

GLIMPSSES OF EARLY-DAY POLITICS

Milwaukee Sentinel April 1, 1900.
Some Extracts From the Letters of the Late
John F. Potter.

For a correct understanding of the undercurrents of politics one must search in the letters written and received by persons prominent in the events of their time. The correspondence of the late John F. Potter was especially rich in illustrative material dealing with a stirring period of American history—the years immediately preceding the great rebellion and following the outbreak of the war. There are strong sidelights on state politics to be found in this bundle of old letters, and some of them reveal motives hitherto veiled in obscurity. The extracts selected and here given deal with many topics and affect many men well known in the early history of the state. Out of a mass of many hundreds of letters selections have been made dealing in a general way with several topics. The first series of letters dealing with the unsuccessful attempts of the Southern fire-eaters to intimidate Judge Potter was printed in last Sunday's Sentinel. The second is printed to-day. Others will be printed on succeeding Sundays, as follows:

A SOUTHERN CONSPIRACY TO CAPTURE CUBA;

TWO NOTABLE CONTESTS FOR THE UNITED STATES SENATORSHIP;

A MILWAUKEE POSTOFFICE FIGHT;

JUDGE POTTER'S LETTERS TO MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY;

POLITICAL MISCELLANIES.

II.

CARL SCHURZ AND HIS POLITICAL CAREER IN WISCONSIN.

BUT for the strength given the party by men of German birth and descent, the Republicans of Wisconsin would be in a helpless minority. The ascendancy of the party in this state may be said to date from the time when the Germans began to outadrift from the Democratic party. In the early days of statehood, the German vote was solidly Democratic, and the German press was likewise strongly Democratic. Along the lake shore, and in the city of Milwaukee, heavy Democratic majorities were rolled up with the help of the German voters. Recognition of their strength naturally followed, and it was not long before it came to be deemed essential that tickets and political committees must have German representation. In 1851, and again in 1851, Fred Horn was elected speaker of the assembly, and German names crept into the roll of the state senate. In 1852 Edward Janssen became state treasurer.

There were numerous reasons why the leaders of the Whig and Free Soil parties failed to make much impression on the German voters of the state. Questions affecting the naturalization qualifications of voters had from the first alienated them, even if other considerations had not held them aloof. The first wedge in the partition of the German vote was doubtless due to the influence of the political exiles who have come to be known as the Forty-eighters. One of the most influential of these revolutionists of '48 was Carl Schurz. His influence in turning the drift of German sentiment toward the Republican party has never been fully admitted. Events, of course, were favorable, for at the time he became active in the politics of Wisconsin and the Northwest, began that agitation which eventually found an outlet on the battlefield. The fact remains that the influence of Carl Schurz on the stump, not only in this state, but in many parts of the country, became potent in crystallizing German sentiment to that point that affiliation with the Republican party became the natural course of events.

Carl Schurz was but a young man when he came to Wisconsin and settled in the village of Watertown—26 years of age—but he had taken part in the stirring events of the old country and had been schooled to self-reliance, alertness and the prompt seizure of opportunity. He was an orator of unusual gifts, soon acquired ready command of the language of his adopted country, and rapidly gained an influence that attracted attention, outside the state.

In 1857, Carl Schurz was nominated for lieutenant governor on the Republican ticket. Randall had been nominated for governor after a warm contest and some one was wanted who would strengthen the ticket. It was thought especially desirable to placate the Germans, who looked with suspicion on what they regarded as the nativistic tendencies of the new party. Sherman M. Booth, then a powerful factor in state politics, nominated Carl Schurz in an eloquent speech.

Most of the delegates had never heard the name before, and in fact Schurz had been a resident of the state but two years at this time. However, he was nominated on the first ballot, for he seemed to be the only available German to put on the ticket.

"None of us dreamed then," the late A. M. Thomson wrote in his reminiscences of this convention, "that we were dealing with the destiny of one of the highest and most famous German-Americans who ever came to this country. 'Who the devil is Carl Schurz?' was the general inquiry among the delegates. Only a few knew him or knew about him. Nobody knew how to pronounce his name, some calling him 'Shirts' and others catching on to the correct pronunciation.

