was going on in the North, and Southern arrogance and abuse helped it along.
With the South smarting under a sense of existing wrongs and filled with forebodings of greater and permanent future ones; with the Northern Democrats feeling sure of defeat for the party and political ruin to themselves if further concessions to Southern views were made; with the Republicans, a young party made up largely of young men, eager for the fray, hopeful of success, sure of being right and determined to stop the spread of slavery; with many sober-minded Americans, most of them old men, fearful of discretion and its incalculable consequence, the Presidential year had begun.

CHAPTER XIX
DEMOCRACY’S GREAT DEBACLE
1857-1861


The Eighth Democratic National Convention assembled at Charleston April 23, 1860, with full delegations from every state. From contemporaneous accounts it seems that if those Democrats who witnessed the 1824 Democratic Convention in New York would divide its size by five and multiply by the same figure the intensity, the heat, passion and dissension manifested there, they could form a fair conception of the Charleston gathering. Whom the gods would destroy they first made mad was often and aptly quoted at Charleston in 1860.

The conditions preceding the convention resembled much the Democratic conditions of 1827-8. For a year and more the Northern wing of the party had proclaimed a candidate to whom the Southern wing was strongly opposed. The question was constantly agitated whether or not the South would support Douglas if he were nominated. Some said that he would not carry a single Gulf state; others that the South would stand by the ticket, but very reluctantly; while others maintained that there were a great many Douglas men in the South who for various reasons were unwilling to avow their sentiments. On the way to the convention a Mississippi delegate bet an Indiana Douglas delegate $1,000 that Douglas, if nominated, would not carry Mississippi, but other delegates protested and the wager was withdrawn.

There was a great seeking in the months preceding the convention by the Douglas men for a popular Southerner to take
second place on the ticket. Long before the state conventions met the whole situation centered about the Little Giant and the proceedings of the national convention revolved around his candidacy. His Freeport speech was in the hands of every delegate, more discussed in conversation than the Constitution, the Cincinnati platform or any other one thing.

Through Judge Smalley of Vermont, chairman of the executive committee, the Douglass element controlled the preliminaries and admitted the New York “Soft” delegation, Douglass men, over the “Hard” led by Mayor Fernando Wood; they also admitted the Douglass delegation from Illinois. This gave Douglass a majority of the delegates, but the anti-Douglass element, California and Oregon acting with them, held seventeen states, fifteen of them Southern, against their sixteen.

Caleb Cushing of Massachusetts, originally a Whig, then Tyler Democrat and lastly a regular Democrat and Pierce’s Attorney General, was elected president, and presided with great, some say “aristocratic,” ability.

The two-thirds rule was adopted, and the unit rule modified by a proviso that when a state had not provided or directed how its delegation should vote each delegate could vote individually. The change was not adopted to, but carried. Two questions arose under the new rule; Georgia had “requested” its delegation to vote as a unit and Cushing held the delegation under the rule; New Jersey’s convention had “recommended” its delegation to vote as a unit, and a similar ruling was made, but the latter question was not raised until excitement had grown high and the chair was overruled and the New Jersey vote was made.

Just before the balloting began the two-thirds rule was amended. The old rule, adopted by this convention, required two-thirds of the “vote given in the convention”; the amendment required two-thirds of the vote of a full convention. The amendment was carried after several of the Southern States had withdrawn, and was conceded on the threat of Virginia and other states to withdraw also unless it was done. The vote was 141 to 112.

The resolutions committee of one from each state brought in a majority report approved by seventeen members, a minority report by fifteen members was offered as a substitute, and Benjamin F. Butler of Massachusetts brought in an individual report. Butler recommended the readoption of the 1856 or Cincinnati platform, adding only a plank favoring protection of American citizens. His report was promptly rejected, 198 to 105.
THE STORY OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Butler made a fierce speech, asserting that the majority report was not based on the protection of the African slave trade by its mention of "on the high seas," and he was equally severe on the minority for opposing the party in advance to support any decision of the Supreme Court when Black Republicans might control it.

