitute - a statement so contrary to Lincoln's habit of mind and sense of honest dealing that he rejected it.

"The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy and possess the property and places belonging to the Government," he read to the crowd. Did that mean Fort Sumter?

Great abstract questions, such as the right to leave the Union, once raised, sooner or later focalize in a thing which in itself may be comparatively unimportant but which answers the question for the crowd. The question of the Union at this moment was focused in Sumter. Why risk going to war over a wretched little fort like Sumter? But if you do not risk going to war over Sumter

you decide that the Union was not formed to be perpetual. If you knew the fibre of the man who read the inaugural, you would know that he meant to hold Sumter. And yet, since he did not say Sumter in so many words, people went away from the ceremony still doubtful. Mr. Seward went back and assured everybody that Sumter would not be touched.

The doubt came chiefly from the smoothing out and generalizing that Seward had succeeded in injecting. He had impressed upon Mr. Lincoln that, above all, his speech should be of gentle temper, forbearing. No one can read the inaugural as printed in Springfield without knowing that from start to finish it was marked by good temper and forbearance; but it was marked also by resolution, and it closed on the note of resolution.

"In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The Government will not assail you. You can have no conflict, without being yourselves the aggressors, you have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the Government, while I shall have the most solemn one to 'preserve, protect and defend it. You can forbear the assault upon it, I cannot shrink from the defense of it. With you and not with me is the solemn question, Shall it be peace or a sword?"

Mr. Seward protested against any such clear and unmistakable challenge to the South. Above all, the inaugural must close on a note of affectionate brotherhood, not on one of decision.

Let there be an appeal to their common inheritance. But Mr. Lincoln had himself already made such an appeal. The germ of the paragraph which Mr. Seward now suggested for the closing was already in the document: "Before entering upon so grave a matter as the destruction of our national fabric, with all its benefits, its memories, its hopes, would it not be wise to ascertain precisely why we do it?" Mr. Lincoln had written. Moreover, he had made a most solemn appeal to their faith in final eternal truth and justice. "Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people. Is there any better or equal hope in the world? In our present position is either party without faith of being in the right? If the Almighty Ruler of nations, with his eternal truth and justice, be on your side of the North, or on yours of the South, that truth and that justice will surely prevail by the judgment of this great tribunal of the American people."

But these paragraphs were lost in the body of the address. Mr. Seward wanted them to be the last word and out of a suggestion that he submitted, Mr. Lincoln made one of the most beautiful bits in his writings. I hardly know two paragraphs in English which better illustrate what intelligent, critical revision can do than these, how it can bring a fine idea turgid with words into clarity and beauty. The student cannot compare them too often. Mr. Seward suggested:

"I close. We are not, we must not be, aliens or enemies, but fellow-countrymen and brethren. Although passion has strained our bonds of affection too hardly, they must not, I am sure they

will not, be broken. The mystic chords which, proceeding from so many battlefields and so many patriot graves, pass through all the hearts and all hearths in this broad continent of ours, will yet again harmonize in their ancient music when breathed upon by the guardian angel of the nation."

Mr. Lincoln read:

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

It was too late. - "We are not enemies, but friends." It was not true, they were enemies. The mystic chords were broken, a new chorus swelled in the South, a new vision was before their eyes, the vision of a dominion of their own, unhampered by these alien Northerners.

The inaugural as a whole is dignified for one who has been following the development of Mr. Lincoln's ideas on the matters at stake by the consistency of its logic and purpose. It grows naturally out of all that he had thought and said before, and it is worth studying, simply with this idea in mind.

The inauguration over, Mr. Lincoln went direct to his new home, the White House. President Buchanan accompanied him to the door. As he left him he said: "If you are as happy, my dear Sir, on entering this house as I am on leaving it and returning home, you are the happiest man in this country."

Happiness? She was never to pass the White House for more than an hour after he entered, and even then she came

enveloped in a veil of mourning.