"But I shall never forget his unique and picturesque appearance on that occasion, and now after the lapse of thirty-eight years I can see just how he looked when he came forward to make his little speech of acceptance in response to calls made for him after he was nominated. He was then miserably poor, and the suit of well-worn and faded clothes upon his back would have been rejected by an ordinary tramp. His long legs were encased in a pair of tightly-fitting trousers that were much too short at

1. Scrapbook

C. S.

to

J. F. Potter

1858+

the bottom and baggy at the knees. His threadbare coat had the same complaint of shortness in the arms, and taken altogether his appearance was really not very unlike the pictures that Puick has often made of him since he became famous enough to make him the subject of caricature. When he was introduced to the convention the stillness was painful. I think nearly every delegate in that convention felt as I did that we had made a terrible blunder in nominating him, and we awaited the speech with intense anxiety. We did not have to wait long before our suspense was happily relieved by one of the finest impromptu addresses I ever heard, which convinced all of us that we had made no mistake, but that the ablest man in the hall was Carl Schurz."

Randall was elected governor, but Schurz met defeat, the majority against him being small—but enough. Two years later he sought the nomination for governor, and a warm contest ensued. Randall was renominated and was so impolitic in his speech of acceptance as to refer in disparaging terms to his opponents. Schurz accepted his defeat with feelings of resentment, believing he had been badly used. After sulking in his tent awhile, he went on the stump for Abraham Lincoln, and made many effective speeches in the eastern states. He was named as minister to Spain by President Lincoln and left Wisconsin never to return to the state as a resident. He resigned his foreign post to enter the army, but after the war went to Missouri, which state he later represented in the United States senate.

The accompanying letters from Carl Schurz to John F. Potter are given in chronological sequence. They will be found especially interesting as giving a clear view of the man's sincerity in politics. That he had egotism is not to be denied; that he was intensely ambitious is apparent; but when all has been said, his letters have a tone that bespeaks for their writer motives of public good rather than individual preference, and patriotism above personal selfishness.

With these letters is given one written to Judge Polter by Senator James R. Doolittle referring particularly to Schurz.

Letters of Carl Schurz.

Milwaukee, Dec. 24, 1858—Hon. J. F. Potter, My Dear Sir: I must write you a few lines on a subject in which I feel a deep concern. Some time ago I received a very kind letter from Sen. Wilson, requesting me to send him a few copies of my Chicago and Milwaukee speeches. In answer to his letter I called his attention to the efforts which are being made to unite the whole opposition to the administration on a common basis, and I availed myself of the opportunity to tell him frankly that in my opinion any sacrifice of principle, and especially an alliance with the American party, would certainly ruin us in all the Northwestern states. An article which appeared in The Washington Republic some time ago leads me to believe that some Republican leaders think of uniting with the anti-administration Democrats on a "Popular Sovereignty" platform. How is this possible? Have we been beaten at the last election? Are we too weak to stand on our own feet? Or is not Douglas' "Popular Sovereignty" to-day the same humbug it was two years ago? How shall we stand before the people, if we now adopt the very same principle in opposition to which our party was originally organized? We are bound to conquer in 1860, if we stand to our colors and do not throw away our chances by a tricky and inconsistent policy. I know that you and I entertain the same views and feelings about this subject. Will you be kind enough to keep me advised of what is going on in Washington in this respect? I think that every attempt to trade our principles away should be met with a perfect hurricane in the newspapers.

There is another matter about which I want to speak to you. My name has been mentioned in connection with the nomination for governor. Several newspapers have brought me forward and all our German Republican papers have taken this thing up with great alacrity. Then it went through the whole German Republican press of the North, and my nomination was represented as already made. This state of things embarrasses me very much. If I had been consulted about it, before it got into the newspapers, I would have stopped it, for the reason that my name cannot be used in connection with a nomination unless the thing is understood at all hands; if, after it has been spoken of, adverse circumstances should occur, which might induce the Republicans to select somebody else, or should prevent me from accepting a nomination, it would hurt me in my political standing, and at the same time it would injure the Republican party with the German population very much. Now, what the feeling of the people of this state is, I do not know and have taken no pains to ascertain. As for me, I am wavering whether I shall let the thing go on or cut it short by publicly de-

claring that I shall not be a candidate. Allow me to consider you my confidential friend, to tell you my thoughts and to ask your advice. To be governor of this state, honorable as the position may be, is really not the object of my ambition. My political standing is such that I can do without any official station. The thing has only one charm for me, and that is, that a success of this kind would give me a powerful influence over the German population of the Northern states, which would tell in 1860. Beyond this the governorship has little value for me personally.