William L. Yancey of Alabama made the main argument for the majority report. He accused Democratic leaders in the North of pandering to anti-slavery sentiment, and scored Douglas and his followers for opposing the admission of Kansas as a slave state. Northern aggression required that the deliberate assertion be made that slavery was right, not merely constitutional. Not one state, he said, voting against the majority report could be relied on with certainty to cast Democratic electoral votes, while every one, with the possible exception of Maryland, supporting it was surely Democratic. In concluding he admitted that the South did not ask of the Northern Democracy an advanced step in vindication of its rights.

Senator Pugh of Ohio, regarded as the Douglas spokesman, replied, and traced the defeats of the Democrats in the North to subervience to Southern views; they could go no further in that direction. "Gentlemen of the South, you mistake us, we will not do it." He denied that the majority report wasobjection to the Constitution, and named men present in the convention, former Senators and Representatives, who had suffered defeat in their states and districts because of their support of Southern doctrines.

The report had been brought in on the third day and it soon became apparent that an "irresistible conflict" existed between the Northern and Southern wings of the party, which later was to prove the truth of the adage that a house divided against itself cannot stand. The South regarded its political and economic existence at stake while the North felt sure that certain and permanent defeat would follow the acceptance of Southern demands. It will be noted that the Southern wing of the party admittedly demanded a change in the party's policies—an advance in its position on slavery extension. On the sixth day disruption came.

The minority was substituted for the majority report by a vote of 165 to 138; 12 Southern delegates voted ayes, 33 from the North nay. Buchanan was opposed to Douglas, and to his influence the presence of anti-Douglas men from the North was attributed.

DEMOCRACY'S GREAT DEBACLE

Each plank was then taken up and voted on separately; the first plank, reaffirming the 1856 platform, was adopted 237 to 65; a motion to table the rest of the report was rejected 188 to 81, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Florida and Texas thereupon withdrawing from the convention. The slavery plank was then rejected 238 to 21, the Douglass men first voting aye, but on the Southerners refusing to vote, they changed their votes to nay. Some delegates from North Carolina, Georgia, and Delaware now joined those of the bolting states just above named, 45 of the 363 delegates composing the convention voting out. A motion was entered to reconsider all of the above votes, which motion was not acted on until tabled at Baltimore in June.

Various substitutes were offered in place of the rejected slave-plank and great efforts made to heal the breach by Richardson of Illinois, the Douglas manager, but the Douglass men and the Southerners were both obdurate. The South's attitude was well expressed by a Mississippian's reply to a plea for harmony for the party's sake—"We are for principles. Damn the party."

On the eighth day, 26 of Georgia's delegation of 34 withdrew, and the delegations from Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina and Maryland retired for consultation. The motion to require two-thirds of the whole convention to nominate was then made by Howard of Tennessee; Caldwell of Kentucky said he thought the adoption might bring back seceded delegations, and Russell of Virginia announced that its failure meant Virginia's retirement from the convention. The chair decided that the 8 Georgia delegations remaining in the convention could not cast the vote of the state. Howard's motion to amend the two-thirds rule carried 141 to 112, only New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island and Oregon voting solidly against it, New York voting solidly for it and Pennsylvania splitting.

Douglass, James Guthrie of Kentucky, Dickinson of New York, R. M. T. Hunter of Virginia, Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, and Joe Lane of Oregon were placed in nomination.

The vote of New York on the two-thirds rule amendment having rendered Douglass' nomination impossible, that delegation proceeded to vote solidly for him on every ballot. The first ballot was Douglass, 145 1/2, Hunter, 42, Guthrie, 35, Johnson, 12, scattering, 18, including one vote for Jefferson Davis. Thus Douglass received in the first ballot a majority of the vote actually cast. The twenty-third ballot gave Douglass 152 1/2, a majority of one vote of a full convention. He fell back the following ballot to 151 1/2, where his vote stood until the thirty-second ballot when
The Story of the Democratic Party

he again received 132 1/2. On the thirty-ninth ballot Guthrie received 86 1/2 votes, the highest he or any other lesser candidate obtained in the whole fifty-seven ballots taken. The last ballot was Douglass 151 1/2; Guthrie 86 1/2, Dickinson 4, Hunter 16, Lane 14, Davis 1. It is said the Benjamin F. Butler cast his vote on every ballot for Jefferson Davis although instructed for Douglass.

