

# A Wife's Disappointment

In the chapter titled "A Wife's Disappointment," set against the backdrop of rising tensions in Washington, the creation of a "Select Committee" highlights a deepening suspicion within the government regarding potential treasonous acts. This "Committee of Five"—comprised of two Republicans, two pro-Union Democrats from the North, and one Southern Democrat—casts a wide net of inquiry, spurred on by information from Edwin M. Stanton, the new attorney general. Stanton's covert communications point to a traitor within the cabinet, specifically targeting Isaac Toucey, the Secretary of the Navy, due to the Navy's inaction as Southern forces seized the federal navy yard in Pensacola. The committee's findings expose a dire situation: twenty-eight naval ships unfit for service despite a considerable repair budget.

As political turbulence escalates with fears of a Southern coup aiming to disrupt Lincoln's inauguration, the committee pivots to investigate purported threats against the capital. Influential sources kindled rumors spurring military preparations as General Winfield Scott deployed troops to Washington, temporarily alleviating fears of insurrection.

In Congress, fierce debates unfold, amplifying divisions between "Black" Republicans and Southern Democrats. Jefferson Davis's forewarnings of war provoke a stark response from Senator Seward, who surprisingly aligns with Southern sentiments in an effort to assuage tensions. His assertion that states should dictate their own policies regarding property, including the controversial issue of slavery, disgusts many Republicans, including his own wife, who candidly critiques his readiness to amend the Constitution to protect slavery to maintain the Union.

Despite his conciliatory efforts, Seward's stance reveals an essential misunderstanding of the crisis: the South's growing resentment towards the North's condemnation of slavery. The latter perceives this moral stance as a direct attack on Southern honor and identity, igniting a simmering animosity that could lead to violence. Lincoln, too, struggles with the complexities of this conflict as he navigates a divided nation, acknowledging that the fundamental difference regarding slavery lies at the heart of the discord—a chasm far beyond the reach of political compromise.