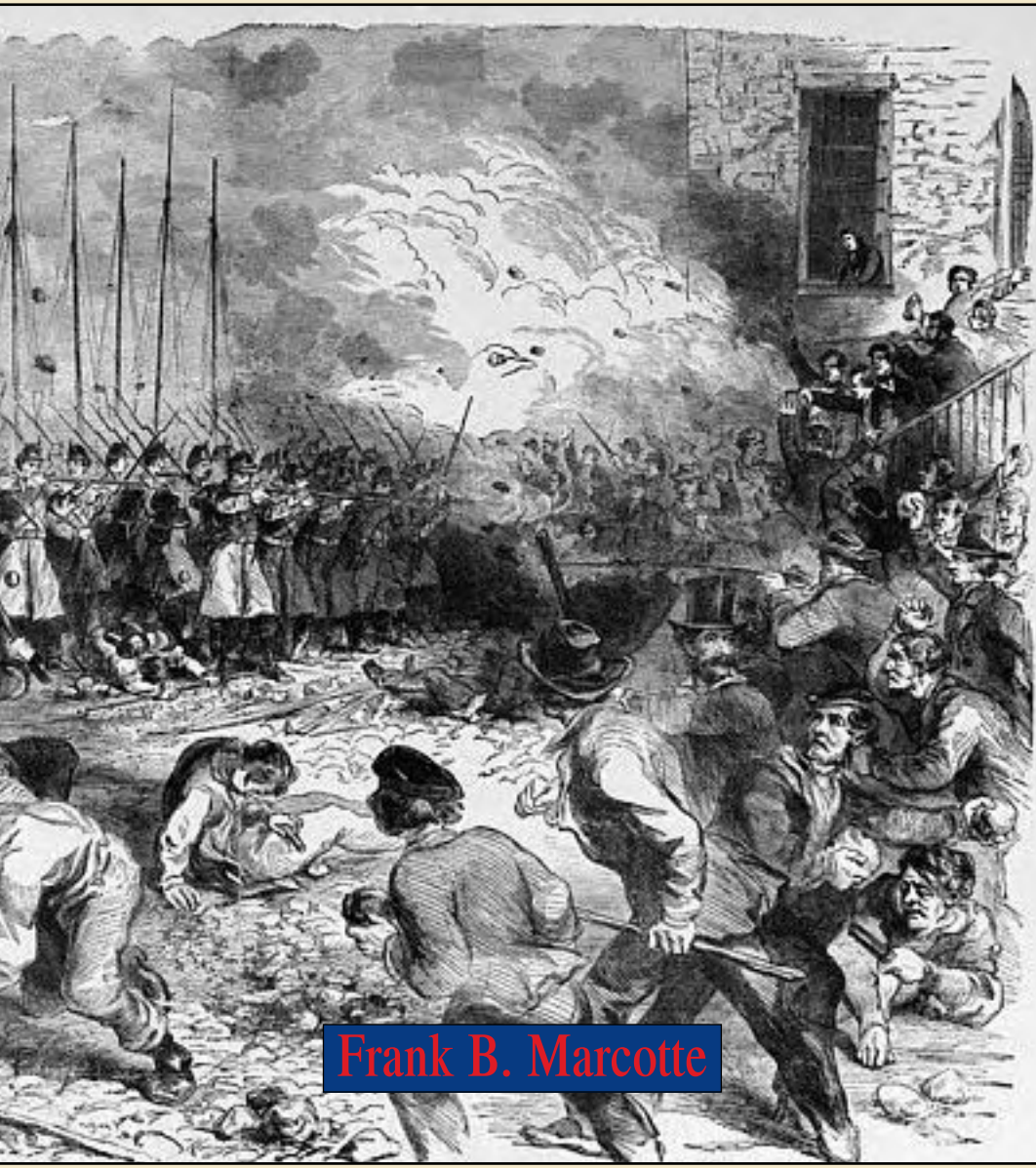
Six Days in April

Lincoln and the Union in Peril



Frank B. Marcotte

Algora

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Front Cover: Riot in Baltimore, Maryland. Secessionists in Baltimore, Maryland, fire upon troops from the 6th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment during a pro-secession riot in 1861. Date Created: ca. 1861-1865 © CORBIS

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To my wife, who has contributed loving criticism and encouragement in the sometimes dark days of writing.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1. Two Cities: Baltimore and Washington

The rebellion of the Southern states was underway. On Friday, April 12, 1861 the South fired on Fort Sumter. On Monday, April 15, President Lincoln ordered 75,000 troops from the Northern states to assemble in Washington. On Friday, April 19, a Baltimore mob of thousands attacked a Massachusetts regiment en route to the defense of Washington.

The Massachusetts troops, the first to respond to Lincoln's call, lost four men and many others were wounded by the angry hordes. In a spectacular midnight raid, Baltimore citizens burned all the railroad bridges, cut telegraph wires, and stopped all mails en route to the capital. They were determined that Northern troops would not go through Baltimore on their way to protect Washington.

All Washington's connections to the North normally went through Baltimore. Now, they were cut off. Without any military force or the possibility of calling any in, the capital was helpless.

For six days Washington was threatened with capture. It was isolated, an island in a sea of Southern states. On the Virginia heights, across the Potomac River from Washington, Southern

troops were massed for an attack. On its other three sides Washington was pressed against the Potomac by the surrounding state of Maryland, which was threatening to secede and join the South.

This is the story of the two cities, Baltimore and Washington. It is the story of five men who battled for the state of Maryland, key to the immediate survival of the Union. For six long days, these five men battled to control Maryland while Baltimore held Washington incommunicado: Abraham Lincoln, president of the United States; Thomas Hicks, governor of Maryland; George Brown, mayor of Baltimore; George Kane, chief of police of Baltimore; and General Benjamin Butler, in charge of the military force trying to rescue Washington. In their hands lay the fate of the Union.

Laid out in grand circumstance on the hills above the harbor, Baltimore had a magnificent (if rough-edged) history as one of the great American cities of the colonial period. Now, in the years before the Civil War, it was in the grip of partisan outrages.

In the late 1850s, as the Civil War approached, Baltimore was a brutal city, a city ruled by thuggery and violence. Authorities could not control the raging political factions, whose "bloody and destructive riots…[left scenes of] killed and wounded truly appalling," said Governor T.W. Ligon in a special report to the Maryland legislature.[1] The unruly populace of Baltimore presented such dangers that on February 22, 1861, on his way to Washington for his inauguration, president-elect Abraham Lincoln went through that city in disguise in the middle of the night.[2]

In contrast, Washington, the capital of the nation, was a new city, only a few decades from farmland when the Civil War began. The construction of buildings along the newly mapped out streets had been slow; there was still a great deal of open space.

1. Scharf, J. Thomas, *The Chronicles of Baltimore*, Port Washington: 1972, Kennikat Press, pp. 555-6; originally published in 1874.

2. Lamon, Ward H., *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*, Boston: 1872, Osgood and Company, pp. 520-525.

Government buildings were few: the Capitol, the President's House (later called the White House), the General Post Office, the Treasury, the Patent Office, and the Smithsonian Institution completed the list. The streets were still unpaved. Commissioned by George Washington, Major Pierre L'Enfant had laid out an elegant plan for the city. When the federal government moved (from its temporary home in Philadelphia) to Washington in 1800, it was "a backwoods settlement in the wilderness.... As a city it existed principally on paper, and the magnificence of the design only served to emphasize the poverty of the execution." The quality of arrangements in the city had, by the time of the Civil War, not progressed a great deal. "For many years such characterizations as 'Wilderness City,' 'Capital of Miserable Huts,' 'City of Streets without Houses,' 'City of Magnificent Distances,' and 'A Mudhole almost Equal to the Great Serbonian Bog,' were common. Members of Congress offered [resolutions] for the removal of the capital...."[3]

"It was a Southern town," relates Margaret Leech, "— with the indolence, the disorder and the want of sanitation. Its lounging Negroes startled Northern visitors with the reminder that slaves were held in the capital. Hucksters abounded. Fish and oyster peddlers cried their wares...on the corners. Flocks of geese waddled on [Pennsylvania] Avenue, and hogs roamed at large.... People emptied slops and refuse in the gutters."[4]

"Such was the capital of the United States in December, 1860, the sprawling and unfullfilled embodiment of a vision of national grandeur...." There were those who admired the unfinished city; one thought that "the Post Office and the Patent Office...faced each other like white Greek temples...." Another sympathetic commentator said that the city "was a mere ambitious beginner, its defects...[were] those of youth and energy and inexperience." The

3. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, llth Edition, Vol. 28, p. 352.

4. Leech, Margaret, *Reveille in Washington, 1860-1865*, New York: 1941, Harper and Brothers, pp. 9-12.

critics of the new capital suddenly vanished at the outbreak of the Civil War.

Baltimore was also criticized as unattractive; Louisa May Alcott, travelling through that city on her way to Washington to serve as a nurse during the Civil War, found Baltimore "a big, dirty, shippy, shiftless place, full of goats, geese, and colored people...."[5]

Washington and Baltimore, thirty-seven miles apart, were connected by a railroad, the Washington branch of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The single-track railroad ended at Washington; the city was a terminus, not a way station to anywhere else.

Both Washington and Baltimore were port cities and both had an atmosphere of ships and shipping. In this era there were two means of travel for people and for goods, by water and by railroad. Highways were dirt tracks, suitable only for local travel by horse and buggy.

Washington was a river port; ships arrived from everywhere, sailing up the Potomac River. From the upper reaches of the Potomac River barge traffic brought products down from the western settlements. And battleships gave an additional, naval atmosphere to the city of Washington; the United States Navy maintained a navy yard on the edge of the city.

Baltimore was a port on Chesapeake Bay, doing business with the East Coast and with the rest of the world; masts of tall ships tied up at the wharfs were intimate with the city streets.

Baltimore was an aggressive, ambitious city. It saw itself as a rival to New York as the major port of the east coast — a "great ship-building, importing and commercial emporium...the ocean whitened with her sails....palaces reared from her...ever-expanding profits."[6]

Baltimore was one of the first cities in the United States to have a railroad. Merchants of that port city saw the need for a railroad early on; they wanted to bring the produce from inland

5. Alcott, Louisa May, "Hospital Sketches," New York: 1957, Sagamore Press, p. 48.
6. Pinkerton, Allan, *The Spy of the Rebellion*, Lincoln: 1883, Univ. of Nebraska Press, p. 42.

farms and mills and mines west of the city to the wharves of Baltimore harbor. These aggressive business men did not wait for the steam locomotive to be invented, still years away. Horses were to pull the first train over the rails. On July 4, 1828, Baltimore had a tremendous celebration, with a grand parade, to celebrate the railroad that they were going to build to the Ohio River, 300 miles away to the west.[7] Although no such railroad had ever been built, Baltimoreans had faith and enthusiasm. The first portion of the railroad, a short section from Baltimore to a neighboring village, was completed in 1830; a horse-drawn train travelled over wooden rails.[8] The steam locomotive and iron rails soon came into use and expansion was then rapid to western and Northern cities.

Slavery was a part of daily life in both Baltimore and Washington. Slave markets operated in both cities.

Washington had a Southern populace and Southern traditions. It was surrounded by the slave state of Maryland, and was across the Potomac River from the slave state of Virginia; it was an awkward location for the capital of the Union when the Civil War broke out.

The War Department was established in four old-fashioned houses across an extensive wooded lawn from the President's House. Mr. Lincoln would spend much time in those houses during the Civil War: "He visited the War Department telegraph office morning, afternoon, and evening, to receive the latest news from the...front. His tall, homely form could be seen crossing the...lawn... [to] the War Department day after day...Sometimes he would stay all night...."[9]

Washington, in 1828, "had no rail links to anywhere and no prospects of any.... But by 1831 the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad had

7. Harwood, Herbert Jr., *Impossible Challenge II*, Baltimore: 1979, Barnard, Roberts and Co., pp. 14-15.

8. Toomey, Daniel Carroll, *A History of Relay, Maryland, and The Thomas Viaduct*, Baltimore: Not dated, Toomey Press, p. 8.

9. Bates, David Homer, *Lincoln in the Telegraph Office*, New York: 1939, Appleton-Century, p.7.

decided that a Washington link would be useful: "An all-rail New York-Washington route eventually would develop … [and] the Baltimore-Washington segment would be a…key element." [10] In 1833 construction began on the Washington link. Completion of the line was celebrated on August 25, 1835 when four full trains of Baltimore celebrants travelled on the single track to Washington where they met Washington celebrants at the new station on Pennsylvania Avenue. "Several thousand Washingtonians turned out to meet the [train] but — a revealing indication of what downtown Washington was like then — there was no crowding, for few homes were nearby."[11]

The two cities were connected by telegraph. All telegraph messages from Washington went out along the wire to Baltimore and thence to the rest of the country. The telegraph wire ran from pole to pole along the thirty-seven miles of railroad between the two cities. Railroads were the first to use the telegraph, needing rapid transmission of messages to control train movements. Washington, when the Civil War began, was completely dependent on that one telegraph line running along the railroad track to Baltimore.

Washington and Baltimore had an historical association involving the telegraph. Some years before the Civil War began Samuel B. Morse, having interrupted his career as a prominent portrait painter, invented the telegraph. To show his new invention to the world, Mr. Morse selected the route between Baltimore and Washington for a demonstration telegraph line; in 1844, Mr. Morse ran a wire on poles along the railroad track from Washington to Baltimore. History remembers the first message sent by Mr. Morse: "What hath God wrought!"

At the opening of the Civil War the two cities became locked together when the unruly citizens of Baltimore blocked Washington from all connections to the North. On the night of April 19, 1861, one week after the South fired on Fort Sumter, a mob,

10. Leech, p. 6

11. *Ibid*., p. 46.

directed by Baltimore officials, burned railroad bridges and cut telegraph lines around Baltimore. Since all railroads and telegraph lines to Washington came through Baltimore, Washington was cut off. Confederate forces threatened to capture the helpless capital of the Union.

Mob action by Baltimore citizens was not new — they had often been disorderly and barbarous. The city had a long history of mobs and riots and assaults and murders. This savage behavior had given that city a well-deserved reputation. A Baltimore historian wrote:

"The city was at the mercy of...brutal and reckless desperadoes.... Assaults were their daily pastime, and murder was a familiar thing. Stabbings and shootings in the open streets, desperate affrays between gangs of ruffians, wanton outrages.... Election days were mere carnivals of unchecked ruffianism.

"Day by day gangs of well-known thieves and outlaws, the terror of their neighborhoods, congregated in public places, the police seldom daring to molest them... Not crowded into one short hour of wild anarchy, these things followed each other in an unbroken series as month followed month. Humiliating as the confession may be, the facts are unhappily too true."[12]

The violence in Baltimore, persisting for many decades before the Civil War, has been noted by historians — but an explanation of this social aberration has not been offered. In particular, the tolerance of the public for the continued assaults and murders has been a puzzle. This uncivilized behavior may be accounted for in part by the poor education of the populace. Public schools were late in coming to Baltimore. The first public school was opened in 1829 — much later than, for example, Massachusetts where, one hundred and eighty two years earlier, in 1647, right after the Pilgrims landed, a law was passed requiring cities to provide public schools for their

12. Scharf, J. Thomas, *The History of Maryland*, Hatboro, PA: 1967, Tradition Press. Vol. III, pp. 282-3.

children.[13] If Baltimore had had an educated populace such violence, it would seem, would not have been tolerated.

The rough elements of a port city could have been a cause of the violence; sailors coming ashore after long voyages could be unruly. But sailors are not mentioned in any of the numerous accounts of ruffianism in that city.

The uncivilized behavior of Baltimore's citizens remains unexplained, but it was real and it drove Abraham Lincoln to desperate measures in the earliest days of the Civil War.

13. Scharf, J. Thomas, *The History of Baltimore City and County, Maryland*, Baltimore: 1971, Regional Publishing Company, p. 225; first published in 1881. Deighton, Lee C., in *Encyclopedia of Education*, New York: 1971, MacMillan, Vol. 8, p. 159.

Chapter 2. Five Men: Lincoln, Hicks, Brown, Kane, and Butler

"The fate of the Union..."

In the first days of the Civil War five men of controlled the fate of the Union. Washington, D.C., capital of the Union, faced capture by Confederate forces. The loss of Washington could have meant the end of the war, and a nation governed by the Confederacy. To save Washington, Union troops had to travel through Maryland. Five men contended for that state:

- Abraham Lincoln, a calm and gentle man but ruthless when he had to be;
- Thomas Hicks, earnest but vacillating, the governor of Maryland;
- George Brown, mayor of Baltimore, a quietly determined Southern sympathizer;
- George Kane, the militaristic Chief of Police of Baltimore;
- General Benjamin Butler, brash and inexperienced but the right man for the task before him.

The future of the Union, if it were to have one, depended on these men.

* * *

Abraham Lincoln

"Blow after blow of bad news."

In early February of 1861, Abraham Lincoln drove his horse and buggy out into the countryside from his home in Springfield, Illinois. He wanted to see his aged stepmother before he left for his inauguration in Washington, D.C. The uncertainty of the times had reached the village of Farmington and his stepmother was afraid for him; "the threats which pursued Lincoln had reached her, and in bidding him good-by, she sobbed out her belief that she would never see him again."[14] "The good old woman, with tears streaming down her cheeks, gave him a mother's benediction, expressing the fear that his life might be taken by his enemies...." [15]

One of Mr. Lincoln's close friends, Ward Lamon, remembered: "The fear that Mr. Lincoln would be assassinated was not peculiar to his step-mother. It was shared by very many of his neighbors at Springfield.... Some thought the [railroad] cars might be thrown from the track; some thought he would be surrounded and stabbed in some great crowd; others thought he might be shot from a house-top as he rode up Pennsylvania Avenue on inauguration day; while others...were sure he would be quietly poisoned long before the 4th of March." Another friend remembered talking to Mr. Lincoln before he left for Washington, "Well...I talked to him [for] some time.... [I] told him that it was the last time I should ever see him..., they would kill him.... He smiled and said jokingly, 'Hannah, if they do kill me, I shall never die another death.' I then bid him good-bye." [16]

14. Tarbell, Ida, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*, New York: 1895, S.S. McClure Co., Vol. II, p. 202.

15. Herndon, William, *The Life of Lincoln*, Chicago: 1890, Belford-Clarke Co., Vol. III, p. 481.

On the afternoon of the day before he left Springfield for Washington, Mr. Lincoln "came down to our office," recalled his law partner William Herndon. "We ran over the books…and arranged the completion of unfinished matters…. After these things were all disposed of…he threw himself on the old office sofa…. He…requested…that the sign-board which swung on its rusty hinges…should remain. 'Let it hang there undisturbed,' he said…. If I live I'm coming back some time, and then we'll go right on practicing law as if nothing had ever happened."[17]

Mr. Lincoln was resigned to the possibility of assassination; all precautions against assassination he considered worse than useless. "If they want to kill me there is nothing to prevent it," he told Mr. Herndon.[18]

Lincoln's advisors were concerned about possible chaos in Washington when Southern sympathizers might try to prevent the Electoral College from counting the official vote on February 13; he therefore planned his trip to Washington for his inauguration so that he would arrive after that date.

The trip began on February 11, 1891, when Mr. Lincoln went on board the train in his hometown, Springfield, Illinois. The trip, from city to city eastward to Washington, was to occupy the time until March 4, the inauguration date. Ward Lamon, a member of Lincoln's party, wrote: "It was a gloomy day, heavy clouds…and a cold rain…Mr. Lincoln ascended the rear platform…facing about to the throng…drew himself up to his full height, removed his hat, and stood in profound silence for several seconds…his solemn manner…full of melancholy eloquence…. It seemed long until he had mastered his feelings sufficiently to speak…. Imitating his example, every man in the crowd stood with his head uncovered in the…rain. 'No one who has never been placed in a like position can understand

16. Lamon, Ward, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*, Boston: 1872, James Osgood and Company, p. 465-466.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 483-4.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 476.

my feelings.... For more than a quarter century I have lived among you...Here all my children were born...all the strange checkered past seems to crowd now upon my mind...Friends, one and all, I must now bid you an affectionate farewell.'"[19]

That member of Lincoln's party continued: "At eight o'clock the train rolled out of Springfield amid the cheers of the populace. Four years later a funeral train, covered with the emblems of...mourning, rolled into the same city...."

A pilot engine went ahead to test the track for Mr. Lincoln's train which rolled along behind.[20]

While he had been waiting in Springfield, after the presidential election on November 6, 1860, Mr. Lincoln had absorbed blow after blow of bad news. Just before Christmas, on December 20, 1860, South Carolina, in a special convention at Charleston, voted to secede from the United States, a sign that the Union was beginning to unravel. It was black news indeed for the president-elect. Following up rapidly, South Carolina had taken over several forts in Charleston Harbor;[21] but Fort Sumter, in Charleston Harbor, had been defended by Major Robert Anderson who had resisted capture. Major Anderson had continued to resist as the year ended, and on into the new year.

While still at Springfield Mr. Lincoln had heard more bad news; on January 3, 1861, Fort Pulaski, in Georgia, was seized by Georgia authorities. On January 4, Alabama seized the United States Arsenal. On January 5, Alabama seized U.S. forts Morgan and Gaines. On January 6, Florida seized the United States Arsenal at Apalachicola. On January 9, the state of Mississippi seceded, Fort Johnston, North Carolina was seized by local authorities, and Governor Moore of Louisiana sent troops to Florida to capture Fort Pickens, a United States military installation. On January 10, the United States Arsenal at Baton Rouge was seized by the state of

19. *Ibid*., p. 506.
20. *Ibid*., p. 505.

21. Johnson, R.U., and Buel, C.C., editors, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, New York: 1887, Century Company, Vol. 1, p.1, chronology.

Louisiana. Then, on January 11, 1861, Governor Moore ordered the Louisiana state militia "to seize the Government forts and arsenals…[in Louisiana]."[22] Also on January 11, the state of Alabama seceded. On January 15, the United States Arsenal at Baton Rouge, Louisiana was seized.

On January 16, the governor of Alabama requested that the state be put on a war footing. On January 19, the state of Georgia seceded. On January 26, the state of Louisiana seceded.

On February 1, the state of Texas seceded; on the same day the U.S. Mint at New Orleans was seized by the state of Louisiana.

On February 4, the seceded states met in convention at Montgomery, Alabama. On February 8, the U.S. Arsenal at Little Rock, Arkansas was seized by the state. On this day the seceded states, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina adopted a constitution for the "Provisional Government of the Confederate States of America."

As his train left Springfield on February 11, 1861, Mr. Lincoln was under a heavy burden — he had to face the reality of a break-up of the Union and the disintegration of the country. At each of the cities on his route to Washington, as he gave speeches of encouragement, he knew that the country's future was in serious doubt.

Mr. Lincoln spoke from the train to welcoming and enthusiastic crowds at Toledo, at Indianapolis, and at Cincinnati; at Pittsburgh, Buffalo and Albany; in New York City he was received with fanfare; then on to Philadelphia. After Philadelphia, Baltimore was next — the last stop before arriving in Washington.

Ward Lamon wrote later, "Whilst Mr. Lincoln…was being born in triumph through the streets of Philadelphia and a multitude of people were shouting themselves hoarse, and…crushing…around his carriage wheels, Mr. Felton, the President of the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railway, was engaged with a private detective discussing the details of a…conspiracy to murder him at

22. *Washington Daily Intelligencer*, Jan. 16, 1861, p. 3.

Baltimore."[23] Suddenly Mr. Lincoln's traveling party was facing danger. The vague worries about Mr. Lincoln's safety had been pushed aside in the happy excitement of the crowds at every stop. Now the triumphant tour was overshadowed by the dark fear of assassination.

The conspiracy to murder Lincoln had been discovered by Miss Dorothy Dix — who later became the famous Civil War nurse. Dorothy Dix had spent the last nine years in the South — in Alabama and Mississippi, in Louisiana and South Carolina, in the other Southern states — working to relieve the dreadful living conditions of the mentally ill. She was a gentle woman, kind and sweet, and driven to help the unfortunate. In "a plain gray traveling dress with snow-white collar and cuffs,"[24] she toured the South in horse and buggy and on the newly built railroads to document how insane men and women were treated. Locked in jails and outbuildings, beaten by attendants, they lived like animals, often in their own filth. She reported her findings to state legislators and coerced and cajoled them into spending money to build insane asylums surrounded by lawns and trees.

Dorothy Dix had been remarkably successful in working with Southern politicians. In dealing with these politicians she had become aware of the temper of the South, of the deep hatred of the North and of the hatred of Abraham Lincoln, the incoming president. She had learned of a plan to kill Lincoln, whom the Southerners believed would surely destroy their way of life.

While Mr. Lincoln's train took him across the country toward Washington for his inauguration, Miss Dorothy Dix traveled to Philadelphia to see Mr. Samuel Felton, the president of the railroad that ran between Philadelphia and Baltimore. "She came into my office on a Saturday afternoon," Mr. Felton remembered years later. "Her occupation in building hospitals had brought her into contact

23. Lamon, p. 512.

24. Tiffany, Francis, *Life of Dorothea Lynde Dix*, Boston: 1890, The Riverside Press Cambridge, p. 159.

with the prominent men in the South. She had become familiar with…Southern society and with the workings of the political machinery. I listened attentively to what she had to say for more than an hour."[25] Miss Dix told Mr. Felton of a Confederate conspiracy to murder Mr. Lincoln to prevent his inauguration. She said that "troops were even then drilling on the line of our own railroad to carry out this conspiracy." Mr. Felton acted quickly. He hired Allan Pinkerton, a detective from Chicago (who would later run a spy agency for General McClellan).[26] Mr. Pinkerton threw his staff into an investigation, secretly stationing his men in towns along the railroad line which ran from Philadelphia to Baltimore and Washington. Mr. Pinkerton found that "the … sympathy with secession was intense … men of all classes [were] in favor of resistance and force." Allan Pinkerton later wrote, "Loud threats were uttered: 'no d—d abolitionists should be allowed to pass through the town [of Baltimore] alive.'"[27]

One of Mr. Pinkerton's men infiltrated an "organization whose avowed object was to…compass the death of the President." In a secret meeting, one of the leaders, a Captain Fernandina, "drew from his breast a long, glittering knife [and] exclaimed, 'Lincoln shall never, never be President.'"[28]

Allan Pinkerton warned the presidential party of the assassination threat when Mr. Lincoln arrived in Philadelphia. The murder conspiracy was examined by Mr. Lincoln's friends. They knew that Baltimore was seething with political unrest and that the city had a reputation for violence. Baltimore was the only city on his route to refuse him a welcoming delegation. However, there was no way around it; Baltimore lay on the only route to Washington by railroad.

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25. *Ibid*., p. 334.

26. Pinkerton, Allan, *The Spy of the Rebellion*, Lincoln, Neb.: 1989, Univ. of Nebraska Press, p. 47; originally published in 1883 by M.A. Hatch, Hartford.

27. *Ibid*., p. 49.

28. *Ibid*., p. 63.

Mr. Lincoln's advisers became convinced of the danger and devised a plan for him to go through Baltimore in secrecy. Mr. Lincoln resisted such a plan as demeaning for a man about to become president of the country. After much discussion Mr. Lincoln gave in, putting himself in the hands of his advisers, particularly Ward Lamon. Ward Lamon was perhaps Mr. Lincoln's closest friend. They had worked together as lawyers for many years; Mr. Lamon, "a giant...figure with sagging jowls" and Mr. Lincoln had travelled the Illinois countryside in horse and buggy, following the court circuit before the days of railroads. Mr. Lincoln, after his election to the Presidency, had said to Mr. Lamon, "[When] I go to Washington...I want you to go along with me.... In fact, I must have you. So get yourself ready and come along."[29]

For the secret passage through Baltimore, Ward Lamon was chosen to accompany Mr. Lincoln — along with Allan Pinkerton the detective. The remainder of their party, including Mrs. Lincoln and the children, would come to Washington on the train the next day. Mr. Lamon later wrote in his biography of Lincoln: "A carriage was brought to the side-door of the hotel.... [Mr. Lincoln] changed his hat and coat and passed rapidly through the hotel and out the door...stepping into the carriage. [He] wore a soft felt hat, drawn down over his face...and a shawl [was] thrown over his shoulders and pulled up to assist in disguising his features. The carriage paused in the dark shadows of the depot building [waiting for the regular midnight departure time]. The berths...had been retained for a 'sick man'.... [He] got into his bed immediately and the curtains were drawn. The detective had men stationed at various places along the [rail]road....[He] rose and went to the [rear] platform occasionally to observe their signals, but returned each time with a favorable report."[30] The train arrived at Baltimore at 3:30 in the

29. Teillard, Dorothy Lamon, editor, *Recollections of Abraham Lincoln*, Lincoln, Neb.: 1994, University of Nebraska Press, p. xix. First published in 1911 by A.C. McClure Company.

30. Lamon., p. 524.

morning. Since steam locomotives were not allowed in the city, Mr. Lincoln's train was transferred through the city by teams of horses to the station for Washington. Then "the train sped out...of Baltimore.... At six in the morning the dome of the Capitol came in sight...." remembered Ward Lamon.[31] It was February 23, 1861; Abraham Lincoln was finally in Washington for the inauguration which would take place in ten days, on March 4, 1861. That same morning of February 23rd a Baltimore crowd met the train carrying the remainder of Mr. Lincoln's party — unaware that Mr. Lincoln was already in Washington. A member of the presidential party later described the scene: "When the train stopped in Baltimore it was instantly besieged by the crowd. Men forced their way in at the doors of the cars and thrust their heads through the windows, shouting: 'Where is he?' 'Trot him out.' 'Let us see him,' etc. All this in a very different tone and style from the deferential and affectionate greetings that had been extended to him in all other places.... With great difficulty the party succeeded in making [its way]...across the city....

"Mr. Lincoln's secret passage through Baltimore was ridiculed at the time, but...had he been one of the party who crossed the city that day he would not have lived to become the...savior of the nation...."[32]

THOMAS HICKS

> "The figure...who stood out in greatest prominence was...Thomas Hicks."

Thomas Holliday Hicks, the governor of Maryland, was a controversial and contradictory man. He was gentle and tenderhearted, but he belonged to the Know-Nothing Party whose

31. *Ibid.*, p. 525.

32. Robinson, J.C., *Baltimore in 1861*, *Magazine of American History*, September, 1885, p. 259.

cruel and ugly behavior at election time was legendary. He became famous for a treasonous letter, but was welcomed into friendship by President Lincoln; he was a slave owner and sympathizer with the South, but he led his state into the Union fold. An enigma to historians even today, it is clear that he profoundly influenced the course of the Civil War. If he had yielded to secession pressures within his state, Maryland would have seceded and it would have been a different war.

Thomas Hicks was the governor of a critical border state when the Civil War began. Hicks biographer Harold Manakee wrote: "Would [Maryland] remain in the Union? Or would it secede and join the Confederacy? Maryland's choice would be important. Every road, telegraph line and railroad between Washington and the Northern states passed through the state. If Maryland should join the Confederacy, then the nation's capital would be surrounded by...enemy territory.

"Maryland...absorbed attention throughout the country — not so much for her population, which was...small [but] Maryland was...supremely important from her geographical position. In case of the secession of Maryland, the seat of the Federal Government would be enclosed in a foreign land. [In addition], through the state passed all the direct avenues of approach to Washington from the North.... The state was anxiously watched, and pressure...[was] brought to bear upon her from both Northern and Southern states.... During this period the figure in Maryland who stood out in greatest prominence was...Thomas Holliday Hicks..."[33]

A man who knew Thomas Hicks wrote: "He...humored the prejudices of...his people, being...one of them. He possessed great personal popularity. His appearance told much in his favor. He had a down right honest look...with a most benevolent expression of countenance.... Thick set...with strong features...easy in address, and

33. Manakee, Harold R., *Wheeler Leaflet on Maryland History*, No. 17, published by the Maryland Historical Society, no date given.

of dignified carriage.... He had not the learning of schools, for he had come up from the ranks...."[34]

A complex man with unclear motives, Governor Thomas Holliday Hicks seems, in retrospect, to be have been trying to maneuver the critical border state of Maryland into a neutral position between the North and the South — a worthy object to many Marylanders but anathema to many others. Firebrands such as Bradley T. Johnson, leader of the Democratic Party in the Maryland Legislature, wanted Maryland to join the Confederacy immediately; but many cooler heads wanted to wait, to see how the new president handled the Southern states before deciding to secede from the Union.

In divided Maryland there were many Union men, and there were many men for the Confederacy. Industrial and railroading and shipping interests liked stability; they had little to do with slavery and did not want the Union to break up. But the farmers needed slave labor; they sympathized with the Southern states and were ready to secede.

Maryland was divided in another way, the radical and the conservative factions. Bradley Johnson, the young leader of the Democrats in the legislature, was a radical who was for taking the state of Maryland into the Confederacy and fighting the North; he wrote: "The young men, ardent, impetuous, devoted to ideas, believed that disunion was the only possible relief from the...insults and aggressions of the North.... With the political power [held by the North, Southerners] would become serfs...as had been the case in all history.... The old men [were] Union to the core — conservative by education and by nature...ex-governors, ex-senators, ex-judges — all brought their...weight to bear against connecting Maryland with the secession movement." Bradley Johnson's radicals did not like Thomas Hicks; Johnson had his own

34. Radcliffe, George L.P., "Governor Thomas H.Hicks of Maryland and the Civil War," in the collection entitled *Johns Hopkins Studies in Historical and Political Science*, H.B. Adams, Editor, Baltimore: 1901, The Johns Hopkins Press, p. 18.

view of what the governor was up to: "The governor…knew well that in the strife…about to burst…the foundations of the mountains would be broken up and the winds of the tempest would sweep the land, [and] the cry of 'Peace! Peace!' was but the whining of babes…. Governor Hicks was no fool. He was a shrewd, sharp man. He knew what he wanted — he wanted to save Maryland to the Northern States…. With the North, Maryland [would be] in possession of the national capital…he, as her governor, would fill a distinguished role…"[35] Others believed that the governor was selfless, seeking the best for Maryland.

Thomas Hicks, a sociable man who liked people, had a reputation as a humane person, kind and caring.[36] He sought President Lincoln's help, during the war, in getting "the release of sick and wounded Confederate prisoners of war…. His requests were always granted…the President had such implicit confidence in him…."[37] One colleague said of him, "He was essentially a man of the people…his instincts, his sympathies were all with them…."[38] From an English-Scotch family long established in Maryland, Thomas Hicks was born in 1898, the eldest of thirteen children, and the son of a planter who used slaves on his land. With a limited education in the local schools he became a Deputy Sheriff holding that position for three years; then he purchased a farm and operated it while serving in the state legislature. When he was fifty-nine, in 1857, four years before the Civil War, he ran for governor.

Thomas Hicks ran for governor on the Know-Nothing ticket. The Know-Nothing Party was against immigrants and Catholics; the members of that party especially hated Irish and German immigrants. In accepting the nomination of the Know-Nothing

35. Johnson, Bradley T., contributor, *Confederate Military History*, Atlanta: 1899, Vol. II, "Maryland," pp. 11-16.

36. Jones, Elias, *New Revised History of Dorchester County, Maryland*, Cambridge, Maryland: 1966, pp. 11-16.

37. Robinson, J.C., "Baltimore in 1861," *Magazine of American History*, September, 1885, p. 259.

38. *Ibid*., p. 346.

Party, Thomas Hicks "declared his...belief in...'America for Americans only!" In that election the Know-Nothing Party used its usual ugly vote-controlling methods and Hicks was elected governor.[39] It was another contradictory aspect of his nature, that this gentle, humane person could be a member of the Know-Nothing Party. But it was the only way that he could get elected governor since, at that time, in Maryland, the Know-Nothing Party controlled elections.

Governor Hicks then presided over a state with a severely troubled history of mob violence, instigated especially by the Know-Nothing Party. The historical record does not show that Governor Hicks's administration did very much to lessen that violence.