To give time for passions to cool, the convention on its tenth day adjourned to meet in Baltimore on June 18th, and it was recommended that the several states make provision for supplying all vacancies in their respective delegations. The motion to adjourn was carried 105 to 55, 61 Southern delegates voting, 59 having withdrawn or bolted.

The seceders from the main convention, a little more than 100 in number, met May 1st and elected James A. Bayard president. There was much discussion talked and Bayard on the third day, retired from the convention after making a strong Union speech.

The convention adopted the name "Constitutional Democrat," and a platform identical with the majority report of the main convention, and called a convention to meet at Richmond June 11th, inviting the Democratic Party of the United States to send delegates. Accordingly that day about 100 delegates from slave states met and adjourned from day to day, until the 26th, when Breckenridge and Lane, just nominated at Baltimore by the bolting convention, were declared the unanimous choice of the convention.

When the Democratic national convention reassembled at Baltimore June 18th, it was recognized that the New York delegation held the balance of power. Dean Richmond was its chairman and leader. Richardson was again manager for Douglass.

In the interim between the two sessions of the convention another Senate debate between Douglass and Davis had widened the breach between the two factions of the party, though the Senate had approved the Davis resolutions.

Five days were consumed in organizing and in deciding various contests between old delegations which had withdrawn and new delegations, the latter being Douglass delegations. Fraud and favoritism were charged against the Douglass men on the credentials committee. For a time New York wavered, often long for consultation, and the Douglass men were divided between rage and alarm, but finally Dean Richmond brought his delegation in line and New York's deciding 35 votes were cast for the Douglass delegations, the votes on the various contests ranging around 140 to 110, the states with contesting delegations not voting.

In the convention hall a reasonably calm atmosphere prevailed, but each night two great mass meetings were held in close proximity to each other on the streets. At one the Douglass men denounced in unmeasured terms their opponents and at the other the fire-eaters in violent invective returned the fire, while individual partisans exchanged animosities and personalities.

The motion to reconsider inherited from the Charleston meeting was disposed of on the evening of the fifth day. In the afternoon New York had voted with the South and the motion to table was lost, but later with New York's change of vote the motion to table carried 139 to 113.

Final action now was taken on the seating of the contesting delegations, the Douglass men carrying everything with New York's vote, whereupon the Virginia delegation withdrew, followed by other states, and organized another convention. Cushing resigned the chair and joined the bolters, Benjamin F. Butler and many others of the Massachusetts delegation going with him. Governor David Tod of Ohio, a vice-president, took the chair for the rest of the session.

The evening before the balloting great excitement was caused by the report that Douglass had written Dean Richmond a letter authorizing the withdrawal of his name. Richardson emphatically contradicted the rumor and was believed, he being Douglass' manager. But such a message was, in fact, in Richmond's pocket.

The first ballot on nominations was taken on the sixth day and was: Douglass, 173 1/2; Breckenridge, 5; scattering, 13. Church, of New York, moved that Douglass having received two-thirds of the votes given, be declared the nominee; he said the two-thirds rule as adopted at Charleston was "outrageous, unreasonable, degrading, and wrong" and submitted to by New York only for the sake of harmony. However, on objection, he withdrew the motion.

The second ballot was: Douglass, 181 1/2; Breckenridge, 7 1/2; Guthrie, 5 1/2. Church renewed his motion and it was carried without division. A resolution embodying the Douglass slavery plank was adopted by acclamation. Benjamin Fitzpatrick, of Alabama, was named for second place, and he later declining, Herschel V. Johnson, of Georgia, was named by the national committee.