Among the reasons which would induce me to decline a nomination, is the first, that Harvey of Rock is likely to be a candidate before the convention. I owe him much; he brought me forward for lieutenant governor last year, and he has always been a warm and consistent friend of mine. I should not like to stand in the way of his aspirations. Something is due to him, and I feel I ought not to destroy his chances. The second reason is, that I have not got the money for carrying on an electoral contest, especially a hard one as this will be;—and the third is, that I cannot afford to suffer another defeat, neither before a convention, nor before the people. This, however, I do not fear much, for I think I can carry the state more easily than most others—provided no side issues are brought up in the contest. At all events, a nomination carried by a bare majority would not do for me. If I cannot be nominated by a nearly unanimous vote, I would prefer to withdraw altogether. But then I have to do it at once, of my own free will, so that our opponents have no right to say that I was but yielding to outside pressure. I should not like to appear to be obliged to do it. Meanwhile some Democratic papers have commenced a bitter warfare on me. Robinson of The Green Bay Advocate (who expects to get the Democratic nomination), commenced to traduce me by attacking in the grossest and most sophistical manner my Milwaukee speech, representing it as a libel on the people of Wisconsin. Another paper has started the story that I was a minion and an agent of the king of Prussia and am still in the pay of that government, etc., and other Democratic organs have followed suit. They endeavor to kill me off before the nominations are made. Well, all these things cannot injure me, they will rather help me, but they are in so far disagreeable to me, as they treat me as a candidate while I am none.

Now, I want your advice, my dear judge; tell me openly, whether in your opinion I should put a stop to it by declaring my intention not to be a candidate, or whether I shall let the thing go on.

What effect had Douglas' decapitation on his Democratic friends? My impression is, that he will not be nominated by the Charleston convention and that he will gradually destroy his chances North and South by carrying water on both shoulders. Do you not think so? But Douglas out of the way, and the victory will be ours in



Carl Schurz.

1860 unless we destroy ourselves by bad management.

How are you getting along personally? I should be very glad to hear from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours very truly,
C. SCHURZ.

Milwaukee, Aug. 12, 1859—Hon. J. F. Potter, My Dear Friend: I hoped to see you here some time last week, but being disappointed in that respect, I have to write you a few lines. The note of the Atlas which I had endorsed, was extended for sixty days, and the matter settled for the present in that way. I have given them a further endorsement so as to keep them running until the campaign commences. The party will then have to take care of the concern, if necessary.

Did you hear from Doolittle? I understand he is not inclined to do anything in regard to gubernatorial contest. This is a disappointment to me. I thought that his advice joined to yours would carry a great weight with it in the convention. I shall follow your advice not to withdraw at present. The general impression is that my chances are improving as the convention approaches, but I am, of course, the last man to judge. I feel that my being a candidate before the convention is a dangerous experiment, but there is no backing out at present. I must rely on the energetic support of my friends. I hope you will be a delegate to the convention. Do so by all means. Did you write to Washburne and will he be there?

I think the best way to manage things would be to have a kind of informal consultation, a committee of the whole before the vote is taken, and to discuss matters there. I saw Randall yesterday and had a talk with him and several of his friends. He thinks he can get the nomination, but he seems to be a little troubled about the election. There is one thing that puzzles them very much. Their opinion is, that a ticket can hardly be successful without there being a German on it; now if he should be nominated they would have to find some new man (for I have declared

definitely that I shall accept no nomination under him. Who shall be that man? And suppose we find one, where is the place for that man? There is, I think, no German in the state suited for the position of lieutenant governor. They might think of the treasury, but can they discard Hastings? There is no German Republican, as far as I know, who would be fit for attorney general. Where, then, find the man, and if the man can be found, where the place for that man? There Randall's friends are at a deadlock and they know it. I think that this matter if calmly explained in an informal meeting of the delegates before the opening of the convention might decide the contest. I should not wonder if this very difficulty should induce R. to decline.

At all events, I should be very glad to have you go to the convention as a delegate. If consistent, let me know what I may expect of Doolittle and Washburne. Doolittle's influence would be very valuable. I do not like the idea of writing to him myself. Randall's friends boast of being sure of the whole delegation from Walworth. Is that so?

