



Lincoln Lore

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Bulletin of The Lincoln National Life Foundation...Mark E. Neely, Jr., Editor. Published each month by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801.

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HOW A FREE PEOPLE CONDUCT A LONG WAR

The Lincoln Library and Museum holds a collection of over 1,350 pamphlets which are not classified as Lincolniana. They include speeches delivered in Congress, eulogies, Fourth of July orations, sermons, and discussions of controversial political topics by men who felt they had something especially telling to say. Pamphlets are not ordinarily retained by even large public libraries because of their great number, their tendency to focus on soon-forgotten and narrow political subjects, and their meager size and flimsy construction (which makes them hard to shelve and keep track of). What makes pamphlets hard to keep and what makes them seem ephemeral today also makes them excellent material for the historian. Their flimsy construction made them cheap and capable of wide circulation; their brevity and shoddy printing betokens their nearness to the immediate historical event. They reveal popular literate opinion as historical events unfolded rather than the more elite and reflective opinion captured in books. Pamphlets were lengthier and contained more deeply pondered and elaborately argued positions than newspaper articles and editorials, but they did not require the leisurely lapse of time that books required.

Abraham Lincoln was a reader of pamphlets. George Livermore's *Historical Research* (see *Lincoln Lore*, Number 1621) was a pamphlet, and George Whiting's discussions of the President's war powers (see *Lincoln Lore*, Number 1623) first appeared in pamphlet form. Several authorities cite Charles Janeway Stillé's pamphlet, *How a Free People Conduct a Long War*, as another which Abraham Lincoln read. Stillé's pamphlet was apparently popular, being reprinted on numerous occasions. The *Lincoln Library and Museum* owns four different printings of Stillé's pamphlet. The Loyal Publication Society reprinted Stillé's pamphlet in 1863 after its original publication in 1862 by Philadelphia printers, and the Society's pamphlets were nationally circulated. One historian claims that it was "probably the most widely distributed single piece of Northern patriotic literature."

There are two principal sources of evidence that Lincoln read Stillé's pamphlet. One is a reminiscence which appeared in *The Prairie Chicken*, a short-lived newspaper published in Tilton, Illinois. In July of 1865, the editor published a reminiscence (probably his own) of a visit paid to Lincoln's private secretaries in Washington "after Antietam" during which the President dropped in for some light conversation:

At any rate we were soon talking of graver things. Two pamphlets were just then occupying a good deal of Mr. Lincoln's attention, "How a free people conduct a long war," by Mr. Stille, and Mr. Charles P. Kirkland's pamphlet on the war power of the President, to the latter of which, especially, Mr. Lincoln accorded great weight. About these, and about Napier's Peninsular War, (on which the first named pamphlet was based,) the conversation went on for awhile.

The other piece of evidence is even more impressive because it stems from a witness known to have had contacts with Abraham Lincoln. Orville Hickman Browning made this entry in his diary on December 29, 1862:

The President took up a pamphlet on the war by Stillé, and saying it was the best thing he had seen upon the

subject added he would read some of it to me. He commenced and read the entire pamphlet. It was running a parallel between the condition of this Country and England during the Peninsular War and reasoning that there was nothing in events thus far to discourage us.

Charles Janeway Stillé was a Philadelphian, descended from a long line of successful Philadelphia merchants. He was a Yale graduate, the valedictorian of the class of 1839. He studied law afterwards in the office of Joseph Reed Ingersoll. Stillé never took practice very seriously and spent much of his time before the Civil War traveling to Europe. During the Civil War, he was corresponding secretary to the Executive Committee of the United States Sanitary Commission. He became provost of the University of Pennsylvania in 1868, but resigned twelve years later. Afterwards, Stillé devoted himself almost entirely to writing history and became for a time the president of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, which now holds a large collection of Stillé's papers. He died in 1899.

Stillé's role in the Civil War is characterized in George M. Fredrickson's innovative and argumentative book, *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965). Fredrickson contends that Stillé was an ultra-conservative who capitalized upon the issues of the Civil War to make an attack on humanitarian reform, democracy, and the natural rights philosophy of the Founding Fathers. He shared this opportunistic impulse with other conservative intellectuals (many of whom were also members of the United States Sanitary Commission).