In 1861, three years into his term, civil war threatened and Thomas Hicks became a central figure in the possible secession of Maryland. He had Southern sympathies. He was a slave owner.[40] But he did not favor the break up of the Union.

The idea of a Negro insurrection was a worry to Marylanders, especially after John Brown's attempt, two years earlier, to organize the slaves in nearby Virginia. "The Maryland legislature, with a view of meeting any outbreaks among the negroes...appropriated $70,000 [$700,000 in today's money] for the purpose of arms...for distribution among local military companies."[41] Governor Hick got into political trouble with a letter which he wrote to one E.H. Webster who had introduced to the governor a man who wanted guns funded by that legislation. The governor wrote, "we expect a supply [of arms], and your people will be furnished. Will they be good men to send out to kill Lincoln and his men?" A Lincoln biographer, Ward Lamon, reported the incident, commenting: "[The governor] was a lively trimmer...very anxious to turn up...on the winning side.... [In spite of the letter's] treasonable and murderous

39. Radcliffe, p. 14.

40. Jones, p. 345.

41. Radcliffe, p. 519.

import…[he] lived to reap splendid rewards and high honors…as the most patriotic and devoted Union man in Maryland.." [42]

The enigmatic Governor Hicks established a connection with Abraham Lincoln when the latter first arrived in Washington from Springfield. Three days after Mr. Lincoln's arrival, Governor Hicks came to Washington to see Mr. Lincoln. The nature of their discussions is not known.

As the war progressed Governor Hicks and Mr. Lincoln became friends. Later, when Governor Hicks became fatally ill Mr. Lincoln came to his bedside. After Thomas Hicks died, Mr. Lincoln marched with his coffin in the funeral procession to the Senate Chamber. At his funeral in the Senate Chamber Thomas Holliday Hicks was honored by Washington's most prominent men.[43] During the six days of drama created by the isolation of Washington by the city of Baltimore, we shall see that the complex and enigmatic Thomas Hicks demonstrated his capacity for surprising and controversial actions.

George W. Brown

"A man of Baltimore."

George William Brown was the mayor of Baltimore at the time of the April 19, 1861 riot. He took part in that riot, trying to stem the violence of the mob. After that event he was jailed by President Lincoln, suspected of being a Confederate sympathizer.

A Baltimore native, he was a passionate advocate of the Confederate cause. Wrote one of his biographers: "Baltimore was a Southern city; and Maryland was a slave state; and the people were deeply attached to the South, being intimately associated with its

42. Lamon, p. 518.

43. Jones, p. 349.

traditions and institutions."[44] George Brown was a man of Baltimore, a man of Southern traditions.

He held that "the founders of the Constitution of the United States had built a house which was divided against itself from the beginning — a union of States which was part free and part slave…," that slavery was constitutional, and that the North had no right to interfere with slavery in the Southern states.[45] "When a hostile hand is raised to strike a blow, he who is assaulted need not wait until the blow falls, but…may protect himself… These are rights… acted on by all freemen… Such was the honest belief of the people who united in establishing the Southern Confederacy."[46] So believed George Brown.

His was a classic success story. He was the son of an Irish physician in Baltimore. After he had graduated first in his class at Rutgers he came back to Baltimore, studied law, passed the bar examination and was in law practice by the time he was twenty years old.[47]

Four years into his law practice, when he was twenty-four, George Brown took his first role in public affairs — dealing with mob violence. For most of its history Baltimore had a propensity for mob violence: The Election Riot of 1752; the Whig Club Riot of 1777; Lee's Mob of 1779; the Embargo Riot of 1794; the Geneva Gin Riot of 1808; the Mob of 1812. Mob violence was again demonstrated in the Maryland Bank Riot of 1835; a mob scene that George Brown helped to bring under control.[48]

The Maryland Bank, in financial difficulties, closed its doors; Baltimore historian J. Thomas Scharf wrote, "the public which had lost heavily…in deposits…grew to believe…[that] the affair [was] a

44. *Municipal Journal*, a semi-monthly publication of the city government of Baltimore, Feb. 21, 1919, p. 7.

45. Brown, George William, *Baltimore and the Nineteenth of April, 1861; A Study of the War*, Baltimore: 1887, Johns Hopkins University, pp. 20, 24, 30.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

48. Scharf, J. Thomas, *Baltimore City and County*, Baltimore: 1971, Regional Publishing Company, Vol. II, p. 778 et seq.

gigantic swindle. A…mob gathered…, the disposition to violence increased…. At dark [some of the mob]…went to attack the house of Mr. Glenn [a bank official]…. The windows were shivered to atoms…. The mob…fiercely battered the door…: an entrance was forced…everything in the house was shattered or thrown into the street. Throughout the night skirmishing [with guards hired by the city] kept up…firearms were freely used. [The next day] the house of Mr. Johnson [another bank official] was…attacked…, its contents, including a valuable library, were thrown into the street and a bonfire made of them…. They sacked the houses of John Morris, of Mayor Hunt, of Evan Ellicott, of Capt. Bentzinger, and of Capt. Wiley…. Thus it went on with shouts, alarms, volleys of musketry, fierce combats, rushes and charges to and fro, the crashing of walls and windows, and the lurid glare of bonfires…. The municipal authorities…[were] incapable of restoring order…the fury of the mob had now cast off all restraint."[49]

George Brown "and a few public spirited young men…assembled a number of law-abiding citizens…and organized an armed force…. [M]ultitudes of citizens…[were formed] into companies…and speedily furnished with arms. For many nights these armed volunteers, of whom Mr. Brown was one, patrolled the city…the mob vanished from existence."[50]

In 1839, after seven years of private law practice, George Brown and a former schoolmate, Frederick Brune, formed a law partnership. He married his new partner's sister, Clara; they were to remain a couple for fifty years, until his death.

He came into public view again in 1842 when some proposed anti-negro legislation raised his ire. He was thirty years old and practicing law in Baltimore when a "slaveholders convention" was called at Annapolis, the state capital. That slaveholders convention, wrote historian Conway Sams, "urged upon the legislature radical

49. *Ibid*., pp. 784-6.

50. Sams, Conway W., and Riley, Elihu S., *The Bench and Bar of Maryland*, Chicago: 1901, The Lewis Publishing Company, pp. 488-9.

changes in its policy with regard to the negro population..., measures of a harsh and oppressive character, discouraging manumissions [freeing of slaves by owners], and laying...burdens upon the free blacks [compelling] them to leave the state. No outspoken opposition [was heard]...and it seemed [that] the legislature would [pass these new laws]. Mr. Brown, through the public press...protest[ed] against such a course. He showed that the policy of the state had ever been to encourage manumissions, and that the measures urged against the free blacks were...oppressive.... [George Brown's comments] excited much attention.... Public meetings were held...and the legislature dropped the obnoxious propositions."[51]

Mobs were so much a part of Baltimore's history that it became known as "Mobtown"; historian J. Thomas Scharf included a whole chapter entitled "Mobs and Riots" in his history of Baltimore.[52] George William Brown took the lead in calling for reforms. In 1853 he gave a lecture before the Maryland Institute, "Lawlessness, the Evil of the Day." One historical study said, "This was perhaps the first step toward the reform movement which some years later assumed a definite shape...."

"Few can now realize the state of municipal affairs at the time when Baltimore bore the opprobrious name of 'Mobtown,'" wrote another historian in 1901, "when outrages...were of frequent occurrence, and regarded almost as matters of course. In [George Brown's] address the magnitude and danger of the growing evil were forcibly presented [but] the only paper which published the address thought it prudent to disavow [the problem]." George Brown would not get his chance to make reforms for several more years.

"These evils reached by far their worst stage under the American or Know-Nothing Party, which had a longer lease of existence in Baltimore than in any other community. The mayor [in

51. Sams and Riley, pp. 489-90.

52. Scharf, *Baltimore City and County*, Vol. II, p. 778.

these decades] had the police force under his control and he…expected them to connive at any amount of fraud or violence at the polls…to keep him in office and his party in power…. During these years the scenes at the polls…on election days were disgraceful."[53]

The Know-Nothing Party, also called the American Party, was a political phenomenon in the United States in the 1850s. It was against immigrants and Roman Catholics. It got its name from the secrecy surrounding it — any member who might be questioned would say that he knew nothing about it.

The Baltimore Know-Nothing Party was particularly powerful in the decade just before the Civil War. So scandalous were it's election practices that a state commission was assigned to investigate it. The commission reported that it was a secret political society whose members swore under oath that they would not vote "for any man for any office…unless he be an American-born citizen." Irish and German immigrants were special targets. A Know-Nothing candidate for office swore that, if elected, he would "remove all foreigners, aliens or Roman Catholics from offices coming under his control."[54] The commission was helpless in dealing with the election abuses. The Baltimore historian J. Thomas Scharf wrote, "Citizens in Baltimore [knew] that organized clubs were banded together to disenfranchise the naturalized voters and that the police of the city…could not be trusted…. Riot, ruffianism, and murder reigned…almost the entire body of naturalized citizens" was kept from voting.[55] One of the devices used to control elections was the shoemaker's awl. The awl was a sharp steel needle several inches long set in a round wooden knob which fit into the hand; shoemakers used the awl to punch holes in leather. "The awl was a handy weapon, easy to conceal and nicely adjusted to wound without killing…. The Know-Nothing clubs waved banners with such slogans as 'The Awl is Useful in the Hands of an Artist' and

53. *Ibid*., p. 490-492.
54. Scharf, *History of Maryland*, Vol. 3, pp. 298-9.
55. *Ibid*., p. 250.

'Come Up and Vote; There is Room for Awl'...When a [Know Nothing] congressman named Henry Winter Davis whipped up his hearers at a monster rally [in Baltimore] in 1859, similar banners were displayed behind him on the speaker's stand; a three-foot awl dangled above his head; and in front of the stand a blacksmith at his forge turned out one awl after another for his audience."[56] A reporter wrote of a Know-Nothing mass meeting just before the 1859 election, "Some [of the slides presented to the crowd] were humorous and some were threatening; the prevailing figure was that of an awl. One [slide] was the figure of a man running, with another in pursuit, sticking him with an awl — another [slide was] of a bleeding head, with the [caption] 'The Head of a Reformer'."[57]

Another election tool was the "blood tub". "Although more cumbersome, the tub proved nearly as effective as the awl. The practice was to haul to the polls tubs of blood from neighboring butchers' establishments and whenever a luckless German or Irishman approached, to seize him, drag him to the tub, and squeeze a sponge full of blood over his head and face. When let loose few voters did anything but run away. The shoemaker's awl and the blood tub became the Know-Nothings' pet devices..."[58]

Another election device of the Know-Nothing Party was called "cooping". Carl Bode in his history of Maryland wrote that cooping "meant the shutting up of men, usually derelicts, in room or coops on Election Day and then dragging them from polling place to polling place to cast their votes. To make them more docile while voting again and again, many were drugged or made drunk. Edgar Allan Poe was... cooped in the election of 1849 and died from the effects..."[59] George Woodberry, Poe's biographer, wrote that Poe had taken a sudden notion to go to Baltimore on September 27, 1849 where "it is said that he was captured by an election gang, drugged and made to vote in several places.... He was picked up unconscious

56. Bode, Carl, *Maryland, A Bicentennial History*, New York: 1978, W.W. Norton, p. 99.
57.Scharf, *Chronicles of Baltimore*, p 574.
58. Bode, p. 99.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

near one of the rum shops used for voting…and taken to Washington Hospital [where] on Sunday, October 7, about five o'clock, he died."[60]

We have first-hand accounts of a cooping experience in a Baltimore election. In one account an Irishman, a Mr. Peter Fitzpatrick, was put in a "coop" on Holliday Street, Baltimore, just before the 1859 election. He said: "When I got in there, there were about fifteen in there before me…. The number increased until they had about eighty or ninety…. They took us out six at a time to vote the American [Know-Nothing] ticket. I told them I wasn't entitled to vote, and they said if I wouldn't vote I should die…. Others…they knocked down with billies and took their money and their watches." Mr. Henry Funk, in the same "coop," said, "They knocked me down flat on my back, and poured the whiskey into me, about half a pint…I saw one German…he made a noise to get out and they handcuffed him…and stripped him of all his clothes except his shirt and drawers…and said they would hang him, and he went down on his knees and said he would be quiet…. I saw fellows come in with revolvers…which they pointed at the men in the 'coop' and told them to lie down… or they would be shot…."[61]

In another account of cooping, a Mr. John Justus Ristus reported his experience: "The captain of the coop led us to a trap door which led to the cellar…we were put down there…. We found ourselves in a dark hole full of all sorts of men … with one candle…. There I was kept [until election day]… we were brought out by three's and four's, and tickets put in our hands…they were 'American' tickets. Three others and myself were led by the rowdies, holding us by the arm, up to the window of the second ward poll and voted; we four were then put in a carriage and driven around the town to various polls."[62]

60. Woodberry, George E., *The Life of Edgar Allan Poe*, Boston: 1909, Houghton-Mifflin, pp. 342-9.

61. Scharf, *Chronicles of Baltimore*, p. 573.

62. Woodberry, George E., *The Life of Edgar Allan Poe*, Boston: 1909, Houghton-Mifflin, pp. 342-9.

George Brown was elected mayor of Baltimore in 1860, five months before the Civil War began. In the election of November, 1859 the violence had been so outrageous that something had to be done. "The following autumn Mr. Brown was brought forward by the reform party as their candidate for the office of mayor.... He received not far from two-thirds of the vote. He entered upon office November 12, 1860, at a peculiarly critical period, when the whole country was agitated by the election of Mr. Lincoln."[63]

Mayor Brown was just getting his reform program underway when events descended upon Baltimore. Elected on his promise of preventing violent mob behavior, Mayor George Brown suddenly had the worst riot in Baltimore history on his hands. On April 19, 1861 thousands of Baltimore citizens attacked a regiment of Massachusetts soldiers on their way to Washington to save the city from capture by Confederate forces. Mayor Brown came under intense criticism for that outrage.

GEORGE P. KANE

"We will fight them and whip them or die."

George Proctor Kane was another outsized character whom Lincoln had to deal with during those six days which set the shape of the war to come.

Marshall George P. Kane, in the riot of April 19, was the chief of police of Baltimore. In that riot he fought against the mob — in the streets with his men, making a heroic effort to protect the Union soldiers.

After the riot Marshall Kane jumped to the other side; he was now ready to fight to keep Lincoln from sending any more Union troops through Baltimore. Twelve hours after the riot, he telegraphed to the town of Frederick, Maryland for soldiers to come

63. Sams and Riley, p. 493.

to Baltimore: "Streets red with Maryland blood; send expresses over the mountains of Maryland and Virginia for the riflemen to come without delay. Fresh hordes will be down on us tomorrow. We will fight them and whip them, or die."[64]

Marshall George Kane would, in the next few days, organize an army of 15,000 men to keep Union troops from going through Baltimore.

George Proctor Kane was born in Baltimore in 1820. His early life is obscure. Apparently he was an aggressive young man; by his early twenties he had set himself up in the grain business on a wharf on the city's edge, in Baltimore harbor.

In 1846, when he was twenty-six, he was noted in the newspapers as captain of an artillery company.[65] He continued his interest in the military, rising to colonel in the local militia.

At one time in his life George Kane was an aspiring actor. He performed on the stage of the National Theatre in Baltimore — a creditable actor "according to high dramatic authority."A history of Baltimore theatrical life records that George Kane was a part owner of Arnold's Olympic Theatre. It was in this theatre that John Wilkes Booth, who assassinated President Lincoln, made his debut as Richmond in Richard III.[66] In 1847, George Kane, now a colonel of militia, demonstrated his pluck, quieting a mob in Annapolis by standing in front of a cannon to prevent its firing on the passengers of a Baltimore ship at a wharf in Annapolis. A fight had "started...between some citizens of the town and some of the young men on the boat — stones, bricks, and were thrown upon the boat...," reported Baltimore historian J. Thomas Scharf. "Citizens of Annapolis...placed...two cannon...on the common near the wharf to fire on the boat.... Colonel Kane [with two others], prevented it by placing themselves before [the cannon]...."[67]

64. Coyle, William, "The Mayors of Baltimore," a series in *The Municipal Journal*, a semi-monthly publication of the city of Baltimore, May 9, 1919, pp. 2-3.

65. Scharf, *Chronicles of Baltimore*, pp. 516-7.

66. Scharf, *Baltimore City and County*, p. 694, 695.

67. Scharf, *Chronicles of Baltimore*, pp. 524-5.

In the same year Mr. Kane, a grain merchant and president of the Hibernian Society, "was active in sending food to the suffering peasantry…during the famine in Ireland."[68]

The next year, 1849, taking an interest in public order, he ran for sheriff of Baltimore county; he lost in that election.[69]

Mr. Kane, in the months leading up to the Civil War, in February, 1860,[70] was appointed chief of police of Baltimore with the title of "Marshall." Forty-one years old, he had the courage and the confidence to accept that appointment in that troubled city. His appointment was a part of reforms ordered by the state of Maryland. His mission was to build a new police force and bring order to the city's chaos.

Marshall George Kane's personal story is tied to Baltimore's history of ruffianism and mob violence. In the decades before he took charge, the police force in Baltimore was weak and ineffectual. They were overwhelmed by the violence, and the assaults, and the murders, that Baltimore citizens wreaked on each other.

Marshall George Kane met the challenge with remarkable self-confidence and a large ego. He had need of that confidence. He had to deal with a culture of violence with a long history in Baltimore.

That culture was exemplified by the behavior of a mob when, in 1912, war against England was declared by President Madison. Baltimore witnessed a mob of almost unbelievable viciousness. A faction in the city was all for the war — and took violent exception to those who were against it. Among the people attacked by the mob was General Henry Lee — "Light Horse Harry" Lee of Revolutionary War fame and the father of Robert E. Lee. General Henry Lee had opposed the war with Great Britain.

A mob trapped him and others in a house. "A massacre [ensued]…[men were] tortured in a manner unknown in the annals of all time…to satiate the bloody appetites of cannibals and tigers in

68. *Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography*, 1888, p. 492.
69. *Ibid.*, pp. 282-3.
70. Scharf, *Chronicles of Baltimore*, pp. 575-6.

human form…," reported one of the men trapped in the house. General Lee and several others "were dreadfully beaten…. The mob [then] torture[d] the mangled bodies by beating first one and then the other, sticking pen-knives into their faces, opening their eyes and dropping hot candle-grease into them…."

General Lee was "crippled and disfigured, doomed to invalidism for the remaining six years of his life, wholly dependent on the income of his wife…."[71]

Baltimore historian J. Thomas Scharf wrote, "[Mob violence] left a stigma on the city, which bore for a long time the name of 'Mobtown.'[72] He described the lack of police control in the city just before the Civil War: "A short time before [George Kane was made reform police chief], Baltimore had been at the mercy of as brutal and reckless desperadoes as ever defied law and justice in a frontier settlement. Brutal assaults were their daily pastime, and murder was a familiar thing. The Exchange [a local newspaper] commented on the condition of the city: 'In the police department, men have been appointed whos incompetence is notorious…. The…judge…of the criminal court…[has released] from custody felons by the score…. Men have long ceased looking to him for law or justice… Murder red-handed has stalked abroad and grown familiar to us all."

Historian Scharf continued: "As for brutal assaults, stabbings and shootings in the open streets, desperate affrays between gangs of ruffians, wanton outrages upon the unoffending participants in picnics and steamboat excursions, they cannot be enumerated. Election days were mere carnivals of unchecked ruffianism. Day by day…gangs of well-known thieves and outlaws, the terror of their neighborhoods, congregated in public places, the police seldom daring to molest them…. Not crowded into one short hour of wild anarchy, these things followed each other in an unbroken series as month followed month. Humiliating as the confession may be, the facts are unhappily too true."[73]

71. Freeman, Douglas Southall, *R.E. Lee, A Biography*, New York: 1934, Charles Scribner's Sons, Vol. I, pp. 14-5.

72. Scharf, *History of Maryland*, Vol. 3, pp. 4-5.

In 1860, just before the Civil War began, the ruffianism and mob violence in Baltimore was finally addressed by the state legislature. A reform committee of Baltimoreans devised reform bills, including a "police bill," which were easily passed by the legislature. The judge of the criminal court of Baltimore, Henry Stump, much criticized for corrupt treatment of law breakers, was summarily dismissed by the legislature. The legislature created a Board of Police Commissioners which was responsible to the legislature, not to the Baltimore city government. A new chief of police was appointed by this Board — George P. Kane, a determined optimist, who believed that he could alter the long tradition of brutality and lawlessness of that city.

George Kane had for many years served as an officer in the militia, as captain and then as colonel of artillery; he now proceeded to organize an efficient force of peace keepers. After a year of getting his new police force in shape Marshall Kane, in February, 1861, was dealt a public blow to his ego. He learned that President Lincoln, on the train trip from Springfield to Washington for his inauguration, went through Baltimore secretly, in the middle of the night, to avoid an assassination plot.

Marshall Kane was outraged that Baltimore had been disgraced, that his police force had not been trusted to protect Mr. Lincoln on his passage through Baltimore. The story of the assassination plot had made headlines — "all the journals of all the large cities of the North, day after day, for a long time continued to repeat the story [of the assassination plot]."[74] Marshall Kane issued a public statement denying that there was any such plot against Mr. Lincoln in his city; he wrote that the report in "the New York papers...of a conspiracy to offer violence to [Mr. Lincoln's] person... is destitute of the truth.... Ample measures were...taken to prevent any disturbance of the peace.... These slanders upon the good name of the city of Baltimore, now one of the quietest and most orderly in

73. *Ibid.*, pp. 282-3.
74. Scharf, *History of Maryland*, Vol. 3, p. 389-90.

the country, deserve to be rebuked wherever uttered."[75] Kane's confident statement was issued on February 25, 1861; but just two months later, on April 19, 1861, the police could not stop a Baltimore mob from attacking the Massachusetts Sixth Regiment.

George Kane played a devious game with the media in his manifestation of outrage at Mr. Lincoln's secret trip through Baltimore to foil assassins. There is evidence that Marshall Kane, always of pro-South sentiments, was a party to plans to prevent the passage of Mr. Lincoln through Baltimore and to keep him from becoming president.

When detective Allan Pinkerton and his men infiltrated Baltimore society they found George Kane active in the innermost secessionist organizations. "The police force of Marshall George P. Kane…was almost entirely composed of men with disunion proclivities," wrote Mr. Pinkerton, "Their leader was pronouncedly in favor of secession, and by his orders the broadest license was given to disorderly persons and to the dissemination of insurrection information."[76]

* * *

The three Marylanders in this story — Governor Hicks, Mayor Brown and Marshall Kane — were strong, self-willed characters. Each had his own agenda. They figured in the destruction of bridges and railroads on the night of April 19, 1861 to isolate Washington. These three men put at risk the survival of the Union.

All three were contradictory. Governor Thomas Hicks, after conspiring in the destruction of bridges and railroads, putting the Union in great hazard, became an Union supporter and a good friend of President Lincoln. Mayor George Brown, a straight forward young lawyer, anxious for the fair treatment of negroes and for reform in Baltimore, was at bottom a Confederate, a willing

75. Scharf, *Chronicles of Baltimore*, pp. 524-5.
76. Pinkerton, p. 47.

party to the violent isolation of Washington and to the crisis it created, threatening the survival of the United States government. Today's observer, trying to put himself in the mind of Mayor Brown or Governor Hicks, sees enigma — enigma which is even today not resolved by historians. And Marshall George Kane, militaristic and disciplined, on the street himself fighting the mob to protect the Massachusetts soldiers in the riot of April 19,; then, in a few hours, changing sides and calling for reinforcements to fight Massachusetts soldiers.

These were three strong, complex men that the untested new president, Abraham Lincoln, had to deal with to put the Civil War on a winning course for the Union.

* * *

Now we look at Benjamin Franklin Butler, one of the most complex and intriguing figures of the war.

BENJAMIN F. BUTLER

"As much a news item as any man except Lincoln."

From quite modest origins came one of the most controversial figures in the Civil War, Benjamin Butler. "Here was a poor boy, who without relatives or influence became wealthy and important," said one historian.[77] Born in New Hampshire and raised by a widowed mother who ran a boarding house in the mill city of Lowell, Massachusetts, he scrambled for enough education to qualify as a lawyer.

Benjamin Butler, in his typically aggressive style, became a wealthy trial lawyer early in his career and then added politics to his interests. He was a Democrat, active in national political circles,

77. Holzman, Robert S., *Stormy Ben Butler*, New York: 1978, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, p. 241.

intent on preventing a civil war, sympathizing with the South in their regional differences with the North. At the Democratic National Convention in 1860, he voted for Jefferson Davis for presidential nominee, to the disgust of Massachusetts abolitionists who backed Lincoln for president.

Ben Butler also had military interests, perhaps inherited: Zephaniah Butler, his grandfather, had fought with Wolfe, the French general, at the battle of Quebec. His father, Captain John Butler, fought the English in the War of 1812. Ben Butler, in the years leading up to the Civil War, advanced in the Massachusetts militia from Private to Brigadier-General.[78]

A portrait of General Butler was written for a Massachusetts newspaper by a member of the Massachusetts Bar who was a competitor and a political opponent of his.[79] "He is not a fluent nor graceful speaker," wrote this correspondent, "his voice is harsh and grating. There is no mistaking his meaning. He uses 'talk words' with fiery vehemence. He makes awkward work when he undertakes to utter compliments. But he smites an adversary with the plainest of Anglo-Saxon epithets. He compromises nothing. He don't 'smile and smile and be a villain.'[80]

"The laughs he creates are more apt to be appreciated in the rear seats…his wit needs chastening and softening…. He lives in a style anything but Democratic, according to our New England ideas. Scarcely any other lawyer could maintain such an establishment as his [palatial estate overlooking the Merrimac River in Massachusetts]. But he has earned it by his energy, industry and perseverance.

"He is a genial companion. His wit in conversation tells better than in formal speeches or argument. He can set and keep a table in a roar. Gen. Butler is as able a man as walks the soil of Massachusetts."[81]

78. Butler, Benjamin, *Autobiography and Personal Reminiscences of Major-General Benjamin F. Butler*, Boston: 1892, A.M. Thayer, p. 852.

79. Reported by the *New York Times*, May 31, 1861; no name given.

80. "Smile and smile and be a villain:" Shakespeare, Hamlet.

Ben Butler was not tall; he had a tubby figure and a characteristic droopy eyelid. A Democrat and against the election of the Republican Abraham Lincoln, Ben Butler was not popular in abolitionist Massachusetts. Governor John Andrew, a committed abolitionist, was not friendly toward Butler, whom he had just defeated in a race for governor.[82] But when the South fired on Fort Sumter Governor Andrew rose above his personal feelings; he made Butler a brigadier-general in charge of the first Massachusetts troops to go to war. "Thereupon, began one of the most astounding careers of the war," wrote one historian. "Butler was, until Grant took control, as much a news item as any man except Lincoln."[83] A complex man, he was ever active in his pursuits, as a lawyer, as a politician, as a Union general. Impatient with superiors who did not think quickly and act with decision, he would often take action without waiting for orders; his exploits in the first months of the Civil War made frequent national headlines.

Ben Butler was a Union general who developed a very mixed reputation. He was loved and respected by his men, and he was a favorite of President Lincoln. He earned the hatred of Southerners.

He was the subject of many polemical diatribes. One Butler hater, a newspaper editor named M.M. Pomeroy, accused him of "beastliness, venality, double-dealing, fraud, dishonesty, corruption and betrayal of trusts;" the editor warned boys in this and other countries against following Butler's example.[84]

General Ben Butler, never in doubt, knew where he was going in the Civil War and he moved ahead with energy and enthusiasm.

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81. *New York Times*, May 31, 1861, p. 5.

82. Schouler, William, *A History of Massachusetts in the Civil War*, Boston: 1868, E.P. Dutton, p. 3.

83. *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. 2, p. 357.

84. Pomeroy, M.M., *Life and Public Services of Benjamin F. Butler*, New York, 1868, publisher unknown.

Chapter 3. The Strange Isolation of Washington

The strange isolation of Washington, D.C. in the first days of the Civil War was an event which, in the re-telling, appears so improbable as to test our belief in history. The Civil War could have ended then. An isolated Washington, with no military protection, could have been captured by the Confederacy. For all we know, slavery would have expanded into the new western states and the future direction of the United States would have been very different in many ways.

The Baltimore Riot on April 19, 1861 was followed by the tearing up of the railroads to Washington by the Baltimore mob. All railroads to Washington went through Baltimore, as did the telegraph and mails, also cut off. Washington, the capital of the Union, was rendered helpless by the Baltimore mob. With no army to protect it, Washington was under threat of immediate capture by Confederate forces. Union troops could not get to Washington — could not get through Baltimore — to fight off the Confederates.

Day after perilous day Washington waited for rescue — waited as Confederate troops gathered to attack the city — waited

while Union troops fought their way across Maryland to rescue the beleaguered Union capital.

THE BALTIMORE RIOT

"A mangled, bleeding corpse in Baltimore..."

Friday Morning, April 19, 1861

It was a fine spring morning in Washington, D.C. Blue skies and spring flowers cheered the city after a cold and snowy winter. Before that beautiful day was over disaster would strike the city. The capital of the United States would be rendered helpless.

Abraham Lincoln, battered by events, had been in the Executive Mansion for six weeks and three days. The Civil War had started one week before — when the South, long preparing for war, had fired on Fort Sumter.

The nation's capital was not ready for hostilities. With no military protection, it was in danger of capture. The few soldiers in the U.S. army were not in Washington to protect the city, they were in the western territories fighting Indians.

The Federal government, under President Buchanan and now under Abraham Lincoln, had been careful to appease the South. The government had taken no war-like measures. It had temporized, hoping that it would not come to war. The South, on the other hand, was ready for war. It had spent the last year enlisting and drilling recruits for an army, and acquiring' guns and ammunition. When the South fired on Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, "Jefferson Davis had...four or five thousand troops, fully armed and equipped... a disciplined army...[ready to] capture Washington...."[85]

The days leading up to this Friday were frantic. The Monday before Abraham Lincoln had issued a proclamation asking the states

85. Butler, *Autobiography*, p. 220.

for 75,000 soldiers to rush to Washington. Massachusetts was the first state to put soldiers on a train. The Massachusetts Sixth Regiment left Boston yesterday, Thursday, for the long train ride to the capital. Mr. Lincoln, in the Executive Mansion on Pennsylvania Avenue this Friday morning, waited for the arrival of those Massachusetts troops.

He could not have been in a cheerful mood while he waited; he had just received some very bad news, adding to the unending bad news he had been receiving since his election last November. Since then he had received news of a steady stream of losses of U.S. forts and arsenals and customs houses and mints, picked off by Southern states. Now, he had just received a report that the important U.S. armory at Harper's Ferry, in northern Virginia, had been destroyed during the night. The officers in charge of that armory had burned it to the ground Thursday night as thousands of Virginia troops were on their way to capture the Harper's Ferry arsenal. Hours after the South had fired on Fort Sumter officials in Virginia had organized a preemptive strike against that arsenal — to capture guns and ammunition for the war that the South had been planning. The officials sent a train up through Virginia, collecting soldiers as it went, heading north toward Harper's Ferry. When the train arrived at Harper's Ferry the arsenal was in flames. The Virginia troops found little of use in the ruins.

The troops that Mr. Lincoln was waiting for, the Massachusetts Sixth Regiment, had arrived in Philadelphia by train on Thursday night; on Friday morning they were on a train to Baltimore where they were to change trains and go on to Washington that afternoon. The thirty-five car train arrived in Baltimore at eleven o'clock in the morning. The Massachusetts troops, as they changed trains for Washington, were set upon by a mob of Baltimore citizens. Four Massachusetts soldiers were killed and a number were wounded. The attack immediately became infamous as the "Baltimore Riot," and was roundly condemned in the Northern press. The first blood of the Civil War was shed by a mob.

We have eye-witness accounts of that historic event of one hundred and forty years ago. One of the accounts is from John Dennis, a private in the Massachusetts Sixth Regiment; he remembered the send-off that the regiment received, in Boston, from the "Great War Governor" John Andrew.[86] It was noon, Wednesday, April 17, 1861. Private Dennis recalled Governor Andrew's address to the regiment on the steps of the Massachusetts State House; the governor's voice rang out over the crowd:

"Citizen soldiers of Massachusetts, summoned suddenly with but a moment for preparation … take and bear this flag with you… on which all eyes will rest…"

And General Ben Butler, whom Governor Andrew had just appointed to lead all Massachusetts forces, added his voice:

"Soldiers…our Commander-in-Chief [has] assigned us to lead the advance guard of freedom…. Let me say…to the good people of this Commonwealth, that we will not turn back until we show those who have laid hands upon the fabric of the Union, that there is but one thought in the North, the union of these states now and forever…."[87]

Private Dennis described his regiment's trip to Washington, by way of New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore. "We arrived in New York City…and it looked like the whole populace had come out to welcome us… All along the route through New Jersey the enthusiasm kept up… The people of Philadelphia…were not lacking in kind words and deeds toward us… News came by telegraph that the Secessionists in Baltimore were preparing to resist our march through their city… [When our train left Philadelphia on its way to Baltimore] Colonel Jones [commander of the Massachusetts Sixth]…requested a pilot engine to run ahead of the train… When about ten or fifteen miles from [Baltimore] ammunition was issued

86. Dennis, John B., "March of the Old 6th Massachusetts through Baltimore," a paper read before the Nebraska Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, June 6. 1888, p. 6. Available at the U.S. Military History Institute, Carlisle, Penn.

87. *Ibid*., p. 15.

to us and orders given to load. Col. Jones passed through the train and gave orders that we were to march through the city, not to cast our eyes right or left, but to keep straight on unless fired upon by the mob that was likely awaiting us..."[88]

The Chaplain of the regiment, John Hanson, wrote: "At every station [as we approached Baltimore], communications was had with the railroad officials in Baltimore and...assurance was received that there would be no trouble unless the regiment provoked it. Orders were therefore given to the band to confine their music to tunes not likely to give offence, especially avoiding the popular air, 'Dixie.'"[89]

The Massachusetts Sixth regiment, as the train approached Baltimore, was described by Private Dennis: "Here was a handful of men, about six hundred all told, fresh from the counting room, the shops, schools, stores, banks, the plough...who knew nothing of war...had perhaps in their whole lives never fired a gun...these were the men soon to be participators in one of the severest trials of the whole war."[90] Trains going through Baltimore on the way to Washington had to make a change, since steam locomotives were not allowed to go through the city. Arriving in Baltimore from Philadelphia a train had to terminate at the President Street station, on the east side of the city. The steam locomotive was disconnected from the train. Horses then pulled the train, a few cars at a time, on a special railroad track, across the city to the Camden station. At the Camden station a steam locomotive was then connected to the re-assembled train and the locomotive pulled the train out of the station on its way toward Washington.

At 10 o'clock on the morning of Friday, April 19, 1861, the Massachusetts Sixth Regiment arrived in Baltimore on its way to Washington. The train of thirty-five cars, filled with hundreds of young soldiers, pulled up at the President Street station. Following

88. *Ibid*., p. 21.

89. Hanson, John W., *Historical Sketch of the Old Sixth Regiment*, Boston: 1866, Lee and Shepard, p. 23.

90. *Ibid*., p. 21.

the usual procedure, horses began to pull one or two of the railroad cars at a time from the President Street station across the city, along the tracks on Pratt Street, to the Camden station.