When shall I have the pleasure of seeing you here? Truly yours,

C. SCHURZ.

Racine, Sept. 10, 1859.—Dear Judge: I hoped to meet you at Milwaukee, but did not. I am going to try and raise \$100 in Kenosha and \$100 in Racine towards the amount, \$750, for which our friend, Mr. Schurz is liable as endorser for the German Republican papers. I said to one friend that I thought Mr. Durkee would pay \$50, Washburn \$50, you \$50, and I \$50, making \$200 of the amount. Now whatever course the German Republicans may pursue in this election makes no difference to me and should make no difference with our friends in this matter. But now is the time for the true and wise friends of Col. Schurz to take care of him, and not allow him to be sacrificed. He is a man of noble impulses, and of the highest order of genius. But like men of that character he needs some men of strong practical good sense to act for him at this juncture, which is perhaps the crisis of his life as well as the crisis in our Republican battle so far as Wisconsin is concerned. The people, if the German Republicans should as some anticipate, bolt Randall, will place these two facts in juxtaposition, and no explanations will ever separate them. The German Republicans urged Mr. Schurz's nomination for governor. The convention by a large majority nominated Randall for governor and unanimously tendered any other office on the ticket to Mr. Schurz, which he declined. The German Republicans bolted the nomination of Randall, and the inference whether right or wrong will be irreparably drawn in the popular mind that the Germans bolted because a German was not nominated for governor. It will not remove the inference to say they would accept Hanchett or somebody else. Nothing could do so much to rekindle into a flame all the elements of American Know-Nothingism among our people, and Mr. Schurz, our most eloquent and gifted orator, would be crushed between the upper and nether millstone, between German Know-Nothingism and American Know-Nothingism and our Republican party at once divided by the element which I had hoped was forever laid aside. Dear Judge, will you see that among our good Republican friends in your neighborhood raise say \$100 towards paying off his liability by endorsement. Please remember us kindly to Mrs. P. I remain ever devotedly yours,

J. R. DOOLITTLE.

If you do not come and see me, write me.

Columbus, O., March 17, 1860.—Hon. John F. Potter. My Dear Friend: I have just taken a survey of the state of Indiana, a hard state, but I think we can carry it if proper exertions are used. There is a strong Fillmore element there, which is now just what it was in 1856, and I am assured by reliable men, that it will be exceedingly difficult to unite that element with the Republican party. The Bates movement is dead in that state; it has worked only mischief and nothing else. All true Republicans seem to have turned their backs from it. From what I have seen there I am led to believe that we can turn

about 10,000 German votes that were formerly Democratic,—perhaps a great many more. That, it seems to me, is the only way to carry the state. There is a very strong demand there for the German translation of my Springfield speech; the Indiana members ought to send a good supply to the southern districts of their state. I have tried to establish a system of correspondence all over the state, and I think that after the national convention we shall get the machine in good working order. Please let me know what the feeling is in regard to the presidential candidates in congressional circles. Seward seems to be gaining everywhere. It will require much hard work to carry Indiana and Illinois for him, but still I think it can be done.

I expect to be at Milwaukee by the 21st. Our judicial election is rather mixed up. I see by the papers that Dixon is running, and I should not wonder if A. D. Smith had induced his special partisans to call him out. Still, I think we can rally the party upon the regular nominee.

I shall be very happy to hear from you. My regards to Doolittle and Washburn.

Yours as ever,

C. SCHURZ.

Milwaukee, April 12, 1860.—My Dear Friend: You have learned the result of our judicial election. To be defeated is bad; but to see Republicans rejoice over it is worse. I did, indeed, expect that Sloan would be elected by a small majority, but I must confess Dixon's sweep does not surprise me very much. Sloan has been defeated by his own friends, or rather the friends of the state rights cause. The fire-eaters of our party (and you know there are such, who are always apt to undo



Carl Schurz in 1860.

Carl Schurz spent the first year after his coming to Wisconsin in Watertown, Wis. He was a nominee for lieutenant governor of the state and a candidate for nomination as governor. He was appointed by President Lincoln as minister to Spain and returned to this country to enter the army. He never returned to Wisconsin to live.

by overdoing) threatened to bolt unless Sloan would make a public statement of his views on the state rights question. Shortly after the convention, while I was traveling in Indiana, I wrote Sloan that there was some difficulty in Milwaukee and Racine, probably instigated by A. D. Smith and his particular friends, and that he, probably, would be called upon to write a letter for publication. I told him that I would consider it very improper for a candidate for a judicial office to make a public statement of his views on matters which might come up to him for adjudication; but if it was necessary that something should be done, I advised him to write private letters to some prominent Republicans, enabling them to endorse him as a state rights man, without publishing the letters. When I got home, the first thing that met my eye was a letter from Sloan stating that my advice had come too late, and that he had yielded to the urgent demands of the state rights men. He had, indeed, showed himself to be

driven into doing a very weak thing and doing it in a very weak manner too. You have probably seen Sloan's letter to his "dear brother" in Janeville. That letter has cost him over 2,000 votes, for it made even state rights men doubt of the good sense of their candidate. So there was no fire, no enthusiasm, no alacrity in the fight on our side, while Dixon's friends were active and working in all parts of the state. Recent developments show that the farm-mortgage interest went in for Dixon, while, during the campaign, Sloan had to bear the odium of it. In short, there was foul play, discontent, disaffection, treachery everywhere; men who had worked to get Sloan nominated and voted for him in the convention, turned right against him as soon as his letter appeared, and our opponents found in the apparent make-up of the thing a new ground to place their batteries upon. Thus the thing was done. Meanwhile we have to rally for a new battle. The Democrats are no stronger than they were before, and whatever may have happened, the state is sure for the Chicago nominee by an increased majority.