Fredrickson's book is so ingenious (and complex) that its argument deserves lengthy recounting here in order to provide a framework for discussing Stillé's notion of how a free people conduct a long war. The genius of the book lies in the fact that it does not treat Civil War patriotism as epiphenomenal rhetoric but recognizes the specific social content of patriotism. Fredrickson argues that a group of "Conservatives in a Radical Age" disliked the individualistic and anti-institutional doctrines prevalent in antebellum America. Men like Charles Eliot Norton, Francis Lieber, Orestes Brownson, Francis Parkman, and Horace Bushnell criticized Transcendentalism and abolitionism, retained a suspicion of democracy grounded in a view of man as a depraved creature, and praised the role of institutions in society. Headed by upper-class professional men like themselves, institutions were essential to control men's passions.

Though conservative on the slavery issue, these gentlemen literati were not pro-Southern during the Civil War. According to Fredrickson, they were losing status with the rise of the new middle-class wealth gained from industrial enterprise. They had already lost a good deal of authority with the rise of Jacksonian democracy and the enthusiastic revivalism of the Second Great Awakening. When the Civil War came, they saw their chance to reassert their authority by leading the Northern crusade against Southern barbarism, as they termed it. More important, it was for a good cause: they could come to the defense of the authority of the state, one of the institutions vital to maintaining order and curbing individualism.

After the war, Fredrickson contends, these Northern intellectuals maintained their conservatism by falling out of love with the state when it loomed as a regulator of economic life in the interests of the working classes. Here the experience of the United States Sanitary Commission was important. As men like Stillé tried to organize charity for the sake of military efficiency, they came to distrust indiscriminate, soft-hearted philanthropy as destructive of discipline and military organization. The experience meshed perfectly with the tough laissez-faire economic philosophy uttered by men like William Graham Sumner after the Civil War. Charity, they said, was for small children and dependent women; a man would only lose his incentive to work and better himself if the state attempted to help him out of his economic misfortunes.

There is much in Stillé's life and ideas which fits the pattern described by Fredrickson. According to a manuscript biography of Stillé's life at Yale (located in the Sterling Library at Yale University), the young Philadelphian apparently lost in his bid for the editorship of the *Yale Literary Magazine* because he was too anti-republican in his sentiments. An article he wrote for the *Yale Literary Magazine* in 1838 (also available in the Archives Room in Sterling Library) entitled "The Patriot Statesman" warned that there was "a jealousy of too great a freedom from that close connection with their constituents, which it is contended representatives should ever feel, which is too often the foe of enlightened and liberal legislation." Stillé's Burkean ideal of representation required that one "should insist upon the indispensable requisite of independence in the course of the politician." An article by Stillé in the same undergraduate magazine a year later denounced a majoritarian society. "Anyone who reflects upon the state of society here," he wrote, "must be readily convinced . . . that public opinion is a tyrant, as remorseless in its decrees, and as able to exact obedience to them as the haughtiest despot the world has ever borne with." Fredrickson cites the following passages from Stillé's *History of the United States Sanitary Commission*, written in 1868: the commission, Stillé wrote,

subordinated all its plans, even for the relief of suffering, to the maintenance of that discipline in its strictest form. . . . It never forgot that the great purpose of any Army organization was to train men to fight and conquer. To effect this object perfect subordination and accountability were essential; and just as it was impossible that an Army which had gained a victory should be delayed in the pursuit of a retreating army in order to look after its wounded, so it determined that if the relief of suffering required a violation of those rules of military discipline . . . the sacrifice should be made for the general good.

Fredrickson devotes considerable attention to Stillé's pamphlet, *How a Free People Conduct a Long War*. This is Fredrickson's characterization:

In substance, it was an account of Britain's experiences in the Peninsular War with some reassuring contemporary parallels. What is interesting, however, is the assumption, uncommon in ante-bellum America, that United States and British history can be described in the same terms. Both are "free peoples" with a similar problem—defined at one point as "that hideous moral leprosy which seems to be the sad but invariable attendant upon all political discussions in a free government, corrupting the very sources of public life; breeding only the base spirit of faction." The British achievement in the Peninsular War had been that they had managed, despite the bickering of parties, to turn "the excited passions of the multitude," which had greeted the war, into "a stern endurance—that King-quality of heroic constancy" which carried the nation through temporary setbacks to ultimate victory. . . . Stillé . . . was so sure that the Southern revolt was of the same class as the European revolutions which contradicted the historic claims of government that he asserted shamelessly in his *How a Free People Conduct a Long War* that "Poland, Hungary and Lombardy . . . were just as determined to be free as the South," but

had been legitimately put down by the great powers of Europe. The "*ultima ratio*," as he put it, was physical force. . . . Ultimately then Stillé's worship of history boiled down, like so many historicist views, to a worship of force. Any government strong enough to enforce its rule over an unwilling populace was providential and therefore legitimate.