The mayor of Baltimore, George W. Brown, later wrote: "On the morning of the 19th, about 10 o'clock, I was at my law office…when three members of the City Council came to me with a message from Marshall Kane [chief of police of Baltimore]…[that] the troops were about to arrive, and…he apprehended some disturbance. I…got into a carriage and drove rapidly to the Camden station…where the troops were to arrive in the railroad cars [pulled by horses] from the President Street station…. The troops began to arrive at the Camden station…. There was a great deal of excitement, and a large and angry crowd assembled…. At this time an alarm was given that a mob was about to tear up the rails on the road to Washington…Marshall Kane ordered some of his men…to protect the track…. I was about to leave…supposing all danger to be over…when news was brought…that [some of the Massachusetts] troops were left at the President Street station…and that the mob was tearing up the track on Pratt Street…. I hastened down Pratt Street towards the President Street station…. I found that anchors had been piled on the track to obstruct [the cars]…."[91]

Most of the railroad cars, full of soldiers, were still at the President Street station when difficulties developed rapidly. Six of the cars had been pulled across the city without serious problems but the mob now tried to keep the remaining cars from traveling over the track to the Camden station. Chaplain Hanson was with the Massachusetts troops as they tried to leave the President Street station: "Some demonstrations were made on one or two of the cars…but nothing like an attack was made until the seventh car started…. [The car] was attacked by clubs, paving-stones, and other missiles. The men were very anxious to fire on their assailants, but [their officer] forbade them, until they should be attacked by

91. Brown, George William, *Baltimore and the Nineteenth of April, 1861*, Baltimore: 1887, Johns Hopkins University, p. 44 et seq. Also, Brown, George William, "Message to the Baltimore City Council," reported in Scharf, *Chronicles of Baltimore.*

fire-arms. One or two soldiers were wounded by paving-stones and bricks; and at length one man was shot.... He asked leave to fire in return. Orders were then given to lie on the bottom of the car and load [their muzzle-loading muskets] and rising, to fire from the windows at will... The car was three times thrown from the track [when the wheels encountered obstructions thrown on the tracks], each time [the officer] compelled the driver [of the horses] to assist in removing obstructions and getting in motion again.... Moving with as much rapidity as possible, and receiving musket and pistol shots and showers of rocks and bricks the car reached the main body of the regiment [at the Camden station]..."[92]

Several railroad cars, carrying the remainder of the Massachusetts regiment, were still at the President Street station. The superintendent of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, on the spot because of the anticipated trouble, advised that the remaining troops be marched across the city because, Chaplain Hanson remembered, "the track was so obstructed...that the [remaining cars] could not be drawn across.... [The superintendent] suggested to Col. Jones that his men march...as quickly as possible, following the railroad track."[93] Colonel Jones gave the order to leave the cars and form a column to march across the city.

Private John Dennis, in Company G, recalled: "Obeying the order to leave the cars...[the soldiers] seem to throw themselves right into the arms of the howling mass of hungry rebel wolves, as they appeared to be. It was with the greatest difficulty that the men could file out of the cars, and, to form a line was a much more difficult task.... That howling mob...acted and looked more like a pack of wild beasts than human beings.... When Mayor Brown worked his way through the crowd...he snatched a rifle from the hands of one of the soldiers...and deliberately fired right into the crowd.... This firing by the mayor acted as a signal for the officers, and the command was given to fire.... The mob returned the fire and

92. Hanson, p. 25.
93. Hanson, p. 27.

here it was on that beautiful April morning, the 19th day of April, 1861 here in Baltimore, only about thirty-six hours from...home, our comrades were to receive their baptism of fire.... Here the demons commenced their onslaught...with fifty times the number of that little band. Here it was that Ladd, Taylor, Whitney and Needham fell, the first martyrs of the rebellion. Ladd was a native of New Hampshire...a mangled, bleeding corpse in Baltimore, his body...pierced by more than a dozen rebel bullets. Whitney, from Maine, a traitor's bullet in his right breast. Needham, also from Maine, taken to the hospital where he died eight days later. Taylor, not known as to his home, they beat the life out of him with clubs and stones, leaving his blood and brains to mingle with the filth of Pratt Street."[94]

Chaplain Hanson also recalled: "They debarked [from the railroad cars] and formed to march on foot; the mob, which had been accumulating until it...reached many thousands, filled the streets as far as the eye could see.... There were but...two hundred and twenty in the column [of soldiers], and the mob soon reached ten thousand....

"The air was filled with yells, oaths, taunts, all sorts of missiles, and...pistol and musket shots.... The crowd...pressed on the flank and rear [of the column of soldiers] more and more furiously. At one of the bridges on Pratt Street, a formidable barricade with cannon...had been arranged.... [Their officer] ordered [the soldiers] to scale the barricade.... Had they been compelled to halt at the [barricade], it is probable that the small detachment would have been annihilated for arms were multiplying among the assailants, and they were becoming more furious every moment. Cheers for 'Jeff Davis,' and for 'South Carolina and the South;' all sorts of insulting language, — such as 'Dig your graves!' — 'You can pray, but you cannot fight!' and the like were heard but the little battalion went steadily ahead...."

94. *Dennis.*, p. 34.

Chaplain Hanson continued: "As the gallant detachment passed along Pratt Street, pistols and guns were fired at them from the windows and doors of stores and houses; our boys...loaded their [muzzle-loaders] as they marched, dragging them between their feet.... At one place, at an upper window, a man was in the act of firing, when a rifle ball suggested to him the propriety of desisting, and he came headlong to the sidewalk.... The men were hampered by their orders to fire as little as possible; they were anxious to get to the capital, even then...in danger. They were separated from the [rest of the]...regiment, and knew not where their comrades were.... The order to double-quick was given and the rear of the column...was...fiercely assailed.... Captain Dike was wounded and left behind...Lieutenant Lynde...gave the order to fire on the mob. Marching the entire distance — a mile and a half — bearing several of their wounded with them...they reached the Camden station and joined the rest of their regiment."[95]

Marshall George Kane had tried to protect the soldiers as they struggled along Pratt street toward Camden station, according to Mayor George Brown who later wrote a book about the riot. "Marshal Kane, with about fifty policemen, came at a run and throwing themselves in the rear of the troops, they formed a line in front of the mob, and with drawn revolvers kept it back.... Marshal Kane's voice shouted, 'Keep back, men, or I shoot.' This movement, which I saw myself, was gallantly executed, and was perfectly successful. The mob recoiled like water from a rock.... The column passed on under the protection of the police...to the Camden station." [96]

Chaplain Hanson described the scene at Camden station: "When they reached...the Camden station, an immense crowd surrounded them. Rushing towards the car windows, [the mob]

95. Hanson, p. 34.

96. Brown, George William, *Baltimore and the Nineteenth of April, 1861*, Baltimore: 1887, Johns Hopkins University, p. 44 et seq. Also, Brown, George William, "Message to the Baltimore City Council," reported in Scharf, "*Chronicles of Baltimore.*"

brandished revolvers, knives, clubs…in angry fury…with fearful shouts and yells and curses…." [97]

The Baltimore Sun reported that at the Camden station "the blinds of most of the cars were shut down, and in those not provided with blinds the troops laid down flat to avoid the bricks thrown at them. The car windows were perfectly riddled and their sides bore great indentations from the rocks and bricks hurled at them. The scene…was indescribably fearful. Taunts, clothed in the most fearful language were hurled at them by the panting crowd, who…pressed up to the car windows, presenting knives and revolvers, and cursed into the faces of the soldiers."[98]

Private Dennis: "[We] succeeded in joining the main body of the regiment [at the Camden station], bringing…the wounded, who were cared for on board the cars, as no time was lost in getting on board and starting off, for fear that the rails in advance of us [toward Washington] would be torn up."[99]

The Baltimore riot, wrote a Northern observer, "sent a thrill through the heart of the nation, and aroused it like a giant to defend its life."[100] The riot, which shed the first blood of the Civil War — Massachusetts blood — took place on the anniversary of the battle of Lexington, April 19, 1775 where the first blood, also Massachusetts blood, was shed in the Revolutionary War. "Some of the men who were attacked in Baltimore were the direct descendants of the men who served in the Revolutionary Army." [101]

Four Massachusetts soldiers were killed. A number of Baltimoreans were killed and wounded. Governor John Andrew sent a telegram to Mayor Brown:

"I pray you to cause the bodies of our Massachusetts soldiers, dead in Baltimore, to be immediately laid out, preserved with ice,

97. Hanson, p. 31.
98. *The Baltimore Sun*, April 20, 1861.
99.Dennis, p. 28.
100. Schouler, p. 92.
101. *The Baltimore Sun*, April 20, 1861.

and tenderly sent forward by express to me. All expenses will be paid by this Commonwealth."

A Midnight Mob In Baltimore

"The excitement is fearful."

Friday Afternoon, April 19, 1861

The train carrying the Massachusetts Sixth Regiment escaped from Baltimore at a quarter to one.[102] As it steamed toward Washington, a trim, petite lady, with dark brown hair pulled back into a bun, hurried with her sister along the streets of Washington to the Baltimore and Ohio railroad station. Word of a riot in Baltimore had just come to Washington by telegraph and had spread among the public. A former teacher in Massachusetts, she was worried that some of her old students, now in the Massachusetts Sixth Regiment, may have been hurt in that riot. She was from the small town of North Oxford, Massachusetts, near the city of Worcester. She was forging a career in the Patent Office, where women were not welcome. Her given name was Clarissa, a name she did not care for; she had changed it to Clara. Her last name was Barton.[103]

Clara Barton later recalled that as she and her sister joined the throng at the railroad station they were "bewildered" by what they heard of the atrocities in Baltimore. When the train came to a halt they watched the men of the Massachusetts Sixth Regiment descend from the cars. Some of the soldiers were bandaged and limping. Miss Barton saw that no one was helping these wounded youngsters. She "determined to render any aid possible to the weary and wounded men," wrote her biographer Elizabeth Pryor. "There

102. Brown, George William, *Baltimore and the Nineteenth of April, 1861*, Baltimore: 1887, Johns Hopkins University.

103. Oates, Stephen B., *A Woman of Valor, Clara Barton and the Civil War*, New York: 1994, The Free Press, p. 3.

were no hospitals or even barracks... She filled this immediate need by bringing the most severely wounded to her sister's house [she had no home of her own]...Hearing...that no rations had been issued to them, [she] hastily set to work to [help the soldiers] as best she could."[104] A soldier in the Massachusetts Sixth wrote later that after they arrived in Washington, "the wounded were taken care of by Miss Clara Barton.... She...nursed them and cared for them as tenderly as their own mothers or sisters could have done..."[105] This was the beginning of Clara Barton, Civil War nurse.

"The regiment reached Washington at five in the afternoon, and was received...with the wildest enthusiasm," wrote historian William Schouler. "Soon afterwards it marched to the Capitol building, and was quartered in the Senate Chamber.... Thus, under the roof of the Capitol, were sheltered the men who first marched to save it, and in whose ranks the first blood had been shed, and the first lives sacrificed in its defense."[106]

The fact that the Massachusetts Sixth Regiment was quartered in the Senate chamber was a sign of how little preparation had been made for war. Nothing was in place to greet the arriving soldiers. Private Dennis of the Massachusetts Sixth: "We were marched to the United States Senate Chamber, which was assigned to us as quarters. We had eaten nothing since morning and were very hungry, but we had to wait until the next morning before anything could be procured for us to eat."[107] The North was not ready for war; the possibility of war had not been taken seriously. But the South was ready! The South felt vulnerable. The dreaded Mr. Lincoln might very well, thought the leaders of the South, release their millions of slaves. Visions of rampaging negroes taking revenge on their masters haunted Southern minds. This

104. Pryor, Elizabeth Brown, *Clara Barton, Professional Angel*, Philadelphia: 1987, p. 78.

105. Dennis, "March of the Old 6th Massachusetts through Baltimore." A paper read to the Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, June 6. 1888, p. 6. Available at the U.S. Military History Institute, Carlisle, Penn.

106. Schouler, William, *A History of Massachusetts in the Civil War*, Boston: 1868, E.P. Dutton & Co., p. 93.

107. Dennis, p. 28.

frantic fear had driven the South to get ready for war, a year ago. With troops trained and armed, the South was the first to strike, at Fort Sumter, sending the Union reeling. The Washington government had done essentially nothing to prepare for this eventuality. Although Lincoln had requisitioned 75,000 troops from the states immediately after the firing on Fort Sumter, his government had not ordered housing or food for the arriving soldiers. Research has uncovered no evidence of preparations for receiving the volunteers. No tents and no food awaited the men of the Massachusetts Sixth Regiment when they arrived in Washington.

The city of Baltimore, that afternoon, reacted violently to the riot. After the riot, notices were immediately tacked up on city buildings announcing a public meeting. Mayor George Brown called the meeting, bringing the agitated citizens together in Monument Square, the city's meeting place. Impressive Monument Square, in the center of Baltimore, was dedicated to George Washington. A statue of Washington, hero of the Revolution, perched high on a slim pedestal, towered over the square. Large public buildings surrounded this central space. A newspaper reporter was on the scene in Monument Square. He wrote: "This call [for a public meeting]... [eased] the excitement which at this point had reached a fearful degree, the streets being thronged with soldiers...and with citizens armed with every style of fire-arm... Monument Square was... crowded with an excited throng... [who gave] cheers for Jeff Davis..., for the Southern Confederacy, and for South Carolina varied with...groans for Governor Hicks." Hicks was not popular with Southern sympathizers in Baltimore; he had been resisting calls for the secession of Maryland from the Union.

The first speaker waved a Maryland flag; it "excited the enthusiasm of the multitude to the highest pitch; scores of Union men, catching the patriotic infection, joined in the cheers...given again and again with deafening effect." [108] The citizens of Baltimore,

108. *Baltimore American*, April 20, 1861.

previously divided on the question of secession, suddenly were of the same mind. It was a remarkable turnaround in public sentiment. And a threat to the safety of the nation's capital, solidifying the public mood against the passage of more Northern troops though their city on their way to Washington.

Mayor Brown addressed the crowd, explaining his actions in the morning's riot, that he had been trying to protect the Massachusetts soldiers passing through on their way to Washington — to "a storm of groans" by the multitude. He received a better response when he proclaimed, "The civic authorities would take full measure for the protection of the city against the recurrence of today's occurrence.... The people of the North will soon...know that it is the height of folly for one portion of the country to attempt to subjugate the other. The South can never be coerced, never, never, NEVER!" Mayor Brown received "wild cheers, long continued," wrote the reporter. This was the same Mayor Brown, who, a few hours earlier, had walked down Pratt Street trying to protect the Massachusetts soldiers — and had fired a gun into the mob to hold it at bay.

The crowd gave three cheers for Secession. The reporter wrote that a William P. Preston, Esquire, was next to speak: "He had this day witnessed stirring scenes. He had seen our citizens butchered in the streets of their own city. He had beheld their dying gasps, and had seen the heart's blood of Marylanders staining the soil of Maryland. He prayed for peace...but he wanted no peace at the cost of wrong and degradation...he deplored the horrors of civil war yet they owed it to Maryland not to see...our streets polluted by strangers.... Let no more troops pass though Baltimore.... We shall next hear of the degradation of our women, of insults to our wives and daughters..." The reporter heard cries of "No. No. We are ready." "We only want a leader." "D—n 'em, let 'em try it!"

Governor Hicks, equivocal about secession, was seen walking toward the square and was called forward to make a speech. He was introduced by Mayor Brown, who said that he had just advised the governor that in his earlier remarks he, Mayor Brown, "had pledged

the governor to the full vindication of the inviolability of the soil of Maryland against any invading force."

Governor Hicks made a speech but not exactly in support of Mayor Brown's comments: "My presence in your beautiful city is indeed due to accident.... I came here not to take any part in your municipal affairs...[I have] ever been devotedly attached to the Union." Here, the governor recited a patriotic verse "extolling the grandeur of the American Union." The Union, he said, "was now apparently broken but...reconstruction may yet be brought about." "NEVER! NEVER!" the crowd shouted. The governor continued, "I am a Marylander; I love my state, and I love the Union, but I will suffer my right arm to be torn from my body before I will raise it to strike a sister state." [109]

"The mobs by no means consisted of the rough elements alone," wrote historian George Radcliffe. "Many prominent and respectable persons were to be found in their ranks, seeking to repel what they considered an invasion of Maryland."[110]

Immediately after the riot, Baltimore's military was alerted. It may seem remarkable today that a city would have its own army but in those uncertain times the populace felt that it needed an armed force. The Baltimore American newspaper reported: "The military of the city assembled at their armories soon after the collision with the Northern troops." The newspaper continued: "The companies assembled with great promptitude, and a large number were soon under arms and prepared for service...." The city military was, a few hours after the riot, placed under the Baltimore police chief Marshall George Kane. [111]

Earlier that afternoon Mayor Brown and Governor Hicks had sent a telegram to Washington; the dispatch was also delivered by a messenger, sent on a special train to Washington, to ensure that Mr. Lincoln received it:

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109. *Baltimore American*, April 20, 1861.

110. Radcliffe, George, L.P., *Governor Thomas H. Hicks and the Civil War*, Baltimore: 1901, The Johns Hopkins Press.

111. *Baltimore American*, April 20, 1861.

Mayor's Office
Baltimore, April 19, 1861

To his Excellency, the President of the United States:

Sir: A collision between the citizens and Northern troops has taken place in Baltimore, and the excitement is fearful. Send no more troops here. We will endeavor to prevent all bloodshed... The troops of the State and the city have been called out to preserve the peace. They will be enough.

Respectfully,
Thomas W. Hicks
Geo. Wm. Brown, Mayor[112]

When Mr. Lincoln received this message he consulted with General Scott and the Cabinet. John Nicolay, Mr. Lincoln's secretary, wrote later that the President deduced that Mayor Brown and Governor Hicks meant to say that they needed no help in putting down the riot; But General Scott thought that it meant that no more troops could pass through Baltimore. The matter was left in the air for the moment. That evening, on a special train from Baltimore, three representatives from Mayor Brown came to Washington. The representatives were H. Lennox Bond, judge of the criminal court of Baltimore; J.C. Brune, Mayor Brown's law partner and President of the Board of Trade; and George W. Dobbin, a Baltimore lawyer. [113] They brought a letter to the president:

To his Excellency Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States

Sir:

This will be presented to you by H. Lennox Bond, J.C. Brune, and George W. Dobbin...[who came] by an express train...to explain fully the fearful condition of affairs in this city. The people are exasperated to the highest degree by the passage of troops, and the citizens are universally decided...that no more should...come.

112. Baltimore American, April 20, 1861.
113. Brown, p. 57.

> The authorities of the city did their best to-day to protect both strangers and citizens and to prevent a collision ... but for their great efforts, a fearful slaughter would have occurred. It is my solemn duty to inform you that it is not possible for more soldiers to pass through Baltimore unless they fight their way.... I therefore hope and trust and most earnestly request that no more troops be permitted or ordered by the Government to pass through the city. If they should attempt it, the responsibility for the bloodshed will not rest upon me. With great respect, your obedient servant,
>
> Geo. Wm. Brown, Mayor

Governor Hicks added a postscript: "I have been in Baltimore City since Tuesday evening last, and cooperated with Mayor G. W. Brown in his...efforts to...suppress the fearful outbreak as indicated above, and I fully concur in all that is said by him in the above communication."[114] When messengers Bond, Brune and Dobbins arrived in Washington on the special train from Baltimore it was after midnight. They went to the Executive Mansion to see Mr. Lincoln. They were told that he had gone to bed. Lincoln's secretary, John Nicolay, remembered, "They therefore applied to [Secretary of War] Simon Cameron at the War Department, who refused flatly to entertain their request, turning over on his sofa for another nap."[115] John Nicolay, before he went to bed, wrote prophetically in his diary: "We are expecting more troops here by way of Baltimore, but are fearful that the secessionists [will] cut the telegraph wires, tear up the railroad track, or burn the bridges, and thus prevent their reaching us and cut off all communications."[116]

Mayor Brown waited in vain at his home in Baltimore for word from the president, hoping that Mr. Lincoln would agree not to send more troops through his city. "No reply came from Washington," he wrote later. "The city authorities were left to act on their own. Late

114. Brown, p. 57.

115. Nicolay, John and Hay, John, *Abraham Lincoln, A History*, New York: 1890, The Century Company, Vol. IV, pp. 51-2.

116. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-5.

at night reports came of troops being on the way. It was impossible that they could pass through the city without fighting and bloodshed."[117] Troops were reported to be coming from Pennsylvania on the North Central Railway and from Philadelphia on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Mayor Brown, in his memoir, wrote: "In this emergency, the board of police, including the mayor, immediately assembled for consultation...." [118]

Marshall George Kane remembered, "Our whole city seemed filled with horror at the knowledge that peaceful and respected citizens had been shot on our public streets.... Till a late hour of the night my office was beset by those anxious to ascertain the truth of rumors that a renewal of difficulties was likely to occur.... Near midnight I received from [officials of] the...Baltimore and Ohio Railroad...and the [North Central] Railroad [the message] 'that it was impossible to prevent these troops from going through Baltimore....' I felt it my duty to communicate this information to his Honor, Mayor Brown, and went to his house.... He deemed it all important to confer with his Excellency, Governor Hicks, and visited him in his chamber [Governor Hicks was staying overnight in Mayor Brown's house]. The Governor then sent for me...and I went to his chamber.... The condition of the city, the dangers of a sanguinary conflict in the event of troops coming to it whilst the public mind was so highly inflamed, being fully discussed, the Governor deemed it proper, and agreed with Mayor Brown and myself that the bridges on the railroads by which troops, would likely come, should be destroyed, as the only means of impeding them and avoiding the threatened conflict, and the Mayor and Board of Police then issued the order to that effect."[119] Marshall Kane issued orders for his men to destroy, that night, the bridges of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and the bridges of the North Central Railroad.

117. Brown, p. 58.

118. *Ibid.*

119. Coyle, William F., *The Mayors of Baltimore, 1919*, reprinted from the *Baltimore Municipal Journal, pp. 149-150.*

Mayor Brown later recalled that midnight conference with Marshall. Kane and Governor Hicks: "[We] came to the conclusion that it was necessary to burn... the [railroad] bridges...to prevent the ingress of troops. This was accordingly done at once, some of the police and a detachment of the Maryland Guard being sent out to do the work."[120]

In the dark hours of that night Baltimore police and military, joined by Baltimore citizens, struck out from the city, east toward Philadelphia and north toward Harrisburg, burning the bridges which carried trains over rivers and ravines. In a few hours no railroad train could get to Baltimore from the Northern states. And all communication to Washington from the North — by rail or telegraph or mail — was utterly destroyed. Washington was rendered helpless.

* * *

On the day prior to that momentous Friday, in Boston, General Benjamin Franklin Butler, stood on the steps of the Massachusetts State House. Resplendent in his uniform and confident in his authority he was soon to be a headline name in newspapers North and South. General Butler was getting the Massachusetts Eighth Regiment ready for a hurry-up train trip to Washington, hard on the Massachusetts Sixth which had left yesterday. Haste in preparing the Massachusetts Eighth was evident — while General Butler was addressing the soldiers from the State House steps, "the tailors busied themselves in the rear of the regiment, sewing on buttons on the backs of the overcoats of the men."[121]

Benjamin Butler, who had seen the war coming and had insisted on getting Massachusetts men ready to fight, was the brigadier-general in charge of Massachusetts regiments. On that

120. Brown, p. 58.
121. Butler, Benjamin F., *Autobiography*, A.M. Thayer, 1892, p. 174.

cold and rainy Thursday he was rushing his men to Washington before that city could be overwhelmed by Confederate forces.

Ben Butler had become wealthy as an aggressive lawyer, particularly involved with the rights of laboring men and women. He had just now left a law court in the middle of a trial: "I arose and said to the presiding judge, 'I am called to prepare troops to be sent to Washington. I must ask the court to postpone this case.'"[122]

General Ben Butler and the Massachusetts Eighth, after they left Boston, spent the night in railroad cars on the way to New York where they arrived on the morning of that fateful Friday, April 19, 1861, the day of the Baltimore Riot. It was also the anniversary of the battle of Lexington and Concord, April 19, 1775 — the "shot heard round the world" — and the beginning of the American experiment in democracy.

In New York, General Butler later wrote, "As [I] stood…on the balcony of [my] hotel, my regiment passed by, cheering me very lustily." Senator Baker of Oregon, who stood there with General Butler and who would later serve as a general under Butler, "turned to me and said: 'All very well, General, for them to cheer you when they go out, but take care of them so that they will cheer you on their return.'"

The war was very new and railroad men were loath to interrupt passenger service for troop movements. Some thirty cars were needed to take the Massachusetts Eighth Regiment from New York to Philadelphia. General Butler remembered: "The railroad people said they could not get cars to carry us without discommoding their passenger trains; and I said to the official that we must go whether the passenger trains went or not. With some hesitation he yielded to necessity."[123]

The long train carrying the Massachusetts Eighth arrived in Philadelphia about five o'clock Friday evening; at that hour news of

122. Butler, p. 170.
123. Butler, p. 175.

the riot in Baltimore and the killing of Massachusetts troops had not yet reached that city. Philadelphia papers put out extra editions that Friday night reporting at first that the Massachusetts Sixth had been captured, and General Butler considered rushing to Baltimore to rescue that regiment, "But later in the evening I got more reliable information." General Butler wrote in his memoirs: "That night Mr. S.M. Felton, president of the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore Railroad, called upon me. From Mr. Felton, based on the telegrams he had received, we got a clear comprehension of the situation.... We learned that the Sixth Regiment had passed through Baltimore on its way to Washington. It was believed that it had arrived at Washington in safety, although no telegrams to that effect had come over the wires." General Butler later learned that President Lincoln had met the train with the Massachusetts Sixth on board at the railroad station and had welcomed them with the warm greeting, "Thank God you have come; for if you had not Washington would have been in the hands of the rebels before morning." General Butler continued in his memoirs: "I learned also that the mayor of Baltimore had got a promise from Mr. Felton by telegraph that no more troops should be sent through Baltimore, and the further fact that the Gunpowder bridges, which were very long trestle-works some miles from Baltimore had been burned, so that no troops could be sent by rail. The question then arose, how should I get to Washington?"[124] With his Massachusetts Eighth Regiment in Philadelphia hotels, General Butler was faced with the problem of getting his troops to Washington without going through Baltimore on the railroad. He worked all night in his hotel room, with maps, and with his advisors, trying to work out a route to Washington. He knew that the New York Seventh regiment was on the way to Philadelphia by train from New York; perhaps the New York Seventh would join him, in the morning, in an attempt to reach Washington.

* * *

124. Butler, p. 181.

The New York Seventh was the pride of New York, young men from the city's elite families. When the war broke out it had an established reputation as the nation's "crack" regiment. "The New York Seventh stood out [among the militia of the country]....," wrote historian William Roehrenbeck, "Their discipline was rigid, their drill had a snap to it...; their gray uniforms, with the immaculate white cross-belts sparkled as they paraded...; their band was superb; the men came from the 'best' families in New York and thus created an aura of great wealth about the organization.... The ranks were filled with successful business and professional men.... To become a member was almost the same as being admitted to an exclusive club."[125] The regiment had developed a national audience, performing in many cities, with attendant ceremonies and publicity.

The commander of the regiment was Colonel Marshall Lefferts, just days away from becoming famous in the rescue of Washington. He was a "distinguished professional engineer in New York and had had an active part in the development of the telegraph industry."[126]

Blasé New York awoke to a war frenzy on the morning of Thursday, April 18, 1861 when the morning papers announced that the New York Seventh was leaving for Washington. That same morning the Massachusetts Sixth arrived in New York, marched up Broadway, and left for Washington. And, that same morning, Major Robert Anderson, fresh from his heroic stand against the Confederacy at Fort Sumter, came into New York Harbor on the U.S.S. Baltic. New York, joining the war fever, gave itself over to the excitement.

New York city, known for immigrants and for commerce, its citizens wrapped up in their own concerns, was not famous for patriotism. So John Dalton, a new recruit in the regiment, was surprised at the reception the regiment received, as it formed and began to march up Broadway: "The spectacle that met us was a

125. Roehrenbeck, William J., *The Regiment That Saved The Capital*, New York: 1961, Thomas Yoseloff, pp. 38-40.

126. *Ibid*., p. 46

revelation," he wrote later, "men, women, and children…occupied every window and balcony…as far as the eye could reach. The mass was alive…with waving flags and handkerchiefs — cheers…filled the air…. It was a sudden and surprising demonstration…but that was hardly the beginning…. As the regiment moved on past one street after another…at every block the crowd grew denser and the uproar more incessant…. All the while the same continuous cry, from innumerable throats, kept up without a moment's intermission…. It was like a drama…the longer it continued, the more it affected the senses and the mind," continued the recruit, "almost as if [one] marched in a dream, half dazed."[127]

Private Theodore Winthrop was another new soldier, a writer looking for adventure; he had been commissioned by James Russell Lowell, editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, to report on the war.[128]He was killed a few weeks thence while leading a charge. He recorded the leave-taking of the New York Seventh Regiment: "An enormous crowd! It was worth a life, that march…a tempest of cheers, two miles long, terrible enthusiasm…Parting gifts showered on the regiment…handerkerchiefs came floating down upon us from the windows like a snow…pretty little gloves pelted us with love-taps…. Men gave us pocket-knives, combs, soap, slippers, boxes of matches, cigars…fruit, eggs, and sandwiches."[129] Private Theodore Winthrop would, in a few weeks, change regiments and serve under General Butler, helping to make both of them famous.

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127. Dalton, John Call, "John Call Dalton," Cambridge: 1892, Riverside Press. pp. 8-9.

128. Private Theodore Winthrop was an unpublished novelist, hired by James Russell Lowell as a war correspondent for the Atlantic Monthly magazine. He was killed in the first battle of the Civil War, at Great Bethel, Virginia. He was then a major under General Butler, leading his men into heavy fire. The New York Times and other Northern newspapers made him a hero. His manuscripts were published posthumously to critical and popular acclaim. His early success was phenomenal and his popularity as a novelist continued for forty years. Roehrenbeck, p. 235. Winthrop, Theodore, "New York Seventh Regiment," *The Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1861, p. 745. Moore, Frank, Ed., *The Rebellion Record*, New York: 1977, The Arno Press; Vol. 1, documents, p. 80. Twelve volumes, volumes 1-6 originally published by Putnam, 1861-3. 25. Winthrop, p. 746. 26. Moore, p. 150.

129. *Ibid*., p. 188.

The staid New York Times allowed itself to get excited: "It was many Fourth-of-July's rolled into one. The Stars and Stripes were everywhere...twenty, thirty, forty feet [high]...down to a few inches...it was flag, flag from every window from the first floor to the roof, from every doorway...in short it was flag, flag, flag all along the route of the Seventh.... They proceeded down Broadway, down that great thoroughfare...to a perfect ovation.... Thousands lined the sidewalks. It will be remembered as long as any of those that witnessed it live. We saw women, we saw men shed tears as [the regiment] passed.... Amidst the deafening cheers...we heard cries of 'God Bless You'.... And so along Broadway, under its countless flags, the gallant Seventh Regiment left the City."[130]

"A nobler, braver band of young men never marched more gayly forth to the defence of any country since the world began," later wrote Captain Emmons Clark, the regimental historian.

Private Winthrop remembered: "The news of the rascal attack in Baltimore on the Massachusetts Sixth had just come in.... If there were any of us not in earnest before, the story of the day would steady us. So we said goodbye to Broadway...under a bower of flags, and shoved off in the ferry boat [across the Hudson River to Jersey City].... Jersey City turned out and filled up the Railroad Station like an opera house.... The state of New Jersey, along the railroad line [to Philadelphia], stood through the evening and the night to shout...their good wishes. At every station the Jersey men were there...to shake our hands and wish us a happy dispatch. I think I did not see a rod of ground without its man, from dusk til dawn, from the Hudson to the Delaware. Aboard the train we...sang more than we slept...and that has been our history ever since.

"At sunrise we were at the station in Philadelphia," continued Private Winthrop. "Some hundreds of us made up Broad Street for the Lapierre House to breakfast. When I arrived, I found every...table filled. So I followed up the stream of provender to the...kitchen. Half a dozen [other soldiers] were already there, most

130. *Ibid.*, p. 184.

hospitably entertained by the cooks.... They served us, hot and hot, with the best of their best.... It was a poor part of Philadelphia but whatever they had in the shops or in the houses seemed to be at our disposition.... We stopped at a corner shop and were amicably assailed by an earnest dame — Irish, I am pleased to say. She thrust her last loaf upon us. A little farther on, two kindly Quaker ladies compelled us to step in. 'What could they do,' they asked eagerly. They had no meat in the house; but could we eat eggs? They had...a dozen and a half newly laid. So the pot to the fire and the eggs boiled.... While the eggs simmered the two ladies thee-ed us prayerfully and tearfully, hoping that God would save our country from blood, unless blood must be shed to preserve Law and Liberty."[131]

In Philadelphia the New York Seventh crossed paths with the Massachusetts Eighth, both waiting for their officers to come up with a strategy to get them to Washington without going through Baltimore. Intermingling, the two regiments sized each other up. Private Fitz-James O'Brien of the New York Seventh wrote a few days later: "The Massachusetts men presented a singular...contrast to the members of the Seventh. They were earnest, grim, determined. Badly equipped, haggard, unshorn, they yet had a manhood in their look.... Their gray, eager eyes seemed to be looking [for the battles ahead]. With us, it was...different. Our men were gay and careless, confident...of performing, and more than performing their duty. They looked battle in the face with a smile... The one was courage in the rough; the other was courage burnished. The steel was the same in both..."[132]

* * *

Washington waited. Communications cut off, the city was in fearful silence, with no definite word of coming troops. Baltimore, in

131. *Ibid., pp. 182-4.*
132. *Ibid., P. 189.*

its key position, had stopped all troops from coming to Washington on the railroad through that city. The Massachusetts Eighth Regiment, in Philadelphia hotels, waited for General Butler to devise a way to get his regiment to Washington. The New York Seventh Regiment, under Colonel Lefferts, was also stymied in Philadelphia. Confederate troops gathered on the Virginia shore, across the Potomac from the capital, ready to pounce.

* * *

WASHINGTON IS ISOLATED

"Bizarre happenings..."

Saturday, April 20, 1861

On that Saturday, the day after the riot, a number of events were taking place at the same time — in Baltimore, in Washington, and in Philadelphia.

* * *

In Baltimore events were underway long before daybreak. In the darkness Baltimoreans were out burning railroad bridges. Mayor George Brown and Marshall George Kane had dispatched Baltimore police and military into the countryside on a mission to destroy railroad bridges. The Baltimore police and military were joined by mobs of citizens. Mayor Brown and Marshall Kane were determined that Union troops would not come through Baltimore.

Railroad bridges of that era were marvelous feats of engineering. They were a delicate-looking lattice-work of wooden timbers. Some bridges were of breathtaking height. Massive locomotives and their trains of cars ran over those wooden bridges, high above rivers and chasms. Wooden railroad bridges could be easily set afire and destroyed.

Just after midnight, in the early hours of Saturday morning, the night sky was lighted by rising flames shooting up from burning bridges. The flames brought a pre-dawn glow to the Baltimore sky.

The bizarre happenings in Baltimore were told on the front pages of the three major city newspapers — the Baltimore American, the Baltimore Sun, and the Daily Exchange.

