This dissertation has been microfilmed exactly as received

CURL, Donald Walter, 1935—MURAT HALSTEAD, EDITOR AND POLITICIAN.

The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1964
History, modern

University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan
MURAT HALSTEAD,
EDITOR AND POLITICIAN

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of the Ohio State University

By

Donald Walter Curl, B.Sc., M.A.

The Ohio State University

1964

Approved by

Francis P. Weissburger
Adviser
Department of History
AUTOBIOGRAPHY

October 7, 1935
Born - Logan County, Ohio

1957 . . . . .
B. Sc., Ohio State University

1957-1959 . .
Student Assistant, Department of History,
The Ohio State University

1958 . . . . .
M. A., The Ohio State University

1959-60 . . . .
Graduate Assistant, Department of History,
The Ohio State University

Teaching Assistant, Department of History,
The Ohio State University

1961-1962 . .
Instructor, Department of History,
The Ohio State University

Instructor, Department of History,
Kent State University, Kent, Ohio

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Late Nineteenth Century American History

Medieval History. Frank J. Pegues

Modern European History, 1870 to present. Charles Morley

The Slavery Controversy and the New South. Henry H. Simms

United States History to 1850. Eugene H. Roseboom
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.  CHILDHOOD AND THE YOUNG MAN</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE APPRENTICE JOURNALIST</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE EDITOR AND THE CIVIL WAR</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. HALSTEAD AND PRESIDENT JOHNSON</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.  HALSTEAD THE JOURNALIST</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. HALSTEAD THE TOURIST AND WAR CORRESPONDENT</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. THE LIBERAL REPUBLICAN</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. THE ELECTION OF 1876</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. HALSTEAD THE POLITICIAN</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X.  THE ELECTION OF 1884</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI. THE PAYNE AFFAIR</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII. THE BALLOT-BOX FRAUD</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII. THE TWILIGHT OF A JOURNALIST</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV. EPILOGUE</td>
<td>408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD AND THE YOUNG MAN

As the hour approached midnight on December 31, 1901, a lonely and dejected old man sat in room 1756 of the Auditorium Hotel in Chicago, far from his family and friends in Cincinnati, writing a memoir of the preceding year. His loneliness, his recurring financial difficulties, his legal problems, and a host of other worries convinced Murat Halstead on this New Year's Eve that his life was at an end. He seemed to realize that, taken from any point of view, his life was basically one of the nineteenth century, not of the twentieth.

Through his forceful personal style of journalism, Halstead had made the Cincinnati Commercial into one of the leading newspapers of the United States. Now it and his fortune were gone, the result of a struggle with the McLean family and their Enquirer—a struggle between the personal journalism of the editorial room and the business journalism of the counting room. A power in Ohio political circles, a friend of Republican governors, senators, and presidents, he had ventured into officeholding only once, and this had also brought the centuries into conflict and Halstead defeat. He was nominated as minister to Germany by Benjamin Harrison, but his editorial denouncements of corruption in senatorial elections resulted in the Senate's failure to confirm him. Turning from newspaper and political life to the authorship of books on current affairs and
biography he seemed to meet success. His *The Illustrious Life of William McKinley* sold three-quarters of a million copies and established the record for the greatest number of books ever sold by one author in the same length of time. Yet instead of recouping the lost Halstead fortune, the book only brought legal difficulties, and as a result, little financial return. Again the centuries had come into conflict, and the nineteenth-century author lost to twentieth-century business ethics.

The world of the past century with its Ohio Republican presidents, many of whom had been friends of Halstead, ended with McKinley's assassination. While he was yet to see another Ohio Republican, and former Commercial legal reporter, nominated for president, Halstead's period of great influence and political power was over. To his friends he might talk of starting a new "penny" newspaper in Cincinnati, one selling for a cent or two, and appealing to the masses. Yet he knew that the age when a paper could be successfully inaugurated through its forceful editorship was forever over, and that high-speed presses, scores of reporters, and almost unlimited financial resources were now needed for such a venture to be profitable. The Greeleys and the Halsteads had been passed over for the Pulitzers and the Hearsts. And on that New Year's Eve in 1901 Halstead felt that an age of integrity and honesty had been passed over for an age of money and power. Now in his seventy-second year, he recognized that he had not been meant to be a millionaire. He felt that he had had such a chance in the past, but instead had chosen what to him was the path of honor. If he did not have a fortune on which to live out his old age in comfort and security, at least he felt he had the peace of mind that comes to a man of public trust and influence who never betrayed
that trust and never sold that influence. As the great clocks of the
city struck twelve and the church bells pealed out their welcome to the
new year, the lonely and dejected Halstead was consoled by the typically-
nineteenth-century thought that while lacking fortune, he, nonetheless,
retained his integrity.¹

Murat Halstead was a child of nineteenth-century mid-western
America and was typical of his era and place in almost every respect save
his first name. This unusual name had been given him by his father, a
colonel in the local Paddy's Run unit of the Ohio State Militia, and a
devotee of military history. "Colonel Griff," as young Murat's father
was called by the people of Butler County, greatly admired Napoleon's
commander of cavalry, Joachim Murat. During the 1820's Murat's two sons
came to the United States and the American newspapers published accounts
of them and of their father's career, further arousing the colonel's
interest in the Murat family. Thus when the colonel's first son was born
his Christian name became that of the illustrious Murats.

The birth of a first son and heir was a great event in the life
of any pioneer family, and the colonel celebrated Murat's birth in a
manner that his frontier friends and neighbors greatly appreciated.
Soon after the event the colonel's militia unit gathered for their an-
nual muster. As the exercises came to a close, a wagon was driven to
the front of the lines, and the proud new father invited all present to

¹Murat Halstead Papers, Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio (Cincinnati). The full citation for each title will be found only in its first use in each chapter.
come forward and do honor to his son by sampling the contents of the barrel of corn whiskey in the back.  

The Halsteads were an ancient English family, the name Halsteede or Halsteade appearing in the Doomsday Book of the late eleventh century. The Halsteads in later periods were yeomen and tradesmen, with a few merchants, churchmen, and naval officers, and even some members of the landed gentry. The first American Halstead was Henry who emigrated from England in 1651 and became the owner of a large slave plantation on or near the site of what today is the city of Norfolk, Virginia. Murat's immediate family can be traced from John Halstead, his grandfather, who was born and reared in Currituck County, North Carolina, near the Virginia state line. John married Ruth Richardson, a young girl of similar southern gentry background. Their first home, in Orange County, North Carolina, was where Griffin, Murat's father (and their second child) was born in 1802. As was often typical of the era, John was unsatisfied with the land in North Carolina, and having heard stories of the blue grass land of Kentucky, decided to move West with his family. In the fashion of those early days, all the earthly possessions of the Halsteads were packed in a wagon and the long journey to the West and a new home began. A life of deprivation, of make-shift housing, or of long years of toil was not the destiny of the Halstead family, for packed in the center of the wagon was a keg of silver coins, the means of purchasing new land and farm equipment, and of building a house in this fertile area. The

\[2\text{William L. Halstead Manuscript, Philosophical and Historical Society of Ohio, 17.}\]
\[3\text{Ibid., 16.}\]
Blue Grass section surpassed all of John's expectations, but the land titles of Kentucky were in such confusion in 1810 that he was afraid to risk his small fortune and decided to cross the river into Ohio at Cincinnati.  

The "Queen City" was then a miserable little village of a thousand people living in about three hundred log cabins sprawling along the banks of the Ohio River. John was not impressed. He later said he would not have traded the silver in his keg in return for the whole town. Moving on to the area known as Paddy's Run in Butler County, he bought 381 acres at two and a half dollars an acre. With early methods of cultivation, this was a sizable farm. In the Paddy's Run Valley in 1810 the wilderness was almost unbroken and the land was rich in ash, walnut, hickory, oak and poplar, with occasional beeches and blue gums and groups of sugar trees. Here and there the persimmon and the pawpaw flourished among honey locust, mulberry and wild cherry. Near a spring, about one hundred yards from the north line of the untamed land which he had bought, John built his family a square log house. It was in this house that Griffin grew to manhood and it was to this house that he brought his bride, Clarissa Willit, in 1827.

The Willit family, of Scotch-Irish descent and sturdy farm stock, had lived on the banks of the Susquehanna, near York, in Pennsylvania. Clarissa's father, when a youth of about eighteen had charge of a "mover's" wagon that was coming to the Ohio country. A distant cousin in delicate

---

4 Murat Halstead, "Tales and Traditions," Halstead MSS, 8.
5 William L. Halstead MS., 16.
6 Halstead, "Tales and Traditions," Halstead MSS, 12.
health was sent along with him in hopes that the fresh outdoor air would have a beneficial effect on her condition. Guardianship grew into love, and fortunately the relationship was distant enough to allow marriage. After a few years the newly married couple settled on Paint Creek in Ohio, where their daughter Clarissa was born. The family later moved on to Hamilton County where one Sunday she met Griffin, and not long thereafter, on November 1, 1827, they were married.\footnote{Ibid., 4-5.}

It was to the same house of hewn logs that John had built for his family that Griffin brought his bride. Here too on September 2, 1829, Murat was born. A log cabin for a birth place befitted the nineteenth century American, but Murat's boyhood memories were not of the family log house, but of the home that his father built when he was two. This new home, near the old in location, but more fitting for a prosperous young farmer, was a substantial two story house, the first story built of stone and cut into a hillside, the second of frame filled in with brick.\footnote{Ibid., 12.} Thus, while Murat was reared on a pioneer farm in an isolated community, it was not in squalor or in deprivation. By the time he was born the more onerous tasks of pioneering had been completed and there were funds on hand for the amenities of rural life. Moreover, John's old keg often had a surplus that could be loaned out to the neighbors at the prevailing ten per cent rate of interest, which was always taken out in advance.\footnote{William L. Halstead MS., 25.}

Murat did not escape the ordinary chores of the farm boy, but the family was prosperous enough to hire extra help in the busy seasons of
planting and harvesting, and a small boy had sufficient time for the adventures that only a small boy can find. A long remembered location of many of these adventures was a garret atop the family home, which was entered by climbing a ladder and had the advantage of both mystery and privacy. Here a rainy afternoon under the wooden shingles could be spent looking through the various stored objects, such as back issues of the family newspapers. On cool days he could curl up in heavily woolled sheepskins and, gazing out the high window, dream of conquering medieval castles or making voyages on distant seas. While the woods were more tame than when John first arrived in the area, they were still full of life and beauty, providing a home for wild turkeys, raccoons, opossums, squirrels, and all types of birds. Young Murat's first pet was from these woods. A squirrel's nest fell from a tree, leaving a baby squirrel homeless. In remembering this first pet in later years, Halstead was unsure whether he or the squirrel had been captured as the pet took over the life of its master completely. As the squirrel got older it became mischievous, and after invading the kitchen met its end at the hands of a hired girl who had the "hardness of heart to broil the delicate morsel for breakfast." Perhaps to make up for the loss of the squirrel, Murat was later given a pig, a far more usual pet for a farm boy. Ambitious that his pig should grow up to be the fattest hog in the county, Murat fed him roasting ears, his favorite food, and cared for him until the young boy painfully realized the pig was big enough to make a barrel of pork, and that the pig

---

10 Murat Halstead, "Paddy's Run Papers," Halstead MS., 42.

also must find an end like that of the pet squirrel. Perhaps consolation
came to the heartbroken master in the form of a half interest in a new
double barrelled shot-gun which he shared with his brother. Next to a
pig, a shot-gun was the most valued possession of a farm boy.\footnote{Ibid., 477.}

The first time Murat was allowed to go hunting by himself he was
given a gun that had been already loaded with one shot (no more powder
was given the novice hunter for fear of loading accidents) and sent off
to "get a squirrel." While he thought of his little pet of bygone days,
he nonetheless succeeded with his one shot and brought home a cleanly
killed squirrel. The treat enjoyed by the young boy when his squirrel
was cooked in a special skillet for his dinner was long remembered. He
was naturally extremely proud of this accomplishment, but prouder still
was his father, who felt fine marksmanship must certainly be inherited.\footnote{Ibid., 475.}

The greatest joy of Murat's youth was not a pet of his own, but a
riding horse belonging to his grandfather. Selim, a bay with black mane
and tail, and the racing blood of England and Kentucky mingled in his
veins, was the type of animal to set any boy's heart to pounding. Just
when Murat was at an age to appreciate fully the prestige which the
ownership of such a magnificent animal would give him, his grandfather
began to feel he was too old to ride Selim himself. Grandfather Halstead,
a firm believer in frequently exercising fine horses to retain their form,
gave Murat the job that was one of the pleasures of his young life. Un-
fortunately, exercise for grandfather meant a leisurely gallop, but never
racing. For Murat nothing seemed more unfair. The possession of a horse,
if even just for exercise purposes, that would out-distance any other in
the county seemed a hollow pleasure if it could not be used to its fullest.
It took little time for the resourceful young horseman to discover that a
portion of woods cut off the view of the road from the house. Thus a
slow trot might be maintained until that spot was reached and then Selim
might be given free rein. Much to his regret, Murat's career as a win-
ing local jockey came to an abrupt halt with the outbreak of the Mexican
War. Grandfather Halstead was prevailed upon by a local committee to sell
Selim so that he might be presented to a distinguished general. Murat was
forced to be contented with the knowledge that his winning mount of past
days might be leading cavalry charges in far off Mexico. His chagrin can
be imagined when he learned that the general's horse had been captured by
the Mexicans.14

The adventures of an imaginative farm boy in an only recently
tamed land kept Murat's days full. But more exciting than the daily
routine of his farm chores, his tramps in the woods, or his hunting ex-
peditions was the yearly trip which the Halstead family made to Indiana
to visit the Wayne County farm to which his mother's family had moved.
A trip of any length still took on the flavor of a pioneering venture.
The family wagon would be spread with fresh hay to provide both a comfort-
able ride and a warm bed at the end of a day's journey. Provisions for
the two days on the road—such as apples and pears, corn bread and boiled
ham—would be packed in with the tea kettle, and when the white cover had
been put in place, and the horses hitched up, a young boy's anticipation
of the greeting he would receive from his grandparents could only be

14 Ibid., 479.
matched by the thrill of seeing new and exciting places along the way. Sometimes the route chosen would be through the small college town of Oxford, sometimes through Brookville and Connersville in Indiana, famous places in their time, and exciting places for a boy from Paddy's Run. 

Much closer to home and without doubt much more exciting to the small farm boy was the mushrooming city of Cincinnati. No longer the collection of log cabins that old John Halstead found so distasteful, the city on the Ohio was just taking its place as the "Queen of the West." Already a manufacturing and trading center, it was rapidly becoming the literary and intellectual center that would magnet-like pull to its boundaries the bright young men from Xenia, Oxford, Hamilton, and Paddy's Run. Griffin often let his son accompany him when going to the river metropolis to sell his crops. Once when his parents were away from home for a few days, Murat loaded a great amount of produce on a wagon and, starting very early in the morning, took it to Cincinnati to sell. The adventure, which might have proven disastrous, turned out well. While the city seemed much larger and frightening to the small boy when he was alone than it did when his father was along, the merchants to whom he took his goods remembered him from earlier trips and did not take advantage of him. The profit of forty dollars which he was able to take home helped to quiet somewhat the dread which his parents felt when they learned of his venture; but profit or not, he was warned of severe consequences should he ever try such a thing again.

---

15 Halstead, "Tales and Traditions," Halstead MSS., 2.
16 Halstead MSS.
Living near Cincinnati gave the Halsteads the advantage of the budding literary activity that showed itself in the publication of numerous periodicals in that city. Subscriptions to at least one newspaper and at least one of the better periodicals was considered a necessity by both Griffin and Clarissa. As soon as Murat was old enough to stand by her side, his mother read articles to him from the newspapers and taught him his letters from the bold heads. As the Halsteads, like most of the people of Butler County, were politically followers of Andrew Jackson, Murat's first primer was the Democratic Hamilton Telegraph. Constant readers themselves, Murat's parents encouraged his interest in literature and history. Halstead was later to recall that the "thought of setting the dogs" on the agents for subscription books never crossed the minds of the family. Side-by-side with the usual Weems' Life of Washington and the biographies of Daniel Boone, Tecumseh and other men of frontier legend were volumes of the classics and of Robert Burns' poetry. Murat's favorite book was an "Astronomical Atlas." On many winter nights the future editor studied the illustrations of the Zodiac and poured over pages showing the Milky Way, Job's Coffin, the Big Bear, and both dippers. Milton's Paradise Lost occupied many another long evening. Murat felt that it came close to being one of the books of the Bible and wondered if the supernatural in it could be disbelieved. Remembered more fondly though were those nights when Clarissa Halstead, William L. Halstead MS., 26.

"History Makers I Have Known," 2, Halstead MSS.

"The Story of the Farmers' College," The Cosmopolitan (January, 1897), 280.
with the seemingly never ending chores of an even moderately well-to-do farm wife done, would read aloud to her children the poems of Burns, her favorite author.\(^{20}\)

A desire to give Murat every educational advantage possible was responsible for the plan which his parents worked out with his aunt when he was four years old. Already a champion reader, his first visit to the local school would be recalled by another student nearly fifty years later as one of the highlights in his own school days. A very small boy was remembered, who, dressed in his Sunday best and sitting with the girls on the "female side" of the one-room school, took his turn when the girls read aloud from their history books, and finished his passage without any correction from the teacher.\(^{21}\) As the school in his Aunt Rebecca Shaw's district was considered better than the one in Paddy's Run, it was arranged that the talented young scholar should spend week nights at her house and the weekends at home. This arrangement lasted for only a few months. The combination of an indulgent aunt and the extreme youth of Murat caused him to neglect the lessons which the rather harsh teacher felt were necessary for progress in his school. The punishment for such a crime was a lashing, administered on the unhappy child every day. Having been told that only very bad boys were whipped at school, Murat took the lashings and said not a word to either his aunt or his mother. When his mother finally discovered the punishments that he had been suffering she immediately took him from the school, though she never told his father

---


\(^{21}\) Daniel Brown to M. Halstead, December 2, 1879, Halstead MSS.
the reason for fear he would have whipped the school master for his cruelty.  

Probably blaming herself for the blows to which Murat had been subjected, Clarissa saw to it that her only son was completely prepared before allowing him to start to school again when he was ten. His new school was run by B. W. Chidlaw, a young Congregationalist minister, in New London, Ohio. There was no recurrence of his former experiences, Murat being extremely fond of Chidlaw and making excellent progress in his classes. It was during his days in Chidlaw's school that Murat developed a strong aversion to his Christian name. The more Anglo-Saxon sounding names of his fellow scholars prompted the usual schoolboy's hostility to being different from the group. Moreover, his schoolmates often teased him by pronouncing his name in unusual ways. As a consequence, his signature all his life was "M. Halstead." Nonetheless, as William Halstead says, "... when he became prominent his unusual, yet euphonic full name 'Murat Halstead' was an asset, like a well chosen stage name, in establishing and spreading his fame." In later years other newspaper men would debate the correct pronunciation, but Halstead did not offer any clues to help solve the mystery until in 1889, when testifying before a Congressional committee, he gave his name as "'Mu-raw' Halstead."  

As Murat's school days drew to a close, he and his parents began thinking about the possibility of a college education for him. Old John

---

22 Halstead MSS.  
24 Cincinnati Commercial Gazette, February 7, 1890.
Halstead was not enthusiastic about this course for his favorite grandson. He said he had witnessed the careers of other promising young men from Paddy's Run, who had sought their fortunes in the accursed cities after college, turning their backs on farming, which, for a Jacksonian Democrat, was the only worthwhile occupation. Desiring to save Murat from the wicked and unhealthy cities, Grandfather Halstead gave him a tract of land to farm on the shares at much better terms than was the usual practice. The old Jacksonian's proselytizing went amiss though, for as Murat tended what turned out to be a fine crop of corn, his thoughts were not on husbandry, but rather on what more profitable things he might do with his life. The young man found in his parents two willing accomplices in thwarting the will of his grandfather. Both Griffin and Clarissa felt that Murat was capable of attaining any goal he set for himself. Moreover, the old American dream of the son advancing beyond his father's position in society prompted them to encourage him in seeking a wider range for his talents than the Butler County farm. When he first decided upon a career in law, both parents gave their wholehearted approval. His plan was to study Blackstone at home and then continue his readings in the office of a Cincinnati or Hamilton attorney. But as has been the case with many young men before him, Murat found his interest in the law left him after a few months with Blackstone. The only answer then, his grandfather notwithstanding, seemed to be college. There perhaps the opportunity to broaden his knowledge and to explore new interests would help him find the field best suited for his life's work. 25

In 1832, Freeman G. Cary, a recent graduate of Miami University at Oxford, decided to make the teaching of boys his profession and opened a high school in a room in his home at Pleasant Hill, Ohio, near Cincinnati. Cary's school grew rapidly and by the mid-forties was recognized as one of the best academies in the West. A permanent, but small, two story brick school building and frame dormitories had been built by Cary soon after the founding of the school. He later added a larger more spacious structure with classrooms and a chapel. This building too was soon outgrown, and Cary, unwilling to invest more of his own money in further additions to the physical plant of the school, asked the large number of men who had acted as his patrons in the past to consider the existing situation. This group decided to form a corporation and seek a charter from the state legislature for the establishment of a college with Cary at its head. Adopting the name "The Farmers' College of Hamilton County" (partly because many of the patrons were farmers, but also because Cary wished to adopt a program of agricultural education), the patrons formed a board of directors and began to sell stock in the new corporation. The unusual feature of this stock was that its interest was to be paid out on demand in tuition in the College.

Soon men were visiting the farmers of the surrounding counties, urging them to buy a share, or as it came to be called, a "scholarship," in the new college. For only thirty dollars a share a farmer could insure that when the time came there would be an institution for his sons.

---

26 Samuel F. Cary, History of College Hill and Vicinity, With A Sketch of Pioneer Life in This Part of Ohio, 19.
27 Ibid., 20.
to attend based on the newest reforms in education. This college, moreover, was to be for farmers and farmers' sons; and would instill knowledge of, and zeal for, the science of agriculture. It would not turn its students' heads with "effete" ideas of becoming doctors, lawyers, and ministers.28

When the salesmen-patrons reached the Paddy's Run Valley, all thoughts that Murat might have had of attending Miami, Marietta, or Kenyon instantly vanished. Here was a college that met all of old John's objections to higher education for farmers' sons. The purchase of scholarships decided the institution in which Murat was to matriculate.29

The board of directors was soon able to report that enough farmers like Murat's grandfather and father had subscribed for shares in the college to make it possible to purchase four additional acres of land and to begin work on a new building. All together thirteen thousand dollars was subscribed.30

A stately new brick building with a large chapel and numerous classrooms and students' rooms was ready for occupancy on the rainy autumn day in 1848 when Murat and about two hundred fellow scholars arrived for their first day at college. The old academy building, a brick row, and several frame dormitories completed the small campus. Adding to the attractiveness of life at Farmers' College was the Miami Female College

29Ibid., 284.
in the near neighborhood. A decided majority of Murat's class were straight from the farm and showed it by their browned muscular bodies and their far from fashionable dress. Big boots, big hats, rough clothes, and extremely long hair were only a few of the eccentric characteristics that the town boys in their midst were more than willing to point out. Many of the farm students came prepared to board themselves. Their fathers brought the family wagon loaded with cords of wood, boxes of provisions, and in one case enough boiled pork to last the six weeks before the Christmas holidays. The pork might actually have held out longer had not the embarrassed scholar decided to burn it for fuel. To add insult to the farm boys' injured pride, when the faculty began to inquire into the academic backgrounds of their new charges, a greater percentage of those with agrarian backgrounds were placed in the preparatory class than were their more sophisticated town fellows.

Murat was one of those placed in the preparatory division. The faculty felt that a little polishing with some lessons in algebra, geometry, geography, natural philosophy and astronomy, book-keeping, grammar of rhetoric, composition, and Bible recitation would better prepare him for the work of a first year college student. The loss of prestige that Murat shared with the other farm boys quickly divided the students into "fellows from the country" and "fellows from the town." And while the country boys might hold their own in ball games, foot races, and

---

32 Ibid., 285.
33 Farmers' College Catalogue, 1848, 13.
perhaps an occasional fight, the feelings of inadequacy in intellectual attainment and particularly in appearance soon had their effect. One town boy had made the remark, within Murat’s hearing, that a skilled barber would spend a few hard days' work on the country group. While nothing more was said about it, one by one the rural scholars began to appear with neatly trimmed hair. The heavy and coarse cowhide boots gave way in time to shoes more suitable for indoors; the fur hats with flaps to cover the ears were discarded; and after the Christmas holidays the number of new and fashionable suits that could be counted was amazing. Murat’s first venture into the newspaper field has been credited to his desire to conform to the more stylish dress of the town boys. Benjamin Harrison, a grandson of a president and a town boy, was one of the students to arrive at the college the same year as Murat. Hair trimmed, shoes polished, and wearing a broadcloth suit with brass buttons, Harrison was the envy of the young boy from Paddy's Run and the pattern for his transformation. The summer before he had started to college Murat had built a kiln to burn lime. This business venture had been moderately successful, but most of the profits had already been spent to meet tuition and the incidental expenses of college. Writing home for money would have been unthinkable for the self-reliant young student, who instead, according to family tradition, wrote a short story entitled "The Red-Haired Maiden of the Blue Miami" and sent it off to a Cincinnati paper which carried it in its columns. He was to regret this action in later life, when, as a famous journalist known for his way with English prose, a rival newspaperman was

---

34 Robert Halstead, "Presidents I Have Known," Halstead MSS.
35 Halstead, "Paddy's Run Papers,"
to discover this long forgotten story, and much to the delight of the citizens of Cincinnati, taunt the poor editor with its republication. At the time, all Murat cared about was that he had earned a broadcloth suit with brass buttons.³⁶

The first six weeks of college life produced a more marked change in the "fellows from the country" than they would ever know again in all their lives. Fathers who pulled up to the college with wagons loaded down with cords of wood and boxes of fruit and preserves no longer could count on a cordial reception from their sons and the practice of boarding out soon took precedence over boarding oneself. The color of one's suit, the correctness of one's collar and cuff buttons, and the style and polish of one's shoes soon became more important factors than the old ones of wearability and warmth. A new horizon, a way of life that they had never known before, had opened to Murat and his companions. Returning to their homes for the holiday they found the old land that they had known and loved suddenly confining, and their families somewhat provincial. After the holidays the increase in homogeneity at the college was marked. It became impossible at first sight to tell which of the boys were from the towns and which from the country. Hats, shoes, suits, shirt collars, and neckties were all of the same style. Literature, the law, or theology became the topic of more conversations than the proper selection of seed corn or the best way to apply manure. With the reports from Cary and the other faculty members that their sons were doing well and were showing the qualities that would make them the equal of gentlemen in any walk of life, the fathers were reconciled to this change of events. After all,

³⁶Robert Halstead, op. cit.
their fathers concluded, it was not likely that the boys would learn much more about farming at college than they could have picked up at home. Many even decided that it might be a good thing to have a teacher, a doctor, or even a preacher, in the family.  

Not only had the first term of Murat's college life proven successful from the point of view of refinement, but out of a grading system based on ten, he had received nine and a half in three of his classes and nine in the other two. The second term of preparatory work seemed unnecessary for embarking on full time college studies, and so Murat decided to drop out and spend the term teaching at the district school in the nearby village of Colerain. After working on the farm during the summer, he re-entered Farmers' College in the fall.

While remaining a good, and a serious, student, Murat found time to engage in the types of antics which the sophisticated college student of a later day would consider beneath his dignity, but which released the tensions and made life more exciting for the youthful student of the nineteenth century. To the occasional raidings of a neighboring farmer's watermelon patch, or of Gary's celebrated orchard of plum, cherry, apple and pear trees, were often added elaborate schemes for mischief involving many of the students. One night, having nothing better to do, a group made-up of Murat, Benjamin Harrison, and several others, concluded it would be excellent fun to ring the fire bells of both Farmers' College and the Miami Female College at the same time. It was decided that the

37Halstead, "Farmers' College," 286.

38William L. Halstead MS., 32.
best plan to keep from being caught was to climb to the steeples from
the outside of the buildings, attach ropes to the bottom of the clappers,
and then, when the coast was checked and found clear, ring the bells si-
multaneously from the ground. With this plan it was possible to beat a
hasty retreat to some vantage point and watch the proceedings when the
authorities came to investigate. The plan seemed to be working beautiful-
ly. One boy climbed a tree and jumped over to the roof at the home col-
lege. A ladder was found and successfully carried to the other school's
cupola. The ropes were tied and since the buildings were a good quarter
of a mile away, the boys at the girls' school gave the bell two light
taps to signal those guarding the other bell that they were ready. In
giving the signal it was discovered that the rope had been poorly tied
and it came off the clapper. The whole scheme appeared to be collapsing.
That the laboriously designed project would not go for nought, Harrison
volunteered to again climb the ladder and tie the rope more securely, if
Murat would promise to remain on guard and see that he was not caught. As
luck would have it, Ben had no more than reached the bell when Murat
sighted a group of people coming up a path close to the building. A pile
of rocks was his only resource, so Murat began hurling them over the
heads of the band, hoping that Ben and he would be able to make their
escape while the party took cover. It took three throws to get the most
prominent member of the group, who turned out to be the president of the
college, to retreat, but once he had, Ben scampered to the ground. He
had been able to tie the string, and so before the two remaining conspira-
tors rushed away into the darkness they gave the scattered party a
splendid serenade from the bell. 39

Once a week prayer meetings were held in the room of President Cary, and Murat, not being an overly religious boy, was surely one of the gang of students who engaged in harassing those more pious souls who attended. The door to the president's room was at the foot of the stairway that led to the floor on which the students had their quarters. Often during the meetings a keg filled with rocks would be noisily rolled down the stairway past the door. When someone in authority rushed up the steps to catch the culprits, the students' level would be in darkness and the rooms, seemingly at least, would all contain sleeping occupants. 40

If the barrel rolling was not bad enough, during a series of revival meetings held at the college in the winter of 1850, Murat wrote a jesting letter to a Cincinnati newspaper complaining that the meetings were diverting the attention of the students and taking them away from their studies. When the newspaper with his letter in it reached the college, the faculty found itself with an extremely perplexing problem. Most of the faculty members were also Protestant clergymen, and thus deeply interested in the progress and success of the revival. On the other hand, as educators they felt they could not punish a student who showed so much zeal for his work. In the end, Murat was "not reprimanded so much as remonstrated with." The erstwhile rebel's punishment came at church the next Sunday. The most eminent citizens stared at him as if, as he said,

39 A. Halstead to Mrs. Benjamin Harrison, April 1, 1904. Halstead MSS.
40 Harry J. Sievers, Benjamin Harrison, Hoosier Warrior, Through the Civil War Years, 1833-1865, 31.
"I had been a bear-cub that had just waddled into Christian society."  

With such activity it was no wonder that a state of unarmed beligerency existed between the students and their president. Cary believed that discipline should be mild and essentially parental in character, substituting advice, warnings, and expostulation for public censure and punishments, but the problem of the south wing, where the Halstead-Harrison crowd had their rooms, was enough to try the patience of the most mild-mannered of men. Cary’s reputation among the students, that of a strict disciplinarian, was certainly undeserved. His basic belief in the honesty and integrity of his young charges prompted a degree of fairness on his part that they often did not merit. The mischief that the Halstead crowd engaged in was not of a serious nature, but the president’s desire to be lenient, and his profuse apologies in open chapel when he falsely accused, seems to have had the effect of making it a real challenge for the students to "put something over on him." Often Cary ended his sessions of advice and warning with a wayward student by a very pious, long prayer, the subject of which was usually a sinner whose sins had been found out. His interest in his students, and his real concern for their well being, had the effect of making him a well beloved teacher, but his spotty discipline and ever ready willingness to acknowledge error, did not bring perfect peace to the campus.

The teacher that seems to have had the most lasting influence on Murat was not Cary, but his professor of history and political economy.

---

41 William L. Halstead, MS., 32.
42 Farmers' College Catalogue, 1848, 15.
43 Murat Halstead, "Farmers' College," 284.
Robert Hamilton Bishop. Dr. Bishop, regarded by the students and faculty as "our beloved father," was a sort of center of loyalty for the school, taking the place of college flag or colors. By the early fifties he was in the twilight of his career, having served the cause of higher education since 1804. Scottish by birth and education, he had come to the United States as a very young man. He had first taught at Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky, and then for twenty years was president of Miami University at Oxford. An intra-faculty squabble had forced his resignation from the Miami post, and Cary, a former student, had invited him to join his faculty along with John W. Scott who had also resigned in protest at the same time as Bishop. 44

Meeting Dr. Scott at the White House during the Harrison administration, Murat told him that he had been diverted from his planned occupation of farming by his courses in literature. 45 Rather interestingly, Scott not only taught literature, but was also "Professor of Chemistry and Its Application to Agriculture and the Arts." 46 Nonetheless, it was Bishop and not Scott who was responsible for molding the outlook on life of the farmer boy from Paddy's Run. Bishop's great knowledge and his enthusiasm for learning combined with his love for young men, made him one of those rare teachers whose influence can be seen in the development of his students. Time and time again in later life, Murat would be guided in decisions and in responses to important issues by the principles Bishop

45 M. Halstead to Mrs. Benjamin Harrison, April 1, 1904, Halstead MSS.
46 *Farmers' College Catalogue, 1848*, 4.
had instilled in his classes in biography, in history, and in political economy.

Bishop believed in continual progress in history, but he felt that society was made up of "reformers" and "anti-reformers." Thus every proposed improvement, every progressive step, had both its advocates supporting the reform, and an opposition resisting change. The differences between the two groups could lead to revolution, but in most cases, "these conflicting classes of principles ... mutually balance each other till by a slow but gradual progress, the object of [the] reformer is secured."\(^{47}\) He saw the source of the immediate problems of society traceable to the principle of the inherent right of the individual to private property, thus causing conflicts between social classes. Perhaps it was his clerical training that led him to seek a somewhat "Christian" rather than a completely economic answer to the problem. He found that this right to private property had often led to vigorous efforts to accumulate wealth. These efforts in turn tended to lead to conflict mainly because the man seeking wealth was so exclusively concerned with his own property that he forgot that there were also things which were exclusively the property of another man. While Bishop felt that one means of escaping conflicts was through the division of labor, he concluded that it was the purpose of government, and the "avowed object of all modern political economy" to seek a means of removing or reconciling these differences between classes. Men, when uniting together in communities were forced to discard some of their freedoms for the good of the whole of the community, and every individual in it, but being forced to

\(^{47}\)This section of Bishop's philosophy is based upon Rodabaugh, *Bishop*, 173-187, *passim*. 
give up some freedoms, he should not be denied all. In fact, Bishop held that the best government was that in which power was exercised by individuals or groups, which while independent of one another, were at the same time united by a community of feeling, and supported by public opinion. Thus the progress in which Bishop believed was towards civil and religious liberty for the individual, protected by the government of individuals.

Consequently, Murat would hold the basic belief that the individual was more important than his government, and would use his position as editor to fight for the rights and freedom of individuals. Holding essentially nineteenth century liberal views he would campaign for a government that protected all, but showed favoritism to none. Always demanding honesty in government, he would all his life attack and condemn corruption, would support civil service reform as a means of securing better government (though he might argue that party control and its possible cleaning out of the government offices every few years might be preferable to a permanent bureaucracy), and would always support the right of everyone, Negro and white, to the political rights of voting, officeholding, and recourse to court. Economically he would always believe in the inherent right of the individual to acquire and hold property and the protection by the government of this property. Like other liberals of the era he would feel that property had its obligations, but that as long as these obligations were met and the basic laws of the nation not violated, government should not interfere in its forward progress. He judged it wrong that government should ever step into a situation that could be handled by individuals. He felt that the answers to the problems of society were usually found not in government interference, but in the
combined hard work of individuals.

Both Professor Bishop and the teacher in charge of the preparatory school, George Ornsby, were known for their intense anti-slavery views. Thus Murat found the principles on which he had been reared challenged time and time again during his college career, and as an editor, his hostility to slavery and the power of the slaveholding South were well known.48

At its annual commencement exercises in September, 1851, Farmers' College conferred the degree of "American Scholar" upon Murat. Having successfully completed mathematics, English composition, rhetoric, logic, sacred history, chemistry, history, political economy, and many other courses, and written a graduation thesis on "Suppressed Thought," Murat was deemed ready to seek his fortune in the world. Absent from the list of graduates that included two future attorneys, two future editors, and a future railroad president was the name of Murat's companion in his various college adventures. Benjamin Harrison had left the school at the end of his junior year, transferring to Miami. His purpose for the move was not entirely educational. Professor Scott had returned to Miami and Harrison, wishing to be close to Scott's daughter, had also transferred.49

Murat never forgot his old college, and as he became one of its most distinguished alumni, it never forgot him. Some years later it granted him the degree "Master of Arts" for having engaged in literary pursuits for a period of at least three years.50 In 1890, at its last


49Ibid., 240; Sievers, Benjamin Harrison, 32.

50William L. Halstead MS., 43.
commencement, the honorary degree "Doctor of Laws" was awarded to him. In a humorous report the New York Sun said that the then well known journalist had the age and dignity for such a degree, though it hoped he would not take to calling himself Dr. Halstead.51

After the passage of the Morrill Land Grant Act, the Board of Directors of the college voted to give title to the property, valued in 1863 at one hundred twenty-two thousand dollars, to the state as a start for a state agricultural school. Murat gave this project his wholehearted support in the editorial columns of the Commercial.52 The state did not act at the time, and when ten years later the legislature finally decided to establish an agricultural and mechanical college in Columbus, Murat proposed Farmers' College's president and founder, Freeman Cary, for the presidency of the new school.53

The college itself had a rather checkered career in later years. A very large number of those farmers who had subscribed to shares in the institution never paid for them and so the administration of the college constantly had to draw from its capital to pay current expenses. Had the stock been promptly paid for and invested, the plan which the board had for the college might have been successful. As it was, the institution limped along until 1890, leading a hand to mouth existence, always short of funds and, in later years, also short of students. In 1885 its name

51 Cincinnati Commercial Gazette, June 16, 1890.
52 Cincinnati Commercial, February 26, 1863.
53 Ibid., March 14, 1873.
was changed to Belmont College and women were admitted as pupils, but the enlarged student body was not enough to save it. In 1890 its career was ended for good when it became the Ohio Military Institute.  

54 Huston, *Historical Sketch of Farmers' College*, 122.
CHAPTER II

THE APPRENTICE JOURNALIST

From College Hill the smoke of Cincinnati, just six miles distant, was visible to Murat and his classmates. By the fall of 1851 John Halstead might well have wished he had invested some of his silver coins in Cincinnati real estate back in that earlier day. Little in the city of mid-century bore any resemblance to the rustic town of old John's day. Now six times larger, it had grown from about twenty thousand to almost one hundred and twenty thousand in twenty years, and while still "Porkopolis" to wags across the country, its citizens were engaged in business ranging from wool-picking to iron production. Meat packing was still the largest single industry, accounting for almost eight million dollars of the value of the city's annual production, but the allied industries, such as oil and lard production, soap and candle making, and luggage manufacturing, had nearly equaled their parent industry in the value of their product. By 1857 Proctor and Gamble, the candle and soap manufacturers, would have sales exceeding one million dollars annually.¹ Already some of these firms had started to import raw materials from the growing packing centers farther west.

The city was also becoming known for many other products. The value of wine, beer, and whiskey produced exceeded five million dollars, making Cincinnati the whiskey and beer center of the West. It was also

becoming known as a grape growing center. For thirty years Nicholas Longworth had been experimenting with various vines, and by 1851 he had over a hundred and fifty acres planted with the Catawba grape. Paying immigrant workers starvation wages Longworth was to become one of Cincinnati's best known citizens, and also one of its wealthiest. His Catawba grape was to make the wines of Cincinnati famous across the country.

Flour milling, furniture making, and especially clothing manufacturing were also major industries. Clothing in fact was a multi-million dollar industry that gave employment to over three thousand people. There were four concerns in 1851 which produced nothing but Masonic and Odd Fellows' regalia. While the value of its product was small compared to many other businesses in the city, the firm of Thomas Phillips made Cincinnati the lightning rod center of the western hemisphere. Besides the major companies there were also ship builders, sail makers, coffee roasters, ink makers, and a host of other small concerns that gave Cincinnati one of the most diverse economies in the country.²

Of more concern to Murat were the many daily and weekly newspapers and monthly periodicals published in the city in 1851. Besides the six English and four German dailies, Cincinnati could boast forty-three other publications ranging from General Samuel F. Cary's temperance journal, the Western Fountain, and the Baptist Sabbath School's Young Reaper, to the Nachwaechter of the radical Forty-Eighter Frederick Hassaurek, which was described as "Socialist and infidel of the deepest dye." In addition there were many professional and business periodicals, such

²Charles Cist, Sketches and Statistics of Cincinnati in 1851, 169-244, passim.
as the *Journal of Homeopathy*, the *Dental Register*, and *Dye's Counterfeit Detector* as well as many devoted exclusively to literary pursuits.³

Wealthy, and with a cultural life that old John could never have imagined, Cincinnati nevertheless remained a city of contrasts. A focal point for German immigration, hundreds of poor immigrants joined their earlier arriving countrymen every year. Many found living conditions in the "over the Rhine" district the most primitive imaginable, and the wages paid by employers such as Longworth often made it impossible for them to overcome the conditions. On the other hand, young and cultured college men, such as Murat and the rising attorney Rutherford B. Hayes, would also seek the city, desiring to prosper with its growth. The growing wealth produced spacious public buildings, elegant homes, lofty churches, and lush park-lands, but these existed side by side with the vile and unsightly packing plants and some of the worst tenement conditions in the country.

With many manuscripts in his baggage, Murat arrived in Cincinnati in the Fall of 1851 determined to make his mark. During most of his college life he had been bombarding the newspapers of the city with articles on mound builders and legends of frontier and wilderness life. Romances of beautiful girls, who, abducted by Indians, were rescued by their handsome and brave Kentucky lovers after deadly hand-to-hand combat in which the foul redman met his just end formed the plots of many others.⁴ Years of outdoor life and wholesome farm food had made the Queen City's new


⁴Murat Halstead, "Varieties in Journalism," *Cosmopolitan Magazine* (December, 1892), 203.
citizen strong and healthy. Physically he was tall like his father, but his coloring—light brown hair, fair skin, and blue eyes—came from his mother. Self-confident, energetic, and almost always cheerful, he found easy acceptance in the small set of young intellectuals who, having been drawn by the numerous newspapers with their large literary departments, had made Ohio's largest city the literary center of the West. 5 Taking up cold and sparsely furnished rooms, spending hours in favorite coffee shops in conversation with their fellows, the would-be authors lived the life of Bohemia. Murat fell quickly into this easy life. Meeting another young man who had also recently arrived in the city, and finding they had similar ambitions, the two found a garret room which was entered by a trap-door in the floor, and set about to make their names as authors. Murat continued to submit what he wrote to the various newspapers, and often his stories were accepted. The most important literary papers were published on Saturday, and once Murat found that three rival sheets were running articles under his name on the same day. At first afraid that his friends would be shocked and angered at his monopoly of the space, he was later disappointed to find that no one had noticed. In fact the young Farmers' College alumnus began to feel that there was some kind of conspiracy against him, for while his compositions were often published, he never seemed to receive the recognition he felt his work deserved. 6

The newspapers, many of them struggling along on meager budgets, did not pay their contributors well. Probably the largest amount Murat ever received for his labors was five dollars for seventeen columns of

---

5 William L. Halstead MS., 36.

6 Halstead, "Maristies in Journalism," 203.
With a desire to augment his slender income from writing, Murat hit upon the scheme of sending out weekly newsletters from Cincinnati to the country newspapers, requesting the editors who published them to send him a dollar. When this plan failed to supply enough money for living expenses, he was forced for a short period to take a job in the office of the clerk of the Superior Court of Hamilton County.

Feeling that his literary labors were unappreciated and desiring some regular source of income, it was only natural that Murat should eventually think of seeking employment on the staff of one of the newspapers. William D. Gallagher, the editor of the Atlas, a small afternoon daily, which had recently accepted a story of Murat's entitled "The White Stag," met him on the street one day in the summer of 1852. Gallagher had been impressed with the story and invited Murat to join the staff of the newspaper as exchange editor, at five dollars a week. The exchange editor of a newspaper was the lowest paid editor on the staff. His job consisted mainly of poring over the newspapers which were received "in exchange" for a free copy of his own newspaper and clipping those articles which were felt to be of interest to his readers. Headed with a phrase such as "From the New York Tribune" these articles would be printed verbatim—whenever there was room. Though hardly an enviable position, it was nonetheless a start for the industrious and ambitious Murat, and he promptly accepted. Unfortunately, after only a few weeks a new economy-minded editor decided the paper did not need a "scissors man," and Murat

---

7 Ibid., 204.

8 William L. Halstead MS., 42.
lost his job. Determined now to be a journalist, he next found a place on the Enquirer as assistant local editor for an eight week period while a staff member was on leave of absence. Completely taken with newspaper life at the end of the eight weeks, and with the confidence of only a novice, he and a printer friend founded a Sunday newspaper which they named the Cincinnati Leader. The response to the new venture on the part of the reading public was anything but encouraging. Two editions were put out, and one side of the third was printed when Murat's printer-partner went on a spree that consumed the small capital they had for the project. Without capital, and with no printer, Murat was forced to abandon his newspaper.9

The young man's initiative had struck a responsive chord in William B. Shattuck, editor of the Columbian and Great West, a flourishing literary weekly that was held to be the organ of "Western Literature." When the Leader failed, Shattuck offered Murat the assistant editorship of his paper. The latter remained on the Columbian until March 8, 1853 when he joined the local news staff of the Commercial, the city's leading morning journal.10 Associations on the Columbian had been congenial and Murat's duties had combined writing with his editorial work, but the position on the Commercial, with its twelve dollar a week salary, could not be resisted.

The Commercial was owned in 1853 by the firm of Potter and Lee. It had been founded in October, 1843 by the firm of Curtis and Hastings.

---

9 Ibid., 44.

10 Murat Halstead, "History of the Cincinnati Commercial," Murat Halstead MSS.
Martin D. Potter, a printer turned publisher, bought control of the paper in 1851 and shortly thereafter sold a half-interest to Richard H. Lee. Potter remained in charge of the financial and printing end of the business, and Lee was editor-in-chief.¹¹

A prosperous paper, its large circulation supported a growing staff of editors and reporters. Journalism itself was a leisurely field, competition coming only in the form of a scramble for advertising, not for "scoops." The general rule among the morning papers was that they would publish nothing that arrived later than ten o'clock at night.

Murat was responsible for disturbing these easy-going ways of Cincinnati journalism. He would sit up until two o'clock in the morning when the train from the East arrived at the Cincinnati depot. If the mail bag that contained the eastern papers was on board—often as not it was delayed—he would ride to the post office on the mail wagon, wait while the bag was opened, and then rush to the Commercial office with the latest eastern papers. Working quickly with scissors, a practice he had picked up as exchange editor on the Atlas, he would make up one or two columns under the heading "Latest by Mail" or "Midnight Mail Matter," and have them ready before the paper went to press.¹² The telegraph has just been introduced, and while the Cincinnati papers had joined forces to be able to afford one short dispatch a day, the complete news was still found in the papers from the East. For several years in fact, the only effect the telegraph had on Murat's late night activity with his scissors

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Halstead, "Varieties of Journalism," 205.
was to speed up his composition. The telegraphic dispatches told him what to look for in the way of important news.  

He was able to bear the reproaches showered upon him by his fellow journalists for being in such an "atrocious hurry" when it became evident that the good citizens of Cincinnati preferred purchasing a morning paper with the latest news, and when his initiative found an appreciative response from his employers.

When Murat joined the Commercial staff the newspaper was one of four pages, or a folio, and a usual edition contained more literary material than news of the day. Often there would be a "bear story," a "snake story," a "bird story," or perhaps an "Indian tale." On Saturdays a whole page was often devoted to the latest chapter of a novel or novelette which was currently being published in installments. The editorial page itself benefitted from the literary productiveness of the Commercial's readers, for mixed in with the editorials and local news stories was found its most conspicuous feature in the form of an original poem by a local poet who was usually an amateur.

Murat desired to include more news in the paper. He did this by the use of longer telegraphic dispatches. The effect of this was to force most of the literary features from the paper. The increased costs for telegrams made it impossible to pay for the amateur efforts, and their widespread use, it was soon discovered, was just to fill up the newspaper's pages. The young journalist found that life on the staff of a major daily newspaper could be extremely demanding. A sixteen hour day

---

13 Ibid., 204.

was not uncommon. He was often at his desk to write his own stories and articles soon after noon, and did not return to his room until four or five o'clock the next morning after the paper had gone to press. It was during this busy and early period of his career that he made many of the friendships that would be lifelong. Many of these came from contacts made at meetings of the Cincinnati Literary Club. The club had been formed in 1849 as a kind of protest against an older and more elegant literary group known as the Semi Colon Club. The Semi Colons held their meetings in private homes, necessarily limiting the range to those with large drawing rooms. As both men and women were members, the gatherings tended to be rather sedate and probably boring affairs.

The Literary Club was strictly masculine, and the tea and cakes that served for Semi Colon refreshment gave way to pickled oysters, crackers, Rhine wine and cigars. Often as not the meetings would be formally adjourned and then continued on an informal basis in a nearby saloon. The purpose of the organization was not to be able to indulge in more bacchanal habits, as the "Young Turks" who made up the Literary Club membership did show a sincere love of letters, but rather to break the confining bonds of the old group, and in more congenial surroundings, discuss questions that the elegant atmosphere of the drawing rooms often made impossible.

The group found private rooms for their meetings and began a ritual, still continued a century later, of gathering on Monday evenings.

15 Ibid., 713.
for dinner and for a paper read by one of the members. After the paper
the members originally sat around the tables eating and drinking and dis-
cussing the paper's contents. When Murat joined the group in 1853, the
papers were often followed by serious debates that led to many angry com-
ments, and sometimes fights. This was particularly true as the sixties
approached and the questions of slavery, abolition, and states' rights
formed the topics of more and more of the papers. Cincinnati was a city
in a northern state with many strong abolitionist citizens and institu-
tions, but it was also a city which for years had enjoyed a booming trade
with the South, and which, lying just across the Ohio River from a slave
state, had many residents of southern heritage. Consequently, the inten-
sities aroused by some of the debates threatened the continuance of the
club, and it was finally decided that there would be a hard and fast rule
that no public comment or debate would be allowed to follow the papers.
As Murat by this time had become an abolitionist, and as he always loved
a good debate, he probably regretted the decision, but he probably agreed
with the majority of his fellow members, that the club and its fellowship
were worth more than the debates. The club widened Murat's circle of
friends greatly. His acquaintances had before been mainly limited to
the literary and newspaper colonies. Now he was thrown into association
with young professional and business men of the city such as the attorneys
Stanley Matthews, later to become a justice of the United States Supreme
Court, and Rutherford B. Hayes, the future President. Both of these men,
and many others from the organization remained life long friends.17 In
1884, Murat was given honorary membership in the group, which meant he

17Harry Barnard, Rutherford B. Hayes and His America, 172.
could from then on enjoy all the privileges of active members, but would no longer have to pay dues. His interest and participation in the organization spanned a period of nearly seven decades. During the Hayes Administration he joined other members of the club in a trip to Washington, where a regular meeting was held in the White House. Even with his ever increasing journalistic duties he found time to write three papers that were delivered before the club. "Iceland" was presented in November, 1874, soon after his return from a journey to the Danish colony with Cyrus Field; "Paragraphs," a paper on the newspaper field, was read in March, 1880; and "European Travel," his last effort for the club, was given in October, 1887.

Within a few months of Murat's coming to the Commercial he had started to write paragraphs about various issues of the day that were not just of a local character. Most of these found their way into the editorial page of the paper and Lee started asking him to contribute more. His vigorous and forceful style, and the initiative he had shown in "scooping" the other sheets on late news, resulted in his being asked to take on more and more duties of an editorial nature. When Lee fell ill in the late summer of 1853, at a time when Potter was vacationing in the East, Murat was asked to submit a news summary for the paper every day along with a leading editorial. He was temporarily relieved of local duties for the editorial position. Lee's illness proved fatal, and when Potter returned in August, he found the paper virtually under the direction of

19 The Literary Club of Cincinnati, 1849-1949, Centennial Book, 76.
the young reporter who had only been hired in March, just six months be­
fore. Potter was impressed with Murat's capabilities and approved of the
innovations that he had made. Thus when the office was reorganized in
the spring of 1854, Murat was a one-sixteenth partner in the new firm of
M. D. Potter and Company. Increased circulation and increased advertising
revenues made it possible for Murat to pay for his five thousand dollar
interest in the paper out of his share of the profits in just four years. 20

As Potter worked along side his new assistant editor, his ad­
miration for the gifts of the young man grew. Potter, while the father
of a daughter, did not have a son, and in many ways the bright young man
from Paddy's Run filled the void. Fearing that if something should hap­
pen to him the Commercial would be without a head that could direct both
the editorial and business departments of the concern, Potter started to
teach Murat how to carry the business responsibilities of the office.
Later, A. R. Spofford, who went on to become Librarian of Congress, was
also engaged to help Murat in the editorial department. Murat gave Spof­
ford the credit for completing his editorial education. Possessed of a
comprehensive and searching mind, Spofford produced an endless supply of
informative and interesting editorials. It was from emulating his de­
vices, that Murat became the master editor that later generations of Cin­
cinnatians were to know. 21

Murat's youthful support of all things Democratic had been some­
what shaken by the influence of several abolitionist professors during
his college days. When he discovered Daniel Webster: his Jacksonianism

20 Halstead, "History of the Cincinnatí Commercial."

21 Ibid.
completely collapsed. Webster became his hero and one of his favorite pastimes was reading and re-reading the speeches of the "godlike Daniel." Among his favorite phrases from Webster's speeches were "Liberty and Union, now and forever, oge and inseparable!" and "I speak today for the preservation of the Union, 'Hear me for my cause.'" As he felt the southern wing of the Democratic party was bent on destroying the Union, it was no wonder that the rising Republican party should gain an early convert in the Commercial's young editor. Moreover, Potter too had become a convert to Republican ideals, and the influence of this man who had become almost like a second father to him could not have been lost on Murat. Thus when it was decided that the Commercial should become a straight Republican paper, Murat cheered the decision. All his life Murat was to be an enthusiast. Whenever he gave his support to something or someone it was wholehearted. Being zealous, and seeing the large circulation of the Commercial as providing a fertile field on which to commence his missionary efforts for the Republican party, Murat wished to launch an all out campaign in its columns. Potter, on the other hand, felt that Cincinnati, and in particular Cincinnati business interests who through advertising were the main support of the paper, were not yet ready for special political effort. As he still controlled a majority of the stock of the company, he was able to keep the paper moderate in its tone. While sometimes straining within this harness of moderation, Murat nonetheless recognized the wisdom of the older man's policy, and the paper continued to grow and continued to gain advertisers.  

22 Ibid.
Murat's long career as political reporter and commentator might be said to date from the first Republican National Convention which met in June, 1856, in Philadelphia. Potter decided to attend the convention and invited Murat to join him to write first-hand reports for the Commercial. The great question before the convention in Murat's opinion was whether slavery was to be extended into the territories. In an earlier editorial he had voiced fears that both the Republican and Democratic politicians, who were more concerned with success and office than principles, would try to avoid the question. He feared that they, in a search for winning candidates, would come up with weak nominees who would offend no one, as the politicians to him were "trucklers, temporizers, and compromisers." 23

Both Potter's and Murat's first choice for the nomination was probably Salmon Portland Chase, a Cincinnati attorney who had been an organizer of the Liberty party and one of the founders of the Free-Soil party. He had served as a senator from Ohio from 1849 until his election to the governorship in 1855. Opposed to the Compromise of 1850 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act, he was the kind of no-nonsense candidate that Murat thought would give the people a fair test of the "Great Question." At first possessing great prestige in the new movement, and certainly an early front-runner for the nomination, Chase finally lost out partly because the Whig element in the party found it too hard to forget him as an old political opponent. William H. Seward, a New York Senator, and

another early front-runner also ran into trouble because of the polyglot nature of the movement. While Seward was more acceptable to the ex-Whigs than Chase, his advocacy of greater rights for the naturalized citizen and his courting of the Catholic vote in New York made him unacceptable to the Know-Nothing element of the party.

Combining support from almost all the various interests in the party was only one man. John C. Fremont had captured the imagination of the country. His expeditions in the West were known by every schoolboy. He was a figure of romance and adventure to the nation. All the elements which seemed necessary for victory were present. The Know-Nothings loved him, the Germans respected his interest in science, and his marriage to the daughter of Senator Thomas H. Benton seemed to make him the "spiritual heir to Jackson." So while Murat was disappointed that Chase could not receive the nomination, and while he could complain that Fremont was a product of availability—that the politicians were playing on his allure of romance and adventure to win office, and were not giving the voters a clear trial of the issues at stake—he, and the Commercial, supported Fremont's candidacy for the presidency. In a letter to Congressman T. C. Day of Cincinnati, written soon after his return from Philadelphia, Murat expressed the belief that Fremont would be elected, but he felt the battle would be hard fought. He went so far as to predict that should Buchanan win and the Democratic policy toward Kansas not change, the country

---

24 Wilfred E. Binkley, American Political Parties, Their Natural History, 207-208.

25 Commercial, July-November, 1856, passim.
would be involved in Civil War.\textsuperscript{26}

The country did not agree with Murat, and Buchanan won. While naturally disappointed in the "Pathfinder's" defeat, Murat had more important things to worry about. A few years before at a party he had met the two daughters of Mrs. Hiram Banks, the widow of a Cincinnati builder. The "Banks Girls," as their friends called them, had had all the advantages that a relatively well-to-do family could give, and were thus not overly impressed by the young and rather countrified Murat. As many an individual has done, to cover his embarrassment from the unfamiliar surroundings, Murat had become the life of the party, singing verse after verse of a popular song that he knew. He later regretted attending the party and determined to learn the social graces before he went to another. As the "Banks Girls" and their circle of friends were fond of small dancing parties, Murat decided it would be best for him to learn to dance. Taking lessons on the sly and eluding invitations to parties Murat waited until he knew a few steps before accepting another invitation. When it came, the two Banks sisters were present, and the younger of the two quickly realized that he had not yet mastered the dance. Consequently, she took his education in hand, and it was not long until all of Cincinnati society looked upon "Mary and Murat" as partners.\textsuperscript{27}

The wedding was announced for March 1, 1857, and Potter arranged for their wedding trip. They were to travel to Washington, Murat combining work with pleasure by sending back to Cincinnati first hand accounts of Buchanan's inauguration. As the first of March dawned, Murat

\textsuperscript{26}Halstead to T. C. Day, June 30, 1856. Quoted in Sarah J. Day, The Man on a Hill Top, 172.

\textsuperscript{27}Halstead MSS.
was quarantined until midnight with variloid, a mild form of small pox, which he had contracted a few days before, and the wedding had to be postponed. The latest train they could take to get them to Washington in time for the March 3 ceremonies left at six o'clock in the morning of the second. Plans were quickly changed, and the wedding supper of the night before was made into a wedding breakfast, which followed an extremely early morning ceremony. At midnight the quarantine was lifted, and the ceremony was held. With no time to spare the happy young couple made their train and arrived in Washington just before the ceremonies started. The variloid left no facial scars, but Murat's hair fell out and grew back dark and curly and shortly began to turn gray.

Murat was not an unprejudiced observer at the inauguration. In his reports Buchanan became the overly nice "Jeems," a man that Murat could not respect. In fact, about the only thing that Murat did not complain about in his news reports was the weather. It was a bright sunny day when he and his bride arrived in Washington from Baltimore. The sun had brought out the crowds, and the young editor-reporter from Cincinnati felt them very poorly mannered. With biting pen he described the "citizens" who were perfectly aware that this was "a free country" and were setting out to prove it by being impolite, loud, and obnoxious. If the crude and boisterous crowd received his condemnation, so did the too-refined and too-cold Buchanan. "It would appear from the exquisite polish upon him, and the expression of his lips, that he must sleep between rose leaves with a little lump of fresh butter in his mouth . . . ." The delicacy which the young reporter noted in Buchanan seems to have been at

least partially the result of illness. The new President had journeyed to Washington several weeks before and had fallen victim to the "National Hotel disease," a kind of dysentery accompanied by diarrhea brought on by a failure in the clean water supply of the hotel. Buchanan had, in fact, needed brandy and medication to settle his queasy stomach in order to get through the official ceremonies. Moreover, he found the pomp and circumstance surrounding the ceremony too elaborate for his republican tastes. The carriage in which Buchanan and Pierce rode to the Capitol, which was escorted by a mounted guard, appeared to Murat as "a shabby imitation of royalty" and an "insult to intelligent American citizens." It was with relief that he discovered that the new President's inaugural address was going to be short. When he and his wife had arrived in Washington everyone had said that the bright sun was a good omen for the new administration. Thus it was almost with glee that Murat was able to report that when it came time for Buchanan to speak the sun went behind a cloud, and it grew cooler. Disappointed with American politics, and a little less confident in the ability of the American voter to choose a president, Murat and his bride rushed to the more seate Baltimore on the first train after the ceremony.

In the following years as sectional bitterness grew more intense, the Commercial under Potter's direction tried to steer a middle course. On January 15, 1859 Potter appointed Murat editor-in-chief and permitted him to purchase another one-sixteenth interest in the firm. The newspaper had continued to prosper, and Murat's second purchase cost ten thousand

---

29 Philip S. Klein, President James Buchanan, 268-272.
30 Commercial, March 10, 1857.
dollars, or double the first, the capitalization having risen from eighty thousand to one hundred sixty thousand dollars. While still strongly Republican, the newspaper nonetheless took the position that the outstanding problems could be solved by means short of disruption of the Union and war. It was under such conditions that on the night of October 16, 1859 an event occurred that would have great portent for both the nation and for Murat. John Brown and eighteen followers attacked and captured the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia. His plan seems to have been to distribute the military stores of the arsenal to the slaves in the area who would in turn revolt against their masters. His raid electrified the South. A complete failure, it nonetheless seemed to prove to many southerners that they were right about the length to which the abolitionist would go in attacking their institutions. Vigilante groups were set up in many southern communities, and it was a very unhealthy place for anyone suspected of anti-slavery principles. Northern Republican papers such as the Commercial were embarrassed by the raid, but like the Commercial, could claim with much justification, that it was the act of a madman and that Brown had not had the support of the more rational elements in the North.

After a speedy trial, Brown was sentenced to be executed on December 2, 1859. Many editorials in the Commercial had been particularly critical of the outcry in the southern journals against Brown and against the support they felt he had in the North. In one editorial, Murat said that the Southern editors were as "mad as March hares--mad as Old Brown,"

---

31 William L. Halstead MS., 70.
32 Commercial, October 18, 1859.
and he singled out the conservative Richmond Whig as one of the leaders in what he termed a "race of fanaticism."  

All told, the position of the Commercial on this issue was not one that would recommend itself to what Murat proposed. As the date set for Brown's execution drew near, Murat decided that he would go to Harper's Ferry and witness the event. He had planned to go to Washington for the opening of what he felt would be an important and exciting Congress, and stopping at Harper's Ferry would only delay him a short time.

As the execution date approached, his friends tried to impress upon him that the position of the Commercial was known in Virginia, and if his life was not in actual danger, there was at least a chance that he would be mobbed, or possibly arrested. Murat refused to listen to these warnings. On board the train to Virginia his fellow passengers, upon hearing what he planned were also anxious for his safety. Rumors were afloat that no one would be allowed to leave the train at Harper's Ferry and that all the passengers would be searched when the train crossed the state line. Some justification was given to the rumors when a proclamation issued by Henry Wise, the governor of Virginia, was circulated through the cars. The proclamation stated that until after Friday, December 2, all "strangers" found within Jefferson County, the county of Harper's Ferry and Charlestown, where the execution was to take place, who had no proper business, and who could not give a satisfactory account of themselves, would be arrested.

---

33 Ibid., October 25, 1859.
34 Ibid., December 3, 1859.
35 Ibid., December 2, 1859.
The proclamation was not too encouraging, but Murat was determined to go through with his plan. The Master of Transportation for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, who happened to be on the train, was an old friend of the reporter's. He promised Murat that he would introduce him to the railroad's special agent in charge at Harper's Ferry. Thus when the train arrived, Murat received his introduction and was received cordially, aid being promised him in accomplishing his purpose. He was vouched for by the agent to the commander of the military contingent at the terminal, and taken to the Wagner House, a local hotel, for the evening. In the morning when he went down to breakfast, he found Mrs. John Brown at the table. Brown had requested to see her before he died, and Governor Wise, after many delays, had finally granted her permission to come to the place of execution. Murat felt that while Mrs. Brown had the most melancholy face he had ever seen, and was surrounded by at least thirty United States officers, she retained a simple, yet dignified calm, and did not betray any signs of nervousness. 36

Murat soon discovered that the Governor's Proclamation had been issued because rumors had been heard in Virginia that bands of armed men in the northern states had been organized to rescue Brown before the execution. A single reporter, vouched for by someone who was known in the community, was free to come and go with only minor restrictions imposed on his actions. Murat found the situation rather absurd. In a newsletter to the Commercial he compared the circumstances in Harper's Ferry, with its great numbers of federal troops and the orders for the citizens of Cincinnati fearing that five hundred Chinese should attack their city

36 Ibid., December 3, 1859.
some night in an attempt to revolutionize Ohio. After examining the arsenal, and having the still-remaining blood stains pointed out to him, he felt the whole situation bordered on the ridiculous. That Brown's act was not that of a hero, but of a madman, and that the preparations of the national government and of Virginia were unbelievably extreme seemed obvious to him. He said it was estimated that the cost to Virginia for her military demonstration would be at least one hundred thousand dollars.  

On the morning of the second Murat arose early and went out to Charlestown to see the field in which the gallows had been built. The hanging was to take place in the center of a thirty acre clover field. Already two companies of infantry and one of cavalry were in place. Flags marked the areas that were off limits to civilians. On returning to the town he discovered that the general commanding the forces had decided to give the press special privileges. A list had been made of the reporters present who could witness the hanging. Murat later found that several of the reporters charged with making the list had not wanted to include his name. They feared the general would decide that rather than let a representative of the Cincinnati Commercial into the area close to the gallows he had better not let any of the reporters enter. His name was finally added though, and Murat became one of the approved reporters.