Just before adjournment Richardson sent to the clerk's desk...
and had read a letter he had received, very similar to the one received by Richmond, in which Douglass, after insisting on the doctrine of non-intervention, said:

“But while I can never sacrifice the principle, even to attain the Presidency, I will cheerfully and joyfully sacrifice myself to maintain the principle. If therefore you and my other friends shall be of the opinion that the principle can be preserved and the unity and ascendancy of the Democratic Party maintained and the country saved from the perils of Northern abolitionism and Southern disunion by withdrawing my name and uniting upon some other non-intervention and Union-loving Democrat, I beseech you to pursue that course. . . . I conjure you to act with a single eye to the safety and welfare of the country and without the slightest regard to my personal interest."

A manly, self-sacrificing letter this and the one to Richmond. Imagination may riot on what might have happened to the party and country had they been used. It is stated that the seceders from the convention had placed it out of his power to use the letters, and that the responsibility was on them. His statement was greatly applauded.

The boiling convention met on June 23rd, and Cushing was chosen president amidst great enthusiasm. Delegates purporting to represent all states except Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin were present, but many delegations were small and the scrutiny of credentials slight. As listed 230 delegates were in attendance, but less than half this number seems to have voted. The majority report of the resolutions committee at Charleston was adopted as a platform. The rule of voting adopted at Cincinnati and Charleston was followed, but two-thirds of the votes of only the States represented in the convention were required for a nomination. The first and only ballot for Presidential nominee was Breckenridge, 81; Dickinson, of New York, 24, but the delegates changed their votes and Breckenridge was named unanimously. Joseph Lane of Oregon was nominated for Vice-President by acclamation. This ticket, as stated before, was adopted by the Constitutional Democrats.

Buchanan soon publicly announced that there had been no regular nomination by the Democrats and that members of the party could consistently vote for Douglass or Breckenridge. The influence of the administration, however, was thrown to Breckenridge.

The first and only national convention of the Constitutional Union Party was held at Baltimore, May 9th, nearly every state being represented. The old Whigs and Americans constituted the body of the new party. Edward Everett was a great favorite, but availability called for a Southern man, and the choice was between old Sam Houston, Democrat of Texas, and John Bell, Whig of Tennessee. The Whig element favored Bell, the American for the second ballot, and Everett named for second place unanimously. Platforms were asserted to be humbug, and the convention declared for “The Constitution of the Country, the Union of the States, the Enforcement of the Laws,” adding a few general principles of justice, fraternity and equality.

The Republican National Convention met in the Wigwam at Chicago, May 16, with 645 delegates, but nine states, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee were unrepresented. Old Francis Blair and Horace Greeley were the lions of the day, and had much to do with the final result. Richardson was a member of the convention as a delegate for Oregon, the New York delegation being made up of Seward men only.

The platform was adopted with little debate. Joshua Giddings moved an amendment adding the opening clauses of the Declaration of Independence to one of the planks; the convention had no idea of being tied up with the Giddings amendment was voted down; he was withdrawing from the convention when George William Curtis championed his proposition and Jefferson’s words were inserted in the platform.

Seward at Chicago, as Douglass had been at Charleston, was for a time the pivot on which everything turned. He had capable managers, Weed, Evarts and Curtis. But he had powerful enemies. “Success rather than Seward” was their slogan. Pennsylvania wanted a high tariff and Seward’s tariff views were not liked. It is one of the curiosities of politics that Seward’s “irrepressible conflict” speech was held to destroy his availability while Lincoln’s “house divided against itself” phrase seems not to have impaired his. The night before the balloting began even Greeley practically conceded a Seward victory, but much was accomplished between midnight and the hour the convention met next morning; Virginia weakened, as did several New England states under Greeley’s efforts, Lincoln was nominated on the third ballot. Greeley had worsted his former partners. Wendell Phillips, Abolitionist leader, was much displeased at the nomination of the “slaveholder of Illinois,” Lincoln had said a fugitive slave law was proper.
THE STORY OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

For the second place the convention chose Hannibal Hamlin of Maine, a former Democrat. The Democratic element in the young party was a factor to be considered.