A reporter for the Baltimore American wrote of that night:

"Baltimore is a scene of wild excitement.... Shortly after 1 o'clock [Saturday morning] information was conveyed to the military headquarters [of Baltimore] that a large body of Northern troops were approaching by way of the Northern Central Railway and that the Seventh Regiment of New York and other troops...[were] en route to Washington.... It was immediately resolved to destroy the bridges on both railroads [the Northern Central Railroad, from Harrisburg, and the Philadelphia and Baltimore Railroad, from Philadelphia].... Truck Company No. 1 [a fire company] was summoned to the Mayor's office," continued the reporter, "and dispatched with combustibles to the bridge at Canton...it was in flames before the arrival of the regular Philadelphia train. Another party was sent in omnibuses to the bridges beyond Cockeysville, on the North Central Railway, and they were also in flames before daylight. The work of destruction...was accomplished by a detachment of the Baltimore city Guard.... Two large bridges...between Cockeysville and Ashland were destroyed...there was scarcely a timber left.... A detachment of the City Guard, numbering 25 men, [had been] ordered to destroy these bridges..."[133]

A Daily Exchange front page story told a similar story: "About 3 A.M. Saturday, an order was issued for the destruction of all bridges on the on the Northern Central [to Harrisburg] and Philadelphia railroads...so as to prevent the passage of any more troops from the North. In pursuance of this order, four cans of spirits of turpentine were procured, and a squad of police were detailed, accompanied by

133. *Baltimore American*, April 22, 1861.

one company of the City Guard...and a number of armed citizens..., to perform the duty. They at once proceeded on foot to the Melville bridge, about five miles from the city, where they demanded of the watchman possession of the bridge. He at once surrendered, and after they had torn down as much of [the bridge] as they saw fit, they tore to pieces the watch-house, and piled it on and under the bridge in order to facilitate the burning. The turpentine was then poured upon the mass and the torch applied, and in a few minutes the whole structure...was one sheet of flame.

"The military and police stood guard until daylight when they returned to the city. The citizens, however, who had crossed the bridge before it was destroyed, expressed their determination to proceed to the iron bridge at the Relay House and destroy it. Cheering and shouting, they proceeded on their way, and as day broke upon them, citizens from the surrounding country joined them and entered heartily in the work. Arriving at the bridge, they crossed, and after unscrewing the immense girders, the structure was turned over into the water.... They then moved on Cockeysville and destroyed the bridge between that point and Ashland, about eleven miles from Baltimore. The passenger train from Harrisburg was within half a mile of the bridge, and it may be said to have been burned in the face of the passengers, whoever they may have been. Here the crowd received large accessions from their brothers, the farmers and mechanics of the neighborhood, some of them coming a considerable distance. After daylight the parties dispersed to their respective homes, cutting telegraph wires and poles at several points upon the route." [134]

"At an early hour," the Baltimore Sun reported, giving its version of the night's events to its readers, "the city council convened in secret session and made an appropriation of half a million dollars for the defense of the city. Then the people who had been without arms looked more hopeful, and the approach of a number of carts towards [Marshall Kane's] office drew thenceward

134. *Daily Exchange*, April 22, 1861.

thousands of persons eager for the privilege of assisting in the defense against the threatened invasion. The arms were 900 of Hall's patent rifles from Mr. Isaac M. Denson."[135]

The Baltimore Sun continued: "A rumor arrived at the city [Saturday] morning that thousands of troops had reached Cockeysville. At five minutes before eleven o'clock the bell of the Town Clock sounded the call to arms and instantly the people ran in every direction. Boys of fourteen to hoary headed men of seventy to eighty years appeared on the streets on the way to join their respective companies.... Within a half hour of the call to arms the headquarters of the several recruiting stations were thronged with people anxious to join in the defense of Baltimore. A large number of companies were mustered into service, when they proceeded to the office of [Marshall Kane] to receive their arms.

"The Eagle Artillery marched to the intersection of Gay and Second streets where they drilled for some time in loading and firing [their cannon]. Full preparations were made for a conflict and large quantities of grape and cannister shot, besides heavy balls were provided. Among the pieces of ordnance was a thirty-two pounder pivot gun."[136]

"The war spirit raged through the city among all classes on Saturday with an ardor which gained fresh force with each hour...," said the Baltimore American, "the...streets were crowded with masses of citizens...united to resist the passage of troops through Baltimore. Private citizens were arming...at their own expense. The gun stores were thronged with crowds of eager purchasers, Colt's revolvers and revolving rifles being most in demand."[137]

Mayor Brown issued a proclamation to arm Marshall Kane's developing army:

135. *Baltimore American*, April 22, 1861.
136. *The Sun* [Baltimore] April 22, 1861.
137. *Baltimore American*, April 22, 1861.

ALL CITIZENS HAVING ARMS SUITABLE FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE CITY...ARE REQUESTED TO DEPOSIT THEM AT THE OFFICE OF THE MARSHALL OF POLICE.

On the *Baltimore Sun* front page: "Among the most exciting incidents of the day [Saturday] was the enlistment of volunteers for the defense of the city. These, to the number of 4,000 and upwards, were divided into companies and marched to the Old City Hall where they were furnished with firearms."[138]

At one point on Saturday another rumor of Northern troops approaching Baltimore caused a "scene of excitement on Baltimore streets of extraordinary intensity. The throng rushed...excitedly about. Armed men gathered...and unarmed men...rushed to gun shops which were quickly broken open.... The bells of the church on Second Street rang out an alarm communicating the excitement to every part of the city. Church services were interrupted, ladies shrieked and fainted, congregations dismissed themselves, and terrified women hurried to their homes. From all sections of the city throngs of men poured to the center, seeking information as to what had occurred, and adding to the general alarm by repeating the rumors, magnified to the utmost extent."[139] The resolution of this particular panic, a symptom of the city's mood on this Saturday after the riot, was not found in the historical record.

Public sentiment in Baltimore, after the riot, had turned almost instantly against the Union. A *Baltimore Sun* reporter said: "One...indication of the change in popular sentiment was the disappearance of the Stars and Stripes...[and the appearance] of the flag of Maryland...and innumerable Confederate flags pinned to the lapels of...citizens."[140]

Although, before Friday's riot, Baltimoreans had been of two opinions about secession — some for and some against — now,

138. *The Sun* (Baltimore) April 22, 1861.
139. *Baltimore American*, April 22, 1861.
140. *The Sun* (Baltimore) April 22, 1861.

suddenly, all citizens were of the same mind. All were now Confederates. The widely believed rumors of more Northern troops coming through Baltimore — marching through the city — were seen as an attack on the city! In retrospect, such a panic by a whole city is difficult to grasp. Why did the citizens believe, strongly and sincerely, that it was to be attacked by Union troops — troops wanting only to get through that city and reach Washington? Looking back into those times, it perhaps tells us how strange the world had suddenly become to the citizens on the streets of Baltimore.

The citizens thoroughly backed Mayor Brown and Marshall Kane in their startling decision to burn the railroad bridges. It was a city in panic, no longer able to reason. Rumors followed rumors. Rumors that Saturday morning told of approaching troops from Philadelphia "crossing the Susquehanna [River]...en route to Baltimore," wrote the Baltimore American, "with orders to fight their way through the city and rumors of troops coming down from Pennsylvania, already at Cockeysville, marching steadily toward the city...originally two thousand troops...the number rose rapidly in the mouth of rumor to five, eight, ten thousand. Instantly the streets were in an uproar, the cry to arms rang out.... A fresh impulse was given to the excitement by a report of another body of troops...marching on the city by the Reisterdown road and...already at Pikesville, seven miles distant."[141] Ever increasing fear. The city reacted to that fear, hurrying to gather together an army to resist the invaders.

This Baltimore army, in those hectic hours, was organized by the chief of police, Marshall George P. Kane. Marshall Kane, quick to take charge, had, the night before, after the riot, telegraphed to the city of Frederick for troops with the message:

141. *Baltimore American*, April 22, 1861.

> STREETS RED WITH MARYLAND BLOOD: SEND EXRESSES OVER THE MOUNTAINS OF MARYLAND AND VIRGINIA FOR THE RIFLEMEN TO COME WITHOUT DELAY. FRESH HORDES WILL BE DOWN ON US TOMORROW. WE WILL FIGHT THEM AND WHIP THEM, OR DIE.[142]

Mayor Brown later wrote that Marshall Kane had taken matters into his own hands: "The sending of this dispatch was indeed a startling event.... The marshal of police...was so carried away by the frenzy of the hour that he had on his own responsibility summoned volunteers from Virginia and Maryland... [But Marshall] Kane was indispensable because no one could control as he could the secession element in the city, which was then in the ascendancy..."[143] City authorities, according to Mayor Brown, decided not to interfere with Marshall Kane's aggressive moves to build up the Baltimore army.[144]

On Saturday morning, responding to Marshall Kane's summons, "a company of men, numbering about seventy, under the command of Captain Bradley Johnson [a strong Confederate sympathizer], arrived from Frederick...and were quartered [near] the Marshall of Police."

In midmorning the Towson [Maryland] Mounted Guard rode into Monument Square and waited to receive orders from Marshall Kane. The steamer Pioneer arrived from Easton with two companies of troops. "About 4 o'clock a considerable excitement was occasioned by the appearance of a company of mounted men...the Patapsco Dragoons...from Arundel County. They rode up to the Fountain Hotel and inquired for the Governor, but were told that functionary had gone home. They then proceeded to the Mayor's office and offered their services for the defence of the city..."

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142. Coyle, Wilbur F., "The Mayors of Baltimore," in *The Municipal Journal* (Baltimore], May 9, 1919, p. 2.

143. *Daily Exchange*, April 22, 1861.

144. Brown, George W., *Baltimore and the Nineteenth of April, 1861*, Baltimore: 1887, Johns Hopkins University, p. 70.

"Large numbers of arms of every description were taken possession of by the city and in a few hours several thousand stand of arms were packed away at the office of Marshall Kane..."[145]

By the end of that day the city of Baltimore had raised an army of 15,000 men.[146] That army, under Marshall George Kane, was equal in size to Mr. Lincoln's entire regular army — which was stationed in the far west.

A visitor to the city reported, "A perfect reign of terror prevails.... No stranger could enter the city without being watched and followed. Nothing but secession flags are to be seen and no man dare proclaim himself in favor of the Union. The secession mob seems to have complete possession of the city, and the police and military are...acting with them.... A Vigilance Committee...holds permanent session at Barnum's Hotel...."[147]

In Washington that Saturday morning President Lincoln was up early — to be told to his great dismay that Washington had been cut off in the night! No telegraph, no trains, no mails. The country's new president was isolated in the White House.

Mr. Lincoln had already developed his work habits; he arose very early in the morning and worked at his desk or with his new cabinet. He had chosen an impressive cabinet: Secretary Seward, "an accomplished, courtly diplomatist"; Secretary of the Treasury Chase, "stately, astute, polished as steel," Secretary of War Cameron, "clear headed and cool." In the middle of the morning he would usually join Mary Lincoln and the two younger sons, Tad and Willie, for breakfast. Robert, the eldest son, was away at Harvard at the moment. A fourth son, Eddie had died back in Springfield.

Also in the family household was Elizabeth Todd Grimsley, a cousin of Mrs. Lincoln who was helping to settle the family into their new home. She later reported that the Executive Mansion was not in a welcoming state when the Lincolns moved in; the "family apartments...were in deplorably shabby condition," presenting a

145. *Daily Exchange*, April 22, 1861.
146. Brown, P. 63.
147. *New York Times*, April 22, 1861.

challenge to the new occupants to make their quarters livable. Mr. Lincoln delighted in the two boys — Willie, "frank and loving, a counterpoint of his father, save that he was handsome," and Tad, eight, "bubbling over with innocent fun, whose laugh rang out through the house."[148] A little visitor remembered many years later that Mr. Lincoln liked to bounce his boys, and other children, on his knee.[149] That little girl remembered his calling her a "flibbertigibbet," a new word to her; he explained that a "flibbertigibbet" was "a small, slim thing with curls and a white dress and a blue sash who flies instead of walking."[150] Mr. Lincoln always wanted a daughter. Mary Lincoln, a short, plump brunette, was, in those early days in the Executive Mansion, a charming supporter of her husband; a visitor remembered sitting beside her on a sofa, her hostess "dressed in a fresh lilac organdy and looking very attractive."[151] The East Room of the Executive Mansion was occupied by soldiers to protect the President. Concern about the safety of Mr. Lincoln had prompted his friends to install a company of Kansas soldiers in the East Room. Jim Lane, an early supporter of Mr. Lincoln, "walked proudly up and down the ranks" of his company of Kansas volunteers.[152]

On Saturday morning, after a night in which the threat of an attack on Washington hung over the city, General Winfield Scott's carriage arrived at the Executive Mansion, stopping under the portico. Mr. Lincoln, who had just finished his breakfast, was told that the general had arrived. He quickly came down the stairs to save the hugely overweight general, who suffered severely from gout, from climbing the stairs to Mr. Lincoln's office. At the bottom of the stairs, Mr. Lincoln encountered Mayor Brown's delegation,

148. Grimsley, Elizabeth Todd, *Six Months in the White House.* Illinois State Historical Society, Vol. xix, Nos 3-4, Oct. 1926-Jan. 1927, P. 43.

149. Bayne, Julia Taft, *Tad Lincoln's Father*, Boston: 1931, Little, Brown and Company, p. 6.

150. *Ibid*, p. 13.

151. *Ibid*, p. 9.

152. Hay, John, *Lincoln and the Civil War, in the Diaries and Letters of John Hay*, New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1939, p. 1.

Messrs. Bond, Brune and Dobbin, who had stayed overnight in Washington to see Mr. Lincoln in the morning. Mr. Lincoln read their letter from Mayor Brown and Governor Hicks, composed at Mayor Brown's home just before the burning of the bridges. It contained the statement, "It is not possible for more soldiers to pass through Baltimore, unless they fight their way at every step."[153] Mr. Lincoln took the three men from Baltimore out to General Scott's carriage. After he had studied the letter the general said, "March them around." Mr. Lincoln took the delegation up to his office and composed a reply for them to Mayor Brown and Governor Hicks.

It said, "For the future troops must be brought here, but I make no point of bringing them through Baltimore.... General Scott said this morning, 'March them around Baltimore, and not through it.' By this a collision of the people of Baltimore...will be avoided, unless they go out of their way to seek it."

Mr. Lincoln said half playfully to the committee as he composed the reply, "If I grant you this concession, that no troops shall pass through the city, you will be back tomorrow demanding that none shall be marched around it."[154] This was a prescient comment. The committee sent a dispatch to Mayor Brown:

"We have seen the President and General Scott. We have a letter...declaring that no troops shall be brought through Baltimore, if...without opposition...they can be marched around Baltimore."

Mayor Brown and his advisors, on receiving this dispatch, were dissatisfied with this interview with Mr. Lincoln, being of the opinion that "Northern troops should not be allowed to pollute the soil of Maryland..."[155] Mayor Brown sent a second committee, two members of the Maryland Legislature, a Mr. Kennedy and a Mr. Harris, to Washington to extract further concessions from Mr. Lincoln. Apparently they were successful; they sent a dispatch to

153. Nicolay, John G. and Hay, John, *Abraham Lincoln A History*, New York: 1890, The Century Company, Vol. IV, p. 126.

154. Nicolay, John G. and Hay, John, *Abraham Lincoln A History*, Vol. IV, p. 127.

155. Scharf, J. Thomas, *A History of Maryland*, Hatboro, PA., Tradition Press, Vol. III, p. 415.

Mayor Brown that they had "seen the President…and General Scott…. The result is the transmission of orders that will stop the passage of troops through or around the city."[156]

The record is not clear but apparently Mr. Lincoln was not satisfied with these negotiations; on Saturday afternoon, April 20, 1861, the President sent a telegram to Mayor Brown and Governor Hicks requesting them to come to Washington by special train.[157] Governor Hicks had returned to the Maryland capital at Annapolis, but Mayor Brown made arrangements to come to Washington on the train on the following day, Sunday, April 21. Mayor Brown and Governor Hicks had kept secret from the President their complicity in the bridge burning around Baltimore.

The Massachusetts Sixth Regiment, which had arrived from, Baltimore on Friday afternoon after the riot, had, in the absence of other quarters, been put up the Senate chamber — a symptom of the lack of preparation for war by the government. A New York Times correspondent described the scene: "It is a warm, sunny day, this 20th day of April…. The Capitol…the temple of legislation…has become the temple of Mars…. It now needs passwords and countersigns to gain entrance…a sentinel marching to and fro…. Armed men and rude implements of carnage…[now reside] in these marble corridors and gorgeous rooms…. On the luxurious damask and brocade covered sofas lay…men who…never before reposed in such magnificence. Over the tapestried carpet are strewn…stores of the Commissary's Department…a slab of bacon, quarters of beef, a saddle of mutton…tin drinking cups, bags of salt…. In the halls and corridors men were being drilled…. In broad contrast to the dark and polished marble wainscoting are the blue uniforms and rough bearing of the men…. In the Vice-President's chair sat Col. Jones, the commandant of the [Massachusetts Sixth Regiment]…. The privates were engaged at the Senators' desks writing letters…"[158]

156. *Ibid*., p. 416.
157. Nicolay and Hay, p. 127.
158. *The New York Times*, April 24, 1861.

On Saturday John Hay, Mr. Lincoln's 22-year-old secretary, went to the Capitol building to see the Massachusetts soldiers. "The scene was very novel," wrote the light-hearted John Hay in his diary.[159] "The contrast was very painful between the grey-haired dignity that filled the Senate Chamber when I saw it last and the present throng of bright-looking Yankee boys, the most of them bearing the signs of New England rusticity...scattered over the desks, chairs and galleries, some loafing, many writing letters, slowly with plow-hardened hands, or with rapid glancing clerkly fingers.... The Hall of Representatives is as yet empty. Lying on a sofa and looking upward, the magnificence of the barracks made me envy the soldiery who would be quartered there. The...skylights overarching the vast hall like heaven blushed and blazed with gold and the heraldic devices of the married States while all around...the eye was rested by the massive simple splendor of the stalagmite bronze reliefs. The spirit of our institutions seemed visibly present...

"The Massachusetts men drilled...on the Avenue [Pennsylvania Avenue].... They step together well and look as if they mean business," John Hay recorded.[160]

Clara Barton "rose early on Saturday to persuade neighboring grocers to sell her as many provisions as they would, hired a train of Negro servants, and proceeded to march down Pennsylvania Avenue, laden with wicker baskets," wrote her biographer Elizabeth Brown Pryor. Besides food, she packed every useful article she could dream of; she had emptied her pockets and drawers of combs, sewing utensils, thread, needles, thimbles, scissors, pens, strings, salves, tallow, etc. Old sheets were torn up for towels and handkerchiefs. With such a cargo she had no trouble passing the guards at the Capitol. Once inside, her former pupils crowded around her, anxious for news. She had only one copy of the hometown newspaper, the *Worcester Spy*, so she sat in the chair reserved for the president of the Senate and read aloud to the men,

159. Hay, pp. 4-5.
160. Hay, pp. 4-5.

joking later that it was 'better attention than I have been accustomed to see in the old time.'" The troops were homesick, she later recalled, and she became fanatical in her pledge to herself that our boys would "never lack a kindly hand or a sister's sympathy."[161]

In Philadelphia that Saturday, April 20, 1861, the Massachusetts Eighth and New York Seventh regiments were in hotels, having arrived Friday night on their way to rescue Washington. They heard of the riot in Baltimore. And they heard rumors that the city of Baltimore would try to stop them from going through that city on their way to Washington. Anxious to get to the capital the men of the two regiments were stymied for the moment while their officers tried to work out a way to get them to Washington.

General Benjamin Butler was visited in his hotel room by Mr. Sam Felton, the president of the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad, the railroad from Philadelphia to Baltimore. Mr. Felton told General Butler "that the Mayor of Baltimore had got a promise from him that no more trains should be sent through Baltimore, and the further fact that the Gunpowder River bridges, which were very long trestle-works some miles from Baltimore had been burned, so that no troops could be sent by rail. The question then arose, how should I get to Washington?"[162] General Ben Butler was now aware that he could not get his regiment to Washington by his original route...the train from Philadelphia to Baltimore and then down to Washington. He had to devise an alternate route bypassing Baltimore.

Ben Butler, a Massachusetts lawyer-politician, was hardly an experienced military man — he had been a general for less than a week. He was now thrown into a crisis: Washington was threatened with imminent capture by the Confederates, and his route to the capital was blocked by Baltimore thugs. He could get no

161. Pryor, Elizabeth Brown, *Professional Angel*, Philadelphia: 1987, University of Pennsylvania Press, pp. 78-9.

162. Butler, *Autobiography*, p. 181.

help from the War Department in Washington — there was no communication of any kind between Washington and Philadelphia; the telegraph wires had been cut and trains could not carry mail over the burned out bridges.

The new general seemed to relish the challenge. Not one to wait for orders — which would get him into a number of difficulties with Washington officials in coming months — Butler did not try to contact isolated Washington. He might, for example, have tried to send a special messenger across the Maryland countryside to Washington for instructions from the War Department. If he considered it he did not mention it in his memoirs. He tackled the problem on his own. Looking at maps, he first considered taking his regiment on the [still operating] train to Perryville, commandeering the ferry steamer *Maryland*, carrying his regiment across the Susquehanna River, and then marching cross country to Washington. From rumors and news about the excitement of the people in Maryland, Butler believed that his regiment would likely be attacked as it marched through Maryland. He decided to ask Colonel Lefferts and the New York Seventh to join him in that march, calculating that a larger force could better resist attacks by Marylanders.[163]

Colonel Lefferts, proud leader of a proud regiment, did not take to the idea of joining forces with General Butler, especially if he were to come under Butler's command. Two very large egos could but collide..."I did my very best to persuade Colonel Lefferts to go with me," Ben Butler wrote later, "He was not persuaded, and in violation of the Articles of War, refused to be commanded. He was going to take a steamer and go up the Potomac to Washington, and I left him," wrote Butler in his memoirs.[164] Colonel Lefferts had a different notion for getting to Washington with his New York Seventh regiment, entirely by water.

163. *Ibid.*, pp. 182-4.
164. *Ibid., p. 188.*

Since Colonel Lefferts refused to augment Butler's force for a march across Maryland to Washington, the general decided on a different route, avoiding that long march across hostile country. Mr. Felton, the railroad president, gave him permission and encouragement to take his regiment to Perryville on the train, and put his regiment aboard the ferry steamer *Maryland* [which belonged to the railroad], and steam down Chesapeake Bay to Annapolis. Butler would then, on foot or on whatever railroad that was available, head for Washington, twenty five miles away. It was a tenuous plan — for one thing, Mr. Felton worried that the ferry steamer Maryland may have already fallen into the hands of Baltimore thugs. For another, travel from Annapolis to Washington was problematical; the railroad may have been torn up, and the countryside was likely hostile to marching troops.

General Butler, aware of possible criticism, wrote to Governor John Andrew, back in Boston:

"Colonel Lefferts has refused to march with me. I go alone at three o'clock to execute this imperfect plan.

"If I succeed, success will justify me. If I fail, purity of intention will excuse want of judgment or rashness."[165]

Butler said, in his memoirs, "[I was advised that] all Maryland had risen as one man to oppose [Northern troops]. But I have never believed much in…rumors."[166] He elaborated on his plan: "I inquired into the soundings of the harbor at Annapolis, and into other matters pertaining to [my planned] movement…. I would take the train from Philadelphia to Perryville, on the Susquehanna River, then seize the ferry-boat *Maryland*, and go to Annapolis, and hold the town with such aid as I could get from the Naval Academy, which could probably supply me with provisions. The premises of the academy were surrounded on three sides by a heavy wall, and overlooked the water on the fourth, so that they could easily be protected with their guns. I believed I could hold Annapolis…."[167]

165. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
166. *Ibid.*, pp. 182-4.

Mr. Felton enthusiastically supported General Butler. Butler said to Mr. Felton, "I may have to burn your boat," referring to the steamer *Maryland*, which may have been taken over by secessionists. "Do so," replied Mr. Felton, and immediately wrote out an order authorizing its destruction. General Butler continued, "He…put the *Maryland* at my disposal…[and] would provide her with water and coal, if the enemy had not taken possession of her…. Mr. Felton tried to get those instructions to the commander of the steamer. But they failed to reach him, the telegraph wires being cut…. I then sent out my brother [Andrew Jackson Butler[168]], who accompanied me as a civilian, to purchase pick-axes for entrenching tools, and to obtain…camp kettles and other means for encamping the regiment, in case we had to march. It was three o'clock in the morning [Saturday] before the whole matter was determined on.

"At eleven o'clock in the forenoon [Saturday, April 20]…[my regiment] embarked on the train…. I was told by Mr. Felton, who was the last man I shook hands with as I got on the train…that he believed the steamer *Maryland* had been captured by Baltimore 'roughs' as he expressed it. I thanked him and busied myself…in preparing the regiment for action. I went through the cars, saw every man, examined his rifle…stood over him while he loaded it, and saw that it was all right. I then told all of them that when we got to Perryville, we expected to make an assault on the ferryboat Maryland, and to take it away from the Confederates who had captured it….that we were to go on the boat at all hazards, whatever resistance was made, and that I would lead the column as this undertaking was very important and that I chose to share the danger with them. I said that we probably should lose a considerable number of men, and that…each in his own way [should] prepare himself for the event in the three or four hours that were left to us."

167. *Ibid.*, P. 189.

168. Parton, James, *General Butler in New Orleans*, Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, p.69.

General Butler continued in his memoirs, "Everything being done that I could do I sat down, not having my clothes off since I left Boston, and according to my habit, went to sleep.... I seemed to have hardly closed my eyes when the cry of 'man overboard' awakened me. The train stopped. I looked out of the window of my car, and saw one of my men...had stripped himself of everything but his trousers and his shoes, and was going across the fields. He had jumped from the train when it was running at full speed.... Some of the men were off the car chasing him. Not willing to lose time, I ordered the bugle to sound recall of the men, and told three or four railroad men that he had deserted and that there was a reward of thirty dollars [three hundred fifty dollars in today's money] offered for him...."[169]

The train rolled on toward Perryville with its load of new, apprehensive soldiers. "When the train arrived within three quarters of mile from the *Maryland* at Perryville, it was halted, and I detailed the Salem Zouaves,[170] my best drilled company, to act as skirmishers and threw them out on each side of the road into the forest. The regiment was then formed into platoons and we marched down without a sound of drum until we got in sight of the boat, myself marching at their head.

"A little incident which shows the civilian's idea of war occurred here. My brother came alongside of me as we were marching down to the boat, and I observed that he had in his hand a heavy pick-axe handle.

'What in the world are you going to do with that?' I asked.

'Why, you expect to fight don't you?

169. Three or four days later, after Butler had arrived in Annapolis, the man was brought in. General Butler remembered, "He was a man of intelligence. The shock had been too much for him. I told him I could not allow him to serve in arms...but if he chose to stay and cook...and did well I would not punish him further.... This he did and...showed himself to be a man whose only fault was that he had had his first fright." Ben Butler had his soft side.

170. The Zouaves, a name taken from Algerian units in the French Foreign Legion, were known for precision drilling and flashy uniforms of bright-colored jackets and pantaloons. Several Massachusetts regiments had Zouave companies.

'Yes.'

'Well, I...know how to handle this weapon in a hand to hand fight....'

As he was a man six feet two in his stockings...I said to him, 'Come on,' and he stepped on board the ferryboat with me.

"But all this preparation was needless," remembered General Butler. "There was nobody there but some of the officers and crew of the boat. I found...no coal on board...and the regiment went to work...to coal her." The *Maryland* was a huge steamer built to carry a train of railroad cars across the Susquehanna River. General Butler explained, "There were [railroad] tracks on the upper deck for the transportation of [railroad] cars. We put four cars loaded with coal upon these tracks; we could not stop to stow it."[171]

General Butler wrote in his memoirs, "There was no water on board for drinking, but we found...a number of empty whiskey barrels, which we filled with good water.... Three days' rations of chicken, turkey, and tongue had been given us at the Continental Hotel [at Philadelphia], but all that had been eaten...as might have been expected of raw volunteers. With this outfit we steamed for Annapolis. It was a fine night." Thus on Saturday evening, April 20, 1861, General Ben Butler and the Massachusetts Eighth Regiment steamed down Chesapeake Bay headed for Annapolis. They had no way of knowing whether the captain and crew were loyal or treasonable, or "whether they were likely to steer the boat to Annapolis or run her ashore," wrote General Butler's biographer James Parton, "questions much discussed among officers and men.... But Butler had men on board...who were capable of navigating any boat in any sea"[172] if they were needed. So General Butler took his

171. The Maryland steamer carried trains across the Susquehanna from Perryville to Havre de Grace. The river was, in those early days of railroads, much too wide for a bridge. The train from Philadelphia stopped at, Perryville; the cars were marshalled on board by way of railroad tracks that led to the ship's upper deck which was covered by tracks to receive the cars. After steaming across the river to the slip at Havre de Grace, the cars were shuttled off the ferry and reassembled on the railroad track leading on to Baltimore.

172. Parton, p. 75.

chances with the captain of the steamer, at least for the next few hours.

"We got into Annapolis Harbor," wrote General Butler in his memoirs, "and steamed up to the wharf of the [Naval] Academy.... As nobody knew we were coming, we expected the old town would be perfectly quiet but...the 'assembly' was beaten...the academy was all lighted up and it was quite evident that we were expected.... No guns were fired and no attack made, and the men were piled up on the deck so thickly that we could hardly [avoid] stepping on them..."[173]

General Butler sent his brother ashore in a boat to seek out the commandant of the Academy, Commodore Blake. Minutes after his brother had pulled away from the darkened ship, General Butler heard another boat approaching the *Maryland*; "I heard the sounds of oars, apparently muffled. Directly I could see a boat with five people in it, four rowing. When they got fairly within gunshot, I called out: 'What boat is this?' 'What steamer is that?' was the reply. The answer went back: 'Come alongside or I will fire into you.'

"A few strokes of the oar brought the boat alongside with a young gentleman in the uniform of the United States navy. When he was fairly on deck two soldiers seized him and held him fast. 'Who are you and what are you here for?' I asked. 'I am Lieutenant Matthews sent by Commodore Blake, commandant of the Naval Academy, to learn what steamer this is.'

"'Very well, I can tell you easily. But whether I shall allow you to communicate it to Commodore Blake is another question. This is the steamer *Maryland*, which plies as a ferry-boat between Havre de Grace and Perryville. I am General Butler, of Massachusetts, and my troops here are Massachusetts men, and we propose landing here.' I was thus careful because I had heard that a great many of the naval officers had quit the service.

173. Butler, p. 189.

"'I am rejoiced to hear it,' said the young lieutenant, 'and so will Commodore Blake. He is afraid that this boat holds a lot of Baltimore roughs who have come to capture the station.'"[174] Commodore Blake had been in a terrified state for several days, expecting Baltimore "plug uglies" to attack him and perhaps try to take the old battleship *Constitution* as a Confederate prize. The *Constitution* was the legendary "Old Ironsides" of American history. That ship lay at the naval academy wharf, aground in mud. Commodore Blake, in the naval academy, was surrounded by the hostile population of Annapolis. He had the guns on the ship ready to fire on attackers. "Large parties of secessionists were round the ship every day, noting her assailable points," testified officers of the ship later. "The [local] militia drilled in sight of the ship…during the night signals were exchanged along the banks and across the river…but the danger to the town as one of the batteries was pointed directly at it…deterred them."[175]

Commodore Blake "was tortured with anxiety for the safety of the *Constitution*. Upon seeing the steamer *Maryland* he had concluded that here, at last, were the Baltimore ruffians, come to seize his ship and lay waste to the academy."[176]

Lieutenant Mathews stayed on the *Maryland* that night as they waited for daybreak and permission to land the Massachusetts regiment.

* * *

At Philadelphia, on that Saturday, April 20, 1861, Colonel Marshall Lefferts and his New York Seventh Regiment had a different day. After his verbal tussle with Ben Butler about who was to be in charge of the troops trying to rescue Washington, and his refusal to join Butler in Butler's plan to get to Washington by way of

174. Butler, p. 189.
175. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
176. *Ibid.* p. 78.

Annapolis, Marshall Lefferts decided to try to get to there by water — by taking his regiment on a ship from Philadelphia down the coast and up the Potomac River to Washington. He must have worried about Confederate cannon along the shores of the Potomac which could fire on him as he went up the river toward Washington, but he took that chance.

Marshall Lefferts, a well-known, substantial figure, was able to obtain a ship to carry his regiment. Tied up at a Philadelphia wharf was the steamer *Boston*; Colonel Lefferts negotiated its immediate lease, paying with his own money.

Private Theodore Winthrop of the New York Seventh wrote later that his fellow soldiers were ready to go through Baltimore and fight the "plug uglies" to get to Washington — which they understood might be attacked at any moment by the Confederates. But their commander had another plan; they were ordered to load themselves on to the steamer Boston at the Philadelphia docks. "At two o'clock…we marched down Jefferson Avenue to…embark…. We tramped on board, and were allotted about the craft from the top to the bottom story. We took tents…and grub on board and steamed away down the Delaware in the sweet April afternoon."[177]

Private Fitz-James O'Brien later recalled the *Boston* vessel, "The boat was old and small, and even in smooth water careened so that the men had to be moved from side to side to keep her on an even keel. How so many men could be crowded into such narrow quarters is still a mystery to me…. We were obliged to sleep in all sorts of impossible attitudes. There is an ingenious device known to carpenters as 'dovetailing' and we were so thick that [for sleeping] we had to dovetail."[178]

Private Winthrop remembered more pleasantly, "We…laid ourselves about the decks to tan or bronze or burn scarlet,

177. Winthrop, Theodore, "New York Seventh," *The Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1861, p. 745.

178. Roehrenbeck, William J., *The Regiment That Saved the Capital*, New York: 1961, Thomas Yoseloff, pp. 38-40.

according to complexion.... We were like any other excursionists, except for the stacks of bright guns and guard-mounting and drill that went on all the time...The young citizens...toughened rapidly to business."[179]

The New York Seventh finished the day of Saturday, April 20, 1861, steaming down the Atlantic coast.

179. Winthrop, p. 746.

Chapter 4. Mr. Lincoln and Mayor Brown

> "The robber's hand is at the throat of the government.... May the great heart of the North turn away sickened at such a spectacle."
>
> — *The New York Times.*

Sunday, April 21, 1861

Washington had been isolated since Friday night — no railroads, no telegraph, no mail. Mr. Lincoln, in the Executive Mansion, waited for Union troops to rescue the capital from impending capture. In Baltimore, angry and bellicose citizens waited to fight Union troops coming through Baltimore on the way to save Washington. In Annapolis, General Butler's troops were stalled in their mission to reach Washington.

On Sunday, critical events were happening in Washington, in Baltimore, and in Annapolis.

* * *

In Washington early on that Sunday morning Mr. Lincoln — who had had nothing but bad news since he became president —

got some more bad news. He received the report that the Norfolk Navy Yard had been destroyed during the night. It had been destroyed to keep it from the Secessionists. The very important Norfolk Navy Yard was a huge loss to the Union but would have been a great gain for the Confederacy had they captured it intact. The South, with its agrarian economy, had little capacity for shipbuilding and for making armaments; an intact Norfolk Navy Yard would have increased considerably the Confederacy's capability for making war. The Navy Yard at Norfolk, surrounded by secessionist Virginia, could not be held by the Union.

The loss of the Navy Yard was another symptom of the Union's lack of military preparedness; government installations could not be protected since almost no army or navy forces were available. General Scott could not muster protection when Virginia seceded and the Norfolk Navy Yard was surrounded by a secessionist state. That installation was doomed. Aware that secessionists had designs upon the post, Mr. Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, had trusted the elderly Commandant of the Navy Yard, Charles McCauley, to look after the Union's interests. But some of his officers were disloyal and as soon as Virginia passed her ordinance of secession, those secretly secessionist officers overwhelmed McCauley's will power; they talked him into scuttling Union ships and they set things up for a secessionist take over of the Navy Yard. The Union men on McCauley's staff, realizing what the secessionists officers were up to, decided to destroy the Yard to keep it out of secessionist hands.

The destruction began late Saturday night, April 20, and was finished, by moonlight, in the early hours of Sunday morning. Those warships which were partially repaired and not seaworthy, "fated vessels left behind,"[180] were put to the torch, along with dry-docks and repair shops. Hundreds of cannon, tons of powder and thousands of rifles were destroyed. A war correspondent for the New York Times watched the conflagration and filed this report:

180. *New York Times*, April 26, 1861.

