

The Real Danger

The chapter titled "The Real Danger" details the tense situation in the United States as Abraham Lincoln prepares to assume the presidency amidst rising unrest. With Anderson at Sumter, the national crisis intensifies, and Lincoln's frustration grows. This frustration stems from the political vacuum left by President Buchanan, a flood of petitions for patronage jobs, and ominous threats suggesting plots against Washington. The Springfield Republican reported a warning from radical senator Louis T. Wigfall of Texas that the capital could fall to secessionists before Lincoln's inauguration, exacerbating an already charged atmosphere.

Lincoln's looming inaugural speech weighs heavily on him, as he realizes its significance amidst the growing unrest. He expresses a desire to take the oath of office immediately, acknowledging the challenges awaiting him and lamenting that the existing administration is doing little to stabilize the situation. His friend Thurlow Weed expresses regret that Lincoln cannot assume office earlier, while Southern congressman Alexander H. Stephens urges Lincoln to take action to "save our common country."

In the midst of this turmoil, Lincoln receives positive news when William Seward accepts the position of secretary of state after some delay. Seward advises Lincoln to arrive in Washington earlier than usual to mitigate potential unrest. While Lincoln feels reassured by Commanding General Winfield Scott's promise of protection, he is more concerned about the electoral vote count set for February 13, 1861, which he believes poses greater risks than his inauguration.

As the year ends, the atmosphere is far from optimistic. Keziah Brevard, a Charleston planter, expresses her fears about the upcoming year through a nightmare, depicting the turbulence that lay ahead. New Year's Day in Washington is subdued, with Charles Francis Adams noting the grim mood that prevails despite good weather. Despite some positive developments like the appointment of Joseph Holt as Secretary of War, there's a palpable sense of dread in the air, culminating in Texas senator Wigfall's belief that Holt's appointment signifies future conflict, underscoring the urgent and dangerous times America faces .