You have heard of our municipal election here. We have made large inroads upon the Democracy and if our Republicans had believed in the possibility of victory, victory would have been ours. The whole work was done by a few young men. The old stagers did not move. I venture to predict, that if Douglas is not nominated at Charleston and the Chicago convention gives us a good Republican candidate, Milwaukee will give us a majority next fall, and the Second ward will be the Republican banner ward of the city. Seward stock is rising in the West. Bates may have gained a little by his letter, but he will not get the foreign vote. I think that Seward stands the best chance, but if he should fail to get the nomination, Lincoln's and Wade's prospects are the next best.

Give my best regards to Washburne and Doolittle. I shall reply to their letters as soon as I can find time. You have won golden opinions by your defense of the

freedom of debate. Lovejoy and yourself did nobly. Your two or three sentences and determined action were better than a long and eloquent speech.

As to your running for congress again next fall I think you will hardly escape the nomination and we shall reflect you as a matter of course. How they feel in the rural districts I do not know, but I suppose it is all the same way. It would be difficult to unite upon any other man, and now, more than ever before, we want representatives who stand their ground.

Yours as ever,
C. SCHURZ.

Milwaukee, April 12, 1860.—Hon. J. R. Doolittle. My Dear Friend: Since yesterday the Republicans of this city are in a state of great excitement about Potter. The telegraph has not informed us yet whether he has accepted the challenge or not. We expect further news about noon. We all feel deeply anxious. God grant that all goes well. Whatever the result may be, do me the favor to send me all the particulars you can gather.

You have learned of the result of the judicial election in this state. Yesterday I wrote a letter to Potter about this very matter, and I think he will show it to you—if he survives. This morning the official returns are coming in, and Dixon's majorities are coming down so wonderfully that there is still some hope of Sloan's election.

In your kind letter of March 13 you speak of the candidates for the presidency. As to Wade I agree with you perfectly. I have a kind of fondness for the brave old round-head, but I think Lincoln will be stronger in the convention. If Pennsylvania and New Jersey should unite upon Wade, that would alter the case. But as things now are it looks as though Seward would go into the convention with nearly a majority of the delegates.

The day of division is drawing near now and I hope you will be kind enough to keep me advised of what is going on in high circles.

Excuse this short and hasty letter. I feel so anxious about our brave friend Pot-

ter that I can hardly think of anything else. But I must not forget to congratulate you upon your excellent speech on state rights. It is a grand vindication of the doctrine. Yours as ever,
C. SCHURZ.

[At this day it seems strange that one good Republican should write another high in office congratulating him on a speech in advocacy of state rights. This was the rock on which the party threatened to split in the 50's before the events of the war solidified the party firmly, in antagonism to the heresy. For a time, influenced by the fugitive slave law excitement, the majority of the Wisconsin Republicans were undoubtedly committed to the state rights doctrine. Sherman M. Booth led this element, and the celebrated Glover rescue did much to give popular approval to the doctrine. Judge A. D. Smith's decision giving precedence to the laws of the state where they came in conflict with the Federal statute was applauded by this radical element of the party. Timothy O. Howe, a far-seeing statesman, sought to prevent the Republicans from espousing the dangerous policy, but met with little encouragement. He manfully stood by his principles, and thereby lost the United States senatorship. His subsequent election and reelection, twice, fully vindicated his position, and the course of events has justified his judgment.]

Milwaukee, April 17, 1860.—Hon. J. F. Potter, My Dear Sir: Your constituency have come to the conclusion that you are "a devil of a fellow." Indeed, this impression seems to be quite general in this region. People threw up their hats when the news came that you had driven Pryor to the wall. Republicans congratulated each other and Democrats swore they would vote for you the next time. The question whether you will be renominated and reflected seems to be settled. All those that had any aspirations that way will have to hang up their harps. You will be renominated, if I understand the temper of the people, not only on account of your availability, but of your unavailability. Your fate is sealed. You have done the right thing at the right time and in the right place. I felt terribly anxious about you when I learned that you were challenged. I knew that you would show them your teeth, but I did not know that you would show it in so emphatic a way, that could not be but successful. This was even better than declining to fight. You will see the effect of your course next fall. That is all I can say.

For two days the papers had Sloan elected by a small majority. But since yesterday Dixon is ahead again, very little indeed, but in all probability sufficiently to elect him. Almost any Republican might have defeated him. This is a lesson which we are not likely to forget soon.