The new home of the Lincolns was the old White House, without the wings which have become familiar to us today. The great East Room, the state dining room, the private apartments above, were as today. Mr. Lincoln's office was on the second floor - a room some 25 x 40, its big windows opening out on the beautiful lawn, running almost down to the estuary of the Potomac which filled in those days a large area now redeemed. Near the centre of this redeemed tract now stands, in a direct east and west line from the Washington monument, the splendid memorial to his memory. The view from his windows became one of his solaces and anxieties. Here he could see the half-completed Washington monument - a symbol of a half-completed Union, a half-understood Constitution. He could see the Virginia hills, whose loyalty he was already questioning. He could look down the Potomac and wonder what menace might come to him by that route.

Within the room was a long cabinet table; at one side his desk, on another a big fireplace with brass andirons, a big brass fender and a white marble mantel. There was a map frame, which was to be filled in the next few years with many a map still untraced. There were three books always in sight in this room, so observers of the day say, the Bible, the Statutes of the United States, and a Shakespeare.

The Washington to which Mr. Lincoln came in 1860 was but little better in most respects than that which he had known in 1848-9. It was larger by some fifteen or twenty thousand people; it was growing the capital itself growing. Since his earlier day the dome had been

started upward and now stood half finished, the Senate wing was complete, and the House of Representatives under construction. The town itself was still unpaved and undrained, a sprawling place, with beautiful spots but little order. Where the British Embassy now stands people went hunting, and the hills of the present fashionable North-west quarter were bespattered with slovenly negro settlements. One pleasant feature of Mr. Lincoln's new quarters was their nearness to the homes of the men whom he had chosen as his advisers. On Lafayette Square, facing the White House, lived Mr. Seward, Gideon Wells and Caleb Smith; just around the corner from them, facing Pennsylvania Avenue, lived Mr. Blair, in a beautiful old house which, happily, has been spared. The other three members of the cabinet were further off, though nearby according to present standards. Secretary Cameron lived at the corner of Fifteenth and I Street, Attorney-General Bates on F Street, between Sixth and Seventh; Salmon P. Chase, furthest away of all, at the corner of E and Sixth Street. These locations give one who knows Washington today, a vivid notion of the changes it has undergone, particularly in its residential section.

Work began as soon as Mr. Lincoln was in the White House by a long interview with the Secretary of State who came in to talk over the note which we saw in the last article Mr. Lincoln sent him just before the inaugural was read. It asked him to reconsider the

resignation that he had sent in the day before. It was a long talk, and no doubt Mr. Lincoln went over all of the reasons which made it, in his judgment, imperative that Seward remain in the cabinet, holding steady his important following as well as giving his great ability and experience through the difficult days on which they were entering. If he had the experience with Mr. Seward's capacity for intrigue and deception-and-deception which he was to have in the next few weeks - if he had realized then the full confidence Mr. Seward had that he was president, would he have insisted as he did? I think so undoubtedly. He was too keen not to have sensed something of these things in Seward, but he believed too that there were few men in the country if any who could contribute as much to his fundamental aim of saving the Union without extending slavery. Let him do that and he could risk the intrigue and take care of his own position. Whatever passed between them, when they parted Seward had promised to reconsider his resignation - he was the Secretary of State in the new Cabinet.

The day ended with an inaugural ball. As there was no proper place for such a function in Washington at that time, the authorities had put up a temporary barnlike structure not far from the City Hall. The President and his party were late in arriving, not getting in until after dancing had begun, which of course was contrary to etiquette. The new President was accompanied by the Mayor of the town, and nobody failed as they looked at him to remark how weary and worn he looked, as indeed he well might.

The sensation of the evening came when Mrs. Lincoln

entered on the arm of Stephen A. Douglas. The ancient enemies had settled their fight then - Douglas was going to back the administration. It was the second time in the day that he had shown himself behind the Lincolns. The first had been at the inauguration when Douglas, seeing that the President was hesitating where to set his high hat in the narrow accommodations of the platform, stepped forward and took it saying cheerfully, "If I cannot be President, I can hold the President's hat." The remark had gone up and down the town, and his appearance at the ball with Mrs. Lincoln on his arm only served to emphasize the course he had chosen.