A few minutes before the appointed time a military escort came to take the reporters through the deserted streets to the place of the execution. Rigid orders had been enforced preventing people from coming

37. Ibid., December 5, 1859.
38. Ibid., December 5, 1859.
into the town during the morning hours. At the field Murat counted between three and five hundred civilian observers. When Brown arrived, Murat was most impressed by his dignity. He saw an old man with white hair and beard, sitting very straight and riding on his own coffin in a small car. The officers with their plumes and highly polished sabers and the long ranks of soldiers seemed completely unnecessary. The hanging itself was over in a minute.

There was a moment of intense stillness, a sudden movement, a sharp twang of the rope, a creaking of the hinges of the trap door, and at fourteen and one-half minutes after eleven the old man, indomitable to the last, swung between the sky and the soil of the Old Dominion. As he dropped, he turned sharply round and faced North.

The simplicity of his death and his calm and resigned demeanour seemed to Murat to mock the elaborate preparations of the Virginians and the national government. Murat sensed that Brown had done more for the cause of abolition in dying than he had in all the years of his stormy career in Kansas and at Harper's Ferry. The sympathy which Murat naturally felt for Brown did not interfere with his evaluation of the execution. It was true, he said, that many people had said he should not have been hanged, but had he been imprisoned he might have escaped and attempted another Harper's Ferry, with results far more damaging than the first. As he had certainly been guilty of a crime it would have been impossible to set him free. No one, Murat believed, could say that he had not received as fair a trial as he could have hoped for, or that his conviction and sentence were not completely in accord with Virginia law. The tragedy in the situation for Murat was that Virginia, in doing only what her

39Ibid., December 5, 1859.
laws demanded, made Brown an important public character and assured his "niche in the gallery of illustrious traitors." But now Brown was no more, and Murat felt that it would be best for the nation if he were forgotten. He ominously predicted, though, that the nation had not heard the last of John Brown. Already reports were heard of sympathy meetings in Philadelphia, in Milwaukee, in Concord, and in many other cities. In Cincinnati several meetings were held, and the last letters which Brown wrote before his execution were published in the Commercial and avidly read by hosts of people. The anti-slavery movement now had a martyr.

Murat's reports were widely reproduced by other newspapers in the North. The Commercial's man had been the only reporter of a Republican paper at Harper's Ferry. To his worried friends he might complain that the Cincinnati Enquirer's dispatches—the Enquirer was a Democratic newspaper—were approved by the commander of the troops and telegraphed back to Cincinnati while he could only telegraph his family that he had arrived safely; but he also had to admit that he was treated as kindly as he could have wished. His reports, only three days delayed, were published in the Commercial beginning on December 5, while he was in Washington for the opening of the Winter session of Congress.

Murat was apprehensive about the situation in Congress. The fanaticism, indulged in on both sides, appeared to him to make a rational settlement of outstanding differences between the two sections impossible.

---

He reported that there was already talk that the election of a Republican president was to be a signal for the withdrawal from the Union by the southern states. Conversations with leading men from the North had convinced him that the unreasonable demands of the South could not possibly be met. The most serious controversy which Murat was to witness while he was in Washington revolved around the organization of the House of Representatives. Murat's candidate for Speaker was John Sherman, a fellow Ohioan. Sherman, along with sixty-eight other Republican members of the House had signed a paper endorsing a book by Hinton R. Helper, a North Carolina native who had lived in the North for many years. Helper's book, *Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It*, developed the theme of the economic superiority of the northern states. He claimed that the only way the non-slaveowning white in the South could prosper was for slavery to be abolished, and threatened violent means to secure this abolition if the slave owners did not do it freely. The South was incensed not only by Helper's economic thesis, but also by the abusive character of his argument. When Sherman was nominated, a resolution was introduced that no one who had endorsed a book suggesting violence should be elected Speaker. This resolution hit directly at Sherman, who had received the most Republican votes on the first ballot. Halstead contended that Sherman could have won the post if the Republican party had been well organized. As it was, he said there were at least ten men who were aspiring to party leadership, which made any united action of the party

---

impossible. Bitterly disappointed in the politicians running the Republican party and realizing that Sherman's chance had been lost, Halstead returned to Cincinnati on December 15 to spend Christmas with his family. Abominable weather, crowds of adventurers, "loafing" lobby members and office seekers in Washington made Halstead proclaim, "Sotty and porky as Cincinnati is at this time, I should be desolate indeed if it did not offer more attractions than this wretched wilderness of false pretences."

The presidential election year of 1860 opened with the Commercial claiming the highest average daily circulation in the midwest. About fifteen thousand people in the Ohio Valley bought the paper each day, which the Commercial's sanguine proprietors thought meant at least ninety thousand people read every edition. Advertisers were advised that these figures were double those for any other Cincinnati newspaper. The proprietors all agreed that if the paper was to continue in its growth it would have to be in the vanguard in both technical improvements and its reporting of the news. Since it was felt that Murat's reporting of the Republican and Democratic Conventions of 1856, his newsletters from Harper's Ferry, and his attendance at the opening sessions of Congress in December had proven his abilities to report accurately and interestingly, it was decided that the Commercial could accomplish a great coup in western journalism by sending the young editor to all the conventions of 1860. When the plans were drawn, a tight schedule for the three expected

---

44 Commercial, December 9, 1859.
46 Ibid., January 2, 1860.
conventions resulted, but before Murat returned to Cincinnati in late June, after an absence of two months, he had actually attended seven. These included the Republican and Constitutional Union conventions, two "Northern" Democratic conventions and three "Southern" Democratic conventions.

Apprehensions arose similar to those when Murat went to Virginia to witness the hanging of Brown. While the people of Virginia had treated him as politely as could have been expected, the Democratic convention of 1860 was to be held in Charleston, and as his friends warned him, hatred of the North and of Republicans was much more intense in South Carolina than in Virginia. Leaving Cincinnati on April 16 by train, Murat traveled in easy daily stages to Nashville, then to Atlanta, and finally reached Charleston on the 18th. This was his first experience on a truly southern train and he found himself alternately delighted and exasperated. He thought the scenery through the mountains in Tennessee some of the most beautiful in the country and recommended it to his readers. He thought the roadbed and track good and the trains well equipped, but he found the habit of making leisurely daily journeys often averaging no more than fifteen miles an hour, and stopping at a large city for the night, rather distressing. On a northern road he claimed the train would have traveled twice as far in a day, and would have continued on into the night until its destination was reached. But since his schedule had taken the slowness of the trip into account, he grew to like the rather lazy atmosphere that prevailed in southern travel.\(^{47}\) The only excitement on

\(^{47}\)Ibid., April 23, 1860. Halstead's reports of the conventions can also be found in Murat Halstead, Caucuses of 1860, etc. and Murat Halstead, Three Against Lincoln, William B. Hesseltine and Bruce Robertson, editors. In this work I will cite only the newspaper source.
the journey came about fifty miles outside Atlanta when a smash-up of a freight train blocked the tracks and the passengers on Murat's train were forced to either carry their luggage around the freight train and board boxcars for the trip into Atlanta (there being no other passenger cars on the line within one hundred miles) or to wait for the track to be cleared. Murat waited and, after a seven hour delay, finally reached his destination.48

He had found that, as travelers, southern people were much more sociable than northerners. All on the car introduced themselves to each other, and all tried to make Murat's journey as pleasant as possible. He found the same courtesy and friendliness when he reached Charleston. The city was crowded with convention delegates and visitors, but he was able to find a clean and airy room at a reasonable price. He thought the city itself extremely interesting, and as there were many who were delighted to show a stranger the "sights" he was introduced to the Calhoun statue in the Court House, the beautiful old St. Michael's Episcopal Church with its bricks imported from England, and St. Philip's, in the yard of which was Calhoun's tomb.49 In attending services at St. Michael's he noticed the large numbers of slaves in the gallery, with their "full-fed sleekness, and the gloss of broad cloth and silk" among them. Perhaps a little naively, as this was Charleston's richest and most fashionable parish, he warned northerners not to imagine all slaves to be starved and ragged creatures of the Harriet Beecher Stowe variety.50

48Ibid., April 24, 1860.
49Ibid., April 26, 1860.
50Ibid., April 28, 1860.
When the convention opened on April 23, Murat was at his seat in the reporter's gallery of Institution Hall. He had spent his time in Charleston interviewing various delegates and mingling with the politicians in the crowded hotel lobbies and on the streets, and was now prepared to report the convention in depth, analyzing the significance of various maneuvers, and predicting what their instigators had in mind. His reports were not to be just a narrative of the events on the floor.  

It was not long before Murat had it forcibly brought home to him that he was indeed in the deep South. Douglas was front-runner among the candidates, but his position on slavery in the territories made him unpopular with the southerners. Oregon and California delegates voted with those from the South to make a majority of the resolutions committee anti-Douglas. The platform which was then brought in was the antithesis of popular sovereignty, declaring that it was the duty of the federal government to protect slavery in the territories. A minority report of the Douglas faction was also read that called for reaffirmation of the platform of 1856, which had endorsed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, with the added proviso that the party would abide by Supreme Court decisions on the right of property in the territories. Murat did not like either platform, but he thought the majority recommendations at least had the virtue of honesty, while the minority report was "a miserable and cowardly evasion." After a long and bitter debate, the Douglas platform was carried by the convention as a whole. By this time Murat had decided it was the "most uncouth

---

51 Halstead, Three Against Lincoln, xii.
52 Commercial, April 28, 1860.
disjointed, illogical, confused, mean, cowardly, and contemptible thing in the history of platforms . . . "53

With the Douglas platform ratified, the southern extremists seceded from the convention. Until the secession, Murat had claimed in his correspondence that the preponderance of brains in the convention was with the South. Now he decided that if this were the case, it had not been apparent in the action of the extremists. He reported that the city of Charleston wore a jubilee air the night of the secession. A southern mass meeting was held, and the city turned out enthusiastically to support the action of the extremists. In front of the court house a crowd of several thousand gathered all shouting for William L. Yancey, the Alabama fire-eater who had led the fight for the majority report.54

With the southern delegates gone, and the two-thirds rule of the Democratic party held to apply to the total vote of the convention, it was impossible for the Douglas supporters to muster enough votes to put him over the top. Calling for the southern states to fill the vacated seats with new delegates, the convention was adjourned to meet again in Baltimore on June 18. The seceders met at Military Hall and adopted the platform which the regular convention had rejected, but also adjourned before nominations were made, planning to reconvene on June 11 in Richmond.

Leaving Charleston for Washington on the last day of the conventions, Murat felt that the sectional cleavages that he had witnessed proved the "false pretence" of the party and was a portent of its final

53 Commercial, April 30, 1860.
54 Ibid., April 30, 1860.
dissolution. Nothing could be more fervently wished for than this by
the Republican editor, who spitefully wrote: "May it die hard." 55

The trip to Washington changed Murat's mind about southern rail-
roads. The train on which he left Charleston was very large according
to southern standards, there being many "distinguished" passengers. Murat
reported about an equal division being United States Senators and Faro
dealers, with the Faro dealers wearing the most costly apparel after their
very successful sojourn to the convention city. The scenery that one
might see from the train window had changed, with the principal features
now being swamps and pine trees. Moreover, the journey could be com-
pleted only after six changes of cars. At one change there were no a-
vailable passenger cars and so three cars designed for the "involuntary
emigration of persons of a particular color" were placed at their dis-
posal, much to the amusement of the Negro depot workers. Murat was par-
ticularly exasperated at the fourth and fifth changes at Petersburg and
Richmond in Virginia. The cities were only about twenty miles apart, but
at both places the tracks stopped at the Southern edge of the city and
the passengers were forced to find their own transportation to another
depot on the northern edge in order to continue their journey. At about
sixty miles south of Washington Murat transferred from the train to the
Potomac River steamer Mount Vernon for the final leg of his trip. The
The ship's bell tolled as Washington's home was passed, and Murat could
not help but wonder what the "father of the country" would think about
the political situation at that time in the republic. 56

55 Ibid., May 2, 1860.
56 Ibid., May 8, 1860.
As was to be the case a century later, in 1860 many of the possible candidates for the presidential nomination were members of the United States Senate. Arriving in Washington with only two days to spare before the Constitutional Union Convention was to begin in Baltimore, Murat naturally hurried to the reporter's gallery of the Senate to see these candidates do their almost daily battle. Seward, Douglas, Davis, and Chase were all on the floor and Murat took particular delight in describing each with his sarcastic pen, sparing neither friend nor foe, but perhaps putting more bite into the sketches of the Democrats. As the Senate was doing little more than marking time until after the conventions, Murat had to be content with observing the "greats" and reporting their appearance.57

The old church in which the Baltimore convention met seemed appropriate to Murat for the Constitutional Union party. He found its delegates all fine looking and "eminently respectable" gentlemen, but he found their convention unanimated and the great issues of the day ignored. Fully resolved to save the country, and devotedly patriotic—the church had been decorated with a full length painting of Washington, a carved American eagle, two great flags, and masses of smaller flags and tricolored drapery—the convention stressed the fraternal feelings that united the Union, but did not take into account or attempt to resolve any of the issues that divided it.58 The most exciting occurrence that Murat could report during the two day meeting came during the balloting for a presidential nominee and had nothing at all to do with the issues before the convention. While the votes were being changed to give John Bell of

57 Ibid., May 9, 1860.
58 Ibid., May 10, 1860.
Tennessee the nomination at the end of the balloting there was a sudden crash and everyone believed that the over crowded balconies of the old church had given away. A panic resulted, and there was a great rush for the doors and windows. It was then learned that only a bench had broken. When the delegates and visitors realized that there was no peril, Murat said the crowd stared at each other with "white faces and laughed."59

Murat heaped as much scorn upon this Convention as on the Democratic. The platform, which called for the support of the constitution, and the candidates, who were old time conservatives, drew this scathing summary from him:

The whole talk was of the Constitution, the Union and the laws, of harmony, fraternity, compromise, conciliation, peace, good will, common glory, national brotherhood, preservation of the confederacy. And of all these things it seemed to be understood the Convention had a monopoly. The Constitution, the Union, and peace between the sections would appear from the record of proceedings to be in the exclusive care of, and the peculiar institutions of, the no-party and no-platform gentlemen here assembled.60

The Baltimore convention of the Constitutional Union party ended on the eleventh of May, and the Republican convention started on the sixteenth. Thus once more Murat found himself on a train, this time heading for Chicago, the site of the second national Republican Convention. Passing through the lush farm lands of Pennsylvania, he was unable to resist the temptation to chide the South and its system of slave labor. He recalled the barren pine scrubs he had just passed on his way to Washington and wrote to his readers in Cincinnati that in the South with its slave labor, none but the most favorably situated and richest land was

59Ibid., May 12, 1860.

60Ibid., May 12, 1860.
cultivated, while in Pennsylvania free labor not only made "the village bloom, but the hill-tops ... radiant with clover and wheat." Everything he saw in the North seemed to "testify to the paramount glory of free labor." By this time Murat had come to expect delays and failures in the railroad system, and so a landslide in Central Pennsylvania and the six-hour delay of the Pittsburgh-to-Chicago train were hardly noticed by the reporter. He noted that the thirteen cars on his train were full of "Irrepressibles" who were completely unsound and delighted in boasting of the fact. Politically, Murat certainly felt himself more at home than at any other time so far on his journey. A party atmosphere prevailed on the train as the delegates sensed the break up of the Democratic party could well mean victory for their cause. The more virtuous delegates might frown, and Ohio's Western Reserve might be thrown into "prayers and perspiration," but bottles were everywhere in evidence, and songs were sung that could not be "found in hymn books." With tongue in cheek Murat proclaimed that drunkenness was no more extensive than in any national convention, but that many delegates were glad to have the co-operation of "Capt. Whiskey."

Chicago had gone all out to play host to her first national convention. The "Wigwam," a ten-thousand-seat wooden auditorium costing seven thousand dollars, had been specially built to house the proceedings, and every effort had been made to house the delegates comfortably in its many large hotels. The crowds of visitors, reporters, and delegates were extremely large, and the hotel lobbies and the streets were

61 Ibid., May 18, 1860.
62 Ibid., May 18, 1860.
full every hour of the day. Murat's hotel, the Tremont House, had alone prepared to house fifteen hundred guests. 63

Murat arrived in Chicago a firm supporter of William Seward of New York for the nomination, and was thus greatly disappointed that the Ohio delegation, which he argued might hold the balance of power in the convention, was sorely divided and could not come out unanimously for his man. The Chicago reports were basically as telling as those Murat had previously sent from Charleston and Baltimore, with the faults of the convention pointed out to his readers; but it was also obvious that Murat was a partisan, supporting this convention, and supporting and hoping for Seward's victory. Moreover, he failed to see, or at least report, the significance of the platform. Seward and his supporters were most closely associated with the old abolitionist wing of the party, but the platform was a victory for those who wished the party to rest on a much broader base than the issue of slavery. The "Dutch Planks," which opposed any change in the immigration laws and demanded passage of a homestead act, other planks which supported river and harbor improvements, and a federal subsidy for a Pacific railroad, could be said to have made the platform sectional, as these were things the southern representatives in Congress had voted down, but certainly not abolitionist. In fact, the old abolitionist wing had to be content with the "inalienable rights" statement of the Declaration of Independence. 64

On the eve of the balloting, Murat was still predicting that Seward would win the nomination. Thus he was bitterly disappointed when

63 Ibid., May 18, 1860.
at the end of the third ballot (Seward led on the first two, but Lincoln pulled to within one and a half votes of nomination on the last), a delegate from Ohio arose and gave Lincoln four additional votes and the nomination. The stop-Seward movement among those who felt he was too closely identified with the abolitionist wing of the party had been successful, and Murat felt he saw another reason for condemning party conventions as a means of choosing candidates and writing platforms. Bitterly he wrote:

The fact of the Convention was the defeat of Seward rather than the nomination of Lincoln. It was the triumph of a presumption of availability over pre-eminence in intellect and unrivaled fame—a success of the ruder qualities of manhood and the more homely attributes of popularity over the arts of a consummate politician, and the splendor of accomplished statesmanship.65

Leaving Chicago on the night train after the convention for Cincinnati and a brief rest before the Richmond convention, Murat discovered at every stop along the way how popular Lincoln's nomination was with the people of Illinois and Indiana. At every station there were tar barrels burning and drums beating or cannons cooming and people shouting. He still felt that the convention had made a mistake, but he could understand the joy of these people who felt that one of their own had been nominated.66

The southern Democrats, or Constitutional Democrats as they preferred to be called, met in Richmond on June 11 and Murat was again at the reporters' table to witness the proceedings. Attendance was very small (even though the convention was held in the capital of Virginia, only one Virginia delegate was present), and after two days of what Murat
thought was inconsequential debate and much talk about defense of the constitution, the meeting adjourned until after the regular Democratic convention which was to meet on the eighteenth in Baltimore. Moving on towards Baltimore, Murat stopped off in Washington, as did most of the Richmond delegates, for the latest capital gossip. From the bitter personal nature of the controversy between men and factions in the party, he felt that Baltimore would not witness a compromise between the two sections of the party, but that there would probably be two Democratic tickets in the race. From what he was able to learn, the debates in Congress during the recess between the two portions of the Democratic convention had served to deepen rather than bridge the chasm splitting the party.

The seceders, again under the leadership of William Yancey, demanded readmission to the Democratic convention, and this was agreed upon except in the cases where state action had been taken and the seats of those who had left in Charleston filled by new men. This provoked a new secession which left only northern and border-state delegates and a few of the southern replacements, who now, on June 23, the sixth day of the convention, nominated Stephen A. Douglas for the presidency. On the train from the convention Murat met a northern Douglas delegate who told him that the northern Democrats were angry with the South, and had insisted, for once, that the northern wing of the party have its way. He blamed the southern threats of secession whenever matters went against them as stemming from the fact that they had ruled over "niggers" so

67 Ibid., June 13, 1860.
68 Ibid., June 20, 1860.
long that they thought they could rule white men in the same manner. Now he said the South had alienated her best friends, and as far as he, and many other northern Democrats were concerned, she could act completely on her own. Murat was convinced that this conversation represented the feeling of the northwestern delegates.69

The seceders met in Institute Hall on the last day of the regular Democratic convention and nominated the vice president, John Breckinridge of Kentucky, a man who was considered a border-state moderate, for president. The now greatly diminished Richmond group confirmed the Baltimore seceders' nomination and adjourned. Murat did not return for the Richmond rump meeting as the action which they would take was known beforehand, and there was no interest in their actual meeting. Moreover, Murat had been on the road for two months, with only a brief rest in Cincinnati, and he was anxious to return home.70

Murat could be well satisfied with his accounts of the conventions. He had written the most complete eye-witness account of all the conventions but the last Richmond meeting, and had scored a major coup for his newspaper. Not even the larger eastern journals could boast of such coverage. He had received the great compliment of having his reports copied by many of the northern and northwestern newspapers, usually with full credit being given to the author, (but in one case the newspaper even claimed that the reports were from its own special correspondent). This newspaper, the Cleveland Herald, changed a few words here and there

69 Ibid., June 26, 1860.
70 Halstead, Three Against Lincoln, 277-78.
and then signed it with an "S." The Commercial had to defend editorially the attacks from other newspapers who felt its "On the Circuit of the Conventions," as Murat's newsletters were called, were too long. The Commercial claimed that it was greatly complimented by the copying and criticism of the reports and felt much more amusement than annoyance at the harping of those journals whose jealousy at a job well done had prompted the attack. The most annoying feature to the Commercial was the habit of criticizing prognostications made in the reports and playing up the wrong guesses made by the author, but never mentioning the times when his guesses turned out to be right.

Nonetheless, the criticism and the copying all proved that many had read the reports with interest, and many had obtained all their first-hand information of the conventions from the pen of Murat Halstead. The worth of these interesting and informative reports was also noted by the enterprising publishing firm of Follett, Foster and Company of Columbus, the publishers of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, who quickly brought out the Cincinnati journalist's correspondence in book form as a companion piece to William Dean Howell's campaign biography of Lincoln which they also published in 1860. Murat's often sarcastic and biting commentary did not find particular favor with the politicians of 1860, but it has remained a basic source for historians ever since. Murat himself believed the publishers did a very poor job, both limiting the number of

71 Ibid., May 26, 1860.
72 Ibid., May 26, 1860.
73 Murat Halstead, Caucuses of 1860, etc. The complete title can be found in the bibliography.
pages and marred the narrative with serious omissions. In 1887 when Nicolay and Hay quoted from it in their biography of Lincoln he received many requests for information about the book which he answered by saying that it could be found only in libraries with large collections of pamphlets and documents and was regarded as a curiosity. Nonetheless, this curiosity has since this time been quoted by every major historian working on Lincoln or the Civil War years, and with only a few rather major exceptions, Murat's reporting ability has always been given credit. In 1960, William Best Hesseltine, the University of Wisconsin historian and biographer of Grant, brought out a revised edition of Murat's 1860 work, calling it Three Against Lincoln.

Professor Hesseltine points out in his introduction that the main point of the original reports was almost completely ignored at the time. Murat felt the conventions of 1860 proved that the "caucus system" was a failure and that it defrauded the American people of their effective rights of suffrage. "King Caucus," he claimed, permeated American political life with his corruption. All decisions were made in government looking to his next meeting, and the nominees were thus only his "obsequious viceroys." For the country to retain a republican form of government, Murat warned his readers that a bonfire must be made of King Caucus' throne.75

74 *Commercial Gazette*, September 27, 1887.

75 Halstead, *Three Against Lincoln*, 279.
CHAPTER III

THE EDITOR AND THE CIVIL WAR

Halstead did not easily overcome the keen disappointment which he suffered when Seward failed to receive the Republican nomination, but the principles of the party held his wholehearted support, and so he worked hard for Lincoln's election. The jubilation he felt after the election was great, but it was more for the triumph of the party than the triumph of the man. In fact, it would be only after Lincoln's death that Halstead would appreciate those qualities which made him a great president.

As the southern states began passing ordinances dissolving the union between them and the other states, Halstead began to have second thoughts about the complete justice in the northern cause. Cincinnati had many close ties with the South. Many of her citizens were of southern origins, many of her leading businessmen were engaged in trade with the southern states, and only a river separated her from a state where slavery was still legal. These close ties had convinced many Cincinnatians that all compromise was impossible, but Halstead urged that the national government take no coercive steps against the South. He proposed as the best solution to the problem a national convention that would end the old union on lines satisfactory to all the states.¹

¹Roseboom, The Civil War Era, 374; Alvin F. Harlow, The Serene Cincinnatians, 224; Clara Longworth de Chambrun, Cincinnati: Story of the Queen City, 214; and David M. Potter, Lincoln and his Party in the Secession Crisis, 53.
The firing on Sumter ended Halstead's agitation for a national convention. The Union had been attacked, and he and his fellow Cincinnatians no longer hesitated in declaring their complete loyalty to the national government. Potter had not shared Halstead's apprehensions as far as Lincoln was concerned, and so generally the Commercial had been willing to give him every chance to prove himself in office. While Halstead still felt that Seward and Chase were greater men than Lincoln, he had been determined from the beginning of Lincoln's term to support his administration and the cause of the Union.²

While the events of the day had a personal meaning for the editor of the Commercial, Halstead's uppermost concern was the meaning they had for his newspaper. It is often said that a revolution in journalism took place with the coming of the war. While this is certainly true, it is also true that for several years Halstead had been introducing into the newsgathering practices of the Commercial many of the innovations that were now to become general in the American newspaper world. The most important of these innovations was a result of the necessity for prompt reporting and publishing of events soon after they occurred. A newspaper might still remain a sounding board for its editor's opinions, but if it did not carry up-to-the-minute news, its buying public would find another source of information. As sons and brothers, husbands and fathers, marched off to join the crusade for the North or for the South, those people left at home became more and more insistent that the progress of the army be followed, and not followed several weeks later in the stilted

²Halstead, "History of the Cincinnati Commercial," Halstead MSS; Commercial, March, 1861 passim, and March 6, 1861 in particular.
prose of a war historian, but followed by a man on the spot whose reports
could at least vicariously recreate for the reader the action, the suffer-
ing and the valiancy found on the fields of battle.  

For several years the Commercial had received brief telegraphed re-
ports of the latest New York and Washington news. Halstead had felt that
it was necessary to supplement these brief telegrams with longer articles
from the latest editions of the exchange newspapers, or with reports sent
by railroad from special correspondents. Now, with speed one of newspaper-
dom's greatest concerns, the telegraph achieved a far greater importance.
Many editors complained bitterly about this necessity to rely upon the
telegraph. Reports carried over its wires were relatively expensive, and
it seemed to many editors that anything printed under the heading "Special
by Telegraph" or "By Latest Wire," took on an importance in many readers'
minds that was undeserved. Also, at the beginning of the war the reports
that were most often telegraphed were sensational and usually not com-
pletely verified by the reporters. It was not long, however, until the
wires that were speedily erected along the railroad tracks of the country
became the news editors' best friend.

While most newspapers either had their own special correspondents
at Washington or shared one with another paper, the idea of large numbers
of reporters, in far-flung corners of the country, writing regular re-
ports of the happenings in their area was rather foreign to American news-
paper life. Now all this was changed by the war. All the major journals

3Louis M. Starr, Reporting the Civil War, the Bohemian Brigade
in Action, 1861-1865, 9.

4Ibid., 6.
found it necessary to have a whole staff with each army. To bring the reading public the complete picture of a battle meant that reporters had to be on the front lines with the men, had to be at the army headquarters with the commanders, and had to be at points of vantage to be able to see the whole sweep of the fighting. Few newspapers were able to fulfill all these requirements, but as a goal of good reporting, most tried. The Commercial was not able financially to attempt to compete in this manner with the leading Eastern papers, but it did have at least one correspondent with all the major armies most of the time. Often arrangements were made with reporters from the New York newspaper, like the Tribune or the Times, to send articles to the Commercial; and often Halstead himself would take on the role he had assumed at Harper's Ferry, at Buchanan's Inaugural, and at the conventions of 1860, and become a special correspondent, reporting the news from Washington, or from a battlefield near Washington.

Halstead spent most of the month of June, 1861, in and around Washington, sending a daily newsletter to the Commercial. He had frequently traveled to Washington over the Baltimore and Ohio line and, as was his usual custom, he stopped over in Baltimore. He found the city entirely changed from his last visit. It bore an air of desertion. In place of the usual crowds in the streets Halstead found only groups of people in front of the bulletin boards reading the war news. In place of the usual cheerful greeting of the Baltimore citizen for friend and stranger alike there was a pained silence, and a quick searching glance that made the visitor feel he was being judged as friend or foe. When people did meet on the streets they talked in whispers and made sure they
were not overheard. Halstead was pained by the change, but could feel no sorrow for the people of Baltimore. He reminded his readers that on April 19 Massachusetts troops had been assailed on the streets of Baltimore and that other activities of various elements in the population proved them unworthy of pity. In this first dispatch, written so soon after the outbreak of hostilities, Halstead also began the criticism of the actions of officers and governmental officials in waging the war, a criticism that later caused his journalistic rivals to bestow upon him the title of "Field Marshal." The Ohio editor said that the action of the officers of the Massachusetts troops on April 19 was so ill-advised that it was a wonder that the whole force was not massacred by the mob. According to Halstead the troops should have been formed in a hollow square and then told to fire systematically into the mob. He was convinced that this would have shown the citizens of Baltimore that the federal government meant business, and would have prevented any similar recurrence. His ire was also aroused when he learned that "the jackasses" of the Quartermaster's department had allowed two cannons to stand on the public streets unguarded one night, thus permitting them to be spiked with rat tailed files, driven in with wedges. The most hopeful sign that he saw in Baltimore was that the regular officers, who he said knew their business, were beginning to complain. They were demanding that the abuses which the quick mobilization of such a large number of men had caused to be rectified and that the Commissary Department be operated more efficiently. Washington in 1861 was still the "city of magnificent distances."
Its plan for great public buildings, located in spacious parks along wide thoroughfares, would someday result in one of the world's most beautiful capital cities, but at the beginning of the war, while many buildings remained unfinished and many of the thoroughfares remained unpaved, it presented a picture of incompleteness. Arriving from Baltimore, Halstead was immediately struck by the terrible June heat and the clouds of dust which the heat and lack of rain helped form on the streets. The large number of troops that had been sent into the city were encamped in a ring about two miles from the Capitol, but even so he found the most distinctive feature of the downtown area to be the great numbers of men in uniform.

One of the first things Halstead did after his arrival in Washington was to visit the camps of the Ohio regiments. After passing the camps of beautifully uniformed and plentifully supplied volunteers from other states, he was mortified to come upon the Ohio soldiers. He found them demoralized and in a ragged condition. Writing indignantly that they had been hurried out of the state unprepared, he said that once they had left Ohio a dispute arose between state and federal officials over whose responsibility it was to provide for the men. While the argument was still in progress, Halstead reported that some uniforms had been sent, but that they were of the meanest possible material, in many ways comparable to paper. The seams of the trousers, he wrote, "Could be pulled open with the fingers,..." As Ohio had appropriated a million dollars for her troops, he asked why it was necessary for them to be styled paupers by the other regiments? The men themselves blamed

---

their misfortune on Ohio's adjutant General, H. B. Carrington, and were convinced that he allowed some of the contractors to make money from their distress.\(^7\)

Halstead's letters continued to complain of the treatment of the Ohio soldiers and continued to call for decent clothes and money for distribution by their paymasters. He claimed that when the Ohio officers wrote to Carrington about their problems Carrington refused to answer their letters, but wrote a "card" to the Ohio State Journal complaining of their impertinence. Halstead insisted that he was not reporting the plight of the Ohio soldiers to create a sensation but to let every citizen of Ohio know that the state was being disgraced.\(^8\)

Halstead's fighting newsletters, and the protests of Ohio officials in Washington, were successful. By June 10 he was able to write that the troops had been supplied with new uniforms and that they would receive a month's pay the next day. He declared that if the government granted a liberal furlough policy the men would find nothing more to complain about during their service and would probably stay in the army until the end of the war.\(^9\)

During the month Halstead was in Washington, hardly a day passed that he did not find some bit of military strategy that required modification or correction. One basic and recurring theme was found in his suggestion that the motto, "Delays are Dangerous," should be posted on all the desks in the War Department and in Adjutant General Offices across

\(^7\)Commercial, June 3, 1861.
\(^8\)Ibid., June 6, 1861.
\(^9\)Ibid., June 13, 1861.
the country. "Time," he wrote, "is the most costly of all human posses-
sions, . . . ." Yet while he thought minutes were important to the war
effort, he found hours and days wasted. He claimed that "Circumlocution
offices" in the War Department and the red tape and other delays found in
the other departmental offices caused hardships on the soldiers, and kept
the army from making progress.\textsuperscript{10} While he was fairly critical of Secre-
tary Gideon Welles' handling of the Navy Department, (Cincinnati boat-
builders were not receiving their fair share of the contracts), Halstead's
pen fairly dripped with venom when he wrote of Simon Cameron in the War
Department:

No one ever suspected Cameron of honesty, but there were hopes
that he had business capacity and that . . . he would make a
reputation for integrity. In truth, however, he is very in-
competent . . . . Cameron attends to the stealing department
. . . . It would be of greater advantage to the country than
to gain a battle, to have Cameron kicked out of the Cabinet.

Specifically, Halstead charged that Cameron was incapable of running his
department and that most of the work was being done by General Winfield
Scott and Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase. Moreover, he said
that Cameron's relatives had all been placed in the War Department in
lucrative jobs or more selling goods to the army at highly inflated
prices.\textsuperscript{11} Halstead reported that he had met a fellow Cincinnatian in
Washington who had come to the capital city to gain a contract for his
foundry to cast cannon balls for the army in the West. The foundryman
was told by Cameron that he had already decided to give the contract to
some Pennsylvania foundries, and the cynical Halstead concluded that the

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., June 12, 1861.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., June 14, 1861.
Pennsylvania foundries that would get the work probably were those belonging to a man named Simon Cameron.  

About the only person in the cabinet that Halstead did not complain about was the Cincinnatian, Chase. Not only did Halstead say that Chase was doing the work of the Secretary of War, but he also claimed that Chase was the driving wheel of the whole administration.

Halstead constantly complained that every politician who could make a stump speech thought he deserved a commission in the army. Moreover, if the politician held enough political power, he usually received one. Halstead also claimed that these "political soldiers" were advanced in the ranks when more meritorious officers, of proven performance but without political power, were more deserving of recognition. He elaborated, "I know of several instances in which perfect boobies have been given commissions, while most meritorious applications are unheeded." Moreover, the Ohio editor claimed, "A word from a silly Congressman has often gone farther than the highest grade of merit in securing appointments." He felt it was particularly disgraceful that Adjutant General Carrington, who he said had made Ohio "contemptible abroad and humiliating at home," was made a colonel while the man who saved Fort Pickens remained a major.

During this first wartime visit to Washington Halstead made several excursions into the surrounding area. While he did not witness any battles, these trips provided him with the knowledge of the area that later

12 Ibid., June 24, 1861.
13 Ibid., June 17, 1861.
14 Ibid., June 6, 1861.
made his editorial writing on the progress of the Union forces lively and vivid. On one visit he toured Robert E. Lee's estates and inspected the fortifications and camps established to protect Washington from a Confederate invasion. On another trip he went down to Alexandria, a city of almost eleven thousand inhabitants before the war, but now almost deserted. The city was being used as a testing ground for Army balloon observations. On the evening of the day he was there a balloon was sent up about fifteen hundred feet. Among its occupants was a telegraph operator with a direct line to army headquarters so that immediate reports could be sent of any Southern troop movements.

The farthest that the Cincinnati reporter went into Confederate territory during this period was to Fortress Monroe, an outpost still held by the national government at the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, between the James and York Rivers. The government was running a daily steamer from Baltimore to the Fort, and permission to make the visit was easily obtained. Fortress Monroe was considered of the greatest strategic importance in commanding the waterway system of Virginia and would often figure in reports from correspondents during the war, but Halstead's visit was during a period of calm.

The most personally galling of all of Halstead's complaints in Washington was that as a newsman in the city to gather information for his Cincinnati readers, he was unable to find a source of reliable news. The War Department, which he said should be the greatest source of information

15 Ibid., June 20, 1861.
16 Ibid., June 24, 1861.
17 Ibid., June 17, 1861.
was staffed with particularly uncommunicative officials. Even when he was able to learn some particular intelligence about a battle or a troop movement, he found he had to contend with a censor in the telegraph office. Reporters from several New York papers told him that the censor always cut their dispatches if their information was correct, and always passed along uncensored those dispatches that contained false information. Halstead realized that the enemy might gain valuable information from the reports of resourceful newsmen who were able to learn advance army plans, and he was not hostile to the idea of keeping this information from the telegraph. His main criticism was that the censorship rules were applied in such ways that the reporter could never really be sure which dispatches would pass and which ones would not. The problem was extremely serious. Commanders claimed that through knowledge that was gained from northern newspapers, the Southern army leaders were able to escape traps or prepare for actions when surprise was the major element in the Northern plans. On the other hand, Halstead and the Northern editors in general claimed that the reading public had a right to know what was happening in the army. The principal problem seemed to be that the censors themselves were too ill-informed to make intelligent decisions on what news to release and what news to withhold. The end result was controversy and bad feelings between the reporters and the War Department. Some commanders even went so far as to bar reporters from their camps.

---

18 Ibid., June 8 and 13, 1861.

19 Ibid., June 27, 1861 and Starr, Reporting the Civil War, 64-68.
Halstead's most serious conflict with a Northern general came in December, 1861. Henry Villard, a German immigrant who had covered Lincoln's campaign for the New York Herald (and was later to gain control of the Northern Pacific Railroad), was at General William Tecumseh Sherman's headquarters in Louisville representing the Commercial. In November Secretary of War Cameron arrived on an inspection trip. For several weeks guests at the hotel where Sherman had his headquarters had noticed him pacing up and down the corridors hour after hour so preoccupied that he did not seem to notice his surroundings. This preoccupation had led to gossip, and it was soon whispered about that Sherman was having mental difficulties. When Cameron arrived in Louisville Sherman asked for a private interview to discuss the military situation in the West. Cameron had traveling with him a special representative of the New York Tribune, and he allowed him to attend the meeting with Sherman. During the course of the talk Sherman told Cameron that he would need at least two hundred thousand men to march South. The Tribune man later told Villard of this figure and said that he felt the general must be "unhinged." 20

When this news became known in Louisville many people, remembering the reports of Sherman's strange behavior in his hotel concluded that he must be insane and should be removed from command. The rumor soon spread that he was frightened of a southern invasion and might take his army into Indiana, abandoning the loyal people of Louisville. Since the people of Louisville feared that any accusations they would make about Sherman's mental health would be attributed to their southern leanings, they contacted Villard and asked him to return to Cincinnati and report

20 Ibid., 69-70.
the whole situation to Halstead, a man whose loyalty to the northern cause could not be questioned. The end result of this was a Commercial headline, "General Sherman Insane."

Sherman may well have needed a rest, but it was quite evident to those who were close to him that he was not insane. Asking to be relieved of his command, he returned to his Lancaster home for a few weeks and then went to St. Louis where he was placed in a subordinate position. Sherman was livid with anger about the whole situation and quite rightly blamed the press, and Halstead in particular, for most of his problems.

In his memoirs he said:

The newspapers kept up their game as though instigated by malice, and chief among them was the Cincinnati Commercial, whose editor, Halsted [sic] was generally believed to be an honorable man. P. B. Ewing [Sherman's brother-in-law], being in Cincinnati, saw him and asked him why he, who certainly knew better would reiterate such a damaging slander. He answered, quite cavalierly, that it was one of the news-items of the day, and he had to keep up with the time; but he would be most happy to publish any correction I might make, as though I could deny such a malicious piece of scandal affecting myself.

Sherman had never trusted reporters and had often lectured them on what they could and could not say about his plans and ideas. After this incident the life of a reporter in Sherman's army was almost impossible, and many in fact were ordered from his camps. As can be imagined, reporters from the Commercial were not at all well received from this

---

22. Commercial, December 12, 1861.
time on in Sherman's headquarters. Once he asserted, "I never see my name in print without a feeling of contamination, and I will undertake to forego half my salary if the newspapers will ignore my name." While Sherman never really forgave him for his part in the insanity stories, Halstead and the General became friends in later years and often corresponded. When Sherman's memoirs were published Halstead wrote to him about the above passage. The General said that he had no feelings of malice in publishing this story, but thought it might be useful to others. If Halstead desired, he promised to withdraw his name from the second edition. While there is no letter available giving Halstead's reply to this offer, the later editions of the memoirs all include the passage with his name. Many years later Halstead appeared on the same program with Sherman at a dinner at Delmonico's given by the New York Press Club. Halstead, who spoke first, recalled that both he and Sherman had run schools of journalism in the West, a humorous reference to the General's action in running reporters out of his camps. Along the same lines, the man introducing Sherman said that this was the perfect time should he wish to apologize to the press for his treatment of their representatives during the war. The old general, in a less than humorous mood, settled old accounts by his opening sentence, addressed to Halstead:

"You ought to have been put into Fort Lafayette—and you know it."

---


25 B. H. Liddell Hart, Sherman, 103.

26 Halstead, "Sherman," (June 22, 1899), 1683.
Halstead admitted that this may have been true and said that something of the sort was probably needed by many of the editors and reporters of the era. The general, making his last public appearance, soon found himself in a more mellow mood and, dropping the press business, gave a talk on the old army before the war.27

Throughout 1861 Halstead continued to combine the jobs of editor and special correspondent. Returning to Cincinnati at the end of June, he spent the month of July editing the Commercial and from time to time writing strong editorials in support of the Union. At the same time there often appeared editorials that condemned the administration's handling of the war effort. In fact, the rival Democratic Cincinnati Enquirer felt called upon to defend the administration from Republican papers like the Commercial after some of the comments on how the war should be handled.28

In the fall, Halstead attended both the Democratic and Union conventions in Columbus. As was the case with the National Democratic Conventions in 1860, the editor's Republican-Unionist predilections made it impossible to send completely unbiased reports from the Democratic meetings, but he happily reported that the "secesh sympathisers" wing of the party seemed to be in the minority, thus making the platform less violent on the war question than it would have been without the presence of so many War Democrats.29 The tame platform, according to Halstead, still should not obscure the fact that because of the peril which the country faced,

27 Ibid., 1685.
28 Enquirer, September 1, 1861.
29 Commercial, August 8, 1861.
the Republican party had invited the Democrats to unite with them and nominate one combined ticket. That they refused and nominated their own ticket meant to him that they were willing to sacrifice their country for the benefit of their party. Their platform claim that the Democratic party, since it had always opposed sectionalism, could not be counted responsible for the war, brought Halstead's most scornful comment on the convention: "The Democratic party not responsible for sectionalism indeed."30

"The intelligent, honest and patriotic people of Ohio" looked with more hope and confidence, Halstead insisted, on the Republican-Union convention which met a month later in September. He characterized the delegates as a "very good class of men" and felt that the large turn out of Douglas Democrats assured the party's success.31 Halstead believed that David Tod of Youngstown, a Douglas Democrat, was a wise choice for the Union nomination for governor, and he applauded the decision to divide the nominations for other state offices between the Republican and War Democrats. The convention's resolve to fight the campaign entirely on lines of support for the Union and the constitution met his whole hearted approval.32

Halstead's reports were always marked with a completely personal approach which not only combined firsthand news of the convention but also gave his readers a picture of the behind the scenes activities. An example of this would be his complaint that Columbus was no place in

30 Ibid., August 8, 1861.
31 Ibid., September 5, 1861.
32 Ibid., September 7, 1861.
which to hold a convention of any size. The fire that had leveled the Neil House and consumed "an infinite assortment of roaches," had left the city without a decent hotel or one that was capable of lodging any number of delegates. In fact, he said there was not a hall in the city large enough to accommodate the meetings. The Republican convention was actually held on the east steps of the Capitol Building. The theatre for which it was first scheduled produced the same situation as that which Halstead had described at the Baltimore meeting of the Constitutional Union Party. An old building packed with people and the rumor that the floor was settling, set the stage for a panic. The panic came when a man mounted a bench and asked if a certain doctor was present. A piece of plaster fell from the ceiling onto his hat and there were immediate screams that the ceiling was falling. In seconds, the supposedly dignified representatives of the people of Ohio were "leaping with the agility of cats over chairs and benches, and tumbling over each other down the stairway." As had been the case in Baltimore, the building was discovered finally to be safe, and the embarrassed delegates returned, but decided to adjourn to a location where they might feel more comfortable and less fearful for their safety.  

Editorially the Commercial supported the Union ticket, taking the line that a vote for the Democrats was a vote for treason. While the Commercial did not claim that all Democrats were traitors, it did say that all the traitors in the state were Democrats. Thus, Halstead insisted that loyal men, who hoped and prayed for the success of the Union cause,

33Ibid., September 7, 1861.
could do nothing less than vote for Tod and the complete Union ticket.\textsuperscript{34} The election returns gave Tod a fifty thousand vote majority over his Democratic opponent, but the more than 150,000 votes polled by Ohio Democrats showed they were not willing to give up their party organization.\textsuperscript{35}

The outbreak of the war found the people of Cincinnati in a state of near panic. There was great fear—particularly if Kentucky should secede—that the city would be seized by the Confederates. The measures taken for the city's defense included the mounting of huge guns in the surrounding hills and the establishing of a military camp in the near vicinity. Yet, the fear of a Southern attack proved virtually groundless.\textsuperscript{36} With Kentucky remaining in the Union Cincinnati was no longer a border city and her safety was threatened only three times throughout the war. Two of these threats came in 1862. The first, in July, was the least serious. It was the result of a raid by Colonel John Morgan into Kentucky. Morgan's Cavalry came through Kentucky with little opposition throwing many of Cincinnati's citizens into a panic. Halstead felt that the situation was really alarming and entitled a \textit{Commercial} editorial "TO ARMS!" He called upon all citizens capable of bearing arms to turn out for the public defense.\textsuperscript{37} Morgan, after inflicting much property damage, turned southwards again after reaching Paris, Kentucky.\textsuperscript{38} The panic over,

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., August 17, 1861, October 3 and 8, 1861.
\textsuperscript{35}Eugene H. Roseboom and Francis P. Weisenburger, \textit{A History of Ohio}, 188.
\textsuperscript{36}Roseboom, \textit{Civil War}, 386.
\textsuperscript{37}Commercial, July 18, 1862.
\textsuperscript{38}Roseboom, \textit{Civil War}, 398.
Halstead chastized the citizens of the city and their officials for what he termed their disgusting reaction to the attack threat. When the enemy was near he said that, instead of the strong united stand that was necessary to meet the attack, everything was in confusion and nothing was done except a vast amount of talking. He claimed that everyone had his own theory on what to do, and consequently, nothing at all was accomplished. What the situation demanded, according to the Commercial's editor, was a military system that could be placed in immediate operation should the city be threatened by another attack.  

The second alarm came just two months later and was certainly the most serious of the three threats to Cincinnati. General Kirby Smith with a force estimated at between ten and fifteen thousand men was marching northward through Kentucky. Halstead blamed those in authority for this second possible raid. He claimed that if the city officials had followed his advice in July the city would have been adequately defended and the Confederate armies would not dare even threaten it. Since his earlier advice had not been followed, he claimed that the present invasion made it necessary to call out every citizen in the city capable of bearing arms. He argued that this plan would save the city and that after these men had been drilled they would always constitute a ready reserve for future emergencies.  

Halstead's proposal was followed. General Ben Wallace, the commander of the military district that included Cincinnati, declared martial law, and the mayor suspended all business in the city so that the  

---

39 Commercial, July 22, 1862.  
40 Ibid., September 4, 1862.
men might be used for defense purposes. Those men who did not willingly volunteer for service were impressed. While Halstead himself had recommended this plan, he nonetheless felt compelled to complain when he found the provost guards, who had been organized for the impressements, were over zealous in their search for delinquents. He claimed many of them took "keen enjoyment" in their work and impressed some who were too old or too ill for work on the trenches. For some time Halstead had recommended that more use be made of the Negro by the Northern armies. He was, and he remained throughout his life, a friend and defender of the race. So, while recommending this use, he also said that the Negro had nothing really to gain by becoming partisan. Halstead explained that if the Negro helped defend the South he but "forges the fetter that perpetuates his servitude." On the other hand, if he fights for the North, he would only be exchanging "absolute servitude for penned freedom," without civil or political rights. However, since the Negro was used in the South to help feed and arm the Southern armies, he was, according to Halstead, a force in the war, and should also be used in the North to further the effort. With this in mind, he was quite indignant when the provost guard impressed the Cincinnati Negroes without warning. He said that of course the able-bodied Negroes should be used for the defense of the city, but that these Negroes, like the rest of the city's citizens, should have been given a chance to volunteer for duty. Their being marched off in summary style was, to Halstead, a grave injustice.

With business suspended, gangs of men working on the city's


defenses, others drilling, and regiments pouring in for the rescue, Halstead thought Cincinnati seemed very much like Washington in June of 1861. "All day the city resounded with the measured tread of armed men . . . . The din of drum and the piercing notes of the fife, were constantly heard, far and near, . . . ."43 Added to the more military-like aspect of the city was a group of men who had shouldered their own guns and had come from various parts of Southern Ohio when they heard of the invasion threat. Their unmilitary appearance, and the variety found in their firearms soon earned them the name, "Squirrel Hunters." The first week of September witnessed the massing of many volunteers and the building of many additional defenses around the city. The rumor was started that the alarm was false, and many of the "Squirrel Hunters" began returning to their homes. Halstead felt compelled to try to counteract the rumor. He stated editorially that the announced purpose of Smith was to take Cincinnati, and that the city had to be ready for him. Between the sixth and eleventh of September, as more and more of the volunteers abandoned their posts, Halstead's editorials stressed Cincinnati's real danger and the need for preparedness. Halstead maintained that the fortifications should be pushed forward as if there were only a few hours left in which to prepare to defend the city and that the "Squirrel Hunters" should hold themselves as "minute men" ready at an instant's notice to return, repeated editorial after editorial.44

On the tenth the military authorities sent out the alarm once again. They were convinced that the rebel forces were massing for an

43 Ibid., September 5, 1862.
44 Ibid., September 6-10, 1862.
attack just ten miles from the Queen City. The prompt answer which the "Squirrel Hunters" gave the call and the improved fortifications surrounding the city convinced Halstead that the enemy would not succeed, but he still called for more volunteers. By this time he not only wanted to save Cincinnati, but he also wanted to inflict a damaging blow to the invading army. On the twelfth the Confederate army was "almost within rifle cannon range of the City," Halstead reported, but it commenced an almost immediate retreat. Actually only a few companies out of Smith's army had advanced close to Cincinnati and these only to cover the retreat of the main force. Thus on the thirteenth Halstead predicted that the "state of siege" would soon be over, and congratulated the Cincinnatians on the record they made in defending their city.

Even after the withdraw of the Southern army martial law was retained throughout most of the month of September, and until the twenty-fourth all business was suspended at four o'clock for daily drills. As the regular drilling of every able bodied male in the city had been one of Halstead's demands he was quite pleased, and claimed that the orders placed the city in shape to ward off any future attack.

The final panic came in July, 1863, and can not really be termed a serious invasion threat. Once again, as in the previous July, it involved a raid by Colonel John Morgan. The raid was of slight military importance, but it did give Southern Ohio its only taste of the war. Martial law was proclaimed as Morgan with a force of 2,460 men crossed the

---

46 Ibid., September 13, 1862.
47 Ibid., September 24, 1862.
Ohio River into Indiana and blazed a crescent shaped trail across the southern part of Indiana and Ohio. The Commercial claimed that Morgan had a force of nearly 5,000 men and again called upon the citizens of the Queen City to help intercept and destroy him. While even an army of 5,000 men would not have been able to take Cincinnati, the fact that he was in Ohio, and less than a day's ride from the city frightened many people.

The raiders were soon pursued by the federal cavalry. After Morgan's group had inflicted damages of over half a million dollars to Ohio's citizens, the leader was captured on July 26. Halstead said the raid had caused little more damage than would have been done by a well-organized band of horse-thieves, and in the long run he felt a positive good might result. The fact that Morgan was able to cross the whole state was proof to him of the lack of preparedness of the local militias. The raid he said had called to people's attention that they were in a state of war and had convinced many that every township should have a company of well-armed and well-drilled militia ready for instant action.

In all of the emergencies martial law or its threat brought with it military censorship of the newspapers of Cincinnati. Halstead did not complain of the censorship as he had done earlier in Washington. As the news items and the editorials in the local papers reveal, the military officials were extremely lax in their control. Moreover, by the summer of 1862, Halstead had learned the importance of self censorship. Thus,

48 Ibid., July 13, 1863.

49 Roseboom and Weisenburger, A History of Ohio, 194-195.

50 Commercial, July 16, 1863.
while the Commercial gave as complete a picture as possible of the posi-
tion of the enemy and its probable strategy and told of local plans for
defense, it never gave details of these designs, nor told of movements of
the Union army. Time after time an editorial would end, "... for the
obvious reason that publication of the state of our defenses would be far
more interesting to enemies than to friends ... ." or "The publica-
tion of details of the military preparations made in this quarter would
be improper, and we only give such points as are requisite for the pub-
lic information." From the outbreak of the fighting Halstead and the Commercial sup-
ported the war and the Union completely. As we have seen, this did not
mean blind support for party. Halstead reserved the right to criticize
both friend and foe. His only loyalty was to what was best for the war
effort and what would save the Union. Allegiance to these two principles
brought him into conflict with many in Ohio, but particularly with Cle-
ment Vallandigham, a Democratic Congressman from Dayton, and the Cincin-
nati Enquirer, a Democratic newspaper and the Commercial's most serious
rival. The "Peace Democratic" position which Vallandigham and the En-
quifer upheld naturally conflicted with Halstead's uncompromising support
of the Union. Thus, as early as July, 1861, Halstead called Vallandigham
and the editor of the Enquirer "semi-secesh," and began a course of almost
daily abuse directed against the Dayton Congressman and the entire staff
of the Enquirer.

Halstead did not dislike all Democratic newspapers, though he said

51 Ibid., September 5, 1862.
52 Ibid., July 13, 1863.
the dissolution of that party would best promote the general welfare of the country. He just disliked the "pitiful, whining, sneaking, snarling" of the Enquirer. Halstead constantly complained that the Enquirer was doing serious injury to the national cause. Its daily manifestations of sympathy with the South were calculated, he declared, to encourage that section to carry on the war and to cause trouble in Kentucky. Whenever there was a rumor afloat of a disaster to the Union armies, and whenever politicians "whose tongues are uttering . . . treason" made a statement, he claimed the Enquirer could be counted upon to spread the sensational exaggerations all over the paper. The effect of this type of editing, Halstead thundered, was to deceive the South with the impression that the great masses of northern people were not loyal to the Union. Nothing could be farther from the truth as there was an "inexorable resolution to wipe out in blood the insolence of the rebels."54

Halstead could not understand why the Federal authorities allowed the Enquirer, an "organ of the traitors . . . the border guerrilla sheet, the comforter of assassins, the solace of horse thieves, the favorite of house burners," to be published. He thought it would be suppressed at once by the military if it was published on the other side of the Ohio River. The encouragement it gave to the enemy, he ominously concluded, meant that the war would be prolonged, and that more young men fighting under the Union's flag would be murdered.55

Part of Halstead's criticism of the Enquirer was a result of that

53 Ibid., July 11, 1861.
54 Ibid., July 16, 1861.
55 Ibid., July 31, 1862.
newspaper's support of the Peace Democrats and Vallandigham in particular. The Peace Democrats, or Copperheads as they were soon called—Halstead said they were venomous and crawling creatures who were "sticking their heads out of their holes, and darting their forked tongues as if they would like to bite"—felt that a peaceful solution might be found to end the conflict between the two sections. The Copperheads insisted that the use of force for the preservation of the Union was both unconstititutional and futile. They argued that only a "Union of hearts and hands" could endure. Largely of Irish-American or German-American heritage, or transplanted southerners on the lower rungs of the economic ladder, they represented a conservative force that feared the competition from free Negro labor.

Halstead said the question was only one of peace or the preservation of the Union. Between the two, he claimed there was no compromise. According to the Cincinnati editor, Vallandigham, with his concern over the shedding of blood between brothers, was a hypocrite. Where was he, Halstead asked, when the secessionists were seizing United States forts, robbing United States arsenals, or firing on Fort Sumter? At times when the Union was in danger and its loyal supporters were being killed Halstead found him "exceedingly calm and philosophic." It was only when the nation had assumed an attitude of self-defense and he could see that the demands of justice were to be executed that Vallandigham became

56 Ibid., July 13, 1861.

excited. "The blood of the innocent victim didn't disturb [him], but the hanging of the criminal was frightful."  

Halstead was particularly upset when he discovered that under the influence of men like Vallandigham and the publishers of the Enquirer, the Peace Democrats were working in Cincinnati to stir up dissatisfaction with the war and to keep young men from volunteering for the army. One of the arguments they used was that it was a "nigger war," and that a white man from the North should not become involved. Halstead had insisted from the first that the question of slavery was secondary to that of the preservation of the Union. While he was an abolitionist, and did believe the war would result in the crushing of the institution of slavery, the real objective of the war for him was to vindicate the laws of the nation. In fact, in many editorials he was as critical of what he called the "rabid anti-slavery agitators" as he was of the Copperheads. He claimed that the anti-slavery men's criticism of the administration often furnished the Copperheads their best material in their war against the government. Thus, he emphatically denied the rumor that the Copperheads started in Cincinnati that the Commercial used no one but Negroes in its press room. It was, he declared, a "traitorous lie" to inflame the prejudices of the ignorant and to aid the Southern Confederacy. Such claims he insisted would cause distrust and dissatisfaction in the minds of the soldiers and would have to be stopped. The country could not overlook the enemies in its midst if it hoped to win the war against the

---

58 Commercial, July 14, 1861.
59 Ibid., October 10, 1863.
60 Ibid., June 3, 1863.
enemy's armies. The truth, he wrote, was that the Commercial hired only "white men and women and boys" for its press-room. 61

As the time for the fall elections of 1862 approached, Halstead became more and more convinced that the real danger was not, as he said, "That the armies of the Union will fall in a fair fight," but that the internal dissensions raised by such demagogues as Vallandigham would shatter the confidence of the people in their government. Democratic criticism of the administration in such times of peril was to him a blunder and while not necessarily treason, it was a mistake that had all the consequences of a crime. 62 He did not feel that all the nominees of the Union party were the best possible men for the jobs, but he said they were pledged to support the administration and to preserve the Union, and as such deserved the support of all loyal citizens. The Democratic nominees, though he admitted some were personally fine men, were dedicated to the embarrassment of the administration, and as such would if elected give comfort to the enemy. 63 The campaign which the Commercial waged most vehemently in the fall of 1862 was for the defeat of Vallandigham's reelection to Congress. Vallandigham's district was gerrymandered by the state legislature to include the overwhelmingly Republican Warren County. It was thus assumed that he would be defeated, but the Democrats claimed it was possible only by these rather shoddy methods. To overcome this criticism, Halstead called for his defeat in the old district as well as the

61 Ibid., August 5, 1862.
62 Ibid., September 27, 1862.
63 Ibid., October 4, 1862.
reorganized one. If he could not be beaten, Halstead said, the disgrace would be "black, burning, and infinitely shameful." 64

Vallandigham was defeated, but the over all result, both in Ohio and in the country in general, was a defeat for the Union Party. George Pendleton, the Democratic Congressman from Cincinnati's first district, was re-elected even though Halstead had editorialized that Pendleton invariably voted with Vallandigham and that his speeches were "tinctured with a tender feeling towards the rebel in arms." 65 Halstead found many reasons to explain the action of the American people at the polls. He felt that many had voted for the Democrats with the mistaken idea that their victory would in some way bring the war to an end. To him it was a mistaken idea because the war could only end with the defeat of one side or the other. Many others, he claimed, had been dissatisfied with the administration's conduct of the war and had voted Democratic as a protest. Others, he said, were influenced by the race prejudice which the Democrats had inflamed during the campaign. Finally, he said that many thousands of soldiers who would have supported the Union ticket were in the field and unable to vote. 66

While Halstead insisted that the country's best hope was still found with the Union party and the existing administration, he did believe that much of the criticism of the administration's war effort was valid.

He said that the people were restless under the prospect of an indefinite prolongation of the war, of a system where victories were

---

64 Ibid., October 14, 1862.
65 Ibid., October 6, 1862.
66 Ibid., October 16, 1862.
rarely followed up, of battles without decisive results, and of months of inaction on the part of large segments of the army. He admitted that many factors and individuals were to blame for this situation, but he said that under the American political system the administration must take the responsibility when the situation was bad if it was to receive the credit when that was due.  

Vallandigham, who felt that his defeat, especially at a time when so many of his party had been elected, was particularly unfair, became even more defiant in his speeches. He continually urged peace between the two sections by conciliation and bitterly denounced what he called the unconstitutional measures of the Lincoln administration. Halstead, as earlier stated, felt that his utterances were treasonable, and General Burnside, commander of the Department of Ohio, obviously agreed with the editor. In General Order No. 38, Burnside announced his intention to arrest anyone who declared his sympathy for the enemy. In a speech at Mt. Vernon, Vallandigham not only denounced the war as he often had before, but also attacked General Order No. 38, declaring his authority was "General Orders No. 1—the Constitution." Burnside had him placed under arrest and after a trial by a military commission whose authority Vallandigham refused to recognize, the former Congressman was sentenced to prison for the duration of the war. The trial and conviction made him a martyr to the Peace Democratic cause and increased his popularity in Ohio immensely. Lincoln realized that Burnside had blundered, but felt that since the action had been taken he must uphold the military's decision. He finally decided to change the sentence to exile to the

---

67Ibid., October 21, 1862.
Confederacy. Vallandigham was consequently sent to Tennessee from where he later went to Canada. The Democratic convention, which met in June of 1863, in a reaction against what was considered the unconstitutional manner of Vallandigham's trial and sentence, nominated him as their candidate for governor of Ohio. 68

Halstead completely approved of Vallandigham's arrest and conviction. It was, he said, "high time that the loyal sentiment of the people of the Northwest was making itself felt." 69 Thus when the Democratic party made its gubernatorial nomination he declared that the issue between the two parties was squarely joined and that the people of Ohio would not allow the calamity of Vallandigham's election to take place. 70 Halstead's choice for the Union party's nomination was John Brough, a former Democratic State Auditor who had retired from politics to take over the presidency of a railroad. The Commercial published a strong Union speech which Brough delivered at Marietta and in an editorial declared that "the coming man has arrived." Brough's former support of the Democratic party, his vigor in upholding the Union cause, and the enthusiasm which the Marietta speech inspired all over the state convinced Halstead that he had found the candidate who would and could win in November. 71 Brough's support spread rapidly, and he was nominated on the first ballot by the Union convention.

68 Roseboom and Weisenburger, A History of Ohio, 192.
69 Commercial, February 18, 1863.
70 Ibid., June 12, 1863.
71 Ibid., June 13, 1863.
During the campaign Halstead attempted through his Commercial editorials to emphasize the traitorous activities and the fanaticism of the Democratic candidate. The old issue of Vallandigham's sympathies for the South was again raised, and Halstead declared that Ohio was on trial. Should Vallandigham win, the editor prophesied that the victory would be hailed by southern rebels, British Tories, French interventionists and northern traitors—by all the enemies of America—as their victory. It would, his gloomy prediction concluded, "[Presage] the irretrievable downfall of the Union."\(^72\) It was in the midst of the campaign that Halstead first recognized that perhaps General Burnside's action in arresting the Democratic candidate had been a mistake. He thought that Vallandigham was a much more imposing person in exile than he would have been campaigning in the state. Brough's majority might be increased many thousands, he said, if Vallandigham was in Ohio on the stump. Moreover, he claimed that the Democrats realized this also and refused to accept the liberal terms which Lincoln imposed for removing the obstacles in the way of his return.\(^73\) These terms were that the committee petitioning the President for his return agree to support the war. This they refused to do.

As election day approached Halstead's editorials against the Democratic candidate became increasingly more vehement. His election it was declared would seal the doom of the Union and spark civil war in Ohio.\(^74\) Personally he was called a traitor, an assassin, and a "malignant and

\(^{72}\)Ibid., August 26, 1863.

\(^{73}\)Ibid., August 8, 1863.

\(^{74}\)Ibid., September 30, 1863.
atrocious wretch." The greatest disgrace the editor declared, was that one single Ohio voter might cast his ballot for the southern sympathizer. On election day, after a campaign marked by its viciousness, Halstead declared that Vallandigham would be defeated, but by now he felt his defeat was not enough. Now he demanded the people of Ohio give Brough at least a 100,000 majority, a majority that would inspire the American people from Maine to California and that would show the Union armies that the people of Ohio were with them.

Thus it was with great jubilation that Halstead announced Brough's victory. Brough received over a 100,000 majority, and the relieved editor said it proved that Ohio was wholeheartedly in support of the Union. This victory, he declared, would, by showing the South that the North was united, have the effect of proving the absolute hopelessness of the rebellion and shorten the war. The result had probably really been determined by the Union victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg which proved that the North was capable of military successes. With its defeat in the election, Copperheadism was no longer a serious threat to the Union. Vallandigham also lost much of his influence in the Democratic party and when he illegally returned before the end of the war the government, rather than give him added publicity and notoriety, chose to ignore his presence.

Halstead again traveled to Washington for the December 1, 1862 opening of Congress. Arriving a few days early, he was the guest of Senator Pomeroy at a Thanksgiving dinner for Negroes who had escaped to

---

75 Ibid., August 5, and October 10, 1863.
76 Ibid., October 13, 1863.
77 Ibid., October 14, 1863.
Washington from the South. Among the other guests was Harriet Beecher Stowe. Halstead found Washington changed from his last visit. The capitol dome was ornamented with a large crane, but he said it finally showed signs that it would eventually be completed. The crowds were as great as they had been here on his first wartime visit, but he missed the old faces. He thought that the old stock had seemingly perished, both at social gatherings, on the streets, and in Congress. Those leaders of old Washington society, so often southern in sympathy, were nowhere in evidence, but life went on without them.

