Lincoln Lore

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A CONFEDERATE IN THE NORTH (Continued)

Lincoln's proclamation brought similar responses even in certain low levels of the Confederate War Department. Clerk John B. Jones wrote in his famous diary on January 17, 1863, "...if Lincoln's Emancipation be not revoked, but *few more prisoners will be taken on either side*. That would be a barbarous war, without quarter." A little later he was saying simply, "The black flag next." Even Robert Garlick Hill Kean, a higher-ranking War Department official in Richmond disposed to legalistic responses to alleged outrages, came by the summer of 1864 to advocate retaliation too:

> The war is taking on features of exaggerated harshness. Hunter when he re-entered the Valley caused a number of private residences of the finest charactaer to be burned, e.g. Mr. Andrew Hunter's (a cousin of General David Hunter and a member of the Virginia Senate from Charlestown, now West Virginia), McCaig's, etc. Early has burned Chambersburg (Pa.) to enforce a refractory town into paying a requisition. The Yankees have had the unutterable meanness to make an expedition up the Rappahannock for the purpose of burning the house of Mrs. May Seddon, the widow of Major John Seddon, the brother of the Secretary. Her condition was perfectly well known to them, and the fact of her connection with the Secretary of War was avowed as the reason!! Somebody over the border will smoke for this outrage. I am satisfied that this thing which they have been doing now for three years in Florida (Jacksonville), Mississippi (Jackson), South Carolina on the Combahee, and all through Virginia on the northern border, can be stopped by deliberate and stern retaliation. They are in more of our territory but their people live so much more in towns that one expedition can burn more houses than they can destroy in a campaign.

Cooler heads than Pollard's usually prevailed, but his views were representative of a substantial segment of Southern opinion.

In August 1864 Pollard was paroled to live in Brooklyn and thus given "opportunities ... of immediate observation of the politics and society of the North, of introduction to many of their public men, and of a rare and extraordinary insight into the public spirit and real designs of the North with reference to the war." The presidential campaign of 1864 was at full throttle, and Pollard's first impression was that "there is no considerable encouragement whatever to be found for the South in any existing party complication in the North, or in any element of conservatism there; that nothing remains for her but the arbitration of the sword, and the resolution of liberty or death. This is not a piece of rhetoric; nor is it an attempt at extravagance. It is a deliberate conclusion; formed against the natural desire of the mind to believe what is most agreeable; formed against my *first impressions* ...." Pollard attributed considerable peace sentiment to the Democratic party of the summer of 1864, asserting "that at the time of the Chicago Convention the Democratic party in the North had prepared a secret programme of operations, the final and inevitable conclusion of which was the acknowledgment of the independence of the Confederate States." He put