It would be more than a little strange for Abraham Lincoln, whose notions of American nationalism always revolved about the Founding Fathers and the Declaration of Independence, to have found such a pamphlet as Fredrickson describes as convincing as Orville Browning said he did. The fault lies more in Fredrickson's rendering of the pamphlet than in Lincoln's inconsistency. It is true, for example, that Stillé's argument had the effect of anticipating the vogue of Anglo-Saxonism in American history by telescoping English and American history under the rubric of "free peoples." However, he did show an awareness of difference, too, in one passage in the pamphlet:

The war was carried on for more than five years. . . . The result, as it need not be said, was not only to crown the British arms with the most brilliant and undying lustre, but also to retain permanently in their places the party whose only title to public favor was that they had carried on the war against the most serious obstacles and brought it to a successful termination. Thus was delayed, it may be remarked, for at least twenty years [that is, until the Reform Bill of 1832?], the adoption of those measures of reform which at last gave to England that place in modern civilization which had long before been reached by most of the nations of the Continent by passing through the trials of a bloody revolution.

This passage, little more than an aside in *How a Free People Conduct a Long War*, grew into a crucial, concluding point in a subsequent pamphlet written in 1863 by Stillé, *Northern Interests and Southern Independence: A Plea for United Action*. There the point of the example became clear: war causes but a temporary decline in liberal reform.

It is satisfactory to find that history does not show any permanent ill effects upon the attachment of a people to free institutions, as the result of war. . . . In that country [England], "in the early part of the war with revolutionary France, if a man was known to be a Reformer, he was constantly in danger of being arrested. . . . ["] "And yet," adds Mr. Buckle, from whose work we have taken this gloomy picture, "such is the force of liberal opinions, when once they have taken root in the popular mind, that notwithstanding all this, it was found impossible to stifle them, or even to prevent their increase. In a few years that generation began to pass away, a better one succeeded in its place, and the system of tyranny fell to the ground."

Stillé was not unaware of the differences in degrees of individual freedom permitted in England and the United States.

For the most part, the message of *How a Free People Conduct a Long War* was simple. Take heart, said Stillé; others have fought longer wars, experienced bitter disappointments and even defeatism, and survived to win victory in the end. The similarities he saw between America's Civil War and England's Peninsular War against Napoleon's troops in Spain were these: ". . . in the commencement, . . . the same wild and unreasoning enthusiasm with which we are familiar; the same bitter abuse and denunciation of the government at the first reverses; the same impatient and ignorant criticism of military operations; the same factious and disloyal opposition on the part of a powerful party; the same discouragement and despondency at times on the part of the true and loyal; the same prophecies of the utter hopelessness of success; the same complaints of grievous and burdensome taxation, and predictions of the utter financial ruin of the country; the same violent attacks upon the government for its arbitrary decrees, and particularly for the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus*; the same difficulties arising from the inexperience of the enemy;

and the same weakness on the part of the government in most boldly and energetically supporting the army in the field." Stillé drew one particularly striking parallel which revealed his faith that the United States was capable of self-sacrifice, despite the enemy's contention that it was a society made up of men who worshipped only the almighty dollar. "Napoleon," Stillé wrote, "looking upon England as the Southern people have been taught to regard us, as a purely commercial nation, undoubtedly placed more reliance for ultimate success upon the instinct of money getting, which would shrink from the pecuniary sacrifices in a prolonged struggle, than upon the mere victories of his army."

The most striking part of Stillé's pamphlet appears near the end when he discussed "a certain class of men among us, not very numerous, perhaps, but still, owing to their position and culture, of considerable influence, who, accustomed to find in the European armies their standard of military efficiency, are disposed to doubt whether a force, composed as ours is of totally different materials, can accomplish great results." Stillé sounded very much like he did in those passages from his history of the Sanitary Commission quoted by Fredrickson. "We admit at once," Stillé wrote in *How a Free People Conduct a Long War*, "the superiority of foreign military organization, the result of the traditions of centuries of military experience, digested into a thorough system, and carried out by long trained officers perfectly versed in the details of the service." Stillé even quoted the criticism voiced by a foreign observer of the Civil War, the Prince de Joinville, who, Jay Luvaas tells us in his fascinating study of *The Military Legacy of the Civil War: The European Inheritance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), had been a rear admiral in the French navy and who observed General McClellan's Peninsular campaign as an unofficial member of McClellan's staff. "The Prince de Joinville," wrote Stillé, "in his recent pamphlet, speaking of the battle of Fair Oaks and of the neglect to throw bridges over the Chickahominy at the proper time, by means of which the whole rebel army might have been taken in flank, and probably destroyed, ascribes the neglect on one page to what he calls *la lenteur Américaine*, which he seems to think always leads our countrymen to let the chance slip of doing the right thing at the right time, and again on the next to '*faute d'organisation, faute de hierarchie, faute de lien, qui en résulte entre l'ame du chef et l'armée, lien puissant qui permet a un General de demander a ses soldats et d'en obtenir aveuglement ces efforts extraordinaires qui gagnent les batailles.*'"