Yours as ever,
C. SCHURZ.

Philadelphia, Nov. 30, 1860.—Hon. J. F. Potter, My Dear Friend: I expected to see you at Milwaukee before your departure for Washington, but was disappointed. Well, the crisis is upon us, and it depends upon the attitude of the Republicans to make its result final and decisive. If the North now remains firm, the slave power is done for. We have to choose between a short and violent crisis and a long, exhausting and dangerous one. Common prudence seems to dictate that we should meet the issue boldly, take the bull by the horns, meet treason when and where it is committed and put it down: by all the means which manifest destiny has put into our hands. My dear Potter, if slavery in its present form and strength exists in this republic ten years hence, the Republican party will be responsible for it. We have got them at last; do not let them escape once more. If no compromise had been made in 1833, we would never again have heard of the disunion cry. Let not that mistake be repeated. The future of the country, the repose of the nation depends on our firmness.

Now a few words about a matter of personal interest. You remember that on that memorable night when we went to the

town of Oak Creek in the dark, you requested me to make you the depository of my wishes as to the position I would desire to occupy under the Republican administration. I will now do so without reserve. It is generally supposed, and perhaps not without some reason, that Mr. Lincoln will offer me some appointment or other, and when I passed through Chicago a few days ago, several gentlemen, who acted as though they were in the confidence of Mr. L., requested me to let them know as soon as possible, what position would most gratify me. I did not feel like doing so on the spot, because I wanted to consult you about the matter. I shall, of course, not ask or petition for anything, and do not wish that the administration should offer me anything unless they feel like it. But if they do feel like it, it would be an unpleasant thing if they offered me anything which I would not feel warranted in accepting. First, I should like to be in a place where I can do something; I do not want a sinecure. Secondly, as I am generally looked upon as the representative of the German element, I consider it due to those I do represent that I should not take an inferior place. I am told that the matter has been extensively talked about among leading politicians, and the prevailing opinion was that I should be sent abroad. If so, I should want a place where I can turn my knowledge of men and things to account. To be sent to Germany would in many respects gratify my feelings most, but it might bring up questions of etiquette unpleasant to the administration, and if there is anything I would religiously endeavor to avoid, it is to embarrass the government by anything arising from my peculiar position. Prussia and Austria are therefore out of the question.

Europe is now in a dissolving state, politically, and now, as old governments are decaying and new ones springing up, now is the time for this government to take advantage of this general confusion. Therefore we want men of general knowledge of persons and things and of energy and activity. There are two fields of action in which most can be accomplished. The one is France. The mission to Paris is of so prominent a nature that the custom to send an old, deserving man there seems to be a very just and proper one. I have, therefore, not the impudence to claim any-

thing like that. My aspirations do not run away with my sense of propriety. The other field of action is Italy, and I think there is the place for me, provided it will be raised to a first-class mission, which will undoubtedly be the case. I feel that my turn of mind, my education and my knowledge of things fit me for the place, and that circumstances fit the place for me. This is not only my own opinion, but I know it is shared by many of our leading men. I would therefore be very much gratified if the administration, supposing they intend to offer me anything, would offer me the mission to Turin.

I understand (Colfax, whom I met here, told me so) Burlingame is an aspirant for the same position. I should be sorry to rival him, but, to tell the truth, I really do think, without overestimating my powers, I am better fitted for it than he is. But if he gets it and I remain at home, I shall not shed any tears. Now, friend Potter, I wish you to understand that I have communicated this to you at your own request. I do not intend to make any application myself, nor do I desire to have anybody act as my agent in the matter. I will not embarrass Mr. Lincoln by any demands, nor by declining any offer, unacceptable to myself, which he perhaps might feel inclined to make. But if the matter should become a subject of conversation at Washington among such men as are likely to be in Mr. Lincoln's confidence, you will then be able to speak knowingly about my feelings about it. You may, if you see fit, communicate this confidentially to Doolittle. Trumbull knows probably more about Mr. Lincoln's intentions than any other man in Washington, and you or Doolittle may easily ascertain from him what Mr. Lincoln means to do.

I repeat that I shall be perfectly satis-

fied if the administration offers me nothing, but if they do want to send me abroad, I wish they would give me timely notice of it, so that I may make the necessary preparations in the way of collecting information, etc., etc. If I do go, I wish to go as the best-informed man who ever represented this government abroad. Colfax talked to me about this matter and he, spontaneously, struck the same track. Give Doolittle my regards and tell him that I agree exactly with the views he expressed in his letter to the Milwaukee celebration meeting. I should like to spend a few days at Washington this winter, but I shall hardly be able to do so. My time is all taken up by a variety of engagements. Letters will reach me until Jan. 1, '61, care of Chas. W. Slack, office of Edward Russell & Co., Boston. Yours as ever,
C. SCHURZ.