As on his earlier visit, Halstead secured a pass and rode out to inspect the fortifications around the city. He found every eminence for miles around crowned with a fort. Acres of underbrush had been cleared and the fences all removed. What had only two years before been rich farm land was now a vast waste dotted by the encampments and forts. The forts were connected by long lines of rifle pits with occasional placements of batteries of siege guns. From what he saw, Halstead concluded that Washington was reasonably safe. He thus wondered why it was necessary to retain such large numbers of troops for defense when they could obviously be used to better advantage, as he queried, "Why not use [them] to take Richmond?"

This was a time when northern editors were urging the government to march on the Confederate capital, and Halstead was no exception. All the editors and reporters had their plans as to how Richmond would be

78 Ibid., December 2, 1862.
79 Ibid., December 4, 1862.
80 Ibid., December 13, 1862.
taken, and again Halstead was no exception. He claimed that there was only one sensible way of taking the rebel city, and that was to use the Union's command of water transportation in Virginia to transport the northern armies to the closest point possible, and then to march on the city. He claimed the reason that Richmond had not already fallen was that the nation did not have a man at the head of its military affairs who was quick to take responsibility, nor who could promptly and competently dispatch executive business.

After much difficulty, Halstead was able to secure passes to join the Army of the Potomac. He had heard rumors of approaching action and his newspaperman's instincts demanded that he be where he could get the best story. When General McClellan was relieved of command of the Army of the Potomac and General Ambrose Burnside appointed as his successor, Halstead had doubts as to whether the situation had been improved, but he defended the President's action. Democratic newspapers complained that Lincoln had succumbed to radical antislavery pressure in his removal of the conservative McClellan, but Halstead said that this had not been the case. The President wanted a man of action, and Halstead said he hoped such a commander would be found in Burnside. When it looked like the long awaited march on Richmond might come about the Cincinnati editor planned to be with the new commander's army.

He wrote rather bitterly that he had spent two days getting the passes, but that they stayed folded in his pocket from the time he left

81 Ibid., December 4, 1862.
82 Ibid., December 11, 1862.
83 Ibid., November 12, 1862.
the War Department in Washington until he reached General Burnside's tent with the army in Virginia. Traveling by boat from Washington to Acquia Creek, a sixty mile journey, then on a military train for the rest of the trip, Halstead reached the army on December 13. On the boat from Washington to Acquia Landing he learned that a reporter friend of his was with the army, and since he had few supplies or friends at the camp, he decided to make his way to his friend. He found the encampment as confusing as a large city, but after trudging through deep mud long into the night he found the right tent, but not his friend. He was made welcome, but was told that the southern armies would begin their bombardments in the morning, and that the Union army was determined to force the passage of the Rappahannock the next day. Warned of the dangers, he was told he might stay if he wished. The next morning, an hour before dawn, operations commenced. The troops, taking up their haversacks and cartridges fell in at the call of the bugle to march silently off to the Battle of Fredericksburg.

Halstead was not a trained military reporter, but he quickly realized that the Battle of Fredericksburg was a "blunder and disaster," a judgment with which later historians would agree. Randall calls it one of the "colossal blunders of the War." In a signed editorial, one of the few in all the files of the Commercial, which he telegraphed from Washington, Halstead said the battle was hopeless from the beginning.

The rebels commanded a formidable natural position, had a large army,

84 William Halstead MS., 98.
85 Commercial, December 18, 1862.
86 J. G. Randall, Civil War and Reconstruction, 312.
and were supplied with well placed artillery. The whole situation, he concluded, "was an enormous trap, and the Union army had to withdraw at once or worse would yet come." Ohio regiments suffered heavily. Some of Halstead's friends were among the casualties and he experienced for the first time a sense of guilt for not being in the ranks with them, instead of merely looking on from a semisheltered location with a pair of field-glasses. Potter, a semi-invalid by this time, had prevailed upon him not to enlist for military service, saying that the Commercial needed him, and that as an effective writer, he could do more for the Union with his pen than with a gun. A disheartened Halstead returned to Cincinnati after the battle. He was still determined that the North must be victorious, but his private confidence in the Lincoln administration and the ability of the Union army, was greatly shaken. Thus, when the news of General Burnside's resignation of the command of the Army of the Potomac reached Cincinnati, Halstead commented that this was certainly good news. Burnside's successor, General Hooker, was declared to be a fighting man who could restore the confidence of the army.

Halstead supported the Union cause and the administration from the time of Fort Sumter. From more than ample evidence it can be shown that he felt Lincoln was a poor President and that his management of the war was not the best, but the editor's desire to show an undivided front to the South restrained his editorial criticism of the President. As Halstead said, "It did not seem to me there was any other way of going on.

87Commercial, December 17, 1862.
88William L. Halstead MS., 100.
89Commercial, January 27, 1863.
If the country was gone, why chaos and black night would come." It is unfair to say, as one history of Cincinnati does, that the Commercial far outdid the Enquirer in vilifying Lincoln or that Halstead was a badly balanced, pugnacious firebrand who allowed his dislike of Lincoln to color his editorials. The Commercial's columns often contained criticism of the administration, and this criticism was often unfair, but it was no worse than the criticism of many Republican papers of the era. It was not in the Commercial that Halstead gave his true impressions of the wartime President, but in his private correspondence. Thus the quotation, "There could not be a more inefficient man President of the United States than Abraham Lincoln ... the poor, silly president sucks flattery as a pig sucks milk," which is used to justify the claim that the Commercial was worse than the Enquirer in its criticism came from Halstead's private correspondence. It would never have been published as his editorial opinion.

Halstead believed that Chase would have made a better President, and he believed that he was the strongest member in the Lincoln cabinet. Chase encouraged Halstead in this belief, and the correspondence between the two Cincinnati men was most unflattering as to Lincoln's abilities. Chase related his opinions on the administration to many men in the North. He complained that it was next to impossible for him to maintain the public credit in face of what he called the inadequate administration. He said Lincoln appointed unfit men to high command, and this, plus his

---

90 Murat Halstead, "Weakness of Journalism," Halstead MSS.

91 Harlow, The Serene Cincinnatian, 230. The quotation is from one of Halstead's letters to Congressman Day. Day, Man on the Hill Top, 247.
unwillingness to heed Chase's advice, had prolonged the war by years. To Halstead he complained that he had no voice in the management of the war. The three people most responsible for its management—the President, the Commanding General, and the Secretary of War—all displayed the greatest differences in temperament, wishes, and intellectual characteristics which he claimed made it unreasonable to expect it to be conducted in a wiser manner.

With such criticism coming from a high ranking member of the cabinet, it was no wonder that Halstead's private opinion of the President was so low. Chase was Halstead's principal source of Washington information. Moreover, Halstead considered himself a close friend of the Secretary's and he admired him greatly. Thus the aristocratic, cultivated, and ambitious Chase, who was doubtlessly envious of Lincoln, convinced Halstead of the President's inferiority and his basic inability to cope with the problems of the war. Halstead's opinions can be best seen in a group of letters which he wrote Timothy E. Day, a Cincinnati Congressman during the first years of the war. In their harsh and unrestrained manner, they show how contemptuous Halstead was of the President. In one he said:

Lincoln is simply of no account. He is a little in the way, that's all. He don't [sic] add anything to the strength of the Government—not a thing. He is very busy with trifles, and lets everybody do as they please. He is opposed to stealing, but can't see the stealing that is done. I use the wildest

---

92 Donnal Smith, Chase and Civil War Politics, 50-51.
93 Chase to Halstead, September 21, 1862, Robert B. Warden, An Account of the Private Life and Public Services of Salmon P. Chase, 549.
94 William L. Halstead MS., 97.
phrase when I say he is a weak, a miserably weak man; the wife is a fool—the laughing stock of the town, and her vulgarity only the more conspicuous in consequence to her fine carriage and horses and servants in livery and fine dresses, and her damnable airs . . . .95

The author of the biography of Day, in which these letters are printed, said that Halstead wrote his comments privately—and with "hasty rashness," and that he did not give them to the press. Nonetheless, she says the scorn which the letters show must have made Halstead's press treatment of Lincoln less than fair.96 This may, to a certain extent, have been true. When he wrote of Lincoln's first message to Congress he was more snippy than critical, as he commented, "As for its style—enough is said when we observe that Mr. Lincoln certainly wrote it himself," or "while it is plain, that an honest man whose intentions are excellent, is the occupant of the Presidential chair, it is equally clear that he brings to the aid of the country no such thing as first rate executive ability."97 While Halstead probably never really appreciated Lincoln's abilities until after his assassination, the harping tenor of the early editorials did not continue. The closest to personal criticism of the President that Halstead reached was an editorial about a "gay and festive" White House party given by the Lincolns during the war. He claimed in the editorial that the plain people disapproved of the costly and gaudy demonstration that Mrs. Lincoln made of her party and said that when thousands of brave men were out dying for their country it was deplorably wrong to have the White House connected with feasting and dancing.

95Halstead to Day, June 8, 1861, Day, Man on the Hill Top, 243.
96Ibid., 240.
97Commercial, December 4, 1861.
Mrs. Lincoln herself, he said, would be better off employed in promoting the comfort of the sick soldiers than in "driving out in her fine carriage and presiding at ostentatious carousals." It was unfortunate, Halstead declared, that Mrs. Lincoln has "so poor an understanding of the true dignity of her position." Several important journalists, Halstead among them, had received letters from her dealing with political matters. Thus, part of Halstead's dislike may have been from what he thought was her meddling in the nation's political life.

Halstead's strongest criticism was directed at the activities of various members of the cabinet. Much of this information of course came from Chase, of whom he was never critical, and it can be assumed that his editorial pronouncements against such cabinet members as Simon Cameron and Gideon Welles expressed Chase's opinions. The official and personal relations between Chase and Lincoln were severely strained during the latter part of 1863 and early 1864. Many people by this time felt that Chase had been guilty of many things unworthy of a man of his position. Even though Chase had felt forced to resign from the cabinet, when Chief Justice Roger Taney died in October of 1864, Halstead and many other Ohioans still called upon Lincoln to appoint the former Secretary to the vacancy. Halstead argued that in the matter of the appointment it did not matter that the President and Chase were personally uncongenial. He said that the people wanted Chase, and that since Lincoln had a higher duty than to just award friends and punish enemies, he was sure Chase would

---


100 William Henry Smith MSS., vol. 43, 15. The Ohio Historical Society.
get the appointment. This was particularly true, he felt, because Chase was the only one talked about for the position who was qualified.\textsuperscript{101} As Lincoln was a good politician and realized that it might be well to have Chase as far removed from political life as possible, he yielded to the onslaught from the Ohioans and made the appointment.\textsuperscript{102}

As the war progressed, Halstead's personal and private criticism of the President became less and less frequent. He was a supporter of Lincoln's nomination for a second term and once again used the full weight of the \textit{Commercial} to help in his re-election. From the beginning of the campaign he felt Lincoln's victory was assured, but he called for more than just a victory. Halstead felt that as in the case of the 1863 state elections, the presidential election had to serve as a symbol of American loyalty to the government and leaders. He declared that the election had to prove to America's enemies, whether foreign or domestic, that the people would stand by the Union at all costs and hazards until once again the constitution's authority was recognized throughout all the land.\textsuperscript{103} This position was really not a change from Halstead's earlier attempts to gain public support for the administration, but throughout 1864, in editorials and letters, a definite softening of his personal hostility to Lincoln and his government may be seen. During the early months of the year there was less of a critical nature in the \textit{Commercial} about the administration and the army, and more about Congress and Congressional interference in the conduct of the war. In one editorial

\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Commercial}, December 2, 1864.

\textsuperscript{102} Smith, \textit{Chase and Civil War Politics}, 159.

\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Commercial}, November 8, 1864.
Halstead asked the Congressmen on the Committee on the Conduct of the War if they did not know they were impairing the discipline of the army, and perhaps endangering its very existence? Lincoln's post-election speeches were termed "magnanimous in sentiment" and praised for their conciliatory tone. The inaugural message was called a "sensible, quaint, brief, document, expressing deep religious feeling as well as patriotic sentiments." With the second inaugural, Halstead felt there was now additional cause for rejoicing in Lincoln's good health, and reason to wish for his continual occupancy of the presidential chair. While he praised Andrew Johnson's wartime record and said that he deserved the respect of all loyal citizens, he could not help but think the country had made a mistake in electing him Vice President. Halstead claimed Johnson lacked any sense of propriety, and said his drunken condition at the inaugural was in the worst taste. In a later editorial Halstead was also solicitous of the life and comfort of the President and suggested that he take refuge with one of the armies until the horde of office-seekers had cleared out from the Washington streets.

It was a jubilant Halstead that was able to write the editorial in April of 1865 entitled, "The Surrender of Lee!" For once, it looked as if the nation would again be able to enjoy a period of peace and prosperity. The job for the country, he said, was now to clear away the ruins of

104 Ibid., March 25, 1864.
105 Ibid., November 12, 1864.
106 Ibid., March 6, 1865.
107 Ibid., March 9, 1865.
108 Ibid., March 31, 1865.
the war and to rebuild, enlarge, and strengthen the country. But in
the midst of the joy over the southern surrender came the word of Lin-
coln's assassination. No longer did Halstead feel the contempt for the
President that he had at the beginning of the war. Now he could write
that in all the world, no life had proved so valuable to the people as
Lincoln's. He said that the President had matured under his great res-
ponsibilities and with his new maturity, good sense, and kindness of
heart, had been the hope of the nation.

Many people blamed the critics of Lincoln for inflaming passions
and ultimately causing his death. Halstead felt that this was wrong, but
he also felt that the story of Lincoln could teach the country's politi-
cians and journalists a great lesson. This lesson was that they should
weigh their words more carefully before giving them publicity. He ex-
plained:

History will decide our capacity for self government more
by the measure of restraint we place upon our passions in the
consideration of political questions and acts, than by any
event affecting the lives and fortunes of individuals and par-
ties. We shall but demonstrate our ability to govern our-
selves, and any provocation which moves men from their balance,
and incites them to use unmeasured language and perform unlaw-
ful acts, is to be deprecated.

Years later, at the first Ohio Lincoln Day Banquet at Columbus
in 1885, Halstead, in recalling the war years, said that his love and ad-
miration for Chase had blinded him to the "serious greatness" of Lincoln.
When he looked back on the Lincoln administration he found that many of

109 Ibid., April 10, 1865.
110 Ibid., April 15, 1865.
111 Ibid., April 22, 1865.
the differences between the two men were a result of their vastly different personalities. Chase said he was the more brilliant—and the more rash, but Lincoln the less emotional and the more patient. In summary he quoted Chase who had said, "I do not know but he was wiser than all of us."
CHAPTER IV

HALSTEAD AND PRESIDENT JOHNSON

Lincoln's death caused Halstead to fear for the safety of the nation. He had little confidence in Johnson's ability to administer the office of president in such troubled times. Johnson had gained a reputation as a tireless worker, and even his enemies had to admit his honesty and genuine patriotism. In 1861 he was the only Southern Senator to remain loyal to the Union and later he had been an able and efficient war governor in Tennessee. Nonetheless, Halstead had received and published reports of his "drunkenness" at the inaugural and of his general crudeness. Yet, as a firm supporter of the Union Halstead was willing to withhold editorial judgment and give Johnson a chance to prove himself in office.

For about a month after Lincoln's assassination, Johnson's speeches were definitely vindictive and radical in tone, but his "radical period" was only a passing phase. After Johnson had settled down to the onerous duties of the presidency, his fundamental principles on reconstruction became essentially those that Lincoln had followed. Johnson felt that the avowed purpose of the war was to save the Union rather than extend northern domination over the South. The cardinal tenet upon which he based his policy of restoration was the preservation of the Union. As early as 1861 he had joined Congressman John J. Crittenden in introducing resolutions in Congress which called for the war to be restricted to the defense of the

1Howard K. Beale, The Critical Year, 23.
Constitution and the Union. With this principle before him he realized that to deal with the people of the South in a spirit of revenge not only was unjust, but also would make it impossible to remold a feeling of national unity and solidarity. A strong states' rights man himself, Johnson feared the concentration of too much power in the hands of a few men in Washington. Consequently, in deciding upon an actual plan for bringing the former Confederate states back into a normal relationship with the rest of the Union he decided to restore the states through methods as close as possible to those of normal state-making, rather than through the system of military rule which the radicals desired.

Halstead was glad he had withheld his criticism of the new President's abilities, for he found that on reconstruction policy he was in almost complete agreement with him. Like Johnson, Halstead's main concern through the years of the war had been the preservation of the Union. Now that the Northern armies had been victorious he was for reestablishing normal relations between the sections as soon as possible. Basically a conservative, he too feared the consequences of national domination over the rights of states. As a result, Halstead gave Johnson his complete editorial support throughout 1865 and until the early summer of the next year.

If Halstead found himself in the unusual position of agreeing with the President, there were still many in the country who did not.

---

2 Eric L. McKitrick, *Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction*, 89.
4 *Commercial*, July 17, October 5, 16, December 8, 21, 1865, March 1, 30, 1866.
Gaining support in the North in this period were the much more vindictive policies of such men as Charles Sumner, Thaddeus Stevens, and Benjamin Wade. These Radicals viewed Johnson's moderate policy with alarm. If it should be placed in effect, they claimed, the result of the war would be overturned. Moreover, a South reconstructed along the lines Johnson proposed and without Negro suffrage was sure to vote Democratic. Thus, the specter of a rejuvenated Democratic party that could overthrow the Union party and its wartime legislation haunted the radicals. The first months of Johnson's administration had encouraged the radicals. Many thought they saw the assassination of Lincoln as a political blessing that removed a moderate and placed an ally in the chief magistrate's chair. When they realized their mistake, their wrath knew few bounds.

Halstead wished to keep the Democrats out of office, but he disliked the extreme position of the radicals. What he proposed was support of Johnson's policies, but at the same time he called for a determined effort to show the Southern people that while the North would deal generously with them, they were expected to do away with the causes of secession, to carry out the Emancipation Proclamation by the necessary state legislation, and to acknowledge the supremacy of the Federal government. This determination could be shown, he argued, if the people of the North voted emphatically for the Union party in every election. Leniency and determination were the two principal planks in his southern platform. While he supported abolition and always upheld Negro rights, he took Johnson's side against the radicals on the question of forcing Negro

5 Thomas F. Woodley, Thaddeus Stevens, 423-428.
6 Commercial, October 5, 1865.
suffrage on the South. Not only did he feel that such a policy would hinder the progress of reunion, but he also argued that all the evidence showed the freedman was unprepared for the obligations of complete citizenship. He claimed that all the men who had been in the South and had had close contacts with the former slaves—the soldiers, the newspaper correspondents, and other civilians—were unanimous in the conclusion that conferring the suffrage on them at the present time would be pure folly. Their literacy and almost total lack of political awareness would, he declared, make them pawns in the hands of forceful politicians. 7

The radical proposal for military control of the Southern states until their complete restoration also drew Halstead's disapproval. He likened this position to the dog of the fable, who, not content with the meat in his mouth, snapped at the reflection in the water and not only failed to gain anything, but lost what he had. He said that the continuation of a provost marshal system backed up by military garrisons throughout the former rebel states would be a mistake for two reasons: first, it would keep the North on a continuing wartime footing and as a consequence the national debt would continue to mount; and second, it would assure a Democratic victory at the polls as the people were tired of the war and wanted the soldiers to come home. Halstead asserted that if the radicals would just allow Johnson to put his policy into effect the two indispensable conditions of restoration—the recognition of the freedom of all men and the inviolable integrity of the national territory—would be accomplished, the army could be mustered out, and the expenditures of a wartime economy could be stopped. 8

7 Ibid., August 4, 1865.
8 Commercial, October 16, 1865.
Congress was not in session in April when Johnson took office and was not scheduled to reconvene until December. As the radical Congressional leadership was hostile to his programs, Johnson wanted to present Congress with a fait accompli when it convened. The whole process of remaking the states had gone forward under the President's guidance during the summer and autumn. By December all of the seceded states except Texas had fulfilled the Presidential requirements and had sent representatives and senators to Washington to take their seats. Nonetheless, the radicals were able to thwart the President's plans because of their control of the Union Party caucus. When the question of seating the new members came before Congress, it was decided to refuse them places until a joint fifteen man committee chaired by Thaddeus Stevens could investigate the situation in the South.

In his message to Congress on December 6, Johnson said his policy had been based on the assumption that the greatness of the American political system was a result of the relation of the federal government to the states. For the preservation of the government, he said, the rights of the states were essential. His program had been based on a policy of returning the Southern states to a normal relationship with the Federal government as quickly as possible. Halstead praised this message and said that only the extremists could object to Presidential reconstruction. The sensible, steadfast people, he claimed, approved of the President's message and if there could be a popular vote on his program, would overwhelmingly approve it. The reason, he asserted, for the objections to

9 McKitrick, Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction, 253-260.

10 Ramball, The Civil War and Reconstruction, 708.
the Johnson program, was that it was rational and well thought out, and did not call for slaughters and frequent hangings. It offended that "class of fanatics who not having seen any blood shed during the war, are anxious to have it done now, when and where they can look on in safety." \(^{11}\)

Before Congress met, Grant had made a tour of the South and reported to Johnson on conditions in that section. In his report he concluded that the people of the South had not only accepted the results of the war, but that they were anxious to return to self-government within the Union. \(^{12}\) Halstead asserted that this report vindicated Johnson's policy:

The upright firmness of the President, in maintaining his authority over the disturbed section of the country, and his happy moderation, tempering justice with mercy, putting aside his own animosities, and rising to the dignity becoming the chief magistrate of the Republic in a time so momentous, has given him the sympathies, and will command the suffrages of the major part of the manhood of the Nation. \(^{13}\)

The President's vetoes of the extension of the Freedman's Bureau and the Civil Rights Bill prompted further radical criticism and gained the radicals more support in the North. Halstead attempted to stem the popular tide that was rising against Johnson by pointing out that Presidential reconstruction was responsible for disbanding the armies, cutting down national expenses, and conciliating the southerners by acts of kindness. The President's program, according to the editor, was a program of peace, which was not the case with the program of Sumner and

---

\(^{11}\) Commercial, December 8, 1865.

\(^{12}\) Beale, The Critical Year, 160-162.

\(^{13}\) Commercial, December 21, 1865.
Stevens. He called the argument that Johnson had attempted to introduce rebels into Congress a "malignant lie." The President, he said, would only admit representatives "as are, in fact, loyal men, giving satisfactory evidence of this ... ." When Congress received the vetoed Civil Rights Bill Halstead warned it of the approaching elections and the effect their action would have on the electors. He cautioned that in many quarters in the North much prejudice still existed against Negroes. Many people objected to Negroes owning church pews, sitting with whites in concert halls and theatres, and eating in the same public dining rooms with them. He was sure that any legislation along the lines of the Civil Rights Bill would do more harm than good to the cause of reconstruction. After the passage of the bill over the presidential veto, Halstead urged a halt to any further legislation along these lines. He feared that the extremists in Congress would press their most radical measures after their one victory, thereby causing Johnson to take an injudicious position that would have disastrous consequences for the country. Halstead admitted that Johnson was headstrong, and that the language in which he delivered his veto of the Civil Rights Bill was such that would stir passions, but he claimed that Johnson was not wholly responsible for the poor relations existing between himself and Congress. Much of his combativeness, the editor proclaimed, was provoked by the menacing demeanor of the radicals.

14 Ibid., April 9, 1866.
15 Ibid., July 14, 1866.
16 Commercial, March 30, 1866.
17 Ibid., April 9, 1866.
18 Ibid., July 14, 1866.
The composition of the new Congress that would be elected in the autumn of 1866 began to assume great importance in the minds of the nation's political leaders. If Johnson was unable to capture the offensive and rally conservatives to his position the new Congress might well be under the complete domination of the radicals. Consequently, a national convention of the Union party was called to meet in Philadelphia. The convention, which met in August, was a conservative gathering which included many Democrats. All the states were represented, both North and South. At the opening session, the sentiment of reunion was evident when a delegate from South Carolina entered arm-in-arm with one from Massachusetts. The enthusiasm for Johnson and his policies was great, but, unfortunately, many moderates were absent. Moreover, many moderates and conservative Republicans whom Johnson had counted on to make the convention a success thought it represented a break with Republicanism and refused to join the National Union movement. From the time of the convention, Halstead's ardor for Johnson's administration began to cool. While seemingly maintaining an impartial editorial position, more and more of his editorials began to take on a biting edge.

Illustrative of this change was Halstead's reporting and editorializing concerning Johnson's "Swing-around-the-Circle," an account which is, on the surface, the picture of fairness, but which, underneath, is extremely damning. In September Johnson had decided to go to Chicago for the dedication of Stephen A. Douglas's tomb. This trip permitted him to present his case to the people by making speeches in the various cities

he passed through on the way. In the rough and tumble of Tennessee politics Johnson had held his own as an extemporaneous speaker, but the language of the Tennessee stump was considered undignified in the chief magistrate of the land. "If Mr. Johnson . . . could be prevailed upon to repress his seemingly irresistible desire to make a speech wherever he sees a head, . . . his popularity and party would be the gainers." Later Halstead claimed Johnson "took advantage" of his reception at Cleveland and made a "bitter partisan harangue." The editor claimed that when the crowd began to hiss, Johnson lost his temper and said bitter and harsh things which "dishonored the office he held." While Halstead's editorials were becoming more bitter, he still called upon the people of Cincinnati to treat the President with courtesy when he arrived in their city. He said that even though Johnson had been injudicious in his language and had inflamed partisan animosities when he should have been striving for peace in the Union party, he was still President of the United States and, whatever his shortcomings, entitled to respect from his audience. If someone thought they would be unable to hear his speech in silence, Halstead suggested they stay at home.

Halstead's growing alienation from Johnson, brought on mainly because of the President's increasing Democratic support, caused him to take the position that the trouble over reconstruction was the President's responsibility. He claimed that the outcry made against the Radical Congress in the election campaign was meant to deceive the public. The radicals, he said, no longer controlled Congress. Those in power were Repub-

20. Commercial, September 1, 1866.

21. Ibid., September 5, 1866.

22. Ibid., September 10, 1866.
lican moderates, and their program for reconstruction was a moderate program. The only thing that kept the President from being reconciled with the majority in both Houses of Congress, according to the Cincinnati editor, was his "inherent and perverse obstinacy." As proof for his claims Halstead outlines the radical plan of Stevens and Sumner as one calling for Negro suffrage, denial of the ballot to all citizens who took up arms against the government, and confiscation of the property of those in rebellion. The plan which the moderates were able to push through Congress, the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, Halstead said, did none of these things. The Fourteenth Amendment was completely fair, he declared, because it did not take away the political rights of the masses. Only those former national office holders who had perjured themselves by taking an oath to uphold the Confederate government were denied the right to again hold office under the national government. As for Negro suffrage, the editor claimed the amendment only denied national representation to those citizens who were deemed unready for state representation, while it guaranteed the civil rights of all American citizens. According to Halstead, this was exactly the plan Johnson had proposed a year earlier.

In less than a year, Halstead's editorial support for Johnson had changed to condemnation. When the October congressional elections returned an almost unbroken line of Republicans to Washington, Halstead jubilantly concluded that the Johnson-Democratic coalition was broken and that those who had saved the country from rebellion were standing stead-

23 Commercial, September 26, 1866.
24 Ibid., October 5, 1866.
fast to the principles that had made them victorious in the war.\textsuperscript{25} As for the Democratic party, he felt that it had outlived its usefulness; that it had nothing new to assert or declare, and that it should die.\textsuperscript{26} He said that some Democratic editors were making themselves ridiculous in claiming the radicals had misrepresented Johnson's position on reconstruction and had by other unscrupulous means carried the election. Johnson himself, he asserted, did more in his distasteful electioneering tour to shape the verdict than all the radical orators across the country put together. "No man in the history of American politics ever practiced the art of stinking with such distinguished success as Mr. Johnson."\textsuperscript{27}

As Halstead received reports from Washington of the deepening struggle between the President and Congress, he could only picture dark days for the Republic and ruin for the party which he had supported, almost from its conception. While he placed the blame for the doom he foresaw on the shoulders of Johnson, whom he felt was suspiciously friendly with the Democrats, he could not hold the radicals within the party blameless, as he believed their desire to inflict vindictive punishment upon the South was wrong. Until the summer of 1867 the Commercial's editorials were usually hostile to the President, but the extreme bitterness of the campaign period was missing. Never again was Halstead able to defend Johnson or his policies, but at the same time, he was never able to support those of the radical congressional leadership.

\textsuperscript{25} Commercial, October 10, 1866.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., November 24, 1866.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., January 5, 1867.
ly on the side of the presidency, but his position did not show personal
support for Johnson. Halstead believed the impeachment was political in
nature and defended the institution of the presidency against an unjust
attack. Johnson's continued hostility to radical reconstruction prompted
the congressional leadership to pass a series of laws that limited the
traditional powers of the presidency. One of these laws, which was
passed in March, 1867, was the Tenure of Office Act. By this measure,
the president was prohibited from removing from office governmental of­
ficials who had been appointed by the president with the consent of the
Senate during the term of the president who appointed them, or for one
month after the end of his term, without the approval of the Senate.
Especially designed by Thaddeus Stevens, it was to control and humiliate
Johnson, strip him of the power he might wield through patronage, and,
most specifically, safeguard the position of the Secretary of War, Edwin
Stanton, whose sympathy with the radicals was an open secret. 28

The congressional leadership rendered the President virtually
powerless with acts such as this, but it was still not satisfied. In
the local elections of 1867 the Democrats were victorious in contests in
Ohio, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and New York. This show of strength on
the part of the Democrats convinced the radicals that they would have to
get rid of Johnson. Earlier, in January of 1867, the House Judiciary
Committee had undertaken an investigation of Johnson's conduct in office
and had recommended in June that he be impeached "for high crimes and
misdemeanors," but the House had rejected the report by a substantial
majority. The radicals did not accept this vote as final and started a

28 John Hope Franklin, Reconstruction After the Civil War, 72;
McKitrick, Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction, 496.
search for another cause for impeachment. This cause was found in Johnson's dismissal of Stanton. 29

A year before, a Commercial editorial had shown Halstead's opinion of Stanton. He wrote that the Secretary of War was not one of his favorites in the government, but that Stanton was a strong man whose conservative influence in administering the Reconstruction Acts was needed. The fact that he was bitterly hated by "the malignant rebels and their subservient sympathizers," the editor concluded, was deeply satisfying to lovers of the Union. 30 By the summer of 1867 Johnson had a cabinet which he could count upon to support his policies with the exception of the Secretary of War who remained at his post, even though it was well known that the President wished his resignation. The basic question that had to be answered was whether or not the President had the right to select a cabinet of his own choice. When Johnson learned that Stanton had helped write the Reconstruction Act of July 19, he brought the issue to a head on August 1 by asking for his resignation. 31

Reports of Johnson's plans reached the newspapers before he took any action, and Halstead editorially disapproved of the move. He was not willing to support Stanton, but he felt that the Secretary had held the War Office for so long, even though the whole country knew of the disagreement between the two men, that a change would only convince the nation that Johnson planned to change his policy on the enforcement of the Reconstruction Acts. If this was the case, Halstead warned that

29 Matthew Josephson, The Politicos, 1865-1896, 40; Franklin, Reconstruction After the Civil War, 76-77.

30 Commercial, November 8, 1866.

31 McKitrick, Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction, 495.
Congress would hold him to strict accountability when it reconvened. As Johnson was virtually powerless as chief executive, and as Stanton had kept him out of mischief on several occasions, the editor thought that any attempt to gain harmony in the cabinet at such a late date was foolishness on the President's part.\(^{32}\)

Though knowing the hornet's nest he would stir up, Johnson nonetheless acted on August 12. He suspended Stanton and appointed Grant to replace him. The President knew that Grant was the only person that might gain confirmation in the War Office from the Senate.\(^{33}\) The radicals were outraged by what seemed to be Johnson's violation of the Tenure of Office Act. Furthermore, Johnson sacrificed what possibility there was that the Senate might agree to his firing of Stanton by also removing Generals Sheridan and Sickles from their posts in the South. Their removal set off a violent reaction to the North and added greatly to the conviction that Johnson was trying to stop the strict enforcement of the Reconstruction Acts.\(^{34}\)

Halstead called the President's action reckless, and said that if his "mischief-making" continued, "his impeachment would become popular." The only thing that kept the Cincinnatian from calling for it himself was the man who would succeed Johnson in the office. The times, he declared, called for a man who was not ruled by passion, but was noted for discretion, dignity, and statesmanship. The President pro-tempore of

\(^{32}\) *Commercial*, August 7, 1867.

\(^{33}\) Benjamin P. Thomas and Harold M. Hyman, *Stanton, The Life and Times of Lincoln's Secretary of War*, 549.

\(^{34}\) McKitrick, *Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction*, 498.
the Senate, Benjamin Wade of Ohio, had none of these desirable characteristics the editor said, but rather was as violent a man as Johnson.  

On November 20, the Judiciary Committee of the House, by a narrow 5-4 vote, recommended impeachment. In his editorial the following morning, Halstead said that there was no reason for Congress to fool away its time over questions of impeachment. He declared that Stanton's removal had turned out to be a good thing for the country as Grant was much less extravagant than his predecessor and that the successors of Sheridan and Sickles had gone about their duties quietly and efficiently. Congress would do better, he declared, if it would work out a sound financial policy for the country and leave the President alone. He later added that the American sense of fairness and public justice would be violated in an impeachment attempt because the people would see that it had originated in partisan spite. He felt it could not be questioned that political calculations and not justice were in the minds of the members of the Judiciary Committee. After all, he declared, "High crimes and misdemeanors in the sense of the Constitution did not need to be sought with muck-rakes and fine-tooth combs ... ."

Halstead felt there was no question that the impeachment attempt was to further the political ends of the radicals and to punish Johnson for political offenses, not "high crimes." He claimed that a case of malfeasance in office had not been made out by the report of the Committee, and that this fact was realized by the American public, both North and

35 *Commercial*, September 2, 1867.
South. The Cincinnati editor's sense of fair play was matched, he asserted, by almost all the leading Republican newspapers in the country. According to his reports, there was hardly an influential newspaper that did not urge abandoning the whole project.\(^{38}\) The House agreed. After a stormy session on December 7, the radicals recognized that they did not have a good case against the President and this second impeachment attempt was voted down.

Halstead predicted that the efforts to re-instate Stanton in the cabinet would fail as conclusively as the impeachment scheme. He called the President's message concerning the dismissal a "strong document," and said that Grant's "quiet but effective hostility," placed Stanton in a situation where he could have few hopes of a bright future as Secretary of War.\(^{39}\) Halstead had been right about the impeachment, but he was wrong about Stanton. Early in January the Senate refused its concurrence in his suspension. On January 14, Grant left the war office, and Stanton again took possession. By this time the editor mistrusted Stanton completely. As did many, he believed the President had a right to choose his own cabinet, and felt that Stanton's persistence in remaining in the office after Johnson had made it so clear he wished a new Secretary of War was not the act of a gentleman. Halstead said that Stanton's victory in physically holding the office of Secretary of War was extremely hollow, as while he had possession of "the pigeon-holes, red-tape, and sealing wax" of the War Office, he would not be allowed to attend cabinet meetings, nor consult with other heads of departments. In fact, all orders for the

\(^{38}\)Ibid., November 30, 1867.

\(^{39}\)Ibid., December 20, 1867.
army would probably go directly from the President to Grant who remained as General of the Army. As for Stanton, the Cincinnatian said that he and his clerks could enjoy an elegant leisure and the regular receipt of their salaries. His pen fairly dripping with venom, Halstead claimed that Stanton had lost none of his prompt and methodical business habits during his enforced vacation as his first act on regaining the War Office was to draw his back pay.  

Now that Stanton was back in his old office, Halstead asserted that Congress would be unable to find grounds for impeachment in Johnson's handling of the affair. Like most moderates Halstead believed that Johnson had not earned himself any credit in the action, but that this was to be expected from a man such as the President.

Yet once more Halstead was wrong. A bitter series of letters between Johnson and Grant had followed the General's surrender of the keys to the War Office to Stanton. Johnson believed that Grant had acted in a questionable manner and had violated a pledge which he had given to consult with the President before taking any action. Congress now called for this correspondence to investigate the possibility of finding evidence that Johnson had conspired to break the law. Halstead maintained that there was nothing in the letters that would warrant any further impeachment attempts. Johnson, according to the editor, should be censured for his questionable taste in airing his grievances with the General in front of newspaper reporters, as it was a "mean and base" way of attacking

---

*Commercial, January 15, 1868. Stanton actually needed the back pay desperately. His six years in governmental service had wiped out his savings and he had been forced to borrow money to meet living expenses during the period of his ouster. Thomas and Hyman, *Stanton, The Life and Times of Lincoln's Secretary of War*, 569.*
Grant, but this was hardly a matter which should waste the time of the Congressmen.\textsuperscript{41}

Halstead believed that if Johnson could be persuaded to let the matter of the Secretary rest, Stanton would find his position untenable and resign of his own accord. Unfortunately, said the editor, Johnson could always be counted on to do the "most wrong headed thing." On February 21, the President again removed Stanton from office and appointed in his place Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas. Thomas was a weak choice for, unlike Grant, he could command respect from neither the army nor Congress. A veteran of many years service in various "desk posts" in Washington, Thomas was well known among the political and military leaders, but no one thought too highly of his abilities. In a "serio-comic scene" in Stanton's office, Thomas demanded the Secretary to give up the War Office, but he was refused. When the General withdrew, Stanton, who had received many messages of encouragement from Congressmen and Senators, barricaded himself in the offices of the War Department.\textsuperscript{42}

As Halstead watched events in Washington he believed they took on a sinister significance. He felt it boded ill for the nation that the Secretary of War could maintain his office only by using armed guards. He told his readers that it was evident that Stanton had only been kept in the War Office as an assertion of power by the Congress and not because he was capable of rendering the nation any service that could not be performed by another man. Thus, partisan politics had once again been

\textsuperscript{41} Commercial, February 10, 1868; William B. Hesseltine, U. S. Grant.

\textsuperscript{42} Randall, Civil War and Reconstruction, 766.
responsible for placing the country in a critical situation. If these recurrent crises were ever to end, Halstead asserted, two questions would have to be answered. First, was it constitutionally within the power of the Congress to limit the authority of the President within his own household, and second, was it wise to degrade the office of the presidency just because Andrew Johnson was the incumbent.  

The House of Representatives gave its answer to Halstead's questions on the same day as his editorial appeared. After a weekend tense with excitement, the House passed the "Covode Resolution," impeaching the President on Monday, February 24. While it was well understood that Johnson's second removal of Stanton was the legal ground for the impeachment, there were no specific charges in the resolution; Johnson was just impeached because "of high crimes and misdemeanors in office."  

Halstead declared that he hoped those "excitable gentlemen" who had been demanding the impeachment as a cure for all the ills of the country were now satisfied. Deeply concerned for the whole fabric of the American national government, he declared that the honor of the nation as well as the presidency was up for trial. According to the editor the easiest way for the country to lose was to listen to "frantic governors" and other rash men who wished to send militia, fighting delegates, or members of the Grand Army of the Republic to Washington, or hold mass meetings to sustain the position of either Congress or the President. The only way, he contended, that the United States could preserve its national self-respect, was to allow the trial to be a judicial proceeding.

---

43 Commercial, February 24, 1868.
44 Randall, Civil War and Reconstruction, 767.
in which law and not passions would rule.\textsuperscript{45}

Halstead thought the argument on which the impeachment was based was faulty and claimed that the results of the radical action could well mean ultimate defeat for the Republican party in the 1868 presidential and congressional elections. He called Stanton's second dismissal an occasion and not a cause for impeachment. The problem as Halstead saw it was that the control of Congress was in the hands of men who did not look far enough into the future. These men were willing to accept any excuse to put their party into immediate power. But what would happen to the union supporters, the editor asked, if Wade was installed in the presidency, and Seward, Welles, and Stanbery, following Stanton's precedent, refused to resign their departments? No matter what action the new administration or the Congressional leaders took, Halstead felt the losers would be the Union supporters. Either Wade would have the empty distinction of finishing Johnson's term as a figurehead with the departmental chiefs continuing their own reconstruction policies, or there would be another disgraceful Congressional battle to remove these three men. No matter which, "the political profit and loss account" would not balance out well for the Republican party.\textsuperscript{46}

It was only after Johnson had been impeached that the House named a seven man committee to draw up impeachment articles. On March 2 and 3 the House finally adopted eleven accusations. The charges in these eleven narrowed down to the removal of Stanton, the assertion of authority over the army, non-cooperation in Congressional reconstruction, and criticism

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Commercial}, February 26, 1868.

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Ibid.}, February 26, 1866.
of Congress. The eleventh of the charges, or "omnibus article," was a virtual summation of the other articles designed to capture votes which the other articles might not because it added the charge that Johnson had declared the Thirty-Ninth Congress a "Congress of only part of the States, thereby denying . . . that the legislation of said Congress was valid . . . ." This was a point on which many Senators were extremely sensitive.\textsuperscript{47} The accusations, framed without a thought of justice, sought to solicit popular support and to win the approval of the Senate.

The trial began before the Senate on March 13, 1868. Chase, Halstead's old friend, presided in his capacity as Chief Justice, and William S. Groesbeck, a Cincinnati acquaintance of the editor's, was one of Johnson's defense attorneys. From the first, the Senate served notice that this was not to be a judicial proceeding, but political. Time and time again, evidence which the defense introduced and Chase accepted was submitted to the vote of the Senators and declared inadmissible by the whole body on a strictly partisan vote. The only bright note which Halstead could see in the whole picture was Chase's dignified and impartial demeanor in presiding at the trial. His knowledge of parliamentary law and his handling of the questions which called for decisions, according to Halstead, convinced the radical leaders that the Chief Justice had "gone over to the enemy." The editor thought that the extreme partisanship of the Senate would convict Johnson, but he also saw signs that the impeachers might have offended the sensibilities of some of the fairer minded Republicans. The position which Halstead had been upholding for almost a year, that because of the hatred of the man Johnson, the office

\textsuperscript{47}Randall, \textit{Civil War and Reconstruction}, 770-771; Chester R. Barrows, \textit{William M. Evarts}, 139-141.
of the presidency which he happened to hold should not be violated by impeach­ment, gained more and more converts as the trial proceeded. The impeachers' public image was certainly not helped when Wade allowed himself to be sworn as a member of the senatorial court. Since the constitution prohibits the vice-president from taking part in an impeachment trial before the Senate, most people felt that Wade, as President pro-tempore of the Senate would have the same strong personal interest in the outcome as a vice-president, and was ethically bound to disqualify himself from sitting in judgment. Other actions by the House prosecutors, such as Butler's constant interruption of the defense's examination of General Sherman, convinced many observers that they were ruining their own case.

On April 3 Halstead predicted that Wade would never sit in the chief executive's chair, and said that if he did not, it would be because of the poor management of the House's case. By April 15, many of Johnson's supporters saw a chance of saving him. William M. Evarts, the New York Republican, who, even though hostile to Johnson's Reconstruction policies, had assumed first place among the defense attorneys, thought that there was a growing feeling that the President was being treated with rank injustice and that he was innocent of any wrong intent in his dealings with Stanton. Evarts recognized a noticeable change of opinion in the Senate and among the spectators in the galleries.

As the trial drew to a close, Halstead decided to travel to Wash­ington to be present when the Senate voted on the charges. He arrived on

48 Randall, Civil War and Reconstruction, 773.
49 Commercial, April 3, 1868.
50 Barrows, William M. Evarts, 149.
April 22, just in time to hear the closing arguments of the impeachment managers and the attorneys for the defense. The first two speakers disappointed the expectations of the large crowd that had gathered. George S. Boutwell of Massachusetts read a very tiresome speech for the prosecution during which time the galleries became restless and noisy; and Thomas A. Nelson of Tennessee, a devoted friend of the President's did little better for the defense. Consequently, little was expected from Groesbeck, the almost unknown Cincinnati lawyer. But for sheer emotional power the speech turned out to be the best of all the closing arguments. While dealing almost exclusively with legal issues, he nonetheless had the galleries eagerly following him and even the Senators stopped their talking to listen. Groesbeck's speech impressed his fellow Cincinnatian, but Halstead was convinced, after talking to many of his Washington friends, that all the signs pointed towards conviction and that the defense would be unable to save the President.  

Of all the closing arguments, Evarts' was probably the most telling. He turned the tables on the managers by admitting that some of Johnson's criticism of the Congress had been intemperate and ill-advised, but he also quoted equally intemperate passages from earlier speeches of the managers in which they criticized the President. His most effective point was when he reviewed the background of the Tenure of Office Act. After stating that independent removal by the President was a fixed custom of the government, and tracing its development from Washington to Lincoln, he turned to the Tenure of Office Act itself. His argument brought out two important points: first, that the law did not make it clear if it...
applied to hold-overs of the Lincoln administration, and second, that several senators at the time of the law's passage had stated it did not limit Johnson's power to remove such hold-overs.  

While Halstead felt that arguments such as Evarts' should prove to the Senate that impeachment had been a blunder, he was nonetheless afraid that too many of the Senators, though recognizing this fact, would still vote against Johnson. He felt that the only possible verdict based on the law and the testimony was acquittal. He said that the Republican party had backed itself into a corner on impeachment, and the only way out was acquittal which would be a conspicuous act of justice that all the nation would recognize. The best course for the party "would be to show the capacity to do justice, though provoked and tempted rather to deal harshly and unjustly . . .".  

One of the things that Halstead learned while he was in Washington was that Wade was greatly angered about the Commercial's moderate editorials and its editor's sarcastic jabbings at the Ohio Senator. Wade had declared to friends that Halstead's editorial line proved that "he was no Republican." Halstead admitted that Wade was "high authority upon . . . political orthodoxy," but said that he had to disagree with the "justice of his observation." Halstead's belief in the lack of justice in the impeachment can not be denied, not can his wholehearted support of the Republican party. Time and time again he had reiterated that he felt the best interests of the country would be imperiled by the return of the Democrats to power; this was his whole point in objecting to the impeachment.

52Barrows, William M. Evarts, 153-160.

53Commercial, April 30, 1868.
He believed that the majority of Americans agreed with him. If Johnson was turned out of office, he saw it as only a temporary triumph for the Republicans as he never questioned that the voters would show their disapproval by voting for Democrats in the Fall of 1868. Again and again in his newsletters from Washington he repeated that the managers had made a bad case; that they had not been able to show a particle of evidence of any conspiracy on the part of Johnson or any guilty intent that would justify his removal. He also made the point quite often that Wade as President would put the party at a distinct disadvantage at the polls. He thought that Wade's vindictiveness often made him act as irrationally as Johnson, and that, in every way, he was not a fit man to succeed to the chief executive's chair.

By May 1, Halstead was not as certain as he had been earlier that the Senate would convict the President. He found that more and more people were agreeing with his conclusion that the whole business had been a blunder.

The concluding arguments of the lawyers and the debate that followed in the Senate took much longer than Halstead thought when he went to Washington. Since he did not wish to be gone from Cincinnati for a long period—he had only recently taken over full management of the Commercial—he decided that he would be unable to stay over for the final vote. He left the capital convinced that impeachment had been lost and feeling that the best thing the majority of the Senate could do was to take the vote at once and accept the decision quietly. After all, the

54 Commercial, April 22 to May 1, 1868.
55 Ibid., May 1, 1868.
editor noted, Johnson's term would be over in a few months, and the
scare which he received in the impeachment should have taught him that
it would be best to conduct himself with decency until he retired.56

The Senate finally voted on May 16 on the eleventh or "omnibus"
article. The leadership felt that this one, of all the articles, had the
best chance of passage. Thirty-six votes of guilty were needed for con-
viction, and nineteen of not guilty for acquittal. The radicals were
fearful that seven Republican senators might vote against conviction and
so an avalanche of pressure had been applied, but on the first ballot,
all seven—Senators Fessenden, Fowler, Grimes, Henderson, Ross, Trumbull,
and Van Winkle—voted with the twelve Democrats, and the move was de-
feated. On May 26 when articles two and three were taken up, the same
pattern held, and so the proceedings against the President failed.57

There were three outstanding reasons for the acquittal. First, Senators
who personally disliked Johnson and would have liked to vote guilty, rea-
alyzed that a conviction would have completely upset the balance of power
in the government, and could not bring themselves to be a part of such a
fundamental change on such petty grounds. Second, some of the Senators
did not believe that the managers had been able to prove their case against
Johnson. And finally, some senators just could not accept Wade as either
the type or quality of man to succeed Johnson.58

Halstead viewed the acquittal as a triumph for sound principles in
government. He praised the courage of those Republicans who had been able

56 Commercial, May 16, 1868.
57 Barrow, William K. Evarts, 161-162.
58 Woodley, Thaddeus Stevens, 546.
to withstand the pressure of the radical leadership to vote their convictions. That they were subjected to a barrage of vile accusations for having done so, was proof to Halstead that the trial was purely political, and that the Senators had been expected to be not judges, but party hacks, voting the dictates of the self-seeking leadership. 59

Before the final acquittal vote had been taken, Grant had received the Republican nomination for the Presidency. While Halstead said Grant had many shortcomings as a general, he nonetheless thought the Republican nominee had recorded some of the most brilliant accomplishments in history. While the General was not his first choice for the nomination—he had little faith in brilliant generals becoming effective statesmen—he did think that the nation would suffer no detriment under Grant. Moreover, the editor believed that Grant's commonsense and prudence would result in peace between Congress and the executive branch of the government. In four years, he said, the country would outgrown the difficulties of reconstruction. 60

The fair manner in which Chase had attempted to conduct the impeachment trial had convinced many that he would like the Democratic nomination. Halstead, always loyal to his friend, took the same position as James Gordon Bennett of the New York Herald, that Chase "was the Moses to lead the Democratic party out of the wilderness." 61 Some Democrats also agreed that the moderate Chief Justice, who had been a Democrat for a short period earlier in his career, would make a strong standard bearer

59 Commercial, May 18 and 27, 1868.

60 Ibid., November 11, 1867.

who would appeal to the conservatives of both parties. Chase himself
freely stated that he was not a candidate, but he left a few loopholes
to crawl through in the eventuality that a nomination was forthcoming.  
In a letter to Halstead written in May, Chase claimed that his attempt to
be impartial during the trial had been built up as a great virtue on one
side, and condemned by the other as self-seeking. As to the presidency,
he declared, "I neither seek nor want any nomination." 

Nonetheless, Chase made himself available for the Democratic
call. His daughter Kate even went to the convention to work for his cause,
but his enemies within the party were able to keep the prize from his
hands. The Democrats were not yet ready to give the nomination to a man
who many thought was actually a member of the opposition party, and Horat­
tio Seymour of New York received the nod. Chase regarded Seymour as an
extremist, and was reported as saying that if the New Yorker were nomi­
nated he would run as an independent. He later denied the statement, and
no independent group was formed to offer him a ticket.  With the choice
between Seymour and Grant, Halstead of course chose the General.

62 Ibid., 83.
63 Chase to Halstead, May 22, 1868, J. W. Schuckers, The Life
and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase, 583.
64 Coleman, Election of 1868, 115.
CHAPTER V

HALSTEAD THE JOURNALIST

In the years before the leading New York City and Brooklyn newspapers had joined together to form the New York Associated Press. The original function of this organization was to share the cost of sending a small boat to meet incoming ocean ships and to allow all members to share the latest European news.¹ Later this service branched out, and telegraphic news reports from New York and Washington were sent across the country. Western journals, such as the Commercial, received these reports from the Association, but had no control over the content of them. With the start of hostilities, most of the western newspapers sent out their own war correspondents and discovered that their men were as capable of distinguished reporting from the field as the representatives of the New York dailies. Consequently, a movement was begun among the publishers of the western journals to gain more control over the type and content of the news which they purchased from the New York Association.

Late in 1862 a meeting was called in Indianapolis of representatives from the newspapers of Cincinnati, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Detroit, Louisville, and St. Louis. At this meeting the publishers of the western newspapers decided to act together in attempting to find a solution to their differences with the New York dailies. An executive committee with authority to negotiate a settlement with the Association


143
was formed under Joseph Medill of the Chicago Tribune. The committee
visited New York and succeeded in being allowed to place an agent in the
association's office with authority to file a one thousand word dispatch
at night and a three hundred word dispatch in the afternoon, thus allowing the western journals some control over the type of news which they received.

The conflict between the western newspapers and the New York Asso­
ciation was not solved by this agreement, for the various western journals
had differing news needs. Potter, who was the Commercial's representa­
tive at the first meeting, was unable to attend the second one the fol­
lowing year, and Halstead took his place. When the problem arose of re­
vising the contract with the New York Association to allow for more news,
Halstead proposed varying the sizes of the dispatches which the different newspapers might receive. Under such a system, newspapers with large re­sources could purchase more news than their poorer brother papers. This flexibility was partially accomplished by adding five hundred additional words to the night telegram and doubling the dispatch for the afternoon papers. Nonetheless, all newspapers continued to receive the same re­ports and still failed to gain control over their content.2

Many differences continued to exist between the western journalists
and the New York Association. The westerners complained that too often
the dispatches were of merely a sensational nature and were unreliable,
that little attempt was made to make the reports concise and to reduce wordiness, and that many of the reports consisted of editorial opinion
from the New York newspapers, rather than straight news. At the 1864

2Victor Rosewater, History of Cooperative News-Gathering in the
United States, 115.
meeting of the western journalists in Detroit the delegates decided that they might have more success in their disputes with the New York Association if they were organized more formally, and so the Michigan legislature was prevailed upon to incorporate the Western Associated Press.  

For the next two years the new western association perfected its own organization by establishing rules governing its news gathering and dispatching techniques and persuading western newspapers which did not have representatives at the meeting in Detroit to join them. By 1866 the western association felt itself on solid ground and in a mood to assert its demands. The public appetite for news which the war had whetted continued unabated. Revolutionary changes were also in the making to satisfy this appetite. The Atlantic cable would soon go into operation; telegraph lines were being consolidated under unified management; and new journals were being established. The older newspapers of the West realized they would need to strengthen their position in order to gain the advantages of the new sources of news and to meet the rising competition.

As both president of its board of directors and a member of its executive committee, Halstead had become one of the leading figures in the Western Association by 1866. He, more than any other man, was given credit for infusing life and courage into what was essentially a feeble organization and for making its continued existence possible. When a second national news service from New York was announced in November, he took the lead in formulating an ultimatum from the Western Association to the New York Association. Earlier the Western Association had drawn up a

3Ibid., 116.

bill of particulars of their grievances in which they included such complaints as that the Western Association was forced to pay for marine reports from the Atlantic and Pacific coast, local legislative and political intelligence, announcements of the arrival and departure of vessels at foreign ports, and in general, news that was needed by the New York commercial class, but that did not suit the wants and tastes of their own western readers. Moreover, the Western Association claimed that the expenses for gathering the news were lumped into an account called "the original collection of news" and was charged to the outside press on a pro rata basis without allowing the outside press an opportunity to examine the books. Finally, they complained that the New York Association permitted its seven member newspapers to maintain a monopoly in the city while it encouraged the establishment of new journals in the rest of the country.5

In their ultimatum the directors of the Western Association demanded the correction of what they felt were the principal abuses of the New York group. What they proposed was the establishment of an exchange system whereby the Western Association would supply news of the West to the New York Association in return for news from the East. They also insisted that all eastern news be of general interest to the West before being telegraphed to that section. Full powers to carry on as the struggle with the New York Association for the Western Association increased were invested in the executive committee which was headed by Halstead. On November 27, he and Horace White of the Chicago Tribune addressed a challenge to the New York Association in which it was declared that if

5Rosewater, Cooperative News-Gathering, 118.
the New York group refused to meet their demands, the Western Association would purchase news from all parties who had news for sale—in other words, they would buy from the second news service.\(^6\)

The fight was short and sharp. The western challenge was answered by a declaration that any newspaper accepting news from a rival organization would no longer be permitted use of the New York Association's service. On receipt of this answer, Halstead and White went East and made a contract with D. H. Craig, the general agent of the United States and Europe Telegraphic News Association, to supply the Western Association with East coast news and European dispatches. They then informed those papers which still received the New York Associated Press service that they could no longer have the western report. Nearly all the western and southwestern newspapers decided to accept the service of the new company.\(^7\) Halstead published his "Western Associated Press Issue"\(^8\) of the Commercial, the first issue to use no New York Association reports, on December 1, 1866.\(^8\)

A special meeting of the Western Association was called in Chicago on December 12 and the executive committee's action was approved by its full membership. A vote was taken to sever all relations with the New York Association and to inaugurate a campaign to recruit more members, including even New York newspapers connected with that city's association, into the new organization. The rivalry between the two associations was brisk for a few weeks. The key for ultimate victory lay

\(^6\)Ibid., 119.

\(^7\)Rosewater, Cooperative Newsgathering, 121.

\(^8\)Commercial, December 1, 1866.
in the action that was to be taken by the New England Association and James Gordon Bennett, whose Herald ran a news service of its own. The advantage was with the westerners when the New England Association agreed to a contract with the western group. Bennett, in return for concessions for his service, also agreed to cooperate with the West. In this situation, the New York papers signaled their readiness to conclude peace, and Halstead was able to negotiate a mutually acceptable arrangement. New contracts, dated January 11, 1867, were drawn which agreed to a division of territory and an exchange of news. The New York Association was to receive payments for foreign news and other specified services, while both Associations pledged mutual respect for each other's monopoly of their self-assigned fields and to a most favored treatment clause in the matter of rates by the telegraph company. In a confidential letter to the members of the Western Association, Halstead said he regarded the new contracts as of considerable value to the Association. "The contract establishes the independence of the Western Associated Press, its complete control over its own affairs, the collection, compilation and transmission of news, and over the new agents within its own lines." The source of most of the serious complaints which the Western Association had against the operation of the New York Association were now eliminated.

Relationships between the country's two major press associations remained amiable from 1866 until 1882 when it was decided that the joint

9 Rosewater, Cooperative Newsgathering, 126-27.
10 Ibid., 129.
11 Diehl, Staff Correspondent, 157.
management of the two would not only save expenses, but would also result
in a more efficient operation. A joint executive committee, which in-
cluded Charles H. Dana of the New York Sun, Whitelaw Reid of the New York
Tribune, Richard Smith, Halstead’s partner on the newly formed Commercial
Gazette, W. N. Haldeman of the Louisville Courier-Journal, and James Gor-
don Bennett of the Herald, was formed and the new organization took the
name of "The Associated Press." William Henry Smith, who had been a writer
on both the old Commercial and the old Gazette, and general manager of the
Western Associated Press was made general manager of the joint operation
with headquarters in New York.\(^\text{12}\) The early battles which Halstead had
fought to gain fair play for the western press had thus paid off hand-
somely.

The years following the war were marked by the rise of a group
of editors who claimed that a newspaper should be independent of politi-
cal parties and pressure groups. These editors, among whom were Horace
Greeley of the New York Tribune, Horace White of the Chicago Tribune and
Samuel Bowles of the Springfield Republican, believed that their news-
papers’ editorial policies should be completely separated from influence
by any particular interest group. Opposed to the earlier idea that a
newspaper should be the mouthpiece of a particular politician or party,
they looked upon the field of journalism as a business and attempted to
run their newspapers along sound business lines. They also felt that a
newspaper’s income should be based on its circulation and advertising
revenue and that its advertising revenue should be a result of its ability

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 158; Eugene H. Kleinpell, "James M. Comly, Journalist-Po-
litician." Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio State University, 1936.
to transmit the advertiser's message to his prospective customers, and not on its editorial policy. This philosophy of newspaper management was called "independent journalism."\textsuperscript{13}

Halstead was a leader in the independent journalism movement from the first. By training and temperament, he disliked the shackles imposed on the editor of a political organ and believed that a newspaper was only effective when its editor was completely free to present the news without color or favor. The clearest statement of Halstead's philosophy of journalism was presented in an address delivered to the Kentucky State Press Association on May 20, 1874. He said that a newspaper should be an influence on behalf of right. To be such an influence, the job of the editor was to present the truth, and to him the news was the truth. No matter how unattractive, unwholesome, or damaging the editor might think the facts were, he should neither color nor tamper with them. It was not his job to administer them in doses that he felt his readers could take, but to print them as they were. He said the citizens of the United States were a people without guardians, responsible for themselves, to themselves. What they needed to be well informed, and consequently, responsible citizens, were facts, not instructions from editors. An editor, he said, must always assume that his readers were capable of the application of the facts for their own enlightenment. Halstead's goals for American journalism were that it should always make war against privilege and that it should be a force for the restoration and purification of American public life. To be such a force, American journalism's job was to first purify itself by becoming unflatteringly faithful to the people. He

claimed that this could be done only if editors would disassociate themselves from the bosses and rings and work for the creation of their readers' confidence in their news.\(^4\)

He felt the best way to gain public confidence was to insist that it was a private business to be run along business lines. The rule should be established that no paid matter would appear in the newspaper except under the regular advertisement classification heads. This he said, "was the essential feature of independent journalism.\(^5\)\) Moreover, he insisted that an advertiser, in selecting a newspaper, was making a purely business transaction. The businessman was not patronizing the press, but rather, the press was furnishing him the means of reaching the public. The businessman, in making the purchase, bought only the best possible space, not the right to influence editorial policy.\(^6\)

Halstead claimed that one of the greatest obstacles that stood in the way of a truly independent press was official public advertising. The private advertiser, in order to receive the biggest value for his money, would generally patronize the paper with the largest circulation, while public advertising was most often used as an award for backing the winning political candidates. He claimed that the great mass of public advertisements were frauds, designed to pay for this political support, and that the editors who accepted them were participating in a scheme of plunder. With official advertising as an end, many editors subverted


\(^5\)Ibid., 129.

\(^6\)Ibid., 118.
their newspapers by giving support to men who were unworthy of their attention. Consequently, he said public advertisements were actually a danger to the freedom of the press as they were a means of compelling support through the threat of their discontinuance. While he declared it was impractical to talk of abolishing them, he felt their volume, and their influence, might be reduced, if a formula could be worked out to distribute them on more equitable grounds than patronage. He warned that the loss of liberty could come just as easily from official favoritism as from official oppression.  

Halstead's primary principle for newspaper owners was that they owed it to their readers to "draw the line" between features of an entertainment, informative, and instructive nature, and those that were for the advancement of an individual purpose. In other words, paid matter should never be published so as to conceal the fact. This, he claims, was essential if a newspaper was to have any editorial influence on its reading public, for he said once it became known that editorial articles could be purchased, their force would diminish.  

Halstead's faith in independent journalism and his belief in uncolored news did not mean that he felt that the editor's own opinion should not be expressed in his newspaper. In fact, he believed in a personal style of journalism that called for the editor to express opinions on almost every topic of the day. But he also felt these editorial opinions should be labeled, that is placed on the editorial page, and not be confused with the straight news. He also felt that an editor's
reputation for honesty and truthfulness in presenting the news gave his editorials greater force. A newspaper did not need to be non-partisan to be a great force for truth, if it was independent. Halstead in fact was of the general opinion that the first duty of a "sound" citizen was to labor to keep the Democratic party out of office,\(^19\) even though he also had been known to advocate the dropping of all party names and the election of the best man in local contests.\(^20\) For years the Commercial used as its slogan on its masthead, "An Independent, but not a Non-partisan Newspaper.\(^8\) Of an editor was not in the pay of a party, ring, or interest group, he could give his readers the truth, as he saw the truth, and his opinions would be respected.

Halstead claimed that he had always been guided by these principles, and that he had never asked or received, directly or indirectly, a price for silence or for favor. He said he enjoyed the absolute independence in journalism that disinterestedness gave him. As such, he declared, "there is no influence that can affect my purpose to speak with freedom of those who are plotting forever in public affairs for their private advantage."\(^21\) Even near the end of a long career he still could claim that he had never written an editorial for any other money than his salary as a writer.\(^22\)

Halstead claimed there were no principles of the press that were greater than the privileges of the people—any citizen had the right to

---

\(^{19}\) Murat Halstead, "Weakness in Journalism," Halstead MSS.

\(^{20}\) Commercial, November 15, 1869.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., April 29, 1870.

\(^{22}\) Commercial Gazette, February 18, 1889.
speak or write the truth—but he declared that the far wider audience of
the newspaper gave it a great responsibility. He felt, that overall, the
press in the United States had failed in its responsibilities. This, he
asserted, could best be seen from the fact that there was a "boss" in al­
most every city, county, and state in the country, and from the fact that
most people did not associate officeholding with an honorable career. He
said the average citizen looked upon politics as something dishonorable;
a field they did not wish their sons to enter. Halstead declared this
situation could be corrected by editors earnestly and constantly telling
the truth, irrespective of considerations of personal political or mone­
tary advancement. The results would be that the rule of the corrupt rings
would be overturned and the strongest, thriftest, and most honorable re­
publican form of government firmly established.

Halstead's overall philosophy of journalism might be summarized
in his own words:

... if we accept no favors, we may exact justice. If we can
claim for ourselves only what we earn, we can deny to other
that which they do not deserve.

The thing needful in establishing a base of operations for
the help of the people against those who are mighty in aiming
to devour their substance, is integrity; and with it belong
the courage of convictions and the consciousness of independ­
ence. With these we are equipped for the field, and the field
is the world.