"It is impossible to describe the scene of destruction.... Anyone who has seen a ship burn and knows how like a fiery serpent the flame leaps from pitchy deck to smoking shrouds, and writhes to their very top, around the masts that stand like martyrs doomed, can form some idea of the wonderful display that followed. [When barracks and shops and dry-docks] were also fired, the conflagration roared like a hurricane, and the flames...darted high, and fell, and leaped up again...with the crackling, crashing roar of destruction beneath. But in all this magnificent scene, the old [wooden] warship Pennsylvania was the centre-piece. She was a very giant in death, as she had been in life. She was a sea of flame...and when her bowels were being consumed, then did she spout from every porthole of every deck, torrents and cataracts of fire that to the mind of Milton would have [been] a frigate of hell pouring out...broadsides of infernal fire."[181]

The loss of the Navy Yard exemplified two of Mr. Lincoln's difficulties as he waited for Union troops to rescue Washington: He had almost no armed forces; and he had to work with officers who were often disloyal and who might resign at any moment. Mr. Lincoln was stunned by the resignation of one of his favorite officers, Captain John Magruder, whom General Scott particularly trusted as a key officer in the defence of Washington. "No single case of defection gave Lincoln such astonishment and pain as this one," wrote Lincoln's secretary, John Nicolay, "'Only three days ago,' Mr. Lincoln said when the fact was made known to him, 'Magruder came voluntarily to me in this room, and with his own lips...repeated over and over again his...protestations of loyalty and fidelity."[182] John Magruder became a Confederate general and fought against the Union in many major battles.

"It was not merely the loss of an officer," recalled John Nicolay, "but the significance of this...act of perfidy which troubled the President. Was there no patriotism left...was all sense of personal

181. *Ibid.*
182. Nicolay and Hay, p. 142.

obligation, everyday honesty, and of manliness of character gone also? Was everything crumbling at his touch?"[183]

Later on Sunday morning President Lincoln waited for a delegation to arrive from Baltimore in response to his dispatch of yesterday. He had asked Mayor Brown and Governor Hicks to come to Washington to try to resolve Baltimore's problem with Union troops passing through that city. Governor Hicks had left Baltimore for the statehouse in Annapolis so Mayor George Brown came without him. Why Governor Hicks did not go out of his way to join Mayor Brown on this extremely important mission is not clear from the record; perhaps he did not care to face Mr. Lincoln in case the well-kept secret of having ordered the bridge burning happened to be disclosed to the president during the meeting. Mayor Brown took a special train to Washington, accompanied by Messrs. Brune and Dobbin, who had seen Mr. Lincoln the day before, and S. Teackle Wallis, a prominent Baltimore secessionist.

The train carrying Mayor Brown and his entourage arrived in Washington at 10 A.M. Sunday morning. They went immediately to the Executive Mansion where President Lincoln and General Winfield Scott met them; Secretary of State William Seward, Secretary of the Treasury Salmon Chase, Secretary of War Simon Cameron, and the rest of the cabinet were immediately summoned for this critical conference. It was a long meeting, lasting until nearly 2 o'clock Sunday afternoon; the discussion was carefully recorded by John Nicolay, the president's secretary, and later published. Mayor Brown also recorded and published his version of the meeting.

That Mayor Brown had ordered the burning of bridges around Baltimore was a secret that had been carefully kept from Mr. Lincoln; but in this meeting it was discovered. Under sharp questioning by Simon Cameron, the Secretary of War, George Brown was forced to admit that he had authorized the bridge burning. He tried to justify himself to the President. He said that

183. *Ibid*, p. 143.

Baltimore citizens took Mr. Lincoln's proclamation calling for 75,000 troops "as an act of war on the South.... It was not surprising," he boldly told the President, "that a high-spirited people, holding such opinions, should resent the passage of Northern troops through their city for such a purpose...."[184] Mr. Lincoln's quiet calm was shattered. "He sprang up from his chair," remembered Mayor Brown, "and walked backward and forward ... [and] said, with great feeling, 'Mr. Brown, I am not a learned man! I am not a learned man!' [He exclaimed] that his proclamation had not been correctly understood; that he had no intention of bringing on a war, but that his purpose was to defend the capital, which was in danger of being bombarded from the heights across the Potomac."[185] Mr. Lincoln must be given high marks for patience in not showering outrage on this man who had just admitted that it was he who had isolated Washington from the North and prevented Union troops from reaching that city. The big issue in the Civil War at the moment was the imminent capture of the capital, and Brown stood before the president, brazen in his defiance. (A few weeks later Mr. Lincoln, patient no longer, had him put in prison.)

President Lincoln insisted to Mayor Brown that Union troops must come through Maryland to get to Washington, but not necessarily through Baltimore. General Scott said that troops could march around Baltimore and if Marylanders attacked them they would have to fight back. Mr. Lincoln agreed that no more troops would be ordered to go through Baltimore if they were allowed to march around that city. Mayor Brown promised to keep Baltimoreans from attacking Union troops who were trying to march around Baltimore, still emphasizing that Union troops should not go through Maryland at all. On this rather fuzzy agreement, Mayor Brown and his people left the Executive Mansion and returned to the railroad station.

184. Brown, p. 71.
185. Brown, p. 71.

As they were boarding the train to return to Baltimore, the mayor was handed a "sensational telegram"[186] from John Garrett, the president of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, announcing the arrival of troops at Cockeysville (on the railroad leading to Baltimore, fourteen miles away). The mayor reacted, feeling double-crossed by Mr. Lincoln who had minutes ago promised not to send troops through Baltimore; the mayor and his entourage rushed back to the Executive Mansion. "To Mr. Lincoln's astonishment, Mayor Brown and his companions again made their appearance." The mayor showed him the telegram from John Garrett:

"Three thousand Northern troops are reported to be at Cockeysville; intense excitement prevails; churches have been dismissed, and the people are arming in mass. To prevent terrific bloodshed, the result of your interview and arrangement is awaited."[187]

Mayor Brown then left the Executive Mansion and sent a telegram to John Garrett:

"We have...seen the President...and the troops are ordered to return.... A messenger goes with us from General Scott. We return immediately."[188]

The messenger from General Scott was apparently intended to ensure that the Union troops did indeed retreat from Cockeysville.

Again Mr. Lincoln showed forbearance and consideration to Mayor Brown, reassuring him — while the mayor was burning bridges!

The heavy solemnity of these reports is lightened by comments of John Hay, Mr. Lincoln's assistant secretary, young and rather humorous (later to be a well-known Secretary of State); he wrote in his diary: "This morning came a penitent and supplicant crowd of conditional secessionists from Baltimore, who, having sowed the wind, seem to have no particular desire to reap the whirlwind. They

186. Nicolay and Hay, pp. 130-2.
187. Nicolay and Hay, pp. 130-2.
188. Brown, p. 73.

begged that no more federal troops should be sent through Baltimore…that they would give the government all possible assistance in transporting its troops…across the State by any other route. The President, always inclined to give all men credit for fairness and sincerity, consented to this arrangement, contrary to the advice of some of his most prominent counselors."[189]

When the *New York Times*, days later — having been cut off from contact with Washington — learned of these negotiations between President Lincoln and Mayor Brown, that newspaper was outraged:

"It is the most discouraging event which has yet taken place… Even a defeat on the field of battle would hardly be so demoralizing." And, commenting on Lincoln's agreement not to send his troops through Baltimore, the *Times* said, "Good heavens! Is this the conception of the Commander-in-Chief of the existing state of affairs? The Capital of our country is begirt with enemies… cut off… by an armed mob in a neighboring city… and yet the [Commander-in-Chief] sends for the Mayor of this rabble… he negotiates with him, he discusses calmly where our armies may be allowed to march to save the Capital….The robber's hand is at the throat of our government [and] our philosophic president has leisure to discuss 'all the questions of the day' with the Magistrate of the rascally crew who have been murdering our soldiers and seek now to cut us off from saving Washington… well may the great heart of the North turn away sickened at such a spectacle."[190]

* * *

In Baltimore on Sunday, April 21, 1861 — two days after the riot and one day after Marshall Kane had raised an army of 15,000 men — the city was churning. "It was a fearful day," Mayor George Brown remembered. "Women and children, and men, too, were wild with excitement [about the] certainty of a fight in the streets if Northern troops should enter…. Those who were arming in hot

189. Hay, John, "Letters of John Hay and Extracts from Diary," New York: Gordian Press, 1909, p. 16.

190. *New York Times*, April 25, 1861.

haste to resist the passage of Northern troops little recked of the fearful risk to which they were exposing themselves and all they held dear."[191]

"Such a sabbath…never [before] dawned upon Baltimore," said the Baltimore Sun in a front page story, "thousands…were upon the streets approaching City Hall, the headquarters of the defensive operations…the clamor for arms increased when it was reported that Northern troops were at Cockeysville…. Mounted cavalry were dashing in every direction…. Citizens with guns in their hands…ran in double-quick time to their rendezvous…. Such was the eagerness of the people collected around the bulletin boards to read the latest news that the individual nearest the board read out the intelligence in a loud voice to those behind him. A number of wagons were supplied with…things necessary for the [anticipated] dead and wounded…bandages and lint were furnished…and surgeons were awaiting the call…."[192]

A visitor to Baltimore on that Sunday wrote later: "I noticed…a general disposition to refrain from expressing opinions. All were anxious for news but…nobody was willing to utter sentiments…. In the streets there were immense crowds and [a] high pitch of excitement. Baltimore…was one vast mob…surging to and fro…. Many had small secession cards pinned on their coat collars…. I found the greatest crowd surging around the telegraph office waiting anxiously for news…. As the wires leading to New York had been cut there was no news from that direction…. I found the police entirely in sympathy with the Secessionists and indisposed to act against the mob. Marshall Kane and the [Police] Commissioners do not make any concealment of their proclivities for the Southern Confederacy. Mayor Brown, upon whom I called, seemed to be disposed to do his duty — providing he knew what it was, and could do it safely…. He seemed to be in a high state of excitement…evidently afraid that I was a Northern aggressor with

191. Brown, p. 71.
192. *Baltimore Sun*, April 22, 1861.

whom it was indiscreet to be in too close communications.... I went out into the crowd to gather public opinion.... The crowd was feasting on [rumors]: The Government had backed down, Virginia was coming, Virginia was not coming, [Union soldiers] were marching one hundred abreast across Maryland.... Among the crowds there were many men from the country who carried shotguns and duck guns and old-fashioned 'horse pistols'. The best weapons appeared to be in the hands of young men — boys of eighteen — with the physique and dress and style of...villainous reckless rascality."[193]

Advanced arms technology invented by a Baltimore citizen was brought forward to protect the city: "The centrifugal steam gun which will throw three hundred balls per minute...will be used in the city's defence," said the Baltimore Sun. "The authorities [will] plant the gun at the head of the street up which the invading troops will attempt to march and sweep the ranks." [194]

* * *

In Annapolis Harbor, on Sunday morning, General Butler's all night wait on the steamer *Maryland* ended when his brother, Andrew Jackson Butler, returned to the ship bringing Commodore Blake. The night before, on arriving at the naval academy wharf in the dark, Andrew Butler had been seized by a sentinel; he was taken to the elderly Commodore Blake who suspected him to be from Baltimore. And Mr. Butler had thought that Blake might be a secessionist. "These two gentlemen eyed one another with intense distrust. The navy had not then been sifted of all its traitors; and upon the mind of Commodore Blake the apprehension of violent men from Baltimore had been working for painful days and nights. Probing questions were asked by both.... After long fencing...Mr. Butler said, 'We may as well end this now.... They are Yankee troops on board that boat,

193. *New York Times*, April 24, 1861.
194. *Baltimore Sun*, April 22, 1861.

and if I don't get back pretty soon, they will open fire upon you.' The worthy commodore drew a long breath of relief and said he would visit General Butler at daybreak."[195]

Ben Butler remembered, "I invited Commodore Blake to the quarter-deck where we could be alone, and told him who I was, and why I was there, and asked him what he desired. The old man burst into tears, and shed them like rain for a moment, then broke out:

'Thank God! Thank God! Won't you save the *Constitution*?' I did not know that he referred to the ship...and I answered:

'Yes, that is what I am here for.'

'Are those your orders? Then the old ship is safe.'

'I have no orders,' said I, 'I am carrying on war on my own hook; I cut loose from my orders when I left Philadelphia. What do you want me to do with the *Constitution*?

'I want some sailor men', he answered, 'for I have no sailors; I want to get her out, and get her afloat.'

'Oh, well,' said I, 'I have plenty of sailor men from the town of Marblehead [Massachusetts], where their fathers built the *Constitution*.'

'Well,' he said, 'can you stop and help me?'

'I must stop,' I replied, 'I can go no further at present, and I propose to stop here and hold this town.'

'Oh, well,' he said, 'you can do that as long as we can keep off any force from the sea. This peninsula in connected with the mainland by a little neck not a half mile wide, and a small body of troops...can hold off a large force. Now, General,' he added, 'won't you stop over with me and take breakfast, and then we can talk of this matter wider.'

"I breakfasted at headquarters with Commodore and Mrs. Blake, and their son, who was then an officer in the United States navy. After breakfast...I got the first glimpse of what a civil war meant. I was beginning to say something to Commodore Blake

195. Parton, James, *General Butler in New Orleans*, Boston: 1863, Houghton Mifflin and Company, pp. 79-80.

about getting the *Constitution* out of her dock. As I was speaking, I caught the eye of Mrs. Blake, and saw that I was saying something that I ought not to say. I changed the topic of conversation at once.... Meanwhile Lieutenant Blake, the son, rose and went out as did his father, leaving the lady and myself at the table. Then she remarked: 'General, I observed that you took the hint I tried to give you.... I think it my duty, however painful it is, to give you the reason. My son, I regret to say, sides with the secession, and while I feel certain that nothing you say would be communicated to the enemies of the country by him, yet we find lately that you cannot be too careful."[196] General Butler, at this time, had not yet brought his regiment on shore; they were still aboard the *Maryland*. They had been without food since they left Philadelphia the day before. When he returned to the ship after having breakfast with Commodore Blake, Butler was handed two notes. One was from Governor Hicks; Annapolis was Hicks' city, the capital of Maryland. The Hicks note said:

"I would most earnestly advise that you do not land your men at Annapolis. The excitement here is very great, and I think it is prudent that you should take your men elsewhere...."[197]

The other note was from a Capt. Miller, quartermaster of the army post at Annapolis:

"Having been entrusted by General Scott with the arrangements for transporting your regiments...to Washington, and it being impractical to procure [railroad] cars, I recommend that the troops remain on board the steamer until further orders can be received from General Scott."

Ben Butler was not impressed by Miller's note since General Scott could not have known that Butler had troops at Annapolis. He wrote later, "This letter from Miller I knew was an entire romance on his part and I suspected him of disloyalty. When I got to Washington I reported him to General Scott who relieved him..."

196. Butler, *Autobiography*, p. 193.
197. *Ibid., p.194.*

To Governor Hicks he wrote — in the painstakingly florid style common to official letters of that period:

"I had the honor to receive your note by the hands of Lieutenant Matthews.... I am sorry that your Excellency should advise against my landing here. I am not provisioned for a long voyage. Finding the ordinary means of communicating cut off by the burning of railroad bridges by a mob, I have been obliged to make this detour..."

General Butler then gave his attention to the *Constitution*, the "Old Ironsides" of history and legend. Launched in Boston in 1797, the bolts fastening its timbers and the copper sheathing on the bottom were made by Paul Revere.

Sunk in the mud at its dock, the *Constitution* was a 50-gun frigate, "the swiftest sailer of its era"[198] with a wide expanse of sail and carrying a crew of 450. It had made its country proud in the War of 1812, fifty years before. Watching British shot bounce off its oak sides, the crew, according to legend, dubbed it "Old Ironsides." In 1828, fallen into disrepair and condemned as unseaworthy, it had been recommended for breaking up. But the American public was aroused to save it by Oliver Wendell Holmes' poem "Old Ironsides" — "Ay, tear her battered ensign down" — and it was restored. The Naval Academy asked for the frigate as a school ship a few years before the Civil War broke out. Why the famous ship happened to be sunk in mud at the Annapolis wharf is not revealed in historical records. Commodore Blake knew that capture of that sailing vessel by the Confederates would be a great boost to the South and a great blow to the North.

"I detailed a company of Marbleheaders, who were fishermen," remembered General Butler, "to...work the ship under the command of Lieutenant [later Admiral] Rogers. He worked with a will...he [took] all the upper deck cannons [off the *Constitution* and loaded them.]on board the *Maryland*, thus lightening the old wooden warship. We got up her anchors, which were several feet deep in the

198. Butler, *Autobiography,* p. 194, 195.

mud, and after very strenuous efforts on the part of all of us, the Constitution, [towed by] the *Maryland*, was worked around and down the bay into deep water."

The *Constitution* having been rescued, General Butler issued a bulletin to his troops:

"The frigate *Constitution* has lain for a long time at this port…at the mercy of the armed mob which…paralyzes the…state of Maryland…. This is a triumph…. The blood of our friends shed by the Baltimore mob is avenged. The Eighth Regiment may hereafter cheer lustily upon all proper occasions…. The old *Constitution*…is safe from her enemies."[199]

After the *Constitution* floated free, the *Maryland* started back toward Annapolis Harbor. Here the loyalty of the *Maryland* captain came into question. General Butler's staff suspected the captain, and although the general had withheld final judgment, he had put the engine room in charge of four of his own soldiers. Then he spoke to the captain:

"Captain, have you faith in my word?"

"Yes," said the captain.

"I am told you mean to run us aground…If you do…I'll blow your brains out."

The poor captain evinced symptoms of terror so remarkable as to convince General Butler that if any mishap befell the vessel it would not be owing to any disaffection by the captain. General Butler dozed off in his chair. Suddenly the *Maryland* went aground in the mud. General Butler, in view of the difficulties in negotiating the shallow harbor, did not shoot the captain but put him in the ship's jail.[200]

General Butler wrote in his memoirs, "The *Maryland*, on returning got hard and fast aground, and that closed the day of Sunday." [201] Whether the captain of the *Maryland*, suspected of

199. Parton, p. 84.

200. Moore, Frank, Editor, *The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events, New York, 1862,* New York: Putnam, Vol. I, Documents, pp. 148-154.

201. Butler, p. 195.

possible disloyalty by Butler's men, intentionally ran the *Maryland* aground in Annapolis Harbor was never resolved. But it must have been hugely frustrating for Ben Butler — an impatient sort of officer — on his urgent way to rescue Washington, to have his regiment stranded aboard a grounded steamer, and still unfed since Philadelphia.

The New York Seventh Regiment, one thousand men crammed together on the little steamer *Boston*, had traveled down the Atlantic Coast all night trying to get to Washington by water. Private Fitz-James O'Brien described the trip: "April 21 was Sunday. A glorious, cloudless day. We had steamed all night and about 10 o'clock were in the vicinity of Chesapeake Bay. At 11 o'clock, A.M., we had service read by our chaplain.... At 1 o'clock we were seven miles from the coast. The day was calm and delicious...we drank in with delight the serenity of the scene. A hazy tent of blue hung over our heads. On one side the dim thread of shore.... Flights of loons and ducks skimmed along the ocean."[202]

The story is continued by Emmons Clark, Captain of the Second Company, "The day was beautiful, and the sea was calm and mirror-like. The sanctity of the Sabbath was...respected.... Testaments, which pious mothers had placed in knapsacks, were perused with sober earnestness. About noon the Capes of the Chesapeake were in view. Vessels were occasionally seen, but they all avoided us [possibly because they thought we may have been] secessionists.... The only information obtained was from the captain of a Yankee schooner, who was hastening home as fast as the wind and tide would permit, and who furnished the not very pleasant intelligence, that 'the Norfolk Navy Yard had been burned, and the secessionists were capturing all the vessels in Hampton Roads.' If the vessels at the Norfolk Navy Yard were in possession of the secessionists, these were surely dangerous waters. One gun...could sink the *Boston*.... The *Boston* pushed forward with all speed up the Chesapeake. During the afternoon, no reliable information could be

202. Moore, pp. 148-154.

obtained as to the obstruction of the Potomac by the rebels and...it was decided [not to go up the Potomac to Washington] but to proceed up Chesapeake Bay to Annapolis.... "After passing the mouth of the Potomac, at 9 P.M., many sought repose after the excitement and anxiety of the day, while others, attracted by the beauty of the night...watched the progress of the steamer.... About 11 P.M. the attention of all was attracted to a wonderful phenomenon in the sky, which was at once accepted as an omen of hope and promise. Around the moon appeared three well-defined circles of red, white and blue, of remarkable beauty and distinctness. The mate of the steamer, a rough and rugged seaman, was one of the first to notice the strange phenomenon, and with the superstition peculiar to the American sailor, exclaimed, 'Behold our banner in the sky! God, who placed those circles of red, white and blue, in the heavens, will not allow our flag to go down, or the Union...to be dissolved.' The beauty of the sentimeant...by the untutored seaman, electrified his hearers...."[203]

The same phenomenon was described by Private Fitz-James O'Brien: "About this time a curious phenomenon occurred. Some men in the regiment who have fine voices had been singing, with all that delicious effect that music at sea produces.... While we were singing, the moon swung clear, and round her white disk were seen three circles, clear and distinct — red, white, and blue! The omen was caught by common instinct, and a thousand cheers went up to that heaven that seemed...to manifest its approval of the cause in which we were about to fight."[204]

Colonel Lefferts, aboard the Boston, was on his way to Annapolis to join in Ben Butler's effort to get to Washington by an overland route. After his unpleasant disagreement with Butler at Philadelphia, Colonel Lefferts did not look forward with enthusiasm, one would guess, to dealing again with that imperious general.

203. Clark, Emmons, *History of The Second Company of the Seventh Regiment, N.Y.S. Militia*, New York: 1864, Vol. I, pp. 296-7.

204. Moore, pp. 148-154.

All that Sunday night, April 20, 1861, the *Boston*, with its one thousand soldiers of the New York Seventh Regiment, steamed up Chesapeake Bay, heading for Annapolis.

Chapter 5. Butler Stymied at Annapolis

> "There is no Washington in that, no Jackson in that, no manhood or honor in that...."
> — Abraham Lincoln

Monday, April 22, 1861

Washington was still isolated. Baltimore was now a military city. At Annapolis, Union troops, trying to get to Washington, were stymied. In those three cities the drama of the rescue of Washington continued to unfold.

* * *

In Washington, Abraham Lincoln was taking charge of the war — he was proceeding without Congress. Congress was not in session and would not meet for several months. Lincoln decided that he could not wait for that legislative body to give him new laws to deal with the secession.

He afterwards said: "It became necessary for me to choose whether...I should let the Government...fall into ruin, or whether,

availing myself of the broader powers conferred by the Constitution in cases of insurrection, I would make an effort to save it…." John Nicolay, Lincoln's secretary later wrote: "Assuming without hesitation the responsibilities which existing laws did not authorize…Lincoln made a series of orders…to meet the new crisis…. A convoy was ordered out to guard the steamers bringing gold from California; fifteen merchant steamers were ordered to be purchased…and armed…for coast protection and blockade service; two million dollars were placed in the hands of three eminent citizens of New York, Messrs. Dix, Opdyke and Blatchford, to be in their judgment disbursed for the public defense; another commission of leading citizens of New York was empowered to exercise…the full authority of the War and Navy Departments in organizing troops and…supplies."

Mr. Lincoln was a determined man in those early days of the Civil War. One of his aggressive moves to save the Union will be, in the coming weeks, the imprisonment of suspected Maryland secessionists without trial; it will raise the famous "habeas corpus" issue and trigger an historic conflict between Abraham Lincoln and the Supreme Court.

On Monday forenoon, Mr. Lincoln received a letter from Governor Thomas Hicks who was now at Annapolis, Maryland's capital. Governor Hicks, the president believed, was trying to keep Maryland from seceding and was thus a friend. But Thomas Hicks's motives were sometimes obscure. At this moment he was trying to stop General Butler from landing his troops at Annapolis. He wrote to the president, "I feel it my duty most respectfully to advise you that no more troops be ordered or allowed to pass through Maryland, and that the troops be sent elsewhere; and I most respectfully urge you that a truce be offered by you, so that the effusion of blood may be prevented." And then Governor Hicks made a startling proposal in his letter to President Lincoln; he wrote: "I respectfully suggest that Lord Lyons [British minister in Washington] be requested to act as mediator between the contending parties of our country."

Mr. Lincoln was taken aback at this proposal. "Lincoln thought it absurd in itself," wrote John Nicolay, "but it awakened [in Lincoln] the painful apprehension that [Hicks's] hitherto friendly disposition might suddenly change to active hostility." Nicolay continued: "Hicks was still an effective breakwater against those who were striving day and night to force Maryland into some official act of insurrection." Mr. Lincoln had Seward write a "kindly rebuke" to Governor Hicks saying that "foreign arbitrament, least of all by a European monarchy" was not appropriate.[205]

On that Monday morning Mr. Lincoln received another Baltimore committee, this time a religious group which had a Baptist minister for a spokesman. The minister "bluntly proposed that Mr. Lincoln should recognize the independence of the Southern States," remembered John Nicolay. Mr. Lincoln kept his temper "and replied that neither the President nor Congress possessed the...authority to do this.... [206]Then the clergyman insisted that no more troops be sent through Maryland. Mr. Lincoln answered — letting off a little steam: "You, gentlemen, come here to me and ask for peace...and yet have no word of condemnation for those who are making war on us. You express great horror of bloodshed, and yet would not lay a straw in the way of those who are organizing in Virginia...to capture this city.... [Baltimore] citizens attack troops sent to the defense of this Government...and yet you would have me break my oath and surrender the Government without a blow. There is no Washington in that — no Jackson in that — there is no manhood or honor in that.... I must have troops to defend this capital. Geographically it lies surrounded by the soil of Maryland.... Our men are not moles and can't dig under the earth; they are not birds and can't fly through the air. There is no way but to march across and that they must do.... Keep your rowdies in Baltimore.... Go home and tell your people that if they will not attack us, we will

205. Nicolay and Hay, pp. 138-9.
206. *Ibid*, pp. 140-1.

not attack them; but if they do attack us, we will return it, and that severely."

On Monday, more secessionist members of the Union government resigned, John Nicolay remembered, including "many officers of high grade and important functions.... Commodore Franklin Buchanan, in charge of the Washington navy yard [adjacent to the capital], together with nearly all his Subordinate officers, suddenly discovered their unwillingness to keep their oaths and serve the United States — and [Monday] night this invaluable navy depot, with all it vast stores of material, its immense workshops and priceless machinery, was intrusted to [one officer] and a handful of marines."[207] Washington, in its third day of isolation, took on the atmosphere of a city under siege. Large stores of flour from local mills, as well as flour already loaded on schooners for shipment, were seized and long trains of carts moved through the capital to store this flour in government buildings. Prices of provisions were going up. John Hay, Lincoln's cheerful and irreverent young assistant secretary, noted in his diary, "Housekeepers here are beginning to dread famine. Flour has made a sudden spring to $18 a barrel [$200 in today's money] and corn meal rejoices in the respectable atmosphere of $2.50 a bushel [$30 today]. Willard's Hotel] has reduced its tea table to the severe simplicity of pound cake."[208]

Public buildings were barricaded and guarded by sentinels. Travel and business came to a standstill. Theaters were closed. For safety, the government sent duplicates of important documents with citizens escaping northward by whatever means they could find.[209] At night, Mr. Lincoln, in the Executive Mansion, could see "the camp-fires of the Confederates, who were assembling in force" on the Virginia shore across the Potomac River from Washington.[210]

207. Nicolay and Hay, pp. 140-1.

208. Hay, John, "Lincoln and the Civil War in the Diaries and Letters of John Hay," Edited by Tyler Dennett, New York: 1939, Dodd, Mead and Company, p. 8.

209.Nicolay and Hay, pp. 140-1.

* * *

Baltimore was now a military city. The Baltimore Exchange reported that on Monday morning, "volunteers were out in great numbers...engaged in drill practice.... The heavy tramp of feet was heard to resound in every direction...." Military enrollment "went vigorously forward." Keeping order in the city had become a major concern of the Board of Police: "bands of music are prohibited from parading the streets, children are to be at home after 6 P.M., and intoxicated persons are to be promptly arrested."[211] The rowdy city of Baltimore had been brought under military control.

Baltimore was organizing to repell an invasion of Northern troops. Alarms of the approach of troops threatening the city continued to excite the people on the streets; newspapers announced that General Butler had arrived at Annapolis, thirty miles away, with thousands of troops!

Black residents volunteered to help defend Baltimore. "Between 200 and 300 of our most respectable colored residents made a tender of their services to the city authorities. The Mayor thanked them for their offer, and informed them that their services will be called for if they [are needed]."[212]

Marshall Kane's army continued to increase; two companies of volunteers from nearby Carroll County arrived and put themselves under the control of Marshall Kane "for the defence of the city."[213]

Marshall Kane took possession of four railroad cars of Federal military supplies — muskets, cannon, tents, and uniforms for one thousand men. These supplies were transported, in a parade of horse carts accompanied by sixty policemen, across the city and stored next to Marshall Kane's headquarters.

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210. Poore, Ben Perley, "Perley's Reminiscences of Sixty Years in the National Metropolis," Philadelphia: 1886, Hubbard Brothers Publishers, p. 80.

211. *The Baltimore American and Advertiser*, April 23, 1861.

212. *The Baltimore Exchange*, April 23, 1861.

213. *The Baltimore American*.

Baltimore police, "upon secret information", stormed a large warehouse on a city wharf and "seized...21 cases of guns, a number of gun carriages and a large number of 6 lb cartridges....," reported the *Baltimore Exchange* newspaper. "They were supposed to have come from New York.... Several thousand pounds of lead have also been seized and will be worked up by the military."[214]

A pony express was set up between Baltimore and Philadelphia, riders galloping with mail between those two cities now cut off from each other by the destruction of the railroad bridges.[215]

* * *

At Annapolis, the railroad leading out of Annapolis was torn up by local firebrands to keep General Butler from using the railroad to take his troops to Washington. Governor Hicks had warned Butler not to land his troops. General Butler was in a difficult situation. His mission was to get his troops to Washington, but at the moment he wasn't even able to land them at Annapolis. And he had no means, surrounded by an enemy populace, to outfit them for a march to Washington. "The secessionists in the vicinity had inaugurated a reign of terror," recalled a soldier later, "At the Naval Academy alone...floated the American flag..."[216]

Ben Butler was on his own; with communications to Washington cut off he had no contact with the War Department for orders or advice. He had to work out his own plan to get his men to Washington.

On Monday morning General Butler went ashore and met with Governor Hicks and the mayor of Annapolis. "Both of them exhorted me not to think of landing," remembered General Butler in his memoirs,[217] "they said all Maryland was ready to rush to arms,

214. *The Baltimore Exchange.*

215. *The Baltimore American.*

216. Clark, Emmons, *History of the Second Company of the Seventh Regiment*, New York: 1864, James G. Gregory, p. 298. *Ibid., p. 298.*

that the people of Annapolis could not be long restrained, and that the railroad towards Washington had been torn up and was fully guarded. I replied that I certainly should land and go on through to Washington but that I had no provisions…I desired to purchase the provisions I needed…. They then said that I could not buy an ounce of provisions in Annapolis…no patriot would sell to Yankee troops…. The refusal to sell provisions and the objection to my landing were urged again and again."[218] Butler's Massachusetts Eighth Regiment had passed the night on board the *Maryland* steamer, aground in the mud of Annapolis Harbor. As dawn broke, the men on the grounded ship saw "a strange apparition, a steamer approaching from the sea, crammed with troops, their muskets glinting in the rising sun."[219]

The new ship was the steamer *Boston* slipping into Annapolis Harbor with the New York Seventh Regiment and Colonel Lefferts on board. Emmons Clark, captain of Second Company in the New York Seventh, was on the Boston; he wrote later: "At an early hour, the steamer *Boston* reached the vicinity of Annapolis, and waited until daylight to enter the harbor. As she proceeded towards the city in the fog of the morning, a large man-of-war appeared in view…there was some apprehension…but the stars and stripes became visible, and all breathed more freely…. The vessel proved to be the old frigate Constitution…. A half mile distant lay a long and clumsy steamer…the *Maryland*…and with the aid of a glass it was ascertained that the Eighth Massachusetts was on board. In the distance was the ancient city of Annapolis, and, on either side of the beautiful bay were the fine farms and plantations for which Maryland was distinguished."[220]

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217. Butler, p. 195.

218. Later, both the mayor and the governor had a change of heart. The mayor applied for the post of sutler (vendor of provisions and liquor to soldiers] at Butler's headquarters in Annapolis, and the governor asked Butler to keep the seal of the State of Maryland in his safe to keep it from being attached to an ordinance of secession. Butler, p. 195.

219. Parton, James, *General Butler in New Orleans*, Boston: 1863, Houghton Mifflin and Company, p. 83.

220. Clark, p. 297.

The arrival of the steamer *Boston* was also described by Private Theodore Winthrop, Ninth Company, New York Seventh Regiment: "Our dread, that, while we were off at sea, some great and perhaps fatal harm had been suffered [by Washington], was greatly lightened.... If Annapolis was safe, why not also Washington?

"If treachery had [taken place] at the capital, would not treachery have reached out its hand and snatched this doorway? These were our speculations as we began to discern objects [in the dawn], before we heard news.[221] But news came presently. Boats pulled off to us. Our officers were put into communication with the shore. The scanty facts of our position became known from man to man. We privates have greatly the advantage in battling with the doubt of such a time. We know that we have nothing to do with rumors," wrote Private Winthrop, tongue in cheek, "Orders are what we go by And orders are Facts." Private Winthrop continued, "We lay a long, lingering day, off Annapolis. The air was full of doubt, and we were eager to be let loose."[222]

The officer in charge on the *Constitution* advised Colonel Lefferts not to land his New York Seventh Regiment until he had talked to General Butler aboard the *Maryland*. General Butler and Colonel Lefferts then went ashore to work out permission to land with the local authorities. The New York Seventh men, on the *Boston*, waiting to land, "were becoming more and more uncomfortable," recalled Captain Clark, "for two days they had been crowded almost to suffocation: many had been seasick; meals...were unpalatable; and the water was exhausted." [223]

While Colonel Lefferts and General Butler were negotiating in Annapolis, the *Maryland* tried to get itself off the mud bank. "We could see them, half a mile off," wrote Winthrop, who was onboard the *Boston*, gathering a story for the *Atlantic Monthly*, "making every effort to lighten her. The soldiers tramped forward and aft, danced on her decks [to loosen her from the mud; then they] shot overboard

221. Winthrop, p. 748.
222. Winthrop, p. 748.
223. Clark, p. 297.

a heavy railroad car. We saw them start the car for the stern with a cheer. It went overboard. One end stuck in the mud. The other end fell back and rested against the boat. They went at it with axes and presently it was clear. As the tide rose, we gave our grounded friends a lift with a hawser. No go! The *Boston* tugged in vain. We got near enough to see the whites of the Massachusetts eyes, and their unlucky faces and uniforms all grimy from their sleeping in coal dust. They could not have been blacker..."[224] The *Maryland* remained aground in the mud. A few hours later another attempt was made by the *Boston* to pull the *Maryland* free. Again unsuccessful.

Midday on that Monday things looked grim; the rescue of Washington was not in sight. The Massachusetts Eighth was still on the stranded ferry steamer *Maryland*, and the New York Seventh was still on the *Boston*.

Late on Monday afternoon, after trying to negotiate with Governor Hicks and the mayor of Annapolis, General Butler and Colonel Lefferts decided to land their men without the permission of local authorities. The Naval Academy provided a protected landing; the Academy was walled on all sides except on the side of the Severn River [which flowed into Annapolis Harbor]. Colonel Lefferts brought the *Boston* up to the Academy wharf on the Severn River and unloaded his regiment; his men marched up the Academy lawn which sloped down from the Academy buildings to the river. The stores and camp equipment were then unloaded.