The Democratic and the Constitutional Unionist platforms have already been outlined. The Republican declaration was comparatively long. It endorsed the Declaration of Independence, glorified the Union and denounced disunion, approved states rights, denounced Democratic administration, and also the Dred Scott decision, declared freedom the normal condition of United States territory, denounced the African slave trade, non-intervention and popular sovereignty, declared for immediate admission of Kansas, a tariff encouraging development of industrial interests, and a liberal homestead law; opposed change in naturalization laws, approved river and harbor appropriations, and immediate aid to the Pacific railroad.

The controlling platform issues may be digested as follows:

DOUGLASS DEMOCRATIC
Slavery in any Territ-
ory is entirely the af-
fair of the citizens of
that Territory; neither
Congress nor the peo-
ple of other parts of
the Union have the
right to interfere.

BRECKENRIDGE
Democratic
Citizens of any state
have the right to carry
their property, includ-
ing slaves, into any
Territory; and Congress
has no power to in-
hibit them with or
without cooperation of
Territorial Legislature.

Lincoln REPUBLICAN
Slavery exists only
by municipal law; there
is no law for it in
the Territories and
Congress has no power
to legalize it anywhere,
but bound to exclude it
from Federal Terri-
itories.

Progressive Free
Trade throughout the
world.

Progressive Free
Tariff to encourage
development of indus-
tries, high wages and
prosperity.

Each party charged the others with disunion sentiment or
tendencies, and each candidate pledged devotion to the Union—
Douglas said: "The Federal Union must be preserved"; Brecken-
ridge declared: "The Constitution and the equality of the states,
are symbols of everlasting Union"; Lincoln proclaimed: "The
inviability of the Constitution and perpetual Union"; Bell
stood for "The maintenance of the Constitution and the Union."

Strange to say, the 1860 campaign was not so furious as that of
1856; Breckenridge had it all his way in the South, and the
Republicans were sure of success in New England. In the rest
of the country where the battle was between Douglas and Lin-
coln the recognized fact that the former had no real chance of
election disheartened his followers. Buchanan threw the influ-
ence of the administration to Breckenridge, and Douglas fought

DEMOCRACY'S GREAT DEBACLE 273

Breckenridge as fiercely as he did Lincoln. The best the Demo-
crate of either faction could hope for was a deadlock in the
Electoral College and an election by the House of Representa-
tives, whereby Breckenridge possibly might win, a consummation
little wished by the Douglass men.

The tariff figured heavily in Pennsylvania where the tariff bill
lately defeated in Congress was very popular, and in the Key-
stone state that issue was stressed. Greeley's Tribune declared
that the Pennsylvania vote of 1860 was to settle the future
tariff policy of the country.

The most effective argument in the North against the Repub-
licans was that the success of their party meant disunion, for
many in the South had so proclaimed, and the sectional char-
acter of the party and its platform were evident. But many
believed, as Seward did, that the secession threats in the South
were mere electioneering cries of "wolf," which had been made,
at one time and another, for many years. Douglass thought the
danger real, and boldly argued against and denounced disunion
when on a Southern speaking tour.

Bell, stout Whig as he was, was so convinced that Lincoln's
election would be followed by secession that he agreed to with-
draw along with Douglas and Breckenridge, if an acceptable
candidate could be agreed on. He and Breckenridge authorized
Jefferson Davis to negotiate with Douglas, but Douglas
deprecated. He represented others he had, who stood for great
principles; he had been nominated by two Democratic conven-
tions; any sacrifice of self he was willing to make, but none of
principle; besides his withdrawal would but strengthen Lincoln
as his Western supporters would all go to Lincoln.

Fusion by Democrats of both wings, and with the Constitu-
tional Unionists, was attempted in New York and several other
states, but was ineffectual save in New Jersey where Douglas
received three, Lincoln four of the electoral votes. As the
returns eventually showed, had fusion been perfected in every
state the result only in California and Oregon would have been
changed. Lincoln received was by a majority vote except in those
two states.

The state elections foreshadowed the November result; all
New England, then doubtful Ohio and Indiana and pivotal Penn-
sylvania showed Republican successes.