The war brought many changes in the process of newsgathering and
printing. In an earlier chapter some of the advances in newsgathering,

23Wingate, Views and Interviews of Journalism, 126.
24Ibid., 128.
25Ibid., 116.
particularly the widespread use of the telegraph, were discussed. The Commercial, which had greatly increased its circulation and advertising during the period, also attempted to keep abreast of all the latest technical advances in the field of journalism. With the largest city circulation, and an advertising revenue of $55,732 for the 1863, Halstead felt that the Commercial could well afford more modern equipment and set about planning a radical transformation of its printing process.26

The primary purpose of his changes was to gain greater speed in the production of the paper. A quicker printing operation meant the newspaper might go to press later at night, which would allow the editorial staff more time for their work. It also meant that news received later in the night could be included in the next morning's edition, and, in the case of a truly important newsbreak, an extra edition could be on the streets earlier than those of its rivals. This change was accomplished by printing from stereotype plates instead of type forms. The stereotype plate was made by pressing upon the surface of a type form a layer of tissue paper which then became a mold from which any number of thin metal castings could be taken. This meant that with only one setting of type any number of presses could be used to reproduce the same material. In the case of the Commercial two presses were used from mid-October, 1864, thereby reducing the printing time by one half. The Commercial was the first newspaper outside of New York City to adopt the stereotype process.27

26 Commercial, January 22, 1864.

27 Ibid., October 29, 1864; New York Times, October 26, 1864.
Potter had grown very wealthy through his years of ownership of the Commercial and had constructed a new office building at Fourth and Race Streets for both investment purposes and to house the Commercial's editorial offices and printing rooms. The printing rooms were in a specially built twenty-two-foot deep basement. The stereotype process and completely new Hoe high speed cylinder presses were installed at the time the Commercial moved from its old location. From the cylinder press it was only one step to a press that would employ additional cylinders to print both sides of the page at the same time. Soon after the Commercial began to use its new thirty thousand dollar presses, the Hoe Company announced a new perfecting press that not only printed both sides at once, but also cut the paper into page size and folded it. The secret was in using a continuous roll of newsprint that ran between two cylinders.

While its presses were only one year old, Halstead convinced Potter that the only way the Commercial could remain in front of its rivals was to adopt the even newer and more rapid system. The printers had just become accustomed to the new process and presses when all the printing machinery was torn out and the new ones installed. The thirty thousand dollar investment was worth precisely its value in scrap iron.

On October 23, 1865, the Commercial became the first newspaper published west of the Alleghenys on a Hoe eight-page rotary press. The paper's pages were also increased to eight—it had been a folio—and its size decreased from nine to six columns making it less cumbersome. Larger and more easily read print was also adopted, and its advertising was typically assembled. These changes in form and style put the paper on a parity in appearance and utility with the most advanced eastern
Two weeks after the new presses were in operation a Sunday edition was introduced which was a success from the start. Relying heavily on literary features for this weekly edition, Halstead was able to build its city circulation to ten thousand during the first year.\(^\text{29}\)

On April 3, 1866 Potter died, and Halstead came into active control of the newspaper.\(^\text{30}\) The firm of M. Halstead and Company, a copartnership of active partners and special partners, was established. The active partners were those men, who like Halstead, had acquired partnerships under Potter and were still actively interested in some phase of the business. The special partners were Potter's widow and his daughter, Mrs. Julia Pomeroy, who held interest in the company but were completely inactive as far as its operation was concerned.\(^\text{31}\) The job room of the printing office was sold in 1870 to permit all of the Commercial's interest to be directed towards the publication of the newspaper. The Enquirer soon began a campaign of complaint that Halstead was defrauding the Potter heirs of their inheritance and that the job room sale was one instance showing the editor's corruption.\(^\text{32}\) As the attacks on Halstead's honesty in acquiring the Commercial continued, Mrs. Potter felt compelled to have a letter printed in 1877 in which she declared all of the accusations made by the Enquirer to be false. She said

\(^{28}\)Commercial, October 23, 1865; Murat Halstead, "Varieties of Journalism," Cosmopolitan Magazine (December, 1892), 207.

\(^{29}\)William L. Halstead MS., 114.

\(^{30}\)Commercial, April 4, 1866.

\(^{31}\)Ibid., September 2, 1870 and May 23, 1866.

\(^{32}\)Ibid., December 2, 1870.
Halstead had always acted in an honorable manner and that her husband had told her to place her complete confidence in him.\textsuperscript{33} At the time of Mrs. Pomeroy's death M. Halstead and Company was dissolved, and Halstead purchased the shares of her estate. Mrs. Potter's shares and those of one of the active partners. He then reorganized the property as a stock company.\textsuperscript{34} Far from defrauding the heirs, Halstead claimed that the worth of the company at the time of Potter's death had been set at one hundred thousand dollars by the appraisers, but that he himself had insisted on three hundred thousand in order to include the goodwill which could not be measured by a strict appraisal of the physical plant. Ultimately, when the new company was formed, the newspaper's worth was set at four hundred thousand dollars.\textsuperscript{35}

Halstead employed several reporters or special contributors who would later gain national fame. One of these, Henry Villard, of later railroad building fame, was a correspondent during the war and had earlier written special newsletters during a western trip which were published in the \textit{Commercial}. Don Piatt was also employed by Halstead as his Washington correspondent in 1868. Piatt believed that he had discovered a style that would interest Cincinnati readers, and Halstead gave him virtually free rein in exploiting his method. It consisted of personal comment, lightened by humor and "made attractive by a ting of nonchalant good-nature." His efforts proved popular, and Halstead,

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Ibid.}, May 2, 1877.

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Ibid.}, May 2, 1877.

\textsuperscript{35} Murat Halstead, "History of the Cincinnati Commercial," Halstead MSS.
though often disagreeing with the sentiments expressed in his articles, rarely edited them. Piatt's type of journalism can be imagined when it is noted that a son of a president followed him home bent on assassination; that he was beaten on the floor of the Senate Chamber, and that he was hunted on the streets by a Senator with an armed revolver. His first association with the Commercial ended in 1871 when he established the Washington Capital, a Sunday newspaper. He became Washington correspondent for Halstead again in the late eighties for a short period, but Halstead was less lenient this time and edited some of his reports. In one article he had said that future historians would laugh at Sherman's "March to the Sea" as a crazy retreat saved only by Thomas' superb campaigning. When Halstead cut this out, Piatt wrote an angry letter in which he claimed that the job of Washington correspondent was not so desirable that he would submit to such petty annoyances and humiliations. Hitting directly at Halstead's pride, he claimed he knew the war time situation through means that were unavailable to the editor living in Cincinnati. He concluded that if Halstead did not like it, he could end his letters from Washington. Shortly thereafter this was done.

Of all of Halstead's employees, the one to gain the most fame was a young man who worked as a court reporter for the Commercial while he studied law. "Big Bill," as he was known around the editorial rooms, became President of the United States under the more formal name of William Howard Taft. He was a reporter during one of the Commercial's periodic

36 Charles G. Miller, Donn Piatt, His Work and His Ways, 214-225.
37 Donn Piatt to Halstead, November 23, 1890, Halstead MSS.
labor disturbances. One day he was attacked on the street—he looked "plump, dimpled, happy" and defenseless—what better way to get back at Halstead than to assault one of his employees. Unfortunately for the attacker, Taft was more agile than he looked. After dodging the first blow, he caught the man about the wrist, threw him onto the street, and then sat on him until the police arrived.  

Halstead admired Taft's work so much that he offered him a very high salary to remain with the newspaper. Taft had taken the job to earn extra spending money and to help him in his legal knowledge. When Halstead made his offer, Taft thanked him for the compliment but refused the higher pay. He said he would soon finish his legal training and planned to become a lawyer. If he accepted the larger salary he might be tempted to lay down his plans and remain a reporter for the rest of his life.  

Halstead's independent journalist, his often impetuous reporters and correspondents, and his own gruff style (which through assurance of his position and power sometimes led him to editorial name calling), assured the Commercial of a constant stream of enemies. Often these enemies took action in the form of a libel suit against the Commercial, or Halstead, or both. It was Halstead's opinion that a good newspaper invited a libel suit now and then. The newspaper's job, he said, was to present the facts in a case without malice. Often a party to the facts would not want them known and would sue. In such cases the journal would not only have invited the suit, by presenting the facts, but also, if it was an honest journal, would continue to print the facts. If it did not, the  

---

38 Robert Halstead, "Presidents I Have Known," Halstead MSS.
simple method of bringing a suit would be all that was necessary to si­
lence disagreeable criticism. 40

In 1862 the mayor of Cincinnati, claiming that in publishing ac­
counts of "outrages" by the police of the city the newspaper was influ­
enced by malicious hostility towards him, brought suit against the Com­
mercial. The Commercial lost the case, but the jury set damages at one
dollar. 41 In 1867 another suit was brought against the newspaper for its
handling of the arrest of a Morris Gratz. Gratz had been arrested on the
complaint of his business partner who charged him with fraud. "The Commer­
cial published a full account of the story, and then the next day learned
that Gratz's partner might have committed an injustice and so a paragraph
was printed in the next edition giving Gratz's side of the story. Gratz
claimed that the first article had damaged his business reputation and
claimed twenty thousand dollars in his suit. Once again the jury found for
the plaintiff, but awarded only five dollars damages. 42

In March of 1868 legal proceedings were once again started against
the Commercial. M. W. Myers, a local politician, charged that Halstead
had written an editorial in which he had accused him of trying to bribe
the city council of Cincinnati. In this case the jury was unable to
agree. The majority wished to find the defendant guilty and damages of
one cent were mentioned, but as two men held out the judge discharged the

40 Commercial, June 23, 1862.
41 Ibid., June 23, 1862.
42 Ibid., January 3, 1868.
Meyers immediately asked for a new trial. He claimed he was in the unenviable position of a citizen attacked by a newspaper editor who had daily access to a large audience while he could only reach the public by the verdict of the jury. He claimed that while the judge had enjoined Halstead to stop printing editorials against Myers during the trial, the editor had just taken them out of the paper and had placed them on a bulletin board in front of the Commercial office. The judge agreed to a new trial, but before the date when it was to begin, a settlement was made between the two parties.

There were many other suits over the years in which Halstead either won or was assessed only small damages. The editor was particularly bitter about this last type of case. He claimed that in awarding such a small amount for damages the jury was actually deciding for the defendant. Thus, Halstead declared, he could say that he had been awarded a moral victory. On the other hand, he said that while the damages were small, in finding for the plaintiff, the jury automatically assessed the defendant the court costs. This type of decision he considered extremely unfair, and he thought it was made because the Commercial would be more able to pay the costs than the plaintiffs. Halstead claimed that the Commercial often lost more than a thousand dollars, including lawyers fees and various court costs, in cases such as these.

A far more serious enemy which Halstead made in his journalistic career was Archbishop John B. Purcell of the Roman Catholic Church in

\[\text{Ibid.}, \text{March 23, 1868.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}, \text{March 24, 1868.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}, \text{March 23, 1868.}\]
Cincinnati. The Archbishop was a prominent figure in the American church and the revered spiritual leader of his people, but he lacked business ability and his diocese suffered as a consequence. In the fall of 1873 the Commercial began to print articles and editorials about the pending bankruptcy of the diocese. A controversy also erupted at the same time about the influence of the church in the public schools. The church wished to place nuns in the schools to teach the Catholic students, and the editorial department of the Commercial claimed that this would violate the principle of separation of church and state. The Cincinnati archdiocese had its own newspaper, the Telegraph, in which war with the Commercial's position was waged. After about a month of name calling on both sides the Telegraph printed a letter on October 23, from Archbishop Purcell, asking Catholics to cancel their subscriptions to the Commercial. In the letter the Archbishop reasoned that the Commercial had a perfect right to insult him, but that he also had a right to resent the insults. He claimed that the newspaper had in fact fulfilled malicious columns for years against the faith and morals of the Catholic Church and that it was time fo cry "Stop the vile sheet." But it was not just for these reasons that he felt the Commercial should be stopped. He declared the spirit of the paper had become infidel, "if not atheistic." Halstead reprinted the letter the next day and entitled it "A Paper Bull Against the Commercial."46

Halstead claimed that he was following his old principle of printing the truth, something which he did not propose to end, and it was for

46 Ibid., October 24, 1873.
this reason that the Archbishop was angry. He said that he would continue to pronounce as enemies of the common schools anyone who sought to introduce sectarianism in any shape whatsoever and to demand the complete divorce of church and state. During the height of the Know Nothing Movement and on into the sixties and seventies, many American newspapers did have a decided anti-Catholic bias. The Commercial, generally speaking, was not one of these newspapers. Halstead, however, could not resist a few gibes at the Archbishop after his letter though, and so he declared that he made no war upon a man's religion, even if he "choose to believe in the miraculous efficacy of consecrated relics or any other extreme notions or dogmas," and said not even "prelatical fulminations" would deter him from characterizing the conduct of the church as it deserved.47

In a later, even more anti-church editorial, Halstead admitted that the Archbishop had every right to his own opinion, but he darkly hinted that there was more to the disagreement between the two forces than an argument over the Commercial's heresies. He said that there was agreement among the archbishop's clerical brothers in Rome and in the other Catholic countries of Europe that all opposition to the church should be silenced. "Those who advocate the divorce of Church and State, the secularization of public schools, ecclesiastical non-interference in politics, the rights of free inquiry and private judgment, incur in Catholic Europe the penalty of opinion which the Archbishop pronounces upon the Commercial here."48 To be completely fair, Halstead did attempt to show that the clergy had rights among its people in the realms of religion and

47 Ibid., October 24, 1873.
48 Ibid., October 25, 1873.
morals, but he asserted that problems would always arise when the clergy attempted to project those rights into other fields.49

The Commercial's editor claimed that he was not very anxious about the Archbishop's pronouncement against his newspaper. He said the Archbishop had done his duty as he saw it, and that only time would tell which would suffer more, the Commercial or the church. Actually, Halstead must have been greatly concerned, for Cincinnati had a large Catholic population and many of these must have been Commercial readers and advertisers. If the Archbishop's letter successfully drove some Commercial customers away, the newspaper of necessity suffered. While there are other reasons besides the dispute with the Archbishop, the Commercial did begin a slow and gradual decline from this period. That the Archbishop was responsible for this decline, it is impossible to say.

Earlier in the same year as the Archbishop's letter, Halstead had already contended with a stronger force than the Church in Cincinnati and with different results. He had long been an opponent of lotteries and when a bill was proposed in the Ohio State Senate to regulate them, he used the full editorial power of the Commercial to urge its passage. Halstead disliked lotteries for many reasons. He felt that lottery promoters swindled the poorer classes who bought tickets and made a very large profit themselves. Much more importantly, the Enquirer had used a lottery promotional stunt to greatly enlarge its circulation—at the expense of the Commercial. When Halstead received word that some state senators might be influenced in their vote by a "grocery"—a room used to give out bribery money—being run in the Neil House, a hotel across the street from

49 Ibid., October 27, 1873.
the capitol, Halstead wrote an editorial drawing attention to the "grocery." The State Senate thought that Halstead's charge reflected on the honesty of that body and decided to hold an investigation. As the charge had been made by Halstead, he was called to appear in Columbus as a witness.

In an editorial before the convening of the committee of investigation, Halstead predicted that since he had never seen a senator taking a bribe or had never seen a lottery promoter giving a bribe, the senators would decide that his evidence was "hearsay" and unworthy of their notice. Yet he was not terribly concerned about this potential outcome. He claimed that the investigation itself would focus public opinion on the lottery bill, and this public opinion would force its passage. Thus, lotteries would be strictly regulated in Ohio and Halstead would be vindicated.50

On March 31, 1873, Halstead journeyed to Columbus to be the committee's first witness. The Senate adjourned for the day, and the committee sessions were held in its chambers under packed galleries. After the preliminaries incident to starting an investigation were completed, Halstead was sworn in as the representative of the Cincinnati Commercial. On questioning by the committee he admitted being the author of the editorials which contained the statements: "Senators who opposed the Little Bill [the lottery bill] were dishonest in all their bones . . . if they were not too dull to know what they were about," and Bill Smith, a lottery promoter, "had been placing some of his money where it would do the most good, and that seemed to be most effective in the Democratic Party." He was also questioned about the large dollar marks that followed such

---

50 Ibid., March 27, 1873.
paragraphs, much to the amusement of the galleries. On further question­
ing about his exact information as to those charges, Halstead used a
rather tenuous form of reasoning, but one that was probably not far from
wrong. He said that the lottery bill under discussion was written after
a public investigation had been held following the defeat of an earlier
lottery bill in the House. This investigation by the Corcoran Bribery
Committee had brought forth evidence that a lawyer for the lottery inter­
est had said that ten thousand dollars would have been paid for the sup­
pression of the earlier bill. He said since the usual "grocery" was in
operation at the Neil House, and since the earlier bill had been worth
ten thousand dollars, it might be concluded that the Little Lottery Bill
was responsible for the distribution of an even larger sum.

The senators concluded that Halstead had no specific evidence
concerning bribery and moved on to ask him what his connection was with
the Little Lottery Bill. He said that his interest was that of a citizen
and a newspaper owner. He claimed that lotteries had to be regulated as
they were growing in number and magnitude, and that under the existing
law an intolerable amount of swindling was allowed. He also declared
that if lotteries were allowed to continue unregulated the great weekly
circulation which the Enquirer built by its lottery would require other
newspaper managers to use the same methods, to the detriment of the whole
field of journalism. Even if the Senate felt lotteries should remain le­
gal, the Cincinnati editor felt that some law should be passed to protect
the people from the swindlers who often managed the lotteries. Believing
as he did in lottery legislation, Halstead said he was prompted to take a
hand in promoting the law's passage when he was told it would not pass the
Senate without the Commercial's support. When he heard that a gang of lobbyists were in Columbus, he concluded that corruption was involved and wrote the editorials, believing them true and fair, to gain the attention of the Senate.

The chairman of the committee asked Halstead if he felt that this type of expose based on few actual facts was good journalism. Halstead answered evasively, contending that he did not wish to enter into a discussion of the proprieties and improprieties of modern journalism. He did say that it was general knowledge across the country that state legislatures could be bought, but that the cases in which this could be proven were very small. When he was asked about the personal aspects of his support of the lottery bill—if the Commercial was not a competitor of the Enquirer, and if a personal enmity existed between himself and Bill Smith—Halstead answered that the two papers were not in competition and that he had never even heard of the name of Bill Smith until the Corcoran investigations and still would not know him if he saw him. In saying the two newspapers were not in competition, Halstead was begging the issue. While it was true they were not in competition in the regular sense—the Commercial was a morning journal, the Enquirer was published in the evening—these two newspapers were Cincinnati's largest by this time and were in deadly competition for both readers and advertisements.

When the committee finally adjourned late in the afternoon, Halstead was even more convinced that the Senate would not take his testimony as evidence of corruption in the fight against the bill. Yet, he was further encouraged into believing the bill would finally pass when Bill Smith testified that he had no financial interest in the measure but only
wished to defeat Halstead, whom he considered "a bad man." He attempted to show all of Halstead's "wickedness" on the spot, but the committee would not let him. Halstead felt that this type of activity on the part of the bill's opponents would prove to the Senate that he was right and would persuade the senators to pass the bill.\textsuperscript{51}

When the committee made its findings public four days later, Halstead's predictions were realized. It reported that it was unable to find any foundation of truth in the accusations made by the Cincinnati editor. The report stated that Halstead had testified under oath that the grave charges were made without the possession of any evidence for the purpose of making a sensation which would create a large body of public opinion for the passage of the bill. This type of activity, the report concluded, did a rank injustice to the members of the Senate, degraded the profession of journalism, and if further practiced, would destroy the influence of the press as guardians of public morality and peace.\textsuperscript{52} Yet, the main purpose for which Halstead claimed he had made the charges was vindicated. On the same day as the committee's scathing report, the Senate, by a vote of twenty-seven to ten, passed the bill. Later, on April 11, the House agreed to the Senate's measure, and the Little Lottery Bill became law.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{51}\textit{Commercial}, April 1, 1873. The \textit{Commercial} printed a long and detailed account of the hearings in this issue. The Senate later ordered the official proceedings published by the Columbus firm of Nevins and Meyers: \textit{Senate Investigation of the Little Lottery Bill, Testimony of M. Halstead, B. J. Loomis, Senator Yong [and others]}. The report of the committee, without testimony, was also placed in the appendix of the Senate Journal.

\textsuperscript{52}\textit{Commercial}, April 4, 1873.

\textsuperscript{53}\textit{Ibid.}, April 11, 1873.
The bill's passage of course pleased Halstead, but he felt the committee's report grossly unfair. He said that the committee claimed to have made a careful investigation but to have found no evidence. The editor could not agree, as he thought the investigations "careless, awkward and absurd," moreover, he said the truth of his accusations could be found in the testimony of "Bill Smith and his associates." The report, he concluded, represented the will of the "Courthouse rings" to prevent exposure of their plundering of the people.\footnote{Ibid., April 11, 1873.}

Halstead, of all people, was one of the few individuals to be arrested for violating the new law. One year later, on Saturday evening, April 11, 1874, he was charged with "promoting a lottery." In answer to the charge the editor claimed that this was not the real reason, but rather that he had been arrested for just the reverse. According to Halstead, an advertisement had been taken out in the Commercial to run for twenty-three times. After its appearance on the first day he realized that it could be construed to be an announcement for a lottery, and so it was not run again. Then several days later, a warrant was sworn out for his arrest by Thomas Procter, a soldier stationed at the Newport Barracks with close connections with an Enquirer reporter named Baker. Procter, the account continued, was a stranger in Cincinnati and was paid to swear out the warrant. After doing his duty, the Commercial claimed that he went to the Enquirer office and then got drunk, landing eventually in the guard house for drunkenness and neglect of duty. The article concluded that he seemed the type of man who ought to have a permanent position on the Enquirer staff. "Under the
system of journalism announced by the proprietors of that paper, the usefulness of such a man must seem to all observers quite clear."

The prick of Halstead's pen had been felt by so many in the Cincinnati police force and in the prosecuting attorney's office that many people whose job it was to smooth the wheels of justice decided a little friction would be a good thing. While Halstead was able to leave jail on bond in a few hours after his arrest, the trial was continued several times on request of the prosecuting attorney, much to Halstead's embarrassment. Ultimately the editor paid a small fine and the matter was forgotten.

Halstead's fame as a fighting editor also had a physical aspect. Soon after he came to the Commercial he was involved in his first Cincinnati fist-fight. The levee hackmen did not like an item which had appeared in the Commercial about them. One of them, mistaking Halstead for the author, started an argument and then called him "an offensive name." It was reported that in the next instant the hackman found himself sprawled on the street with an aching jaw. In 1871 the "fighting editor" added to his reputation when a man called at his office to question the truthfulness of an article, and the man called Halstead a liar. The result was a "terrible fight" in which Halstead did the punishing. Reports of the fight were heard as far away as New York. Whitelaw Reid, of the Tribune, telegraphed for details. The Tribune dispatch had indicated that the fight was a result of bad feelings between Washington McLean of the

---

55 Ibid., April 13, 1874.
56 Ibid., April 18, 1874.
57 William L. Halstead MSS., 147.
Enquirer and Halstead. The editor answered that it was just a simple mat-
ter of his veracity being questioned and the proper justice being adminis-
tered. An editorial "fight" did wax and wane between the Commercial's edi-
tor and the Enquirer during the latter part of the sixties and the early
seventies, but the closest it came to a physical fight was a result of an
article in the Enquirer saying that Halstead was a liar. The article end-
ed by saying Halstead knew who had written it and where to find him. Hal-
stead claimed he did not know who wrote the article, or where to find him,
and furthermore, he did not care. Consequently, in a few days a note ar-
rived from Washington McLean indicating he was the author. At the same
time, McLean sent to Kentucky for seconds. Halstead told Reid that he
was the aggressor in the matter—he had been exposing McLean's "rascally
proceedings"—and that courtesy demanded McLean issue a challenge. Had
it been sent he said he would have received it, even though "it would be
unpleasant to see his [McLean's] family going about in black clothes." He
added that McLean probably suspected he would receive it, because none was
ever sent.\(^2\) The animosity between Washington McLean and Halstead was
passed down to Washington's son John, and the editorial "fights" and the
threats of more serious engagements continued for years.

The late sixties and early seventies were also years in which the
Commercial and Halstead prospered. The Commercial's average income during
these years was around two hundred thousand dollars and Halstead's personal
income went over the thirty thousand dollar mark as early as 1868.\(^3\) His

\(^2\) Halstead to Whitelaw Reid, January 21, 1871, Reid MSS.

\(^3\) Commercial, April 13, 1869, January 21, 1870, November 2, 1870,
May 28, 1875, and May 21, 1876—all contain tax lists for the various
years.
growing income allowed him to purchase in 1871 a large three-story brick home on Cincinnati's then fashionable West Fourth Street. His new home, within walking distance of the Commercial's editorial offices, was a typical town residence of the well-to-do citizen of his day. Its many well furnished rooms were a necessity, as his family grew with his income. His first child, Jean, was born in November, 1859. She was followed by John, Marshal, Clarence, Robert, Albert, Hiram, Mary, Clarissa, Griffin, Frank, and the last Willet, who was born in December, 1881. John died in infancy and Hiram at seven. Of the remaining children, Marshal, the eldest son to survive, was Halstead's nominee for his successor at the newspaper. After working on the paper in Cincinnati and as its Washington correspondent, Marshal was appointed American consul at Birmingham. Later he returned to the United States to manage the properties—which included Pennsylvania coal-fields—of his elder sister Jean after the death of her husband, but was stricken and died himself soon after his return to the United States.

Both Halstead and his family were socially prominent. Halstead was one of the first members of the Queen City Club, which remains today one of Cincinnati's "best" clubs, and he and his wife were considered among the city's first families.

60 William L. Halstead MSS., L48. By the summer of 1961 Halstead's home at 361 West Fourth Street, as is the way of so many homes in once fashionable near downtown districts, had been razed for a new expressway. The once attractive residences on the other side of Fourth Street were now slums, each building housing many families, and they too are scheduled for razing.

61 Commercial, November 10, 1875. Halstead does not seem to have been a member of any church. He was a college classmate and a life long friend of a man who became a Methodist Bishop and the Bishop officiated at several weddings for members of the editor's family and at his funeral, but never seems to have converted him to his faith. His family seems to have had some connection with St. Paul's Episcopal Church, but there is no evidence that they were members. Halstead MSS.
Hayes, Jacob Cox, John Walter, the owner of the London Times, John Sherman, William Bristow, Grant's Secretary of the Treasury, and Matthew Arnold were among the many out-of-town celebrities who enjoyed the Halstead's hospitality.  

His circle of friends was large and included most of the celebrated names in journalism and literature in the country. Whitelaw Reid had worked on a Cincinnati newspaper before leaving for New York. He and Halstead had become friends in this period and corresponded for the rest of their lives. William Dean Howells was also an Ohio boy and a friend, even though Halstead felt him to be a little puritanical. He had met and become friends with George W. Childs of the Philadelphia Enquirer at the 1856 Republican Convention. Their correspondence also covers many years. Once, after Potter's death, Childs offered to purchase the outstanding shares of the Commercial in order to give Halstead a free hand in its management. Joseph Medill of the Chicago Tribune was also an old friend. At the time of the Chicago fire in 1871 Halstead sent Medill an extra font of type by express, enabling the Tribune to publish an edition again only a few days after its plant had been completely destroyed.

Halstead's closest friend in the journalistic field was Henry Watterson. Watterson came to Cincinnati in the spring of 1865 after the "rebel" newspaper which he had been editing in Chattanooga was closed by the Federal authorities. His aunt was the wife of Halstead's Literary Club friend Stanley Matthews, while his grandmother lived in the suburb of Glendale. It was only natural that Watterson, a newspaperman should

---

62 William L. Halstead MSS., 149.

63 Philip Linsley, The Chicago Tribune: Its First Hundred Years, II, 133.
seek employment on a Cincinnati newspaper, and he found it on the Evening Times as a reporter. Soon after he had taken this job, the Evening Times' editor fell from a ferryboat crossing the Ohio River and was drowned. Since Watterson was the only man on the staff with editorial experience, the publisher, at a large increase in his salary, made him managing editor. A week later Watterson introduced several changes in the paper which prompted the Commercial to print several humorous paragraphs which had as their basis a newspaper referred to as the Chattanooga-Cincinnati-Rebel Evening Times.

Artemus Ward was in Cincinnati a few days before and he had given a dinner for his old friend Watterson. Halstead had been among the guests, and Ward had told Watterson that the young editor was the "homing man on the Commercial." The Commercial's paragraphs, though admittedly amusing, called attention to Watterson's past as a "rebel" editor, which Watterson felt might cause him to lose his job if they were continued. He decided his best course of action would be to call upon Halstead and see if he could persuade the editor to cease the humorous attacks. He told Halstead that he was "the merest bird of passage with my watch at the pawn-broker's," that he needed the job for a while, and that he thought the personal allusions quite unfair and might result in his unemployment. Halstead replied to him with great heartiness, "... they were damned mean—though I did not realize how mean. The mark was so obvious and tempting I could not resist, but—there shall be no more of them. Come, let us go have a drink." Thus Watterson recalled the beginning of a friendship that lasted nearly half a century.64

Watterson, who later became the editor of the Louisville Courier-Journal usually was Halstead's political enemy, but their personal friendship continued to grow over the succeeding years. They often exchanged visits, traveled to New York and Washington together, and remained in constant correspondence. Their political opposition often took the form of friendly rivalries and friendly feuds carried on in the columns of their respective newspapers. During one of their feuds—Halstead was running a series of articles attacking the South in the Commercial—one of Watterson's associate editors wrote an editorial which personally attacked the Cincinnati editor. When Watterson received the proof he rushed into the room where his assistants worked and said:

Look here, boys, Murat Halstead and I have been fighting literally and figuratively for many years, but we understand each other and know when to fight and when to be friends. He is my particular meat. You boys shinny on your own side and leave Murat to me.65

By the early seventies, Halstead, like his friends, belonged in the first rank of American journalism. Albert Shaw, writing in the Review of Reviews at a latter period, said that he had shown the brains, character, and distinctive personality of a great journalist by this time. He also said the son of Paddy's Run had become one of the most conspicuous representatives of America's greatest school of journalists and placed him along side Horace Greeley and Charles A. Dana because his work always showed the same originality, frankness, sympathy, and intense American patriotism as did that of these men.66


66 Albert Shaw, "Murat Halstead, Journalist," Review of Reviews, (April, 1896), 439-443. It is possible that Shaw, the editor of the Review of Reviews, showed some partiality in his article as he was related to Halstead's mother's family. Nonetheless, his conclusions stand.
CHAPTER VI

HALSTEAD THE TOURIST & WAR CORRESPONDENT

In the spring of 1870, Halstead began to plan a long anticipated vacation. In the years since Potter's death he had only left Cincinnati for brief periods. His desire to make the Commercial into one of the nation's truly great newspapers and his consequent passion for personal supervision of the various details of its daily operations had made him reluctant to leave the newspaper in the hands of his subordinates for a longer period of time. Yet, the persisting dream of seeing the countries and cities that his daily editing duties called upon him to write about convinced him that he should make a summer tour of Europe. Having received letters of introduction from several friends with European connections, Halstead sailed for the continent on the Hamburg Line ship, the "Cimbria", in the middle of June.

The main purpose of the trip was relaxation, as Halstead was beginning to show the strain of his long and irregular hours, but, nonetheless, he remained a devoted journalist and planned to send travel letters back to the Commercial. Travel letters were a feature of American journalism of the period. While often dull by later standards, they met

1 Samuel Bowles to Halstead, June 7, 1870, Halstead MSS.

only allowed the writer to practice his literary style, but also gave the
readers a glimpse of a life most of them would never see or know in any
other way. The Commercial had often carried series of these letters before.
The most famous were from Henry Villard's western journey in 1859. In
proposing to write the letters, Halstead was able to quiet his conscience
in leaving the newspaper for such a long time.

Halstead arrived in Paris near the first of July and delighted in
the tourist's occupation of sight-seeing. He found the splendors of the
city magnificent and loved the historical monuments and small squares
filled with trees and fountains. However, the first-time visitor's
delight with the city which Halstead experienced soon changed to another
emotion. Just as he was preparing to go to Switzerland, war broke out
between France and Prussia on July 19. He was so involved in his activities
that the declaration caught him almost completely unaware. In his day,
before atomic and hydrogen bombs, Halstead can perhaps be pardoned for his
feelings of jubilation after the declaration. It was not because he was
particularly blood-thirsty, or because he disliked either France or
Prussia that caused him to be pleased with the war, but because he saw the
war as a sterling opportunity to gain more prestige for himself as a
reporter and for the Commercial as a great western newspaper. In addition,
he realized that the large German population of Cincinnati and southern
Ohio would read his first-hand reports with intense interest, thus
enlarging the Commercial's circulation. The Commercial could not afford a
European representative and it would have taken a month to send a reporter
from Cincinnati, even if the expense could have been justified.

Commercial, August 5, 1870
Under usual circumstances the Commercial, like most of the newspapers of the United States, would have received their war news from the cabled reports and the newsletters of English correspondents and a few reporters representing New York newspapers. With Halstead on the scene, he could send home first-hand accounts of the fighting, a major coup for a western journal. He immediately decided to become a war correspondent. 4

Halstead, notwithstanding his years at the editorial desk, was still a good reporter. He saw that while the war was seemingly popular among the French, the Emperor was not, and he compared Paris in 1870 to New York at the beginning of the Civil War. The people seemed ready and willing for battle, but there was also ample material for a "peace party." The Emperor, he said, could not afford to lose battles, for if France should fall, he would fall:

...and the group of working men who were passing my window just now, with a great torch and a tri-colored flag in advance, singing the Marseillaise as if it were the beginning and the end of war songs, would sing that song in another cause, and revive again in these stately struts the recollections of the Revolution. 5

His advice to Louis Napoleon was to keep a few reliable regiments within easy reach of Paris, as he was afraid there were people in the city with a greater hatred of the Emperor than of the Prussians. These people, he claimed, would be willing to see France humiliated for the sake of the destruction of the existing regime. 6

---

4Marat Halstead, "Outflanking Two Emperors," The Cosmopolitan Magazine (August, 1894), 424.
5Commercial, August 6, 1870
6Ibid., August 9, 1870
Halstead applied at once through the American minister for authorization to become a war correspondent with the French army. With his experience in Washington during the Civil War behind him, he realized that there might be difficulty in obtaining the right credentials. When days passed without a word from the war ministry, it began to look to Halstead as if his great chance was being ruined by French officialdom. One day while he was in the garden of the Tuileries, he saw the Emperor with the Empress by his side drive out to join the Army at Metz. At about the same time, he learned that the French Government had decided to refuse, without exception, to permit newspaper correspondents to go with their armies. In a bitter newsletter which he sent to the Commercial, Halstead said this meant the entire history of the war would be written from the German point of view. The French, he claimed, would gain nothing from their decision as the Germans had already all the information about the French army that they needed.

The Emperor had left the city to join the army at Metz, and regiments with drums and trumpets sounding were marching from the city, yet Halstead was denied permission to follow. The great battles of the war would be fought, and he would be only a day's journey away, but he would not see them. With these thoughts racing through his mind, Halstead became determined to get to the front. He had been given a very impressive passport bearing a large American eagle, much ribbon and an immense amount

---

7 Murat Halstead, "Outflanking Two Emperors," 424.
8 Commercial, August 9, 1870
of wax when he left the United States. With this impressive document, and a promise from the American minister to answer any telegraph from him immediately, no matter how trivial, Halstead was armed with as much authority as possible. Accordingly, he hired a courier and made plans to go to Metz.

The Cincinnati editor's attempt to become a war correspondent with the French Army without the government's permission resulted in a series of mistakes and frustrations. His first mistake was in hiring a man as a courier who spoke seven languages, but not English. At the railroad station the courier told the French guards that Halstead was a rather suspicious person, and they warned the editor that he would be arrested if he went to Metz. He was able to convince the courier that he was going, even if the authorities would cast him in a dungeon for the duration of the war, and so the courier was able to find a place for them on a train. The only fortunate thing that happened during his last days in Paris was that he met Moncure D. Conway, a former Unitarian clergyman and author of religious books, whom he had known in Cincinnati. Conway was now a correspondent for the New York World and was as anxious to get to the front as Halstead. Consequently, they decided to join forces. Conway was on his way to Strassburg and when Halstead left Metz he was to join him there.

Halstead traveled to Metz with the idea that he would find the French army in action and the attention of the authorities directed towards the enemy, allowing him to make his observations unobserved. His

---

9Halstead, "Outflanking Two Emperors," 425; Moncure D. Conway, Autobiography, Memories and Experiences, II, 219-20
plan failed because when he reached Metz the army was not yet engaged in battle. He was able to find a room at a small hotel, but when he went out walking he was immediately aware that he was being followed. At first Halstead rather enjoyed the attention he was receiving. On the first day he walked around the town and the camps with his escort always just a few paces behind, but not trying to stop him. The following day was different. When he tried to approach the Emperor's headquarters, he was ordered away, and when he climbed to the top of the city wall, he caused a great deal of excitement and his papers were examined by several police officers. That night he wrote a long letter for the Commercial in which he said the French army was "not in good shape" and the letter was confiscated by the authorities. The following day his police escort was even heavier, and he began to fear that the threat of the officer at the Paris railroad station would be carried out. In the hope of forestalling arrest, he telegraphed to the American minister asking him whether his business with the war ministry had been completed. The minister immediately wired back that his application was still pending. The telegrams were meaningless as the French had decided to allow no correspondents, but the officials at Metz read both of them and saw that Halstead was connected with two important people, the American minister and the minister of war, and so he was not arrested.10

By this time Halstead had resolved not to push his luck too far. The next day he paid his courier and took a train for Strassburg, hoping

10 Commercial, August 20, 1870; Murat Halstead, "Outflanking Two Emperors," 426.
his problems with the French police were over. In Strassburg he had just been shown to his room when the police, who had been notified that a mysterious man was coming, arrived and demanded to see his passport. In spite of another police escort, he decided to see the major attractions of the city. After a day of sight-seeing at the Cathedral and around the Rhine, he met Conway in the reading-room of his hotel. Conway had been receiving the same unwanted attention as Halstead, and so the two men decided to go over to the Germans. Halstead had some unfinished business in Paris, and so the two friends agreed to meet in Basle. In Paris Halstead spent one day shipping his luggage to London and arranging for his news reports to be sent to the United States through Belgium. While he was in the city, a messenger from the War Office delivered to him a foot long envelope which contained the final rejection of his application for war correspondence credentials.  

Halstead finally reached Germany by traveling from France to Switzerland and then crossing the frontier from that country. Meeting Conway in Basle, Halstead traveled with his companion to Karlsruhe, the capital of Baden. Part of their journey was made by necessity in a hay wagon when the horse drawn omnibus on which they were riding developed wheel trouble. The two men found that, compared to the French officials, those of Germany the picture of courtesy. Halstead had a slight problem with his first name, which was embarrassingly French. He found even reducing it to an initial was suspicious, but as Conway said, it took only

11Commercial, August 20, 1870; Halstead, "Outflanking Two Emperors," 427.
a little modification of his hand writing to make it completely illegible.  

In Karlsruhe the American minister recognized both men and introduced them to the minister of war of Baden. The minister of war gave them passes to go to the German headquarters, but warned them that it would be an extremely difficult trip since all the trains were densely crowded with soldiers going to the front. They learned that the French Army had suffered a defeat and that King Wilhelm, Moltke, and Bismarck had just crossed the Rhine in preparation for the invasion of France. With the hope of catching up with the King's headquarters they immediately decided to follow. Deciding that their best plan was to follow the railroad, they found an unoccupied compartment on a westbound train and held it until they reached the frontier. At the frontier a German officer ordered them off the train and forbade them going any further. Even though both men had decided that German officers commanded their respect more than their French counterparts, they were not so easily diverted from their plan. A cattle train had arrived a few hours before, and after it was cleaned German soldiers were loaded on it for the front. Halstead and Conway boarded one of the cattle cars and passed out cigars to the soldiers. When the inspectors came along, the soldiers did not betray their generous friends.

---


13 *Commercial*, August 29, 1870.

The train stopped a few miles inside French territory at a macadamized road, and Halstead was told that the King was at the village of St. Avold, only a few miles up the road. The two men arrived at St. Avold late in the afternoon and were unable to find a room. The landlord of the Hotel de Ville de Paris, after serving them a dinner of cold meat and red wine, was however, persuaded to allow them to sleep in his barroom. They had learned that the King was making his headquarters in the village post office, and so after dinner they decided to walk by in hopes of seeing him. Looking out of a second floor front window as they passed below was the King "wondering, I believe, what two such odd looking people as Conway and myself meant by being there. He graciously returned our salutation."  

That night the two American reporters were awakened from their none too comfortable sleep—one was on a billiard table, the other on a stairstep—by a messenger looking for Moltke, who, they discovered, was also staying in the hotel. Conway remembered being given the message and delivering it himself to Moltke's room. Halstead, on the other hand, said that the messenger at first mistook him for the Field Marshal but that the landlord soon arrived and straightened out the situation. Halstead claimed that it was a result of a distorted account of what happened that night that the New York Sun conferred upon him the rank of field marshal.  

---

15 Halstead, "Outflanking Two Emperors," 430.

16 Ibid., 430; Conway, "Reminiscences of Kaiser Wilhelm," 147; Conway, Autobiography, II, 228.
The next morning Halstead and Conway tramped about the town, feeling for the first time since they left Paris that they were a part of the events of the war. During their walk they were talking with a man who spoke English at the King's headquarters when another man of unusual stature and immaculately dressed in the uniform of the Prussian army approached them. Halstead asked if he was Bismarck, and the man replied, "to be sure." Bismarck walked over to where they were standing and in perfect English said he had heard that Halstead was an American editor. Halstead found him extremely gracious and was elated when he said that there were millions of men of his blood in America and that he felt it important that they should have a true history of the war.¹⁷

Bismarck told the two Americans that anytime they were hungry they were welcome to eat at the King's headquarters and asked if there was anything he could do for them. Halstead told him that their most serious problem was transportation. He indicated that without horses he and Conway feared they would be unable to keep up with the army. While they had French gold, they had been told they could not use it to purchase horses without military permission. Bismarck said that he was extremely sorry but that the horses were needed for the army's operation. Consequently, he could not give them permission to make the purchase. Halstead commented that "it was hard that the one thing wanted was the one thing that could not be had." In his description of this meeting with the Chancellor the Cincinnati editor said that with this comment Bismarck's eyes flashed, his voice deepened and an expression that showed proof of

¹⁷Halstead, "Outflanking Two Emperors," 433.
vast experience came over him as he asked, "Oh! you have often found it so?"\textsuperscript{18} To soften somewhat his refusal to allow them the horses, Bismarck commented that the horses were military matters and that he had no influence in the army. Halstead reported that he could not believe this but found that it was true. Bismarck was the King's chancellor, but he was only a major in the army. Nonetheless, he was a rather important major.\textsuperscript{19}

The next day the army advanced and the site of the King's headquarters was unknown to the two American journalists who set out to find it. Food was extremely scarce and both men were hungry. After tramping about for several hours, dodging horses heels, they finally gave up the search. Feeling that they would be starved out of the army, unless they were able to turn the politeness of high officials into something more tangible, they decided to end their search for food when they found a deserted railroad car where they could spend the night.\textsuperscript{20}

On the previous day at St. Avoil Halstead had met a group of officers who were in charge of the division of the telegraph corps and whose duty it was to see that every night there was a wire between the King and Berlin. He had met them through an army surgeon whom he had seen reading a book of Shakespeare and had started a conversation with him.

\textsuperscript{18} Murat Halstead, "Prince Bismarck," \textit{The Cosmopolitan Magazine} (August, 1891), 504. Conway remembered Bismarck's comment as, "Have you not found it so in life, that what one most desires is just that thing he cannot obtain?" Conway, \textit{Autobiography}, II, 227.

\textsuperscript{19} Halstead, "Outflanking Two Emperors," 434.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Commercial}, September 1, 1870.
in English. The telegraph corps had wagons and followed headquarters, and so when the officers asked the two reporters if they would like to ride with them, it seemed as if all their problems had been solved. They were now able to catch up with the King's headquarters at Pon-a-Mousson, near Metz, by the evening of August 14. Here for the first time in several nights they were able to find a room with a real bed.  

The French army had been outnumbered, outgunned, and outmaneuvered from the beginning. Its mobilization was so muddled that the Prussians were able to take the offensive at once. In the first week of August the French suffered defeats at Wissembourg, Froschwilhr, and Forbach. After these losses, the Emperor, who was so ill that he could sit on his horse only in agony, was pushed out of command by his generals, and Bazaine, an intriguer who had disgraced himself in Mexico, was now placed in charge of the main army. Bazaine decided to withdraw from Metz and fall back towards Paris.  

On his earlier visit to Metz, Halstead had noticed Mount Mousson which overlooked the city, and when rumours were heard that Bazaine was going to withdraw and that the Prussians would probably attack, he and Conway decided to climb the mountain for a good view of the battle. At first the Prussian officers said they could not go up, but after they showed them their passes no further objections were made. Halstead thought that this basically frank and cordial policy of the Germans contrasted greatly with the treatment he had received at the

21 Ibid., September 8, 1870.

22 Alfred Cobban, A History of Modern France, I, 199.
hands of the French. The trouble with the French, he claimed, "is too much government—they suspect everybody."23

When Halstead and Conway finally reached the summit they found that it commanded the whole countryside. A group of German soldiers were also on the top, and they told the two reporters that there would be no battle that day. On the following day a story circulated among the townspeople that Bazaine had rushed out of the city with three hundred thousand men to attack the Prussian army. The Americans paid an old French woman to fix them a lunch and then set off once again for their mountain top. They had expected to find the German soldiers at the top as they had on the preceding day, but when they arrived it was deserted.24 Both men immediately felt concern for their safety, for when they had passed through the little French village on the mountain side the villagers, who were clustered in the public square, had not returned their "bon jour," even though on their first visit they had done so with what seemed like great friendliness. The reporters decided that their best policy would be to retreat but concluded that it would be imprudent to appear anxious and decided to linger for a few moments to enjoy the view. Both men were looking at the surrounding landscape with their field glasses when six or seven burly men in the blue blouses of the French peasant came from around the side of a ruined wall. Both men had heard stories about how frightened and desperate the French were, and how anxious they

23 *Commercial*, September 8, 1870.

were to murder "German spies." Remembering that they had been seen talking to the German soldiers the previous day, the reporters sensed they were in danger.

The leader of the group, a heavy set man with a thick neck and large sunburnt hands, approached the two and said in French, "You are Germans." Halstead replied, "No, we are Americans." One of the peasants said, "English," while another one handed the editor a copy of a German newspaper and told him to read it. Fortunately, the reporters' room at Pont-a-Mousson had been occupied before them by a correspondent for an English newspaper, and he had left behind a copy of the London Telegraph behind which Halstead had picked up. He pulled it out of his pocket and showed it to the peasants who glanced at it suspiciously. As a last resort, he then produced his passport bearing its American eagle and ribbon and wax and pointed to the words "United States of America."

This document produced a definite impression of the group, and seizing the chance, Halstead and Conway said "good-day" and walked quietly and steadily away—as if there was nothing the matter. At first the Frenchmen hesitated, and then they began a rapid consultation among themselves. They evidently decided to allow the Americans to leave, for nothing was done to hinder their departure. Halstead thought that their decision was probably based on the fact that the hilltop was exposed and a struggle might be seen from below. The path they had taken up the mountain went through a ravine in the vineyards which the reporters thought a more likely place for an attack. The ravine was admirably constructed for an ambush for on one side were vines while on the other side was a dense hedge. All of it was out of sight of houses, road, or camps. They
concluded that their only chance for safety would be not to take the ravine route but to turn onto another path when they reached the little French village and cross an oat-field to regain the open road. They had a good start before their change of routes was detected. On looking back, they saw the peasants come out of the vines near the ravine with reaping-hooks which Halstead thought looked as if they had been designed for throat cutting. They soon realized that they were still in danger as the peasants began rushing towards their line of retreat. Fortunately for the Americans, they were now within full view of the road, and a squadron of German lancers could be seen approaching. The French "spy-hunters" decided to retreat while the two shaken American reporters hurried back to Pont-a-Mousson. Subsequently, the two decided to limit their morning walks in the future to points within sight of the German army.

On the following day the battle of Mars-la-Tour took place, but neither Conway nor Halstead knew a thing about it until after it was over. While the reporters were engaged with the French peasants, Bazaine, instead of marching against the Germans, had started to retreat towards Paris. After a great battle with frightful slaughter on both sides, the German army was able to cross Bazaine's line of retreat at Mars-la-Tour. The fact that a battle could be fought in their immediate vicinity and neither know anything about it greatly discouraged the two reporters. Later at his hotel, Halstead fell into a conversation with a Prussian officer who spoke English. The officer was interested in his work and

---

25 Halstead, "With an Invading Army," 605; Commercial, September 12, 1870; Moncure Conway, Autobiography, II, 233-234; Commercial Gazette, November 3, 1890
sympathized with him for missing the battle of Mars-la-Tour. At three o'clock the next morning there was a knock on Halstead's hotel room door and when he answered it, he found the English-speaking Prussian officer. The officer told him that he had received new orders and if Halstead would proceed immediately to the village of Gorze he would probably be able to find the grand battle which he was seeking. He was unable to muster the enthusiasm he felt he should show at that hour, but he awakened Conway, and the two men set out for Gorze.

It was August 18, but the air was quite chilly. The two reporters could find no one awake to fix them a warm breakfast or pack them a lunch and so they had to make get by with a cup of wine, a piece of chocolate, and a cigar. In hopes of finding a ride they decided to look for their friends of the telegraph corp. Luck was with them, for not only was the telegraph company going to Gorze, but the Americans were offered a little coffee and some hot soup by the men of the telegraph corp. The wagons were slow, and by eight o'clock, when the reporters once again began to fear that they would be too late to see the battle, they decided to walk ahead.

In a short time they arrived at the battlefield of two days earlier. The armies had not had time to bury their dead, and the bodies of soldiers and horses were strewn among the rubbish of an army in the field. Halstead picked up a camp chair and carried it along with him. On ascending a ridge the two men could hear the distant sound of rifle fire and could see on an elevation in front of them a small group of men.

---

26 Halstead, "With an Invading Army," 606.
With his glasses, Halstead was able to make out the King's carriage, and so he and Conway decided to head in that direction. For once, it looked as if they would be able to observe a battle.

When they reached the elevation, they stationed themselves some distance from the King's official party. The view was magnificent. The Lorraine countryside was visible for miles, and masses of German troops could be seen moving northward and facing East—that is looking towards Germany, while the French were facing Paris. Halstead soon discovered that with his camp chair he had the only seat on the field. The King and Moltke were standing, while Bismarck was lying on a blanket. A few yards from the King stood another figure that seemed familiar to the Cincinnati editor. After studying the man for a while, he discovered that it was General Philip Sheridan whom Halstead had met several times in Washington. Sheridan had arrived the night before and was Bismarck's guest.

During the morning hours there was skirmishing between the two armies, and then about noon the combat deepened. The heavy cannon began to roar and from their vantage point the reporters could see masses of men advance and retreat. The front by now was nine miles long and part of it was not visible to the reporters. Halstead decided to ask Sheridan for his views on the battle, but as he approached, the King's party mounted horses and rode off. Hoping to find a better vantage point, Halstead and Conway decided to follow them on foot. After walking down hill just a short distance, they realized that the position they had left was much better than any they were likely to find. Just as they turned to go back, a rifle shot rang out and the bullet passed so close
to Halstead that he thought he had been hit. The editor could not imagine why anyone would be firing upon him, but Conway suggested that possibly someone thought that since Halstead had taken the camp chair, he was looting the bodies of dead soldiers. Halstead did not think this was the case, but he nonetheless quickly dropped the chair. They then walked back to their former vantage point without incident.27

For the rest of the day they watched the battle from the King's hill. As the sun set, they thought they should hunt shelter for the night as the unexploded shells, which they could see on the battlefield, suggested to them that it would be unsafe to walk about after dark. A short distance from where they had watched the battle an artist for a German newspaper was making sketches. As Halstead and Conway approached him, the artist asked them if they were English. They replied that they were Americans, and he then inquired if they had a room for the night. When they told him no, he gave them the directions to his own room and said that he would join them later but that he had to take advantage of the last remaining light to complete his work.

The battlefield was still smoking and the cannon still roaring when the two Americans hastened away to find the location the artist had given them. When they found the hotel, it was filled with wounded German officers, and Halstead was glad for the privacy of the room to write his account of the battle for the Commercial. His story of the engagement, which was soon called the Battle of Gravelotte, was six and one-half

27Halstead, "With an Invading Army," 607; Commercial Gazette, November 3, 1890.
columns long and appeared on the front page of the September 9 issue of the Commercial. The next day after the battle the Americans returned to the battlefield with an American war historian whom they had met in the village. Here they came across Bismarck and Sheridan. Sheridan, in what Halstead called true American fashion, asked Halstead what he was doing in such a strange and remote place. The editor replied that he had walked this way because he thought that it was an interesting part of the country. The exchange struck Bismarck as extremely humorous, and he shook with laughter. Sheridan told the reporters that headquarters were being moved back to Pont-a-Mousson that night, and he agreed to try to help them make arrangements to stay with the army. On further reflection the two reporters regretfully concluded that they would not be able to continue with the campaign without horses and a place in the army where they could get food and sleep. In fact, they had made up their minds to leave the army and go to Brussels that very night with their first hand reports of the battle.

The trains were completely filled with the wounded. The officials told the reporters that more thousands of wounded were coming, and, as they were civilians and uninjured, they could not have a place in the train. Having decided to leave for Brussels, the Americans were not going to be stopped by a little thing like lack of room. Since

28 Halstead, "With an Invading Army," 608.
30 Halstead, "With an Invading Army," 609.
the wounded were unable to ride on the top of the cars, the two men climbed aboard the roof and rode there. The ride was uncomfortable. The two were forced to lie flat on their stomachs most of the way because of low bridges and tunnels, and a shower came up and soaked them, but they managed to arrive in Brussels the next morning. Conway continued on immediately to London, but Halstead decided to stay in the city for a few days. 31

Halstead had decided to telegraph Sheridan to see if his influence was sufficient to get him the things he thought necessary in order to return to the army. While he was waiting for a reply, he toured the city and visited the battlefield at Waterloo. 32 Sheridan's answer to his telegram was unfavorable and so Halstead decided to return to Paris before going to London. He realized that the possibilities of the German army laying siege to Paris were very good, and so he stopped at the home of a Cincinnati lady who was temporarily living in Paris and warned her, under many injunctions of secrecy, of the danger. His face was well known to this lady's servants, as he had visited her several times before he had left Paris. When the servants were ordered to pack her trunks so that she might leave before the Germans arrived they concluded that Halstead had told her that the Germans would take Paris. The word soon spread that an American, who had recently been in the presence of King Wilhelm, was in the city predicting its fall.

31 Commercial, September 17, 1870.

32 Ibid., September 16, 1870.
A mob formed to search for this man and to "Hang [him] to a lamp post behind the Grand Opera House." When he returned to his hotel, he was told by the proprietor that anyone who claimed the Germans were going to take Paris took his life in his own hands and that the mob was on his trail. For his own safety and that of the hotel's the proprietor advised him to leave. Fortunately, he was able to evade the mob and remained in Paris until after the Revolution.

After Bazaine's defeat at Gravelotte the Emperor and Marshal MacMahon began gathering a new army. With almost no hope of success, MacMahon and the Emperor led their army back towards Metz where the remaining portion of Bazaine's army had retreated. Bazaine remained inactive at Metz, and MacMahon and the Emperor's army, not receiving the support which was needed, found themselves penned in at Sedan. On September 1, Napoleon III surrendered his 84,000 men, 2,700 officers, and thirty-nine generals. When the news reached Paris, revolutionary crowds appeared on the streets. The Empress and the Prince Imperial, sensing the danger, fled to England. Halstead was at the Place de la Concord on the afternoon of September 4, where an enormous crowd had

---

33 *New York Evening Post*, clipping, n.d., Halstead MSS. The clipping mistakenly claims that Halstead arrived in Paris, practically from the battlefield, his beard untrimmed, badly needing a haircut, a bath, and fresh clothes. It says that his disordered appearance served him as a disguise and allowed him to catch the first train back to the Belgium frontier after the mob began its chase. Actually he had been in Brussels several days before returning to Paris and stayed in Paris after this incident.

34 *Halstead, "With an Invading Army,"* 609.

gathered around the Tuileries. At about two o'clock he said the flag of the Emperor fell indicating the death of the Empire. Halstead's prediction that should France fall the Emperor would also fall, had proven correct. 36

When Halstead left Cincinnati, he had felt a great respect for the French people but little for the Germans. After all, France was the country of LaFayette, of the French Revolution, of Napoleon, and of course, Murat. Halstead had studied French history in college, and in his early days in Cincinnati he had dreamed of seeing Paris. Germany on the other hand was associated in his mind with the Cincinnati Germans and the "over the Rhine" district. These were a sturdy, thrifty people to be sure, but not people that Halstead particularly liked or whose company he enjoyed. While there were some exceptions, such as Frederick Hassaurek (the publisher), a few brewers, and others, the average German in Cincinnati of this period was of the laboring class and did not move in the same circles as Halstead. Halstead's ideas underwent a radical change on this first European trip. He liked France, but when the government refused to allow him to accompany the army, he began to have reservations. When he traveled in Germany and was received so kindly by the Baden government and then later by Bismarck, the reversal in viewpoint took place. While he returned to France several more times in his life, he always felt much more at home in Germany and even sent two of his daughters there for their education. He thought the unification after the war proved the superiority of German

36 Commercial, September 23, 1870.
character as well as of German arms. He also found a hero in the architect of unification, Bismarck, whom he felt was the most striking figure in history since Napoleon I. It was Bismarck, Halstead declared, who used parliaments, kings, field marshals, and armies as instruments to fashion his victory. As a result, he said, "The figure of Bismarck, the statesman of blood and iron, who reconstructed Germany and gave her solidity and glory, will forever stand foremost in the world."  

In the summer of 1874, the Cincinnati editor once again sailed for France. He had received an invitation from Cyrus Field, an old friend and the builder of the Atlantic cable, to join him on a trip to Iceland. Field had passed south of Iceland many times while he was laying the cable and had always wanted to see the island, but his curiosity had never been satisfied because of lack of time. In 1874, Iceland was celebrating its one thousandth year of European settlement, and Field decided to charter a ship, gather a party of friends, and become the unofficial American representative at the celebration.

Halstead spent a few days in Paris and with a surprisingly contemporary sound, he lamented that American tourists were becoming too abundant. He also found the city of the Third Republic less gay than that of the Empire and noticed signs that the French were not happy with the results of the war. One sign of this, he said, could be seen in the Place de la Concorde where the chief cities of France were represented.

---


38 Philip B. McDonald, A Saga of the Seas: The Story of Cyrus W. Field and the Laying of the First Atlantic Cable, 233.
by statutes. The statute depicting Strassburg still remained, but was decorated now as a tomb. 39

On July 19 he left Paris for London where he was to meet Field. The Edinburgh and London Shipping Company had offered the party the use of the steam-yacht, "Albion", which they were to board at Aberdeen. Halstead and Field decided to tour the Scottish Highlands before joining the rest of the party, which included among others Bayard Taylor, the lecturer and author who was going on the expedition as representative of the New York Tribune, a professor from Cambridge, and the second son of Gladstone. 40 When they arrived in Aberdeen they discovered that the little "Albion" was not a passenger ship, and so they all had to be "inscribed" according to British law as seamen. The officials in the Marine Office knew that the members of the expedition were not going to sail the ship and therefore signed them up with mock solemnity. They all agreed that they would obey the captain, conduct themselves with decency and order wherever they went ashore, and observe all the regulations applicable to persons in the marine service. An official with an additional smile, also told Halstead that he would be intitled to a gratuity of one shilling per month if he returned having not disobeyed the mutiny laws. 41

The little steamer, flying an American flag, left harbor at

39 Commercial, August 4, 1874.
40 Bayard Taylor, Egypt and Iceland in the Year 1874, 157.
41 Ibid., 161.
Aberdeen on July 22. The next day it arrived in the Orkneys, and from there made stops at the Shetland and Faroe Islands. At the last stop they joined the fleet of the King of Denmark who was also attending the celebration. Iceland had originally been settled by Norwegians, but in 1830 when Norway and Denmark were united, Iceland passed into the Danish King's hands. Halstead attended a church service at which the King was present at Thorshavn, a town in the Faroe Islands. In the afternoon he went aboard the flagship of the Danish fleet as a guest of its officers. He found the ship extremely well furnished and said that the king should not suffer acutely from "any privations incident to adventurous travel."  

From Thorshavn the party sailed through very rough seas to Iceland. They were received in state by the citizens of the island because their ship was at first mistaken for the King's, which did not arrive until later. In their visits to the island's geysers and volcanic relics the American party received almost as much attention from the Icelanders as the King because there was much speculation that Field was planning to build a new cable by way of their island.  

On August 8 the party left Iceland, and with a calmer sea they were able to reach Scotland on August 13. Halstead finished a series of travel letters which he was writing for the Commercial entitled "Notes on

---

42 Commercial, August 20, 1874.

43 McDonald, Cyrus Field, 234.
a Long Journey," and then he sailed for home with Samuel Bowles, the editor of the Springfield, Massachusetts Republican, whom he had met earlier in Paris.  

In April of 1878 Halstead had a different type of European travel experience. His wife and children were scheduled to sail for the continent of April 10, and Halstead went to New York to see them off. A storm at sailing time prompted the captain of the German steamer, "Holsatia", to remain at anchorage a few miles out in the bay until the next day. A few people came out to say goodbye again and one of these was Halstead. He found his wife ill, and when the tug left for shore, Halstead remained aboard. The ship went to sea presently, and Halstead became an unscheduled European passenger. He had no clothing with him except that which he was wearing, and he was now facing a fourteen day sea voyage. In the late 1870's Halstead was a giant of a man and quite rotund. Thus there were few people from whom he could borrow clothing. Luckily, one of the other passengers was his old friend, Bayard Taylor, who was on his way to Berlin to become the new American Minister to Germany. Taylor was as large as Halstead and had an abundance of clothing which he was glad to share.

On the same steamer and also bound for Germany were Mark Twain and his family. As Halstead's fame as a western journalist spread, he

---


was often in demand as a speaker. In 1868 Halstead was one of the speakers at a Delmonico's dinner for Charles Dickens given by the New York Press Club, though Dickens did not hear his speech as he had hurt his foot and had to leave the banquet early. Energetic, enterprising, with a catholicity of taste and culture, Halstead had a fun-loving nature and made friends easily. He loved to get away from his work for a holiday in New York and soon came to be as familiar a figure at the Fifth Avenue Hotel as he was on Fourth Street in Cincinnati. Soon after its founding in 1870, Halstead was asked to join the Lotos Club, of which Whitelaw Reid, whom he had known in Cincinnati, was president. The Lotos Club was the most fashionable and famous journalist organization of the time, and in its rooms, Halstead met the great figures of the period. One of his earliest friendships at the Lotos Club was with Mark Twain. A small club within the club developed which included Twain, one of the nephews of the original Harpers Brothers who had taken over the family business, several of the "greatests" from the Harpers' office, including Thomas Nast, the actors Joseph Jefferson and Edwin Booth, and finally a group of newspapermen and writers such as Bret Harte, John Hay, Samuel Bowles, Reid, Watterson, and Halstead. Meeting at the Lotos Club, Delmonico's or the Fifth Avenue Hotel, where most of those from outside New York stayed when they were in the city, they

46 Commercial, April 23, 1868.

would often attend plays together and then spend the rest of the evening in eating, drinking, and talking. 48

On one of these occasions a group was dining at the Brevoort House after the theatre when a card was brought in to Watterson from a World reporter asking him for an interview. Watterson was on a vacation and was about to refuse when Twain said to give the card to him and left the table. In a few minutes he came to the door and beckoned to Watterson. Twain had told the young and innocent reporter that he was the Louisville editor's secretary and that while Watterson was not present, he could arrange an interview for the reporter with Murat Halstead. He now proposed to introduce Watterson as Halstead. The young reporter had seen neither of the editors and so Watterson was able to give him enough material for a long column that reversed Halstead's opinions in every way. He made Halstead say: "the 'bloody shirt' is only a kind of Pickwickian battle cry. It is convenient during political campaigns and on election day. Perhaps you do not know that I am myself of dyed-in-the-wool southern and secession stock. My father and grandfather came to Ohio from South Carolina just before I was born." No one could understand how it happened that the interview passed through the World's editorial office without the joke being discovered, but the next day it actually appeared in the newspaper. The day after that a note from Halstead repudiating the interview appeared in the World with a one line disclaimer that read: "When Mr. Halstead conversed with our reporter he had dined." Those men in on the joke

48 Watterson, Marse Henry, I, 128.
felt it was too good to keep to themselves, and so a few days later, John Hay wrote an amusing story for the Tribune, which gave all the details of the "Halstead" interview.49

Halstead found he was in pleasant company for his unscheduled cruise and decided to enjoy himself. Twain, in an article which he wrote after Halstead's death, recalled that he, Halstead, and Taylor sat smoking and reminiscing on the first night out until after midnight. One of the curious facts he recalled from their conversation was that Taylor and Halstead were surprised to find each other in such good health. Several years before, both men had suffered heart attacks and their separate physicians had warned them against any type of physical strain or excitement. Both had led quiet lives, walking slowly, never running, creeping up stairs, and avoiding all excitement. Neither man had seen the other for several years, but both had expected to receive the news of the other's death at any time. Then both had received a sudden and violent surprise just a few weeks before. Halstead had been sitting in his office on the sixth floor of the Commercial building when there had been a violent explosion that shook the building and broke several windows. Without thinking he had jumped from his chair and raced down six flights of stairs. When he reached the street, he realized what he had done and prepared for the worst, but nothing had happened. From that time forth, Twain said that Halstead felt like an emancipated man and had spent much of his time hunting for excitement and devouring it like

49 Watterson, Marse Henry, I, 130-32, Paine, Mark Twain, 567.
a famished person. Taylor's surprise had affected him the same way, and so both men resolved to make the most of their ocean voyage. 50

Halstead had many commitments in the United States, and so immediately after docking in Europe he boarded another ship and returned home. In August he set sail again and joined his wife and family in Paris where they visited the Paris Exposition, and then they all returned to the United States together on the German liner, "Pomerania." This vessel sank in a collision in the North Sea on her return voyage to Europe. 51

Halstead's last European trip was in the winter of 1891-92 when he traveled ten thousand miles and wrote a series of newsletters entitled, "Mid-Winter Journeyings of a Journalist." He sailed from New York for Genoa on November 28 and then visited Rome, Florence, Venice, Vienna, Prague, Dresden, Berlin, Hanover, Hamburg, Paris and London. It was his first European trip during the winter, and he claimed it was his most enjoyable trip. There were some hardships, such as low temperatures and long nights, but also many compensations. These included few tourists and so plenty of room on ships, trains, and in hotels. Not only did Halstead write newsletters on his trip but also several travel articles for the Cosmopolitan Magazine which described cities such as Genoa and Hamburg. 52

51 William L. Halstead MS., 158.
52 Commercial Gazette, March 13, 1892
All together, Halstead crossed the Atlantic fourteen times during his life. Travel became his great recreation, probably because of his habits of work. Travel allowed him to be constantly on the go, to see new places, and still to contribute to his newspaper. He also made trips to Cuba and to the Pacific. In almost every case, he not only was a tourist, but was also a correspondent, writing either newsletters for the papers, articles for magazines, or books about the places which he visited.
CHAPTER VII

THE LIBERAL REPUBLICAN

In the fall of 1862 Halstead had written to the then Secretary of the Treasury Chase to condemn the commander of the army in the West. Grant, the editor claimed, was drinking again. According to Halstead, Grant was a "poor stick sober," but drunk he was "idiotic and an imbecile." "Grant will fail miserably, hopelessly, eternally. You may look for and calculate his failures, in every position in which he may be placed, as a perfect certainty." Chase forwarded this letter to Lincoln with the comment that the Commercial was an influential paper and that such reports as Halstead's were becoming common in the West. Western opposition to Grant was later forgotten as a result of his military successes, and Halstead himself was moved to praise Grant's victories and to forget his failures. While the Cincinnati editor flirted for a time with support for Chase on either the Democratic or a third party ticket, he declared that Grant seemed to be particularly fitted for the place when the Republicans nominated the Union hero for the presidency in 1868. Grant, the editor asserted, had proven he was able to bear the greatest responsibilities with ease; had shown executive talents; and had always acted

1Benjamin Thomas, Abraham Lincoln, 373.