The late Senator George Hear once told me that Charles Sumner had told him that he asked Mrs. Lincoln to permit him to be her escort at this first inaugural ball, but that she had replied that she "calculated she better go with her own folks." The colloquialism put in her mouth was not quite like Mrs. Lincoln. She was a well educated woman. Moreover she would have "reckoned" not "calculated." Hear and Sumner's constituents "calculate," Kentuckians "reckon!" Not only was Mrs. Lincoln a well educated woman, she was something of a politician, quite determined to have a hand in shaping events, clever enough, too, to know that at this juncture an alliance with Senator Douglas was of more consequence at this juncture than one with Sumner, already committed to the administration.

Of course there were plenty of sharp and knowing eyes to look Mrs. Lincoln over and see what she wore. According to the newspapers, she wore "a rich watered silk, an elaborate point lace cape,

deeply bordered, camellias in her hair and pearl ornaments." There was more than one who commented that her face was flushed, and she was evidently excited by her honors.

An incident of this ball which was first published only a few years ago and has been accepted by one of Mr. Lincoln's most scholarly and understanding biographers, Alonzo Rothchild, seems to me both improbable and mischievous. According to the writer, a newspaper correspondent of the day, encouraged by the fact that Mrs. Lincoln had been particularly gracious to him at the ball, ventured to ask Mr. Lincoln before he left their group if he had any news that he might send to Mr. Bennett, the editor of the Herald. "Yes," replied Mr. Lincoln, "you may tell him that Thurlow Weed has found out that Seward was not nominated at Chicago." It is hard to conceive of anything more unlike Lincoln or more impolitic or disloyal for him to say to a reporter - only a few hours after the interview that he had with Seward. I think we may set this down as another example of what time does to the recollections of even the best intentioned.

If Mr. Lincoln thought he had settled the matter of who was to be president by getting Mr. Seward's assent to take a seat in the Cabinet, the next morning revived the issue - put it squarely. Among the first papers that were laid before him in his office on the morning of March 5, was one from the commander at Fort Sumter, Major Anderson, saying that his supplies were almost gone, and that he could get nothing from Charleston. This meant one of two things - either provisions must be put into Sumter, or the fort must be given

up. Quicker than he could have expected, his inaugural promise to 'use the power confided to him to hold property and places belonging to the Government' was to be put to test.

Lincoln asked the new secretaries of War and the Navy, Simon Cameron and Gideon Wells, to meet at once with Gen. Scott, and let him know how soon they could relieve Fort Sumter. Although the news was unexpected and astounding as Wells says, the two new secretaries, neither of whom had yet tackled their departments, instantly determined to gather up all the forces in sight to relieve the garrison. There is no sign that at the moment they thought of any other course. Their resolution was chilled at once by Gen. Scott and the majority of the military and naval men that had been on the ground since secession began. There was practically nothing with which to prepare an expedition, they were told, certainly not enough to stand off an attack. Moreover, who was loyal and who was not? General Scott emphasized the paralyzing notion that Mr. Seward had been spreading for weeks, evacuate Sumter, if nothing was done the disunion sentiment will dissipate of itself!

No sooner did Seward know that the President had asked for information as to the possibility of immediate action than he began his work on the Cabinet. Two weeks was enough for him to break the resolution of that body. When Lincoln, after two weeks delay, distressed and bewildered by the hindrances to action, called upon

the cabinet members for their written opinion on the question of whether it was possible to provision Sumter, and if so, whether it was wise to attempt it, he found six to one against the undertaking. The one was the Postmaster General, who reared his disapproval so loudly and effectively that Mr. Lincoln had the courage not to accept the big majority as settling the matter. He began to counsel with the few in Washington who believed Fort Sumter could and should be provisioned. He began investigations of his own as to the strength of the Union sentiment in places where Seward assured him it was powerful enough to carry the day if given time. He found it usually dwindled to one man with whom Seward had been corresponding! Finally after nearly four weeks delay he decided they would try at least to send bread to Anderson, they could not do anything less. To do less would be nothing else than to discourage the friends of the Union, to give strength to its adversaries - it would be national destruction.