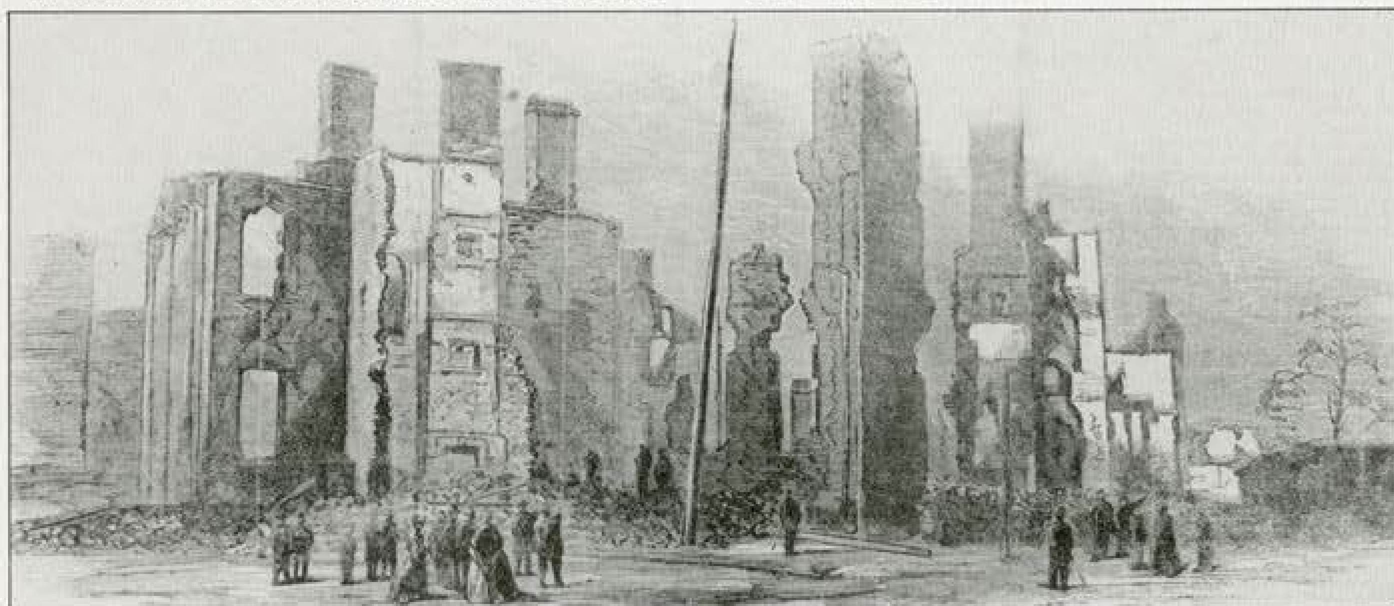

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FIGURE 1. Ruins of the bank and Franklin Hotel in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania.

succinctly the failure of this design: "Since the Chicago Convention, the Yankee peace party has moved inversely with the scale of military operations, and as that has mounted in Northern opinion it has fallen, until it at last approaches zero."

In fact, Pollard found little sincere sympathy with the Confederacy in the North. Most Democrats exploited war issues for partisan advantages *vis-a-vis* Abraham Lincoln and the Republicans, but they were just as likely to slander the South as well. Pollard even hazarded the opinion that most Democrats in the North were "quite as much resolved upon the extirpation of Southern slavery in the war as the Black Republicans themselves; *although for different reasons*. They have nothing to do with the moral question of slavery; they disclaim all sentimentalism on the subject; but they think that slavery must be abolished by the war for State reasons, because it is an element of discord, and the Union cannot be firmly reconstructed without the necessary sacrifice to its future interests."

There was a group, "purely sentimental ... and quite worthless" who thought secession wrong but that the South had been terribly enough punished by suffering and poverty for their error. Finally, there were sincere Confederate partisans who thought the war a crime and an outrage and that the Confederacy embodied all that was left of the genuine legacy of constitutional rights from the past of American liberty. Alas, Pollard reported, this group could "be counted by hundreds" only.

Pollard's observations on the administration of Abraham Lincoln began by stating an intriguing problem: "There are many persons to be found in the North, who admitting the rapid decline since the commencement of the war, of their government to despotism, attempt a consolation by the assertion that a similar lapse of liberty has taken place in the Confederate States. This opinion obtains, to a remarkable extent, even among those who are not unfriendly to the South, and certainly are not disposed to do her injustice." Pollard was willing to admit that it was "quite true that the conscription and impressment laws of the Confederacy are apparently harsh measures." He defended them, however, not only as necessities but also as "organized expressions of the *popular devotion* of the South in the war; intended only to give effect and uniformity to it." Besides, he hastened to add, there were "no Military Governours in the Confederacy; there is no martial law there; there is, properly called, no political police there — our police establishment being limited to a mere detective force to apprehend, in the communities in which they are placed, spies and emissaries of the enemy." There were no soldiers at polling places in the Confederacy and no newspapers suppressed. And "at no time has a single instance of arbitrary arrest, or of imprisonment without distinct charges and the opportunity to reply, occurred within the Confederate jurisdiction."

Here Pollard's exaggerations simply ignored law and fact in the names of morale and propaganda. Martial law had been declared in Richmond on March 1, 1862, and Jefferson Davis suspended the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus on several occasions precisely so that arbitrary arrests might occur — as they did under the authority of military provost marshals, just as they did in the North. The object of their repression in the South, as in the North, was not merely spies but such inconvenient impediments to the war effort as liquor sellers. The allegation that Lincoln's government constituted a despotism was so critical to the Confederate cause by 1864 that its assertion could brook no qualification of fact or analogy. Pollard's *Observations* carefully enumerated the contradictions of Lincoln's move toward the Emancipation Proclamation, an act of tyranny he saw as a perfect companion to the "yoke of intolerable despotism" fixed on the necks of white Northerners — arbitrary arrests and the suppression of unfriendly newspapers.