Breckenridge carried every slave state except Missouri which
went to Douglass by a plurality of less than 500 of a total vote
of 165,000, and except also Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia,
which went to Bell. Practically all of Douglass' strength lay
in states where Lincoln was strongest. The complete votes were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lincoln</th>
<th>Douglas</th>
<th>Breckenridge</th>
<th>Bell</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Popular Vote</td>
<td>1,296,432</td>
<td>1,376,267</td>
<td>849,781</td>
<td>586,379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral Vote</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the vote in the slave states Breckenridge received 674,000; Bell, 512,000; Douglas, 162,000, and Lincoln, 22,000. Thus a majority of over 20,000 votes were against Breckenridge in those states. In the free states Douglas received 1,115,000 votes to 285,000 for Breckenridge. The two Democratic tickets received a total of 360,000 more votes than the Republican single ticket. All three figures are affected by the fact that they do not embrace South Carolina's vote.

It was in the face of threatened and practically certain secession that Buchanan prepared his final message. Three months later Lincoln faced the fact accomplished; Buchanan's task was the more delicate—to aver secession if possible.

It is not necessary to discuss the right of secession further than to outline the situation confronting the Democratic President—the attitude of the public mind of his day on the question. Secession had been advocated, threatened, denounced, and deplored in every section of the country at one time or another ever since the government had been formed. Only Jackson and Webster of the great leaders had ever squarely denied the right, and Webster in 1851 had declared that if the free states did not carry out the constitutional duty of restoring escaped slaves the "slave states were not bound to observe the compact of Union." It is not improbable that in 1860 two Americans out of three believed a state had a right to secede either as a constitutional or a revolutionary right, or were in doubt over the question. Republicans such as Charles Francis Adams, Henry Cabot Lodge and others grant a much larger percentage.

A President, unlike a king, governs under a special, not a general, commission. His party platform on which he is elected by the people is his commission—the sanctioned policy and program of the country for his four years of administration. If party government in America does not mean this, it means little or nothing save a struggle for offices. Buchanan's commission had distinctly asserted that adherence to the constitutional guaranty of slavery and a faithful execution of the Compromises of 1850 were necessary to the continuance of the Union. The platforms of the three contending parties had all proclaimed interference with the rights of the states. The election of 1856 had shown a two-thirds vote against the cardinal doctrine of the

Republican platform—"the right and duty of Congress to prohibit slavery in the territories." All parties had declared for the continuance of the Union.

The election of 1860, just held, gave little indication of any fundamental change in popular opinion. The Republican candidate, though elected, had received less than forty per cent of the popular vote; the two wings of the Democratic Party, differing materially only on one phase of the question, had polled forty-seven and a half per cent of the total vote. The Republicans lacked 500,000 of a majority; the Democrats, allowing for South Carolina's vote, lacked scarcely 50,000. No certain voice of the people of the United States told Buchanan their will.

Buchanan's final message reviewed the situation and the course of events leading up to it. That the slave states had just cause to secede he strongly contended. For more than three-fourths of the time the government had been in existence they had been practically in control; there was not one federal law in existence infringing their rights and the federal courts upheld them. The mere election as President of a fellow citizen of an opposing party was no just cause for dissolving the Union; the agitation of the slavery question by the Abolitionists was censured and the state laws inimical to the enforcement of the fugitive slave law, but these evils, he said, could be remedied by courts and Congress.

The right of a state to secede was vigorously denied, but he could find in the Constitution no power given to the President, or to Congress either, to coerce a state. The remedy he proposed was amendments to the Constitution, and he called on Congress to propose to the several states the remedy for the existing evils.

Horace Greeley in his Tribune, the leading exponent of public opinion in the North, was saying: "If the cotton states shall decide that they can do better out of the Union than in it, we insist on letting them go in peace." Greeley, who had brought about Lincoln's nomination, surely represented Republican opinion. Indeed, he was called the Republican oracle.

The most illuminating evidence of the state of public opinion with which Buchanan had to deal is "Scott's Views," an official letter from the commanding general of the United States army to the President. Scott was a hero of the War of 1812, our commander-in-chief in the Mexican War, long a leading Whig and in 1852 that party's candidate for President, and, withal, a man of unquestioned loyalty.