Seward objected, and like opportunists who find themselves cornered, tried to divert attention, to find a new point of trouble - relieve Fort Pickens, he begged. Let Sumter alone. But why Fort Pickens, asked the President, to the exclusion of Sumter? If holding one means war surely holding the other will mean war. What the President did not suspect was that for weeks Secretary Seward had been assuring the representatives of the South that he would see to it that Sumter was not touched. If he could prevent that, divert the expedition to Fort Pickens, he would save at least part of his face!

Deliberately the Secretary of State took it on himself secretly to break up, if possible, the Sumter expedition. His meddlesomeness would be incredible in so able and patriotic a man if we did not have the proof of it. He even attempted, without one he could trust in his intrigues, consultation with Secretary Welles, to put a new officer at the head of an important Bureau in the Navy Department! He even succeeded in tricking - the word is not too strong for the evidence - the President into signing the order for this appointment.

Secretary Welles, when the order came to him, was at dinner. Astounded and infuriated by this insult to his authority, and frightened, too, for he had reason to distrust the loyalty of the appointee. (As a matter of fact, two months later this man went over to the Confederacy) He strode to the White House and into Mr. Lincoln's office - a righteously indignant old figure. The first look at the Secretary's face told Lincoln there was trouble ahead. "What have I done wrong?" Welles thrust the paper at him, he looked at his signature and told Welles the amazing fact that it must have been signed with what he supposed to be a grist of routine State Department paper brought him by Seward. "You have a right to be angry" he said, "It is an improper order. Tear it up. Treat it as if you had never seen it. It will not be carried out," and in excuse, "Whom can I trust if I cannot trust the Secretary of State?" I presume he added, "Say nothing about it."

It was on the first of April that this amazing proof of Mr. Seward's intriguing came to him. It is not improbable that at the time the irate Secretary of the Navy broke in on him he was mulling over and preparing an answer to one of the curiosities of American statesmanship: a proposal from Secretary Seward to divert attention from domestic troubles by stirring up trouble with a half dozen foreign countries and offering himself as executive in this new national policy. He made the offer because, as he said, the administration at the end of a month was without a policy either domestic or foreign.

How discouraging that must have sounded to Abraham Lincoln, with his simple and clear cut view of the only policy practicable or possible at the moment! It evidently did not take Mr. Lincoln long to decline the Secretary's substitute. He had a policy, he told him, he had laid it down in his inaugural, he had been since March 5th doing his utmost to carry it out. As for who should direct whatever policy the Government followed, "I must do it. And in doing it, he added, "I wish and suppose I am entitled to the advice of all of the Cabinet." Words could hardly make it plainer than these did that in his own judgment at least Abraham Lincoln was President of the United States.

But still Mr. Seward was not entirely convinced. Even after this he secretly sent telegrams crossing those of the Secretary of the Navy, which actually succeeded in diverting the flag ship of the Sumter expedition to the Fort Pickens expedition! When the disgusted Secretary of the Navy showed the disturbed President how

he had been a second time tricked he took upon himself the entire blame. It was carelessness, heedlessness on his part, he said, he ought to have been more careful and attentive.

In spite of Seward's meddling, the expedition to furnish provisions - not arms - to the men in Sumter finally went ahead. It was probably not until the news came on the morning of April 12, 1861 that Sumter had been fired upon, reduced, and later that it had been reduced and its garrison had surrendered, that William H. Seward began to have doubts about whether or no he was President of the United States. The doubt did not prevent his effort to establish the fact. It took several weeks for him to come to the conclusion expressed in private, never in public, "the President is the best of us."

It was a hard period for the President, obliged along with a thousand other duties to convince his Secretary of State by silent and friendly methods that he had made a mistake for sending bread to Sumter had brought war. He had his hands full as we shall see.