

Party Malice

In Springfield, Illinois, the mood following the Election Day celebration swiftly transitioned to an unexpected tranquility. John Nicolay noted that the city had returned to its usual calm, nearly forgetting the tumultuous election, as it prepared for Lincoln's formal celebration—a “Jollification”—which was reluctantly anticipated due to Lincoln's narrow victory. Similarly, young Anna Ridgely expressed her disillusionment with Lincoln's election in her diary. Despite her father's Democratic affiliations, she feared for the nation's future, lamenting Lincoln's lack of experience and polish, and expressing concern that Southern animosity might persist under his leadership.

Henry Villard, a German émigré reporting for the *New York Herald*, shared similar apprehensions regarding Lincoln's ability to navigate the escalating chaos of the nation. Recalling a chance encounter with Lincoln during the senator's campaign, Villard noted Lincoln's self-doubt and his reflection on his political ambitions, which his wife firmly believed he would achieve. Lincoln's humorous admission of his incredulity at the idea of becoming President underscored his insecurities.

As the tensions grew, Lincoln seemed unaware of the Southern discontent but believed the majority still favored the Union. He saw himself as a moderate regarding slavery and avoided incendiary comments ahead of his inauguration. On the night of the Jollification, despite the festive atmosphere with decorated homes and fireworks, Anna noted a lack of enthusiasm and described the smallest torch-lit procession she had ever seen. The highlight was a speech by Senator Lyman Trumbull, whose remarks were subtly guided by Lincoln to assure the South of Republican intentions, even as he drafted passages that suggested Southern militias could quell potential uprisings.

While Trumbull's speech was disseminated widely, it did little to alleviate the national unease. Lincoln reiterated his decision to maintain silence in public discussions, fearing that any words he spoke would exacerbate the tension. His reflections revealed a deep understanding of the political vitriol surrounding him, which he compared to biblical reluctance for signs of divine approval. As the wait for electoral certification began, ominous sentiments circulated regarding Lincoln's safety and the dire implications his presidency might pose to the South, stoking fears of abolition and loss of control over enslaved people .