Boston, Dec. 17, 1860.—My Dear Potter: I have just read the papers of to-day and must write you a line before I start for my lecture appointment. I see by the telegraphic news that Mr. Corwin has submitted resolutions yielding the liberty of the territories, yielding our principles in regard to the Fugitive Slave law and to the admission of slave states, yielding everything we have been contending for. It is incredible, and yet it is not impossible. But is it true that a majority of the Republicans in that committee, as is stated, can assent to such propositions? Is it possible that they can trample under foot everything that is dear to their constituents? I cannot, cannot believe it. One thing is sure. As soon as these resolutions, or anything like them, are adopted, the Republican party has ceased to exist. I have been traveling all over Pennsylvania, New York and New England lately, and outside of the large commercial cities I have not found one single Republican who did not scorn the idea of receding from a single principle laid down in the Chicago platform.

The public sentiment, even among so-called conservative men, is rapidly settling in favor of a prompt and vigorous execution of the laws as against the seceders, and every man in congress who bends his knee now is sealing his political death-warrant.

I cannot help flattering myself with the idea that even Mr. Corwin cannot be in earnest with these resolutions, that they are introduced merely for the purpose of gaining time. But even in that case, their very introduction is an act of degradation, a slur upon the moral sense of the people.

The policy of the true and firm Republicans, in my opinion, is this: Let our men in the committee offer amendment upon amendment; let them discuss every proposition at length, make speech upon speech, motion upon motion, so as to prevent the committee from making an early report. Then let them get up as many minority reports as possible, and as soon as they are submitted to the house, discuss them at length, every one of them, amend them again, and in this way drag along the discussion so as to prevent the house from coming to a final vote before the 4th of March. Everything is gained if congress does not close and compromise Mr. Lincoln's administration beforehand. Every thing is lost if the moral power of the Republican party is frittered away before Lincoln goes into office.

Press this policy upon the attention of our friends and let the voice of the people be heard in the halls of congress. I have thought of writing a speech on the crisis if I could get somebody to deliver it in congress. But I think that is impossible.

I thank you for the information you have given me in regard to the Sardinian mission. But I confess I am so completely preoccupied with the dangers threatening our cause that I cannot think of anything that regards myself. I would willingly sacrifice reputation, prospects and everything if I could but for a few weeks infuse my spirit into the Republican members of congress. I would have profoundly de-

plored a defeat at the presidential election, but I would rather have been beaten than see the party commit suicide now.

My dear friend, now is the time for the true friends of freedom to act with circumspection, promptness and energy; the prospects of the anti-slavery cause for the next twenty years are at stake.

Please do me the favor to give me your views about the present state of things as soon as possible. I am morbidly anxious to learn what is going on behind the curtain. Letters will reach me as before care of Chas. W. Slack, office of Edward Russell & Co., Boston. In haste but truly yours,
C. SCHURZ.

Boston, Mass., Dec. 24, 1860.—My Dear Potter: I thank you for your letter of the 20th inst. The description you give of the condition of things is rather gloomy, but if I may judge from the telegraphic reports in to-day's papers, the force of circumstances will whip our weak brethren into line. The Crittenden resolutions voted down in the senate committee, Lincoln standing on the Chicago platform as firm as an oak, the fire-eaters fluttering, the effect of Ben. Wade's speech upon friends and opponents,—all these are things which cannot fail to encourage even the most timid. We are looking with the intensest anxiety for the report of the Committee of Thirty-three. As soon as that is made, then we shall have arrived at the decisive crisis, which will put the mettle and generalship of the Republicans in congress to the test.

Now, I think, has the time come when they can abandon their awkward, miserable, demoralizing defensive position. If the reports, for I think there will be more than one, are such as to remove all danger of the passage of a compromise,—then let it be acted upon with promptness. But if there is any such danger, it will be necessary to shift the discussion upon a new field, so as to push the matter into the background.

For this there are two splendid opportunities. It is more than probable that Buchanan has been and is now playing into the hands of the seceders. If any facts can be ascertained which will give a substantial foundation to this suspicion, he is undoubtedly liable to impeachment. From what the newspapers tell us I have no doubt you can make a strong case of it. There is the point from which the Republicans can start a new aggressive movement. Whether the impeachment can be carried on or not I care little; a vigorous and prompt movement in that direction will monopolize the attention of congress and of the people. It will place our opponents on the defensive and the Republicans into a new commanding position, with the advantage all on their side. It will operate irresistibly upon the imaginations of the people, and cannot fail to drown the cry for a compromise. But let the movement be pressed with the utmost energy and determination. I know it requires boldness and backbone, but I should wonder, indeed, if times like these did not call into action latent powers and unconscious forces.