Near the end of November, Pollard received word that he was to be exchanged. En route to the Confederate lines he stopped in Baltimore, a pro-Southern haven more to his liking than New York City. In the Maryland city he heard the story of

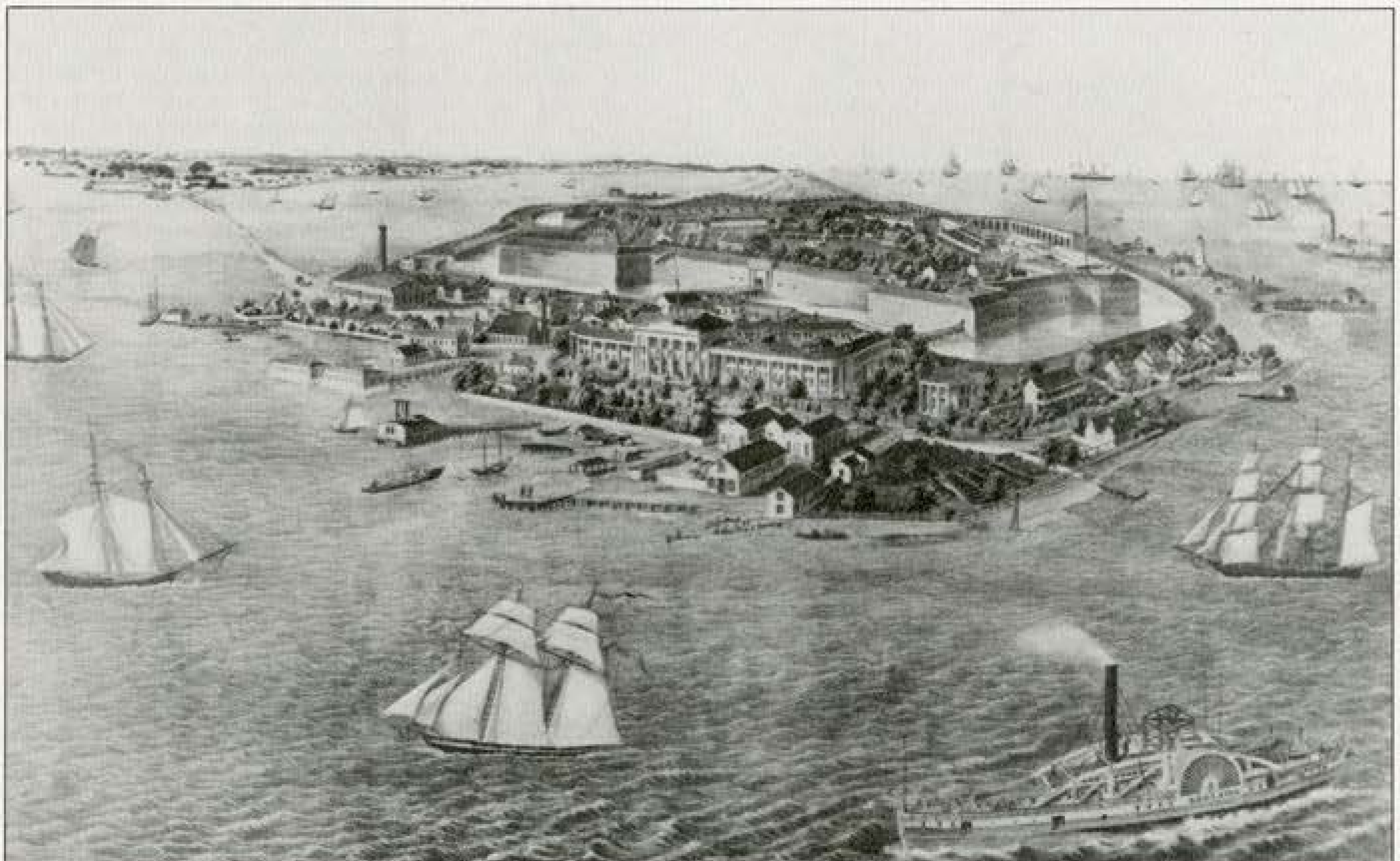

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FIGURE 2. Fortress Monroe, Virginia.

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FIGURE 3. Benjamin F. Butler.

> Mrs. Hutchins, an estimable lady, who had been dragged from her family to a jail in Massachusetts, to be imprisoned five years, for having purchased a sword to send through the blockade te (sic) a relative in the Southern army. A deputation of some of the first ladies of Baltimore had gone on to Washington to get Mrs. Lincoln's intercession in the matter. But the lady of the White House had declined to see them, and had sent word from her apartment that "she could not see visitors, as she had her feet in a mustard bath."

Pollard also heard much talk in Baltimore of Confederate generals. P. G. T. Beauregard appeared to be the favorite of the pro-Southern ladies of the North, but, Pollard noted, "his reputation in this regard, or the reputation of any Confederate officer in any regard among Northern people, is nothing to compare with the unbounded admiration and respect in which General Lee is held by all parties in the enemy's country. I have heard Abolitionists utter all sorts of anathemas against men and things in the Confederacy, with this single exception: that I have never heard at any time or in any company in the North the name of General Lee coupled with a word of hate or derision."