2Chase to Halstead, May 22, 1868 and June 1, 1868, Robert B. Warden, An Account of the Private Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase, 698-699, 700-701.
in a quiet, but decided manner. During the campaign the Grant-Colfax ticket received full editorial support from Halstead, who wrote on the day after the election that the victory meant the triumph of law and order in the United States.

The marriage of Halstead's independent journalism with the Grant Administration was to last only through a short honeymoon and was to end in divorce. Halstead had often found fault with Radical reconstruction, and he hoped that Grant would be able to exert his leadership in the Republican party and redirect its energies into more constructive lines. In less than a year, these hoped for results were forgotten; the full guns of the Commercial's editorial columns were turned against the administration; and the anti-Grant faction in the Republican party was saying that Halstead was on their side. Had Halstead remembered his old wartime letter to Chase, he might well have thought that his words were proving prophetic.

Halstead's growing criticism of the Grant Administration was shared by a number of Americans during the early seventies. As Americans learned of Grant's naivete in trusting corrupt friends and relatives there was a call for a reform movement to purge the party of the President

---

3Commercial, May 22, 1868.

4Ibid., November 4, 1868.


6Commercial, October 23, 1869.
and his appointees. As is the usual case with reform, the movement in
the Republican party was composed of many differing elements. All of
the reformers could only agree on their desire to rid the country of
Grant.

What comes to be known as the "Liberal Republican Movement"
seems to have been made-up of two major forces. The first was a group
which Eric Goldman designated as "patrician dissidents." These
individuals, men of refinement and ability, found Grant a sad disap­
pointment from the beginning. His lack of social accomplishments, his
inability to speak in public, and his ignorance of public affairs
provoked their open contempt. These aristocrats of 1870, moreover
found Grant's close association with financiers of ill-repute particularly
distasteful.7

These patricians had little actual connection with the industrial
America of their age. Through inherited wealth, education, and social
position, they saw themselves as standing above the turmoil of politics
and industry, free from the scrambling for fortunes that they saw all
around the country. Consequently, they found it impossible to believe
that anyone involved in "grimg industrialism," would ever really want
a government "free from money-minded self-seeking." The ideal government
for them was one in which individuals like themselves, free from self­
seeking, would wield an impartial justice for all. One answer that they
saw for the problems of America was thus found in civil service reform.
Government by politicians in the pursuit of wealth would be replaced by

---
7 Earle D. Ross, The Liberal Republican Movement, 13.
government of gentlemen "who need and want nothing from [it]... except the satisfaction of using their talents." Another answer was found in a revenue tariff. To these reformers the high protective tariff meant favoritism for one class and a penalty for the rest. A revenue tariff would permit lower domestic taxes, cheaper prices, and the end to what they felt amounted to a government subsidy to American manufacturers.

At the same time, a second force was making itself felt in the border states. These states had often suffered as much in the war as had some of the Confederate states themselves. While their sufferings had often been physical—some were crossed and recrossed by invading armies and ravished by marauding bands—the mental anguish they had known was even greater. Not only had communities been rent by divisions between Union and Confederate sympathies, but also individual families had been victims of conflicting loyalties among their various branches. Union sympathizers in control of state governments had often placed punishments, restrictions, and penalties on their neighbors and relatives whose views they opposed. Then as the passions of the war years cooled they began to have second thoughts. They asked themselves if in their haste to uphold the Union they had not committed injustices and if the continued subjection of the Southern states by Federal troops was not a further injustice.

In Missouri, of all the border states, passions had been the strongest during the war and in the years immediately following. These

8Eric F. Goldman, Rendezvous With Destiny, 16.
passions found embodiment in the postwar years in a radical constitution which not only disfranchised everyone who had served on the Confederate side, but also anyone who had given aid or support to it. The constitution disqualified such persons for public office, for jury service, for such professions as teaching, the law, and the ministry, and even for officeholding in private corporations. In 1870 the Missouri Republican party split over the issue of whether these disabilities should be repealed, and a reform party was founded under the leadership of Carl Schurz and B. Gratz Brown. Schurz, since 1869, had represented the state in the Senate, while Brown was the reform party's candidate for governor. Both men were newspaper editors. The movement was successful and Brown was elected governor. From this start in Missouri, the movement spread across the country. Those who desired civil service and tariff reforms, general amnesty and the end of radical reconstruction coupled with those who felt a general revulsion against the corruption of the Grant regime, now had a political home.

Halstead fitted rather easily into the Liberal Republican movement. He used the Commercial's columns both to attack Grant and to give the reformers all possible support. While there were many things that Halstead disliked on the national political scene, he felt that Grant's distribution of the patronage was particularly liable to criticism. He said that even though Grant was elected as a Republican,

---


10 Rose, Liberal Republican Movement, 52.
he had disregarded the party in making up the cabinet and filling the
important federal offices. The fact that most of the appointees were
Republicans made no difference to Halstead, for he claimed they were
not the distinguished party leaders but the personal friends of the
President. This by itself would not have been so bad, but he declared
that these friends had seemingly bought their offices with gifts of
money and real estate. Halstead was willing to admit that Grant might
have been acting in good faith, and that the high offices his friends
received might have been the result of naivete. As to the charges of
nepotism against Grant, Halstead claimed that the actual numbers of
relatives appointed to office was small, "but he has appointed personal
friends, and the friends of friends, and the favorites of relatives, to
a degree that is not creditable to his sagacity as a man of the people."^1
Later his attacks on Grant's relatives "down to the second cousins and
their connections by marriage" was to increase and grow more scornful.
He particularly liked to point to Grant's elderly and often ill father,
who was postmaster at Covington (a small city just across the Ohio River
from Cincinnati), as an example of those who were unable to fulfill
their duties after their appointments. 12

From the rather mild accusation that Grant had put inconsequential
people into places of great responsibility, the editor moved on to attack
a host of other related evils such as Presidential interference of the
"most obnoxious form" in the Southern states. Instead of attempting

11. Commercial, October 23, 1869.

reconstruction and rehabilitation, Halstead claimed Grant's policy in the South was one of political manuvering to assure his own reelection. "The power and patronage of the Executive," Halstead declared, "...is to be used hereafter,...for the perpetuation of an administration which politicians, and not men selected purely and simply for their integrity and capacity, are to play the conspicuous parts."\(^{13}\)

Not only did Halstead feel that Grant's appointments were unwise from the point of view that they were his friends, relatives, or directed only towards maintaining himself in office, but also because the editor felt many of the appointees were unscrupulous and corrupt. Selfish capitalists, machine politicians from the large city rings, jobbers, and lobbyists were taking over the national government, he declared. \(^{14}\) To cleanse the government he demanded civil service reform, less interference by the national government in state affairs, particularly in the South, and most of all, the election of a new president in 1872. Halstead also had many suggestions for the Republicans as to whom they might choose as their candidate. While there were several points against Horace Greeley of the Tribune, the Cincinnati editor felt he would make an honest and capable chief executive and might even change some of his opinions for the nomination. Charles Francis Adams and Charles Sumner were also on his list of possibilities, but he

\(^{13}\) *Ibid.*, July 29, 1870 and October 31, 1870.

\(^{14}\) *Commercial*, March 20, 1871.
suggested that since both of these men were suspected of having unpopular qualities, perhaps Greeley would be the best for the Republicans. All told, he concluded that there were probably hundreds of men capable of filling the Presidential office as well as Grant.

There were many points on which Halstead could perfectly agree with the other groups in opposition to the Grant regime and the Republican party's program. For several years he had been critical of the Republican policy of a high protective tariff. As early as 1866 he wrote Hayes, his old friend from the Literary Club, "[not to] go the whole hog" with Morrill on the tariff. The protective principle, he declared, would ruin the economy for the sake of "those damned harpies of Pennsylvania and New England." He argued that the tariff might be necessary for some men, but the good of the people was tied up with a tariff for revenue. He saw only high prices for American goods, a loss of foreign markets, and higher rates of internal taxes to compensate for the loss in revenue. Many Republicans in the mid-West, who were not hostile to the Grant administration, were unable to accept what they considered an Eastern protective tariff, and so Halstead's criticisms fell on fertile ears.

---

15 Ibid., December 29, 1870.
16 Ibid., December 22, 1871.
17 Halstead to Hayes, July 6, 1866, Hayes MSS.; Alvin F. Harlow, The Serene Cincinnatians, 249.
18 Commercial, January 1, 1866.
Halstead was only one of a distinguished group of American editors who were using their newspapers' influence to fight the corruption of the Grant regime and to convince their readers that reform was necessary. Samuel Bowles of the Springfield Republican, Horace White of the Chicago Tribune, and Greeley and his editor Whitelaw Reid of the New York Tribune were all as scathing in their attacks on Grantism as was Halstead. The usual party loyalty of all these newspapers was Republican, but as in the case of Halstead, radicalism and the Grant administration had convinced them to experiment with an independent editorial line. Halstead knew all of these men; Reid and White intimately, Bowles well, and Greeley from afar. Soon they were all working together to insure the exposure of the evils in the nation.

Along with this group was Henry Watterson, the Democratic editor of the Louisville Courier-Journal and Halstead's old friend. As a Southern Democrat, Watterson had to tread a rather narrow path during the early months of the movement. If he went far in support of the Liberals, he risked repudiation by his own party and jeers from the Administration that the reform group was nothing more than an attempt to turn the country over to old time Southern politicians. Believing as he did in the return of home rule for the South and reconciliation of the two sections, he concluded that the only answer was the defeat of Grant and the radicals, and that this could only be done by a coalition of Liberal Republicans and Democrats. Thus by the Spring of 1872, Watterson

---

20. Merriam, Bowles, II, 133.
was working closely with Halstead to insure that a Liberal candidate would be nominated whom the Democrats could support. 21

With the exceptions of Bowles and Greeley all of these men had at one time or other worked on an Ohio and, in one or more cases, even a Cincinnati newspaper and thus shared an even greater comradeship. Nonetheless, the point that comes to characterize the movement was not the Ohio background of the leaders, but the fact that almost without exception they were all involved in the field of journalism. Schurz and Brown in Missouri, White in Chicago, Halstead and Fredrick Hassaurek in Cincinnati, Godkin, Greeley and Reid in New York, and Bowles in Springfield were able to reach most of the North and Northeastern United States. Since the Liberal movement depended upon popular support rather than party machinery, these men were to play an enormous role in its success or failure. 22

The Liberal organization of the Missourians was soon copied by other dissident groups across the country. In March, 1871, over seventy leading Cincinnati citizens, all Republicans in party loyalties, joined to form the Central Republican Association of Hamilton County. This group, containing such leading Cincinnatians as Stanley Matthews, George Hoadly, Jacob D. Cox, George R. Sage, H. L. Barnett, Frederick Hassaurek and John Shilito, issued an address similar to the one Schurz


22 Logan, "Watterson," 320.
had written for the Missouri group. In this they claimed that they were still Republicans and still loyal to the historical ideals of the party, but felt that its continual usefulness to the country could only be guaranteed by its meeting and acting upon the questions of the day. They called for the burying of the enmities and resentments of the war, the removal of all political disabilities, a tariff for revenue purposes, and an end to the patronage system.  

Stanley Matthews, an uncle of Henry Watterson and later to be a Supreme Court Justice, was chosen president of the new organization. Halstead, who was not one of the signers of the address, nonetheless wished the movement well and predicted that it would succeed. Matthews, an old friend, was in Halstead's opinion an excellent choice for the leadership and was heartily supported by the editor.  

The organization of such clubs, the constant opposition to Grant among the growing group of independents in Congress, and the campaign of the Liberal newspapers had by early 1872 convinced most men interested in the movement that the establishment of a national party was both possible and necessary. Originally such men as Bowles, Schurz, and Halstead hoped that they would be able to accomplish their aims within the framework of the old party. As long as Halstead believed that the Democrats would nominate their own "reactionary" candidate he was not for splitting the Republican party. If the choice was between the

\[23\text{Commercial, March 22, 1871.}\]

\[24\text{Ibid., March 22, 1871.}\]
usual Democratic politicians and Grant, he was for Grant, the lesser of the two evils. It was only when he thought the chances were good that the Democrats would endorse a Liberal nominee that he began speaking of the possibility of a Liberal candidate. 25

The Administration supporters scoffed at the idea of a separate party organization and also at the need for any real reforms within the old party. They could not understand the opposition to Grant. They felt it was more apparent than real and believed that the newspaper campaigns were a plot on the part of the editors to gain control of the party. To many, the editors were just a group of "cranks" that it was best to ignore. 26 Moreover, the New York Times, a Grant newspaper, claimed that the aims of the reformers, while important, were not clearly defined. The "vague suggestions" for change according to this journal would only be effective through the regular channels of the Republican party, "the party of progress." 27 It was evident to the reformers that the bosses of the party could not be swayed from their support of Grant and that the bosses were in firm control of the Republican party machinery. 28

On January 24, 1872 a Missouri State Liberal Convention met and called for a convention of all Republicans who desired reform to meet at

25 Commercial, December 22, 1871.

26 Henry Watterson, "The Humor and Tragedy of the Greeley Campaign," The Century Magazine (November, 1912), 34.

27 New York Times, April 2, 1871.

28 Ross, Liberal Republican, 54-55.
Cincinnati on May 1. Schurz urged this early date as he still had hope that the Liberals would show such strength in their convention that the Republican party would be forced to repudiate Grant. He wanted to make Cincinnati an imposing demonstration of reform sentiment to convince the Administration faction that the nomination of Grant would mean the loss of the election. Moreover, should a Liberal nomination seem feasible after the convention met, this early date would forestall any action on the part of the Democratic party.

The continued revelations of Administration corruption, the growing evidence that the regular party bosses were open to no changes, and the growing strength of the reform movement convinced the Liberal leadership by March that the nomination of candidates was not only feasible but desirable. Halstead called upon the leaders to stop inserting an "if before every verb expressive of action." He indicated that the time had come to take a bold stand, to pass from the "conditional to the imperative mood," and to prepare for the nomination of a candidate at the May convention. He claimed that most Democrats knew they could not win with a candidate of their own, but continued inaction of the Liberals might make many decide the reform organization would eventually compromise with the Grant men. The Liberals, to be successful, had to announce that they would nominate candidates. This would cultivate Democratic friendship and help members of that party take stands on the issues that

29 *Commercial*, January 27, 1872.

interested the reformers. If they did not do this, they would have to face up to the fact that the Democrats might decide to make the race "on their own wind." 31

Halstead's first suggestion for the Liberal nomination was Horace Greeley. He praised the New York editor's integrity and independence as sterling qualities and said that his familiarity with American history along with his understanding of its wants and desires would recommend him to the whole country. 32 When other newspapers scoffed at the idea that Greeley would make a good reform candidate, Halstead said that he was "in earnest about it" and intended to do all in his power to work for his nomination. 33

As late as April, 1871 Commercial editorials were boosting the Tribune's editor as a candidate who would let the country have peace. 34 The Greeley boom was not ended until Halstead realized the Liberals could not work for a reform nominee for the Republican party, but would have to seek a candidate acceptable to the Democratic party. Greeley had, it was felt, alienated too many Democrats for the party to accept

31 Commercial, March 15, 1872. Even though Halstead had been heaping scorn upon the Grant Administration for at least three years, and had in return been completely vilified by the Grant supporters, his personal relations with many within the party remained quite cordial. In February he was even invited to a dinner party at the Vice President's home. Schuyler Colfax to Halstead, February 11, 1872, Halstead MSS.

32 Commercial, November 24, 1866.

33 Halstead to Reid, December 27, 1870, Reid MSS.

34 Commercial, April 15, 1871.
his nomination. Moreover, many of the Liberals themselves disliked Greeley. Godkin for one felt him imperfectly educated with a "brain crammed with half truths and odds and ends of ideas," and said that he had a burning desire "to help train up a generation of young men to hate Greeley." The tariff reformer element in the movement was also opposed to Greeley because of his protectionist stand. While Halstead had hoped to gain concessions on the tariff issue, he decided after a New York breakfast with Greeley that he had more serious defects that would make his candidacy out of the question. He had, Halstead asserted, "moved in an eccentric orbit and been an experimenter in affairs—a character which however estimable in itself, did not commend itself to the popular instinct as one that gave an assurance of public safety in the highest executive office."

Many among the editor-leadership were mentioning Charles Francis Adams, the son and grandson of presidents and the United States' able minister to Great Britain during the Civil War, as the ideal candidate. Halstead could find many reasons for going along with them. Adams' father's anti-slavery position in Congress before the war, his own standing as a Republican, and his long and disinterested service to the

---

35 Hollo Ogden, ed., Life and Letters of Edwin Lawrence Godkin, I, 255.

36 Ibid., II, 62.

37 Murat Halstead, "Breakfasts with Horace Greeley," The Cosmopolitan Magazine (April, 1904); 702. Halstead to Reid, May 30, 1872, Reid MSS.
Union cause during the war would make it impossible for regular Republicans to attack him as just another Southern sympathizer and would allow him to command a great many Republican votes that the other candidates would not receive. His dignified retirement after the war without involvements in the schemes of the Washington politicians and his education and family background all recommended him strongly to the patrician wing of the reform movement which felt the candidate should be someone like themselves whose only interest in the White House would be that of the good of the country. Moreover, he felt Adams' disassociation from the program of the radicals would make it easier for the Democrats to accept him as their candidate. Halstead and most of the men who favored Adams had never met him. As no one working for Adams' nomination at Cincinnati had received promises of political preference, the conclusion can be drawn that the Adams men had made an entirely personal decision to support the candidate they considered the most able.

At first Halstead's candidate for the vice presidential nomination was Gratz Brown. One Commercial editorial even suggested him as qualified by his sound judgment, good sense, and long political experience for the top position. Later, Halstead decided that there

---

38 Commercial, April 22, 1872.


40 Commercial, March 27, 1872.

41 Commercial, August 15, 1872.
was too much of the "Communist" in Brown for even the second place. Moreover, he felt that the candidate who was chosen should come from a doubtful state and there was no doubt that Missouri would go against Grant. Both Governor J. M. Palmer and Lyman Trumbull of Illinois were mentioned by Halstead as more practical choices. The editor changed his mind because of the greater population of Illinois and because of the chance that it would vote for Grant. Trumbull had the edge between the two men as the Cincinnati editor felt the Democrats would accept him more readily as their candidate. In late April the New York Times, attempting to cause dissension in Liberal ranks, said that Halstead actually thought Greeley, Brown, Palmer, and Trumbull were "experimentalists" who should not be nominated. In reality, Halstead had decided to support Trumbull for second place at least a month before the convention.

Once Halstead made the decision to support Adams and Trumbull, the full force of the Commercial was used to secure their nominations. Hardly a day passed throughout the month of April without a story or an editorial comment about the good qualities of both men, and on the first and second day of the convention the newspaper contained front-page stories entitled "The Public Services of Charles Francis Adams" and "Charles Francis Adams, the Public Career of the Eminent Statesman, the

42 Ibid., April 13, 1872.
43 Ibid., April 22, 1872.
Great Services to his Country in Politics, Legislation and Diplomacy, the Qualifications Necessary for a President of the United States."

As the Commercial held the place as the unofficial newspaper of the convention, almost all of the delegates were exposed to Adams' sterling qualities.

Several days before the convention was to open, Halstead's brother Liberal editors began to arrive in Cincinnati. Bowles, one of the earliest arrivals, had a common bond with Halstead in his support of Adams, and while they waited for the arrival of the other editors, the two mapped out their strategy. White also arrived early and began button-holing delegates and urging the name of Trumbull for first place on the ticket. Watterson, the last to arrive, later recalled that one might have mistaken the convention for the annual meeting of the Associated Press. 45 Halstead and Bowles met him at the railroad station and drove him to the St. Nicholas Hotel where White was waiting. Watterson and Schurz shared a suite at this hotel, and the parlor between their bedrooms became the "committeeroom" of the editor strategists who were soon to be called the "Quadrilateral"—from the term applied to the four great fortified towns with which Austria dominated northern Italy.

These men, who had been promoting the Liberal movement for months, now hoped to control the convention. 46 There was no tight agreement

---

45Wall, Watterson, 102.

among them as to candidates, and thus there was no attempt on their part to railroad one particular man through to the nomination. What they wished was rather to insure a candidate's selection that the "patrician" wing, the Southern reform wing, and the Democratic party could all accept and, most importantly, write a platform that would conform to all the ideals of the reformers. Although all of these editors were experienced newspapermen and political observers, they were not politicians themselves.  

While the name "Quadrilateral" was used to describe the Liberal leadership, there were actually two other men who joined the ranks of the editors. Schurz, a friend of the other editors, became the guiding hand of the movement. The second extra man in the Quadrilateral was Reid. As he was avowedly seeking Greeley's nomination, and as the other leaders had now agreed his nomination would ruin the movement, they only reluctantly admitted him into their council. The members of the Quadrilateral were inclined to look down upon Reid as they were editors-in-chief of their newspapers while Reid was only second in command after Greeley. Watterson urged his participation to assure Tribune support of the Quadrilateral. Since they thought Reid's influence would be small, the editor's agreed with Watterson that with Reid in the group they could "both eat our cake and have it." They were to regret their decision, but Reid was admitted.  

47 Merriam, Bowles, II, 184.  
48 Watterson, "Greeley Campaign," 31.  
49 William H. Hale, Horace Greeley, Voice of the People, 335.
These six took their self-appointed job of saving the country very seriously, and spent most of their time before and between sessions of the convention going over the performances and developments of the day and laying plans for the next sessions. Nonetheless, they were in a city noted for its lager and its various forms of entertainment. Thus when planning meetings lagged, the beer gardens in the German "over the Rhine" quarter or the amusements across the river in Kentucky provided a change of pace. Halstead, the unofficial host, was in a sporty mood and delighted to be able to show the others a good time. This much to the chagrin of some of the group who felt themselves men with a mission to preform.50

The first important obstacle which all the planners agreed had to be over-come was the boom among the delegates for David Davis, the friend of Lincoln and Supreme Court justice. To the editors, Davis was a political opportunist who would be no credit to the reform movement. A man of wealth, ambition, and ability, Davis was nominally a Republican, but had no strong party ties and had been mentioned during the preceding year as a possible Democratic candidate for President. The actual Davis candidacy had been organized in Washington during the winter by Democratic Congressmen and had too much of the astute old time political allure about it for the reformers. His nomination with a Democratic running mate on the Labor Party ticket in February did not help his cause with the reformers.51 Moreover, a large number of politicians with a great

50 Watterson, "Greeley Campaign," 35.

51 Ross, Liberal Republican, 77.
deal of money had established a headquarters in Cincinnati. Here delegates were induced with refreshments to hear about the glories of Davis. The Liberal leadership began to fear that the numbers who were being influenced by the Davis men were assuming formidable proportions and that the time had come to "kill off" Davis. "What business," Watterson asked, "had the professional politicians with a great reform movement?" That the Davis supporters seemed to be trying to wrench control of the convention from the Quadrilateral, seemed to them to be "flat burglary." 52

There was also evidence that the Davis men at the convention contained just those elements which were anathema to those who wanted to make the Liberal meeting stand for all that was good in American political life. Rumors were afloat that the Davis men were bought; and that they had received railroad tickets to Cincinnati and free rent and board while they were in the city. One Davis delegate, who wrote a book about the convention for campaign purposes, was a Grant man who came to Cincinnati only for a lark—and to embarrass the movement. 53

At a dinner meeting at Halstead's home the Quadrilateral decided that in order to save the country from Davis, they would have to use the only real weapon at their command: the power of the press. In concert they all prepared editorials for their respective newspapers

52 Watterson, "Greeley Campaign," 32.

53 F. G. Welch, That Convention; or, Five Days a Politician, passim.
blasting Davis's candidacy. Thus from four major cities would come the word that Davis was unwanted. But to insure that the delegates saw the editorials and saw the consensus of anti-Davis public opinion, Halstead printed all of them on the morning of April 30th. With so much anti-Davis sentiment showing itself across the country, Watterson said the "Davis boomers, were paralyzed," and the nation was saved from this group of political opportunists. 54

The convention opened with the Davis threat a thing of the past and the Quadrilateral convinced that they could only meet success in their hopes of building a better world. Exposition Hall was freshly cleaned and decorated. The Reception Committee had spent five thousand dollars on decorations which included a painted iron statue of America, garlands of evergreens, jars of rubber plants and ferns, and other items. A sounding board covered with cedar and fir, and tan-bark and saw dust on the floor made the acoustics quite good. Only the roof of the Hall gave the committee concern. "If a shower comes down on that vast tin-roof, the convention might as well take a recess." To counteract some of the idea of insurgency that surrounded the convention and to help show the Liberal's place in the mainstream of American history, the chair in which John Adams sat while signing the Declaration of Independence was brought for the use of the permanent chairman. 55


55 Enquirer, May 1, 1872. The New York Times claimed that the preparations for the convention were damaged by the Cincinnatians who had subscribed to the fund of the Committee of Arrangements, but then did not pay their subscriptions. Times, April 24, 1872.
The morning of May 1st opened with a pouring rain which threatened to last the day. Fortunately, before the carriages started to arrive for the first session at noon the rain stopped and the sun appeared. At twelve, Colonel W. M. Grosvenor, a long time leader of the Missouri Liberals and chairman of the Executive Committee which the Missouri Convention had appointed, brought the convention to order, and in a short speech, declared the Liberal meeting was not only the largest in numbers ever assembled, but also the truest representation of public opinion. He called for unity among the delegates so that the movement could go forward against that "power which has so long and injuriously controlled party organizations and political machinery."

Following his opening remarks, Grosvenor named Stanley Matthews as the Committee's choice for Temporary Chairman. Judge Matthews' speech, in which he said that the "time had come when it is the voice of an exceedingly large and influential portion of the American people that they are determined that they will not be longer dogs to wear the collar of party," was followed by loud cries of, "Schurz", from all parts of the hall. To most present, Schurz symbolized the Liberal movement. It was Schurz who had been at the forefront in organizing the Missouri Liberals; it was Schurz who had led the national attack for reform in the Senate; and it was Schurz who had received the blunt of the attack from party regulars. Now the delegates wished to show

---


their appreciation, but after he was conducted to the platform amid tremendous applause and three enthusiastic cheers, he refused the pleas of the audience for a speech. In refusing to speak, he attempted to set the Quadrilateral's tone for the convention. That this was to be a convention free of personalities, one in which the ideals the movement personified were to be stressed, and not any one man. Thus Schurz said "the first of May was a moving day" and called the delegates to get down to the business at hand.

Before the sessions could formally begin, it was first necessary for some order to be brought about in the matter of delegates. There had been no agreed method of choosing delegates and so many had come to Cincinnati by self appointment and demanded seats. Finally a decision was made for all the states represented to hold "state conventions" on the afternoon of the first and these in turn would select from their number who should represent them. This done, the convention was ready to complete its permanent organization the next morning.

The type of men who were selected as delegates was open to controversy. Administration supporters and the Republican press attempted to vilify them, calling them "sore-heads." Sore-heads were those people who were angry with Grant either because they had not received political jobs from him, or had lost political power because of his administration. An attempt was made also to show that the

---

58 *Enquirer*, May 2, 1872.

59 *Commercial*, May 2, 1872.

largest single group was made up of Democrats and that the whole movement was a Democratic plot to regain power. The Cincinnati Gazette, an Administration newspaper, claimed that Watterson was the central figure in the Quadrilateral and was surrounded by "its other members," while the Times called the meeting one of disappointed and dismissed office-seekers and Democrats, and said it showed slight signs of being the beginning of a new party.

On the other hand, Halstead thought the delegates "serious, hard working and distinguished gentlemen," and certainly, from the lists of those present, many were. Horace White claimed that the only members of the old office-seeking fraternity were Davis men. George Julian declared that there were doubtless political schemers and mercenaries in attendance, "but the rank and file were unquestionably conscientious and patriotic, and profoundly in earnest." Ross concluded that while the respectable and eminent representatives were at Cincinnati in great force, so were the more practical politicians. These more practical politicians were able to take control of the convention from the Quadrilateral.

61 Cincinnati Gazette, May 1, 1872; Logan, "Henry Watterson," 328.
63 Ibid., May 2, 1872.
64 Commercial, May 1, 1872.
65 White, Lyman Trumbull, 380.
66 George W. Julian, Political Recollections, 1840-1872, 337.
67 Ross, Liberal Republican, 65.
The beginning of the end came for the Quadrilateral on the second day when the Committee on Permanent Organization named Schurz as permanent chairman. Without question, Schurz was the overwhelming favorite of the delegates and the near unanimous choice for the job, but in accepting the chair he had surrendered all hope of directing the work of the convention from the floor and had assumed a position demanding at least a show of impartiality. Thus the reform leaders lost their only man with any real political experience. Schurz's speech on accepting the chair was admitted, even by the sarcastic Times' reporters, to be eloquent. Calling upon Liberals to put aside the selfish spirit of political trade, he asked them to keep in mind that the platform was every bit as important as the nominees. Moreover, he insisted that if the convention was to be successful, they had to find a better man than Grant, not just any man who might be able to beat the President at the polls. "We want a Government which the best people of this country will be proud of. Not anybody can accomplish that, and, therefore, away with the cry, 'Anybody to beat Grant;' a cry too paltry, too unworthy of the great enterprise in which we are engaged."  

68 Ibid., 92.  
70 Carl Schurz, Speeches, Correspondence and Political Papers, II, 359.
From the beginning it looked to the editors as if the delegates were more interested in just "anyone," than in the more high-minded candidates they were supporting. When the state conventions met, the Illinois delegates were found to be fairly evenly divided between Davis and Trumbull and so White had to be satisfied with only half a delegation for Trumbull from his home state of Illinois. Halstead and Bowles were equally chagrined; when the New York delegation met, the Greeley supporters far outnumbered those for Adams and they refused to give the Adams men any seats in the convention. When the Adams supporter protested to the Credentials Committee that they should have at least a minority representation, the committee refused to agree. Halstead could only take consolation in the fact that Massachusetts and Ohio were holding strong for Adams as was most of the Kentucky delegation.

The real test for the reformers, however, came with the platform, and it was on the platform that the first serious crisis arose in the convention. The Resolutions Committee could not agree on the tariff plank. The Adams and Trumbull men were for a downward revision of the tariff, while the Greeley supporters were for retaining the protectionist principle. The committee could not decide on a compromise that would please both sides and could not report on the afternoon of the second as was planned. When it was learned that there would be no report, the cry went up to start the nominations as many felt that the Resolutions Committee would never be able to report. As nominations

Commercial, May 3, 1872.
without the platform ran counter to the Quadrilateral's demand of principle above the man, they objected to this action, but only defeated it with the greatest difficulty. Watterson later said that he felt this was where the Quadrilateral made its mistake. He claimed that Halstead, Bowles, White, and himself had concluded that Trumbull did not have the strength necessary for the nomination. Consequently, they felt Adams would win on the first ballot, but "inspired by the bravery of youth and inexperience, we let the golden opportunity slip," preferring principle above the man.\(^72\) Since there was nothing further for the delegates to do, they decided to adjourn until the evening in the hope that there might be a report on the platform by then.\(^73\)

When the evening session convened, Schurz had to announce that the report was still not ready for presentation. An attempt to settle the tariff issue on the floor—even though the committee's sessions were secret, everyone in the hall knew that it was the tariff plank that was causing the difficulty—was voted down, and the committee was given until the following morning to find a solution. The next morning Horace White, the committee chairman, was able to announce that the platform had been completed. In general, the platform conformed to the wishes of the Quadrilateral, but on the tariff plank the committee had accepted a compromise. Greeley refused to agree to tariff reduction in any form and so the plank amounted to a defeat for the Quadrilateral.

\(^72\)Watterson, "Horace Greeley," 35.

\(^73\)Commercial, May 3, 1872.
The final solution was actually proposed by Halstead in an editorial in the Commercial on May 1. He said then that he feared the whole popular movement would come to utter failure and disgrace if the delegates allowed their differences over the tariff to get out of hand, and indicated that the platform's most important purpose was to come out unequivocally for absolute purity in the administration of the executive office. Thus to avoid an intra-party rivalry over the tariff issue, he proposed letting the people decide the problem in the Congressional elections. The plank also called on the people to decide the issue in the Congressional districts. If they wished tariff reform, then they should nominate Congressional candidates who would promise to work for such reform. White later wrote that the reason the platform appeared in this form was that the committee decided that while tariff revision could wait, the pacification of the South and the reform of the Civil Service could not. Nonetheless, it was obviously a case in which the reformers were outmaneuvered by the politicians. The Quadrilateral had decided to surrender on this point, but they still expected to name the candidate. There was no controversy over the other planks of the platform. The removal of

74 Commercial, May 1, 1872.
75 Ibid., May 4, 1872.
76 White, Lyman Trumbull, 382.
77 Ross, Liberal Republican, 95.
Southern disabilities was demanded as was local self-government and civil service reform. Repudiation was denounced and a "speedy" return to specie payments was asked. The most radical proposal of the document was that of limiting the president to one term of office. 78

With the platform finally out of the way, the convention was ready to begin the important job of nominating candidates. The Quadrilateral believed that Adams would win on the first ballot. Since entire harmony prevailed between the Adams and Trumbull supporters, it was assumed that the Trumbull delegates would agree to accept the second place for their candidate. 79 Unfortunately for the plans of Halstead and Bowles, the Trumbull supporters refused to give up without testing his strength among the delegates. They also continued to hope that the two front runners would divide the convention and force it to look to Trumbull as a compromise candidate. Thus they continued to vote for Trumbull, even though their votes would have nominated Adams.

There was great tension in the hall as the first poll of the delegates started. While the Quadrilateral still believed Adams would win, there was no positive way of knowing. Alabama divided her eighteen votes among Trumbull, Davis, Greeley, and Gratz Brown. By the time the District of Columbia was called Adams and Brown led the count, but it was also evident that Greeley was running well. With the Wisconsin vote, 78

---

78 Commercial, May 4, 1872.

79 Ross, Liberal Republican, 97.
those fast with figures already knew that Adams had shown the most strength, with a total of 203 votes, but was just over one hundred votes short of the 303 needed for nomination. Greeley came in next with 147, then Trumbull with 108, Davis next with 92 1/2, and Brown with 92. There were scattering votes for other candidates.

Before the official results were announced, Brown asked for recognition. It was already known in the convention why he arose. Brown had arrived in Cincinnati the night before and was determined to keep the Adams group from gaining the nomination. Brown thought that Schurz was trying to keep the nomination from him. Since he knew that the German newspapers were supporting Adams and that Schurz was a leader of the German-American community, he assumed that Schurz was responsible for this support. Consequently, he had decided to come to Cincinnati to work out a compromise that would keep him at the fore of the national movement. Brown was probably right; Schurz did not want him for either nomination, but on the other hand, Schurz had not committed himself to the Adams candidacy. Either Adams or Trumbull was satisfactory to him.

Brown took a room at the St. James Hotel on his arrival and began conferences with the Greeley men. Brown was willing to give his support to Greeley's candidacy in return for the vice presidential nomination. The members of the Quadrilateral and their friends who were staying at the Burnet House were awakened by Grosvenor late Thursday night and informed of Brown's arrival. He ran up and down the bedroom

---

80 Commercial, May 4, 1872.

81 Schurz, Speeches, II, 360.
corridors knocking loudly on doors and shouting, "Get up! Blair and Brown are here from St. Louis." The leaders dressed and gathered in the hotel lobby, but even though they soon learned what was happening, they were unable to take any action. Finally at about two o'clock in the morning they all went back to bed having done nothing. Only Halstead did anything. The editor guessed that a deal was in the making and inserted a warning editorial in the Commercial that appeared on the morning of the voting.

Watterson, the Democratic member of the Quadrilateral and the friend of Brown, could not be found. The other members of the leadership knew that he had "documents which would have induced at least one of them to pause before making himself conspicuous," but the deals were made before he could be found. Watterson claimed that he had been unable to go to bed until quite late because of his habit of always seeing the Courier-Journal, a morning newspaper, to press. Late in the evening some Kentucky friends had convinced him to cross the river to celebrate with them the "triumph of principle over politics." By the time he got back to Cincinnati the celebration had been in vain, and the Quadrilateral "...was done for. The impossible had come to pass."

82 White, Trumbull, 382.


84 Ibid., 335, Watterson, "Horace Greeley," 39. Neither Watterson nor Miss Logan say what these documents were, or what kind of information they contained.
Upon gaining the platform, Brown thanked those who had given him their votes but indicated that he was unworthy of the honor. He then recommended that those who had voted for him switch their support to Greeley as the candidate who could command the largest Republican vote. New Jersey attempted to change her vote, (it had given seven votes to Brown), but Schurz would not recognize the delegation and called for the announcement of the totals on the first ballot. The Quadrilateral now realized that it had been outmaneuvered and that Brown had been successful in making a deal with the Greeley forces. In the hope of stemming what the leaders feared could become a stampede, Schurz gave the chair to George Julian of Indiana and left the hall with the Missouri delegation. Missouri had given her support to Brown and now had to decide if she should follow his advice and take Greeley on the second ballot. Along with Halstead, Schurz did not think that Greeley was the man for the nomination and used his influence to keep Missouri's votes out of the Greeley column. On the second roll call Greeley lead by two votes, 245 to Adams' 243, with Trumbull trailing with 148. Greeley surged ahead by almost one hundred votes over the first ballot, but clearly did not gain the nomination by Brown's withdrawal. While Alabama, Arkansas, California, Georgia, Nevada, New Jersey, and Oregon transferred most of their support from Brown to

---

Commercial, May 4, 1872.
Greeley, Kentucky and Missouri divided their Brown votes between the two front runners. Iowa gave her Brown vote to Adams, while Tennessee gave hers to Trumbull. The Quadrilateral felt that the crisis had passed when the Brown-Greeley deal had not thrown the convention on to the Greeley bandwagon. They now looked for the Trumbull men to give Adams the necessary votes for the nomination on the third or fourth ballot. But on both of these ballots there were only slight variations from the second. Adams regained his lead, but was still almost one hundred votes short of victory.

The fifth roll-call brought the Quadrilateral new hope. Keeping careful count as the balloting progressed, Halstead thought he saw the beginning of an Adams' stampede. When it was announced that his vote had gone over three hundred "a thousand handkerchiefs waved, a thousand hats were flung in the air, and the scene, honestly, for once, really justified the much abused phrase and tired reporter's resource, 'It beggared description.'" The added votes had come from the Trumbull and Davis men and it appeared to Halstead that the long awaited break had come.

Hoping to press their advantage, a sixth ballot was immediately started. As it was obvious that support for Trumbull and Davis was

86 Commercial, May 4, 1872, Enquirer, May 4, 1872.
87 Ibid., May 4, 1872.
88 Ibid., May 4, 1872.
89 Commercial, May 4, 1872.
breaking up, all eyes turned to those states which had given these men most of their strength. On this ballot the Quadrilateral discovered the difference between the professional and the amateur in politics. While counting on what seemed to be an Adams stampede, they were met instead by one for Greeley. As the balloting started, the Greeley men, particularly the New York delegation, began cheering and shout each time a vote was delivered for their candidate. This in turn was taken up by other delegates, and before long a continuing demonstration was in progress. Halstead reported that it was extravagant and did not help Greeley's cause, but nonetheless, more and more votes were changed from the other candidates to the Tribune's editor. When Pennsylvania cast fifty votes for Greeley, victory was his. Greeley won the nomination 482 votes to Adams' 187. The Adams supporters were both angry and shaken. When it was moved to make the vote unanimous, they refused, and Schurz upheld them, saying that Greeley was clearly not the unanimous choice of the convention. 90

While it is clear that the Quadrilateral was no match for the professional politicians who had decided Adams would make a poor candidate, they still tended to blame the results almost entirely on Brown's withdrawal. It is obvious that Brown's decision to support Greeley did not give him the nomination. Had the Quadrilateral either convinced the Trumbull men early enough that they would have to give up their candidates for Adams, or if they had given Adams up for Trumbull, the nomination could have been kept from Greeley. As it was, the Quadrilateral had

90 Commercial, May 4, 1872.
not been able to make a concentrated anti-Greeley attack as they had against Davis for fear of losing Tribune support, and in not eliminating him early, they had let his strength grow. Also Greeley's managers had been willing to work with the politicians, while the Halstead group had attempted to hold themselves aloof, afraid to dirty their hands with what they thought was practical politics. Thus many of the politicians who under most circumstances would not have voted for Greeley had felt that he was the lesser of two evils; that at least under Greeley their importance would be recognized. Many in the Middle West, in the areas where Trumbull and Davis had their greatest support, could not bring themselves to support Adams because of his extremely cold and aloof personality and his opposition to the Free Soil-Democratic coalition of twenty years before. To the westerners he lacked the personal popularity necessary to gain votes. Finally, there was also a widespread fear that the continued hostility of the Irish against him would prevent a Democratic endorsement of the Liberal ticket headed by him.

After the presidential nomination interest in the proceedings seemed to lag. As the delegates were anxious to go home, the roll call was begun for the vice presidential nominee almost immediately. On the first ballot Brown lacked a majority, but had almost a hundred more votes than his nearest competitor. This was proof to Halstead that the Blair and Brown Party [had] handed over the goods, and were ready to receive

---

91 Ross, Liberal Republican, 99-101.
92 Martin B. Duberman, Charles Francis Adams, 362.
On the second ballot Brown went over the top and the vote was allowed to be made unanimous. The Quadrilateral had suffered almost complete failure.

In an editorial the next morning, Halstead said that he felt that the nominations of Greeley and Brown were not the most fortunate which the convention could have made; he repeated his contention that Adams and Trumbull would have made a better ticket; and he refused to endorse the Liberal's choice. All the editors found themselves in an extremely poor position. They had all said that Greeley was not the right man, but he was now the nominee. Their problem evolved around whether Grant was so bad that they could even accept Greeley, and his gang of politicians, or whether it would be best to accept four more years of Grant and not risk the country to Greeley's "experimentationism."

One of the New York Times' reporters at Cincinnati pointed up the problems faced by the editors when their hopes were shattered by what they considered the Greeley fiasco. When the reporter asked Bowles what he was going to do, Bowles said that he was "going to think about it." Halstead, "the Murat of 'Independent Journalism,'" only "swore with an emphatic oath," while Watterson was said to have been surveying his wrecked hopes with a "sickening sensation."

93 Commercial, May 4, 1872.

94 Ibid.; Enquirer, May 4, 1872.

95 Ibid.

Of the Quadrilateral members, only Reid was on the winning side. The other editors had taken Reid into the group because they needed the Tribune, but now Reid realized that he needed the support of the other newspapers for Greeley. Consequently, Reid insisted that the members of the Quadrilateral be his guests for dinner the evening of the nomination. Watterson was given the task of bringing them together, and he claimed that he succeeded in this "up hill work" only by a combination of coaxing and bullying. His characterization of the dinner was one of "frosty conviviality." He and Halstead attempted to enliven the festivities "through sheer bravado," but failed miserably. "Horace White looked more than ever like an iceberg; Sam Bowles was diplomatic, but ineffusive; Schurz was as a death's head at the board...." The dinner party broke up early and sadly, but the guests decided to accept the decision of the convention, even though they found it quite bitter. They agreed to united action, but decided not to make an all-out campaign for Greeley immediately. Bowles sent his famous telegram to the Republican to support Greeley, "but not to gush," as a result of the decision. Schurz was unable to come to a decision for several weeks, but after a conference in New York City he finally agreed with the others. Following the line adopted by the editors, Halstead stated on May 6 in the Commercial that Greeley was in many ways worthy of the office, citing his honesty, sincerity, varied

---

97 Watterson, "Horace Greeley," 40.

experience, and executive abilities, but added that he might support the Democratic candidate if they nominated a true reformer. Not all of the leading Liberals could accept Greeley, even with reservations, as the editors finally had. Few went so far as to renounce the movement itself, but many refused to lend their support to its ticket. Adams was one of those who claimed still to be in complete agreement with the ideals of the reformers, and he urged that the movement be continued, but he could not give his indorsement to Greeley. Another leader who found Greeley impossible was the temporary chairman of the convention, Stanley Matthews. The failure of the platform plank calling for a reduction in the tariff and then the nomination of Greeley, a protectionist, caused him to go back to the Republicans as the lesser of the two evils.

The political leadership of the Liberals realized that if the Cincinnati ticket was to have any success against Grant, the deflections would have to be stopped, and the leading Liberals would have to show a united front before the meeting of the Democratic convention. They knew the Democrats could not be persuaded to take a candidate that any appreciable number of the reformers would not support. In early JuneHalstead received a "confidential" and "strictly personal" invitation to meet with a number of gentlemen "belonging to the different branches of

99 Commercial, May 6, 1872.

100 Charles Francis Adams, Jr. to Halstead, October 5, 1872, Halstead MSS.

the opposition" at the Fifth Avenue Hotel in New York City on June 20 for consultation on the situation in which the reformers found themselves. The note was signed by a group which included Schurz, Jacob Cox, William Cullen Bryant, and David A. Wells. As Halstead, against his better judgment, had already decided to support Greeley, he accepted the invitation as a means of convincing other Liberals that Greeley was not the only answer for their campaign against Grant. Other Liberals felt the meeting, which soon took on the name of the Fifth Avenue Hotel Conference, was to persuade Greeley to withdraw so that the leadership might nominate a new ticket. Watterson said it was "to carry [Schurz] across the stream which flowed between his disappointed hopes and aims and what appeared to him an illogical and repulsive alternative." 

About one hundred persons met at the conference which was chaired by Cox. It was apparent that few of those in attendance wished to choose a new ticket. A poll of the conferees showed that with the exception of the free-traders of New England, New York, and Ohio—a decided minority—the rest, though their commitments ranged from passive to enthusiastic, would go along with Greeley. The meeting did give Schurz and Trumbull a chance to gracefully announce their support for the Cincinnati nominee.

---

102 Schurz et. al. to Halstead, June 6, 1872, Halstead MSS.
104 Ross, Liberal Republican, 119-125. In White, Trumbull, 391, White says that Bryant was chairman of the meeting and fell asleep soon after the precedings began.
The conference adjourned with the majority agreeing to work for Greeley's election. A rump session of the free-traders met the next day and nominated their own candidates, but William S. Groesbeck, the Ohio Independent Democrat who received the presidential nomination, and Frederick Law Olmsted, the New York architect, who was given the second place, both declined. Thus, while not all the Liberals could be brought into the Greeley camp, Greeley was satisfied that they were as united as possible, and felt that the conference had been a success. 105

After the Fifth Avenue Conference, Halstead believed the Democrats would have no choice but to accept the Liberal candidate if they wished victory in the fall. Democrats of both the South and the West, with only minor exceptions, received Greeley's nomination well. The South had lost confidence in the Democratic party to win alone, and that section's earlier pre-war and war-time hatred of the Tribune's editor had been diminished by his sympathetic and conciliatory post-war attitude. In the West, men like Watterson were able to convince the leaders of the party that Democrats as a whole would find fewer objections to Greeley than they would have to either Adams or Trumbull. The only real opposition to Greeley found in the party was from the large mid-Atlantic states of New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. This opposition was both to Greeley's long time support of the Republican party and to his "radicalism." Democratic leaders of these states claimed that Greeley's election would only mean the trading of one set of Republicans for another. By the time of the Baltimore convention the pro-Greeley forces had prevailed, and the

party endorsed the Cincinnati platform and took the Liberal candidates as their own. A group of "true Democrats" refused to accept the convention's decision and held another convention in Louisville. As in the case of the dissident Liberals, the candidates they named refused to accept the nominations, but their refusal was not recognized, and the "true Democrats" were placed in a situation of supporting candidates against their wishes. Even though an active campaign was attempted by this group in twenty-three states, it never became an important force in the election.

Throughout the following campaign, Halstead and the other Quadrilateral editors kept their promise of support for Greeley and Brown. Halstead found it much easier to support Greeley than Brown, whom he claimed was a detriment to the ticket. When Brown went East to campaign in July, he made an extremely damaging speech at a Yale class reunion in which he criticized things Eastern. Halstead said he had personal knowledge of many men who were going to vote for Grant, just because of that speech. "Gratz Brown must have been drunk as a damned fool can get at New Haven," Halstead wrote Reid. He also claimed knowledge of other men who wished to vote for Greeley but could not because of Brown.

Greeley turned out to be a good campaigner. In August he toured some of the New England states, and in September the "October States"—those states like Ohio that held their presidential elections in October. By the September tour Halstead feared for the chances of the Liberal candidate, but he was impressed by his good showing in the rough and tumble

106 Ross, Liberal Republican, 130-149; White, Trumbull, 394.

107 Halstead to Reid, July 14 and 19, 1872, Reid MSS.
of an actual campaign. He said that Greeley's intellectual force was never so clear to his admirers as on the western tour when "the resources displayed were wonderful." All in all, his speeches surprised both friends and enemies by their high tone, good temper and vigor. The main point which he tried to show in most of them was the need for restoration of peace and brotherhood to the still divided nation.

Halstead had decided that the campaign would be a success even if Greeley lost, as the evils of Grant and Grantism had been brought before the people. More importantly, he said that the Democratic partisans could never go back to their old ground. He claimed they could never repudiate the principles that they had endorsed with Greeley, and consequently, there could be no opposition to the constitutional amendments or the result of the war. "Look at it as we may,...the liberal movement is one which ought to gratify every patriotic soul."

Prepared as he was for defeat, Halstead found the returns from the October voting in Ohio disheartening. The Liberals did well in the larger cities, but made no headway in the smaller towns and rural areas. In fact, the Republicans made important gains in the central and Northern parts of the state, and Grant was clearly the victor. Even the Liberal-Democratic success in Cincinnati did not bring Halstead the pleasure one

---


109 White, Trumbull, 400.

110 Commercial, September 7, 1872.
might assume. His old friend, Rutherford B. Hayes, was the defeated congressional candidate in Hamilton County's Second District. While Hayes had remained a Republican, he had retained many of his Liberal friendships and Halstead had even suggested editorially that he should be elected. Halstead claimed that his defeat was in no way damaging to Hayes' own "sterling personal reputation" but was a result of loss of public confidence in the integrity of the managers of the Republican organization in the county.

By November 5, the national election day, Halstead had decided that Grant's luck, "in politics as in war," was likely to reelect him President. Consequently, Halstead's usual fighting election day editorial was replaced by a conservative argument justifying the reformers' opposition to the President. Moreover, he even repeated that Greeley, in his estimate, was not the best candidate that the Cincinnati convention could have nominated. While he called Greeley a good man, he also declared that Grant, with all his faults, was a safe sort of president, and under him the nation would stand firm.

Thus, Grant's reelection did not seem a tragedy to him, nor did he think it meant the failure of the Liberal movement. The liberalization of both parties, which he felt the reformers had accomplished, justified for him the time, money, and hard work which so many people had given.

111 Commercial, August 6, 1872.
112 Ibid., October 9, 1872.
113 Ibid., November 5, 1872; Halstead to Reid, May 30, 1872, Reid MSS.
The success of the movement could be measured, he claimed, "in the removal of the asperities of party differences, and in harmonizing the antagonists of other days over the questions of this day, toward the homogeneity of the American people—a work of inestimable beneficence." Halstead concluded that Grant won because his personal popularity with many Republicans precluded their renouncing the ticket, even though many were dissatisfied with the party. He also found that many Democrats had abstained from voting, unable to vote for Grant, but equally unable to support Greeley, thus allowing the election to go by default. Halstead of course still thought that Adams would have made a better showing, but all indications seem to be that he would have suffered Greeley's fate at the polls. Greeley in fact probably had more Southern support than Adams could have hoped to gain.

At the time of the campaign Halstead felt that his integrity as a journalist demanded opposition to the corruption of the Grant administration and his support of Greeley as the possible remedy for this corruption. Years later he was to regret this adventure into "independent journalism." He always claimed that his opposition to Grant came from the disinterested motives of securing for the American people the best possible government and from no interest in political power for himself. While he certainly enjoyed the importance and public recognition that his shared leadership

---

114 Commercial, November 6, 1872.
115 Commercial, November 7, 1872.
116 Ross, Liberal Republican, 191.
in the movement gave him, there is no reason to doubt the purity of his motives. He later was to complain that his support of Greeley was one of the costliest experiences of his life, resulting in the loss of circulation and advertising for the Commercial, losses from which the Commercial never completely recovered. He came out of the struggle convinced that the best way to succeed in reform was from the inside. 117 Consequently, he never again left the Republican party.

117 Murat Halstead, "History of the Cincinnati Commercial," Halstead MSS.
CHAPTER VIII

THE ELECTION OF 1876

The failure of the Liberal Republican party in 1872 and the depression that hit the country the following year had serious consequences for the Commercial. While there is no question that Halstead remained personally committed to independent journalism and the principles of reform, there is also no question but that this commitment resulted in falling revenues for his newspaper. Long time Republican subscribers turned to the loyal Cincinnati Gazette for their news, and official advertising was channeled to other newspapers.¹

Halstead's basic political philosophy was always closer to the Republican party than the Democratic, and while he worked to keep the Liberal reform element in Ohio intact, it was not long until it was evident that the editor would soon be back in the Republican party.² The disaffected son of the Ohio GOP cannot be said to have returned to his party until after the national convention of 1876, but the state gubernatorial election in 1875 placed him squarely in the path of reunion. Early in June, Ohio Republicans nominated ex-Governor Rutherford B. Hayes for the governorship. Hayes, an old friend of the

¹Murat Halstead, "History of the Cincinnati Commercial," Halstead MSS.

²Samuel Bowles to Halstead, November 9, 1874, Halstead MSS.
editor, had been one of the few Republicans to receive Halstead's endorsement in 1872 when he ran for Congress from Cincinnati. Political observers of the Buckeye scene believed Hayes' nomination insured the Commercial's support for the Republican slate. 3 This support was guaranteed when the Democrats renominated Governor William Allen, who had been elected by a small majority two years earlier when they had adopted a platform favoring inconvertible paper currency. Republicans contended that national financial integrity demanded that greenbacks be redeemed for their face value in gold, while the Democrats felt that the economic needs of the nation in a depression might be better served by inflation. 4

As the inflation question was a national problem Republicans were at first afraid to oppose what seemed to be a popular sentiment and based their campaign on local issues. Halstead believed the issue was the money problem, and made a "direct and vigorous attack" on the inflation doctrine. 5 While he attempted to maintain his Liberal position by calling the Republican currency plank "halting, cautious, and unsatisfactory," he attacked that of the Democrats as "absolutely wrong." 6 It could be characterized, he claimed, "as the sum of all nonsense, absurdity, incoherence and falsehood." The Democrats believed that


4 Philip D. Jordan, Ohio Comes of Age, 1873-1900, 40-45.

5 George S. Merriam, The Life and Times of Samuel Bowles, II, 244.

6 Commercial, July 22, 1875.
inflation would help the common man, but Halstead declared that it only made the rich richer and the poor poorer while the "speculators, the sharers, and the gamblers," gathered the earnings of the people at large. To insure a return to prosperity, Halstead called for a return to an absolute gold standard. This, he asserted, would restore business confidence, make capital active, create thousands of new enterprises, and make many new jobs. 7

Halstead believed the currency question was of the utmost importance for the 1875 campaign because of its implications for the forthcoming presidential contest. He thought that a Republican victory in Ohio on the question of inflation would force the Democrats to give up the Greenback contest on the national level, nominate conservative candidates, and write a sound platform. If the Democrats did this, then the Republicans would also be forced to nominate equally sound reform candidates, thus assuring the cleansing of the national administration. 8

Halstead's belief that the reform battle of 1876 would be won or lost in 1875 was generally accepted by the Liberals. Emphasizing a detachment from both parties, Halstead and the Liberals declared that they were only interested in sound policies and reform. In July Halstead wrote to Schurz, who was then vacationing in Europe, urging him to return to the United States in time for the Ohio campaign. Letters from other Liberals calling for his participation persuaded Schurz to cut short his vacation and to spend part of September campaigning in Ohio. 9

7Commercial, July 3, 1875.
8Ibid., July 15, 1875.
popularity with the German-Americans and the impression of sincerity he made on the hundreds of others who flocked to hear him, caused the chairman of the Republican state committee to give him much of the credit for Hayes' victory. However, Samuel Bowles gave the credit to Halstead, who, he said, more than any other man, "did it" through his intelligent and informed editorials on the issue of resumption.

A few Liberals wished to keep their party organization intact so that they might nominate candidates in 1876, but most, including Halstead, thought they saw within both the Republican and Democratic parties strong elements for reform. They hoped to work through these elements to bring the old parties around to the Liberal position. While the prime enemies of reform for all Liberals remained Grant and his Republican associates, most still saw their best hope in working within the Republican party.

The capture of the House of Representatives by the Democratic party in 1874 scared many of the reformers who claimed that they saw "Jeff Davis and Company" in the Democratic congressional program.

Halstead had few regrets about returning to the Republican party, but he was determined that the Liberals should keep their organization intact so that they might be a powerful force in determining the Republican

10 Jordan, Ohio Comes of Age, 47.

11 Merriam, Bowles, II, 348.


13 Commercial, February 2, 1875.
nominee. The rumor that Grant might try for a third term scared him, though he declared you could not find three Republicans in any Ohio school district who would support the move. He and Bowles soon decided that Adams, their favorite for the Liberal nomination in 1872, would make the best candidate for the Republicans in 1876.\(^1\) When the question of Adams' age arose, Halstead claimed that there was "no instance of a member of the Adams family in good standing dying before he was eighty. There is room enough for three terms yet for Charles Francis Adams."\(^1\)

Near the end of April, 1875, the Liberals gathered in New York for a banquet to honor Schurz and to lay plans for the upcoming campaign. While he was in New York for the Schurz banquet Halstead was interviewed by a reporter for the New York Sun. In this interview Halstead declared himself to be an Adams man but also said that Benjamin Bristow, Grant's reforming Secretary of the Treasury, was being considered by Liberals as a possible nominee. When asked whom he thought the Democrats might nominate, he declared, "not Governor Tilden,...[because] he is positively an honest man."\(^1\) Halstead's interview was widely reprinted and commented on in the American press. The New York Times thought that Halstead was "quite as 'independent' of the 'Liberals' today as he ever was of the Republican Party," and said he discussed politics sensibly and with good humor.\(^1\) The New York Mail found Halstead "a lynx-like discoverer of

\(^1\) Bowles to Halstead, October 19, 1875, Merriam, Bowles, II, 348.

\(^1\) Commercial, May 3, 1875.

\(^1\) Commercial, May 3, 1875.

\(^1\) New York Times, May 4, 1875.
the weaknesses of parties and party leaders," and said no editor would be as much missed as the "Field Marshal." Other newspapers were not quite so sure that Halstead was such an expert political observer. The New York Graphic thought he often had trouble seeing events clearly because his eyes were filled with motes he had thrown into the air, while the Cleveland Plain Dealer lamented that such a man as Halstead was always chosen by eastern journalists to speak for the West.\textsuperscript{18}

Closer to home, the editor of the Hamilton Telegraph thought that the interview was an attempt to prove Halstead "a very great man" in the East, but that the West knew he was "gifted with more brass than brains, and more cheek than conscience."\textsuperscript{19} Halstead published all the comments, both good and bad, in the Commercial.

A year later in May, 1876 a second meeting of about two hundred leaders of the Liberals was held at the Fifth Avenue Hotel in New York. The purpose of this meeting was to take measures to "prevent the national election of the centennial year from becoming a choice of evils." The convention, under Schurz's leadership, did not endorse specific candidates, but issued an address on May 16 which called upon both of the major parties to nominate reform candidates.\textsuperscript{20} Halstead, and a portion of the Liberal leadership who believed their best chance for success meant working

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Commercial}, May 6, 1875.

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}, May 7, 1875.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{David S. Muzzey, James G. Blaine, A Political Idol of Other Days}, 102-103; \textit{Ross, Liberal Republicans}, 229.
with the Republican party, had by this time decided that Adams would never be accepted by the party regulars and had turned to Bristow as their most likely candidate.  

Bristow, a Kentuckian, had made an enviable record both as a soldier and as an administrator. He had served with distinction as a lieutenant colonel of infantry under Grant at Fort Donelson and Shiloh; had become Solicitor General in 1870; and had been made Secretary of the Treasury in 1874. His activity in the prosecution of the whiskey frauds had angered the President when he came too close to Grant's own friends, but it made him the darling of the Liberal reformers who saw him as the one uncorruptible and courageous man in the administration.

While Bristow had the support of many Republicans for the nomination, James G. Blaine was probably the most popular with the rank and file of the party. The amnesty debate during the preceding session of Congress in which he defended "the boys in blue" and condemned the "rebel chieftain" had made him a hero to millions in the North. For several years Halstead had corresponded with Blaine, but the close friendship that grew up between the two men was still in the future.

---

21 Bowles to Halstead, March 4, 1876, Merriam, Bowles, II, 349.
22 Muzzey, Blaine, 107.
23 Ibid., 82-83.
Blaine might claim that he had explained "that Credit Mobilier Matter" to Halstead's satisfaction, but by early spring, the Cincinnati editor knew of the existence of the Mulligan Letters, items not so easily explained away.

In late February Blaine sent Halstead a copy of a letter that he had written to Joseph Medill in which he declared:

> without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion (as the Iron-Clad oath says)...that there is not a semblance or scintilla of truth in that story.... I should be a very great fool to permit myself to be placed on the parapet, to be naked by the Enemy's fire, if a single point of my harness was weak. I am as Iron-Clad as the oath.

Halstead could not accept these assurances. Since he sincerely wished the Republicans to nominate a reform candidate, he not only found it impossible to accept Blaine, but he resolved to do all in his power to keep the Maine Senator from securing the nomination. Halstead felt that the Mulligan Letters should be printed to expose Blaine and to insure his defeat, but at the same time he realized that the letters might also have the unwanted effect of ruining the chances of the Republican party in the national election. Moreover, if the letters were published and the blame were placed on the Bristow supporters, Blaine might retaliate by

---

24 Blaine to Halstead, April 4, 1873, Halstead MSS. One Blaine letter, interestingly enough, is headed "Confidential, Destroy," Blaine to Halstead, December 31, 1873, Halstead MSS.

25 Allan Nevins, Abram S. Hewitt, With Some Account of Peter Cooper, 302.

26 Blaine to Joseph Medill, February 29, 1876, Copy, Halstead MSS.
throwing his support to a third candidate. The letters were finally published in late May in Dana's New York Sun. As Halstead expected, Blaine saw this as the work of the Bristow men and resolved that if he could not gain the nomination neither should Bristow. 27

Roscoe Conkling of New York, Oliver P. Morton of Indiana, John Hartranft of Pennsylvania, and Marshall Jewell of Connecticut were also mentioned as possibilities for the Republican nomination, but the only other candidate to stir widespread public support was Ohio's three-term governor and Halstead's friend, Hayes. An active organization captained by William Henery Smith, the general agent for the Western Associated Press, secretly worked with the Bristow men to stop Blaine and at the same time built second-choice support for their candidate in the rival camps. 28

As a close friend of Hayes it might be assumed that Halstead was a party to the maneuvering to gain him the nomination. When the Mulligan Letters were republished in the Commercial on the eve of the convention Hayes and not Bristow profited. 29 Yet Halstead, while never editorially hostile to the Ohio Governor's candidacy, remained a Bristow supporter until the end of the convention. During the pre-convention period he was in

27 Harry Barnard, *Rutherford B. Hayes and His America*, 285-286. Barnard's story on the publishing of the letters is somewhat confused. He places General H. V. Boynton in Washington as the Commercial's correspondent while actually he held that position for the Gazette. He also says Richard Smith was publisher of the Commercial and Halstead editor. In 1876 the two men had not yet combined their newspapers.


29 Halstead added to the republished letters a strong editorial condemning Blaine as a "sort of broker in the stock of railroads which were affected by the legislation of Congress," and guilty of "Disposing of the bonds to 'his friends in Maine,' [at] . . . a very handsome commission." *Commercial*, June 2, 1876.
constant correspondence with Schurz concerning the reformers' strategy. When Schurz wrote asking if the editor thought his presence in Cincinnati during the convention would help their cause, Halstead urged him to attend. When Schurz decided to make the trip to Cincinnati he asked Halstead to act as his agent in rounding up delegates from Wisconsin, Ohio, and Indiana for him to talk with the night before the opening session of the convention, as he claimed the reformers' success would depend on the impression made on the delegates from the Northwest. He also warned Halstead against frightening people in Ohio with his opposition for fear it would produce a reaction against Bristow. Hayes also thought that the editor was a sincere Bristow supporter, but told Halstead that in his work against Blaine, he could not possibly be doing as much for him if he were supporting him directly.

