

Journal Divided – “That Presidential Grub”

Excerpt from Chapter 14 of Michael Burlingame’s *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* (pgs 1523-1525)

Link to full Chapter Fourteen:

<http://www.knox.edu/documents/pdfs/LincolnStudies/Burlingame,%20Vol%201,%20Chap%2014.pdf>

Page 1:

“No man knows, when that Presidential grub gets to gnawing at him, just how deep in it will get until he has tried it,” Lincoln remarked in 1863.¹ That grub began seriously gnawing at him after the 1858 campaign. His astute friend Joseph Gillespie believed that the debates with Douglas “first inspired him with the idea that he was above the average of mankind.” That was probably true, though Lincoln pooh-poohed any talk of the presidency, telling a journalist during the canvass with the Little Giant: “Mary insists . . . that I am going to be Senator and President of the United States, too.” Then, “shaking all over with mirth at his wife’s ambition,” he exclaimed: “Just think of such a sucker as me as President!”² In December, when his friend and ally Jesse W. Fell urged him to seek the Republican presidential nomination, he replied: “Oh, Fell, what’s the use of talking of me for the presidency, whilst we have such men as Seward, Chase and others, who are so much better known to the people, and whose names are so intimately associated with the principles of the Republican party.”

¹ Comment made to J. Russell Jones, in “Lincoln and Grant in 1863,” statement of Jones to J. McCan Davis, 10 December 1898, typescript, Ida M. Tarbell Papers, Allegheny College. See also James Harrison Wilson, “Reminiscences of General Grant,” *Century Magazine* 30 (October 1885): 954; James B. Fry in Allen Thorndike Rice, ed., *Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln by Distinguished Men of His Time* (New York: North American, 1886), 390.

² Joseph Gillespie to [Martin Hardin], Edwardsville, 22 April 1880, Hardin Family Papers, Chicago History Museum; Henry Villard, *Memoirs of Henry Villard, Journalist and Financier: 1838-1900* (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1904), 1:96.