After Pollard left Baltimore, he proceeded to Fortress Monroe, Virginia. Shortly thereafter, General Benjamin F. Butler summoned him to his nearby headquarters. There the rabid Confederate journalist had a long conversation over dinner with perhaps the most hated Yankee in the South.

> The General did the honours very graciously, and the bill of fare quite upset my notions of the diet of heroes: soup, roast beef and potatoes, apple sauce and other condiments, apple pie, cheese, almonds, and English walnuts. The table was attended by two negro waiters, whose appearance of cringing obsequiousness surpassed anything I had ever seen of such behaviour in the presence of a Southern master, and reminded one of the nervous awe which one might suppose the attendants and slaves of a potentate of the Orient might show in the august presence. . . . After the cloth was removed, (I may remark parenthetically, there was "nothing to drink"), and the black servants had walked out on the tips

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FIGURE 4. Recruiting immigrants in New York.

of their toes, General Butler lit his Havanna, and launched into a long and entertaining talk. I must do him the justice to say that in this conversation he did not apply a single improper question to me, or, by the least allusion, offend the delicacy of my position as a prisoner. . . . General Butler talked freely of his own acts. He said that he had been much abused for two acts in New Orleans — the hanging of Mumford and the so-called "woman order." He had, as all men, some things to regret in his life; but these acts he could never regret; he hoped that when time had composed the passions of this war, justice would be done him. . . . He said that when Mumford took the flag from the United States mint, he narrowly escaped drawing upon the city the fire of the fleet; and it was with great difficulty that the crews were restrained by their officers. . . . He regretted the necessity of hanging Mumford. He (General B.) had received at least a hundred letters threatening his life if he dared to execute . . . Mumford; and when his life was begged by a very respectable citizen, but a few moments before he was taken to the gallows, he (General B.) replied that "in one hour it was to be decided whether he was to govern in New Orleans or not" — and he decided it by keeping the word he had first pronounced, and hanging Mumford.

As to the "woman order," when Lord Palmerston denounced it, he might, if he had turned to the Ordinances of London, have found that General Butler had borrowed it from that ancient and respectable authority. The "ladies" of New Orleans did not interfere with his troops, it was the demi-monde that troubled him.

When the general explained that he "had fed upwards of thirty thousand poor people in New Orleans," Pollard thought to himself, "This . . . was simply *Agrarianism*," by which he meant socialism.

Shortly after this remarkable interview, Pollard was suddenly and inexplicably placed in solitary confinement. He surmised later that it was on the order of Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton. After languishing a while in prison, he decided to appeal to General Butler, figuring that he was just maverick enough to ignore Washington and honor the promise to return Pollard to Richmond. And so the general did.

After his return to the Confederacy, Pollard quickly wrote this little memoir, and ended it with an appeal for continued Southern resistance. Admitting that the Confederacy had suffered some pretty considerable reverses, the Richmond editor nevertheless argued that all the South need do was to hold out a little longer, for they did not have to conquer the North but rather wait until the North lost its will to endure more casualties for the end in view. This, he felt, could not be long off, and the South's cause would be aided by the near-exhaustion of Northern manpower. "Foreign enlistments," as he called them, were "pretty thoroughly dried up"; the North had been relying on the veritable "scabs" of the Northern cities for manpower. Their reliance on the new manpower pool of blacks would not work either, for the Northern Negro soldiers were, Pollard asserted, the "dregs" of the race, plantation "scrubs" and escaped slaves. The Confederacy's Negro soldiers would prove far abler under the accustomed leadership of their old plantation masters.

Pollard was a shrewd, entertaining, but perverse man. A self-conscious conservative and bitter critic of Jefferson Davis, he came to support the government's policy of arming Confederate blacks. And he made Benjamin Butler, of all people, the hero of his memoir.

LOOKING AT PICTURES

Readers of *Lincoln Lore* Number 1752, February 1984, may recall the Thomas Nast cartoon pictured at left below, entitled "Wilkes Booth the Second." The clever woodcut appeared on the cover of *Harper's Weekly* in 1868. Nast was even cleverer than may appear at first glance. Readers may well have wondered why General Grant's potential assassins in the cartoon were depicted in such antique costume.

The answer lies in the pictorial source of Nast's cartoon. A glance at the painting reproduced at right below shows that the American cartoonist relied on a picture originally produced in 1852 by the French military painter Ernest Meissonier (1815-1891). The Frenchman's canvas was called *The Bravoes*.

The discovery, admittedly quite by accident, of the genealogy of the Nast cartoon suggests that more may be going on in the woodcuts in the illustrated newspapers of Lincoln's day than readily meets the modern eye. Only further study will reveal whether such copying constituted simple artistic theft or clever cultural comment.