"Has anybody seen Annapolis?" wrote Private Theodore Winthrop, recalling the landing of the New York Seventh. "It is a picturesque old place, sleepy enough, and astonished to find itself wide-awaked by a war and obliged to take responsibility, and share for good and ill in the movement of its time. The buildings of the Naval Academy stand parallel with river Severn, with a green plateau toward the water and a lovely green lawn toward the town. All the scene was fresh and fair with April, and I fancied, as the

224. Winthrop, p. 748.

Boston touched the wharf, that I discerned the sweet fragrance of apple-blossoms coming with the spring-time airs....

"We disembarked and were halted in line between the buildings and the river. Presently, while we stood at ease, people began to arrive, — some with smallish fruit to sell, some with smaller news to give. Nobody knew whether Washington was taken. Nobody knew whether Jeff Davis was now spitting in the Presidential spittoon, and scribbling his distiches with the nib of the Presidential goose-quill. We were absolutely in doubt whether a seemingly inoffensive knot of rustics, on a mound without the inclosure, might not, at tap of drum, unmask a battery of giant columbiads [cannon], and belch blazes at us, raking our line.

"Nothing so entertaining happened.... At sunset our band played strains sweet enough to pacify all Secession, if Secession had music in its soul. Coffee, hot from the coppers of the Naval School, and biscuit were served out to us; and while we supped, we talked with our visitors, such as were allowed to approach. First the boys of the School — fine little blue jackets — had their story to tell. 'Do you see that white farm-house across the river?' says a brave pigmy of a chap in navy uniform. 'That is head-quarters for Secession. They were going to take the School from us, sir, and the frigate; but we've got ahead of 'em, now you and the Massachusetts boys have come down,' and he twinkled all over."

Private Winthrop continued, "After the middies came anxious citizens from the town. Scared, all of them. Now that we were come and had assured them that persons and property were to be protected, they ventured to speak of the disgusting tyranny to which they, American citizens, had been subjected. We came into contact with utter social anarchy. No man, unless he was ready to risk assault, loss of property, or exile, dared to act or talk like a freeman.... So we tried to reassure the Annapolitans that we meant to do our duty...and mob law was to be put down, so far as we could do it."[225]

225. Winthrop, p. 748.

Colonel Lefferts met with the officers of the Academy and the city and state authorities and then consulted the officers of his regiment. One of his officers, Captain Emmons Clark, recalled that Colonel Lefferts said that he had been told that "the whole country was up in arms, that the roads were infested with guerillas and bush-whackers, and that large parties of Baltimore secessionists were prepared to attack...the regiment. A brief discussion of this news resulted in the unanimous decision that it was the Seventh Regiment's duty to face all dangers, surmount all obstacles, push rapidly forward...and spare no effort to reach...Washington."[226]

At this moment, remembered Captain Clark, a strange event took place. General Butler, who had earned the dislike of the officers of the New York Seventh, "approached and asked permission to say a few words. His...manner and general conduct...at Philadelphia and in...Annapolis had rendered him extremely unpopular.... It was not without some embarrassment...that he commenced his speech to the officers of the Seventh Regiment. It is safe to say that in all his oratorical efforts he has never been more successful. With flattering reference to the fair fame and patriotism of the Seventh Regiment, and to the courage and endurance of his "plain Massachusetts boys;" with well-worded expressions of patriotism and devotion to the country and love for the Union and it's flag; with apt allusions to the historical past, to the momentous present, and to the future so dependent upon the acts and efforts of the soldiers of New York and Massachusetts, he won the hearts of his hearers and disarmed them of their prejudices. It was no trifling victory, for he secured in the mind of every one present that character for energy and ability which he has since maintained before the American people, and which is so brilliant and commanding that it obscures his many faults and imperfections. The scene at this time was worthy of an historical painting. In the centre, a group of handsome and intelligent officers listening to General Butler, who in spite of his unsoldierly dress, dumpy figure, unprepossessing face, commands,

226. Clark, p. 299.

by his brilliant oratory, their...undivided attention; to the left, the calm river Severn...; in front, the broad bay of Annapolis, with the *Boston* at the wharf, the *Maryland* hard aground, and the *Constitution* in the distance; to the right, the members of the Seventh Regiment at rest on the greensward...the imposing buildings of the Naval, School, with its officers and students in neat uniforms...and beyond all the sleepy, antique city of Annapolis, and on a hill a frowning crowd of men and boys, watching each movement with unfriendly eyes, and beyond them the brilliant setting sun."[227]

But the wonderful scene of General Butler speaking to the officers of the New York Seventh had little effect on the prickly relation between General Butler and Colonel Lefferts. To work out an agreement on the next step for their regiments — the route to be taken to get to Washington — Butler and Lefferts met on Monday evening, after Ben Butler had given that speech to Lefferts' officers. Colonel Lefferts preferred a march on the turnpike from Annapolis to Washington, preferably after more Northern troops had arrived at Annapolis, but General Butler wanted to move fast, to repair the railroad tracks so that the soldiers could travel in railroad cars to Washington. In their conference tempers flared. General Butler described the discussion in his memoirs, "I endeavored to impress upon him the necessity of immediate action. [Lefferts said] that he had held a consultation with his officers and had concluded to remain there until more reinforcements arrived.... The trouble with Lefferts appeared to be that he had picked up somewhere a man who had once been at West Point.... Lefferts never called upon me without him...and he was...somewhat officious and not always too courteous. But I pardoned that on account of the color of his nose.... Lefferts informed me that...his officers declined to march." That remark outraged Ben Butler. "'Colonel Lefferts,' said I, 'war is not carried on in this way. A commander doesn't consult his regiment as to the propriety of obeying his orders...' Here Red Nose lighted up and said, 'General Butler you don't appear to be aware that [you]

227. Clark, p. 299.

have no right to command New York State troops....'" General Butler questioned his source of military law. "'I was educated at West Point,'" answered that gentleman. West Point was a particular sore point with General Butler, who had never attended that institution. "I turned to Lefferts," continued Ben Butler, "'What rank does this man hold in your command?' 'None at all.' 'Then I will have nothing to do with him.' I asked Lefferts again, 'Will you march?' Then Red Nose said, 'What will you do if the colonel refuses to march?'

"'If he refuses to march...I will denounce him and his regiment as fit only to march down Broadway...to be grinned at by milliners' apprentices.' I then called...for Colonel Hincks.... I said, 'Colonel Hincks, take two companies...and march out two miles towards Washington and hold it against all comers until I reinforce you. Colonel Lefferts with his whole regiment is afraid to go.' Red Nose then said, 'Such language as that, General, requires reparations among officers and gentlemen.' 'Oh, well,' said I, 'as far as Colonel Lefferts is concerned I shall be entirely satisfied with him if he shows a disposition to fight anybody anywhere; let him begin on me. But as for you, if you...do not leave this room instantly, I will direct my orderly to take you out. Good afternoon, Colonel Lefferts.' And that was the last communication that I had in person with Colonel Lefferts of the New York Seventh."

General Butler went along with Colonel Hincks and the two companies:

"I at once mounted my horse and marched with Hincks and his two companies outside the grounds of the academy, to seize the railroad depot." At the Annapolis depot they found no locomotives; all had been removed by the secessionists. Butler's men seized all the buildings without event but one which was locked. Butler ordered his men to force the door; inside they found "a small, rusty dismantled locomotive, portions of which had been removed to disable her," remembered General Butler, "I turned to the men, who stood in line in front of the depot, and said to them, 'Do any of you know anything about such a machine as this?' Charles Homans, a private of Company E, stepped forward and took a good look at the

engine and replied, 'That engine was made in our shop; I guess I can fit her up and run her.' [228]

"Charles Homans, from Beverly, Massachusetts, took a quiet squint at the engine.... The...rattle trap was an old friend.... Homans called for a gang of engine-builders," recalled Private Winthrop of the New York Seventh. "Of course they swarmed out of the ranks. They passed their hands over the locomotive a few times, and presently it was ready to whistle and wheeze and rumble and gallop, as if no traitor had ever tried to steal the go and music out of it."[229]

In the meantime Colonel Lefferts ordered the *Boston* to go across the harbor and pick up the long-suffering Massachusetts Eighth Regiment from the *Maryland* and bring them to the Naval Academy. "The Boston brought the Massachusetts Eighth ashore that night," remembered Private Winthrop, "Poor fellows! what a figure they cut.... They had come off [from Massachusetts] in hot patriot haste, half-uniformed and half-outfitted.... They were out of grub. They were parched dry for want of water on the ferryboat *Maryland*. Nobody could decipher Caucasian much less Bunker Hill Yankee, in their grimy visages. But, hungry, thirsty, grimy, these fellow were GRIT. Massachusetts ought to be proud of such hardy, cheerful, faithful sons. We were proud...to share our rations with them and to begin a fraternization which...will be *historical*." [230]

228. Butler, pp. 199-202.
229. Winthrop, p. 750.
230. *Ibid*, p. 749.

CHAPTER 6. WASHINGTON IN DESPAIR

> "From the mountain tops to the sea there is one wild shout of fierce resolve to capture Washington City.... That filthy cage of unclean birds...must be purified by fire!"
>
> — *The Richmond Examiner.*

Tuesday, April 23, 1861

Tuesday found Washington cowering, waiting for an onslaught of Confederate troops to sweep across the Potomac River from Virginia and take the city. It was some kind of a miracle that it had not happened.

Southerners were upset that Confederate forces had not captured Washington; Tuesday's Richmond [Virginia] Examiner was outspoken in its impatience:

> The capture of Washington City is perfectly within the power of Virginia and Maryland...there is not a single moment to lose to take Washington and drive [out] every Black Republican.... From the mountain tops to the sea, there is one wild shout of fierce resolve to capture Washington City.... That filthy cage of unclean

> birds must...be purified by fire. The people...are clamorous for...the onslaught.[231]

* * *

In Washington, President Lincoln was beginning to despair of Northern troops ever getting to the capital. "Why don't they come? Why don't they come?" he asked, pacing his office, peering out through the window.[232] When officers and men of the Massachusetts Sixth Regiment, in Washington since Friday, quartered in the Senate Chamber, came to the Executive Mansion to visit Mr. Lincoln, he found it difficult to contain his anxiety. "He thanked them for their presence in the capital, then added, 'I don't believe there is any North! The 7th Regiment is a myth.... You are the only Northern realities!'"[233]

In Annapolis that Tuesday morning a startling rumor came to General Butler — that a slave uprising in the Annapolis vicinity was imminent. The rebellion of slaves was in the front of many minds in the South and in the North at that time. The "Nat Turner" rebellion, just thirty years before, in 1831, had received immense publicity and no doubt was readily recalled by General Butler on hearing this rumor of a slave uprising. Nat Turner, a brooding, religious black mystic had led a band of slaves on a rampage in Virginia, hacking white men and women and children to death with axes. General Butler decided to try to head off such a slave rebellion near Annapolis; Ben Butler made a huge political mistake. In a letter from his Annapolis desk he offered his military services to Governor Hicks to help put down a slave uprising:

> I have understood within the last hour that some apprehension is entertained of an insurrection of the negro population of

231. *Richmond Examiner*, April 23, 1861. Cited in Horace Greeley, *The American Conflict, A History of the Great Rebellion*, Hartford: 1865, Vol. 1, P. 470.

232. Foote, Shelby, *The Civil War: A Narrative*, New York: 1958, Random House, Vol. I, p. 54.

233. Foote, p. 54.

> this neighborhood.... The forces under my command are not here...to countenance [the breaking of] the laws of the state of Maryland. I, therefore, am ready to cooperate with your Excellency in suppressing...any insurrection....I beg you to announce publicly that my...forces...are at your disposal...for the preservation of the peace....[234]

Governor Hicks gave immediate publicity to Butler's letter. It quieted the panic among the white citizens in the area. But Northern abolitionists were outraged when they learned of Butler's offer to use his soldiers to quell an uprising of negro slaves. In many minds in the North the war was about freeing the slaves from their Southern masters. Now Butler proposed to put down an attempt by slaves to free themselves! That was incomprehensible! But Butler's mind was clear; it worked along the lines of maintaining order. He could not countenance a rebellion, even of slaves. He took great pains to explain his thinking in his memoirs, presenting copies of letters on the issue to and from Governor Andrew in Massachusetts, a strong abolitionist, and very unhappy about Butler's offer. Butler never changed his mind on the matter. Memories of this event would turn out to be long. Butler's detractors at the time and historians since have made much of the event, darkening his reputation.

The notion of General Butler using his soldiers to resist a slave insurrection was particularly poignant since he was particularly in sympathy with the negro. In a few months he would become the first Union general to bring former slaves into his command. He became a strong proponent of the fighting qualities of freed black men, an attitude not popular, of course, in the South, but also not popular in the North. He would later send men behind Confederate lines to find slaves who wished to fight in the Union army; he brought the slave volunteers, along with their families, into Union territory. He cared for the families while training the former slaves to be Union soldiers. Large numbers of former slaves served under

234. Parton, *General Butler*, p. 89.

General Butler. He also campaigned for equal pay for black soldiers. Ben Butler was a complex man with many sides to his personality.

Governor Hicks was not entirely captivated by General Butler's offer of help. That same day Governor Hicks sent a letter to Butler complaining that he was preventing the legislature from coming together the next Friday:[235]

> Having…summoned the Legislature…to assemble…at Annapolis and having been creditably informed that you have taken military possession of the…railroad, I…protest…that such occupation of said railroad will prevent members of the legislature from reaching this city.

General Butler, irritated, replied:

> You are creditably informed that I have taken possession of the…railroad. It might have escaped your notice but at the…meeting between your Excellency and the Mayor of Annapolis and myself as to the landing of my troops [you] said that I should not land my troops because they could not pass [over] the railroad because the rails had been taken up…. It is difficult to see how it can be that if my troops could not pass over the railroad one way, members of the legislature could pass the other way…. I am endeavoring to…vacate [Annapolis] prior to the sitting of the legislature, and not be under the painful necessity of encumbering your beautiful city while the legislature is in session.

As a result of this correspondence, Governor Hicks changed the meeting place of the legislature to Frederick, Maryland, some seventy miles to the west of Annapolis. General Butler was beginning to be sympathetic to Governor Thomas Hicks. He wrote, in his memoirs, that this interaction with the governor

> brought me at once into personal, friendly relations with Governor Hicks, who was not at heart a secessionist, but only a very timid and cautious man. I informed him in a private, friendly conversation, that he must not recommend, in his message to the legislature, any discussion of the question of secession, and that if he did I should certainly proceed against him. He assured me that nothing was further from his wish or thought than secession, and

235. Butler, p. 210.

> that he would never permit the great seal of Maryland to be affixed to any such ordinance or give force and validity to it, if it were passed; and as a guarantee of his good faith in this regard, he placed the seal for safe keeping in my hands, and I so held it during the session of that legislature.
>
> I also told him that if the legislature undertook...to discuss an ordinance of secession, I should hold that to be an act of hostility to the United States, and should disperse that legislature, or, more properly speaking, would shut them up together where they might discuss it all the time... [236]

At Annapolis, on Tuesday morning, preparations by the New York Seventh Regiment were underway for the march to Washington. The Seventh had made the decision, the night before, on their route to Washington; rather than join General Butler and the Massachusetts Eighth Regiment in their plan to try to use a rebuilt railroad, the New York Seventh would begin an immediate march on foot over the turnpike to the capital.[237] The quartermaster of the Seventh had little luck in gathering materiel for the march; "the quartermaster and his men scoured the town and country in search of horses and wagons, but with trifling success; and the few vehicles and animals that made their appearance during the forenoon were of a kind that would not be tolerated in any respectable farming section of the North...."[238]

Before preparations for the march by the Seventh were very far along, a messenger from General Scott, a Colonel Lander, arrived. Colonel Lander was the thirteenth messenger sent to Annapolis by Scott; twelve others had not made it across the hostile Maryland countryside.[239] Colonel Lander had been taken prisoner by secessionists "but under false pretenses [had] induced his captors to convey him to Annapolis, where he succeeded in escaping to the Naval School."[240] He reported that the situation at Washington

236. Butler, p. 210.

237. *Richmond Examiner*, April 23, 1861, cited in Horace Greeley, *The American Conflict, A History of the Great Rebellion*, Hartford: 1865, Vol. 1, P. 470.

238. *Ibid*, p. 301.

239. Winthrop, p. 751.

was extremely critical and that the Government was intensely anxious for the troops at Annapolis to hasten to its relief. General Scott sent the message that the troops should use the railroad via Annapolis Junction. That would open a railroad route for future troops landing at Annapolis to travel to Annapolis Junction on the Annapolis and Elkridge Railroad and then on to Washington on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

Colonel Lefferts, on this order from General Scott and on the advice of Colonel Lander, abandoned his plan for a march on the turnpike. [241]

Colonel Lander told Lefferts and his officers that, from his recent experience, a march on the turnpike to Washington would likely lose two or three hundred men. The party by whom he had been captured numbered four hundred men and "all the roads were infested with troopers and bushwhackers."[242]

Colonel Lefferts, at this time, received an order from General Butler directing him to detail two companies of the Seventh to hold the Annapolis railroad depot. Colonel Lefferts did not want to tie up his troops as a railroad guard and miss the opportunity to rescue Washington; he returned the order to General Butler. General Butler "was deeply outraged at this reply…his indignation and anger at this refusal of the Seventh Regiment to obey his orders knew no bounds…," remembered an officer in the New York Seventh, "It is but justice, however, to General Butler to state that his patriotism…overcame his bad temper, and…he consented to cooperate with the Seventh in the forward movement." Under pressure from Colonel Lefferts, General Butler agreed that the New York Seventh would be allowed to be the first to arrive in Washington and thus get the major credit for rescuing the capital.

240. O'Brien, Fitz-James, "The Seventh Regiment, How it Got From New York to Washington," *The Rebellion Record*, Frank Moore, Editor, New York: 1977, Arno Press, Vol. I, Documents, pp. 149-154.

241. *Ibid*, p. 301.

242. Clark, p. 303. 10.

In this agreement with Colonel Lefferts, "General Butler assigned two companies of the Eighth Massachusetts to seize and occupy the [Annapolis] railroad depot, and, soon after midnight, two companies of the New York Seventh would take the advance to Washington, to be followed at daylight by the balance of the Eighth Massachusetts."[243] That was the end of the bitter disagreement between Colonel Lefferts and General Butler as to who was to be in charge — they would act independently but in cooperation.

Butler's Massachusetts men had stayed all Monday night at the railroad depot, guarding the repaired steam locomotive. Early on Tuesday morning some of Butler's men were sent out for a mile or two to assess the condition of the track; the track was indeed torn up, with rails taken away by Confederate sympathizers to prevent easy repair.

General Butler called for men who knew how to repair a railroad: "Nineteen stepped out of the ranks, practical railroad makers..."[244] They started to lay rails on the track leading away from Annapolis depot to establish that it could be done. Enough track was repaired to carry the locomotive a short distance along from the depot towards Washington, ready to begin the march the next day, Wednesday.

At the Naval School, at the end of the day, Tuesday, the men were enjoying a fine April evening — "clear, calm and beautiful, many getting to sleep early to prepare for a hard march the next day, when about 11 P.M. the 'long roll', the signal of immediate danger, was beat, and in an instant the quiet scene was changed into one of terrific haste and bustle." It was a false alarm; rockets had been sent up to announce enemy ships in the harbor. But it turned out to be good news. The new ships were friends, bringing more troops from the North.[245]

As Tuesday, April 23, 1861, ended, the New York Seventh Regiment and the Massachusetts Eighth Regiment had made their

243. *Ibid., p. 303.*
244. O'Brien, Vol. I, Documents, pp. 149-154.
245. Clark, p. 303. 10.

preparations to leave Annapolis early the next morning, on their way to rescue the capital of the Union.

CHAPTER 7. THE MARCH FROM ANNAPOLIS TO WASHINGTON

> "There will be some bitter work done if we ever get to blows in this war...."
>
> —Private Theodore Winthrop

First-hand reports of the march from Annapolis to Washington have come to us from three soldiers in the New York Seventh Regiment: Captain Emmons Clark, Second Company; Private Theodore Winthrop, Ninth Company; and Private Fitz-James O'Brien, Ninth Company.

Wednesday, April 24, 1861

In Washington, tension and despair. "Another night of feverish public unrest, another day of anxiety for the President," remembered John Nicolay, Lincoln's secretary. "There was indeed no attack on the city but, on the other hand, no arrival of troops.... Long faces in the streets...closed shutters and locked doors...sentinels about the Executive Mansion.... Ever since the telegraph stopped the Washington operators had been listening for

the ticking of their instruments.... General Scott kept up a series of military scouts along the Baltimore Railroad as far as Annapolis Junction, twenty miles from Washington, from which point a branch railroad ran at a right angle...twenty miles to Annapolis.... The general dared not risk a detachment...to hold the junction.... It was known, or at least strongly probable, that the volunteers from the North had been at Annapolis since Sunday morning. Why did they not land? Why did they not advance?" Nicolay noted that some three-day-old New York mail had "by a lucky chance" reached Washington. It told of "the wild, jubilant uprising of the whole immense population of the free States. All this was gratifying, pride-kindling...and yet, read and re-read...in Washington that day it would always bring the galling reflection that all this magnificent burst of patriotism was paralyzed by the obstacle of a twenty mile march between Annapolis and the junction. Had the men of the North no legs? Lincoln, by nature so calm, neverless passed this period of...isolation from the North in a state of nervous tension.... Day after day...hope was deferred; troops did not come..., railroads remained broken, messengers failed to reach their destination.... Whether a Union or a Secessionist army would first reach the capital was...an uncertainty.

"Lincoln, almost a giant in physical stature, combined...a masculine courage...with a sensitiveness...as delicate as a woman's. This Presidential trust which he had assumed was to him not a mere regalia of rank and honor.... Its terrible...responsibilities seemed...a coat of steel armor, heavy to bear, and cutting remorselessly into the...flesh. That a successor to George Washington should find himself...in the hands of his enemies was personally humiliating; but that the majesty of a great nation should be thus insulted...[and] above all, the hitherto glorious example of the republic to other nations should stand in this peril of...possible collapse...begot in him an anxiety approaching torture."[246]

246. Winthrop, p. 753.

* * *

At Annapolis, early Wednesday morning, the march to Washington began. General Winfield Scott, the great military hero of the time, would later call the march "one of the most remarkable on record."[247]

After four days of delay — days spent in negotiating to land the troops and by preliminary work to assay the feasibility of rebuilding the torn-up railroad — the troops were finally going to move out. The soldiers were ready for business. "For the treasons we came to...punish..." wrote one soldier, "there will be some bitter work done, if we ever get to blows in this war."[248]

General Butler's strategy for getting the troops to Washington consisted of marching along the railroad bed, repairing the tracks, from the Annapolis station to Annapolis Junction. At Annapolis Junction, twenty miles away, the line from Annapolis joined the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad which ran between Baltimore and Washington. The Baltimore and Ohio line from Annapolis Junction to Washington was understood to be in good repair and would carry Butler's troops on to Washington. General Butler and Colonel Lefferts had agreed that the New York Seventh would take the lead, moving out of Annapolis, marching along the railroad bed, rebuilding the tracks as they went; the Massachusetts Eighth would hold the Annapolis depot and then come along behind the New York Seventh with reinforcements.

Colonel Lefferts travelled with his regiment to Washington,[249] but General Butler remained behind. Butler was kept at Annapolis at the last moment by an order from General Scott. The order had arrived by a special messenger who had travelled at great hazard across the Maryland countryside. Speculating that the route from Annapolis to Washington would somehow be opened shortly, General Scott ordered Butler to stay in Annapolis and see that the

247. Nicolay, John G. and Hay, John, *Abraham Lincoln, A History*, Vol. 4, p. 155.
248. Parton, *General Butler*, pp. 91-93.
249. Winthrop, p. 748.

Union troops soon to arrive by ship at the port of Annapolis would be sent rapidly on to Washington. The steamer *Baltic* had already arrived on Tuesday, the day before, loaded with troops from New York.

Thus Butler was ordered to stay at Annapolis, to hold the town and the railroad, and to superintend the passage of troops on to Washington when the railroad had been repaired. General Scott created the "Department of Annapolis", putting Butler in charge with "ample powers, extending even to the suspension of habeas corpus and the bombardment of Annapolis if...necessary for the maintenance of the supremacy of the United States."[250] The suspension of habeas corpus — which took the form of jailing suspected Maryland secessionists without trial — would become a great constitutional issue in the next weeks, Abraham Lincoln would be pitted against the Supreme Court as Lincoln sought to keep Maryland from seceding. The Massachusetts men had, the day before, repaired some track leading away from the Annapolis depot, and had tested the repaired steam locomotive on that tract. They also found two platform cars to be pulled by the locomotive.

General Butler issued the order for the march:

"The detachment of the Eighth under command of Lieutenant Colonel Hincks, which has already pushed forward and occupied the railroad for three and a half miles, will remain at its advance until joined by two companies of the New York Seventh, which will take the train now in our possession, and push forward as far as the track is left uninjured by the mob. These companies will then leave the cars, and, throwing out proper skirmishers, carefully scour the country along the line of the road, while the working party of the Eighth is repairing the track.... The train of cars will return, and take up the...detachment of the Eighth now holding the depot. [The train] will again go forward as far as can be done with safety, on account of the state of the track, when [the detachment of the Eighth] will leave the train, assist the party repairing [the track],

250. O'Brien, Vol. 1, pp. 149-154.

and push forward as rapidly as possible, [repairing] the track…for the passage of the train. In the meantime the remaining portions of the Massachusetts and New York regiments will put themselves on the march, and consolidate the two regiments as rapidly as possible…"[251]

General Butler's order also gave directions for the supply of provisions, a halt of two hours in the middle of the day, the sacredness of private property, and the measures to be used in case of attack on the troops. "Nobody knew," wrote Private Theodore Winthrop, "whether Washington was taken, Nobody knew whether Jeff Davis was now spitting in the Presidential spittoon, and scribbling his distiches with the nib of the Presidential goose quill. We were absolutely in doubt…"[252]

Early on Wednesday morning, "a bright, warm spring day, the air fragrant with blossoms,"[253] the troops were in motion. John Nicolay later wrote, "Wednesday morning, April 24, being the fourth day at Annapolis for the Eighth Massachusetts and the third for the Seventh New York, they started on their twenty mile march to the junction. A couple of extemporized platform cars on which the Seventh mounted their little brass howitzers, the patched up locomotive, and two rickety passenger cars constituted their artillery, baggage, ambulance and construction train all in one… The two regiments marched, scouted, laid track, and built bridges as occasion required…"[254]

"We started at about 8 o'clock, A.M.," wrote Private Fitz-James O'Brien of the New York Seventh, "and for the first time saw the town of Annapolis, which, I may say, looked very much as if some celestial schoolboy, with a box of toys under his arm, had dropped a few houses as he was going home from school, and that the accidental settlement was called Annapolis. Through the town we marched, the people…afraid…"[255] And Private Theodore

251. Parton, pp. 91-93.
252. Winthrop, p. 748.
253. Parton, pp. 91-93.
254. Nicolay and Hay, p. 155.

Winthrop wrote, "The townspeople stare at us in a dismal silence. They have the air of men quelled by despotism. None can trust his neighbor. If he dares to be loyal, he must take his life into his hands. Most would be loyal if they dared... The bullies cow the weaker brothers... There must be an end to this mean tyranny... As we march through old Annapolis [we] see how sick the town is with doubt and alarm."[256] The soldiers, marching out of Annapolis on their way to save Washington, gave deep thought to the essence of the civil war, a war of men who have been pushed into unwanted conflict. These soldiers seemed to sense that Maryland secessionists were leading unwilling neighbors into a questionable war. That notion foreshadowed Sherman, two years later, and his bitter belief that Secessionist leaders misled the South into the war. And Sherman was bitter that Confederate leaders, after decisive defeats at Gettysburg and at Vicksburg, continued to throw men into battle with no real hope of victory over the North. Secessionist leaders had much to answer for.

Private Fitz-James O'Brien: "The tracks had been torn up between Annapolis and the Junction [with the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, some twenty miles away], and here it was that the wonderful qualities of the Massachusetts Eighth Regiment came out. The locomotive had been taken to pieces by the inhabitants...[but] a Massachusetts volunteer...says coolly, 'I made this engine, and I can put it together again.' Now engineers were needed. Nineteen stepped out of the ranks."[257] Captain Emmons Clark, commander of the Second Company of the New York Seventh, picks up the story, "The train was....ready, and consisted of two platform cars — one carrying a cannon — in front of the locomotive, and two small passenger cars pulled by the locomotive into which were crowded 250 men of the New York Seventh Regiment battalion. It was broad daylight when the train moved slowly in the direction of Annapolis Junction."[258] The engineer

255. O'Brien, Vol. 1, pp. 149-154.
256. Winthrop, p. 751.
257. O'Brien, Vol. 1, pp. 149-154.

driving the locomotive was Private Charles Homans, the soldier from Beverly, Massachusetts who had just repaired it. "Two miles from, the station," continued Captain Clark, "was found a detachment of the Eighth Massachusetts...which during the night acted as a picket and a guard for the railroad. Having been without food for nearly a day and constantly on duty, these brave and patriotic men were in a pitiful condition. [Our] haversacks were at once opened, and with a generosity almost prodigal, the members of the Seventh distributed the rations provided for their long march among their more needy comrades of the Eighth Massachusetts. Words could not express their gratitude at the unexpected relief to their sufferings; henceforth the two regiments were firm friends."[259]

"The scene is beautiful," wrote Private Winthrop, "Cattle are feeding quietly about. The air sings with birds. The chestnut leaves sparkle. Frogs whistle in the warm spring morning."[260] The train moved slowly ahead, preceded by skirmishers watching out for Marylanders, and accompanied by soldiers ready to make repairs in the track. The train stopped again and again when missing rails in the track were discovered; men fanned out into the neighboring fields and ditches and woods to seek the missing iron rails, hidden to prevent or at least to slow down repairs. The soldiers became expert in finding hidden rails and in replacing them into the broken track. Then the train started up again, proceeding slowly until the next break in the track was discovered.

Winthrop described how they dealt with one such instance: "It was found without difficulty. The imbeciles who took it up probably supposed we would not wish to get our feet wet by searching for it in the dewy grass of the next field. With incredible doltishness they had also left the...spikes beside the track.... In a few minutes [we] had the rail in place and firm enough to pass the

258. Clark, Emmons, *History of the Second Company of the Seventh Regiment*, New York: 1864, James G. Gregory, pp. 304-313.

259. Clark, pp. 304-313.

260. Winthrop, p. 751.

engine.... We were not only hurrying to succor Washington but opening the only...route between it and the loyal States."[261]

With Private Charles Homans of the Massachusetts Eighth at the throttle of the locomotive and a Massachusetts soldier shoveling coal into the firebox, the little train steamed back and forth between the working party and the Annapolis station, keeping the repaired track free from Maryland bushwhackers, and replacing exhausted men in the working party.

Unused to marching, many of the men — especially the city men of the New York Seventh Regiment — fell out with sore and blistered feet. Private Winthrop, impressed with this weakness of his regiment, later wrote of the foot soldier's need to have good feet and good shoes: "Good shoes and plenty of walking make good feet. A man who pretends to belong to an infantry company ought to keep himself in training, so that at any moment he can march twenty or thirty miles without feeling a pang or raising a blister. Was this the case with the army who rushed to defend Washington? Were you so trained, my comrades of the Seventh? A captain of a company, who will let his men march with such shoes as I have seen on the feet of some poor fellows, ought to be garroted with shoe strings.... If you find a foot soldier lying beat by the roadside, desperate as a sea-sick man, five to one his heels are too high, or his soles too narrow, or his shoe is not made straight on the inside, so that the great toe can spread into its place when he treads.... I SAY TO EVERY VOLUNTEER: TRUST IN GOD BUT KEEP YOUR FEET EASY!"[262]

261. Parton, *General Butler* pp. 91-93.
262.Winthrop, p. 753.

Chapter 8. Arrival in Washington

"Those in the capital on Thursday, April 25, 1861,
will never, during their lives, forget the event...."
— John Nicolay, Lincoln's secretary.

The march to Washington by the New York Seventh and the Massachusetts Eighth regiments was underway — soldiers marching over the railroad bed and repairing the track as they moved forward; skirmishers out in front looking for the enemy; the small steam locomotive shuttling back and forth, bringing supplies and protecting the repaired track.

"About three miles from Annapolis," Captain Emmons Clark of the New York Seventh wrote later, "a party of rebels was discovered busily at work destroying the railroad track.... A battalion was sent away into the...woods.... [The battalion] scouring the woods and the country near the railroad, and only returning to the main body to report progress, or to procure fresh men in place of those exhausted by these dashing and fatiguing movements, the certain proximity of the enemy made it prudent [for the battalion to stay ahead of] the train; the battalion...marched forward by the flank accompanied by the platform-car with the howitzer [pushed and pulled by

soldiers.]"[263] The howitzer cannon was set to blast secessionist with cannister or grape shot.

Captain Clark, in charge of a leading patrol, remembered: "[We] had advanced about [six miles] when a report was received that a body of cavalry was at a [railroad] station not far distant... A favorable position was at once secured to repel an attack, but a reconnaissance proved that the cavalry were only mounted citizens who, frightened at the approach of armed men, had hastened to the [station] to...consult with their neighbors [and were of no danger too us]...

"It was now 9 a.m. and the day was becoming increasingly hot [as we stopped and waited for the main body]... In the shade of trees, men...ate their scanty breakfast, smoked their pipes, and with the careless ease and grace of veteran woodsmen, stretched themselves on the ground for an hour's repose.

"In the...defensive position selected...the right rested upon an unpretending log house, the inmates of which had fled at the approach of the soldiers, the women and children to the woods and the master on horseback, to the town." Captain Clark remembered mostly ill of the Marylanders whom he saw on the march — this family was typical: "The house was explored, but yielded nothing to refresh the hungry and weary... It was not long before the master of the house appeared, pale and almost speechless with fear...hoping to save some portion of his household goods... By degrees, confidence was restored; the Marylander became satisfied that his uninvited guests were not thieves or robbers; a display of silver coin brought fresh eggs from beneath the bed, and meat and bread from other hiding places; and finally, a glass of excellent wine from [my] flask—which was viewed with suspicion until he had seen it tasted by Colonel Hincks and Lieutenant Bunting — opened his simple heart, and made him fearless, social, and communicative. From his statement it was evident that the whole region was thoroughly

263. Clark, Emmons, *History of the Second Company of the Seventh Regiment*, New York: 1864, James G. Gregory, pp. 304-313.

alarmed by…exaggerated rumors… He retailed the fearful stories of preparations to repel the invaders of the sacred soil of Maryland. He was confident that there was a large armed force at Annapolis Junction [waiting for us]… But like many other Southerners, when surrounded by Federal troops, he declared that 'he was a good union man himself'…It was evident, however, that his great desire was to be rid of [us], to keep on good terms with the rebels as well, and to be allowed to remain peaceably in his own quiet home. This man was a specimen of nearly all the inhabitants of Maryland encountered during the march to the Junction. They hastened away from the …railroad, taking their horses and negroes with them… They displayed indifference as to the fate of the country… selfishness…disgusting to contemplate. The negroes wore only smiling…faces…and seemed to understand that these strange movements would ultimately… [be] beneficial to their despised and downtrodden race."[264]

While Captain Clark and his Second Company of the New York Seventh proceeded in advance of the main force, Private Theodore Winthrop, of Ninth Company of the regiment, followed some distance behind, shepherding one of the two howitzers. Private Winthrop wrote, of marching from Annapolis that morning: "Outside the town, we strike the rail road and move along, the howitzers in front, bouncing along over the sleepers [railroad ties]. When our line is fully disengaged from the town, we halt… The van [of our force] rests upon a high embankment, with a pool surrounded by pine-trees on the right, green fields on the left. Cattle are feeding quietly about… The regiment groups itself along the bank and the cutting. Several Marylanders of the half-price age — under twelve — come gaping up to see us harmless invaders. Each of those young gentry is armed with a dead spring frog, perhaps by way of tribute.