Far from citing these criticisms as suggestive of programs to be adopted by American military reformers (the reason one might expect from reading Fredrickson's appraisal of Stillé), the Philadelphia pamphleteer in fact proceeded to refute every charge with a ringing defense of the quality of the individualistic American common soldier. Stillé was willing to fault the officers but not the soldiers. A West Point education was adequate only "for the scientific and the staff corps of the army," said Stillé; it "seems to fail in teaching the young soldier, what is just now the most important quality he can possess for command, the character and capacity of volunteer soldiers." Stillé elaborated on the officers' shortcomings:

The system of discipline he has been taught is that which governs the regular army, a system modelled upon the English, which is, with the exception of that in use in Russia, the most brutal and demoralizing known in any army in Europe. No wonder, therefore, that when our educated soldiers are suddenly placed in high positions, and with great responsibilities, and when they discover that the sort of discipline which they have been taught is wholly out of place in securing the efficiency of a volunteer army, they are led to doubt whether it can ever be made efficient at all. These prejudices, however, are wearing away before the test of actual experience. Generals are gradually learning that they may confide in their men, even for desperate undertakings; they begin to see in their true light the many admirable qualities of the volunteer;

and he, in turn, begins to understand something of that military system which seemed at first so irksome and meaningless to him; and the advance of the army in the essentials of discipline has been proportionally rapid.

Notable, once again, are the differences Stillé drew between the American and the British common soldier. The British army in the Peninsula had been composed "of the refuse of the population, . . . reinforced by the introduction into its ranks of convicts taken from the hulks." Their "brutal passions . . . could only be checked by the equally brute hand of force." The American soldier was different, "essentially *sui generis*," Stillé said. He was "civilized, sober, well educated . . . , animated with the consciousness that he is fighting for a great cause, in the success of which he and his children have a deep personal interest, and who learns obedience because both his common sense and his sense of duty recognize its necessity." He "may not regard his officers as superior beings," but his discipline stemmed from his recognition of his own stake in the cause. Stillé did not worship blind, unquestioning loyalty in the soldiery nor European organization and machine-like military efficiency. Stillé did not fear a lack of "proper deference to rank" or "too much camaraderie" between officers and men. These were the trappings of "mere formal discipline"; the American army obeyed "the true spirit of discipline."

Nor does Fredrickson's scheme fit the other parts of Stillé's life precisely either. His undergraduate essay on "The Patriot Statesman" championed as his ideal of the independent Burkean legislator William Wilberforce: ". . . behold him on his deathbed . . . when it was announced that the great object of his life, the extirpation of slavery from British soil, had just received the approval of Parliament! What a picture of an independent statesman, devoting his lofty energies for the ultimate triumph of justice, unsustained by majorities, and ridiculed by those who could not comprehend the vastness of his resources."

Fredrickson's scheme also fails to explain Stillé's views after the Civil War was over. To put it simply, he did not fall out of love with the state for the sake of laissez-faire economics. In an address on "Social Science" in 1884 (the manuscript notes for which are in the Charles Janeway Stillé papers at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia), Stillé argued that the modern economic problem was one of distribution rather than production. Therefore, classical economics had outlived whatever usefulness they ever had; besides, classical economics were "certainly not the gospel recalled by the Bible." "The right of individual action in the sphere of government of morals and of religion has been much subordinated to the power of the State during the last hundred years," said Stillé, noting but one exception, "industry." That would soon follow, he urged, because "it is the duty of the State not merely to protect each individual but to aid him in the development of every capacity which may make him a useful citizen."