Another matter I want to call your attention to is this: The opinion is gaining ground, and I must confess, I share it, that the revolutionists will attempt to take possession of Washington city and to prevent Mr. Lincoln's inauguration. I am led to believe by many things that there is such a plan entertained by the most desperate of Southern fire-eaters. The more the chances of the original secession movement decrease, the more will a plan like that come into prominence as their last resort. But, however vague and indefinite the rumors in circulation may be, the matter ought to be brought up before congress, be it in the shape of a resolution calling upon the administration to provide for such an emergency, or whatever other form. Whether such a resolution can be carried, or, if carried, will have any effect upon the executive, is a matter of indifference. The introduction of this subject and the discussion it will necessarily draw out, will at all events serve two great objects: First, it will divert the attention of congress from the plans of compromise and concentrate it upon subjects of practical importance. Two subjects like this and the impeachment, if well managed, will inevitably kill all concession schemes, however plausible. But the most important effect the discussion of this last point

will have, is to draw the attention of the people of the North upon a danger, which, at present, seems to be too little thought of.

A few days ago I addressed a letter to Gov. Morgan as chairman of the National committee, requesting him to send a circular to the different State committees and to invite them to make preparations for an escort of honor to the president on the 4th of March. As soon as the matter is broached in congress, we may go one step further. The governors of the states may then proceed to arm and organize their militia for the emergency and demand appropriations from their legislatures for that purpose. It may be said that the danger exists only in our imagination. I tell you, it does not; I am almost certain the attempt will be made if we are not prepared to meet it. It will probably not be made if we are on the spot with a force sufficient to make its success impossible. But I deem it absolutely necessary, that the emergency should be provided for. I have a plan in my head, on which these preparations can be made; and as soon as the thing is brought into prominence by a movement in congress, I mean to write to the different Republican governors about it.

These are the two points I wish to bring to your notice. I deem it of the highest importance that the Republicans should drop their defensive attitude and resume the aggressive with resolution and vigor. Action, action is the great secret of success, and if ever a time called for it, it is now. I do not understand the men who, when the decision of one of the vital questions of the age is within their grasp, stand there chickenhearted and cast about for small contemptible expedients. What right had they to demand the votes of the people, if at the aspect of the first difficulty they find in their path, they are ready to throw away the victory gained by those votes? Let them know, that the people want to have an end of it, and an end of them too, if they should wantonly fritter away what is the fruit of an arduous and earnest struggle of many years. Let them know, that the Stock exchange does not rule the popular heart, and shall not rule those who are commissioned to represent the feelings of the popular heart.

The change of public opinion in favor of vigorous and decisive action is most encouraging. Even timid men want no longer to hear of a timid policy, and our Republican compromisers, if they should succeed in bartering away our principles and our honor, will have to face a storm of popular indignation, which in the delusions of their puny statesmanship they do not dream of.

I am distressed to find myself tied down to this tame lecturing business,—to be obliged to devote my time and energies to the poorest of all occupations,—making money,—while the time ripens for great decisions. I feel as though I would do something in Washington—but then, I cannot help it. I have to pay my tribute to the necessities of life.

I shall write that speech on the crisis as soon as the report of The Thirty-three is out and distinct propositions are before the people. And then I shall let you know of it.

One word about personal matters. I received a letter from Doolittle (who, by the way, deserves the thanks of every true Republican for the firm stand he took in the senate committee), asking me, whether I wanted the Sardinian mission; in my reply I repeated in substance what I had written you about it. The matter seems to have been talked of in senatorial circles. I am informed that George P. Marsh of Vermont and Jay Morris are pushing for the same position. Now let me say, however much an offer of that kind on the part of the administration would gratify me, I do not want to engage in a scramble of aspirants. If the government mean to tender me anything, let it be a spontaneous offer. To ask for an office is in my opinion to pay too high a price for it. I shall not do that myself, nor do I wish to have others do it for me. I will tell you why I am somewhat scrupulous on that point. If I ask for a place, I lose part of my independence; if I merely accept what is spontaneously offered, I am bound by no obligation; and I must confess, my independence in political life is worth more to me than all the favors which a government can shower upon a man.

Let me hear from you again and keep me well posted. Every letter from Washington will be considered a great favor by yours,
C. SCHURZ.