Private Winthrop continued, "After a few minutes' halt, we hear the whistle of the engine. This machine is also an historic

264. Clark, pp. 304-313.

character in the war. Remember it! 'J.H. Nicholson' is its name. Charles Homans drives, and on either side stands a sentry with fixed bayonets. A new spectacle for America! But it is grand to konw that the bayonets are to protect, not to assail, Liberty and Law.

"The train leads off. We follow, by the railroad track. Presently the train returns. We pass it and trudge on in light marching order, carrying arms, blankets, haversacks, and canteen. Our knapsacks are upon the train. Fortunately our backs do not have to bear any more burden! For the day grows sultry. It is one of those breezeless baking days which brew thunder-gusts. We march on for some four miles, when, coming upon the guards of the Massachusetts Eighth, our howitzer is ordered to fall out and wait for the train. With a comrade of the Artillery, I am placed on guard over it.

"Henry Bonnell is my fellow-sentry. So we talk — keeping our eyes peeled.... Men that will tear up track are quite capable of picking off a sentry. A giant chestnut tree gives us little dots of shade from its pigmy leaves. The country about us is open and newly ploughed. Some of the fences are new, and ten rails high: but the farming is careless, and the soil thin.

"Two of the Massachusetts men come back to the gun while we are standing there. One is my friend Stephen Morris of Marblehead.... His business is, 'I make shoes in winter and fishin' in the summer.' He gives me a few facts — suspicious persons seen about the track, men on horseback in the distance. Stephen remarked, 'I don't mind life, nor yit death; but whenever I see a Massachusetts boy, I stick by him, and if them Secessionists attack us tonight, they'll git in debt.'

"Whistle again! and the train appears. We are ordered to ship our howitzer on a platform car. The engine pushes us on. This train brings our light luggage and the rear guard.... "The train goes slowly on, as a rickety train should. At intervals we see the fresh spots of track just laid by our Yankee friends. Near the sixth mile, we began to overtake squads of our fellows. The unseasonable heat of this most breathless day was too much for many of the younger men,

unaccustomed to rough work, and weakened by want of sleep and irregular food...."[265]

Captain Emmons Clark, himself commander of Second Company, New York Seventh, picks up the story: "About 10 o'clock the eight companies of the [New York Seventh] Regiment, that had remained at Annapolis [following General Butler's plan for the march] and had left there [on foot] at 7 a.m., reached the place where the Second and Sixth Companies [of the New York Seventh] had halted. As they approached...[coming down] the railroad track with their bright bayonets glistening in the sunlight, their appearance was imposing. The march of six miles [from Annapolis station] in the extreme heat had [had an effect on] the young and inexperienced soldiers, already debilitated by confinement on the steamer Boston....a few had been obliged to fall out and wait for the train which was to follow. The Second and Sixth companies now formed up and again took the advance. A march of three miles brought the Regiment to a railroad water station, where it was overtaken by the train...A railroad bridge, near the water station, had been totally destroyed by the rebels, and as rebuilding it would take considerable delay, the train was sent back to bring forward the Massachusetts Eighth. A rapidly approaching storm also necessitated a halt and preparations for its reception. Blankets were converted into tents, and pitched in the neighboring wood, but they afforded trifling protection against the storm which burst with fury.... The men were thoroughly drenched, and although the rain proved a relief from the heat...it added to their sufferings during the following night.

"After the storm, men were detailed to rebuild the bridge and...the work progressed with great rapidity. Trees were felled and hewn [into timbers] and the timbers placed into position, and without suitable tools, a respectable bridge was constructed which proved sufficiently strong for the safe transit of the train. It was

265. Winthrop, p. 748.

after sunset before the bridge was completed, and the regiment moved forward."

With miles still before the troops — to reach their destination of Annapolis Junction — the march continued into the night. "It was full moonlight and the night inexpressibly sweet and serene," wrote the poetic Private Winthrop, who was gathering an article for the Atlantic Monthly magazine, "the air was cool and vivified by the gust and shower of the afternoon. Fresh spring was in every breath. Our fellows had forgotten that this morning they were hot and disgusted. Every one hugged his rifle as if it were the arm of the Girl of his Heart, and stepped out gayly.... Tired or foot-sore men, or even lazy ones, could mount upon the two freight-cars we were using for artillery wagons. There were stout arms enough to tow the whole [soldiers pulled the cars along the railroad track with ropes fastened to the cars].

"The scouts went ahead under First Lieutenant Farmhand of the Second Company. We were at school together.... He is just the same cool, dry, shrewd fellow he was as a boy, and a most efficient officer.

"It was an original kind of march," continued Private Winthrop; "I suppose a battery of howitzers never before found itself mounted upon cars, ready to open fire at once and bang away into the offing with shrapnel or into the bushes with canister. Our line extended a half-mile along the track. It was beautiful to stand on the bank above a cutting and watch the files [of soldiers] strike from the shadow of a wood into a broad flame of moonlight, every rifle sparkling up alert as it came forward. A beautiful sight to see the barrels writing themselves upon the dimness, each a silver flash."[266]

The more pragmatic Captain Emmons Clark wrote, "Night...increased the difficulties of the march. The railroad track afforded an uneven path, and every railroad tie was a wearying stumbling block to the soldiers. At short intervals, the track had

266. *Ibid*, p. 751.

been torn up and it was with the greatest difficulty that the rails could be found in adjacent fields and forests; if found, it was no small task to adjust them into their former positions; and it finally became necessary to take up side tracks, and carry the rails forward to [make replacements in the torn up track]. All this caused delays, and to wet, hungry, and weary men, these delays were... discouraging."[267]

The soldiers, under stress, were aware that their mission must be pursued. "Remember," wrote Private Winthrop later, "we were not only hurrying on to succor Washington, but opening the only...practicable route between it and the loyal States."[268]

When the marchers came to a small village and railroad station, they decided to tear up the rails at a turn-out by the station to lay up a supply for the repairs ahead. "So 'Out Crowbars' was the word. We tore up half a dozen rails.... Here too some of the engineers found a keg of spikes.... This too we loaded on the cars. We fought the chaps with their own weapons," chuckled Private Winthrop.[269]

Private O'Brien continued to be impressed by the skills of the Massachusetts men: "The rails had been torn up — practical railroad makers out of the [Massachusetts] regiment laid them again, and all this, mind you, without care or food. These brave boys, I say, were starving while they were doing this good work.... As we marched along the track which they had laid, they greeted us with ranks of smiling but hungry faces.... There was not a haversack in our regiment that was not emptied into the hands of these ill-treated heroes, nor a flask that was not at their disposal. I am glad to pay them tribute...."[270]

During that night of April 24, 1861, the rebuilding of the railroad track went on hour after hour. The Maryland secessionists along the way were determined to resist these Northern troops,

267. Clark, pp. 304-313.
268. Winthrop, p. 754.
269. *Ibid*, p. 751.
270. O'Brien, Vol. 1, pp. 149-154.

tearing up the rails ahead of the Union soldiers. Private Winthrop joined the skirmishers scouting the track ahead of the repair crew: "A mile ahead of the line we suddenly caught the gleam of a rifle barrel.... We had arrived in the nick of time. Three rails were up. Two of them were easily found. The third was discovered by beating the bush thoroughly.... With the aid of a huge Massachusetts man we soon had the rail in place. From this time on...not a half-mile passed without a rail up. At one point, on a high embankment over standing water, the rail was gone, sunk probably. Here we tried our rails [which we had] brought from the turn-out. They were too short.... The Massachusetts commander called for some one to dive into the pool for the lost rail. Plump into the water went a little wiry chap and grabbed the rail." The little wiry chap told Private Winthrop later, "When I come up, our officer out with a twenty-dollar gold piece and wanted me to take it. 'That ain't what I come for,' says I."

Private Winthrop continued, "Farther on we found a whole length of track torn up, on both sides, sleepers [railroad ties] and all, and the same thing repeated with alternatives of breaks of single rails.... [But] we were not going to be stopped. We had now marched some sixteen miles.... The men had been on their legs all day and all night. Hardly any one had had any substantial sleep or meal since we started from New York. They napped off, standing, leaning on their guns, dropping down in their tracks on the wet ground, at every halt.... As we passed through deep cuttings, places, as it were, built for defence, there was a general desire that the tedium of the night should be relieved by a shindy [a fight]. It seems impossible that such difficulty could be encountered within twenty miles of the capital of our nation...."[271]

Captain Emmons Clark wrote about the night march: "During the night...as a limited number of men could be employed upon the work [repairing the track]...and a large majority must patiently wait...[during] these halts..., the men acquired the habit of dropping

271. Winthrop, p. 751.

upon the ground…and dozing until the repairs were completed. To drag and push forward the platform car on which the howitzer was mounted [the locomotive being engaged to their rear] had now become an irksome task to men already thoroughly fatigued. But not a moment was lost; all realized the importance of continued activity, and by midnight…the Junction was only six miles distant. Serious opposition was expected at the Junction.

"Soon after midnight…the weather became extremely cold.… The damp and chilling air was positively fearful. Wet, hungry, tired, and sleepy, the men only needed this change in the weather to complete their misery. When halted to repair the track, those not engaged would fall asleep in an instant…to be aroused to resume the march. In several instances men rolled down the railroad embankment to the imminent danger of life and limb and when on the march they trudged along half conscious, half dreaming.…"

Captain Clark continued, "It was not uncommon to notice men marching forward upon the uneven railroad track with their eyes completely closed, their heads falling forward…with the staggering gait…of the profound sleeper."[272]

Private Winthrop, in his telling of his experiences in that march to Washington, felt that he had not given a true picture of the hardships those new soldiers had lived through. "I find that I have been rather understating the troubles of the march.…We were making a rush to put ourselves in that capital, and we could not proceed in the slow, systematic way of an advancing army. We must take the risk and stand the suffering, whatever it was.…We had now marched some sixteen miles. The distance was trifling. But the men had been on their legs pretty much all day and night. They were sleepy but plucky. During the whole night I saw our officers moving about the line, doing their duty vigorously, despite exhaustion, hunger and sleeplessness."[273]

272. Clark, pp. 304-313.
273. Winthrop, p. 755.

Private Winthrop remembered that the New York Seventh and the Massachusetts Eighth, which had been operating somewhat separately in the early hours of the march, joined together during the night. "About midnight our friends of the Eighth had joined us, and our whole little army struggled on together."[274] The two regiments, two thousand men, stumbled along over the railroad track, watching out for snipers, repairing the track as they went, marching toward Annapolis Junction.

After marching in the dark of that bitterly cold April night, very early on Thursday morning, "between 3 and 4 o'clock," wrote Captain Clark, "the regiment arrived within a mile of [Annapolis] Junction, and halted.... So intense was the cold that that [our men] built a huge fire with the rails of...neighboring fences."[275] And Private Theodore Winthrop wrote, "At last we emerged from the damp woods...just below Annapolis Junction. Here was an extensive farm. Our vanguard had halted and borrowed a few rails to build a fire. These were, of course, carefully paid for at their proprietor's price. The fires were bright in the gray dawn. About them the whole regiment was now halted. The men tumbled down to catch forty winks. Some who were hungrier for food than for sleep, went off foraging among the farm houses.... All meals were...paid for."[276]

The skirmishers, meantime, had approached Annapolis Junction and found that it had been occupied by secessionist troops recently, but that they had been frightened away by reports that Union troops were on the way. When the New York Seventh and the Massachusetts Eighth arrived at the Junction, at daylight on Thursday, April 25, 1861.[277] They found the little village of Annapolis Junction unoccupied except by its sleepy inhabitants who put up no resistance. Private Winthrop: "The people came up to talk to us. The traitors could easily be distinguished by their insolence, disguised as obsequiousness. The loyal men were still

274. *Ibid.*, p. 756.
275. Clark, pp. 304-313.
276. *Winthrop*, p. 751.
277. Clark, pp. 304-313.

timid, but more helpful at last. All were very lavish with the monosyllable. But we were warmed and refreshed by a nap and a bite....we...dropped into ranks as if on parade and marched the last mile to the [Annapolis Junction] station. We still had no information until we saw the train awaiting us...and the Washington companies who had come down to escort us, we did not know whether our Uncle Sam was still a resident of the capital. We packed into the train and rolled away to Washington."[278]

At Washington, at noon on Thursday, April 25, 1861, "the piercing shriek of a locomotive broke the silence of the city,"[279] announcing the arrival of the New York Seventh Regiment to the rescue of the capital of the Union. The New York Seventh received a boisterous welcome, a welcome reflecting the immense relief of the city after days of waiting, in despair, for troops from the North. The soldiers marched to the Executive Mansion where President Lincoln came out and spoke to them. Private Winthrop: "We marched to the Executive Mansion, showed ourselves to the President, and made our bow to him as our host."[280]

John Nicolay, Lincoln's secretary, remembered the arrival of the New York Seventh Regiment: "Those who were in the Federal capital on that Thursday, April 25, will never, during their lives, forget the event. An indescribable gloom had hung over Washington for nearly a week...crushing out its life. As soon as the arrival was known, an immense crowd gathered at the depot to obtain ocular evidence that relief had at length reached the city. Promptly debarking and forming, the Seventh marched up Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House. As they passed up that magnificent street, with their well-formed ranks, their exact military step, their soldierly bearing, their gaily floating flags, and inspiring music of their splendid regimental band, they seemed to sweep all thought of danger and all taint of treason out of that great national

278. Winthrop, p. 751.

279. Foote, Shelby, *The Civil War A Narrative*, New York: 1958, Random House, Vol. I, p. 54.

280. Winthrop, p. 751.

thoroughfare and out of every human heart in the Federal city. The presence of this single regiment seemed to turn the scales of fate. Cheer upon cheer greeted them, windows were thrown up, houses opened, the population came forth upon the streets for a holiday. It was an epoch in American history. For the first time, the combined spirit and power of Liberty entered the nation's capital."[281]

The excitement of the arrival of the New York Seventh Regiment was also described by Captain Emmons Clark, who had just led the Second Company of that regiment on the march through Maryland: "Having reported to the President at his residence, the Regiment was dismissed, and the companies marched to the quarters assigned them at the several hotels. The Second and several other companies were quartered at Willard's [Washington's major hotel], and the men, after luxuriating in the baths of the establishment and enjoying the refreshing influences of the immense fountain in the court, were in a condition to do ample justice to a substantial and elegant dinner. Clean linen was sought and found, and barbers were patronized; letters were hastily indited to dear ones at home; and many spent the afternoon in sleeping away the fatigue of the long and tedious journey. The new Hall of Representatives was assigned to the Regiment as its quarters, and thither it marched as the shades of evening were gathering in the courts and corridors of the Capitol; and each company quietly occupied its portion of the main hall or of the gallery. In the chairs of Congressmen, upon the cushions of the gallery, or upon the marble floors of the corridor, forgetful of the past, the present and future, all sought much needed repose,."[282]

Private Winthrop sat in the House of Representatives, in the hours after the arrival of the Seventh, and wrote an article for the Atlantic Monthly. "They gave us the Representatives Chamber for quarters...," he wrote, "in we marched, tramp, tramp. Bayonets took the place of buncombe...." Private Winthrop was impatient with the

281. Nicolay, John G. and Hay, John, *Abraham Lincoln, A History*, New York: 1890, The Century Company, Vol. 4, p. 156.

282. Clark, p. 312.

representatives from the North who had not saved the country from war and with the representatives from the South who had promoted war. "The frowsy creatures in ill-made dress-coats, shimmering satin waistcoats...who lounge, spit, and vociferate there were off. Our neat uniforms and bright barrels showed to great advantage, compared with the costumes of the usual *dramatis personae* of the scene."[283]

The Massachusetts Eighth Regiment did not go to Washington with the New York Seventh, leaving the glory of that dramatic arrival entirely to the New York Seventh. The Massachusetts Eighth stayed overnight at Annapolis Junction. General Butler had made a prior deal with Colonel Lefferts — as an inducement for Lefferts to join Butler in the march to Washington, Ben Butler had agreed that Colonel Lefferts and the New York Seventh would have all the glory of entering Washington as the savior of that city. The Massachusetts Eighth would come to Washington later. [284] As it turned out, the Massachusetts Eighth stayed at Annapolis Junction for an additional reason — to protect Annapolis Junction from a rumored attack by Maryland secessionists.

Strong rumors had it that local secessionists were about to attack Annapolis Junction. Southern newspapers exulted in their erroneous assumption of a successful attack: "Glorious News. The regiment of New York cut to pieces.... Three times three cheers for the brave Marylanders!" said a Charleston newspaper.[285] But the attack did not materialize and the next day the Massachusetts Eighth Regiment went on to Washington. The Massachusetts Eighth was quartered under the dome of the Capitol Rotunda, having arrived in a Washington still unprepared for war.

283. Winthrop, Theodore, "Washington as a Camp," in the *Atlantic Monthly*, July, 1861, p. 106.

284. Foote, Shelby, *The Civil War A Narrative*, New York: 1958, Random House, Vol. I, p. 54.

285. *Ibid.*, p. 756.

The capital of the Union had been rescued and General Benjamin Butler, who had devised the rescue strategy and had driven the scheme to success, was a hero in Northern newspapers. Colonel Marshall Lefferts also enjoyed enthusiastic newspaper headlines since his regiment, the New York Seventh, had arrived first at the railroad station in the capital.

Washington was saved! And a route had been opened to the North. Troop ships began bringing soldiers from Northern states. Landing at Annapolis, the soldiers were loaded on to trains to Annapolis Junction; there the trains changed to the Baltimore and Ohio line for the twenty-five miles down to Washington. In the next few days thousands of Northern troops poured into Washington along this route established by the two regiments, the New York Seventh and the Massachusetts Eighth.

Epilogue: Butler, Hicks, Kane, Brown, and Lincoln in the Continuation of the Civil War

For the moment, Washington was safe. Northern troops were arriving in the capital, giving it the beginnings of a military presence. But Baltimore still had an army of 15,000 men; and, across the Potomac, thousands of Confederate troops were camped on the Virginia shore, threatening Washington.

The nature of the conflict, the nature of the Civil War, had not yet taken shape. Into what kind of a war would it evolve? The North, with its industrial and financial might, could perhaps quickly overcome the South, an agricultural society with little capacity for making cannons. Lincoln's War Department thought it would be a small war, perhaps a very small war. Dithering for weeks, it held the states off from sending more troops while it decided what kind of an army it wanted. Supplies for troops already in Washington were scarce; Massachusetts was forced to send food to keep its regiments in the capital from starving. The South also dithered, not taking the opportunity to capture Washington made helpless by indecision and lack of purpose.

But the North would shortly become outraged and driven to protect the Union; and the South would bitterly defend its way of life, a social structure and an economy based on slavery.

It was early days in the conflict — which would become a vast battleground of six hundred thousand dead and dying soldiers. Participants were unaware of the horrific events that would follow — four years of killing, the near devastation of a nation. It would take the lives and the futures of young men, the select of the North and of the South, to resolve the issue.

The issue was the survival of a nation. The nation, the United States, was just eighty years old — the world's first experiment in democracy. It now faced this bloody civil war to resolve its fate.

The five men who had battled for control of the pivotal state of Maryland were still in contention: General Ben Butler, Governor Thomas Hicks, Marshall George Kane, Mayor George Brown, and President Abraham Lincoln. What of these men as the war began to develop? General Butler, in Annapolis, was the only active Union general. Governor Hicks, also in Annapolis, had yet to decide his position in the war. Marshall George Kane controlled a large army in Baltimore. George Brown, Mayor of Baltimore, was an active secessionist. President Abraham Lincoln, newly released from isolation in the White House, was the hope of the North. Here we trace the activities of these men as they take part in the developing conflict. These five men helped to shape a war that would see a nation reborn into a new life, free of slavery.

General Benjamin Butler

"It was as easy to capture Baltimore as it was to capture my supper."

Ben Butler was a hero in the North. The New York Times wrote: "There is no man in the field of military action who...

concentrates upon himself a larger share of public interest…than Maj. Gen. Butler of Massachusetts."[286]

Even as his troops were rebuilding the railroad to Washington General Butler, with his usual enthusiasm, was at work on his next project, developing Annapolis as a receiving station for troops from the Northern states. One ship, the Baltic, had already arrived at Annapolis, laden with Union troops, and many more ships would arrive in the next days. General Butler organized the landing and the care of the troops and sent them on to Washington on the newly rebuilt railroad. Thousands of Union troops poured into Washington, establishing an army to protect the city.

On May 4, 1861, General Butler, with affairs at Annapolis well in hand, captured Relay House, a railroad junction on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad six miles west of Baltimore. Relay House was a station where, in the earliest days of railroads, before steam locomotives, horse-drawn trains had changed horses.[287] It was now a junction where the railroad from Ohio and northern Virginia went either to Baltimore or onto Washington. Trains to and from the West, the East, and the South had to pass through the Relay House junction. For an important example, a train from Harpers Ferry, a secessionist stronghold in northern Virginia, could deliver Confederate troops through Relay House and on to attack Washington. Suddenly Relay House was a major military objective.

Ben Butler wrote, in his memoirs, that General Scott told him, on a visit to Washington on May 3, 1861, "the rebels were gathering in considerable force at Harper's Ferry, and it might portend an attack upon the capital. [General Scott] asked me how many troops I thought would be required to hold [Relay House].... I told him that it could be held with two good regiments and a battery of my light artillery.... 'When can you occupy it?' said he. 'I will be there for

286. *New York Times*, May 31, 1861.

287. "Condensed History of Relay, Maryland," research note by the Baltimore County Library. See also Toomey, Daniel Carroll, "*A History of Relay Maryland*, published by Toomey Press, Baltimore, no date.

Sunday services at ten o'clock tomorrow.' We were at the Relay House at eleven o'clock the next morning."[288]

General Winfield Scott, having ordered General Butler to make this move, was less than happy when Butler, acting on his own, from his new perch at Relay House, captured the city of Baltimore a few days later, on May 13, 1861.

General Scott was outraged that Ben Butler had not asked Scott's permission to move on Baltimore. Butler had sent men into Baltimore to size up the situation; "I believed it was as easy to capture Baltimore as it was to capture my supper."[289]He was aware General Scott was planning a large campaign using thousands of troops to capture that city. General Butler thought that was silly, that capturing Baltimore was a simple matter. He also believed Scott would not have given his permission for Butler's attack if asked.

General Butler remembered in his memoirs, "I was very anxious to go into Baltimore....I had promised...the Sixth Regiment...that I would march them through Baltimore and revenge the cowardly attack made upon them on the 19th of April."[290] With the Massachusetts Sixth and a few hundred other volunteers Butler took a train from Relay House to the Baltimore railroad station in a storm; here they debarked without event and started on a march through the city, with the instructions: "No soldier should fire his musket...if any shot were fired from any house.... A detail should be put in that house and the building fired...until it was fully burned...."[291]

With those few volunteer soldiers, Butler took over the city. That was on May 13, 1861. He encamped on Federal Hill, overlooking the city. On the 14th he sent a detachment of thirty-five men to seize arms stored near the locality of the riot. The little squad of volunteers found the warehouse and the arms — thousands of

288. Butler, Benjamin F., *Autobiography*, Boston: 1892, A.M. Thayer, pp. 222-5.
289. *Ibid*, p. 227.
290. *Ibid*, p. 226.
291. *Ibid*, p. 235.

muskets sent from Virginia during the riot week. Loading them on to thirty-five wagons, they traveled to Federal Hill over the very streets where the Massachusetts soldiers had been murdered by the mob, three weeks before.[292]

A resident of the city remembered Butler's capture of Baltimore: "On the night of the 13th of May during a most frightful thunderstorm Gen. Ben Butler marched into the city. He took possession of Federal Hill. Early next morning he put troops into Monument Square with several pieces of artillery. I shall never forget my feelings when entering the square on the morning of the 15th.... I felt as though I could hug those soldiers. I just stood and gazed at the Stars and Stripes, with my head uncovered, and tears rolling down my cheeks.... By noon that day the city was alive with flags.... In a very few days...it was found that...a very large proportion of our citizens...were Unionists...."[293]

General Scott was outraged on reading in the newspapers that Butler had captured Baltimore. He telegraphed a message to General Butler: "Sir: Your hazardous occupation of Baltimore was made without my knowledge.... Not a word have I received from you.... Let me hear from you."

Butler recalled his feelings on receiving that message: "To a communication couched in that language I made no reply....knowing that I could hold Baltimore as easily as I could hold my hat and that Scott knew [from the newspapers] all that I could tell him, I thought I was not the 'sir' to answer that communication...." Butler wrote later, "I really did think if I took Baltimore I should please Scott."

Butler was relieved of his position by General Scott. He was ordered to take command of Fort Monroe, a large Union installation across Hampton Roads from Norfolk. Deeply hurt, Butler wanted to resign and return to civilian life in Massachusetts. President

292. Nicolay, John G., and Hay, John, *Abraham Lincoln - A History*, New York: 1890, The Century Company, Vol. 4, pp. 173-4.

293. "Bloodshed in Baltimore," Wheeler Leaflet on Maryland History No. 18, Maryland in the Civil War Series. Available in Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore.

Lincoln, impressed with his energy, pressed him to stay. After consulting with his wife and daughter, who had joined him and who also pressed him to stay — they knew that, on the sidelines, he would be an unhappy man to live with — Ben Butler took the Fort Monroe assignment.[294]

In the second year of the war General Butler headed the army in the attack on New Orleans, taking the city on May 1, 1862. "General Butler was assigned the difficult task of [serving as Military Governor] of that hostile population.... [It was] the most controversial portion of his career."[295]

"I led the column [into the city] on foot," remembered General Butler in his memoirs.[296] The city was untamed.... The streets [about my hotel] were packed with obstreperous mobs...while I met with the mayor and his staff.... I [gave the order] to clear the streets at once with artillery...[the mayor's staff] sprang to their feet, crying: 'Don't, General; don't give such an order as that.' 'Why this emotion, gentlemen,' I said, 'the cannon are not going to shoot our way, and I have borne this noise and confusion as long as I choose to.' And so the mayor made them a speech from the balcony but they jeered him to his face.... Then the mob raised the cry, 'Where is old Butler?' I stepped forward on the balcony in full sight, with my cap in my hand...as unmoved as possible... 'Who calls me? I am here.' That answer brought a hush.... Just at that time there was a wonderful noise.... The Sixth Maine Battery [came down the street] every horse driven at the fullest speed and the bugles sounding the charge....The mob...turned their eyes on the approaching avalanche and then sought safety in flight.... From that hour...I never saw...a mob in the streets of the city."[297]

While he was military governor, the hanging of a man named Mumford became a famous Butler incident. The Union flag had been raised above the U.S. Mint to signal the capture of New Orleans. "A

294. Butler, p. 242.
295. *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. 2, p. 358.
296. Butler, p. 852.
297. Holzman, Robert S., *Stormy Ben Butler*, New York Books, p. 139.

party headed by Mumford," General Butler wrote in his memoirs, "tore down the flag [and] dragged it through the streets and spit on it, and trampled on it until it was torn to pieces. It was then distributed among the rabble, and each one thought it a high honor to get a piece of it and wear it." General Butler decided that Mumford must be dealt with publicly; he later wrote, "[I] issued Special Order No. 10 — that Mumford should be executed on the 7th of June [1862] between 6 A.M. and 12 A.M.; the order was received by the populace...with derision....Blacklegs and blackguards assembled in large numbers and voted that if [Mumford] was executed...Butler should die the [same] death.... They sent me forty or fifty [letters] the next morning...accompanied by illustrations of pistols and coffins and cross-bones and skulls to intimidate me.

"I ordered [the hanging] to take place from the mint, with the flag of the United States floating over him.... Mumford was allowed to stand upon the scaffold and make a speech as long as he chose...he claimed he was impelled by the highest patriotism. A swearing, whiskey-drinking mob assembled below him, their bottles and pistols sticking out of their pockets.... They kept declaring to each other that Mumford would not be hanged...that this was only a scare by old Butler....

"At the appointed time the drop fell, and as it did there was a universal hush. The bottles and pistols went out of sight, and the crowd separated.... And no scene approaching general disorder was ever afterwards witnessed during my time."[298]

At New Orleans General Butler treated the former slaves fairly and won the enmity of white Southerners; Jefferson Davis called him a "Beast" and called for his hanging. The New York Times noted: "Maj. Gen. Butler...has lately been...savagely abused.... He went to Louisiana to reestablish the authority of the United States, and the censures of his assailants...wax virulent in proportion to his success.... An outcry from the enemies of our Government...[is]

298. *Ibid.*, p. 374-7 and 439-50

pretty conclusive evidence that [Gen. Butler] has been doing something to aid the...restoring...of the Union."[299] The Times also said: "The Military Governor [will soon hold] an election for two members of Congress for New Orleans. As the greater part of the inhabitants of the city have already taken the oath of allegiance to the United States Government...two earnest...Union men will soon take their seats in Congress as representative of the largest commercial city in the South. This election will practically complete the restoration of New Orleans.... The success of Gen. Butler in restoring New Orleans to its old position in the Union is proof [against the argument] that the South...will never again cooperate with the North.... It is impossible to conceive a reason why the result that has been so soon wrought out in New Orleans should not also be reached in any other locality brought into our military possession."[300] Ben Butler had established that the South could be brought back into the Union.

When Ulysses S. Grant took charge of the Union armies, Grant picked Butler and Sherman as his two chief generals.

General Butler was offered the Vice Presidency by Abraham Lincoln for the 1864 presidential election.[301] He refused, preferring to continue as a general.

After his reelection in 1864 Mr. Lincoln asked General Butler to be his Secretary of War. In his memoirs General Butler wrote: "I replied to him...that I should hold no office except an active command in the army until the war had terminated.... The great encomiums I had received had not turned my head...as to my loyal duty...." General Butler also mentioned "the opposition of the officers of the regular army" to his appointment as Secretary of War. An amateur general, his appointment as Secretary of War was resisted by some West Point officers. In his memoirs General Butler remembered the criticism he had received for being in command of troops when he had no West Point training: "[My critics] forgot

299. *New York Times*, July 21, 1862, p. 4.
300. *Ibid*, Dec. 7, 1862, p. 4.
301. Butler, p. 852.

that putting an animal into a stable does not make him a horse; that point being better determined by the length of his ears."[302]

Mr. Lincoln, as the end of the war approached, discussed with General Butler the peace terms to be worked out with the South. Mr. Lincoln was particularly concerned with the fate of the negro in the South: "What shall we do with the negro after he is free....? You have been such a stanch friend of the race since you first advised me to enlist them at New Orleans.... I wish you would give me your views...."[303] General Butler had indeed become well-known for his advocacy of the colored man as a soldier; he had organized many colored regiments, flying in the face of conventional thinking that colored men could not fight. The President and General Butler were not able to devise a likely scheme for dealing with the negro after the war although they considered such drastic action as setting up a separate country for them.[304]

Ben Butler, after the war, served in the U.S. Congress — "the most impressive figure in the House of Representatives," wrote one historian. Butler had a very clear idea of dealing with the reconstruction of the South. Before the war Butler had been active in trying to accommodate Southern anxieties to avoid a civil war; because of that approach he was unpopular in abolitionist Massachusetts. But his experiences in the war led him to believe that Southern politicians had deliberately led their people into a brutal, useless war; Ben Butler was no longer a friend of the South. He now believed that "All the Confederate State governments should be wiped out...." He raised his voice in Washington: "I advised that the States in rebellion should be divided into territories held under military control for a sufficient length of time to teach them that the lost cause and the lost Confederation was utterly obliterated and forgotten.... These territories should be so drawn as to cut up the boundaries of the original States so that there should

302. Butler, p. 127.
303. *Ibid*, p. 852.
304. *Ibid*, p. 903.

be nothing of State pride left...[and] all brotherhood of Confederation against the United States...blotted out forever."[305]

But Butler found that President Andrew Johnson was lenient in his treatment of the seceded states, allowing them to apply for re-admission to the Union with few of the Confederates punished, and no political rights given to negroes; his unhappiness with President Johnson caused him to take a major role in the Johnson impeachment. Ben Butler wrote the articles of impeachment and it was he who read them to the Senate in that failed attempt to remove President Johnson.

Benjamin Franklin Butler served in the U.S. Congress from 1866 to 1875, an aggressive and outspoken advocate of the working man, of the former slaves in the South, and of Women's rights. He received an overwhelming blow in 1876 when Sarah, his wife — a close companion of his private and public lives — died suddenly. They were both fifty-eight. "My wife," he wrote in his memoirs, "with a devotion quite unparalleled, gave me her support by accompanying me, at my earnest wish, in every expedition in the War of the Rebellion." His grieving was eased by his three children, particularly his daughter, Blanche, now a bright and beautiful young woman. Blanche had been in a convent school near Washington in the days of the Baltimore riot and Butler's rescue of the Union capital. In letters between them, she complained of having to study Latin. Himself a former Latin scholar [when he was a student at Phillips Exeter Academy] General Butler, in his letters to his daughter, explained the importance of Latin in the development of the English language and as a mark of a learned person.

Long a lover of the sea, Butler purchased the very famous racing yacht, The America. The America had been built by an American to compete with British racing yachts and it had defeated the British impressively in the years before the Civil War. Today's "America's Cup" yacht race received its name from that famous sailing ship. Butler used it for family sea expeditions for many years.

305. *Ibid*, p. 908-9.

After his years in the U.S. Congress Ben Butler still had political ambitions. He ran for governor of Massachusetts in 1878 and lost. He ran again in 1882 and won. As governor Benjamin Butler pressed for giving women the right to vote, and for shorter working hours for laboring men and women, and for better pay for workers. He appointed the first black lawyer to the state bench. The Boston establishment did not care for any of this. He was defeated for reelection, the end of his political career.

Civil War historians have been hard on Ben Butler, giving him little credit for his rescue of Washington from the imminent threat of Confederate capture. Ben Butler is not a comfortable man to admire. He did not suffer slow thinkers and he did not like West Point officers; quick to act and to ask permission later, he was often in hot water with his superiors. The record, however, does not appear to justify the poor opinion of historians; perhaps he made so many enemies that bad reports overwhelmed good reports and historians did not get a balanced view of the man.

Butler's soldiers were enthusiastic about their leader.[306] Jefferson Davis had thought highly of Ben Butler and had wanted Butler to serve under him.[307] President Lincoln in particular liked him and kept him in the forefront of the Union war effort; despairing of the desultory attitude of so many of his other generals, Lincoln admired the aggressive and energetic General Butler.

Benjamin Franklin Butler died in 1893 at seventy-five. He lay in state in his home city of Lowell, Massachusetts while a multitude of admirers moved slowly past his casket. For his funeral all stores and commercial activities were closed and the facades of downtown buildings were clothed in black. Thousands thronged the streets to view the procession. The hearse carrying his remains was pulled by six black horses and accompanied by old soldiers from the Massachusetts 6th Regiment, the regiment which had been attacked in the Baltimore Riot of April 19, 1861.

306. As I have demonstraed in "Private Osborne, Massachusetts Twenty-Third Volunteers," Jefferson, N.C.: 1999, McFarland and Company, p. 212.

307. Butler, p. 221.

THOMAS HICKS

"In that dark hour…he stood like a rock."

The avuncular, vacillating Governor Thomas Hicks was seemingly weak but he proved to be strong. In the days following the rescue of Washington, he evolved into an important figure in keeping Maryland from joining the Confederacy. After having delayed for weeks to avoid a vote of the Maryland legislature to secede, he finally called a session of that legislature; since General Butler was holding Annapolis, the state capital, for the Union, the legislature met in the city of Frederick, fifty miles west of Annapolis. The issue before the legislature was whether Maryland would secede.