Fredrickson's thesis will not stand or fall on the merits of his treatment of Charles Janeway Stillé, but the case is, I fear, symptomatic of the book's problems. Its thesis fits parts of men's lives but not the whole of any single man's life. Fredrickson is not wrong in asserting that Stillé was a conservative. The Philadelphian was silent about the "great cause" which animated the soldier in *How a Free People Conduct a Long War*; notably absent was reference to the cause of freedom. Stillé's efforts at writing Civil War propaganda do not belie the contention of William Dusing's fine book on *Civil War Issues in Philadelphia, 1856-1865* that this Northern city was strikingly pro-Southern and extremely reluctant to embrace the cause of the Negro even after Lincoln's administration had done so. However, an accurate reading of *How a Free People Conduct a Long War* without an artificial effort to fit Fredrickson's oversimplified thesis does reveal how Abraham Lincoln, a former volunteer soldier in a unit that elected its officers, could find the pamphlet heartening reading in the dark days which followed Antietam.

CUMULATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY 1972-1973

Selections approved by a Bibliography Committee consisting of the following members: Dr. Kenneth A. Bernard, Boston University, 725 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Mass.; Arnold Gates, 289 New Hyde Park Rd., Garden City, N.Y.; Carl Haverlin, 8619 Louise Avenue, Northridge, California; James T. Hickey, Illinois State Historical Library, Old State Capitol, Springfield, Illinois; E. B. (Pete) Long, 607 S. 15th St., Laramie, Wyoming; Ralph G. Newman, 18 E. Chestnut St., Chicago, Illinois; Hon. Fred Schwengel, 200 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C.; Dr. Wayne C. Temple, 1121 S. 4th Street Court, Springfield, Illinois. New items available for consideration may be sent to the above persons, or to the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

1972

LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY 1972-31

Lincoln Memorial University Press/(Device)/Winter, 1972/Vol. 74, No. 4/Lincoln Herald/A Magazine devoted to historical/research in the field of Lincolniana and/the Civil War, and to the promotion/of Lincoln Ideals in American/Education./ [Harrogate, Tenn.]

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 10 $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ ", 185-236 pp., illus., price per single issue, \$1.50.

1973

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A Touchstone / For Greatness / Essays, Addresses, / and Occasional Pieces about/ Abraham Lincoln/Roy P. Basler/ Contributions in American Studies, No. 4/(Device)/Greenwood Press, Inc., / Westport, Connecticut, England/[Copyright 1973 by Roy P. Basler. All rights reserved.]

Book, cloth, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", ix p., 257 pp., price, \$9.50.

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1973-12

Abraham & Mary Todd/Lincoln/(Seal of the President of the United States)/Margaret Bassett/a volume in/Profiles and Portraits of / American Presidents and Their Wives/Thomas Y. Crowell Company/New York. Established 1834/[Copyright 1973 by The Bond Wheelwright Company. All rights reserved.]

Brochure, cloth, 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", fr., 58 pp., illus., price, \$4.95.

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Book, cloth, 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 6", 42 (4) pp. plus letter variants of numbered pages, uncut pages, illus. First edition. Limited to 150 numbered copies of which this is No. 57. Autographed copy by author.

PETZ, WELDON 1973-18

In The Presence/of Abraham Lincoln/Written and compiled by Weldon Petz/(Statue of A. Lincoln)/Lincoln The Lawyer by C. S. Paolo. A statue commissioned for the campus of Lincoln Memorial/University and dedicated February 11, 1949./An acquaintance with some of the rarest and priceless items preserved in the Collec-/tions of Lincolniana and Civil War materials at Lincoln

Memorial University at/Cumberland Gap, Harrogate, Tennessee./Lincoln Memorial University Press/(Device) / Box 1965, Lincoln Memorial University/Cumberland Gap, Harrogate, Tennessee 37752/First Edition, September 1973 / Library of Congress Card Number: 73-8663/ISBN: 0-914148-00-1/

Book, paper, 11" x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", 104 pp., illus., price, \$10.00. Limited edition, serially numbered, of which this is Volume No. 348.

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The/President's Wife/Mary Todd Lincoln / A Biography / Ishbel Ross/(Portrait of Mary Todd Lincoln)/G. P. Putnam's Sons/New York/[Copyright 1973 by Ishbel Ross. All rights reserved.]

Book, cloth, 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 6", fr., 378 pp., illus., price, \$8.95.

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LINCOLN NATIONAL LIFE FOUNDATION 1973-23

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The Years—1861

A beautiful china vase, containing a portrait of Lincoln and with a number of new and old coins, is one of the outstanding items of art in the Lincoln Exhibition.

Because the vase is so well known, it is included in the 1861 exhibition. The vase, probably from the Lincoln period, is one of the finest pieces of china made in the United States.



Page from *In The Presence Of Abraham Lincoln*