The Republicans met on June 14 in Exposition Hall in Cincinnati. This was the building used by the ill-fated Liberals four years earlier for their convention. Many commentators mentioned that something of the "Spirit of '72" seemed to hover over the building in the way that the delegates "paid tributes to honest government." Pious sentiments to honesty in government notwithstanding, there was no question that Blaine was the most popular of the candidates. The short "plumed knight" speech of Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll, the Republican spellbinder and anti-religious lecturer, sent the crowded galleries into wave after wave of cheering.

30 Schurz to Halstead, May 30, 1876, Halstead MSS.
31 Schurz to Halstead, June 7, 1876, Halstead MSS.
32 Murat Halstead, "Recollections and Letters of President Hayes," The Independent (February 16, 1899), 486.
33 Muzzey, Blaine, 102.
and might have carried the delegates along with him if the voting had immediately taken place. When the voting began on June 16, Blaine led for the first five ballots with the principal opposition scattered between Morton, Bristow, Conkling, and Hayes. On the sixth ballot the Blaine strength increased to less than seventy votes of the number needed for nomination, and there was immediately the fear that the delegates would be stampeded into his corner. The Conkling-Morton group was forced to choose between Bristow and Hayes, or see Blaine, Conkling's arch-enemy, achieve the nomination. As the Bristow supporters had offended too many of the old guard Republicans whom Conkling-Morton represented, it was only natural that they should turn to Hayes.\textsuperscript{34} Samuel Bowles claimed that Hayes won because the Bristow supporters could not prove to the Conkling-Morton forces that Blaine could not be nominated. Failing in this, he said, it was easier for Conkling and Morton to force Bristow to accept their second choice candidate than for Bristow to bring them to an agreement.\textsuperscript{35} 

Many of the reformers were disappointed in Bristow's defeat but echoed Halstead's opinion that while the party "lost a great opportunity," it had at the same time "escaped a great disaster." Hayes, while never closely identified with the reformers, had an unblemished record of faithful public service. Moreover, as the first Ohio Governor to gain a third term he had already proven his popular appeal. His good Civil War record and his soundness in financial matters added to his stature as a candidate.

\textsuperscript{34}Roseboom, \textit{Presidential Elections}, 238; \textit{Commercial}, June 17, 1876.

\textsuperscript{35}Samuel Bowles to Halstead, June 22, 1876, Halstead MSS.
Halstead claimed him a satisfactory choice "... not a giant, but of good dimensions for reasonable service."  

In sending congratulations to the nominee Halstead declared that his support of Bristow during the pre-convention campaign had not taken into consideration his personal feelings, and that his public statements and editorials since the convention had not yet given his full estimate of the candidate. "It has not seemed to me becoming to be in haste to be expressive." Pledging to "keep step to the music and follow the flag of the Union," Halstead volunteered his services in the contest which he claimed would be very close but end in Hayes' election.  

Halstead was further reassured that the convention had made a wise choice when his Washington correspondent wrote that the original Hayes men, the Bristow men, a few of the Morton men, and very few of the Conkling men, "in brief, the real reform element," constituted the "Hayes Party." Moreover, Schurz and the other leaders of the Bristow wing of the party were convinced that Hayes could be counted upon to take a stand on civil service reform.

The Democratic convention, which met in St. Louis at the end of June, nominated Samuel J. Tilden, New York's reform governor and the one

36 Commercial, June 17, 1876.
37 Halstead to Hayes, June 22, 1876, Hayes MSS. In a later letter Halstead claimed that "it was not a labor of love" for him to oppose Hayes' nomination, but that he liked the way Bristow "took damn scoundrels by the neck," and wanted to support that kind of man. Halstead to Hayes, September 19, 1876, Hayes MSS.
38 Wilson J. Vance to Halstead, July 11, 1876, Charles R. Williams, The Life of Rutherford Birchard Hayes, I, 471.
39 Halstead to James M. Comly, June 18, 1876, Comly MSS.
Democrat whom Halstead had called "positively an honest man." As the candidates of both parties were men with strong reform tendencies, the liberals found themselves divided. Most of the independent journals, agreeing with Halstead that their best chance for lasting reforms lay with the Republicans, supported Hayes.  

Halstead's immediate and wholehearted endorsement of the Republican nominee caused some opposition newspapers to chide him for his inconsistencies. It was asked how one could be so unsparing in condemnation of Grant, and yet so damning of the Democratic candidate and party. Halstead replied that much of his opposition to Grant and his administration stemmed from his fear that Grant was following a course that would allow the country to fall into the hands of the Democratic party. He claimed that his criticism had not been directed against the Republican party, but against Grant who had wasted and squandered the "glory of the party," and made "the triumph of the Confederate Democrats possible." He would grant that the sins of the Republican administration had been "many and inexcusable" but called it folly and "national suicide" to turn the government over to a set of men who might claim loyalty to the Union, but whose "devoted adherence to constructions of constitutional dogmas ... lead logically to disunion."

Halstead's fear that the election would be close was shared by Republican decision makers. By September the whole galaxy of party stars

---


41 *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September, 1876, *passim*.

42 *Commercial*, October 2, 1876.

43 *Commercial*, October 17, 1876.
were put on the stump. Schurz, Morton, Blaine, Ingersoll, and even Halstead made speeches for the Republican candidate. Halstead took a deep interest in the campaign. He freely offered advice to the candidate and received indications that it was welcomed. The editor contended that the issue that would decide the election would be Southern war claims. The Southern war claims issue resulted from the Republican induced fear that a Democratic president and congress might submit to Southern demands for the payment of Confederate war claims. Halstead asserted that this fear was real as the Democratic party had given abundant evidence that it would be "subservient to Southern influences." "The lately rebel elements ... which the Democrats will carry out in Congress."

Beginning in September, Halstead kept up an incessant campaign in the Commercial against Southern war claims and what he started to call "the Solid South." That he seriously believed there was a Southern threat can be seen in a letter to Hayes in which he declared that "the Confederacy is attempting now what the idiots missed doing when they preferred war." Not satisfied only with his newspaper contributions to the campaign, Halstead also suggested to Hayes that he write a newspaper supplement on the war claims issue for distribution in the doubtful states of New York, Ohio, and Indiana, and that he speak on the war claims in New York. Halstead argued that New York would be the crucial state in

---

44 Hayes to Halstead, September 18, 1876 and September 21, 1876, Hayes MSS.

45 Halstead to Hayes, October 14, 1876, Hayes MSS.

46 Commercial, September 8, 1876.

47 Halstead to Hayes, September 19, 1876, Hayes MSS.
determining the election. He stated that Tilden would pour money into the state and that the powerful organization that the Democratic candidate had already developed would make it difficult to oppose him, but, if the "peril" of Southern war claims could be promptly carried to the people, Hayes might have a chance.

Hayes was also worried about the New York vote. He felt that the large registration in the city might mean that the honest vote of the remaining state might be overturned. He agreed with Halstead that the Southern claims would be the best issue for New York—"It touches the two vital things, first the whole Rebel menace, Second it reaches Men's pockets—it is answer to 'hard times.'" He also agreed that a New York speech and a newspaper supplement by the Cincinnati editor would be a great help to the campaign, but complained that the party was short of funds.

The money for Halstead's project was found, and he arranged to speak at Cooper Institute on October 25. His speech was then printed as a newspaper supplement and widely distributed in the principal northern states. This was Halstead's major contribution to the campaign. That he considered it important can be seen in the fact that the editor, who was in the habit of dashing off editorials and long articles in minutes, spent three days and nights on the composition of the speech.  

---

48 The Ohio State Committee had already distributed 160,000 copies of an earlier supplement which Halstead authored. Halstead to Hayes, September 21, 1876, Hayes MSS.

49 Halstead to Hayes, October 14, 1876, Hayes MSS.

50 Barnard, Hayes, 313.

51 Hayes to Halstead, October 14, 1876, Halstead MSS.

52 Halstead to A. T. Wikoff, October 19, 1876, Hayes MSS.

53 Halstead to Hayes, October 23, 1876, Hayes MSS.
The Cincinnati editor was well known in the East and a large and fashionably dressed crowd turned out to hear his speech. As Hayes suggested, the speech was formed to emphasize the unpatriotic character of the South—to wave the bloody shirt, and to point out the danger to the American economy of granting Southern claims. While he added very little to his argument that he had not already used in his Commercial editorials, his language was more intense, and its emotional appeal more obvious.

Moreover, speaking to an audience with a greater immediate interest in financial problems than his Cincinnati readers, he carefully emphasized the havoc the payment of the war debts of the South would bring to American finances. It would mean, he asserted, "the adoption of the Confederate system of finance—the issue of legal tender paper to pay the claims, a policy that would reduce the finances, the credit, the bonos of the Nation to a level with those of the Southern Confederacy—the level of hopeless bankruptcy." As if the whole idea of greenbackism was not already anathema to his audience, he pointed to continued horrors that they might expect from a once again powerful South:

It is the flagrant intention that those claims shall ultimately include the slaves emancipated by the sword, and that there shall be added to them the value, according to the estimates of the owners, of the cotton destroyed, and the corn, green and dry, in the fields, and cribs, that was consumed by men and beast in the national service. Then we see coming, like a cloud of grasshoppers, myriads of thousand dollar mules and pianos, and an endless array of velvet parlor furniture and rosewood fencerails.

54 Commercial, October 26, 1876.
56 Ibid., 10-11.
How could the people of New York keep this ghastly specter from becoming fact? Vote for Hayes!

Halstead's journey to the East did not make him any more optimistic about Hayes' chances. While the upstate vote might be expected to go to the Republican candidate, there were large and ominous increases in the registration lists in New York City. The editor thought that it might mean the upstate vote would be overbalanced. Moreover, he feared that intimidation of Negro voters in some of the Southern states would also mean their loss to Hayes. As Halstead more and more heard reports from his friends of the attempts in some of the Southern states and New York to insure Tilden's victory, he became worried about a new danger. Since it was probable that the election would be close, what would happen if some of the electoral votes from the South were disputed? In his Cooper Institute speech he said a disputed election would "Mexicanize" the United States. Halstead claimed the real problem was a result of the failure of Congress to legislate standards for the qualifications of electors. He predicted that should Tilden win as a result of carrying the Solid South, the Republicans would vigorously contest the election, if it were proved that the Democrats had used intimidation and fraud. The tragedy, he declared, was that there existed neither law nor tribunal in the nation to recognize their appeal and to decide the question.

The fear voiced by Halstead and seconded by Hayes was borne out.

57 Commercial, October 30, 1876.
58 Halstead, "War Claims of the South," 12.
59 Commercial, October 19, 1876.
60 Barnard, Hayes, 314.
Tilden received a popular majority in the election, but in the states of South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana, the outcome was in dispute. The Democratic candidate carried the large northern states of New York, Indiana, Connecticut, and New Jersey and had 184 undisputed electoral votes, one short of election. For victory Hayes needed all of the disputed electoral votes. In the face of what seemed like overwhelming odds, the Republican National Chairman was ready to concede defeat, but John Reid, a New York Times editor who had spent time in Libby Prison during the war and hated all things Southern and Democratic, persuaded him to claim the votes of the disputed states and, consequently, the election for Hayes. 61

In the three Southern states the Republican party controlled the state governments and the election machinery. The party had counted upon this control along with the masses of Negro voters to carry the election. The Democrats on the other hand had practiced intimidation and violence to keep Negroes from the polls. Where possible, both parties seemed to have resorted to fraud. In Florida and South Carolina Republican election boards quickly certified Republican electors. Democrats also claimed victory and so from the two states two sets of returns were sent to Washington.

In Louisiana the incidences of corruption by both parties were much greater than in the other states and much more flagrant. The election board was controlled by the Republicans, but on the face of the returns, Tilden received a comfortable majority. Even President Grant admitted that Tilden seemed to have a six to eight thousand majority. 62 For Hayes to claim the Louisiana vote it would be necessary for the board,

62 Nevins, Hewitt, 399.
which had wide discretionary power, to throw out thousands of Tilden's votes. "Observers" from both parties were sent into the South when it was learned that the election would depend on the vote of these three states. Halstead was asked to go to Louisiana as his friend Watterson was to be a Democratic observer, but in a telegram he replied that he did not think he could be of any use to the party.

From the first, Halstead's position in the Commercial was that while Tilden had a count of 184 in the electoral college, he would be unable to get the one additional vote that would make him president. When Democratic newspapers whouted that Republican tactics were foul, and their editors threatened force to uphold what they considered a Tilden victory, the Commercial's editorial columns emphasized shame in the situation.

The memories of the war should save us from rashness of initiative. It is wrong to be denouncing the authorities and assuming that they are wholly regardless of the common rights of citizens. It is inflammatory to follow every movement of a squad of troops to keep the peace, with vindictive cries that this work of the peacemakers is the mechanism of despots.

Halstead's history of independent journalism ended in November, 1876. Following his own dictates of earlier years, the Commercial should have printed the whole story of the Louisiana canvassing Board, but Halstead's partisan support of Hayes would not allow him to do this. Halstead honestly believed that a Democratic victory held grave dangers for

63 Roseboom, Presidential Elections, 243-244.
64 Halstead to James M. Comly, November 17, 1876, Hayes MSS.
65 Commercial, November 10, 1876.
66 Ibid., November 11, 1876.
the country. He saw the blood of Union soldiers shed in vain if a "Democratic-Confederacy" was returned to national power, and so perhaps allowed his passion to blind him to the facts. While it does not "make the kettle white by calling the pot black," Halstead did have on his side the fact that there were large scale Democratic frauds in the state. His editorials all took the same scornful position, that the Republicans would far rather lose the election than carry it by fraud. Mr. Tilden, he declared, might find nothing "objectionable in his being raised to the Presidency by illegality, violence," but Mr. Hayes did. The Democrats defeated by a swindle would "receive a quit-claim deed for the country, the property deliverable forever at the end of four years." The Republicans, he asserted, were not about to deliver up this deed. 67

When the Louisiana board finally certified the Hayes electors, the dilemma of the disputed election was still not over. As in South Carolina and Florida, the Democratic electors also sent their votes to Washington. Now it was the problem of Congress. The Constitution provided that "the President of the Senate shall, in the Presence of the Senate and House of Representatives, open all the Certificates, and the Votes shall then be counted," but made no provision for disputes arising from two sets of returns from the same state. Moreover, the wording: "and the Votes shall then be counted," was vague enough to allow controversy as to whether the president of the Senate could determine which of the votes were to be counted, or whether this could only be determined by the vote of the two chambers. In October Halstead had feared a disputed

67 *Commercial*, November 10, 17, 19, 21, and December 2, 1876.
election and claimed Congress in not resolving a possible conflict was
derelict in its duty. By late November he changed his mind and adopted
the straight Republican line, "that the rule of the Constitution is good
and sufficient, and not likely to be improved." In other words, T. W.
Ferry, the Senator from Michigan who had been chosen President of the
Senate on the death of Vice President Wilson, should count the votes.
The heart of Halstead's argument was that there was no constitutional pro­
vision for any officer of the government to "declare" who had been elected.
He said the Constitution itself declared the President, and he was the
candidate who received 185 votes. While it remained unsaid in this ar­
gument, Ferry, of course, would count only the Republican votes.

Unfortunately, the solution to the problem was not so simple as
Halstead would have liked it to be. The Republican Senate would accept
this plan, but the Democratic House of Representatives was obviously against
any answer that would so easily count Tilden out of the race. No solu­
tion had been found when Congress met in December, but extremist state­
ments on both sides began to frighten moderates and finally forced a com­
promise. A fifteen-man Electoral Commission was set up that included five
Senators, five Congressmen, and five Supreme Court Justices. Three from
each House were to be of the majority party and two of the minority, making
five Democrats and five Republicans. Two of the justices were to be from
each party, and they were to choose the fifth—presumably David Davis,
Lincoln's old friend and a man of no strong party loyalties. The Com­
mission was to have final authority over any disputed returns except when

68 Commercial, October 19, 1876.
69 Ibid., November 21, 1876.
overridden by both Houses of Congress. The Democrats were elated with the plan as they were sure Justice Davis would decide that at least one electoral vote should go to Tilden, but their elation was short-lived. On the day that the bill passed, word was received in Washington that Davis had been elected to the Senate by the Illinois legislature, removing him from eligibility on the commission. As all the remaining Justices on the Court were Republican, Joseph P. Bradley, who was considered the most independent, was named. It was hoped that Justice Bradley, even though he was a Republican, would realize the gravity of the situation and allow fact and not partisanship determine his course.70

Not only were the votes of the three Southern states at stake when the count began on February 1, 1877, but Abram S. Hewitt, the Democratic National Chairman, had also caused one vote from Oregon to be in dispute. In Oregon Hayes had clearly won a majority, but one of his electors was a local postmaster, violating the Constitutional provision against electors holding places of trust under the Federal government. When this was discovered, the Democratic governor of Oregon was persuaded to refuse his commission and certify the highest Democratic elector. The Republican elector immediately resigned as postmaster, and his two fellow Republican electors elected him to fill his own vacancy. Thus, two sets of returns were sent to Washington from Oregon. Halstead and his fellow

70 Roseboom, Presidential Elections, 246–247. Henry Watterson claimed that his uncle, Stanley Matthews, told him that the Republicans wanted Davis as much as the Democrats. "Judge Davis was as safe for us as Judge Bradley. We preferred him because he carried more weight." Henry Watterson, "Marse Henry," An Autobiography, I, 311. Halstead also thought that the commission remained safe for the Republicans whether Davis or Bradley sat on it. He saw it as a means of giving Hayes the presidency "relieved of all assumptions or mortgages and imputations." Halstead to Hayes, January 22, 1877, Hayes MSS.
Republican editors accused Hewitt of a dirty trick in the Oregon case, but Hewitt knew what he was about. Republicans claimed that the Electoral Commission had no right to go behind the canvassing board's decisions. Hewitt reasoned that they would be forced to investigate the methods of election or accept the Oregon Democrat, giving Tilden the election. Nonetheless, the Commission voted not to go behind the official returns and in every disputed case voted strictly along party lines of Hayes.71

When the Democrats saw how the count was going they were naturally angered that their candidate was to be seemingly defeated by such a partisan vote. They had agreed that the decision of the Commission would be final unless both Houses objected, and of course, the Republican Senate was not going to object, but several northern Democrats thought that they had found a solution to this new problem. They proposed a filibuster movement that would keep the House in separate session and would prevent the completion of the count before March 4, the date Grant's term ended. They seemed to feel that the specter of the country without a President would force the Electoral Commission to decide in at least one of the contests in Tilden's favor.72 Surprisingly, when this plan was proposed in the Democratic House Caucus, the Southerners in lining-up almost solidly against it were able to help defeat it. Halstead had been claiming for a year that the Democratic party was controlled by its Southern wing which wished to regain national power to overturn the results of the war. On

71 A. Taft to Halstead, February 12, 1877, Halstead MSS; Allan Nevins, Hewitt, 327; Roseboom, Presidential Elections, 247-248.

72 Halstead claimed the filibustering Democrats were behaving like "idiots and lunatics." Halstead to Hayes, February 19, 1877, Hayes MSS.
its surface Halstead should have been surprised by the patriotism which these Southerners showed in allowing the count to be completed, but he was not. In fact, he was an active worker in the behind-the-scene maneuver that brought about the surprising Southern vote.  

During the preceding session of Congress, the Hayes men had noticed a division between Northern and Southern members of the Democratic party. The Southerners, their section suffering from the effects of reconstruction and depression, wished to receive Federal grants and subsidies for internal improvements. They argued that hundreds of millions had been spent in the North, and since their taxes had paid for these Northern improvements, they too deserved a share. By 1876, Northern Democrats had become spokesmen for reform and retrenchment. They argued that too much Federal money had been squandered and refused to support any more subsidies. The Hayes' men cautiously looked to this split in the Democratic party as their answer to assuring Hayes' victory.

As early as late November, Halstead attempted to arrange a meeting between L.Q. C. Lamar of Mississippi and Hayes. Lamar, a leading Southern Democrat, stopped to talk to Halstead in Cincinnati on his way to Washington, but refused to commit himself to a visit to Hayes in Columbus. Following Lamar's visit, Halstead was able to arrange for Colonel W. H. Roberts, a close personal friend of Lamar and the managing editor of the

---


75 Halstead to Hayes, November 30, 1876, Hayes MSS.
New Orleans Times, to meet with Hayes. The Enquirer saw sinister implications in the meeting, and Halstead was forced to explain in an editorial that it was just a courtesy visit by a gentleman of the press to Ohio's governor. Roberts, Halstead explained, had been telegraphing stories from Louisiana to the Commercial, and when he stopped in Cincinnati on his way to Washington, he gave the New Orleans editor a letter of introduction to the governor. As Roberts was also a friend of Comly of the Ohio State Journal, he and Roberts called upon the governor, who wished to hear a first hand report on conditions in Louisiana. Contrary to the Enquirer's report, Halstead claimed that nothing had been said about patronage.

Actually the meeting went further than a friendly visit, but did not produce any compromise that promised to end the stalemate on the disputed election. Roberts promised to make no trouble for Hayes, but he also stated he had no authority from any of the leading southern Democrats to make any "proposition looking to a compromise." Halstead thought the Hayes-Roberts conference a promising start towards a compromise, but he was at a loss to know what could be done to further it. With the comings and goings of Hayes' visitors so closely watched by the press all seemed to be agreed that any additional action would have to be in a less conspicuous place and between men on more intimate terms.

An organization that would provide such conditions was already in existence. The Western Associated Press, of which Halstead was president, had on its board of directors the leading publishers of the western press,

---

76 Enquirer, December 2, 1876; Commercial, December 3, 1876.
77 Woodward, Reunion and Reaction, 26.
78 Ibid., 27.
both North and South. One of these was Colonel A. J. Kellar of the Memphis Avalanche. Not only was Colonel Kellar (the title colonel was earned in the Confederate Army) respected by Southern political leaders, but he also hated the Northern Democratic party. He called Tilden "the most contemptible and dangerous politician this country has ever seen," and was willing to help Hayes gain the presidency in exchange for promises from the South.79

William Henry Smith, the Western Associated Press General Agent, and others of the Hayes faction worked out a grandiose scheme that looked not just to Southern support for Hayes' candidacy, but to a Republican—Southern Democratic alliance. Smith claimed that he had been privately discussing the possibility of an alliance between the Republican party and the old Whig and Douglas Democratic elements of the South since Hayes' nomination in June.80 It was thought that many of the Democratic political leaders of the South had more in common with the Republican party than their Northern brothers. Many had been Whigs before the slavery controversy had driven them into the Democratic party, and many retained their Whig economic orientation. The Hayes' men thought that promises of federal aid for river and harbor improvements, a Federal subsidy for the Texas and Pacific railroad project, and closer economic ties with the North would sever their shaky alliance with Northern Democrats.81

As Halstead said in a later editorial, there was no reason why some former Whigs who worked with the Democratic Party in the South during

79 Barnard, Hayes, 360.
81 William H. Smith to Whitelaw Reid, December 18, 1876, Reid MSS.
the war and reconstruction period "should not, now that those issues are out of the way, seek party relations that are more congenial on other questions." Smith arranged for General Henry Boynton, the Washington correspondent for the Cincinnati Gazette, to work with Kellar in an attempt to convert the Southern Congressmen to Hayes. In accepting the Republican nomination Hayes promised noninterference in the internal affairs of the South. Smith felt that this was the single most important point which Boynton and Kellar could emphasize in their campaign for the Southern Congressmen. As a Southerner Kellar was able to act as a go-between for the Hayes forces and Southern Congressmen without arousing the suspicion of the Democratic press. Kellar spent the month of December in Washington sounding out the Southern Representatives. On his return to Memphis he stopped off in Cincinnati and told Halstead the Solid South was dead, but to insure a Hayes victory, Kellar suggested that the governor proclaim as often as he could that he could stand by his letter of acceptance.

The compromise that evolved from the talks was that Hayes would stand by his letter of acceptance by ending carpetbald rule in the South, by appointing a conservative Southerner to his cabinet, by supporting Federal grants for internal improvements and education, and by favoring a subsidy for the Texas and Pacific railroad. In return, the Southerners promised fair treatment for the Negro in the South and that the electoral count would not be obstructed.

82 Commercial, April 28, 1877.
83 William H. Smith to Hayes, December 14, 1876, Hayes MSS.
85 Halstead to Hayes, December 15, 1876, Hayes MSS.
For years historians have told of the Wormley's Hotel conference in Washington that presumably arranged this compromise. The details had all been worked out before Wormley's which was only a last-minute meeting to assure the Southerners that Hayes would stand by the promises his supporters had given them.

In the early hours of the morning on March 2, Senator Ferry declared Hayes elected. Later in the day the new President-elect arrived in Washington. As the 4th fell on Sunday, he was privately sworn in on Saturday and the public ceremony held on Monday. Halstead claimed that Hayes had triumphed because the people of the United States desired peace and the removal of sectional prejudices. As long as the new President stood by his promises, the editor declared he would retain the support of Republicans, Democrats, and even ex-rebels, alike.

Halstead's active role in politics did not end with the manipulations of the disputed election. When it appeared likely that Hayes would win the decision of the Electoral Commission the problem of choosing a

---

Matthew Josephson, *The Politicos, 1865-1896*, is just one of many.


*Commercial*, March 12, 1877. It is interesting to note that Halstead reported to Hayes that failing all other lines, Democrats were planning to take the Presidency by force. L. G. Weir to Hayes, February 7, 1877, Hayes MSS. Barnard, *Hayes*, 342-343. Even Halstead's old friend Watterson volunteered to lead an unarmed regiment from Kentucky to force Tilden's election. Halstead called the people who made such threats the "disorderlies" and said they only showed their "childishness and cussedness." *Commercial*, March 1, 1877. A *Harper's Weekly* cartoon by Thomas Nast showed a bulky Halstead pouring water on a fire breathing Watterson over a caption of "Fire and water make vapor." *Harper's Weekly*, February 5, 1877. Nast, incidentally, was a close friend of both Halstead and Watterson. Halstead to Watterson, February 18, 1874, Watterson MSS.
The discussion between the two men was not limited to the cabinet, but also included the inaugural address. Halstead insisted that Hayes should emphasize in the address that he would deal liberally with the South, but at the same time make it known that he would protect the Negroes in their rights. This would encourage Southern whites to support the Republican administration, and also reassure Northerners that the

90 Robert Halstead, "Presidents I Have Known," Halstead MSS.

91 Halstead to Hayes, February 9, 1877, Hayes MSS.

92 Halstead to Hayes, February 11, Hayes MSS. Samuel Bowles had earlier sympathized with Halstead about the burden of having his state's "favorite son" as a Presidential candidate and declared, "it must be wearing, even to a man of your stubborn constitution." Bowles to Halstead, December 26, 1876, Halstead MSS.

93 Halstead, "Hayes," Independent, 487.
results of the war were not to be overturned. The editor also thought that Hayes should make a strong statement on Civil Service reform, but he believed it was necessary to guard against giving the impression that an "official class" would be established. 94

"As to the cabinet, Halstead was most insistent in urging the claims of Carl Schurz. He claimed the appointment would recognize the strength of both the liberal wing of the party and of the German element. Moreover, he felt the Missourian would make an effective administrator." Halstead had been pushing Schurz's candidacy for several months. At first he had hoped to see him made Secretary of State, but later decided the Interior department would be a better field for his abilities. When Schurz suggested that the reform element might be better represented by Bristow in the Treasury Department, Halstead replied, "You suggest I go to Columbus to meet Hayes and talk Bristow. I saw him here and talked Schurz." The editor declared he was for Schurz as Secretary of the Interior because there was more room for civil service reform in that department than any other. 95 Halstead's insistence bore fruit and on February 25th Hayes wrote Schurz of his intention, should be become President, to appoint him to Interior. 97 William Henry Smith, who did not think Schurz or any other prominent reform figure should have been

94 Halstead to Hayes, February 11, 1877, Hayes MSS.
95 Halstead to Schurz, February 6, 1877, Carl Schurz, Speeches, Correspondence and Political Papers, III, 388.
96 Schurz, Reminiscences, III, 374.
97 Ibid., 375.
included in the cabinet, declared Schurz's choice "was Halstead's work after I left . . .".\(^98\)

Hayes confided to Halstead at the February 11th meeting that he planned to include neither members of Grant's cabinet nor Presidential candidates in his official family. The editor agreed that this was a wise decision and claimed that the people wanted Hayes to "dispose of all the cabinet difficulties" in his own way without reference to intra-party politics. Halstead also wished Hayes to rule out all prospective candidates from Indiana and Pennsylvania. Indiana was a Morton preserve and Pennsylvania was in the hands of Simon Cameron. To take a man from either state would mean either accepting old guard dictates, or creating two strong Senatorial enemies. Halstead declared that the success of Hayes' administration would be dependent on the Republican party capturing the House of Representatives in 1878. Whether this could be done, he asserted, would depend on the cabinet choices that were made. To give the cabinet over to the Grant party, would mean giving Congress to the Democrats for a generation. As proof he cited the election in Indiana. While Morton had made a machine fight and lost, the editor maintained that Benjamin Harrison, Bristow, and Schurz, could have carried the state.\(^99\)

At the conclusion of the Cincinnati meeting Halstead was convinced that the best cabinet Hayes could appoint would include William M. Evarts as Secretary of State; John Sherman as Secretary of Treasury; Schurz as Secretary of Interior; John M. Harlan, Bristow's campaign manager and law

\(^98\)William H. Smith to Richard Smith, November 19, 1877, Hayes MSS.

\(^99\)Halstead to Hayes, February 22, 1877, Hayes MSS.
partner, as Attorney General; Eugene Hale, Zach Chandler's son-in-law, as Postmaster General; and General Joseph R. Hawley of Connecticut, as Secretary of the Navy. This slate, Halstead claimed, would satisfy everyone, and it would leave the War Department open for further maneuvering. Halstead believed that since Harlan could be counted as being from Kentucky the promise of including a Southerner would be taken care of with his appointment. Hayes was more realistic than the editor on this point and Thomas Settle, a North Carolina politician, was proposed for the Navy Department with Hawley going to the War Office—certainly a much more appropriate place for the general. Settle remained in the revised plans for the cabinet only a short time. On February 19th Halstead received word that the North Carolinian was not of the caliber for inclusion in the cabinet. "He is said to be a very hard drinker—habits spoiling him for business—and a fraud in other respects, shaky as to integrity, etc." Southern Congressmen were not satisfied with the Navy post, and while there was some talk of Settle receiving the Postmaster General's chair, Halstead squashed this by declaring Settle a Blaine man. He said that the office would enable him to distribute patronage with the view of manipulating the next Republican convention for Maine's favorite son. Hayes ultimately gave in to Southern demands and appointed a Southerner Postmaster General, but not Settle. The choice fell on David

100 Halstead to Hayes, February 11, 1877, Hayes MSS.
101 Halstead to Hayes, February 13, 1877, Hayes MSS.
102 Halstead to Hayes, February 19, 1877, Hayes MSS.
103 Halstead to Hayes, February 24, 1877, Hayes MSS.
Key of Tennessee, a retiring senator. Key was not only a man of integrity, but was also a friend of Kellar and the choice of the arbitrators.\footnote{Barnard, \textit{Hayes}, 418, Woodward, \textit{Origins of the New South}, 42, 47.} Hayes did not go along with the often repeated Halstead advice that he not choose a man from Indiana.\footnote{Halstead, to Hayes, February 22, 1877, \textit{Hayes MSS.}} The President had wanted to find a position for Benjamin Harrison, whom he admired, but indicated that he could not offer him a cabinet post for fear of angering Morton.\footnote{Halstead to Benjamin Harrison, February 22, 1877, \textit{Harrison MSS.}} According to Barnard, Hayes showed "practical political sagacity" in not needing Halstead's advice, for Morton had shown zeal in working for Hayes election and in championing the Republican cause during the disputed election. Moreover, after Thaddeus Steven's death, Morton was the outstanding defender of the Republican reconstruction policy in the Senate and in a dispute over a new Southern policy Hayes would need Morton on his side.\footnote{Barnard, \textit{Hayes}, 417.} Consequently, he removed Harlan from consideration because of Morton's objections to him and named Richard W. Thompson Secretary of the Navy. Thompson was considered by many a liability to the cabinet and a mere puppet of Morton, but Hayes had appeased the powerful Indiana Senator.

Two other appointments were also decided on practical political grounds. Charles A. Devens, a Massachusetts judge and a close personal friend and law partner of Senator George F. Hoar, was appointed Attorney General. George W. McCrary, an Iowa Congressman who had sponsored the

\begin{itemize}
  \item One of Hayes' biographers claims that he wanted to give the seat to General Joseph E. Johnston, a leading ex-confederate, as a grand gesture of reconciliation, but that General Sherman protested and Hayes had to be content with the lesser man. H. J. Eckenrode, \textit{Rutherford B. Hayes, Statesman of Reunion}, 243.
  \item Halstead, to Hayes, February 22, 1877, \textit{Hayes MSS.}
  \item Halstead to Benjamin Harrison, February 22, 1877, \textit{Harrison MSS.}
  \item Barnard, \textit{Hayes}, 417.
\end{itemize}
bill that set up the electoral commission was made Secretary of War. McCrary was a friend of General Grenville M. Dodge, the chief engineer of the Texas and Pacific Railroad, and his appointment may have been directed at fulfilling the arbitration commitments to the Southern Congressmen to gain a subsidy for the road.108

Considering the complexity of presidential politics, the most amazing thing about the Hayes cabinet was not that he was forced to take compromise choices to appease Senators and various segments of opinion within the party, but that he was forced to compromise on so few. Of the original group discussed in Halstead's parlor, three, Evarts, Sherman, and Schurz, ultimately sat in the most important seats in the cabinet. A fourth, Hale, could have had the Attorney General's office but declined. Since the other four positions were filled through political maneuvering at the end of February, Robert Halstead's account may not be accurate, but it does demonstrate to some degree the important role that the editor played in advising the Republican candidate. How quickly the circle had turned! Four years earlier Halstead was denouncing the Republican party and all of its policies; in 1877 he was a close friend and trusted adviser of a Republican President.

108 William H. Smith to Whitelaw Reid, March 5, 1877; Reid MSS; Barnard, Hayes, 416-417; Eckenrode, Hayes, 242.
CHAPTER IX

HALSTEAD THE POLITICIAN

The phrase from Hayes' inaugural, "He serves his party best who serves his country best," seemed to Halstead to be a vindication of his course in deserting the Liberals and returning to the Republican party. This one phrase would also serve to sum up Halstead's political philosophy. He never again returned to an independent course in politics, but his argument was always that he could serve his country best by serving the Republican party.

During the Hayes Administration the warm relationship between President and editor continued. Even though the steady correspondence of the campaign was somewhat diminished, Halstead did become a frequent visitor at the White House. In 1880 Jenny Halstead, the editor's daughter, was a White House guest for a week.¹ The relationship between the two men was intimate enough for Hayes to discuss his personal financial position with Halstead. In an 1880 letter the President noted that he entered the White House in debt and that while he had been able to save almost twenty thousand dollars a year from his salary, he would still leave office in debt.² There were also numerous hints in the press that

¹Halstead to Mrs. Hayes, January 18, 1880, Hayes MSS.
²Hayes to Halstead, November 26, 1880, Hayes MSS.
Hayes would reward his Cincinnati friend for his election support by appointing him to a foreign diplomatic post. Halstead always denied these reports. Soon after Hayes' inaugural the position of Minister to France was mentioned, but Halstead said it "has never been seriously thought of."³ Later many newspapers carried the story of Halstead's impending appointment as Minister to England. The editor immediately rejected any thought that he could be considered for the post, for he claimed a foreign appointment of any kind was impossible because of his newspaper affairs. Having recently gone into debt to increase his interest in the Commercial, he told Hayes that he "must make money."⁴

The relationship remained close throughout Hayes' term, but there was no correspondence to show that Halstead attempted to give Hayes advice on any of the pressing issues of the day, or that the President sought his advice. While not a consultant on Presidential policy, Halstead almost always gave Hayes full editorial support in the Commercial on all his major decisions. On civil service reforms the editor commented that, "The principle of conducting the public business on business principles has become so evidently reflected in the changes that have been made and the reforms that have been commenced, that there will soon be no one in the United States, however skeptical as to the purpose or the power of the Republican Administration who will any longer doubt it."⁵

³Commercial, April 23, 1877.
⁴Halstead to Hayes, December 3, 1879, Hayes MSS.
⁵Commercial, April 17, 1877.
Halstead also commented Hayes' Southern policy as one that would lead to "permanent peace" and under which "sectional and race lines will disappear." When the President was criticized for abandoning the South to the "rebels," the editor defended his policy by claiming that when Hayes entered office Republican support in the South consisted of three returning boards and two military garrisons. This he said had happened under Grant, and there was nothing Hayes could do about it. Instead of trying impossible measures, the President had correctly decided to let the people of the South have a chance to work out their own problems. Halstead predicted that the government would use its influence to preserve the peace and to gain the newly enfranchised citizens fair play, but said that this was all that could be expected. Only those who wished to keep old issues alive for their own gain could find fault with this position, the editor argued. The "Great Leaders" were "miserably mad" about Hayes' policy towards the South only because "they feared that their occupation was gone."

As early as summer, 1873, Halstead was also editorially lamenting that Hayes had announced he would not be a candidate for a second term. Hayes was upset by these editorials. He declared that he did not mean to be his own successor "under any circumstances" but requested his personal friends not to mention his name in that way, for such talk weakened his efforts to "improve and purify things." Halstead declared he

---

6Ibid., April 22, 1877.
7Ibid., June 30, 1877.
8Ibid., November 16, 1878.
9Ibid., June 15, 1878.
10Hayes to Halstead, July 13, 1878, Hayes MSS.
still regretted Hayes's decision, not only because he thought Hayes was doing a good job as President, but also because Hayes' enemies were pushing Grant for a third term in 1880. If they should succeed in nominating Grant, Halstead said he "wouldn't fool away time on a third party but go for the Democrat."

With Hayes taking himself out of the 1880 race, Halstead became a supporter of John Sherman for the Republican nomination, but his newspaper energies were directed against a third term for Grant. As it became obvious that Grant was the candidate of the "Stalwarts," Halstead began a major campaign against the former president, and against that section of the party which thought the general was the "Savior of Society."

Those who wanted Grant, Halstead declared, were only interested in "the weaknesses, the stupidities and the Corruption of his administration." Later the editor said the cry for Grant was a cry for a dynasty. "Imperialism means facilities, without limitation of time or fear of investigation, for robbing the people. If Grant is demanded for a third term...and... elected, the demand for him for a fourth term, if he should live so long would be redoubled." Privately Halstead expressed the same opinions. He told Whitelaw Reid that Grant "would utterly disgrace the nation" and if he received the nomination, he would be beaten in Ohio. The editor added, "and I will help do it—no matter about the opposing man." Halstead

---

11 Halstead to Hayes, July 18, 1878, Hayes MSS.
12 Commercial, July 11, 1878.
13 Ibid., July 13, 1878.
14 Halstead to Reid, February 25, 1879, Reid MSS.
said that while he preferred Sherman, both he and Schurz would support Blaine in preference to Grant. Reid was backing Blaine for the nomination.\(^5\)

Halstead proposed that the best policy for the anti-Grant forces would be to combine to defeat the third term movement and then work for their own candidates. It was his judgment, he told Reid, "that the Republican leader who fights Grant first and hardest will win."\(^6\) To show his own willingness to cooperate with the anti-Grant forces, he told Reid that he had heard reports that a man was living in Washington who had proof that Grant's brother-in-law was personally involved in the whiskey scandals. Since this man hated Grant but thought that Blaine would make a good president, Halstead suggested that Reid contact him for his testimony so that they could end the Grant boom by showing this added corruption.\(^7\)

Halstead also claimed that should the Blaine and Sherman forces combine to bring the Republican convention to Cincinnati Grant's defeat would be insured. Holding the convention in the Queen City "would take the bloom off the Grant boom at once," the editor declared. Not only would the Sherman forces be strong in the city, but his own newspaper and Richard Smith's \textit{Gazette} would both be actively working against the third term. Moreover, Halstead pledged that there would be no recurrence of the anti-Blaine \textit{Commercial} editorials. "I will not only not \(^{15}\)

\(^{15}\)Halstead to Reid, November 7, 1879; Halstead to Reid, November 29, 1879, Reid MSS.

\(^{16}\)Halstead to Reid, December 20, 1879, Reid MSS.

\(^{17}\)Halstead to Reid, March 21, 1880, Reid MSS.
abuse Blaine, but I will give him in every way fair play, and I will cultivate a local sentiment friendly to him by crediting him with bringing the convention." Halstead realized it would be a major victory if he could get the Blaine forces to agree to Cincinnati. This would not only mean that the city would have played host to conventions for three straight elections, but would also have proven Halstead's power within the party and would have given Sherman the advantage of making the convention fight on his home grounds. The Blaine forces particularly realized this last advantage, and another city was chosen.

Perhaps the Blaine supporters did not trust Halstead's promises. In March, 1878, Blaine had attacked Carl Schurz on the floor of the Senate for his decision on timber rights on national lands, and had sarcastically alluded to his German ancestry. At the time, Halstead had called the Maine Senator "an ignorant, rude, and malicious man, and a disappointed speculator in the Presidency," and had declared the speech showed Blaine in his true light, "a coarse, sneering Know-Nothing, catering to rascalities and indulging malice."

Actually, when Halstead realized the possibility of Grant's success in the 1880 convention, his old animosity towards Blaine was immediately put aside. He believed that Blaine was the only strong Republican candidate who could rally the party and prevent a third term nomination. By February, 1880, Halstead was even stating editorially his

---

18 Halstead to Reid, December 8, 1879, Reid MSS.

19 Commercial, March 14, 1878.

20 Ibid., March 17, 1878.
new found respect for Blaine in the Commercial. He declared that Blaine would be preferable to Grant because Blaine could win the election. Moreover, he said that Blaine, though having many faults, would give the country a good administration and the party strong leadership.21

Blaine recognized that he could stop Grant, but he did not wish to make the fight only to prepare the ground for another candidate. Therefore, in April he wrote to Halstead complaining that everyone wished him to use his influence and votes against Grant, but the many favorite sons made it extremely difficult for him. The Maine Senator further contended that he could have defeated Grant in Ohio, but with Sherman as Ohio's favorite son, he was never given the chance. If Grant should win, Blaine told the editor, it would be a result of "local jealousy and state pride."22

The opposition to Grant had also organized "No Third Term" Clubs to gain popular support for their fight against the former President. Halstead supported this movement, but Blaine was afraid it would boomerang against him as well as Grant. When the clubs held a convention in St. Louis, Blaine said he feared it would be turned into a "Bowles-Adams, 'Young Republican,' sentimental-civil service-jackass concern," that would end in condemning him along with Grant.23 While the convention did not condemn Blaine, it was not really effective in stirring up popular anti-Grant sentiment either.

21 Ibid., February 28, 1880.
22 Blaine to Halstead, April 23, 1880, Halstead MSS.
23 Blaine to Halstead, May 3, 1880, Halstead MSS.
When the Republican convention met in Chicago on June 2, the anti-Grant forces were led by James A. Garfield, newly elected Senator from Ohio and Sherman's floor leader. By adroit management, Garfield was able to keep the convention from stampeding to Grant and at the same time impressed many of the delegates with his own abilities. Later in the convention he greatly added to his own luster by an eloquent nominating speech for Sherman. When the convention became deadlocked between the Grant forces and the many splintered groups that made up the anti-Grant forces, Garfield was proposed as a compromise candidate by the Blaine and Sherman supporters and won the nomination on the thirty-sixth ballot.

Once again the Republican nominee was an Ohioan and an acquaintance of Halstead. Garfield had never been a warm personal friend of the editor, and, in fact, the Commercial had often carried editorials roundly critical of the nominee. In 1877 a Commercial editorial suggested that Garfield had "not kept himself in the attitude that should have distinguished an honest man in his relations to the robbers of the District of Columbia." The Commercial had also mentioned Garfield in

---

24 Eugene Roseboom, *History of Presidential Elections*, 225. While there were claims that Garfield, as Sherman's manager, had sold Sherman out to gain the nomination for himself, Halstead said that this was absurd. The editor declared that Garfield had told him he would "rather be 'shot with musketry than nominated' and have Sherman think he had been unfaithful to his obligations...." Moreover, Halstead said that no man who was scheming for his own nomination could have delivered the nominating speech Garfield made for Sherman's candidacy. Halstead, "The Tragedy of Garfield's Administration. Personal Reminiscences and Records of Conversations," *McClure's Magazine* (February, 1896), 273.

25 Commercial, August 11, 1877. In 1872 Garfield had been retained to present arguments before the District Board of Public Works by a paving company when Richard C. Parson, another Congressman, had been called back to his home before the case could be completed. Garfield always claimed that he had acted as any member of the legal profession would have and not
connection with the Credit Mobilier scandal, but accepted his denial of any involvement. When Garfield was mentioned as a senatorial candidate the Commercial was hostile. Halstead claimed he lacked power, "self-assertion, executive aptitude" and those abilities essential to "large leadership."

On his election Halstead declared that he felt the Ohio Republicans had made a mistake, not because Garfield lacked ability—"few, if any, Senators exceed him in intellectual capacity"—but because the editor believed the next House of Representatives would be Republican and Garfield would without doubt have been elected Speaker. Halstead was willing to write off most of what he called "Garfield's mistakes" as growing out of inexperience. The editor later said that while Garfield was in Congress he "needed a good deal of admonition" because of a tendency to "dwell upon a mountain."

"He was still boyish about some things and the speculative men in public life sought to beguile him." Yet, Halstead found the Congressman always growing and said that he had the ability to laugh at critical articles, "even if they had stings in them." Moreover, Halstead claimed that since Garfield's little "faults" were so well known he could not be guilty of any wrong intent. If he had wished to defraud, the editor claimed, he would have used "every trick" and covered "every turn" while actually

and as a member of Congress, but it was later learned that the paving company had distributed 72,000 dollars to gain a 700,000 dollar contract. To most people, there seemed to be fraud involved. Theodore C. Smith, The Life and Letters of James Abram Garfield, I., 566; Garfield to Hinsdale, April 20, 1874, Mary L. Hinsdale, ed., Garfield-Hinsdale Letters, 285-286.

26 Commercial, September 16, 1872.

27 Ibid., January 7, 1880; Smith, Garfield, II, 730-731.

his part in the "small transactions" only showed an early "awkwardness
and inexperience" of public affairs. 29

Halstead was also extremely critical of the rumors that were heard
in Ohio before the convention that Garfield's supporters were grooming
him to be a dark horse candidate for president. To keep Ohio from looking
absurd to the nation as a whole, Halstead demanded the state party stick
with John Sherman as its only candidate. 30 Even as late as the eve of
the convention Halstead did not see the developing Garfield strength. 31
When Commercial reporters at Chicago telegraphed Halstead before the con­
vention opened that Garfield looked like the nominee he refused to accept
their judgments. 32

Garfield's nomination did bring an immediate pledge of support
from the Cincinnati editor. 33 An editorial written by Halstead called the
nomination a happy solution to the difficulties of the Republican party.
While Halstead reiterated that his choice had been Sherman, he claimed
that Garfield would be equal to all emergencies, that he would grow upon
the country as a candidate, and that he would be the next president of
the United States.

29 Commercial, June 8, 1880.
30 Ibid., March 27, 1880.
31 Ibid., May 9, 1880.
33 Halstead to Garfield, June 8, 1880, Garfield MSS.
34 Commercial, June 9, 1880.
Halstead went to New York at the time of the meeting of the National Republican Committee. He found the Grant wing of the party upset about the nomination and demanding special guarantees that their influence in the party was still to be strong. Senator Conkling in particular had apprehensions about "another Ohio man" and felt that Garfield should come to New York personally to reassure him that his support was needed. Halstead advised against such a trip. He claimed it would seem that Garfield was going "to Canosa" [sic].

While he was in New York Halstead met Conkling for the first time. Also present at this meeting was Ohio's Governor Poster, who was spreading the story that after the editor's introduction to Conkling, the Senator asked, "Who was that man?" When he was given the name—"Halstead, Halstead," he said musingly: "isn't he an editor somewhere? Oh, I remember, he's editor of the Cincinnati Gazette...." Whitelaw Reid wrote that if Poster became irritated by the story, Halstead could report that Conkling had also said when asked to make campaign speeches for Poster in Ohio, "Poster, Poster; is he a Republican then?"²⁶

Garfield decided not to take Halstead's advice and went to New York. He realized that without carrying the state he could lose the election and was therefore willing to make a gesture to the Grant wing of the party and candidate, but invited Garfield to his home at Coney Island. Garfield told Halstead the invitation meant, "I may have a pocket

---

²⁵ Halstead to Garfield, July 4, 1880, Garfield MSS.

²⁶ Reid to Halstead, July 12, 1880, Halstead MSS.
interview with my Lord Roscoe; but if the Presidency is to turn on that I do not want the office badly enough to go." Instead he returned to Ohio.\(^{37}\)

Halstead was a member of Garfield's party on the return trip. For this he was roundly criticized by several newspapers for using, what they claimed, was his position as President of the Western Associated Press to gain full news coverage for Garfield's trip.\(^{38}\) Halstead himself feared that he had done the wrong thing in traveling with the candidate, for not only was he criticized for using his official position to the advantage of the Republican party, but to men like Conkling and Cameron, Halstead still represented the Liberal, reform wing of the party, and they distrusted his close association with the candidate.\(^{39}\)

Actually Halstead was not as closely associated with the 1880 campaign as he had been four years earlier. The editor was never a close personal friend of the candidate, and he was not connected with the Northern Ohio wing of the Republican party that contained Garfield's greatest support. Yet, he was an active Garfield supporter and used all the resources of the Commercial to gain his election. In September the editor began publishing a campaign Commercial which he called "the best Republican document for universal distribution of which we have knowledge."\(^{40}\)


\(^{38}\)Commercial, August 11, 1880.

\(^{39}\)Halstead to Garfield, August 24, 1880, Garfield MSS.

\(^{40}\)Commercial, September 3, 1880.
He wrote every line of the editorials in the campaign editions, which proved, he declared, that he was "not decaying through idleness this summer."\(^{41}\)

The campaign which Halstead waged in the daily *Commercial* was based almost entirely on waving the "bloody shirt." The Solid South, he declared, was nothing more than "the reorganized Southern Confederacy." The editor's earlier calls for understanding between the two sections were now forgotten:

They do not seem to understand that they got the worst of the war....The magnanimity with which they have been treated, and which all the rest of the world recognized as remarkable they do not appreciate....Under all these circumstances it seems to us of infinite consequence that the Republicans should make their victories in the free States—the phrase is as good and true as it ever was—overwhelming from ocean to ocean.\(^{42}\)

While claiming he deplored a sectional fight, the editor said that since the Democratic policy was to make the South solid for their party, it could not be avoided.\(^{43}\) For a few years after the war, he claimed, the South was at least one-half Republican, but now he maintained that it was wholly Democratic. According to Halstead, the question before the country was whether these Souther "Confederate" Democratic leaders who had reestablished their control over the South should be allowed to reestablish their rule over the whole nation.\(^{44}\) When he was assailed for

\(^{41}\) Halstead to Garfield, September 10, 1880, Garfield MSS.

\(^{42}\) *Commercial*, August 12, 1880.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., August 13, 1880.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., September 8, 1880.
this extremely vindictive attitude, Halstead replied that he was not being 
any more partisan than he had been during the war. "We were opposed to 
submission to the Southern Confederacy then, and we are opposed to sub­
mitting to the Solid South now. We have all the time been in favor of 
the United States."45

Halstead's attacks on the South might be criticized for their 

extreme position, but the editor must also be commended for his handling 
of one aspect of the campaign. Edwin Cowles, the anti-Catholic editor 
of the Cleveland Leader, declared that Mrs. Hancock, the wife of the 
Democratic candidate, was "a bigoted Romanish," who would introduce a 

chapel, priests, nuns, and monks into the White House. Moreover, he 
claimed that the pope, acting through Mrs. Hancock, would be the real 
power behind the throne should the Democrats win. There was some 
criticism in Garfield circles that Halstead was not giving the Republican 
nominee as complete support as Cowles. Halstead assured F. D. Mussey, 
a Garfield friend, that the Commercial would do all within its power to 
to elect Garfield, but that it would not "follow Ed. Cowles in representing 
Hancock's family on religious subjects."46 In this Halstead had accepted 
the position of Henry Watterson, who declared that Cowles "was the type 
of editor who had ten nightmares every night, and in everyone of them saw 
the pope advancing on America accompanied by a large army." Moreover,


46 F. D. Mussey to Garfield, July 16, 1880, Herbert J. Clancy, 
The Presidential Election of 1880, 175.
the Louisville editor had pointed out that Mrs. Hancock was an Episcopal and not a Roman Catholic. 47

During the campaign Halstead was particularly upset by what he called the "personal abuse" heaped on Garfield by the Democratic press. Most of this abuse just repeated the Credit Mobilier and Washington paving scandals—stories which had been published earlier in the Commercial. Halstead felt that the best way to counteract this type of campaign was for Garfield personally to take to the stump. "Damn the traditions—make new precedents." 48 Garfield believed that such an extreme measure was unnecessary, and he was proven correct on election day. The Commercial celebrated Garfield's victory by running a front page engraving of the next president that covered five of the newspaper's eight columns. Underneath the engraving an American eagle on a draped United States flag was shown with a Democratic cock in its beak with the cock's feathers flying in all directions. The remaining columns bore such headlines as "ALL SAFE!" "Old Man Secesh Will Smile No More," and "The Stars in Their Course Fight With Us." 49

Soon after the election Halstead received a letter from John Sherman. Sherman had been a successful Secretary of the Treasury, as his strong candidacy for the presidency showed, and there were reports that Garfield would retain him in that post, but Sherman had heard nothing officially from the President-elect. At the same time, there was also

48 Halstead to Garfield, September 13, 1880, Garfield MSS.
49 Commercial, November 3, 1880.
strong support in Ohio to elect Sherman to the Senate seat that Garfield would vacate. Sherman indicated that he would not refuse to continue in the cabinet, but that he would prefer the Senate. \(^{50}\) Halstead wrote to Garfield that he believed Sherman felt embarrassed because he had not heard from the President-elect about his cabinet plans, and suggested that Garfield appoint another Ohioan to the cabinet and save the Senate for Sherman. \(^{51}\) Garfield refused to commit himself at the time, but ultimately Sherman went to the Senate.

In early January Halstead sent Garfield a newspaper clipping which claimed that the editor was choosing the new cabinet and had only two more places to fill. \(^{52}\) Halstead did give Garfield much advice on cabinet appointments, but was far less influential in helping to choose the Garfield cabinet than he had been four years earlier. Blaine, the editor's choice, was made Secretary of State, but his advice that Garfield include Governor Foster in the cabinet was never taken. \(^{53}\)

Some Republican leaders felt that the breach in the party could be healed with Conkling in the cabinet. Halstead wrote to Garfield that Conkling was an impossible choice, but suggested that Senator Morton, another Stalwart, might be a possible candidate for the Treasury instead.

---

\(^{50}\) Sherman to Halstead, November 5, 1880, Halstead MSS.

\(^{51}\) Halstead to Garfield, November 9, 1880, Garfield MSS.

\(^{52}\) Halstead to Garfield, January 8, 1881, Garfield MSS.

\(^{53}\) Halstead to Garfield, January 14 and 15, 1881, Garfield MSS.; Halstead to Blaine, January 23, 1881, Blaine MSS.
However, he warned Garfield that with Morton in the Treasury he would have to give personal attention to that department and make sure that no personal New York interests were promoted. He also suggested that his college friend, Benjamin Harrison, would be a good choice for an Indiana man in the cabinet. The final Garfield cabinet bore little resemblance to the cabinet that Halstead proposed, but, nonetheless, Halstead's advice seems to have been valued by the President-elect.

As a former Liberal Republican and a member of the reform wing of the Republican party, Halstead was sympathetic to Garfield's efforts as President to strengthen his own party organization at the expense of the Stalwarts. When the new President appointed William H. Robertson, a Blaine delegate to the Chicago convention and an arch-enemy of Conkling, to the Collectorship of the Port of New York, the most important patronage position in the country, Halstead applauded his action, saying, "the boys are all yelling about it and the old folks are really glad." He claimed the western press was nearly unanimous in praise and that Cincinnati Republicans were rejoicing and taking courage from the action. Conkling tried to block confirmation of Robertson in the Senate, but Garfield stood firm. Halstead had wired, "compromises impossible, victory certain"—

---

54 Halstead to Garfield, February 4, 1881, Garfield MSS.
55 Halstead to General D. G. Swain, March 3, 1881, Garfield MSS.
56 Halstead to Garfield, May 5 and 9, 1881, Garfield MSS.; Halstead later claimed that he had urged Garfield to do all in his power to conciliate Conkling, but that Conkling had shown that he did not care to be conciliated. Commercial, June 28, 1882.
and the appointment went through. When Conkling and his fellow New Yorker, Senator Platt, resigned their seats and sought vindication by reelection from the New York legislature, they failed, and two moderate republicans were named in their place.

On his way to New York, Halstead stopped in Washington on June 30, and in the evening walked to the White House to pay his respects to the President. Finding Garfield out, he decided to stroll through Lafayette Square. The editor later learned that Charles J. Guiteau, the man who was to shoot Garfield, had also been in the park that evening. Later in his hotel, Halstead met Postmaster General T. L. James who told him that he had just dined with the President and that he was now alone at the White House. The Postmaster General assured him that even though the hour was late, the President would be glad to see him, and so Halstead returned to the executive manison. The editor found Garfield in high spirits as he was traveling to Williams College for commencement in two days, and would thus escape patronage problems and the summer heat of Washington. He urged Halstead to join the party, which was to include several cabinet officers, to see "the sweetest old place in the world." Halstead replied that the pressure of business would not allow him to take such a long vacation, but that he had been invited to Cyrus Field's home at Sleepy Hollow where the President was to be a guest on his return from Williams.

---

57 Halstead to Garfield, May 11, 1881, Garfield MSS.

On July 2, when Garfield's party was at the Railroad Station in Washington preparing to board their train, Guiteau fired the fatal shots. After weeks of suffering, Garfield died on September 19. Soon after July 2, a man in Newark, Ohio had said he hoped Garfield would not live. A Captain C. A. Cook of Newark slapped his face and was then arrested and fined. The Commercial asked for subscribers to send in pennies to pay Captain Cook's fine. At first everyone who sent a penny had his name printed, but by August 10 50,000 people had made a contribution and the lists were taking over the entire newspaper and had to be discontinued. When the campaign finally ended on September 23, 98,838 people had sent their pennies to the newspaper.59

Halstead had known Chester Arthur for ten years, but he had no intimate connection with the new President, who was generally assumed to be a tool of the Stalwart bosses. When Arthur became President, Halstead editorialized that Arthur would have "a deeper and more intelligent sense of the responsibilities of the office than the people generally give him credit for." The editor asked that the new President "at least be given a fair show."60 In an effort to keep the lines open between the Sherman supporters and the White House Halstead called upon Arthur in October of 1881, but his position in the new administration was only that of a political observer.61 The editor's prophecies about Arthur

59Commercial, August 10, September 23, 1881.
60Ibid., October 15, 1881.
61George F. Howe, Chester A. Arthur, A Quarter Century of Machine Politics, 158.
turned out to be generally correct. The new President showed executive ability and did not turn the administration over to the Stalwarts. The most important legislation of his term, the Pendleton Act which provided for civil service reform, had his support and gained the President editorial praise from Halstead. When the act passed, Arthur showed his willingness for reform by successfully inaugurating the merit system.

---

62 Commercial, December 29, 1882.
CHAPTER X
THE ELECTION OF 1864

The new year of 1884 marked a momentous change in Halstead's life. The Commercial, which the editor had controlled since Potter's death in 1867, was merged with Richard Smith's Gazette. Even before the reorganization of M. Halstead and Company into a joint stock company in 1879 the finances of the Commercial had been in bad shape. Halstead's support of the Liberal Republican party cost his newspaper Republican patronage support and subscribers. His controversy with Archbishop Purcell further added to his problems. As the seventies advanced the evolution of the journalistic profession increased expenses more rapidly than profits. Telegraph expenses mounted yearly as Cincinnati readers demanded more national and international news, and the cost of composition rose as cheap newsprint encouraged Halstead constantly to expand the number of pages in each edition of the Commercial. Newspaper competition in Cincinnati had always been stiff, but the Commercial had managed to stay on top by Halstead's policy of immediately adopting new innovations in news gathering and printing. This process of constant technical improvement was, in the Commercial's case, one of the reasons for its declining revenues. In the sixties the Commercial could easily absorb the increasing costs that innovation brought because Cincinnati was a growing city and the circulation and advertising market of the newspaper grew with it. By the seventies the percentage growth of Cincinnati had been outstripped by Chicago, St. Louis and Pittsburgh. The railroad had ruined river shipping and with it
Cincinnati's position as the Queen City of the West, and she developed no major new industry to retain her title. Consequently, the Commercial found it had to compete in a closed market with competitors who were as determined to gain success for their newspapers as Halstead was for the Commercial. Technical change in the Commercial's plant was now made often to keep up with the competition, not merely to keep ahead of it. Earlier innovations had been quickly paid for from the increased revenues which they brought, but now Halstead had to turn to long term loans.¹

As the Commercial's expenses mounted along with its indebtedness, it became evident to a great many people that Cincinnati could not support two major Republican newspapers in competition with each other. "Deacon" Smith and Halstead had long been rivals, but their agreement on party issues since 1876 had made this rivalry increasingly friendly. Smith's Gazette, the city's oldest newspaper, claiming origin in 1793, was as hard hit by the mounting costs of publishing as the Commercial. Halstead had long been recognized as a brilliant editor, while Smith was thought to have organizing and executive talents—abilities which Halstead conspicuously lacked. Consequently, negotiations during the fall of 1883 produced an agreement to consolidate the two newspapers with Halstead acting as editor-in-chief and Smith in charge of the business end of the new company.²

¹Murat Halstead, "History of the Cincinnati Commercial," Halstead MS.; Chicago Herald, December 29, 1883, Halstead MSS.

Former President Hayes expressed the sentiment of many when he wrote to insure his subscription to the new journal. While declaring that the combination produced one of the greatest, "perhaps the greatest" newspaper on earth, he nonetheless felt a "certain regret and gloom.... the old Gazette and the old Commercial are to be seen no more." Both editors probably agreed with Hayes, but they recognized that the union gave them a chance to replenish their personal fortunes which they had seen dwindle away during the decade of cutthroat competition. Moreover, for the sake of the combination, Halstead agreed to forsake independent journalism and make the new Commercial Gazette a Republican sheet. This now gave the Republican party a strong voice in Cincinnati to compete with the powerful Democratic Enquirer. The union of the two journals also marked a new publishing innovation. For the first few months the editorials in the Commercial Gazette were signed by the initials of their authors.

There was no question that the new Commercial Gazette would support the Republican presidential nominee in 1884, but there was a question as to who would gain the nomination. At first Halstead sup-

---


1Commercial Gazette, January, 1884, passim; While there is no evidence that this was the case, Halstead's reputation for impulsive action might have convinced Smith that he wanted no confusion over the authorship of an individual editorial. No matter what the reason for the signed editorials, in a few months they were discontinued except for occasional denials or statements of a personal nature from one of the owners.
ported the candidacy of John Sherman, but since half of the Ohio delegation were Blaine men, the Ohio Senator's chances seemed more remote this time than in 1860. By 1884 Halstead had no strong objections to Blaine's nomination, for since the 1876 convention and his strong anti-Blaine campaign, he and the former Maine Senator had established an intimate friendship. This intimacy between the two men had its beginning in 1880 when both men were working to prevent Grant's nomination for a third term. Halstead wrote in 1882 that he had made a mistake in 1876. He claimed that in his zeal for Bristow he had done Blaine an injustice and made a grave political error. By 1882 the two men were exchanging visits, and Blaine felt sufficiently close to Halstead to send him items for the Commercial's editorial columns.

In an article which was published in 1896 Halstead told an unusual story about his participation in the 1884 preconvention maneuvering. A week before the Chicago meeting he received a telegram requesting him to meet Blaine at his Washington home. When the editor reached Washington, he reported that Blaine told him he was alarmed by the political situation. Halstead remembered asking, "You surely are not afraid you are not going to be nominated?" To which Blaine responded, "Oh, no; I am

---

5Joseph Benson Foraker, Notes of a Busy Life, I., 159; Sherman to Halstead, March 13, 1884, Halstead MSS.

6Edward Stanwood, James Gillespie Blaine, 183.

7Commercial, February 20, 1882.

8Blaine to Halstead, May 28 and July 14, 1882, Halstead MSS.; Blaine assured Halstead that while he had a special motive for wishing to have the item inserted that he could not commit to writing, that it was "altogether legitimate."
afraid I shall be nominated, and have sent for you for that reason, and
want you to assist in preventing my nomination." Blaine told the editor
that he had come to this decision after weighing all the factors in­
volved in the political situation. Everything, he said, pointed to the
fact that he could not win the election if nominated. He would be un­
able to carry any state in the Solid South or New York, and he concluded
that he could not win with New York. Nonetheless, Blaine had a ticket
which he declared could win: William T. Sherman and Robert T. Lincoln.
Halstead replied that General Sherman had declared he would not accept
the nomination even if offered, and that he certainly would not contend
with his brother for the nomination at Chicago. The editor asked, why
"not try the other Sherman." Blaine replied that since the element of
military heroism was lacking John Sherman would have no more success in
New York than he. He further added that he had written the General, but
had been told "he could not consent to be President." Nonetheless Blaine
declared, "If General Sherman had the question put to him—whether to be
President himself or turn the office over to the Democratic party, with
the Solid South dominant—he would see his duty and do it."9

9Murat Halstead, "The Defeat of Blaine for the Presidency,"
McClure's Magazine, (January, 1896) 160-161; Sensing a political sen­sation in the story Blaine told him, Halstead wrote to General Sherman after the election asking if the General would send him copies of the Blaine letter and his reply. Sherman answered testily that the letters were confidential and that he could not show the Blaine letter without the writer's consent. In fact, he added, "I am not sure that I would, even with his consent, because I believe the true policy is to look ahead and not behind." As to his own reply, "I will not have my letter pub­lished, as it contained certain points purely personal which the public has no right to." William T. Sherman to Halstead, November 21, 1884, Ibid., 164.
After leaving Blaine in Washington, Halstead hurried off to Chicago for the convention. In Chicago he shared a room with Charles Fleishman, an Ohio delegate from Cincinnati who never failed "to take with him all the facilities and accommodations for an enjoyable time." The convention itself was packed with spectators, most of whom, as in previous conventions, were supporters of Blaine. One delegate later stated that he found this situation impossible for a deliberative body, "I saw women jumping up and down, disheveled and hysterical, and some men acting in much the same way. It was absolutely unworthy of a convention of any party, a disgrace to decency, and a blot upon the reputation of our country." On the fourth ballot the "shrieking galleries" had their way, and Blaine was nominated.