General Scott unequivocally conceded the right of secession, and suggested, and outlined geographically, four possible "new Unions" as a smaller evil than the one Confederacy forming. He
settled the great dispute. It was purely a question for the people to decide rather than a President going out of office in a few months.

The supreme and sole impulse of Buchanan's last three months in office was to preserve the status quo so far as possible until his successor was inaugurated, and to do this every effort was made, and every concession possible. That he should have pursued any other policy now seems impossible. Border states, Virginia, Kentucky and Missouri, to say nothing of North Carolina and Tennessee, were trembling in the balance. To have precipitated action by them in the closing days of his administration would have been criminal, and cruelly wrong to his successor who was charged with the task of government for the coming four years. That he turned the government over to Lincoln uncommitted to any definite policy, unengaged, free from irrevocable pledges or acts, was a notable feat of statesmanship. When Lincoln assumed charge of the government the hands were free; the Democratic administration had given its Republican successor an honest deal. If a peaceful settlement had been possible, it still was possible; not a state had been driven into hostility to the Union, no new or greater opposition to the government engendered.

Nor was the Democratic administration's policy widely different from Lincoln's initial one as announced in his inaugural address. Considering the fact that the Republicans held aloof, Lincoln refused to agree to any measure extending slavery one iota, and Southern Democrats and Americans were either indifferent or actively hostile. Southern Democrats indeed were virtually out of all parties and out of national politics sometime before their respective states had actually seceded.

Significant was the organization of the territories of Colorado, Dakota and Nevada with no provision against slavery, and the recommendation by a two-thirds vote of both houses of Congress of an amendment to the Constitution forbidding any amendment giving Congress the power to abolish or interfere with slavery in any state. Conservative Republicans joined with Democrats in passing these measures, the amendment carrying in the Senate 24 to 12, in the House 133 to 65, and was approved of by Lincoln in his inaugural address.

Buchanan looked directly to the body of the people—to the half-million Southerners who had voted for him, to the people of the whole United States. He gave them, so far as he could, the opportunity to bring about a peaceful
The difference between the positions of the two men was largely between "could" not and "would" not. George W. Julian, surely a Republican of unquestioned authority of that day, says in his Political Reflections: "Notwithstanding all the abuse that has been heaped upon Mr. Buchanan by the Republicans . . . the policy of the new administration, up to the attack upon Fort Sumter, was identical with that of its predecessor."

Charles Francis Adams, who during the War between the States most ably represented this country at the British Court, years later writes of the situation between Lincoln's election and inauguration: "On the part of the North it was highly desirable that every possible form of compromise should be discussed, and discussed at great length, if only to gain time. It was unreasonably under such conditions as these the part of the statesman, as well as of the shrewd political manager, no matter with which side of the struggle he sympathized, to keep his eyes fixed on the 4th of March. If he was a secessionist, he would strain every nerve to precipitate a conflict before that day arrived, while if he were a Union man he would exert himself to the utmost to tide peacefully over the intervening time."

In this paragraph Adams outlines exactly the course Buchanan as a Union man followed.

Buchanan has been accused of weakness and vacillation; nothing seems farther from the real character of the man and his course of action during his whole administration and more especially the last three months of it. He stood squarely on the platform on which he was elected and his interpretation of the Constitution. Many leading men of his own and the Republican Party repeatedly changed opinions and positions as new developments occurred, but Buchanan held to his course.

There are points of resemblance between Buchanan and Taft. Large men physically, calm, kindly and of the judicial temperament, both are reported to have preferred the bench of the Supreme Court to the other honors and places assigned them, though leading finally to the Presidency. Both are credited with great diplomatic ability in healing difficulties, carrying in their right hands gentle peace. Yet both had to deal with bitter dissensions in their parties which their wonted judicial tempers and diplomatic skill were powerless to appease, and both are blamed for party defeat and disruption.

From the campaign of 1860 the Democratic Party emerged with tremendous losses. Not only had it lost strength in the North, but its stronghold, the South, was out of the Union.