

# LINCOLN LORE

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## RAYMOND—"LINCOLN'S 'POLITICAL LIEUTENANT-GENERAL' "

Brown, Francis *Raymond of the Times*. W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., 101 Fifth Ave., New York 3, N. Y. Price \$5.00.

Francis Brown, long associated with *The New York Times* and recently made editor of the Sunday book review feature, is the author of a new publication *Raymond of the Times*. The dust jacket bears a subtitle in which Henry Jarvis Raymond is presented as "Lincoln's 'political lieutenant-general,'" a title conferred upon Raymond by the President. This designation invites students of the Emancipator to again review the activities of a small coterie of political leaders surrounding the chief executive among whom Raymond is given a rank next to the President himself. The subtitle emphasis also invites us to confine our comments on the contents of the book to the Raymond episodes which bring him in contact with his political chief, President Lincoln.

Raymond did not come by his commission as lieutenant-general through any long period of devotion to Lincoln or his principles. In fact he was not even in the ranks during the early stages of the Railsplitter's political ventures. The fusion principle in politics was Raymond's shibboleth, which brought him such recognition as he eventually achieved. During the Illinois senatorial campaign in 1858 *The New York Times* threw its strength back of Douglas urging the Republican element to forsake Lincoln and unite in the support of the Democratic Senator. The extent to which the *Times* supported Douglas is illustrated by the fact that a speech he delivered at Columbus, Ohio in 1859 was telegraphed to New York at Raymond's request and at a cost to the *Times* of \$497.

When the candidates who aspired to the presidency in 1860 were made known, Raymond worked valiantly for the success of William H. Seward, Lincoln's chief opponent at the Chicago convention. Even after Lincoln received the nomination at the Wigwam, Raymond hesitated so long before endorsing him that it was rumored that the *Times* was to support Douglas instead of Lincoln in the presidential contest. Raymond finally came around to a full support of the Republican ticket and shared in the Lincoln victory.

Raymond's passion for party coalition in times of stress found expression soon after the beginning of civil strife. His editorial columns began to advocate the submerging of rival party objectives and pleaded for a combined support of the administration by all men who were loyal to the Union. This appeal was climaxed by an invitation from the New York Republican State Committee to the Union Democrats to join with them in such an enterprise. Raymond himself was one of the first benefactors of this new federation movement and was swept into a seat in the New York legislature by the statewide success of the new political setup.

The purely local aspects of Raymond's unity appeal in New York soon expanded into a national movement and it was his association with the origin and development of this enterprise which chiefly accounts for his political ascendancy. He became the logical leader and exponent for this loyalty effort and visualized the need of this same political cooperation extending over into the post war era. Raymond had given his support to the administration and he found himself in agreement with the ideas of the President as he explored the needs of the recon-

struction program. Anticipating the 1864 political campaign he wrote to Schuyler Colfax, later to become Speaker of the House of Representatives, "the task of reconstructing the Union will be better performed by Lincoln than by any one else."

Backing up this conviction Raymond prepared for publication a book entitled *A History of the Administration of President Lincoln*. It was so timed as to come from the press contemporary with the Union National Convention to be held in Baltimore on June 7, 1864. It served as a unifying factor in the unanimous choice of Lincoln to succeed himself as the chief executive. Directly, Raymond may have had as much to do with the choice of Lincoln's running mate, Andrew Johnson, as with the nomination of the head of the ticket. Here again the amalgamation stress of the New York editor found expression. With Lincoln a former Republican and northerner for President and Johnson a former Democrat and southerner for Vice President, everything seemed to be arranged politically and sectionally to Raymond's satisfaction for the 1864 campaign. He was awarded for his effort by being made chairman of The National Union Executive Committee.

Apparently there had been a fusion of too many diversified interests in moulding the Union party. The effort to overcome its sectional and partisan character in the choice of its nominees for President and Vice President and the selection of Raymond to lead the campaign was a good omen but among the masses the ever present longing for peace began to make itself felt. The time came when Lincoln's "political lieutenant-general" was about ready to surrender and for a brief moment the commander-in-chief himself was skeptical about success. On that August day in 1864 when the National Union Executive Committee met in New York, Raymond wrote to Lincoln a despondent letter in which he advised his chief: "The tide is settling strongly against us," and the following day Lincoln scribbled these words: "it seems exceedingly probable that this administration will not be reelected." But Lincoln soon reassured his discouraged lieutenant-general that conditions were not as hopeless as they appeared and the President was duly reelected.

When John Wilkes Booth assassinated Abraham Lincoln he also wrecked the political machine which Raymond had constructed for the post war effort. Still believing as he told Colfax that Lincoln could best perform the task of reconstruction, Raymond also believed the objective of reunion could most efficiently be accomplished by a non-partisan constituency. Not only was the President removed from the supreme command on April 15, 1865 but figuratively speaking, down with him went his "political lieutenant-general," who directed the forces that placed Lincoln at the head of the Union party in 1864.

Mr. Brown in his comprehensive portrait of the war editor of the *Times* feels that the management of affairs which reelected the President in 1864 brought the chairman of the National Union Executive Committee "to the pinnacle of his political career." Had Abraham Lincoln lived to guide the nation through the critical early days of reconstruction Henry Jarvis Raymond would most certainly have shared in even a more glorious political heritage.