A Commercial Gazette editorial stated that Blaine had worked for the nomination in 1876 and 1880, but had been beaten both times by Ohio men. Now in 1884, the nomination came "literally without seeking." It was, the editorial concluded, "the free gift of the plain Republicans of the United States, whose enthusiasm for the Maine statesman...defeated all attempts at a combination to defeat him. If ever there was a nomination by the voice of the people Blaine's certainly is such a nomination." The nomination may have come as a "free gift" from the

---

10 Forsaker to Halstead, May 24, 1884, Halstead MSS.
11 Andrew D. White, Autobiography of Andrew Dickson White, I., 204.
12 Commercial Gazette, June 7, 1884.
people of the party, but there were some party leaders who were not so sure the convention had made a wise choice. These men, many of them of the liberal reform wing of the party, could not believe Blaine's explanation of the Mulligan letters and looked upon the Republican candidate as little more than a criminal. These men, who included in their numbers some of the nation's leading intellectual leaders, were soon to be christened Mugwumps by the regular Republicans. When the Democrats nominated the reform governor of New York, Grover Cleveland, as their candidate, the Mugwumps announced their support for Cleveland also. Some of the country's most important magazines and newspapers, including Harper's Weekly, the Nation, Puck, the New York Herald, Times, Evening Post, and Telegram, the Boston Transcript, Herald, and Advertiser, the Springfield Republican, the Philadelphia Record, and the Times and News of Chicago also bolted the party and favored the New York governor.¹³

In a signed editorial, Halstead and Smith pledged the support of the Commercial Gazette to the Blaine ticket. That this was to be another "Bloody Shirt" campaign was evident from the editorial. They supported the Republicans, the newspaper's owners declared, because the Democratic party was the party of "evil deeds" and had the backing of the Southern Confederacy.¹⁴ Halstead scoffed at the Mugwumps even though some, such as Carl Schurz, had previously been close friends and political associates. True, he declared, Blaine was not the kind of candidate that


¹⁴Ibid., June 17, 1884.
people sprung from six generations of Harvard graduates would promote for the presidency, but, he added slyly, these same "particular people" took a long time finding that Abraham Lincoln had some merit as president. Since they can not bear Blaine, the Mugwumps would rather turn the government over to the Democratic party which would plunder the country without restraint, Halstead declared.\textsuperscript{15}

If Halstead's original plan was to base his newspaper campaign on the "Bloody Shirt," he enlarged this plan very early to include attacks on the Democratic nominee's personal character. Early in July he published an account of a story by an Albany reporter that claimed Cleveland had taken a mistress with him when he went to Albany to become Governor. Halstead declared that should the story be true; Cleveland's moral character "is not reliable.\textsuperscript{16}

Actually, the story of Cleveland's Albany mistress was an attempt to give substance to the rumors that were circulating in New York about something shady in the Democratic candidate's past. The Buffalo \textit{Evening Telegraph} finally broke the true story later in the month. In the early seventies, Maria Halpin, a Buffalo department store clerk, had been on intimate terms with Cleveland and several other men. When a son was born to her, she named Cleveland as the father, and Cleveland accepted paternity. It was later claimed that the bachelor Cleveland accepted responsibility to protect the reputations of the other men involved who were married and had families. Cleveland supported the child until Maria began to see her old friends

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid.}, June 20, 1884.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, July 9, 1884.
again, and then had the boy placed in an orphanage, from which he was
ultimately adopted by a good family.\textsuperscript{17} The scandal was made to order for
Halstead's pen:

> Upon general principles it is our opinion that the
President of the United States should be the honored
head of a family....it is best that the first lady of
the land should be the wife of the President, and that
the beauties of a virtuous home should be present in
the Executive Mansion and not the perfumes of a brothel.\textsuperscript{18}

and later:

> For Grover Cleveland's offenses there is no excuse. He
may repent and he may reform--but the stool of repentance
should not be carried to the White House by the ballot of
the American people, whose government rests upon virtue,
and which virtue has its abiding in the family.\textsuperscript{19}

Warming to the personal attack, Halstead also found that Cleveland's
war record left much to be desired:

\textsuperscript{17}Muzzey, James G. Blaine, 298.
\textsuperscript{18}Commercial Gazette, August 3, 1884.
\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., August 23, 1884; The scandal hit the Mugwumps harder
than the regular Democrats as they supported Cleveland because they
believed Blaine to be dishonest. Now they had evidence that Cleveland's
cache might not be pure either. The solution to the Mugwump's
dilemma is an often told story. A group of leading Mugwumps that includ­
ed Schurz, Godkin, and Henry Ward Beecher were in despair until some­
one suggested: "Well, from what I hear, I gather that Mr. Cleveland has
shown high character and great capacity in public office, but that in
private life his conduct has been open to question; while, on the other
hand Mr. Blaine has been weak and dishonest in public life, while he
seems to have been an admirable husband and father. The conclusion I
draw from these facts is that we should elect Mr. Cleveland to the
public office which he is so admirably qualified to fill, and remand
Mr. Blaine to the private life which he is so eminently fitted to
adorn." Muzzey, James G. Blaine, 298.
But his record during this interesting period is a blank—an utter blank. His name nowhere appears in any writing, even expressive of devotion to the Union and the cause for which the boys in blue at the front were fighting.... The one fact is that when drafted he hired a substitute, that is all.20

Before his nomination, Blaine had told Halstead that the election would be decided in the state of New York. The strategists of the Republican National Committee agreed that New York would be decisive in the election and that New York City would be the key to the state. Consequently, Republican planners were greatly upset by the many defections from party regularity among the New York City press. Of the newspapers still supporting Blaine, only the Tribune had a wide circulation, and the boycott of the Tribune by the typographical union was hurting the party's cause among workers.21 It was in this situation that the Republican National Committee decided to print a penny campaign newspaper in the city. Not only was it to be cheap, but with the hope that it might have a large audience among the masses in the city, the new journal was also to have dash and be unrestrained in its policies. In hunting for an editor, the Committee decided on the "stalwart and irrepressible" Halstead.22 Halstead's duties on the newspaper, which was called the New York Extra, permitted him time to continue his editorial work for the Commercial Gazette. A private

20Commercial Gazette, August 17, 1864; Halstead claimed Cleveland was a young man without wife or children to support, or public position to fulfill, and should have served his country. While this was technically true, it was also true that Cleveland was the sole support of his mother and younger brothers and sisters.

21Mazzey, James G. Blaine, 310-311.

22Press (no city) August 10, 1864, Halstead MSS.
telegraph wire allowed the editor to send his editorials from New York to Cincinnati daily. *Commercial Gazette* readers were told that since New York was one of the most politically important states in the nation, Halstead's personal views from the scene would make the newspaper's coverage among the best in the country.\(^{23}\)

Publication of the *Extra* was started in mid-August and continued until the election. Halstead conducted a hard-hitting editorial campaign in both of his newspapers. All through the campaign he attacked Cleveland's moral character, the Democrats and Mugwumps struck back with their own attacks against an equally vulnerable Blaine. Blaine, as Speaker of the House of Representatives, made a favorable ruling in connection with the securing of a renewal of a land grant for a railroad in Arkansas. Later he and Warren Fisher, a Boston broker, sold the bonds of this Arkansas railroad to their friends. When the bonds proved to be nearly worthless, Blaine was able to return the investors' money by reselling the bonds to the Union Pacific Railroad at a greatly inflated price. These manipulations, which obviously seemed very suspicious, were brought to light when James Mulligan, an employee of Fisher's, furnished a House investigating committee in 1876 with copies of the Blaine-Fisher correspondence. Blaine was able to secure these letters before their text was made public, and read extracts from them to the House. He combined this reading with a brilliant speech in which he claimed to have done nothing wrong or unethical. His defense came before the 1876 Republican convention and was one of the primary reasons he lost

\(^{23}\) *Commercial Gazette*, August 10, 1884.
the nomination. While his supporters either believed his explanation of
the letters or accepted his financial dealings as a product of the era,
many in the party only saw in the whole situation the evidence of Blaine's
corruption. Soon after his nomination in 1884, more Blaine-Fisher cor-
respondence was discovered and included in the new batch was a draft of
a letter exonerating the candidate from all wrong doing which he re-
quested Fisher to copy and send to him. On the draft in Blaine's own
handwriting was the injunction to "Burn this letter." Fisher had neither
copied nor burnt the letter, and so the anti-Blaine forces had political
ammunition that was a match for the Maria Halpin story.24

The additional letters were seized upon by the Mugwumps as
further proof that they had been right in deserting the Republican nom-
inee. Halstead was particularly embarrassed by the letters because he
had been one of the most violent in attacking the honesty of the Speaker
in 1876. The paragraphs that the editor had written at the earlier time
now came back to haunt him in circulars distributed by the Democratic
party. Many people sent Halstead copies of the circulars "with lots of
illiterate scribbling on the margins" and asked him what he had to say
about Blaine now.

Halstead's argument was that he was unfair to Blaine in 1876. He
said that the more he examined the testimony the better it seemed for the
Republican candidate. As for the new letters, they did "not leave a
shadow of a doubt upon the proposition that injustice was done Blaine

In 1876, for the gravest form of accusation against him then was that he had suppressed a portion of the letters taken from Mulligan. His enemies have furnished the proof of this head."²⁵ Obviously Halstead had to work very hard to come up with this argument. He utterly ignored the contents of the letters and made the issue one of suppression. Now that the letters were no longer suppressed, he said there was no issue.

In another editorial Halstead defended Blaine on the content of the Mulligan letters. His argument was that the letters showed that Blaine and Fisher were old friends, that even though Blaine had made a ruling which favored Fisher's interests, the ruling was the correct one and could not be questioned, and that Blaine made reference to his ruling in a letter to his old friend. "That was not at all a surprising thing to do." After Blaine made this ruling, Halstead said it was only natural that the speaker should become interested in the outcome of the enterprise and that this interest should lead to his active participation in the undertaking. "Where was the harm in this?"²⁶ To the Mugwumps the harm came when a Congressman in his official capacity as a lawmaker made decisions about interests in which he had a personal financial stake. Moreover, the question which Halstead did not try to answer was the one that excited the most critical comment: Would the Union Pacific have agreed to buy the bonds if they had not expected a favor in return?

The political scene which Halstead observed in New York was one of the most complex in the nation. Not only were Democratic and Republican

²⁵ Commercial Gazette, October 9, 1884.
²⁶ Commercial Gazette, October 7, 1884.
candidates in the field, but also John P. St. John, a former Republican governor of Kansas, was running on the Prohibition ticket with strong support from Frances Willard's Women's Christian Temperance Union, and General Benjamin Butler was running on an Anti-Monopoly-Greenback ticket. St. John was expected to draw Republican votes from Blaine while Butler was secretly being financed by the Republican National Committee with the hope that he would take Democratic votes from Cleveland. Further complicating the picture was the Irish vote. Nominaly the Irish could be expected to vote for the Democratic candidate, but Blaine was of Irish descent. To add to the Republican candidate's attractiveness for the Irish voter, his mother was a Roman Catholic and a cousin was a mother-superior in a convent. Cleveland, on the other hand, was called a "free Trader" and the "British candidate" by the Republican press. 27

Many Republicans realized that their greatest asset in the canvass was the magnetic presence of Blaine himself. Over the opposition of Halstead, who did not think well of the candidate taking to the stump, Blaine went to New York to speak during the last week of the campaign. 28 As it turned out, Halstead was correct in his advice to Blaine, as the New York speech proved disastrous for the candidate. On one day he probably overturned any advantage that he might have had in the state. Speaking in the morning of October 29 to a group of Protestant ministers, he was introduced by Samuel D. Burchard, a Presbyterian clergyman, who

28 Halstead to Blaine, June 17, 1884, Muzzey, James G. Blaine, 311.
proclaims: "We are Republicans, and don't propose to leave our party and identify ourselves with the party whose antecedents have been rum, Romanism and rebellion." Blaine was engaged in conversation during the introduction and did not hear the remark and so did not comment upon it in his speech. A Democrat in the crowd did hear the remark though, and it soon appeared in handbills and Democratic newspapers. The damage was done; Blaine seemed to agree to an insult of the very group he was courting, and thousands of Irish votes were lost.

Adding to the morning's fiasco, that evening Blaine attended a dinner at Delmonico's given by the party's top financial backers--some of the wealthiest men in the city. The next day the New York World in a front page cartoon showed "the Royal Feast of Belshazzar Blaine" with the diners feasting on "Monopoly Soup," "Lobby Pudding," "Navy Contract," and "Gould Pie," while a starving and ragged workingman and his wife looked on through a window. As labor was experiencing hard times, many more votes were probably lost for Blaine.29

Election day found Halstead back in Cincinnati. By this time it was known that Blaine's earlier prediction was right; the election would be decided by the New York vote. The first New York returns were against Blaine, but left the outcome in doubt.30 Halstead refused to admit Blaine's defeat, and for three days after the election the Commercial Gazette claimed a Republican victory.31 It was not until November 17 that

29Muzzey, James G. Blaine, 272.
31Commercial Gazette, November 5, 6, and 7, 1884.
Halstead admitted Cleveland had won, and even then he carried the story without a headline. The vote in New York had been very close. The official returns gave Cleveland only a 1,149 plurality in a contest in which over 365,000 votes were cast. At first Halstead refused to admit that Blaine had been beaten fairly. He claimed that General Butler's vote had been counted for Cleveland in many cases and that thousands of other votes had been fraudulently given to the Democratic candidate.

In a famous letter to Halstead Blaine declared that he felt "quite serene" over the results. "As the Lord sent upon us an ass in the shape of a preacher, and a rainstorm, to lessen our vote in New York, I am disposed to feel resigned to the dispensation of defeat, which flowed directly from these agencies." There is no evidence that Blaine believed he was cheated out of the New York vote. However, other Republicans besides Halstead made the charge, and a committee of lawyers investigated and decided there had been no fraud. "It was a lack of votes, not a theft of votes, that lost the state to Blaine." By the next year, Halstead also agreed that there had been no fraud. In an editorial he listed ten reasons for the defeat. Among these was the indifference of President Arthur and his cabinet, the "malignant conspiracy" of Roscoe Conkling, who when asked to campaign for Blaine replied, "I do not engage in criminal practice," and:

---

32 Ibid., November 17, 1884.


34 Blaine to Halstead, November 16, 1884, quoted in Ibid., 169; Stanwood, James G. Blaine, 294-295.

35 Muzzey, James G. Blaine, 324-325.
6. the idiotic alliteration of the unhappy and absurd Burchard.
7. the rain storm that swept the state....
8. the unparalleled economy of Republican rich men, and the generosity of Democratic millionaires....
9. the magnificent dinner at Delmonico, against which Blaine in vain protested, and which was not redeemed by his splendid speech on the occasion.
10. the hostility to the Republican candidate of half a dozen newspapers that had been Republican and flew the track on personal pretense, and the unexpected faithfulness of Tammany....

While unmentioned by Halstead, there were two other important factors that would help account for Blaine's defeat. The first was that the election came in a year of hard times; the second was the bolt of the Mugwumps. Both probably took many normally Republican voters into the Democratic camp for the election.

Part of Halstead's reluctance to admit defeat in New York stemmed from the fact that this meant his efforts in editing the Extra had gone for nought. In fact, one of Halstead's enemies said the Extra was about as valuable to Blaine's cause as so much wrapping paper would have been with the legend "Vote for James G. Blaine of Maine." This same critic said the editor had received $143,000 from the National Committee for the newspaper, but had spent only $11,200. The remaining sum of $31,800 "has never been accounted for except as salary for Mr. Halstead's services as editor-in-chief." The author of these charges was the editor of the Evening Telegram and a bitter Cincinnati enemy of Halstead, and so his figures can not really be trusted. They are based on estimates of costs of publication, and as no announcement was ever made of actual cost they

36 Commercial Gazette, July 5, 1885.
37 Cincinnati Evening Telegram, October 26, 1885.
can not be verified. Halstead did find the election profitable, in one way; the Commercial Gazette's circulation was greatly increased, approaching ninety thousand copies on the day after the election. 38

Even though he might agree that the New York count had been honest, Halstead was still unable to accept Cleveland's election with good grace. He reported that he still believed Cleveland was unfit for the Presidency, and said that he took consolation in the fact that "the American people did not elect Grover Cleveland," but rather that he had been elected by the 153 electoral votes cast for him in the South, which were a "result largely of brute force." 39 The next year in an article for the North American Review entitled "The Revival of Sectionalism," he further developed the theme that the conduct of the Solid South in keeping the Negro from the polls and forcing the Democratic party on that section would revive sectionalism in the United States:

The political evil to the country of slavery itself was not as far reaching, deplorable, and desperate as the solid Southern system would be, if tolerated until fixed in the public habit. That the people of the free North should be expected to sit down contented under an outrage upon them so gigantic as the turning of the votes of the enfranchised blacks against the national cause, and restoring the Old Southern boss politicians to their ancient supremacy is not reasonable. 40

38 Commercial Gazette, November 7, 1884.
39 Ibid., November 18, 1884.
40 Murat Halstead, "The Revival of Sectionalism," North American Review (March, 1885), 244; Halstead said he realized the race problem in the South was serious, and suggested the answer might be found in the migration of whites and blacks into separate states. He did not propose which of the Southern states should be Negro and which white. Ibid., 249.
The 1884 election marks a turning point in Halstead's career. This was true for several reasons. From this time on the editor spent more and more time away from Cincinnati and devoted less and less time writing for his newspaper. In expanding his field of work, Halstead wrote several dozen magazine articles and books in the next couple of decades. This turning point in his career also had a less discernible level. Halstead had always been a man of strong passions, but in his newspaper editing there had been an attempt at balance, an attempt to write well reasoned and reasonable editorials. He had been a Republican all his adult life, and with the exception of 1872, had always supported the Republican candidates, but not until 1884 did he become the complete party man. The 1884 campaign was dirty, and Halstead as much as any other editor made it so. Just four years earlier he had refused to make comments about Hancock's family and its religion. In 1884 he said many more personal things against Cleveland. At the same time, he defended actions of Blaine that only eight years earlier had brought his most severe censure.

Part of this seemingly changed attitude may be explained by the fact that Halstead was no longer an "independent journalist." Part of the agreement which he made with Smith when they combined their newspapers was that the new journal was to be Republican. Moreover, even though Halstead was editor-in-chief, Smith's wishes on editorial policy had to be consulted, which meant that the Commercial Gazette's editorial position was a compromise between two strong forces. While both men agreed on broad policy, they often disagreed over means. Then too, Halstead by 1884 was a close personal friend of the Republican candidate. Many people have commented on Blaine's strong magnetic personality, and there was no
doubt that Halstead was attracted to him as others. Thus it was because Halstead believed in him, almost with a passion, as the best man for the Presidency that he was willing to go all out for his election. Then finally, the change in Halstead's journalism and outlook may be a product of his age. For years he had practiced his free wheeling journalism for which he was often highly praised, and which had made him one of the nation's best known editors, but by 1884 he was fifty-five years old and his newspaper had skidded so far that he had seen his only salvation in combining it with Smith's. As the head of a large family with expensive tastes and with his years of active work becoming shorter and shorter, it seems only natural that Halstead should become more conservative, less free wheeling, and more interested in doing what was expected of him by his party and by his friends.
CHAPTER XI
THE PAYNE AFFAIR

In the Ohio elections of 1883 the Democrats made almost a clean sweep of the state, electing the governor and a majority in both Houses of the General Assembly. This meant that the Democrats could select the successor to United States Senator George Pendleton in January, 1884. Pendleton, while a Democrat with a distinguished record, was out of favor with a large group within his party who had resolved to prevent his re-election. His strongest competitor for the post was Henry B. Payne, a seventy-four year old former Congressman and the father of the treasurer of the Standard Oil Company. Payne's candidacy was promoted by John McLean, the publisher of the Cincinnati Enquirer and that city's Democratic boss, because he felt Pendleton had discriminated against his organization in passing out senatorial patronage.¹

By December, 1883, Halstead's editorials claimed that Standard Oil money was being used to buy Payne a Senate seat.² He declared that if just "one/hundred part" of the stories that were circulating around the state capitol were correct, money was circulating on a grand scale. He demanded that before the legislature voted for Senator it investigate the corruption charges. After all, "the honor of the great State of Ohio is involved."³ When Payne was elected, without an investigation, Halstead lamented that the state had been seriously injured. Now that it had been

¹Philip D. Jordan, Ohio Comes of Age, 1873-1900, 183.
²Commercial Gazette, December 25, 1883.
³Ibid., January 8, 1884.

329
demonstrated that money could buy a Senate seat, the editor said it could be expected that money would also be used to influence general legislation.\textsuperscript{4} Halstead claimed that Payne was personally innocent of corruption, but that the election was taken care of by people who professed to be his friends. These friends, the editor asserted, had disgraced the closing years of the "old gentleman's life" by branding his Senate seat in advance with the dollar mark. Now, the editor insisted, Payne would be remembered as the first Senator from Ohio whose election was bought. The only way for Payne to save his reputation was to decline the seat.\textsuperscript{5}

When Payne accepted his election, Halstead declared there was a "cyclone of indignation" among both Democrats and Republicans throughout the state. The editor alleged that everyone knew that the new Senator's son had spent his Standard Oil money for the seat, but that it was generally recognized that this was just the first step. With millions to spend, the editor claimed the Standard Oil Company would be able to make Payne its nominee for President at the Democratic convention. "How long would the Southern representatives hesitate to swing on the hinges of gold that will be provided?"\textsuperscript{6}

Halstead occasionally mentioned the election fraud over the next two years, but nothing was officially done until 1886 when the Republicans once again gained control of the Ohio House. Then Republicans undertook an investigation of the 1884 senatorial election after a \textit{Commercial Gazette}

\textsuperscript{4}\textit{Ibid.}, January 10, 1884.
\textsuperscript{5}\textit{Ibid.}, June 11, 1884.
\textsuperscript{6}\textit{Ibid.}, January 10 and 21, 1884.
article implicated several House members in the fraud. While the testimony taken by an investigating committee produced no legal proof of bribery, the inability of witnesses to remember what had happened just two years before and the many attempts to dodge subpoenas convinced members of the committee that their findings should be sent to the United States Senate for action. Halstead charged that it was known that 265,000 dollars were spent to secure Payne's election, but he declared the Senate might well refuse to take on its own investigation. Many senators, he claimed, realized an inquiry would produce an awful scandal that would affect the whole Democratic party. The editor said the fact that Payne's friends were doing everything in their power to prevent an investigation seemed "to raise a strong probability of guilt." "If Payne and his friends were...innocent they would...demand" an investigation.

The Committee on Privileges and Elections of the Senate held hearings, but voted against an investigation of the charge for lack of evidence. Three Republican Senators, William M. Evarts, John A. Logan, and Henry M. Teller, voted with the Democrats of the committee in this decision. The next day Halstead, declaring that there was "rottenness in high places" and that "the character of the Senate itself was affected, attacked the vote and the three Republican Senators. The editor asserted that Standard Oil lawyers had been "hanging around...doing dirty work"

---

7 Ibid., January 12, 1886.
8 Ibid., June 15, 1886.
9 Ibid., June 22, 1886.
since the start of the inquiry and intimated that the three Republican Senators were paid for their votes. They had, he maintained, "acted as the representatives of corruption in Ohio" and this action would follow them to "the end of the days of their lives as public Men."\(^{10}\)

Halstead decided that the Payne case brought the whole Senate before the bar of public opinion. The editor declared that the Senate contained too many men of great wealth who had purchased their seats. They did not wish an investigation because they too were vulnerable. Whenever the people of a State can not get a hearing from the Senate, the editor said, the time had come for a change. While he mentioned that some people were calling for the abolition of that House, he wished only to change the means of election. He would take the choice from the state legislatures and give it to the people. This, he declared, would make the Senators as responsible to the will of the people as the members of the House of Representatives.\(^{11}\)

Halstead quoted one Senator as saying that the decision not to investigate "struck the deadliest blow ever dealt at the integrity of the Senate." The editor, claiming that most Republican newspapers agreed with him, called for an investigation by the Senate into its own "degeneracy."\(^{12}\) Senator Evarts called the demands of the Republican editors a "crow carnival."

\(^{10}\)Ibid., June 22, 1886.  
\(^{11}\)Ibid., July 7, 1886.  
\(^{12}\)Ibid., July 9, 1886.
If anyone has ever observed the proceedings of that most extrordinary concert among the birds, he will find that their parliamentary system is extremely simple. They all speak at the same time, and they all say the same thing. They have a greater power of voice but a very limited vocabulary. They have great energy of assertion, but great poverty of argument. 13

Senator Logan attacked Halstead directly. In a very long speech before the Senate, he read extracts from the Commercial, the Commercial Gazette, and Halstead's personal correspondence. The Senator claimed that his friends had warned him that he would be "ground to dust" if he attacked the Commercial Gazette, but he said that he did not propose to attack it, only read from it. The Senator then read Halstead's most intemperate, and in general self-repudiated, editorials. A great deal of laughter was provoked in the chamber by Halstead's earlier views of Lincoln, Grant, and Blaine. Logan continued by saying that he never dreamed he was a "big enough man" to be attacked by the Commercial Gazette. He claimed that he could only conclude that to be attacked by the newspaper was a compliment as he was placed in such illustrious company. 14

A Commercial Gazette editorial, called "The Shame of the Senate and the Lamentable Logan," declared that the "Boodlers" success in stopping the investigation of Payne had not ended the matter. The Republican editors of Ohio were forwarding their own investigation to prove the justice of their claims. As for Logan, the editorial concluded:

14 Congressional Record, Senate, 49th Cong., 1 Sess., vol. 17, part 7, 7285-7287.
It was, we are afraid we must say, simply a vulgarity in the Senator to be so loud and furious about what Mr. Halstead of the Commercial Gazette had done, and to follow the beaten track of the boodle blackguards who have been yelling for years precisely the maliciousness that the Senator roared.\textsuperscript{15}

General H. V. Boynton, Halstead's Washington correspondent, claimed that Logan was involved with the Standard Oil Company. He said that former Governor Foster had lately organized an oil and natural gas company in Fostoria in which Standard Oil was participating. Foster, according to Boynton, went to Washington before the committee had reported and let Logan in on the "ground floor" of this new company. Boynton thought that if an investigator could get a list of the stockholders in Foster's company, there would be enough evidence that public opinion would force a Senate inquiry.\textsuperscript{16} Nothing came of the investigation of Foster's company, and three years later Foster himself told Halstead that while he did have business dealings with Standard Oil, he had not acted as the company's agent in the Payne matter. In fact, he said Oliver Payne, the Senator's son, was not on friendly terms with his associates in the management of the company, and most of them were Republicans who would have been glad to have seen Payne defeated in his senatorial bid.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15}Commercial Gazette, July 24, 1886.

\textsuperscript{16}H. V. Boynton to Halstead, July 30, 1886, Halstead MSS.

\textsuperscript{17}Charles Foster to Halstead, April 5, 1889, Halstead MSS; The Standard Oil Company like many giant concerns of the time often tended to non-partisan action when it came to elections—giving financial support to both candidates in a race. There is every reason to believe that the company would have supported Payne if it felt he would be a "Standard Oil Senator." In fact, there is every reason to believe Standard Oil money did buy Payne his seat as Halstead claimed. Allan Nevins, Grover Cleveland: A Study in Courage, 344.
While the **Commercial Gazette** and several other Ohio newspapers tried to keep the Payne issue before the public in the hope of forcing the Senate to take action, the whole matter was soon forgotten by most people. Halstead did think that the new interest which was shown in several states in a constitutional amendment for the direct election of senators might lead to the desired reform.\(^{18}\) Unfortunately for Halstead, only the people seemed to forget about the Payne matter, for the senators whom he attacked were going to prove to have long memories.\(^{19}\)

Halstead and the **Commercial Gazette** began preparing for the 1888 election almost immediately after the 1884 election. When many of the Blaine Clubs refused to admit complete defeat and inscribed "1888" on their standards, Halstead wrote the defeated candidate that "we go towards the future with that banner flying."\(^{20}\) One of the most important ways that Halstead kept the banner flying was to attack the Cleveland Administration every chance he had and in particular to identify the President with the South. When Jefferson Davis wrote a letter charging cruelty to the Confederate prisoners in Northern prisons during the war, the editor attacked Davis by pointing to Andersonville, "the prison-pen

\(^{18}\)Commercial Gazette, December 15, 1886, January 30, 1887.

\(^{19}\)The story of Payne's election and the attempted investigation can also be found in Jordan, Ohio Comes of Age, 183-185; John Sherman, Recollections of Forty Years In the House, Senate, and Cabinet, 946-949; Matthew Josephson, The Politicos, 1865-1886 362ff.; Nevins, Grover Cleveland, 347; and Henry D. Lloyd, Wealth Against Commonwealth, Chapter 27, 259-388.

\(^{20}\)Halstead to Blaine, November 19, 1884, David S. Muzzey, James G. Blaine, A Political Idol of Other Days, 327.
in Georgia, where our soldiers perished by the thousands, from poisoned water, scant food, exposure to a blazing sun and pestilential air, and to the system of assassination practiced by the Confederate guards." While he declared that he was for peace between the sections as much as anyone in the country, he would not sit idly by and watch the nation be ruled in the name of peace "by the minority class responsible for the crimes and horrors of war." To Halstead it was obvious that the Cleveland Administration was dedicated to the maintenance of the supremacy of the Solid South—the continuance of the Southern Confederacy.  

By 1887 the Commercial Gazette had once again decided that Cleveland had been elected by fraud. It was not fraud in counting the New York vote, but the fraud of the Solid South which suppressed Republicans, the fraud of the Mugwumps who for personal spite voted against Blaine, add the fraud of the Prohibition party that took whiskey money to campaign in New York.

Halstead claimed that he was not at all surprised when Cleveland ordered the return of the captured Confederate battle flags to the Southern states. Halstead and other Republican editors made this incident an excuse for an all out attack on the President. Not only was it claimed that his order proved that he was a tool of the South, but he was also criticised for vetoing private pension bills, for not making a patriotic

---

21 Commercial Gazette, December 12, 1886.

22 Ibid., January 16, 1887; Paul H. Buck, The Road to Reunion, 1865-1900. 285-287.
speech when he visited Gettysburg, and for going fishing on Decoration Day.\textsuperscript{23} Joseph B. Foraker, the Republican governor of Ohio, became a Northern hero when he announced: "No rebel flags will be surrendered while I am Governor."\textsuperscript{24} When Halstead was criticised for magnifying the importance of the rebel flag incident and reviving old war sentiments by insisting that Negroes of the South "had the rights of citizenship," he claimed he was "on the right side" and no matter who criticised him, he believed he had done the "state some service."\textsuperscript{25}

Halstead later declared that he knew of nothing Cleveland had done since his election, "with the exception of getting married, that calls for public confidence and approbation." He claimed Cleveland's messages showed his "ignorance and egotism," and said his recommendations were "unsound, superfluous, and worthless."\textsuperscript{26} "Was the President crazy?" he asked, or was he just "a political ignoramus, dolt, simpleton, idiot."\textsuperscript{27}

The worst thing the President did in his first term, according to Halstead, was to appoint L. C. Q. Lamar to the Supreme Court. It was bad enough that Lamar, a former "rebel" who had been a "beneficiary of the disfranchisement of the colored people of Mississippi," should be Secretary

\textsuperscript{23}\textit{Commercial Gazette}, June 16, 1887.
\textsuperscript{25}\textit{Commercial Gazette}, July 8, 1887.
\textsuperscript{26}\textit{Ibid.}, December 4, 1887.
\textsuperscript{27}\textit{Ibid.}, December 8, 1887.
of the Interior, but to allow him to sit on the Supreme Court and give Confederate "misinterpretations" of the constitution would, Halstead declared, give "that diseased section control of the nation." When Lamar was confirmed, Halstead lamented that the new justice would "represent on the bench the nullification of the Constitution." The only salvation for the country that he could see was for the people to turn out the "Confederate Democratic party" and elect a Republican President and Congress in 1888.²⁹

Halstead's candidate for that Republican president was once more John Sherman.³⁰ The editor claimed that Sherman was also Blaine's choice for the nomination. In the summer of 1887 Halstead met Blaine in Germany and the two talked about the 1888 election. At that time Blaine felt that his health would not permit him to take up the duties of the Presidency, but he told the editor that he would accept the position of Secretary of State in Sherman's cabinet.³¹ It appeared to Halstead that Sherman's chances for the nomination had never been better. As early as April the editor claimed that the Ohio Senator had the complete support of his own state, almost the entire vote of the Southern Republicans, and many delegates from the Middle and Eastern States. Halstead realized

²⁸Ibid., January 7, 1887.
²⁹Ibid., January 17, 1887.
³⁰Ibid., May 27, 1887.
that the position of the front runner in the presidential race could be dangerous, but he believed Sherman would be able to stay ahead of his competitors.\(^{32}\)

Halstead met with Blaine supporters in New York just before the Republican convention. Once more Blaine declared he did not intend to be a candidate, even though Sherman said he would withdraw if Blaine decided to seek office again. Blaine refused to endorse Sherman's candidacy, but Halstead said he spoke of it "in terms of cordial approval."\(^{33}\)

The Republican convention met once more in Chicago. Halstead campaigned before the Republican National Committee to have Cincinnati chosen, but even though he "received a greeting of unusual warmth from that committee," they decided Chicago offered more advantages than the Queen City.\(^{34}\) The editor arrived in the convention city several days early and was constantly questioned by other reporters as to the chances of Blaine being nominated. Halstead's answer was that he was sure Blaine's name would be presented to the convention, but that since it was known he could not accept the nomination, Sherman would receive the nod instead.\(^{35}\)

Unfortunately for Sherman's candidacy, Halstead let his preferences overturn his political judgment. Sherman led on the first ballots, but a Sunday recess in the voting allowed the backroom manipulations to take place that finally gave the nomination to Indiana's Benjamin Harrison.

\(^{32}\) Commercial Gazette, April 30, 1888.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., June 7 and 12, 1888.

\(^{34}\) Ibid., December 13, 1887.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., June 11, 1888.
Levi Morton of New York then received second place on the ticket. Governor Foraker, who led the Ohio delegation, was criticised in many quarters for deserting Sherman, but Halstead defended his decision. He claimed that when the Sherman vote declined among the Southern delegates and did not rise in any other quarter, it was obvious to all observers his cause was lost. While Foraker had wished to take the Ohio delegation to Blaine, Halstead declared he would not accept the nomination and recommended going to William McKinley.36

The Cincinnati editor was not unhappy with the choice of the convention. Harrison, an old college friend, had often received Halstead's support in his Indiana campaigns. The Commercial Gazette's editorials during the pre-convention period had also pointed out Harrison's availability and praised his public record. With his nomination, Halstead promised him immediate support. He telegraphed his personal congratulations and in an editorial wrote of the candidate's "genial dignity," "unfailing courtesy," and "marked ability." Praising the nomination because it gave recognition to the soldier element, the editor declared that Harrison was one of the men who saved the Union and thus "transmitted the glorious heritage which the Harrison family helped create, to generations yet to come."37

36 Ibid., June 30, 1888; Foraker, Notes of a Busy Life, I, 381-389; Everett Walters, Joseph Benson Foraker, 73-77.
37 Halstead to Harrison, June 25, 1888, Harrison MSS; Commercial Gazette, June 26, 1888.
Soon after the convention, Halstead volunteered his personal services to the candidate. He suggested that he might act as a "frozen barrier against the heated affections of the people." He humorously declared that his "vast experience" might make him of "some slight assistance" in the campaign.\(^3^8\) The editor wrote inviting Mr. and Mrs. Harrison to Cincinnati as his house guests to escape the crowds of people that were visiting him in Indianapolis.\(^3^9\) He followed his invitation with a letter calling the suggestion of the trip "impracticable," though the editor said he would like to talk to the candidate before going to New York to welcome Blaine home from his European tour.\(^4^0\) After his return to the United States Blaine campaigned for Harrison, speaking throughout the country. Halstead wrote Harrison that he was "delighted" with Blaine's tour as he had "a larger liberty, and an advantage of mowing a wider swath than you can be permitted."\(^4^1\)

As in the earlier campaigns, the Commercial Gazette's editorials once more waved the "Bloody Shirt." When it was claimed during the campaign that there was a new spirit in the South, Halstead scoffed that "the Leopard can not change his spots, and the narrow-minded, tyrannical, vote-suppressing Bourbonism of Dixie crops out once in a while."\(^4^2\) Not only did Harrison's war record permit greater use of Cleveland's hiring of a substitute in this campaign, but the President's attempt to bring some

\(^3^8\) Halstead to Harrison, July 8, 1888, Harrison MSS.

\(^3^9\) Halstead to Harrison, July 19, 1888, Harrison MSS.

\(^4^0\) Halstead to Harrison, July 22, 1888, Harrison MSS.

\(^4^1\) Halstead to Harrison, October 16 and 21, 1888, Harrison MSS.

\(^4^2\) Commercial Gazette, September 8, 1888.
order to the granting of war pensions was also thoroughly condemned as political. Under the Republican presidents in the post-war period, any private pension bill which Congress had passed was automatically signed. Cleveland, on the other hand, attempted to investigate the individual cases, and often vetoed bills when he deemed the petitioners unworthy. Halstead declared that the President's own lack of a war record made these vetoes particularly brutal and said that they "ought to arouse such a whirlwind of public indignation as would sweep him from public life."\(^3\)

Try as hard as he might, Halstead could not convince the voters in the North that this election was just like all the other post-war elections. Cleveland had proven during his term, even though Halstead refused to admit it, that the election of a Democratic president did not mean turning the national government over to the South. The issue of 1888 was not the Solid South or Cleveland's war record but the tariff. On the tariff issue Halstead himself was extremely vulnerable. Cleveland's annual message of 1887 had attacked the high protective tariff and demanded reductions. The Democratic House of Representatives passed a moderately reformed tariff, but the Republican Senate wrote its own highly protective bill, allowing the tariff to become the major campaign issue of 1888. Halstead had allied himself with the tariff reform wing of the Liberal Republican party, and many Democratic editors reprinted his earlier Commercial editorials damning the protective system. Moreover, in 1874

\(^3\) Ibid., August 11, 1888.
he had been made an honorary member of the Cobden Club, an English free trade group, at its annual banquet at Greenwich. At the time he had made a speech praising the principles of free trade. When this was also brought up by the Democratic editors, Halstead claimed that he still believed in some form of "tariff reform," but that Democratic ignorance on matters of money and commerce had convinced him that reform would have to come from the Republican party. While Halstead might have been touched by political heresy in the tariff question, Smith was not, as he always supported a system of protection. Consequently, with only a mild embarrassment, the Commercial Gazette was able to tell its readers that the Democratic low tariff policy would mean European competition and closed factories across the nation.

During the campaign Halstead kept up a steady correspondence with the candidate. In his letters the editor warned of the enormous vote registration in New York; suggesting speakers for the Republican cause; and cautioned against long campaign trips. Halstead also interfered with the collection of campaign funds in the Cincinnati region. He suggested that donors send their money directly to Indiana where he said it would do the most good. He did this because he felt the National Committee was not dealing liberally enough with the state. At the same time, he told Harrison not to expect too much in the way of large contributions from Cincinnati, as many businessmen who would ordinarily have sent checks

---

1 Commercial Gazette, February 19 and October 3, 1888.
2 Ibid., October 23, 1888.
3 Halstead to Harrison, August 4, October 16, and 21, 1888, Harrison MSS.
found themselves financially embarrassed. Cincinnati was holding a Cen-
tennial Exposition during the autumn and many of these businessmen had
subscribed to the guarantee fund and thus felt it best to curtail other
spending. Halstead invited the Republican candidate to attend the Ex-
position of "Republican Day" as he said Cleveland would be there on
"Democratic Day," but Harrison decided to stay in Indianapolis.

In the last weeks of the campaign a minor sensation occurred with
the publication of a letter from Sir Lionel Sackville-West, the British
Minister, to a Charles F. Murchison. The letter was in response to a
request from Murchison, who claimed to be a former British subject, for
advice in voting. Lord Sackville's reply favored Cleveland. The Murchison
letter had been a Republican trick to embarrass the President. While
Secretary of State Bayard immediately demanded the Minister's recall, the
trick was successful, and Cleveland may have lost many Irish-American
votes.

The letter was important enough to Halstead to warrant an editor-
ial set in triple sized print. Realizing that there was anti-English
sentiment among many Americans, the editor proclaimed that the letter was
proof of co-operation between "British Tories and the American Confederates
and Copperheads." Claiming that the British and the South were in alliance

\[^1^7\] Halstead to Harrison, October 23, November 1, 1888, Harrison MSS.

\[^1^8\] Halstead to Harrison, October 11, 1888, Harrison MSS.

\[^1^9\] Lord Sackville would later claim that Republican National Chair-
man Quay had been responsible for having the letter written. Springfield
Republican, October 21, 1895. Quoted in Allan Nevins, American Press
Opinion: Washington to Coolidge, 393.
during the war, Halstead declared that a Confederate Democratic coalition was going to take the United States back to the colonial system. The editor concluded: "The Sackville letter is the handwriting on the wall for the doomed administration, and the fraudulent Cleveland;...It is only necessary to remove the remains." The next day, after reports that the letter was a trick, the Commercial Gazette's editorial was scornful. "The Democrats whine that the poor, dear British Minister was trapped!" Halstead claimed that he was not trapped but "betrayed," betrayed into telling the truth about the alliance between "British Tories and the creatures of the Solid South."\footnote{Commercial Gazette, October 26, 1888.} The Sackville-West letter may have changed some votes, but the election results actually turned on what was probably fraud in New York and Indiana, and the warnings of employers in all the Northern states that a Democratic victory with its tariff reductions would bring lower wages and unemployment. While Harrison had an easy electoral college victory—he carried every Northern state but Connecticut and New Jersey—Cleveland won a popular plurality of around a hundred thousand.\footnote{Ibid., October 27, 1888.} The distinction of such a victory might be questioned, but Halstead telegraphed to the victor:

Victory worthily won, responsibility greater than since Lincoln's time. Honor and fame and glory and the confidence and congratulations of millions are yours, count me one of the millions who delivered and are glad.\footnote{Eugene H. Roseboom, A History of Presidential Elections, 283.}
Halstead had much advice to give the president-elect on the composition of his cabinet. He told Harrison that Blaine desired the Secretary of State's post and that he felt the former candidate should be in the cabinet. The editor said that many people in the party blamed Blaine for the handling of the Conkling affair while he was Secretary of State under Garfield. Halstead recalled that he had been consulted by both Blaine and Garfield on the matter of the New York appointments and he knew from first hand experience that Blaine's advice to the President "was that which any man would have given him, who did not desire that the Garfield Administration should be engaged in blacking Senator Conkling's boots." The editor added that he would not bring anyone into the cabinet from Ohio, Indiana, or Illinois, but said he had an alternate cabinet composed of all Ohio men—just in case Harrison did not like his other suggestions: Secretary of State, Sherman; War, Foraker; Navy, Grosvenor; Interior, Hanna; Treasury, McKinley; Postmaster General, Foster; Attorney General, Butterworth. Halstead said he suggested this highly unorthodox cabinet because Garfield was friven to distraction in attempting to fill his cabinet and said, "Confound it, if I could make a Cabinet entirely of Ohio men I could get up a right good one, and I believe I would in that way beat anything I could do by going outside..." Halstead told Harrison's secretary that Ohio should be passed over for the cabinet posts. The person most often mentioned for the cabinet was John Sherman.

54 Halstead to Harrison, November 26, 1888, Harrison MSS.
55 Halstead to Harrison, December 7, 1888, Harrison MSS.
56 Halstead to Halford, November 27, 1888, Harrison MSS.
and the editor said this was merely a scheme to crowd Blaine out and also
to make a vacancy in the Senate for the state legislature to fill. Sherman,
Halstead said, would rather stay in the Senate than go into the cabinet.57

Halstead feared that his long letters of advice might bore Harrison,
but the president-elect wrote that he would not "consent on any terms to
be without your occasional letters...which throw a gleam of sunshine across
a sky that is otherwise dark." Besides all that, he said occasionally he
discovered in one of the letters "a vein of thought and valuable sug-
gestions." Inviting Halstead to come to Indianapolis anytime he wished,
Harrison mentioned that he had not been able to write his inaugural ad-
dress and said that perhaps he would have to get some "well equipped news-
paperman" to write it for him.58 Halstead answered that if he were to
write an inaugural address, it would be under a thousand words, but that
that was one document every President had to write for himself as it
must "be inspired in every sentence by your own sense of lonesome respon-
sibility."59

Early in the new year Halstead delivered a speech in Madison,
Wisconsin, and on his way to Cincinnati stopped in Indianapolis to urge
Whitelaw Reid's candidacy for the post of Minister to England.60 On
leaving the meeting with Harrison Halstead talked to reporters and the

57 Halstead to Harrison, December 20, 1888, Harrison MSS.
58 Harrison to Halstead, December 22, 1888, Halstead MSS.
59 Halstead to Harrison, December 21, 1888, Harrison MSS.
60 Halstead to Harrison, January 19, 1889, Harrison MSS.
next day the Associated Press carried the report that Blaine was to be in the cabinet. The editor told Harrison he had given his opinion to the reporters, but had insisted that his opinions were not necessarily those of the president-elect. Many people wrote to Halstead asking him to use his influence to gain them appointments to various government jobs. The Reverend Mr. B. W. Chidlaw, Halstead’s old teacher, wished to be made a visitor to West Point, and the editor said that he was sure that such a "modest ambition" could be granted. When another man asked to be made minister to Belgium, Halstead sent a copy of his reply to Harrison. The editor answered that he was afraid the job was impossible as "the habit of the administration has been to reserve Belgium for millionaires."

As he had done so often in the past, the Cincinnati editor went to Washington for the inaugural and sent letters back to his newspaper. When Harrison announced his cabinet, Halstead found that his advice had been taken in several cases, as Blaine led the list as Secretary of State, and no Ohioan was appointed. Soon after the inaugural the new President sent to the Senate his nominations for first-class foreign missions, and again as Halstead recommended, Whitelaw Reid headed the list as Minister

61 Halstead to Harrison, January 26, 1889, Harrison MSS.
62 Halstead to Harrison, March 19, 1889, Harrison MSS.
63 Halstead to J. M. Dalzell, March 8, 1889, Harrison MSS.
64 Commercial Gazette, March 3, and 5, 1889.
65 With the death of William Windom, Charles Foster, the former Ohio Governor, was given his post as Secretary of Treasury.
to England. While not discussed in the Halstead-Harrison correspondence, but rumored in the press for about a week before hand, the nominee for the post of Minister to Germany was the Cincinnati editor, Murat Halstead.66

Halstead wanted the German appointment very badly, for he was in poor health and he believed a few years in Germany might act as a restorative. Moreover, the Commercial Gazette was in bad financial shape and the editor's policies were often under attack by his associates and creditors. Profit from the newspaper was so low that Richard Smith had taken over the editorship of the Toledo Commercial, though he retained some interest in the Cincinnati newspaper. 67

On March 28, the Senate, in executive session, received the report of the Foreign Relations Committee on the first class diplomatic nominations. All were reported favorably, but on a motion to confirm, six Republicans voted with the Democrats to reject Halstead. Senator Sherman immediately moved the vote be reconsidered. During the debate that followed, the objections to the editor's nomination were disclosed. As might be imagined, almost all of them stemmed from the Commercial Gazette's attacks on the Senate and the three Republican Senators who had voted against the Payne inquiry. The Senate adjourned for the day before the vote to reconsider could be taken.68

66 Commercial Gazette, March 24 and 28, 1889.

67 Foraker is the only source I have found for Smith leaving the Cincinnati newspaper. He claims that Smith severed all connections, but this is unlikely as he wrote several signed editorials in early April, 1889 and by 1891 was the sole editor of the newspaper. Foraker, Notes of a Busy Life, I, 380-381.

68 Commercial Gazette, March 29, 1889.
The next day the Senate devoted almost three hours in executive session to Halstead's case. Two speeches were made in his favor, and Senators Teller, Evarts, and Payne spoke in opposition. Payne was reported as saying "if the nomination had been to Russia, with a proviso that the nominee should go on to Siberia, and never return, he would gladly vote for confirmation." Senator John C. Spooner of Wisconsin, in speaking for confirmation, argued that a journalist could not be held accountable for everything his newspaper published during the heat of a campaign. If he were held accountable, the Senator said, "but few could hope to pass unscathed into the golden realm of office-holding." Sherman announced that he wished to reply to the editor's critics before the vote was taken, and so once more the Senate adjourned without making their final decision.69

On the third day of executive session three Republican Senators, including Sherman, spoke in the editor's behalf. At the close of their remarks the motion to reconsider was put and once more Halstead's confirmation was lost. By a vote of twenty-five to nineteen, the Senate decided not to reconsider. Five Republican Senators voted with the Democrats against the motion, while only two Democrats--Senators Joseph Blackburn of Kentucky and Wilkinson Call of Florida--joined the Republicans on Halstead's side.70 During the roll-call vote the Republicans

69 Ibid., March 30, 1889.

70 J. C. S. Blackburn to Halstead, March 31, 1889, Halstead MSS.
who voted nay explained that they had no personal animosity against the editor, but thought it right to defend the Senate against the attacks made upon it by Halstead and his newspapers. Sherman and the editor's other friends within the Senate explained that they had delayed final action for three days in the hope that they might pick up enough Democratic votes to put the nomination across. 71

Writing from Washington, General Boynton said that the five Republican Senators had sunk their positions as Senators to the "level of their characters." In an article which covered three and a half columns of the Commercial Gazette's front page Boynton sketched the careers of the five in an extremely vindictive manner. Senator Evarts was accused of lobbying for acts before Congress in which large amounts of money were involved, of forcing the Diaz government of Mexico to confirm railroad grants for his New York friends while he was Secretary of State under Hayes, and also of purchasing his election as Senator from the New York Republican caucus. Preston B. Plumb of Kansas was charged with having stolen the property of one A. L. H. Crenshaw of Jackson, Missouri while he was a major in the Union Army. "For many years Senator Plumb has been building his political edifice upon this foundation." John J. Ingalls, also of Kansas, was denounced as another Senator whose election was under a cloud of "bribery and corruption." Henry M. Teller was reproached for granting patents for large amounts of unearned land to the railroads and of "defrauding widows and soldiers and orphans" while he was Arthur's Secretary

of the Interior. Henry L. Dawes of Massachusetts was accused of being involved in the Credit Mobilier scandal: "Of course Senator Dawes would have no sympathy with a man who had been in the habit of telling the truth in a blunt way about Senators." Senators Evarts and Teller had personal reasons for demanding Halstead's rejection, but the other three Senators did not. While it must be remembered that the action of the Senate was taken in executive session, and thus closed to newsmen and officially never entered in the Senate's journals, it seems likely that the three realized their names would be given to the press. Consequently, the evidence would point to their official reasons for their votes—to uphold the dignity of the Senate against its attacker—more likely than Boynton's reason—that they themselves were guilty of corruption and wished to punish anyone suggesting an inquiry. It would certainly seem that there would have been few easier ways of making oneself prominent than by voting against Halstead.

Richard Smith published a signed editorial in which he declared Halstead's rejection was based solely on his criticism of the Senate in refusing to investigate the Payne election. "What the Commercial Gazette said in the whole controversy was the truth....The issue for next fall has been made in Ohio by Mr. Payne. It can not be avoided. The defeat of Halstead was the result of revenge. Now let the people of Ohio demonstrate the folly of revenge." 73

72 Commercial Gazette, March 31, 1889.
73 Ibid., March 21, 1889.
In another letter from Washington, Boynton asserted that the move against Halstead did not originate with the Republican Senators, but rather with Senator Payne who demanded the editor’s defeat for “vindication.” Boynton accused the six Republican Senators of rallying “to the coal-oil standard” and making the Senate a “star chamber” at the command of Payne. The Commercial Gazette’s Washington correspondent pointed out that his employer, having long acquaintance with Germany and German affairs, was recognized as eminently fitted for the appointment. Not only had authorities on international affairs both at home and abroad praised the editor’s qualifications, but Germans themselves had commented on the suitability of the selection. Boynton declared that the five Republicans might have had an excuse for their action if questions had arisen about Halstead’s fitness for the post, but as it was, it could only be concluded they acted from spite. While he declared the five Republicans had disgraced their membership in it, he said the Senate was still an “able, honorable, high-minded body.”

Newspaper opinion in the country was generally favorable when Harrison announced Halstead’s nomination. The Chattanooga Times called the editor “something erratic” but said he was an expert on the German language, well liked by German-Americans, and could be depended upon to stand up for American interests. The editors of the Philadelphia News, Detroit Free Press, Covington Commonwealth, and many other news-

---

7l Ibid., April 1, 1889.

75 Ibid., March 30, 1889.
papers all commented favorably on the nomination. But not all newspaper opinion agreed on the merit of the Cincinnati editor's nomination. The New York Commercial Advertiser declared the selection unwise while the Indianapolis Sentinel could find but one good point in the nomination, that Halstead would be taken out of the country for four years "to the distinct gain of decent journalism." 77

When the editor's appointment failed to gain confirmation, public opinion, in general, once more seemed to be on his side. Many editorials echoed the one written by Richard Smith in which he declared "the tainted Republican Senators" had done the editor a great service. He predicted a newspaper man would not be satisfied with the dull order of diplomatic life and that Whitelaw Reid would be home from England in less than a year. Moreover, he felt the five Republican Senators had by their votes raised Halstead to the highest rank within the journalistic field. 78 The New York Sun believed that with confirmation Halstead would have passed into the ranks "of gentlemen sent abroad to occupy fancy places," but by the act of the Senate he was elevated to "the category of our most attractive and most discussed Senator." 79

Many newspapers agreed that Halstead had been made a martyr to journalistic freedom by the Senate's action. The Senate, the New York World proclaimed, must realize it "can not muzzle the press by with-

77 Ibid.
78 Ibid., April 7, 1889.
79 Ibid., March 31, 1889.
holding offices from editors. And it will invite a plainer speech than its members may relish it it tries.\(^80\) Henry Watterson also mentioned the freedom of the press in his editorial condemning the Senate's action. He declared the real message in the rejection was a warning from the Senate to newspapers to be careful when dealing "with that body or any of its members."\(^81\) The Boston *Evening Traveller* discussed some other famous rejections by the Senate. The Boston newspaper mentioned Isaac Hill of New Hampshire who was appointed Second Comptroller of the Treasury by Andrew Jackson. Hill was not confirmed by the Senate, but eighteen months later he was sent to sit in that body by the people of New Hampshire. This newspaper also recalled the famous case of Martin Van Buren's humiliation by the Senate when he was nominated as Minister to England. While the *Evening Traveller* was not suggesting Halstead as a presidential candidate, the editorial concluded by saying Payne's term expired in 1891 "and stranger things have happened than that Murat Halstead should be his successor."\(^82\)

Many of the editor's friends immediately took up the idea of his candidacy for the Senatorship. Former President Hayes wrote that he hoped the campaign could be fought on the issue of buying and selling Senate seats and told Halstead; "Don't decline."\(^83\) The editor answered that he

\(^80\) *Ibid.*, April 1, 1889.

\(^81\) *Ibid.*, March 31, 1889.

\(^82\) *Ibid.*, April 5, 1889.

\(^83\) Hayes to Halstead, April 1, 1889, Hayes MSS.
had not declined anything, and that he had heard rumors that some of his friends wished to propose him for the gubernatorial race in the fall. He said there were both public and private reasons against his candidacy. The former President replied that he had the Senate in mind and had not heard the suggestion of the governorship. What the state needed, he declared, was "a fight...which has a bone in it." and he seemed to think Halstead could make that fight in either race. Other people were also writing the editor with an elective office in mind. One correspondent thought Ohio had two men who "towered above all their fellows:" John Sherman and the editor. He declared he would be glad to give his support if Halstead ran for governor. Charles Foster, the former governor, sent Halstead a copy of a letter booming his candidacy for governor that he had mailed to the editor of the Sandusky Register. Foster said that the state had no good candidate, that Halstead had the sympathy of a large segment of voters because of the Senate's action, and that this had made the editor's candidacy timely. It would be good politics, Foster declared, because "it possesses 'dramatic' elements." As for the rumors that Halstead wanted Payne's Senate seat, the former Governor said that in this case "you are treading on my toes." Others agreed to the

---

84 Halstead to Hayes, April 3, 1889, Hayes MSS.
85 Hayes to Halstead, April 4, 1889, Hayes MSS.
86 Wilson Vance to Halstead, April 3, 1889, Halstead MSS.
87 Charles Foster to Halstead, April 4, 1889, Halstead MSS.
88 Charles Foster to Halstead, April 15, 1889, Halstead MSS.
"dramatic elements" a Halstead candidacy would have, but insisted it need be a candidacy to "succeed Boodle Payne."  

While the Senate was debating his nomination, the editor was seriously ill in Cincinnati. On March 20 an acute attack of rheumatism, complicated by erysipelas, had hit him. When Halstead learned of the Senate's action, he wrote to Harrison telling him of his condition and suggesting Governor Foraker for the German post. Instead of Foraker Harrison named William W. Phelps, whom the Senate promptly accepted. By the middle of April Halstead returned to his editorial duties, but suffered a relapse which affected his heart. Even with these difficulties, the first week of May found a convalescing Halstead making plans to join his wife and four of his children in Germany. Carl Schurz arranged passage for him on the maiden voyage of the Hamburg-American Packet Company's "Augusta Victoria" at a special rate. On his way to New York for his May 22 sailing, he stopped in Washington to see Harrison. Citing his own case as a point, he cautioned the President about overwork. In Europe he first went to the baths at Bad Nauheim in Germany. The baths were recommended to the editor because they were given at a low temperature

89 Commercial Gazette, April 9, 1889.
90 Halstead to Harrison, April 1, 1889, Harrison MSS.
91 William Halstead claims that the doctors so feared for Halstead's life at the time of his relapse that they cabled Mrs. Halstead to return to his bedside in Cincinnati from Germany. As Halstead writes Harrison less than three weeks later that Mrs. Halstead and his daughters were spending the summer in Germany, I would doubt that she returned to Cincinnati and then went back to Germany in this short time. William Halstead, MS., 196.
92 Carl Schurz to Halstead, May 4, 1889, Halstead MSS.
and a very rigid diet was associated with them. By the end of June Halstead could write Harrison that he was recovering his old vigor.  

Leaving the Spa the Halsteads visited Berlin and then Paris for the Exposition. Halstead particularly enjoyed the French art and the magnificent view from the new Eiffel Tower.

During his European tour his friends and the Commercial Gazette kept alive the idea of his candidacy for the senatorship. Upon his return to Cincinnati these friends, who included Governor Foraker, Frederick Hassaurek, the publisher, and Richard Smith, arranged for a public welcoming reception to be held at the Music Hall. When he arrived in the city on Friday evening, August 2, he was met by the mayor and a party of dignitaries who escorted him to his home. On the next evening he was escorted to the Music Hall where speeches of welcome were delivered on behalf of the colored people of the city, the press, and finally the people of Ohio. Governor Foraker delivered the last welcome. The First Regiment Band played and the Flaine Glee Club Club, the Tenth Ward Glee Club, and the Eleventh Ward Glee Club sang.

Hayes wrote to the editor on his return to keep away from his inkstand so that his restoration to health might be permanent, but

---

93 Halstead to Harrison, May 7 and June 27, 1889, Harrison MSS.
94 Commercial Gazette, August 5 and 6, 1889.
95 Ibid., June 15, 1889; William Halstead MSS., 198.
96 Ibid., August 2, 3, and 4, 1889.
Halstead's enforced eighteen weeks vacation from the newspaper had made him eager to return to work. Consequently, he began writing a series of travel letters about his European experience for publication in the Commercial Gazette. He remarked to Hayes that he could not keep away from his inkstand, "for it is my occupation to spoil paper in various forms with ink." He mentioned to Hayes that he would not refuse election to the Senate, but that he was more concerned that both senators be Republican than that he be one of them.

The Republican party had never seriously considered nominating Halstead for Governor and instead ran Foraker once more. As for the senate seat, the election of a Democratic General Assembly in the Fall ended all hope for the editor along this line. As "Boodle" Payne was eighty, he was not re-elected. Instead the Ohio Democrats chose Calvin S. Brice, another millionaire and party angel. The official choice of the Republican caucus was former Governor Foster, although a state Senator named Schneider bolted the caucus and cast one vote for Halstead. The editor declared that he told Mr. Schneider he should vote for Foster, but that he was, nonetheless, extremely proud to receive the one vote.

In the long run it is probably well for the Republican party and for Halstead that he did not actively engage in seeking political

97Hayes to Halstead, August 3, 1889, Hayes MSS.
98Hayes to Halstead, April 6, 1889, Hayes MSS.
99Commercial Gazette, January 19, 1890.
office. In the first place, his record was too open to public scrutiny. His thoughts on about every issue of importance in American life for nearly thirty years could be found in the Commercial and Commercial Gazette. While it may be good to have an abundance of information about a candidate, this really carried too far. Halstead, in his years as an editor, had probably said something which the opposition could dredge-up that would offend just about everyone in the state. Secondly, 1889 was not a good year for Republicans in Ohio, and there is no evidence that it would have been a better year had the editor been a candidate.
CHAPTER XII

THE BALLOT-BOX FRAUD

The Ohio political scene which Halstead returned to in August, 1889 was extremely complex. Foraker had received the Republican nomination for governor, but the state party was divided. The Sherman-Hanna-McKinley wing felt that Foraker had discriminated against them in patronage matters and that he would push his own political ambitions to the detriment of the party as a whole. Consequently, Foraker's support from this group was only lukewarm. The Democrats, stressing the slogan "the Campbells are Coming," had nominated James E. Campbell, a former Republican whose policies were not popular among the members of his party even though he was personally popular. The campaign was further complicated by the formation of the "League for the Preservation of Citizen's Rights," which was formed to combat legislation increasing the tax paid by saloon keepers and prohibiting Sunday saloon sales. The League was basically a Cincinnati group and found its support among the German element of the city. The German-Americans traditionally spent their Sunday afternoons and evenings in their favorite beer gardens, and to them the legislature's action represented the loss of their personal freedom. When a "Saloon-keepers' Rebellion," which would have kept the beer gardens open on Sunday in defiance of the law, was threatened, Foraker wrote to Cincinnati's Mayor Mosby declaring stable government demanded the enforcement of the law and

1Everett Walters, Joseph Benson Foraker, An Uncompromising Republican, 89-90.
promising him state aid. Foraker's letter made thousands of Republicans forget the other issues of the campaign to uphold "personal liberty" over "stable government."  

While Foraker's support of "stable government" lost him votes, more damaging to his reputation and also to Halstead's was the "ballot-box forgery" incident of the campaign. On June 27, the morning following Foraker's nomination, one of his many callers was Louis M. Hadden, a Cincinnati lawyer who for several years had been associated with the law office of T. G. Campbell, a prominent criminal lawyer of that city. Hadden was at the time an assistant City Solicitor and President of the Board of Education. The attorney told the governor that he feared his reelection would be extremely difficult because Campbell would have the secret backing of many prominent Republicans. He said that he had seen a contract in T. C. Campbell's office, signed by James Campbell, McKinley, Benjamin Butterworth (a Cincinnati Congressman), and other leading Republicans, which gave them all an interest in a patented ballot-box invented by a Cincinnati man named Richard G. Wood. Hadden claimed that James Campbell had introduced a bill into Congress which would have required the use of this ballot-box in all federal elections. Had his bill been successful, all the signers would have been the owners of a ballot-box monopoly worth a fortune. Hadden added that with the failure of the bill a disagreement had arisen between Wood and the others and that he might be willing to show Foraker a copy of the contract. Foraker declared that even though Hadden was not a close friend, his position in Cincinnati politics was

---

2 Philip D. Jordan, Ohio Comes of Age, 1873-1900, 301-302.
such that he saw no reason not to believe the story. ³

A few days later Wood visited the Governor in his offices in Colum­
bus and reluctantly agreed to furnish him a certificate showing the
names of Campbell, McKinley, Butterworth and others. On August 6, Wood
telegraphed Foraker asking him to recommend him to Mayor Mosby for the
position of Cincinnati smoke inspector. The Governor claimed that he had
an investigation made into Wood's qualifications for the job, and when he
found him to be a deserving man with "a genius for invention," he agreed
to recommend him in return for the certificate. ⁴ On September 1, Wood
wrote from Washington that he would secure the contract the next day and
requested a letter of introduction to President Harrison. Foraker not only
supplied the letter, but also sent Wood two hundred dollars to help him
with his Washington expenses. ⁵

After another delay, Wood came to Columbus and gave the Governor a
subscription certificate which contained the signatures of Campbell, Mc-
Kinley, Butterworth, S. S. Cox, and Senator Sherman. The certificate it-
sel did not detail the involvement of the signers in the ballot-box deal,
but was a subscription list to "Contract No. 1000" which, it was explained,
contained full information in respect to the details of the operation.
Foraker was familiar with most of the signatures of the Republicans and
he felt no doubt about them being genuine. When he considered a person
who knew Campbell's signature, this too was declared genuine. Consequently,

³Joseph Benson Foraker, Notes of a Busy Life, I, 402-403; John
Sherman, Recollections of Forty Years in the House, Senate and Cabinet,
II, 1053-1054.

⁴Foraker, Notes of a Busy Life, I, 403.