Although he had resisted the landing of Butler's troops, Governor Hicks, in the light of history, favored the Union and maneuvered against Maryland joining the Confederacy. Governor Hicks now had before him an uphill battle against secessionist forces. "In no State were the secession plottings more determined and continuous than in Maryland," wrote John Nicolay, Lincoln's biographer, "From the first a small but able and unwearying knot of Baltimore conspirators sought to commit [Maryland] to rebellion…by a secession ordinance. They made speeches, held conventions, and besieged the Governor with committees; they sent recruits to Charleston, they incited the Baltimore riot, [but] they reflected a…minority sentiment in the state."[308]

Governor Hicks, when Lincoln called for troops on April 15, 1861, had tried to raise four regiments of Maryland volunteers, an effort which came to nothing because of resistance by secessionist members of the legislature.[309]

Thomas Hicks went to some pains to dissociate himself from the decision to burn the bridges around Baltimore after the April 19

308. Nicolay and Hay, p. 162.
309. *Ibid*, p. 163.

riot. Mayor Brown and Marshall Kane had, in later public statements, made an issue of their claim that, in conference with Governor Hicks at midnight on April 19, 1861, he gave his explicit, official permission to burn those bridges. Although he was staying at Mayor Brown's home on that night and admitted that he discussed the problem of the mob in Baltimore with Mayor Brown and Marshall Kane, he publicly stated that he had no part in the decision to burn the railroad bridges to keep Union troops from coming through Baltimore. Governor Hicks remembered, "Messrs. Brown and Kane and Lowe came to my bedside…at a late hour." Hicks had no good opinion of Marshall Kane and Mr. Lowe [the latter is a personage undefined by research]. "It was impossible for me to consent to the unlawful act which was proposed to me by such men as Kane and Lowe…. I unhesitatingly assert that I refused my consent." In fact Governor Hicks said that the bridge burning was already underway that night before he was requested by Mayor Brown and Marshall Kane to give his official approval. Governor Hicks indicated that there was a long-planned scheme masterminded by Marshall George Kane to burn the bridges, and that the plotters needed the official stamp of approval by Governor Hicks.

Governor Hicks also disclosed that earlier on the evening of April 19, 1861, at Mayor Brown's house, he had been asked by Mayor Brown to approve the scuttling of the ferry boat *Maryland*; that train ferry, tied up at the dock at Perryville, would, Brown feared, have taken trains containing Northern troops across the Susquehanna River and delivered them to the railroad continuing on to Baltimore and Washington. Hicks "peremptorily refused" to sink the *Maryland*.[310] General Butler's problem of getting his troops from Philadelphia to Washington would have taken a different turn if he had found the Maryland sunk at Perryville when he arrived.

310. Moore, Frank, Editor, *The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events*, New York, 1862, G.P. Putnam, Vol. II, pp. 181-184.

The Maryland legislature, assembled in the city of Frederick, could, President Lincoln and his cabinet worried, secede from the Union. "It seemed certain that its first act would be to arm the State and pass...a secession ordinance," recalled John Nicolay, Lincoln's secretary and a party to Lincoln's discussions with his cabinet. They considered whether to arrest the legislature; "General Butler was at Annapolis and he signified more than willing to act in the matter."[311]

Lincoln decided not to arrest the Maryland legislature; he wrote a note to his cabinet: "It is only left to wait their action.... If it is to arm their people against the United States...[we should] adopt the most prompt and efficient means to counteract [this action], even if necessary to the bombardment of their cities...."[312] Lincoln was determined that Maryland was not going to be lost to the Union.

But secession fever in Maryland was rapidly subsiding and Governor Hicks took courage. He sent a special message to the legislature to the effect that "the...safety of Maryland lies in preserving a neutral position between our brethren of the North and of the South."[313] Governor Hicks prevailed in the legislature and Maryland was saved for the Union. The governor summoned four regiments of Maryland volunteers to serve in Washington for the protection of the Union capital.

One historian took note of Governor Hicks' support of the Union in those indecisive days in Maryland: "In that dark hour, almost alone, his life threatened, he stood like a rock....."[314]

As the war progressed and his term as governor ended Thomas Hicks was appointed U.S. senator from Maryland [to fill a vacant seat on the death of Senator James Pierce]. Now in Washington, he became "thoroughly identified with the Union party as one of its

311. Nicolay and Hay, p. 166.

312. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

313. *Ibid.*, p. 169.

314. *Biographical Cyclopedia of Representatives of Maryland and District of Columbia*, Baltimore: 1879, National Biographical Publishing Company, p. 324.

leaders.... Although an owner of slaves he favored the abolition of slavery."[315]

Over the next months Thomas Hicks established a warm relationship with Mr. Lincoln.

"At the height of his fame, influence and usefulness," Thomas Hicks was laid low by "a stroke of apoplexy."[316] Hearing that he was ill, President Lincoln visited him and spent some time at his bedside. Many members of the Senate and Congress also visited him.[317] He died February 13, 1865, a few weeks before the end of the war and the assassination of Mr. Lincoln.

He was honored by elaborate speeches in the U.S. Senate and in the House of Representatives. President Lincoln marched in the funeral procession along with "the diplomatic corps, Judges of the United States, officers of the Executive Departments, officers of the Army and Navy and others prominent in public life.... The coffin was borne into the Senate Chamber where a large audience assembled..."[318] Thomas Hicks had come to the end of an historic life.

GEORGE P. KANE

"A tough and determined man...."

Marshall George Proctor Kane — when the New York Seventh and the Massachusetts Eighth regiments arrived in Washington — had, in the city of Baltimore, an army of 15,000 men, trained and armed and ready to fight.

Although Marshall Kane's military activities were still obscure, President Lincoln became convinced of the treachery of this man.

315. Jones, Elias, *New Revised History of Dorchester County, Maryland*, Cambridge, Md: 1966, p. 345.

316. *Biographical Cyclopedia*, p. 324.

317. *Ibid.*, p. 348.

318. *Ibid.*, p. 349.

Shortly after the rescue of the city of Washington he had Kane locked up as a danger to the Union. "At three o'clock in the morning of the 27th of June," recounted J. Thomas Scharf, Baltimore historian, "a detachment of [Union soldiers] proceeded to the residence of George P. Kane, Marshall of Police, which they surrounded, and upon the door-bell being rung the Marshall made his appearance at the window.... He came down to the front door and was informed that they came to arrest him. A hack was waiting in which the Marshall was placed, and he was driven to Fort McHenry [a Union military post in Baltimore]."[319]

George Kane spent the next fourteen months in Union prisons.

Very little information about Marshall George Kane's sojourn in jail has survived. From Fort McHenry he was transferred to Fort Warren in Boston Harbor. In October, 1862 he was released from Fort Warren, "upon the agreement that he would go further South, and in consequence thereof he went to Richmond, VA., "according to one biographer.[320]

On being released from Fort Warren, he apparently traveled to Canada.[321] From Canada he came to Richmond, the Confederate capital. He had considerable standing in Confederate circles, having organized and commanded a large army in Baltimore that had threatened the Union early in the Civil War. He had access to President Jefferson Davis in Richmond. Three years into the war, in 1864, Mr. Kane approached Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, for a special favor. Many Marylanders, when Maryland did not secede, had left the state and joined the Confederate army; George Kane was concerned that Maryland was not getting proper credit for the valor of Maryland soldiers serving in the Confederate army. Mr. Kane was able to convince President Davis that the

319. Scharf, J. Thomas, "Chronicles of Baltimore," first published in 1874; republished by Kennikat Press, Port Washington, N.Y., p. 613.

320. Coyle, Wilber, "The Mayors of Baltimore," in *The Baltimore Municipal Journal*, 1919.

321. "The Municipal Journal," a semi-monthly publication of the city of Baltimore, February 21, 1919, p. 7; available in the Pratt Library, Baltimore. Brown, George W., "Baltimore and the Nineteenth of April, 1861,"

Confederate army should be reorganized to favor Maryland soldiers. Mr. Kane issued a proclamation:

> TO ALL MARYLANDERS IN THE CONFEDERATE STATES
>
> After a long and painful imprisonment by the Lincoln Government, and enduring every form of persecution…I succeeded at last in making my escape to Canada, and by a tedious journey have reached the South, in order to unite my fortune with hers, and to combat with you for the deliverance of our beloved and down-trodden State of Maryland. On coming among you, I find…you…have been distributed into the various regiments of the Southern army…. Valor you may exhibit in battle…ensures to some other state…. I have presented these views to Jefferson Davis…[who] authorizes me to say that he has directed [two camps] to be formed…for the reception of all Marylanders. I call upon you…to repair to the flag of our own beloved State….oppressed for years…There is yet for Maryland a future and a hope. I appeal to you by all the wrongs heaped upon our people…by the memories of our ancestors, to rally as a band of brothers…to rescue our State from the hands of the spoiler and the despot.
>
> George P. Kane[322]

Little is known about George Kane's life in later years. That tough and determined man did survive the war; in 1865 he "entered the tobacco manufacturing business in Danville, Virginia." He came back to Baltimore in 1873, in the Reconstruction era. He found sympathy among the populace and was elected sheriff. In 1877 he was elected mayor of Baltimore. At the age of fifty-eight and after only a few month in office, he died of an unknown illness. [323]

322. Proclamation by George Kane available from the Boston Atheneum, via microfilm.

323. Coyle, Wilber, *The Mayors of Baltimore*, 1919.

GEORGE BROWN

"Would not swear allegiance to the Union...."

Dapper, sophisticated George William Brown continued as Mayor of Baltimore for several months in the Civil War. Baltimore was a Southern city in a slave state and the people were deeply attached to Southern traditions. But it was also a commercial city, with railroad and shipping connections to the North. In those early months of the war, Baltimore "found itself in the throes of...intense and conflicting emotions..." wrote a Baltimore historian, "It was this situation Mayor Brown had to deal with between the first clash [the Baltimore riot] and the time he was summarily relieved of office."[324] Abraham Lincoln, trying to hold Maryland in the Union, grew increasingly uncomfortable with Mayor Brown who was a Southerner by inclination and who might in some way influence a decision by Marylanders to secede. Mr. Lincoln decided to put George Brown where he could do no harm. On September 12, 1861 Mayor Brown was arrested at his home. He described his arrest: "At midnight.... I was arrested at my country home, near the Relay House on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, by four policemen and a guard of soldiers. The soldiers were placed in both front and rear of the house, while the police rapped violently on the front door. I had gone to bed, but was still awake, for I had some apprehension of danger. I immediately arose, and opening my bedroom window, asked the intruders what they wanted. They replied that they wanted Mayor Brown. I asked who wanted him, and they answered, the Government of the United States. I then inquired for their warrant, but they had none. After a short time spent in preparation I took leave of my wife and children, and closely guarded, walked down the high hill on which the house stands to the foot, where a carriage was waiting for me. The soldiers went no farther, but I was

324. *The Municipal Journal*, a semi-monthly publication of the city of Baltimore, February 21, 1919, p. 7; available in the Pratt Library, Baltimore. Brown, George W., "Baltimore and the Nineteenth of April, 1861,"

driven in charge of the police seven miles to Baltimore and through the city to Fort McHenry.... I was imprisoned for one night in Fort McHenry, next in Fort Monroe for about two weeks...and finally in Fort Warren."[325] Fort McHenry overlooked Baltimore Harbor, Fort Monroe was a Union installation at Hampton Roads, Virginia, and Fort Warren was in Boston Harbor.

Lincoln's government made attempts to obtain "an oath of allegiance" from George Brown — in return he would be allowed to continue as mayor, with the assurance that he would not try to undermine the Union. But Mr. Brown would not swear allegiance to the Union. He objected that he had been arrested without a warrant and that he should be released from prison without giving a loyalty oath.[326]

George Brown was kept in prison for fourteen months. On November 27, 1862 he was released; he returned to Baltimore and his law practice.[327]

Some years later George Brown wrote a book, "Baltimore and the Nineteenth of April, 1861," in which he defended his participation in the Baltimore riot and his decision to burn the railroad bridges to keep Union troops from coming through Baltimore. Although, as he said in the introduction to his book, "It revives recollections of the most...painful experience of my life," his book was a candid exposition of his part in that drama.[328]

George Brown, in his book, made his bizarre decision to burn the railroad bridges appear almost logical; he emphasized that Governor Hicks had given his approval to that scheme — an approval which Hicks claimed he never gave. George Brown did not discuss his dishonesty in keeping secret from President Lincoln that he, Mayor Brown, was a party to the bridge burning and the

325. Brown, p. 103.

326. Sams, Conway W., and Riley, Elihu S., *The Bench and Bar of Maryland, A History, 1634 to 1901*, Chicago: 1901, The Lewis Publishing Company, pp. 496-7.

327. *The Municipal Journal*, city of Baltimore, February 21, 1919, p. 7; available in the Pratt Library, Baltimore. Brown, George W., "Baltimore and the Nineteenth of April, 1861."

328. Brown, p. 103.

isolation of Washington.[329] After the war George Brown served as a lawyer on the defense team for Jefferson Davis when the U.S. government indicted Davis.[330] Many in the North believed that Davis was responsible for the murder of Lincoln. The new president, Andrew Johnson, took that view; he issued a proclamation for the arrest of Jefferson Davis:

> Whereas the atrocious murder of...Abraham Lincoln...[was] incited and procured by Jefferson Davis...I, Andrew Johnson, President of the United States, offer for the arrest of said person one hundred thousand dollars [$1.2 million in today's money]...."[331]

In May, 1865 Jefferson Davis was hunted down and caught in Georgia. He had escaped from Richmond just as General Grant was taking over the Confederate capital. President Lincoln had suggested to Grant that Jefferson Davis be treated gently, even given a ship to take him out of the country.[332] Mr. Lincoln was heard to say, "We must extinguish our resentments if we expect harmony and union."[333] But Mr. Davis was not giving up; he planned to travel to the western side of the Mississippi River to organize an army to continue the war.[334] He took a train from Richmond to Danville, Virginia, one hundred and fifty miles away, where he set up a new Confederate capital. He sent his wife ahead on a separate train to North Carolina. In a few days, threatened by Union troops, Jefferson Davis left Danville. He headed for North Carolina to join his wife; his plan was to travel to Texas where he hoped to find soldiers to continue fighting against the North. Lincoln was assassinated as Jefferson Davis was rerouted to North Carolina. Davis learned that he was being accused of conspiring to murder President Lincoln.

329. Sams and Riley, pp. 501-3.

330. Ibid, p. 498.

331. *Ibid*, p. 506.

332. McElroy, Robert, *Jefferson Davis, the Unreal and the Real*, New York: 1937, Harper and Brothers, p. 461.

333. *Ibid*, P. 474.

334. *Ibid*, pp. 459,472.

With Union soldiers on his heels, hunting him down as Lincoln's murderer, Jefferson Davis's mission changed. He could no longer plan to continue the war from the west — he would be fortunate just to survive. He headed South on horseback, seeking his wife, who had left North Carolina earlier, her caravan struggling along, "fearful of attack through mud, forest and heavy storms,"[335] heading for Florida and escape by ship. Jefferson Davis caught up with his wife in Georgia, where they were captured by Union soldiers on May 11, 1865.[336]

An outraged North demanded brutal treatment for the leader of the Confederacy. He was imprisoned in an underground cell, "a living tomb," under very heavy guard, at times shackled in irons, for two years. The United States government tried to devise a case against him which would convince a jury that Davis was involved in the murder of Abraham Lincoln. George Brown, acting as one of Jefferson Davis' lawyers, argued that the government did not have a provable case. He was instrumental in obtaining the release of Jefferson Davis without a trial.[337]

In the years after the war, George Brown became very much a public figure; he was a trustee of Johns Hopkins University and of Johns Hopkins Hospital; he was a founder of the Maryland Historical Society. He gave the major address at the ceremony in Baltimore when the new Enoch Pratt Free Library was opened to the public. He was intensely interested in public education — which had been the object of limited enthusiasm in Baltimore. He advocated freeing the school system from political control; here he had little success. [338]

George Brown, although a Southerner, did not have strong negative feelings about the negro in society. While serving as a regent of the University of Maryland, where he lectured on international and constitutional law, "an effort was made...to refuse

335. *Ibid*, p. 508.
336. *Ibid*, p. 513.
337. McElroy, pp. 505-6.
338. Sams and Riley, pp. 501-3.

colored law students the privileges of the institution. Mr. Brown took a very pronounced stand against any such narrow policy of exclusion."[339]

The prominent negro Frederick Douglas was the only colored man at a funeral ceremony for Vice-President Henry Wilson, who had died in office. At the ceremony, when Mr. Douglas was standing alone before the luncheon was to be served, George Brown stepped forward, took his arm, and led him in to the luncheon table.[340]

In 1873, eight years after the war ended, George Brown, at sixty-one, was elected chief judge of the Supreme Bench of Baltimore. He became respected for his knowledge of the law and his judicial temperament — "combining a simple dignity with the greatest courtesy to counsel practicing before him.... The confidence in his impartiality... and integrity was universal and absolute."[341]

Judge George Brown, nineteen years after the Massachusetts Sixth Regiment was attacked in Baltimore, presided over a banquet honoring that regiment. On April 19, 1880 thirty-nine surviving members of the Massachusetts Sixth were met at the Baltimore railroad station and marched, with a military guard and band and drum corps, with policemen keeping the streets opened for the parade, to Barnum's Hotel. At the banquet Judge Brown addressed the two hundred people present: "[The Civil War] virtually began in Baltimore, by bloodshed on both sides.... After the war there was peace. But enforced peace is not sufficient.... There must be among brothers' respect and confidence and forbearance.... After nineteen years the visit of survivors of the Sixth Massachusetts is...significant of more than peace.... [It shows] a true bond of union between the North and the South...." After the applause subsided, Judge Brown offered a toast: "To the Sixth Regiment of Massachusetts: Baltimore extends her fraternal greeting."[342]

339. *Ibid.*, p. 499.
340. *Ibid.*
341. *Ibid.*, p. 504.
342. Brown, pp. 167-170.

Judge Brown retired from the bench in 1888 and with his wife of fifty years spent a year traveling in Europe. On returning to Baltimore he rejoined his son in their law practice. In his last public appearance, in October, 1889, he appeared on the stage at a ceremony honoring Jefferson Davis for his leadership in the Civil War. George William Brown, known for his robust good health, surprised his friends and relatives when he died of apoplexy on September 8, 1890 at seventy eight years of age.[343]

Abraham Lincoln

> "If...policy...is fixed by the Supreme Court, the people will have ceased to be their own rulers." — Abraham Lincoln.

After the stress of waiting for the Northern troops to get through to Washington — expecting Confederate soldiers perhaps to oust him from the Executive Mansion at any moment — Mr. Lincoln could indulge himself in a little relaxation. He loved children and he loved to be with them, especially his two boys, Tad and Willie. His good friend, Ward Hill Lamon, remembered, "He could persuade any child from the arms of its mother or nurse...there being a peculiar fascination in his voice and manner which the little one could not resist.... He would call his two boys to some quiet part of the house, throw himself at full length upon the floor, and abandon himself to their fun and frolic as merrily as if he had been of their own age."[344]

In that tense life, with the Executive Mansion guarded by soldiers, with cabinet meetings dealing with difficult war matters, Mr. Lincoln had little time to relax. But he did find time to read the Bible. After lunch, remembered Elizabeth Todd Grimsley, Mrs.

343. *The Baltimore Sun*, September 8, 1890, supplement.

344. Lamon, Ward Hill, *Recollections of Abraham Lincoln 1845-1865*, Lincoln, Neb.: 1994, p. 297-8; originally published by A.C. McClure and Company, in 1895. Reprinted from the expanded edition of 1911.

Lincoln's cousin who lived in the Executive Mansion in the early months of Lincoln's presidency, "he would stretch himself out on the couch with a book in his hand, as often as not the Bible."[345] A friend walked behind him on the couch on one occasion, when Mr. Lincoln was being battered with bad news, and discovered that he was reading the Book of Job.

Mr. Lincoln's personal life was not simple; his wife had strong family ties to the Confederacy and was suspected of helping to transmit military secrets to the South. Her brother David Todd, an active Confederate, was commandant of the infamous Libby Prison in Richmond, the Confederate capital, one hundred miles away.[346] "The story became current," wrote Mrs. Grimsley, "that Mrs. Lincoln 'was not loyal,' was a 'rebel,'.... It was believed...that she was in communication with the Confederate Army." In fact, one of Mrs. Lincoln's sisters, from Alabama, was "passed by the President through the lines" to visit Mrs. Lincoln in the Executive Mansion; on returning through the lines, she "carried her weight in quinine, a veritable bonanza to the Southern Army....Orders were given that her Southern relatives should not be permitted" in the Executive Mansion.[347]

Thousands of Union troops were pouring into Washington after the rescue of the city. Railroads and the telegraph and the mail again connected Washington to the Northern states. But Maryland was still a question mark. Critically dependent on that state for access to the North, Lincoln had to make sure that Maryland remained a part of the Union or at least not a part of the Confederacy. Maryland was seething with Confederate sympathizers who had not given up. The Maryland legislature continued to threaten to secede. Mr. Lincoln militarized the railroads going through Maryland and posted soldiers along the

345. Grimsley, Elizabeth Todd, *Six Months in the White House*, Illinois State Historical Society, Vol. XIX, No's 3-4, Oct. 1926-Jan 1927, p. 54.

346. Turner, Justin G., and Turner, Linda Levitt, *Mary Todd Lincoln, Her Life and Letters*, New York: 1972, Knopf, p. 155.

347. Grimsley, pp. 43-73.

tracks to prevent the sabotage of trains taking troops to Washington. And he suspended habeas corpus in Maryland to arrest and jail possible traitors.

Time was of the essence; if suspected persons were allowed the full process of the habeas corpus law, time would be consumed while unstable Maryland might again put Washington in jeopardy. In his assumption of war powers, Mr. Lincoln did not have the Supreme Court on his side. The court was made up largely of Southerners; the Chief Justice, Roger Brooke Taney [pronounced Tawny], was a Baltimore resident. Chief Justice Taney was profoundly disturbed when Lincoln won the recent election; he continued to dislike and distrust him. He was not disposed to support Lincoln in legal questions as Lincoln took the reins of government firmly in his hands to deal with the rebellion of the Southern states. Taney was of the landed, slave-owning gentry of Maryland; he was apprehensive that slaves, given an opportunity, would rise against their white masters with violent and bloody consequences. Taney believed that, with Lincoln as president, the slaves of the South would no longer be under control; he wrote to his son-in-law, just before Lincoln's election, of the "fearful state of things.... I remember the horrors of St. Domingo [Haiti].... [Lincoln's election] will determine whether anything like it is to be visited upon our own Southern countrymen."[348]

Taney was referring to the rebellion of the plantation slaves on the island of Haiti; one of the slaves, Jean Jacques Dessalines, had been made governor, and in 1804 (when Taney was twenty-four years old) a devastating massacre of the whites was unleashed when he proclaimed Haiti a republic. Also vivid in Southern memories was the "Vesey Conspiracy" in Charleston in 1822, when Taney was practicing law in Maryland; some nine thousand slaves were, unknown to white masters, organized into a rebellion by Denmark Vesey, a freed slave. The conspiracy was discovered in time and

348. Walker, Lewis, *Without Fear or Favor, A Biography of Chief Justice Roger Brooke Taney*, Boston: 1965, Houghton Mifflin Company, p. 443.

Vesey was hanged. The most searing memory, perhaps, was that of the Nat Turner rebellion, only thirty years before Lincoln's election. Nat Turner, a brooding, religious black mystic, led a band of slaves on a rampage in Virginia, killing all the whites they could find, hacking men and women and children to death with axes.[349]

Chief Justice Roger Taney, ruling in the famous Dred Scott case, won fervent enmity in the North. Dred Scott was a slave in Missouri, a slave state, who was taken by his owner, a Dr. Emerson, to Illinois, a free state. In Illinois Dred Scott, still held as a slave, married and had two children. Later he and his new family were brought back to Missouri by Dr. Emerson and again held as slaves. Scott sued for his freedom and that of his family, holding that his stay in Illinois where slavery was illegal had made him a free man. The case came before the Supreme Court. In a complex opinion, Chief Justice Taney ruled that a negro could not bring his case before the Supreme Court; Dred Scott and his wife Harriet and his two girls, Eliza and Lizzie,[350] were still slaves. Written in 1857, four years before the Civil War began, Taney's opinion was given great coverage in Northern newspapers. His opinion lost Northern support for the Supreme Court and gained strong dislike for Taney. The North had taken to the desperate plight of negro slaves and bitterly resented Chief Justice Roger Taney and the Supreme Court.

Many were afraid that the Supreme Court, under Chief Justice Taney, would declare the Emancipation Proclamation unconstitutional. Taney, it was understood, believed that the President had no power to "destroy property rights in this fashion."[351] "The Proclamation..." a Washington newspaper wrote, "was to be [judged by] the secession heart of a man whose body was in Baltimore and whose soul was in Richmond.... God help the negro

349. Marcotte, p. 21.

350. Friedman, Leon, and Friedman, Israel, Editors, *The Justices of the United States Supreme Court, 1789-1969, Their Lives and Major Opinions*, New York: 1969, Chelsea House publishers, Vol. I, p. 684.

351. Swisher, Carl Brent, *Roger B. Taney*, New York: 1935, The MacMillan Company, pp. 571-2.

who depended on Roger B. Taney...."[352] The Emancipation Proclamation never came before the court.

Abraham Lincoln and Roger Taney came into contention in the first weeks of the Civil War. The two men were similar in appearance; Lincoln described himself: "I am, in height, six feet, four inches, nearly; lean in flesh, weighing, on an average, one hundred and eighty pounds; dark complexion, with coarse dark hair, and grey eyes..."[353] Many thought Lincoln ugly. Taney was "tall and gaunt...[with] a thick crop of unruly black hair.... a long sensitive face [with a] prominent nose...eyes wide-set and gray-blue.... Some thought him...ugly."[354] The public saw them stand together at Lincoln's inauguration when the Chief Justice swore Mr. Lincoln into office.

Abraham Lincoln had long been of the opinion that the Supreme Court was not exactly supreme. When he spoke to the nation in his inaugural address, he specifically made an issue of the Supreme Court. He said, "If the policy of the government, upon vital questions..., is to be...fixed by decisions of the Supreme Court...the people will have ceased to be their own rulers, having...resigned their Government into the hands of that eminent tribunal."[355] In this inaugural speech he hid the extent of his distrust of the Supreme Court; in an earlier draft he had used the wording: "having...resigned their Government over to the despotism of the few life officers composing the court." Secretary of State Seward urged him to soften his criticism of the court in the final draft.[356]

The conflict between Lincoln and Taney was symbolic of the issues of the Civil War. One Southern historian said of the election of Abraham Lincoln: "The conservative, statesmanly civilization of the Southern States which had conducted the country through a

352. *Ibid*, p. 572.

353. Lamon, p. 11.

354. Lewis, p. 3.

355. Tyler, Samuel, "Memoir of Roger Brooke Taney, L.L.D.," Baltimore: 1872, John Murphy and Company, pp. 411-2. See also Nicolay and Hay, Vol. IV, p. 338.

356. Nicolay and Hay, Vol. IV, p.338.

period of so much honor and happiness…[now] becomes excluded from…the…Federal Government. The civilization of [the North], with its radical spirit, [will] control…the government and the destiny of the people."[357] The South was losing control. Mr. Lincoln, with his Republican, anti-slavery party was grim news for Southerners, especially for Chief Justice Roger Taney.

Roger Taney was born in 1777, during the Revolutionary War. George Washington was president when he was a boy. Now eighty-four years old, he had lived through the entire history of the nation. After he had practiced law for several decades in Maryland, President Andrew Jackson, in 1831, asked him to serve as his Attorney General. President Jackson appointed him Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in 1835. When the Civil War broke out he had been Chief Justice for twenty-four years.

"Habeas corpus" was a legal issue of great public interest in the early days of the Civil War. Habeas corpus (from the Latin, literally meaning, "bring the body") is a civil protection that provides that no person may be arrested and held in jail without a jury trial for a specific crime. By a writ of habeas corpus, a judge can order the authorities to bring the prisoner before him and explain the case against him. But this protection comes under fire when the authorities are nervous; and they were nervous in the days after the Baltimore riot. "Sabotage on the part of disloyal persons became so general and so dangerous that on April 27, 1861, the President directed General Scott to suspend the writ of habeas corpus…to make it possible to imprison persons on suspicion and hold them in confinement without their being released by writs of habeas corpus from judges who might themselves be Southern sympathizers." [358]

The case of John Merryman brought the issue to the attention of the nation "One of the most important [cases involving] the powers of the President and the rights…of the citizen…since the founding of the Government."[359] John Merryman was "a country

357. Tyler, p. 401.
358. *Ibid*.
359. *New York Times*, May 29, 1861.

gentleman…and an active secessionist," who "had supervised the burning of railroad bridges"[360] around Baltimore and had been "found recruiting for one of the rebel [military] companies."[361] He was arrested on May 25, 1861, five weeks after the Baltimore Riot and jailed in Fort McHenry in Baltimore. The next day, Sunday, his counsel, Messrs. Gill and Williams, presented a petition to Chief Justice Taney, sitting in Baltimore, for a writ of habeas corpus. Taney was serving as a circuit judge in Baltimore in addition to his duties in Washington as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.[362]

Roger Taney was now elderly and in failing health. He apparently volunteered to come to his Baltimore chambers from Washington[363] to receive Merryman's petition.[364] Judge Taney immediately issued the writ, addressed to the commander of Fort McHenry, General Cadwalader; the writ ordered that John Merryman be delivered to Judge Taney's court on the following day, Monday, May 27th, "at eleven o'clock precisely."[365]

Many in the North were unhappy with Judge Taney for getting involved; he could have appointed a lower court judge to handle the case. The New York Times said, on its front page, "Judge Taney…is at heart a rebel…. The fact that Judge Taney, old and infirm as he is, volunteered to go to Baltimore to issue a writ in favor of a rebel shows the alacrity with which he serves the cause of rebellion."[366]

On Monday, "at eleven o'clock precisely, the Chief Justice took his seat on the bench. In a few minutes Colonel Lee, a military officer [no relation to Robert E. Lee], appeared with General Cadwalader's

360. Swisher, P. 550.

361. Nicolay and Hay, p. 174.

362. Justices of the Supreme Court, at the time, also served as circuit judges. "Each of the judges had to preside over circuit courts…to which they were assigned…Elderly Supreme Court justices [were required] to ride hundreds of miles over rough roads to preside over local courts…It was feared that if the judges established themselves in Washington and lost contact with the circuits they would become tools of national government." Swisher, pp. 353-4.

363. Tyler, p. 642.

364. *Ibid*, p. 430.

365. Brown, p. 88.

366. *New York Times*, May 29, 1861.

[answer] to the writ." General Cadwalader wrote: "John Merryman] is charged with various acts of treason [including] armed hostility against the Government...; he...has often made...declarations [of his] readiness to cooperate with those engaged in the present rebellion against the Government of the United States."[367] On orders from President Lincoln, he said, he declined to produce John Merryman. Chief Justice Taney was outraged. He spoke to Colonel Lee from the bench, "The commanding officer, then, declines to obey the writ?" Colonel Lee said that he had no further comment.[368]

The chief justice then sent the U.S. Marshall to Fort McHenry to order General Cadwalader to appear before him the next morning at twelve o'clock. The next day, Tuesday, May 28, 1861, Baltimoreans gathered around the court house, intensely following the battle between Baltimorean Roger Taney and the President of the United States.

Mayor George Brown, who was at the scene, wrote later, "The Chief Justice, leaning on the arm of his grandson, walked slowly through the crowd...and the crowd silently and with lifted hats opened the way for him to pass."[369]

The Chief Justice took his seat on the Bench and called for the Marshall's report.[370] The Marshall said that when he appeared at Fort McHenry, "I was not permitted to enter the gate." The Chief Justice then said that, although the Marshall was entitled to use force to bring General Cadwalader before him, the Marshall probably could not prevail against the forces available at Fort McHenry. Judge Taney said, "If General Cadwalader were before me I should impose fines and imprisonment [on him]."[371] Chief Justice Taney summed up his view of the law in the case, and said that he would present his written opinion to President Lincoln.

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367. Tyler, p. 643.
368. Brown, p. 88.
369. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
370. Tyler, p. 422.
371. Brown, p.90.

"After the court adjourned, I went up to the bench," recounted Mayor Brown, "and thanked him for upholding...the writ of habeas corpus." Judge Taney said, "Mr. Brown, I am an old man, a very old man, but perhaps I was preserved for this occasion." Judge Taney told Mayor Brown that he understood that Mr. Lincoln had considered putting Taney in prison, and that Mayor Brown's "time would come."[372] His words were prophetic; President Lincoln had Mayor Brown arrested and jailed a few months later.

Lincoln did not reply to Chief Justice Taney's message. He continued suspending habeas corpus in Maryland; he arrested members of the Maryland legislature and other prominent Marylanders. Lincoln intended to stop "the passage of any act of secession by the Legislature of Maryland."[373] One of the persons arrested remembered, "A number of the most prominent members of the Legislature and editors of newspapers, and other citizens were arrested.... Arrangements had been made to have a Government steamer at Annapolis to receive the prisoners and convey them to their destination...[under] absolute secrecy."[374] The prisoners were taken to Fort Warren in Boston Harbor.

On his election in November Abraham Lincoln had inherited a nation in crisis. Before he was inaugurated seven of the Southern states had left the Union and had set up a Confederate government. He had become president of a disintegrating country. Mr. Lincoln acted promptly and aggressively to save the nation. He assumed extraordinary presidential powers to deal with the threat to the Union. While many resented these "unwarranted violations of sacred constitutional rights,"[375] he did not hesitate. In addition to arresting Marylanders to keep that state from seceding, he put the state of Maryland under martial law, he put Maryland railroads under the military. Mr. Lincoln ordered thousands of troops from the Northern states to protect Washington, he assumed the power

372. *Ibid*., p. 91.
373. *Ibid*, p. 102.
374. *Ibid*.
375. Brown, p. 95.

to order a coastal blockade of Atlantic ports to isolate the South from Europe. All without consulting Congress.

President Lincoln put the Union on a war footing, preparing for the long, bloody fight for survival. He rallied the North and guided the nation through four years of war, through what he called the "fiery trial which will light us down in honor or dishonor to the last generation." Lincoln had an almost mystical belief in the Union; he thought it the "last, best hope of earth."[376]

Victory came at a tragic price. The North was exhausted. The South was bitter in defeat; it had lost its traditional way of life and had to deal with two million freed slaves. President Lincoln may have brought the North and the South together so that they could begin the process of forging a renewed nation; but before that could happen, a new tragedy struck. Abraham Lincoln was assassinated at Ford's Theatre on April 14, 1865.

376. Lincoln, Abraham, Annual Message to Congress, Dec. 1, 1862.

The Afterword

The events of the first days of the Civil War — the Baltimore Riot, the isolation of Washington, the rescue of Washington, the battle for the control of Maryland — were critical to the outcome of the war. In those first days the war was still undefined. Early events were to shape the conflict. The North had no plan for a war. The South knew it wanted to break away from the North, but its war plans were still vague.

The fate of the United States was very much more at risk in the earliest days of the Civil War than is suggested by the typical Civil War history book. It was a war with no strategy, easily influenced by events of the opening days. A different result of the first days — the capture of Washington by the South, the secession of Maryland — and the North may have never been able to gather itself together to fight, may have sued for peace, leaving slavery in place in the South.

Five men had used their power and their wiles to contend for Maryland, to make that state a part of the rebellious Confederacy or to keep it loyal to the Union. Mayor George Brown and Marshall George Kane did not succeed in subverting that state. Governor

Thomas Hicks vacillated and hindered the secession of Maryland, allowing Ben Butler and Abraham Lincoln to save Maryland for the Union.

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