

From Life of Hannibal Hamlin, page 428.

"Mr. Hamlin, you have been repeatedly urging me to issue a proclamation of emancipation freeing the slaves. I have concluded to yield to your advice in the matter and that of other friends,- at the same time, as I may say, following my own judgment. Now listen to me while I read this paper. We will correct it together as I go on."

While saying this, Mr. Lincoln opened a drawer in his desk and took therefrom the first draft of the military proclamation freeing four millions of slaves.

The President and Vice President then sat down, and Mr. Lincoln slowly read the instrument over to his associate, after which he asked for criticism and suggestions.

"There is no criticism to be made," Mr. Hamlin replied.

"Oh yes, there is; at least, you can make some suggestions," answered Mr. Lincoln, laughingly, and he repeated his invitation.

"Finally," said Mr. Hamlin, in his account of this famous interview, "I did make, I believe, three suggestions, two of which Mr. Lincoln accepted."

But this comprised the entire account he would give, and those who knew him can well understand and appreciate his motives in withdrawing into the background. One who knew Mr. Hamlin said that the man reflected himself when he explained his unwillingness to give more details of this interview by saying, "The Emancipation Proclamation was Lincoln's own act, and no one else can claim any credit whatever in connection with it."**

* This original draft was destroyed by fire in Chicago.

** This interview took place on June 18, 1862, or more than a month before Mr. Lincoln informed his Cabinet of his intention to issue a proclamation of emancipation. On July 22 the Cabinet learned that it had been written. Mr. Hamlin, in the meantime, had arrived in Bangor on June 21, according to the Bangor newspapers. See Congressional Globe of June 19, 1862, for his letter to the Senate informing it of his intention to absent himself on that date, p.2798, 2d session of Senate of the 37th Congress, part iii. This record of dates proves that Mr. Lincoln wrote the Emancipation Proclamation earlier than the historians have hitherto supposed.