⁵Walters, Joseph B. Foraker, 92.
Foraker claimed that he accepted the paper without any distrust whatever. 6

Halstead was first brought into the incident when Foraker accidently ran into him on the train to Cincinnati. Halstead, who was returning from an eastern trip, expressed great astonishment when the Governor told him the ballot-box story. The editor insisted that some use be made of the paper and told Foraker that he would publish it if the Governor did not. He declared that it was his "public duty" to see that such a man as Campbell not be elected Governor. Halstead suggested that the great importance of the document made it imperative that Foraker have it photographed and several copies made. In Cincinnati the Governor consulted several friends, and contrary to Halstead, they all agreed that Foraker should not use the certificate in the campaign. 7

On the evening of September 28, Foraker spoke at the Music Hall in Cincinnati, and while not mentioning the contract, did mention Campbell's implication in a ballot-box monopoly. The Governor said his purpose was to show that Campbell, who had been making anti-trust speeches, was "the author of a measure calculated to create a trust of a most odious character." Foraker had a Wood ballot-box on the platform with him and read from the legislation which Campbell had introduced in Congress. While the bill did not mention the Wood box by name, its details made it impossible to use any other. 8

Later the same evening, Foraker spoke to Halstead again, and on

6Foraker, Notes of a Busy Life, I, 405.
7Walters, Joseph B. Foraker, 92; Foraker, Notes of a Busy Life, I, 405.
8Ibid., I, 404.
the latter's insistence, reluctantly gave him a photographic copy of the certificate. On October 2, Halstead printed a front page story on "The Ballot-Box Fraud," and included an engraving of the certificate which revealed that a group of people had subscribed for stock in the Hall and Wood Ballot-Box Company. He also published a copy of the bill introduced by Campbell which would have directed the Attorney General to buy a ballot-box costing twenty-five dollars that was exactly like the box that Wood had patented. The editor commented that had the bill passed, a million dollar trust would have been established. The list of signatures attached to the certificate were not printed with the documents. That evening Campbell spoke in Cincinnati at the Music Hall. In his speech he claimed that Halstead was recognized as a "Common Scold," who had scolded "every public man in every party that has existed since I was old enough to read." Since he had not spared Lincoln, Grant, Sumner, Chase, Logan, Garfield, or Blaine, Campbell said that he felt "honored when he scolds me." The Democratic candidate declared he did not mind being scolded, though he added that in a more primitive day the common scolds were "put on a ducking-stool and dumped . . . into the river until they cooled their tongues," but that he did mind being lied about. "I do object when a man of that character descends from the place of a common scold to that of a common liar." As for Halstead, he concluded that he would leave it to him to prove his charges. In the same speech he read a letter written by George R. Topp, a member of the Cincinnati Board of Public Affairs and a Foraker appointee, which demanded a kickback on

---

9Walters, Joseph B. Foraker, 93; Commercial Gazette, October 2, 1889.
all of the gravel which George Campbell, a contractor, sold to the city.\textsuperscript{10}

The Topp letter was a bomb-shell in the campaign. Foraker was charged with appointing a corrupt governmental board and with "bossism." Realizing the damage which was done, Republicans gathered sworn statements from Mrs. Topp, several doctors, and others, that claimed Topp was insane at the time he wrote the letter. It was also revealed that he had written other "wild" letters and that the contract had already been given to George Campbell when Topp wrote his letter. The morning after Campbell's speech Halstead addressed a signed open letter to the Democratic candidate in which he accused Campbell of using "language becoming the representatives of the Gangsters who are the masters of your party, towards me, ... and a crazy man's letter, hoping to reflect upon the integrity of the Board of Public Affairs." But it would do him no good, the editor declared, as he had proof that Campbell was financially interested in the ballot-box contract before he introduced the bill into Congress. The evidence showed "that you subscribed to secure an interest July 3, 1888."\textsuperscript{11}

On the following day Halstead asserted that the whole city was talking about "the gangster and gang candidate's" reading of the Topp letter. "Almost universal was the condemnation on both Campbells," he reported, "and particularly severe was that passed upon the head of the candidate who, as he sinks deeper in the mire, appears to have lost all sense of honor and decency, if he ever possessed any." In the same issue of the Commercial Gazette the editor also published a reproduction showing the

\textsuperscript{10}Walters, Joseph B. Foraker, 93-94; Commercial Gazette, October 3, 1889.

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., October 3, 1889.
certificate with Campbell's signature down for fifteen thousand dollars. No other name appeared on the list.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, October 4, 1889.}

Campbell made no comment concerning Halstead's very serious allegation, and consequently both Foraker and the editor felt his silence proved his guilt. On October 8, Halstead answered reports that Republicans also appeared on the list by declaring that two things were certain, "a Republican did not introduce the bill, and no Republican's name appears in the "Contract No. 1,000." Halstead had never seen the contract, only the subscription list, so he was certainly dodging the question in this case. Moreover, the editor added that the claiming that Republicans were also on the list was "a queer and original form on behalf of Mr. Campbell's friends of asserting his innocence."\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, October 8, 1889.} On the following day Halstead was further convinced of Campbell's guilt when the Democratic candidate declared the certificate a lie, but said that the \textit{Commercial Gazette} had not accused him of being a part of the contract except by "imputation." Campbell said he was waiting for a direct charge from Halstead so that he might take legal action. Halstead claimed Campbell's "monkeying with words" could not be too reassuring to his friends.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, October 9, 1889.}

Campbell had engaged Judson Harmon, James E. Neal, and Isaac M. Jordon, leading Cincinnati attorneys, to investigate the Hall and Wood Company. They discovered that the signatures were forgeries, traced from the frank-bearing mail of the men. On October 10, the lawyers brought their findings to Halstead and demanded a retraction. The editor admitted

\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, October 4, 1889.}
\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, October 8, 1889.}
\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, October 9, 1889.}
the proof seemed conclusive, but he wished to make his own inquiry. It was agreed that Halstead would be given time to make a complete study of the evidence but that the Commercial Gazette would publish no attack on Campbell the next day. The editor saw Haddon, Hall, Frank D. Davis, and Frank L. Milward, the men Hall claimed had helped him commit the forgery, later that day and was convinced that he had made an error. As it was very late when Halstead was convinced of the fraud, he wrote, "A Personal Statement to the Public" which he published on the following morning without consulting Campbell's lawyers. In his statement he declared that the proof of the fraud had been placed in his hands and that the signatures on the subscription list were forgeries, but the editor refused to go any further than this. "The papers that seemed to show the business behind the bill, are as published, but the signatures . . . are fabricated."

Campbell, the editor asserted, was "where the Governor left him with the ballot-box bill in his Music Hall speech." The attorneys and Halstead agreed that, since all the names on the list were forgeries, no purpose could be served in revealing those names which had not been published.

At the time that Halstead wrote his retraction he also telegraphed Foraker that while he was still convinced that there was a contract somewhere, the certificate was a forgery. Foraker replied that he feared Halstead had been taken in by the forgery claims. He declared that Wood had told him that the Campbell interests had tried to make him sign such

15 Ibid., October 11, and 17, 1889; House of Representatives, 51st Congress, Report #3446, 197.

16 Commercial Gazette, October 13, 1889.

17 Halstead to Foraker, October 11, 1889, House of Representatives, 51st Congress, Report #3446, 208.
an affidavit earlier. He told the editor to have the time of the forgery fixed so that there could be no mistake.\(^\text{18}\)

Press reaction to Halstead's handling of the ballot-box paper was generally very critical. Typical of the unfavorable comments was that of the editor of the Columbus Dispatch who declared that considering Halstead's experience, the error was "inexcusable." According to the Dispatch, Halstead owed it to the people of Ohio to tell them how he was deceived and by whom so that the men involved might receive the punishment they deserved.\(^\text{19}\)

Halstead stated that he would not give the names of those involved in the forgery because they were young men who were duped and did not mean to do any wrong. He said that since they had come to him with their story and explained how the forgery had taken place, he had promised to protect them as long as possible.\(^\text{20}\) Benjamin Butterworth wrote Halstead that he had no "knowledge of . . . or connection with . . . or interest in" the ballot-box scheme. The Congressman asserted that the handling of the affair had hurt him deeply as there were men in Cincinnati saying that the story was true, but that Halstead had agreed to the forgery claims only to save his Republican friends who were also involved. Nonetheless, he agreed to allow the editor to handle the subject as he saw fit for the "cause of the Republican party."\(^\text{21}\)

\(^{\text{18}}\) Foraker to Halstead, October 11, 1889, ibid., 203.

\(^{\text{19}}\) Commercial Gazette, October 13, 1889.

\(^{\text{20}}\) Ibid., November 8, 1889.

\(^{\text{21}}\) Benjamin Butterworth to Halstead, October 13, 1889, Halstead MS.
Halstead compared his involvement in publishing the forgery to a man accepting a counterfeit banknote. He said he had accepted it thinking it genuine, but when he found it counterfeit, he did not try to pass it on. As far as the editor was concerned, this should have ended the matter. Fearing that the fraud would gain sympathy votes for Campbell, Halstead declared that the charge and the retraction were both published because of his sense of obligation to give the public the complete truth. Moreover, he said that the responsibility was entirely his own and that he had no intention "to shirk it." At the same time, the editor claimed that the circumstances were such that—considering Campbell's association with the ballot-box bill—the mistake should have surprised no one.

A few days before the election on November 2, Campbell brought up the case again by charging that Foraker had a financial interest in the box company and had written to the governor of Michigan urging the ballot-box be adopted in his state. Moreover, he charged that the whole affair was a plot to elect Foraker governor and Halstead senator. Finally, Campbell also revealed the other forged names on the subscription list. In a newspaper interview Foraker claimed that his letter to the governor of Michigan had only been a letter of introduction. As to the ballot-box forgeries, Foraker declared that in his judgment "the whole affair was intended to trip him so as to break the effect of exposure of Campbell's bill."

---

22 Commercial Gazette, October 14, 1889.
23 Ibid., October 14, 1889; Sherman, Forty Years, II, 1056-1057.
24 Walters, Joseph B. Foraker, 95.
As Halstead feared, no amount of explaining could have saved Foraker. The Ohio voters not only elected Campbell governor, but also returned a Democratic General Assembly. This meant that a Democrat would be elected to the Senate to replace Payne. In an editorial after the election Halstead declared that Ohio had vindicated "the Honorable Henry Boodle Payne" and announced to the world that the Senate seat was for sale to the highest bidder. He said Calvin Brice had already paid twenty-five thousand dollars in election contributions, so he probably had first claim on the seat. Since Brice spent most of his time in New York, the editor sarcastically commented that the General Assembly might be wiser to allow John McLean, the publisher of the Enquirer, to purchase the seat as he lived in Washington already.

Foraker believed that the ballot-box fiasco had contributed greatly to his defeat. He was particularly upset by the incident, as he claimed he was a victim of Halstead's decision to publish the certificate. As was already mentioned, Halstead also saw the incident as a factor that lost Foraker votes, but at the same time, the editor also recognized that there were other factors involved in the Republican defeat. First, the split within the G. O. P. had not been patched and Foraker had not received all out support of the Sherman-McKinley-Hanna wing of the party. Second, Foraker had to counteract a prejudice against third term governors. Only the extremely popular Hayes had been able to gain election three times, and Foraker was not as popular as Hayes had been. Finally, the enforcement of Sunday closing and the higher taxes on saloons had convinced many

---

25 Commercial Gazette, November 7, 1889.

26 Foraker, Notes of a Busy Life, I, 407.
normally Republican voters that their personal liberty demanded they vote
Democratic in this election. Halstead, who naturally was personally inter-
tested in minimizing the ballot-box affair, declared that personal li-
iberty had been the greatest factor in the election, claiming that "all
other unfavorable influences were insignificant in comparison." Moreover,
unlike other Republicans, he did not blame the saloon keepers, brewers,
and liquor interests for the defeat, but said that rural Republicans in
attempting this "experiment" had driven the liberal Germans over to the
Democrats. 27

Several of the men whose names were mentioned by Campbell as also
appearing on the certificate demanded Halstead print the full story of
the forgery. Sherman wrote that now that the election was over there
could be no danger in giving the public "the whole history." The Senator
said that so long as Halstead felt no doubt in the genuineness of the sig-
natures it was his duty to expose the signers as the certificate certainly
pointed to a corrupt and illegal transaction. He declared that the editor
had no right to withhold the names of some of those involved because they
were his friends. Considering their long years of friendship, Sherman
wondered why, when his name appeared on the paper, Halstead's doubts about
its authenticity were not aroused and why the editor did not contact him
personally to question him about the contract. Sherman added that he felt
it was his duty, once he had tangible evidence of the forgery, to prose-
cute all those involved. 28

27 Commercial Gazette, November 9, 1889.
28 Sherman to Halstead, Sherman, Forty Years, II, 1055.
With this pressure, Halstead gave over the entire front page of
the November 13 issue of the Commercial Gazette to the story of the forge-
ry. He reproduced the complete certificate including all the signatures,
a letter from Foraker, and statements from those engaged in the actual pro-
duction of the forged paper. Also, in a rather moving paragraph, the editor
tendered his apologies to all he might have hurt by his unwise use of the
story:

I am aware of the imperfections of all human testimony, and
alive to the fact of many mistakes of my own—and for such mis-
chief as I may have done to good men and a good cause I am sin-
cerely sorry, and more than willing to accept my full share of
responsibility for the error that, so far as it affected me, I
was glad to acknowledge, for the truth while it stuck hard was
wholesome, and I welcomed it as a relief. The sting that re-
mains is that I could have believed of old friends what seemed
to be written in letters of fire. It is all plain now . . .
and I tender my regrets and apologies. It may be that I shall
be next time wiser, but as I retain self-respect through an
abiding opinion that I meant to be true and have been fair, I
shall be able to endure with equanimity the calumnies of those
so constituted, as to find in the story of the forgery only
opportunity for the perverse interpretations of a sinister
hostility.29

McKinley and Butterworth were so concerned about the rumors that
the paper was genuine and that Halstead had accepted the forgery story
only to protect his friends, that they demanded an investigation be made
by the House of Representatives. On December 12, Butterworth introduced
a resolution for such an inquiry, and on January 16, 1890, the Mason Com-
mittee began hearing testimony on the ballot-box contract. Before its re-
port on April 30, fifty-four witnesses had appeared before the committee.
Halstead testified on February 6, and was on the stand for most of the
day. General Boynton wrote Halstead from Washington that the editor per-
sonally would have nothing to fear from the committee. While he claimed

29 Commercial Gazette, November 13, 1889.
several Senators thought that considering the fight Sherman had made for the editor's confirmation to the German post, he deserved better treatment than he got in the Commercial Gazette, most Congressmen were deeply stirred by Halstead's apologies. Boynton felt that Foraker would have a harder time before the committee. He had heard that James Campbell had in his possession letters from the ex-governor to Wood which expressed his desire to "have something on Butterworth," but which also claimed that the Cincinnati mayor would be forced to give Wood the smoke inspectorship "because he [Foraker] had the 'dots' on Moseby." Saying that he was not suggesting Halstead turn his back on Foraker, Boynton declared that if the rumors were true, it might be best if the editor's part in the hearings could be kept separated from Foraker's as much as possible.

If Campbell did have in his possession such letters as Boynton mentioned he did not refer to them in his testimony before the committee. In fact, Campbell was much more concerned with Halstead's part in the affair than Foraker's. The new governor claimed that Halstead had to know the papers were forgeries or his entire action would have been different. Since his friends were implicated, Campbell thought chances were good that the editor would not have used the documents at all if he felt they were true records. On the other hand, if he believed the papers genuine and thought it his duty to expose corruption, Campbell claimed Halstead would have published the certificate as soon as he received it, and not have waited until it was almost too late for it to be answered. To Campbell,

30H. V. Boynton to Halstead, January 5, 1890, Halstead MSS.
it looked as if Halstead had held it back, hoping it would be too late to prove it was a forgery.  

When Halstead appeared before the committee he was questioned not only by its members, but also by Charles Grosvenor, an Ohio politician who represented McKinley's and Butterworth's interests before the committee. Grosvenor had been made a trustee of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Home at Xenia by Foraker, but as a member of the Sherman wing of the party he had made so many offensive statements about Foraker's handling of the Sherman candidacy in Chicago in 1888 that the Governor had asked him to resign. Grosvenor had taken great pride in the institution and consequently became even more hostile to Foraker.  

Foraker claimed that Grosvenor, as a representative of McKinley and Butterworth before the committee, conducted himself like a prosecuting attorney "whose main purpose was to have the committee find me guilty of the crime that had been committed." Nonetheless, Foraker declared his attacks "were so manifestly unjust and so unsupported by evidence that they had no weight either with the committee or anybody else." Grosvenor's questioning of Halstead was not as harsh as his examination of Foraker, but the editor was given a rough time on the stand. One of the first questions which the Committee wanted answered was why, if Halstead thought the ballot-box papers genuine, had he only printed James Campbell's signature. The obvious answer was that he was in a political campaign and wanted to defeat Campbell. If he had also published the Republican names the effect of the sensation would not have been

31 Commercial Gazette, February 5, 1890.

32 WALTERS, Joseph B. Foraker, 85.

33 Foraker, Notes of a Busy Life, I, 409-411.
directed just against Campbell and thus would not have been as strong. Moreover, it would have made for an even greater division within the Republican party. While he said, "I did not want to destroy the Republican campaign," in the complete answer Halstead gave to the committee he proved himself a politician, if not an honest witness. He claimed he published Campbell's name for only two reasons. First, Campbell had introduced the bill into Congress to establish the ballot-box trust, and Halstead thought this had given him "especial responsibility" in the matter. He said that he did not know until the committee hearings that Campbell had introduced the bill for Thomas C. Campbell who was its real author. Second, Samuel S. Cox, another subscriber to the company, was buried on the day he published the papers, and since he felt he would have to give all the names if he gave any, good taste impelled him to hold them all back.34

In Foraker's testimony he asserted that he had not intended the papers to be published until after the election and had given them to Halstead, as a friend of the Republicans mentioned—and particularly of Sherman—to hold until after the election. It was his intention, he maintained, to contact Sherman and the other signatories and allow them an opportunity to explain their signatures before the papers were published.35 This of course placed the whole blame for publication on Halstead, and while the editor never denied his responsibility, this explanation, on the surface, was untrue. Foraker never gave Halstead the documents to

35 Foraker, Notes of a Busy Life, I, 408-409.
hold, he only gave him photographs of the documents. Halstead had told him that he would use the certificates in the Commercial Gazette if he did not use them, so in giving the editor a copy of the papers, Foraker must have realized that they would appear in print during the campaign. Halstead's testimony, while again taking full responsibility for the publication of the papers, left no doubt that Foraker knew they would be published. The problem, according to Halstead, was not whether they should be published, but when they should be published. The editor explained that Campbell had said if the charges against him were true, he would leave the Democratic ticket. Consequently, Halstead, still believing the signatures to be genuine, decided to wait until two or three weeks before the election to print the papers so that the Democrats would not have time to find a new candidate. "I thought that about two or three weeks before the end of the campaign I would let this thing fly, for that would be long enough to put it through all the country newspapers on both sides, and it would be too late to repair damages in the campaign." Moreover, under oath, Halstead swore that while he had not discussed suppressing the Republican names with Foraker, he told the governor that "Mr. Campbell's distinction in the matter" was so great that it might be possible to use his name during the campaign and "reserve the rest for further consideration."

When Grosvenor attempted to make Halstead admit that his action in the matter was purely political the following interchange was produced:

36 House of Representatives, 51st Congress, Report #3446, 192.
37 Ibid., 192.
38 Ibid., 210.
Q: And really your motive in entering into the matter was rather more political or moral, than patriotic, was it? A: I do not dissociate politics entirely from morals and patriotism (laughter).

Q: But the public considerations did not apply to the other gentleman? A: I thought they did.

Q: The other gentleman? A: Yes, sir, eminently so; I thought public considerations applied. But if I believed a man was a candidate for the governorship of Ohio who had gone into a business like that, that shell should be cracked over his head.

Q: and the other gentleman should come in for their punishment later? A: Yes, sir; later.

Q: You did not want confusion in the campaign at that time? A: No, sir; not absolute rout. (laughter)

Then the editor asserted that Campbell, in his Music Hall speech of October 2, had raised the question of "personal veracity," and had introduced the Topp letter. Halstead declared that the Topp letter was a sore point for many Cininnati Republicans as they knew Topp was an honest man who had been insane at the time he wrote the letter. The editor added that Topp had since died in an insane asylum. Nonetheless, the editor said the letter made such a sensation it was impossible to present the true facts in the case so that they would be believed. Halstead maintained that actually he felt sorry for Campbell, as he had copies of the documents in hand and thought that he could ruin his candidacy at any time. Consequently, the editor related that he published a small paragraph in the Commercial Gazette of the next morning, hinting that he had proof of Campbell's connection with the ballot-box company. Halstead contended that he thought Campbell would know what he meant and be scared off, but instead he again attacked the editor and demanded proof. Thus the editor was not able to hold the certificate until the later weeks of the campaign, but felt he had to publish it on October 4, over a month before the election. Halstead

39Ibid., 210.
also claimed that he had intended to contact Sherman and the other men whose names appeared on the certificate before it was put in print, but by publishing it two weeks ahead of schedule he had not had time. This he gave as an additional reason for not giving the Republican signatures.

When Foraker denied that he had planned any use for the ballot-box documents until after the election, he had also seemed to forget that he had been the one to first bring the ballot-box affair before the public in his September 28 speech at the Music Hall. While he had not said he had the certificate in his possession, he had hinted that Campbell's involvement was greater than just introducing the bill. Before the committee, Halstead asserted that he had advised against Foraker even mentioning the ballot-box in his speech. He wished to spring the whole sensation on Campbell at once.

Another question, which many of the committee members claimed to be puzzled by, was how both Halstead and Foraker could have been taken in by the forged names. Both men declared that they were familiar with some of the signatures and were satisfied that they were genuine, and that people familiar with the other signatures had authenticated them. Halstead asserted that the tracings had been very well done, "the young man who performed this work was an artist in his way." Moreover, the editor declared the internal evidence of the document itself helped convince him it was genuine. "There was in this paper, the work of a lawyer," and it seemed to the editor a good lawyer. He thought the device of separating the subscription certificate from "Contract No. 1,000" itself, which meant

\[40\] Ibid., 193.
\[41\] Ibid., 192.
subscribers actually did not sign the contract, was the work of a genius. "With this artistic work and this lawyer work in the matter, I did not see any room for questioning the genuineness of this paper." The editor was asked why he did not communicate directly with Sherman or one of the other signers to confirm the genuineness of the document. As Halstead said before, he had planned to do this, but "circumstances over which I had no control" forced him to use the paper before he could write to any of the principals. The editor said though, that he had hesitated to write immediately as it was a delicate matter. He recalled that Benjamin Butler had once said you could get a member of Congress to sign a petition to have himself hanged, and he thought that it was possible that through some "hocus pocus" the men had been deceived into signing, not realizing the character or purpose of the document. Consequently, he was reluctant to put his "finger on a sore place like that and inquire."  

Grosvernor asked the editor why, if he believed the signatures to be genuine, he did not expect Campbell to reveal that Sherman, McKinley, Butterworth and the others had signed the paper with him. "Would not that be the most natural thing to infer and expect under the circumstances?" Halstead replied, "I had that in mind a bit. I thought perhaps that Mr. Campbell would not care to undertake to shelter himself among a lot of lambs in that way." The questioner commented that he thought it very strange that Halstead would allow a man like Wood, whom the editor had been unwilling to see made smoke-inspector of Cincinnati, overthrow his

42 Ibid., 191.
43 Ibid., 209.
44 Ibid., 206.
confidence in a group of friends who were known as respectable and honorable men. Halstead replied that he had not changed his opinion of Wood, but that he felt the documents were beyond the capacity of Wood to have devised himself. It could be seen from the internal evidence of the paper itself, he declared, that it was obviously beyond Wood's abilities.  

The committee also wanted to know if part of Halstead's interest in the publication of the ballot-box certificate might not have been to promote his own candidacy for the Senate. Halstead said that it was known that he had declared he would "not flinch from the honor" if the people of Ohio wanted to elect him to the Senate. On the other hand, he added, he was not enough of a candidate to keep him from printing the document in the first place, even though he knew it was "dynamite," nor to refuse to accept responsibility for publishing it when it was proven a forgery. The editor was then asked if it would have been possible in the event the Republicans carried the Ohio legislature, for a rivalry to have arisen between McKinley, Butterworth, and himself for the Senatorship. Halstead answered no, that that had never been thought of until this time.  

As was already mentioned, Foraker declared that he believed the forgery was deliberately planted to trick him and to gain sympathy for Campbell. Before the committee Halstead also put some weight to this argument. He claimed that he was sure Wood was involved because he wanted the job of smoke inspector of Cincinnati, but he said that many others were also involved. The forgers and the lawyers who drew up the certificate  

46 Ibid., 216.  
47 Foraker, Notes of a Busy Life, I, 409.
could not, he asserted, have given their time just so Wood could secure a job. Moreover, he added that considering how many people knew the paper was a forgery, he thought it was astonishing that no one came forward to declare it as such for over a week. Shortly after the election, Halstead had published an account of an interview given by a Democratic official who claimed that Campbell "knew of the ballot-box boomerang Halstead was going to throw at him three weeks before the matter became known to the public," and that Campbell merely "waited until the proper time came and he was ready." The editor declared that he had not known of the document three weeks before it was published, and if the official's story was true, it proved Foraker's contention that Wood was Campbell's tool and committed the forgery in his interest. He was also amazed that when Campbell's attorneys found the evidence of forgery, they did not come with a constable to arrest him. All of these factors, Halstead thought, would seem to leave some suspicions about the ballot-box papers.

James E. Neal, one of Campbell's lawyers, testified that Halstead had not been arrested because they had promised the young men who had committed the forgeries that they would not make their affidavits public unless they were forced to do so to make the editor retract. Then also, Neal said, they all felt Halstead's retraction would carry more weight if it came freely rather than if it was forced through law.

The committee decided to accept the assurances of Campbell's lawyers that their client was not involved in furthering the forgery. In its

---

48 Commercial Gazette, November 18, 1889.
49 House of Representatives, 51st Congress, Report #3446, 192.
50 Ibid., 219.
report, the committee found that "Richard Wood, Frank Milward, and Frank Davis were the only persons directly or indirectly aiding, abetting, assisting or knowingly consenting to the preparation of said forgery with knowledge of its character." Halstead and Foraker, however,

aided in uttering said forgery, Mr. Foraker by exhibiting the paper to several persons and there after delivering it to Mr. Halstead, and Mr. Halstead aiding in uttering said forgery by publishing the forged paper on October 4, 1889, in the Cincinnati Commercial Gazette, but we find that neither of the parties, ... in uttering said paper, knew the same was a forgery.

All of the committee but Mason, the chairman, also found:

the publication of the false paper in the Commercial Gazette, showing Mr. Campbell's name and suppressing all other signatures, was also as bad as the original fabrication of the paper . . . . The entire incident the committee have been instructed to investigate is an example of political methods, deserving condemnation of all parties and all good citizens.

Mason added to the committee's findings the statement:

If our unanimous finding is correct that Messrs. Halstead and Foraker did not know the paper was forged when they uttered it then they were deceived by someone, for we have found it was a forgery. Being deceived, then, is their only offense. 51

The committee's censure was relatively mild, but considering Halstead's earlier pronouncements about the duties of the press, he violated about every principle which he stood for in this matter. It seems only fair to grant to the editor, as the committee did, that he believed the documents genuine. If this is granted, then it must also follow that Halstead's partisanship had become so great by 1889 that he was willing to show up corruption by his political enemies but not the corruption of his political friends. No matter how this might be justified, the end result was that Halstead did not earn himself any credit in the situation.

51 Ibid., viii-x.
CHAPTER XIII

THE TWILIGHT OF A JOURNALIST

In February, 1890, the Commercial Gazette announced that Halstead had accepted an offer to write a monthly current events column for Cosmopolitan Magazine. He planned to continue writing editorials for the Commercial Gazette, but as he had done during the 1884 election campaign, he would telegraph them to Cincinnati from New York.¹ The Cosmopolitan's editor announced that Halstead had long been the magazine's choice for such a column, because of his "familiarity with public events... and entire fearlessness," but his "exacting duties" until only recently had not allowed him to accept the position.²

Halstead's acceptance of the position and his residence in New York, produced a series of rumors that he had lost control of his Cincinnati newspaper.³ These rumors prompted William Berri, the owner of the Brooklyn Standard-Union, to ask Halstead to become his newspaper's editor at twenty thousand dollars a year. On April 20, 1890, Halstead shocked the journalistic world by announcing he would assume the editorship of the Brooklyn newspaper. Berri declared that it was his desire to build a strong

¹Commercial Gazette, February 13, 1890.
²"From the Editor's Window," Cosmopolitan Magazine (April, 1890), 765.
³Commercial Gazette, April 6, 1890.
Republican newspaper in Brooklyn, and that he was confident Halstead's "experience, ability, earnestness and force would materially aid such an undertaking."^4

The Standard-Union had never been a successful newspaper. In Brooklyn alone it competed with the Republican Times, and the Democratic Eagle and Citizen, while the New York newspapers always found a large circulation in what was then the city's largest bedroom suburb. Since its founding by Congressman S. B. Chittenden, the Standard-Union had steadily lost money for a long series of owner-publishers. Berri, a carpet merchant, had been no more successful than the other owners in making the newspaper pay its way. Halstead was appointed to the editorship in the hope of reversing this trend. Since he had been unable to stop a similar trend in Cincinnati, it would seem that he would be no more fortunate in Brooklyn. As one editor commented, "If an able editor is what is required to bring the Standard-Union up to the level of paying and influential newspaper, Mr. Halstead can do it." But this editor thought that "the importance of the editorial writer was on the wane."^5

Halstead was confident that he would be able to make the Standard-Union into one of the great eastern dailies, but he was at great pains to point out that he was not ending his connection with the Commercial Gazette. While Richard Smith was to be editor-in-chief in Cincinnati, Halstead's editorials were to be continued as before. Moreover, he emphasized that the two "labored together in harmony."^6

^4Commercial Gazette, April 20, 1890; William Halstead MSS, 222.
^5Ibid., April 22, 1890; "Journalist," Halstead MSS.
^6Commercial Gazette, April 20, 1890.
Several times in his writings for the Commercial Gazette Halstead attempted to answer the "inaccurate and impertinent reports" that he had been forced out of the Cincinnati newspaper's management. He declared that a reorganization of the Board of Directors of the Commercial Gazette Company had brought his son Marshall into active participation in the management of the company and also signaled greater action on the part of the board as a whole in the day-to-day activities of the company. Halstead denied that he had been forced to accept the reorganization or hand been forced to resign his position as editor-in-chief. He claimed he accepted the New York offer to promote his own business interests and "to enlarge my usefulness as an editor." Halstead may well have left the editorship of the Commercial Gazette of his own free will, but he did not leave it to increase his usefulness as an editor. While extensive evidence does not exist to explain the financial problems of the Commercial Gazette, it is known that by 1890, the newspaper was in bad financial shape as a result of three decades of business and editorial warfare with the McLeans and their Enquirer. As William Halstead said, Halstead felt the McLeans were dishonest and set out to expose them. In doing so, he goaded them into reprisals. The end result was one of the longest, most savage, and most spectacular newspaper wars in American history. The McLeans' public reputation was broken, but their Enquirer became the dominant Cincinnati newspaper. On the other hand, the Commercial was ruined, but Halstead, while bankrupt, was still well respected.

7Ibid.
8Ibid., April 23, 1890.
Washington McLean was a successful manufacturer before he purchased the Enquirer. Thus, he and his son John, who took over the management of the newspaper after his graduation from Harvard, never had to worry about living on their journalistic profits. In fact, the money which they had at their disposal ultimately resulted in Halstead's downfall. As we have already seen, Halstead's financial problems were of long standing and could not all be linked to the McLeans. His loss of party support in 1872 was a result of his venture in Liberal Republicanism and his later loss of Catholic patronage a result of his fight with the Archbishop. The McLeans were able to use these problems to their advantage and to make even more for the harassed editor of the Commercial. In the seventies the Enquirer challenged the Commercial for supremacy in classified advertisements, which were the Commercial's greatest source of revenue. With the McLean fortune behind it, the Enquirer was able to open its columns to classified advertisers free of charge. While Halstead fought hard against this tactic, when the air cleared, most of the Commercial's business had gone to the Enquirer and had no intention of returning.10

In the war for circulation the Enquirer's greater financial resources also gave it an advantage over the Commercial. By the eighties sensationalism had come into vogue. People wanted to read of scandal and of sensational crime, and the Enquirer, with its unlimited funds for

10Osman C. Hooper, History of Ohio Journalism, 1793-1933, 96.
news gathering, was able to satisfy this whim and even to whet the reading public's appetite for more.\textsuperscript{11}

At first the rivalry between the two newspapers was a business matter, but continued competition ultimately produced name calling and then a hint of violence. As early as 1877 Halstead told Hayes that he considered "exchanging the pen for the pistol."\textsuperscript{12} The personal bitterness between Halstead and John McLean seemed to reach its peak in 1886.

During the preceding year the Cincinnati \textit{Evening Telegram}, calling the editor insane and his newspaper indecent, started a campaign of vilification against Halstead.\textsuperscript{13} Halstead believed that McLean controlled the \textit{Telegram}. Since Halstead was guilty of calling McLean a "little beast" and a "political prostitute" and other equally descriptive names, he took little notice of the \textit{Telegram}'s attack. In fact, in the early part of 1886 the personal relations between the two men seemed to grow warmer. When McLean gave a large donation to a church group holding a revival, Halstead said it was the act of a generous citizen and announced that he hoped McLean would "experience religion" at the revival. At about the same time the \textit{Enquirer} had a long and friendly article about an anniversary party for the Halsteads.\textsuperscript{14}

For a while, it looked as if the old animosity between the two men might be lessening when, on August 7, the \textit{Telegram} not only printed another article in which it called Halstead insane, but went on to suggest

\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{11} "A Great American Journalist," Halstead MSS.
  \item\textsuperscript{12} Halstead to Hayes, August 21, 1887, Hayes MSS.
  \item\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Evening Telegram}, October 21, 1885.
  \item\textsuperscript{14} "Blood on the Moon's Face," n.d. Halstead MSS.
\end{itemize}
that his condition was hereditary, and gave the name of a Halstead relative which the article declared was also insane. Halstead was a proud man, and while he could accept the suggestion that he was insane, he found the allusion to his relative unpardonably offensive and resolved to gain satisfaction.

Still believing McLean controlled the Telegram, Halstead concluded that the young publisher was indirectly challenging his honor and courage and decided to have it out with him. First sending three of his sons to Europe and a fourth to the West Coast so that they might not interfere, Halstead dispatched his second to McLean's house at Saratoga in New York to arrange a duel. At first McLean refused to see his representative, but after some negotiations a partial reconciliation was worked out when McLean asserted that he had no connection whatsoever with the Telegram or with the articles that Halstead found offensive.

Just when it appeared that all chances of a duel were gone, Thomas C. Campbell, a well known Cincinnati criminal lawyer, stepped forward and announced that he was the owner of the newspaper, that he was responsible for the articles, and that he was ready to meet Halstead. Actually the feud between Campbell and Halstead was of almost as long standing duration as that between McLean and Halstead. Most of the antagonism stemmed from Commercial articles written at the time Campbell defended a man accused of a particularly brutal murder. Campbell, who was known for his phenomenal success in murder trials, was able to get

---

15 William Halstead MS., 210; Telegram, August 7, 1885.
16 "Blood on the Moon's Face," n.d. Halstead MSS.
the defendant off with a prison sentence even though the evidence had been overwhelmingly against him. The Commercial roundly condemned Campbell's handling of the trial, and perhaps partially as a result of the Commercial's articles, a mob formed before the Hamilton County jail to take justice into its own hands. The sheriff was able to remove the prisoner to safety, but Campbell's life was in danger for several days. After this incident Campbell was never able to rebuild what had once been one of the most flourishing law practices in Cincinnati, and he was never able to forgive Halstead for the Commercial's part in his troubles.  

In the final settlement of the duel controversy, Halstead was extremely wise. He never met Campbell—or his prize-fighter second—on the field of honor. Instead, he claimed that McLean and Campbell should meet. He said that the Telegram had asserted that McLean would be glad to answer to Halstead for the offending article, but Halstead said that when he approached the young publisher, McLean called "this statement concerning himself . . . an infamous life." Consequently, Halstead claimed there was a question of veracity between McLean and Campbell. "Mr. McLean is in Saratoga and the statement is that these parties whom he accuses of this infamous lie are on their way thither. I hope they won't injure Mr. McLean, but it is none of my business."  

While the duel incident did not bring any credit to any of the principals, McLean was able to use the unfavorable publicity to begin a campaign to make Halstead look ridiculous as a newspaperman. He did this by republishing a story that Halstead had written in 1852 called, "The

---

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.
Legend of the Wilderness." Changing the name to "The Red Headed Maiden of the Blue Miami" and introducing the story as a long buried and forgotten masterpiece, McLean succeeded in making it appear "amateurish and sophomoric, and so ludicrous." A columnist for the Chicago Tribune saw the Enquirer's republication, and wrote a series of parodies on it, representing his parodies as other early stories by Halstead. Among those that found their way around the country's newspapers were: "Betrayed by a Butterdish," "Airy Fairy Lillian," "Knee Sprung for Love," and "The Siren and the Sucker." While most of the re-publications and the jests which they inspired were done in good humor, Halstead did not gain stature by the incident.  

Such incidences as these all goaded Halstead into further competition with the Enquirer. Halstead had been in debt since he purchased control of the Commercial in 1866. His generosity towards the Potter heirs, his purchase of the Fourth Street house, his decision to buy the ancestral farm at Paddy's Run, and his endorsement of family notes which he later had to assume made it impossible for the editor to overcome his debts. As Halstead himself said, his problems centered around "the changes in newspaper business; the enormous increase of expenditures; the decline in receipts for legitimate newspaper business; and my own expensive habits." By the time he finally combined his newspaper with Richard Smith's, his outstanding debts were over a hundred fifty-five thousand dollars. While his income from the Commercial allowed him and his family a very high

---

19 William L. Halstead MS., 209.

20 Halstead to McKinley, February 18, 1898, McKinley MSS.
standard of living, it was not sufficient to allow him to pay off his debts too.  

Faced by growing personal expenses and growing newspaper expenses, Halstead was finally forced to borrow money on his stock in the Commercial Gazette. The bank which held his notes became uneasy after Halstead's requests for money became more and more frequent, and according to one source, would have stopped his credit had not John McLean intervened. Osman G. Hooper said that McLean told the bank that he would personally underwrite Halstead's loans. His purpose was to allow Halstead's loans to reach such a height that they would be impossible to repay. Consequently, by 1890 the bank held a majority of Halstead's stock and McLean took it off its hands and took control of the Commercial Gazette.  

Hooper's explanation actually tells only part of the story. While Halstead used part of his stock as collateral for loans, he also sold a great deal of it. In fact, by January, 1890, the Commercial Gazette had forty owners, most of whom were inactive in the business. These new owners, who included McLean among their number, demanded the changes in the newspaper which brought Halstead's removal to New York. While Halstead remained the largest single stockholder, at least throughout 1891, his place in the management of the newspaper had ended. At first the re-organized company limped along under the management of Richard Smith who assumed the position of editor-in-chief, but Smith turned out to be as inefficient and as wasteful as Halstead. In October, 1891, the stock-

21 Williams L. Halstead MS., 216.
22 Hooper, History of Ohio Journalism, 96.
23 William Smith to Halstead, July 20, 1891, Halstead MSS.
holders demanded further reforms, and Henry Blackburn Morehead, long-time Cincinnati investment broker, took control of the management of the newspaper. Morehead had had a distinguished career in banking and investments and sat on the board of Proctor and Gamble and the Ohio Valley National Bank, but the Commercial Gazette did not respond to his ministrations and ultimately fell under McLean's control. As the Commercial Tribune, the McLean's morning journal, the old Commercial continued its existence until the coming of the depression of the 1930's.

Halstead continued to send editorials and other articles to his old Cincinnati newspaper even after it had fallen into McLean's hands, but his major interest all through the decade of the nineties was to make money. The editor's only source of income had been his ownership of the Commercial Gazette and when he lost it, apparently realizing nothing for his equity, he found himself with heavy and seemingly ever increasing expenses.

Halstead might claim that he left the Commercial Gazette to better his financial position, but the remaining years of his life were ones of almost constant struggle to meet his many obligations. While the editor retained some connection with the Standard-Union until 1899 he remained its editor for only one year. At the same time he only conducted the "Current Events" column in the Cosmopolitan until the June issue of 1892, but remained a contributor to the magazine throughout the decade.

Without an assured income, Halstead found it necessary to become a free lance writer, reporter, and lecturer. During the decade of the nine-

24 History of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, 527-528.

ties the old editor wrote over thirty articles that were published in such magazines as the *Cosmopolitan*, the *Criterion*, *Forum*, the *Independent*, *Lippincott's*, *McClure's*, *Men and Women*, the *Outlook*, *North American Review*, *Review of Reviews*, and the *Youth's Companion*. Most of Halstead's articles were concerned with his personal experiences with the political leaders of his day or with his travels.

As his first interest and love remained politics, he attended the conventions of 1892, 1896, and 1900 and wrote articles and feature stories for magazines and newspapers about them. For several months in late 1895 he wrote a weekly column on politics that was nationally syndicated, and during the campaign of 1900 he and Willis J. Abbott, a Democrat, produced the "Campaign Forum," a debate that appeared in parallel columns and discussed the issues and men of the year. 26

Halstead also joined the Lyceum circuit in the nineties. His printed brochures show that he spoke on the same topics as he wrote. While "personal experience" subjects led the list, he also talked about "Major George Washington in the Ohio Country" and "The Gold Cure for Hard Times." After the Spanish-American War he added some extremely imperialistic titles to his offerings, including "The American Islands, Iceland, Cuba, Long Island, Rhode Island, the Hawaii and Filippine Archipelagoes, contrasted with the Islands of Japan" and "The Public Policy of Great or Small Nations—The Freedom of the People Enhanced by the Expansion of Territory—America, England, Germany and Russia as examples." 27

26 A. F. Seested to Halstead, August 20, 1900, Halstead MSS.

27 Brochures, Halstead MSS.
Halstead's interest in imperialism was probably one of the important factors in keeping his name before the public during this decade. In January, 1896, William Randolph Hearst sent Halstead to Cuba to report on the Cuban rebellion. As a reporter Halstead had so many censorship problems with the Spanish authorities that he came to the conclusion that the Spanish were not very intelligent and would be unable to hold the island much longer. As for the Cuban people, he claimed that they were "taught by many troubles," and should the test come, it would prove that they had "built wiser than we knew." Halstead believed that a war would make Cuba another state in our Union and that this was her only way to salvation. Cuba would, he said, "substantiate her freedom forever by consolidation in our imperishable system."

Thus, Halstead was greatly pleased when Congress declared war against Spain. To the editor this was not a war of self-defense, or one that called for great sacrifices from the American people, but a war of opportunity. "It is a war of aggression to vindicate a human and otherwise wholesome ambition for the country. There is no loud cry for personal sacrifice, unless a fellow wants to get on the track to be President of the United States someday." For Halstead, the war presented the opportunity to become a war correspondent once again. With the Congressional declaration he applied to McKinley for permission to go to the Philippines as an "historian."

---

28 Murat Halstead, Our Cuban Relations, 420.
29 Ibid., 427.
30 Ibid., 420.
31 Halstead to Marshal Halstead, May 10, 1898, Halstead MSS.
The Spanish-American War was almost ideal for newspaper treatment and the number of reporters applying for permission to accompany various commanders was greater than the number that reported all four years of the Civil War. While places were hard to gain, Halstead traveled to Washington and received the personal approval of the President and Secretary of War Alger to accompany General Wesley Merritt when he left for the islands.

For a time it looked as if the odds Halstead had overcome in receiving his credentials had all been in vain. The reporter was stricken with typhoid fever on board ship and was confined in a Honolulu hospital for four weeks. As he was approaching seventy there was some concern for his life, but he recovered and was able to continue his trip to the Philippines. He remained in the islands for most of the month of August, 1898, writing stories and dispatches and visiting the rebel leader, Emilio Aguinaldo. In September he returned to the United States by way of Hong Kong and Japan.

Halstead went to the Philippines a convinced imperialist. As early as 1896 he gave a Lyceum lecture entitled, "Cuba and Iceland," in which he described his visits to the two "great American Islands" and gave "reasons why they should belong to the United States." He returned from the Philippines to take up a course as a crusader for further American imperialism.

32 Frank L. Mott, American Journalism, 534.
33 Secretary of War Alger to General Merritt, June 15 and 21, 1898, Halstead MSS.; Halstead to McKinley, June 28, 1898, McKinley MSS.
34 Halstead to Albert Halstead, June 11, 1898; Halstead to Mrs. Halstead, July 25, 1898, Halstead MSS; the date of Halstead's trip is of course 1898, not 1899 as William Halstead gives, 224.
35 Clayton Lyceum Bureau of Chicago, 1896, Halstead MSS.
Andrew Carnegie and other anti-imperialists argued against annexation of the Philippines on the grounds that the United States should never annex areas that were not contiguous to the rest of the nation, or areas that were occupied by people of the "Mongolian and Malayan races." Carnegie also contended that it was impossible for a member of the Caucasian race to grow from infancy to maturity in the Philippine climate.  

Halstead lectured on the Philippines in Pittsburgh in order to counter Carnegie's influence. The old editor declared that the steelmaker did not know anything about statesmanship. He claimed that all the great American leaders had been "expansionists." George Washington, Andrew Jackson, James K. Polk, Andrew Johnson, William Seward, and Charles Sumner were, according to Halstead, all desirous of extending the territory of the United States. If the fathers of our country had followed the policies of Andrew Carnegie, Halstead declared, the United States would still be "a small, snug, neat republic on the Atlantic slope, leaving the Cotton States, the Ohio country, the whole continent from the Alleghenies to the Pacific, to the British, French and Spaniards." To Halstead the whole history of the United States demanded our possession of the Philippines. As for the argument that people taken by force could never be loyal, the editor asserted "there is no better title than the sword drawn in a just war."  

---

36 *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, November 26, 1898, Halstead MSS.  
37 *Ibid.*, November 25, 1898, Halstead MSS.  
38 *Commercial Tribune*, November 29, 1898.  
39 *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, November 25, 1898, Halstead MSS.
During the next few years Halstead gave lectures on the Philippines in many cities across the nation. Before the Economics Club in Chicago he declared that Aguinaldo's decision to transfer his rebellion against Spain to one against the United States was that of a "Traitor." When a member of the audience called out that he wished Aguinaldo success, Halstead declared "That the man who would utter such sentiments was a traitor." A "lively row" ensued from Halstead's remark between his friends and distractors in the audience and the old editor was forced to leave by a rear entrance.  

In speaking before the Commercial Travellers' Sound Money League in New York during the 1900 campaign, Halstead condemned the Democratic candidate because of his stand on imperialism and on the Philippines in particular. According to Halstead, Bryan proposed to extend the Monroe Doctrine to the Philippines. While he wished to grant the islands complete independence, he also desired to protect them from outside interference. To Halstead this proposal proved that Bryan did not know his history and "ought to be whipped. I think Mr. Bryan is whipped as a presidential candidate, so he will get his punishment."  

A Columbus speech of the editor's was answered in the Press Post by recalling several of his more extreme editorials during the Civil War:

Halstead's method of putting down the rebellion was to kill Lincoln, remove Grant, poison General Hunter, try Henry Many (one of the most illustrious Unionists of Maryland), and Wendell Phillips for treason, 'suppress the New York Tribune and World,' and shoot Union soldiers 'by the dozen.' He is now

40 Commercial Tribune, November 26, 1898.  
41 New York Commercial Advertiser, October 23, 1900, Halstead MSS.
telling us through one of our local imperialist organs what to do with the Filipinos.42

In a private letter to Whitelaw Reid, Halstead declared that he believed that the main reason for Aguinaldo's revolt was to help Bryan win the election. The Filipinos, he asserted, felt that a Democratic victory would grant them their independence.43 Thus the Republican victory in the fall not only means the re-election of a President who had granted Halstead many favors, but also the re-election of one who had declared he would keep the Philippines. The imperialist Halstead could not help but be pleased.

Unfortunately, Halstead's articles and lectures did not bring him an assured income, and before the end of the decade his name was linked to a number of possible appointive positions in Washington. The old editor had known McKinley for years and had written very complimentary articles about both McKinley and Hanna at the time of the 1896 campaign, hence many felt the President would reward Halstead with some kind of appointment. The Cincinnatian's name was first linked to the post of Director of the Bureau of American Republics in February of 1898. Halstead said he would accept should the position be offered him, but claimed he could not ask McKinley to appoint him merely as a favor "because the President has already favored me, and I am satisfied."44 While Halstead might claim he was "satisfied" and even that the pay of five thousand dollars was less

42Columbus Press Post, September 24, 1900, Halstead MSS.
43Halstead to Reid, March 19, 1900, Reid MSS.
44Halstead to Charles Grosvenor, February 19, 1898, Halstead MSS. His eldest son Marshal had been made American consul at Birmingham, England.
than his Standard-Union salary, he nonetheless wrote to Hanna, McKinley, and a congressman explaining his qualifications for the position and how he could make "the place . . . more important and distinguished than it has been." The editor was particularly concerned about the criticism that he was unfit for the job because he was such a poor businessman. He told McKinley that the "rumors" about his lack of business ability were false and that the Commercial Gazette was "paying handsomely" when he left Cincinnati and "the collapse of business since was not my fault." Halstead's politicking was of no avail, for McKinley ultimately chose another less controversial man for the position.45

The next year several newspapers mentioned the possibility that Halstead might be appointed Librarian of the Library of Congress. The Brooklyn Citizen claimed Halstead had seen McKinley and Secretary of State Hay about his appointment, while the Washington Star predicted that since the entire Ohio Congressional delegation and Senator Hanna urged that he be chosen, he would have "an easy victory" and his nomination "a foregone conclusion." 46 Once again, when the choice was made, Halstead was passed by, and another man received the appointment.

At the end of 1899 Halstead severed all connections with the Standard-Union and returned to Cincinnati. His money problems followed him back, and shortly after his arrival he announced that he had established a "College of Journalism." The College was a venture that had

45Ibid.; Halstead to McKinley, February 18, 1898, McKinley MSS.; Grosvenor to Halstead, February 18, 1898, Halstead MSS.; New York Sun, February 15, 1898, Halstead MSS.

46Brooklyn Citizen, January 23, 1899; Washington Star, January 23, 1899, Halstead MSS.
profit as its goal, and "Professor" Halstead was anxious to receive as much help from his journalist friends as possible to make it a success. The college was actually a correspondence school, and Halstead thought perhaps Whitelaw Reid might be amused, or "even interested . . . seriously" in dictating a lesson for him.47

In the fall of 1904, Halstead unwittingly became interested in another venture, that while not illegal, at least had unethical overtones. In 1902 a group of promoters established a Newsboys' Magazine in Pittsburgh which was sold on the streets by the regular newsboys for ten cents. The newsboys received seven cents for each magazine sold, four cents of which was in cash, and three cents of which was deposited in a bank under trustees. The purpose of the scheme was to give "every newsboy a bank account."

The Newsboy Magazine was so successful in Pittsburgh that its promoters decided to make it national, and since they felt a nationally known journalist at its head would make the venture a greater success, asked Halstead to become editor of the magazine. The good which the company had done in Pittsburgh permitted its backers to receive an endorsement from President Roosevelt, while Secretary of State Hay, Secretary of War Taft, and other members of the cabinet permitted themselves to be named honorary vicepresidents. Naturally Halstead was flattered to be asked to head such an organization. Moreover, the promoters had agreed to pay him well for his work.48

47 Halstead to Reid, May 17, 1900, Reid MSS.

48 Prospectus, American Newsboys' Company, Halstead MSS.
Halstead was paid five hundred dollars in advance and a "handsome salary," and it looked like he had resolved his financial problems. Then his son Albert, who was with the Commercial Tribune's Washington bureau, heard rumors that the company was trading on a good cause to work a most unethical scheme. According to Albert Halstead, and these rumors were later proven correct, the promoters of the magazine were using the Administration's support and Halstead's name to sell subscriptions to the stock of the company. They in turn had organized a company for the sale of the stock, and this company received a fifty per cent commission on all the stock sold. According to Albert, "the scheme is more to make profit for the promoters than to make the magazine a success."49 When Albert's rumors were confirmed, Halstead had no choice but to pay back the advance and resign from the company. As the editor was extremely bitter about being duped in this way, he went to Washington and personally denounced the promoters to Roosevelt.50

Of all of Halstead's activities during his later years, the many books which he produced probably brought him the most satisfaction and income. His first book, the collection of newspaper reports of the 1860 election, was followed in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first few years of the twentieth by over twenty more titles.

In 1892 the editor wrote two biographies. The first, in connection with Lew Wallace, was a campaign biography of Benjamin Harrison and Whitelaw Reid; the second, with J. Frank Beale, Jr., was a life of Jay Gould. The biographies were followed by a whole series of books that had

49 Albert Halstead to Halstead, December 9, 1904, Halstead MSS.
50 Albert Halstead to Halstead, December 13, 1904, Halstead to Cornelius N. Bliss, January 13, 1905, Halstead MSS.
their origins in American differences with Spain. They included such titles as *The Story of Cuba*, *The Story of the Philippines*, *Our Country in War and Relations with All Nations*, *Our New Possessions*, *Pictorial History of America's New Possessions*, *Life and Achievements of Admiral Dewey from Montpelier to Manila*, *Full Official History of the War with Spain*, and finally, *Aguinaldo and his Captor*. Many of his books also dealt with current affairs, such as *His Briton and Boer in South Africa*, *Galveston: The Horrors of a Stricken City*, and *Pictorial History of the Louisiana Purchase and the All World's Fair at St. Louis*.

All of Halstead's later books shared one trait in common; they were all scissors and paste jobs. The editor wrote very little; usually he just added introductory and transition sentences to passages gathered from newspapers, magazines, and governmental documents. At times in fact Halstead worried about his books and the copyright laws. He usually wrote his books in a period of a few weeks, which inspired a Boston newspaper to call him "the long-distance writer" who introduced "newspaper methods in book manufacture."  

As might be imagined from the way it was produced, Halstead's literary output was not of a lasting nature. His books, which were usually sold door-to-door by subscription, were meant to capitalize on the current scene. This was particularly true of Halstead's best seller, a biography of President McKinley published just days after his death. Halstead wrote a campaign biography of McKinley in 1896 and had written several chapters dealing with the McKinley administration for a history

---

51 Halstead to Albert Halstead, May 26, 1904, Halstead MSS.  
52 *Boston Record*, September 17, 1900, Halstead MSS.
of the Republican party which he planned to publish. Thus when McKinley was shot, he had "a head start" in producing a new biography. He claimed that from the day of the assassination he felt that the President's wounds would be mortal which prompted him to write a "memorial life of the third martyred president." Halstead was therefore able to send his completed manuscript to the publisher on the day that McKinley died.53

The response by the public was unbelievable. Before the year was out over seven hundred thousand copies of the *Illustrious Life of William McKinley, Our Martyred President* had been sold. Unfortunately these sales, that should have restored the broken Halstead fortunes, only added additional worry for the editor. In making his contract for the new biography Halstead was embarrassed by the existence of the plates and copyright to the old campaign biography in the hands of his former publishers. H. L. Barber of the Dominion Company had urged Halstead to revise his old biography and get it before the public immediately, but by the time of Barber's proposal, Halstead had finished the new biography and he realized his profit would be much greater from royalties than from a set revision fee for a book owned outright by Barber and his company. Consequently, he refused Barber's proposal, claiming it would "have been unfair to the public." Nonetheless, the Monarch Company which published his new biography would not agree to pay Halstead a high royalty because they feared competition from Barber and the old biography. The fear seems to have justified as Barber did publish Halstead's old book as *Life and Distinguished Services of William McKinley, Our Martyr President.* Consequently, even though Halstead's new book sold over seven hundred thousand copies,
making it an all time best seller, the editor's contract called for only one cent a book royalties, one hundred eighty dollars in expenses, and one thousand dollars in cash, giving him only a little more than eight thousand dollars profit.  

Halstead sold over a million copies of his various books in 1901, but because of poor contract agreements, disagreements with publishers, and various law suits, the old editor was never able to make his hoped for fortune. Halstead's Cuba book had "enormous sales," but his publishers, the Werner Company, asked Henry Watterson to write a history of the Spanish-American War because they felt that should Halstead write it, the public might think it was just a re-hash of The Story of Cuba. Halstead then thought he had a contract with the Olach Company of Philadelphia and wrote a history of the war only to discover when it was finished that the company wished to change the agreed terms. Consequently, he gave his book to Barber of the Dominion Company and the Oldach Company sued and won the case.

While Halstead complained bitterly about Barber publishing the old book, calling it "a stale affair of no interest or importance" and a "fraud," the Barber edition did have a chapter added to it by Albert Halstead, the editor's son. There is no mention in the letters between father and son of Albert's agreement to write the chapter, but there is no break in the correspondence, and no evidence that Halstead was at all angry that Albert was associated with the Barber venture. Halstead to ?, October 26, 1901, Halstead MS.; Amazingly, no adequate biography of McKinley was written for half a century, and Halstead's work, described by one critic as "a contemporary tear-jerker which capitalized chiefly on the emotions aroused by the assassination and all its horrendous details, including the autopsy," remained the standard biography. James E. Pollard, The Presidents and the Press, 552-553.

G. T. Rowland to Watterson, January 6, 1898, Watterson MSS.

Halstead to Albert Halstead, February 7, 1900, Halstead MSS.; J. J. McNamara to Halstead, March 28, 1901, Halstead MSS.; H. L. Barber to Halstead, April 5, 1901, Halstead MSS.
The editor's success with the McKinley book convinced Rand and McNally to invite him to write a biography of Roosevelt with very favorable royalty terms, but, once again, Halstead ruined his chances to re-coup his fortune. Rand and McNally's editors made changes in Halstead's manuscript, and the old editor insisted on annulling the contract because he "wouldn't submit at all to the criticism of the University men," who he said were "murdering my copy and spoiling it."

His Roosevelt book was finally brought out by an Akron publisher in time for the 1904 campaign, but since the company lacked the promotional apparatus of Rand and McNally, it also failed to make Halstead's fortune.

For a man of Halstead's personality who had enjoyed great wealth and power, his last years must have been extremely bitter. He was forced by economic necessity to continue his work far beyond his seventieth birthday. Everytime he seemed to make a success with one of his books, something intervened to snatch the longed for fortune from him.

The old editor's last national appearance was at Roosevelt's inauguration in 1905. He and Mrs. Halstead, and their eldest daughter Jean attended. The death of Jean's husband had brought Marshal Halstead back from his post as consul at Birmingham, England, to which McKinley had appointed him, to manage his sister's business affairs. Marshal was succeeded in England by Halstead's second son Albert. The editor's pleasure of

57 Halstead to Albert Halstead, January 2, 1902, Halstead MSS.

58 A. J. Saalfield to Halstead, January 18, 1902; Halstead to Albert Halstead, January 28, 1902, May 26, 1904, Halstead MSS.

59 Halstead to Albert Halstead, February 21, March 24, 1905, Halstead MSS.
having several of his children with him in Cincinnati in his last years was marred by Marshal's unexpected death in January of 1908.  

By the time of Marshal's death, Halstead himself was in extremely ill health. His mind had started to fail, and by March, 1908 his son Robert reported that he had occasional spells of violence in which he struck his nurse. On July 2, 1908, just two months to the day short of his eightieth birthday, the old editor died.

---

60 Commercial Tribune, January 30, 1905.

61 Robert Halstead to Albert Halstead, March 18, 1908, Halstead MSS.
EPilogue

On the evening of November 9, 1928, seventy-five of Ohio's most renowned journalists and historians gathered for dinner at Ohio State University's Faculty Club. They had come to inaugurate the Ohio Journalism Hall of Fame, and to honor the first eight Ohio journalists to be elected to the Hall. These first eight were William Maxwell, Charles Hammond, Joseph Medill, Samuel Cox, David Ross Locke, William Dean Howells, Whitelaw Reid, and Murat Halstead. The eight represented the highest order in the history of the journalistic field in Ohio, and certainly Halstead deserved to be included in the list.

At the time of his death, Halstead's reputation had reached its lowest ebb. Strong, personal editorship was out of style, and only Henry Watterson among the old practitioners was still active. The old editor's increasing partisanship, his losing battle with the Senate, and his loss of a newspaper regularly to voice his opinions, tended to make him remembered by 1908 as only a vague figure from the past.

As time passed, historians looked back to an earlier day in newspaper history when a newspaper was a printed extension of its editor's opinions and realized that the United States had produced several giants of "personal journalism." These were men of genius and untiring energy who believed in liberty and democracy, the freedom of the press, and, most importantly, the duties of the press. The Civil War era and the years 1861-1865 had produced such giants.
that followed was a time of strong newspapers and their strong editors. Greeley, Bowles, Medill, Childs, Reid, Watterson, and Halstead were all active in this period, and all had an influence on public opinion and the affairs of the nation far greater than their local reading public would warrant.

Many of these men have strong connections with Ohio journalism, but only Halstead spent the prime years of his editorial life in Ohio, editing an Ohio newspaper. While he edited a Brooklyn paper for a time, he returned to spend his last remaining years in Cincinnati. His place among the great journalists of Ohio would have been secure without the election to the Hall of Fame, but the election gave a deserved honor to one of Ohio's most distinguished sons.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Collections of Letters and Manuscripts.

James G. Blaine, Library of Congress.

Salmon P. Chase, Library of Congress.

James M. Comly, The Ohio Historical Society.

Jacob D. Cox, The Ohio Historical Society.


Benjamin Harrison, Library of Congress.

Frederick Hassaurek, The Ohio Historical Society.

Rutherford B. Hayes, The Rutherford B. Hayes Library.

George Hoadly, The Ohio Historical Society.

William McKinley, Library of Congress.

Stanley Matthews, The Ohio Historical Society.

Whitelaw Reid, Library of Congress.

Jacob Schucker, Library of Congress.

William Henry Smith, The Ohio Historical Society.

Henry Watterson, Library of Congress.

II. Newspapers.

The Columbia and Great West, 1852-1853 (Cincinnati).

The Cincinnati Commercial, 1852-1883.

410
The Cincinnati Commercial Gazette, 1883-1893.
The Cincinnati Commercial Tribune, 1893-1908.
The Cincinnati Enquirer, 1853-1908, passim.
The Cincinnati Evening Telegram, 1885-1886.
The Cincinnati Gazette, 1853-1883, passim.

III. Government Documents, Printed Correspondence and Other Primary Material.


"Investigation Concerning the Public Works of Ohio Including the Report of the Committee and the Testimony Taken." Columbus: Nevins and Meyers, 1875.

Ohio Journalism Hall of Fame, Addresses at the Inauguration of the Hall and the Announcement of the Results of the First Election. Journalism Series, No. 7. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1929.


Thorndike, Rachel Sherman, ed., The Sherman Letters; Correspondence Between General and Senator Sherman from 1831 to 1891. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894.


IV. Biographies, Autobiographies, and Memoirs.


V. GENERAL WORKS


Chidlaw, Rev. B. W., "Remember the Days of Old;" *An Historical Sketch of Paddy's Run, Butler County, Ohio*. [n.p.], 1876.


*History of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Ohio; Their Past and Present, Including Early Settlement and Development; Antiquarian Researches; Their Aboriginal History; Pioneer History; Political Organization; Agricultural, Mining and Manufacturing Interests; A History of the City, Villages and Townships; Religious, Educational, Social, Military and Political History; Statistics; Biographies and Portraits of Pioneers and Representative Citizens, Etc.* Cincinnati: S. B. Nelson and Company, 1894.


VI. Periodical Articles.


"The Cincinnati Convention," The Nation, XIV (June, 1872).


"From the Editors Window," Cosmopolitan Magazine, VIII (April, 1890), 765-767.


McIntyre, Edward F., "The Men's Clubs of Ohio, the Clubs of Cincinnati," The Ohio Illustrated Magazine, II (June, 1907), 477-485.


"Our National Conventions," Review of Reviews, V (July, 1892), 709.

Sandburg, Carl, "Lincoln and Grant." Redbook (April, 1937), 46-49.


"A Veteran Newspaper Man," Outlook, 39 (July 11, 1908), 548-549.


VII. Unpublished Material.


VIII. Books of Murat Halstead.


Galveston: The Horrors of a Stricken City. Portraying by Pen and Picture the Awful Calamity that Befell the Queen City on the Gulf and the Terrible Scenes that Followed the Disaster. Chicago: American Publishers' Association, 1900.

The Illustrious Life of William McKinley, Our Martyred President.  Chicago: The Monarch Company, 1901.


Life and Distinguished Services of William McKinley; Our Martyr President.  Chicago: Memorial Association, Publishers, 1901.


Our New Possessions.  Natural Riches, Industrial Resources . . . of Cuba, Porto Rico, Hawaii, the Ladrones, and the Philippine Islands, with Episodes of their Early History.  Chicago: The Dominion Company, 1898.


IX. Periodical Articles of Murat Halstead.

"Breakfasts with Horace Greeley," Cosmopolitan Magazine, XXXVI (April, 1904), 698-702.


"The City of Brooklyn," Cosmopolitan Magazine, XV (June, 1893), 131-144.

"The City of Hamburg," Cosmopolitan Magazine, XIV (November, 1892), 35-44.


"Do Americans Hate England?" North American Review, 150 (June, 1890), 760-764.

"Electricity at the Fair," Cosmopolitan Magazine, XV (September, 1893), 577-582.

"Historical Illustrations of the Confederacy," Cosmopolitan Magazine, IX (March, 1890), 496-507.

"Genoa—The Home of Columbus," Cosmopolitan Magazine, XII (April, 1892), 643-649.


"An Italian Campo Santo," Cosmopolitan Magazine, XIV (March, 1893), 591-599.


"Recollections and Letters of General Sherman," The Independent, LI (June 15, 1899) and (June 22, 1899), 1610-1613, 1682-1687.
"Recollections and Letters of President Hayes," *The Independent*, LI (February 9, 1899) and (February 16, 1899), 391-392, 486-489.


"With an Invading Army," *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, XVII (September, 1894), 603-609.