“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.”