

## Abraham Lincoln papers

From William Fitzgerald to Abraham Lincoln, July 4, 1863

Castle Thunder

Richmond July 4 1863

As a Citizen of the United States I take the liberty of addressing you a short letter.

I am now, and for a considerable time have been incarcerated by the Enemies of our Country, in Castle Thunder, Richmond— Here I shall soon die; but before being consigned to my obscure grave, I desire as a Southern man to applaud and commend your efforts in the holy cause in-which you are engaged; not only of restoring the Union, but in rending the shackles of Slavery from millions of our fellow beings— Let me assure you that the prayers of thousands in the South ascend to heaven daily for your ultimate success, in the great work—

The heads of the wicked rebellion, and the public journals of the Country, would have the people of the North and of Europe believe, that the Southern people are unanimously in favor of a new goverment; but, Sir, a pretension more false was never promulgated— If the sense and will of the people, including the rank and file of the army, could be taken to-day, they would, by an overwhelming majority, declare in favor of the Union— Of the white population of the South more than two thirds of the adult males are non-slaveholders or poor— It is impossible for them to fraternize with such men as Jeff Davis, Yancey,<sup>1</sup> Benjamin,<sup>2</sup> and their coadjutors— It would be unnatural for them to symathise with this fratacidal rebellion, or revere an oligarchy founded on slavery, which the rebels leaders are seeking to establish— Slavery has been a curse of the poor white man of the south an and he would be mad indeed to desire to perpetuate it— The wealthy planter has ever been the poor mans enemy and oppressor, and the latter would be too generous by half if he disired to increase his foes power over him— You may depend upon it that in general the rich of the South dispise the poor, and the poor in return hate the rich—

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1 William L. Yancey

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2 Judah P. Benjamin was a former U. S. Senator from Louisiana who served in the Confederate government as attorney general, secretary of war and secretary of state.

True it is that the army of the Confederacy is composed principally of men non-Slaveholders but they are not in arms by their own volition

True it is that at the beginning of the war many volunteers from this class were raised; but they did not realize the fact that they were to fight against the United States, against the Union — We are a sensation people; and they were carried away by the excitement of the moment— The leaders induced them to believe they were merely going to repel another John-Brown raid— The deception then successfully practiced by the heartless traitors, enabled them afterwards to enforce the conscription, and now the people are powerless— But let the for war for the Union be prosecuted, let your armies advance, and wherever they can promise security to the people you will find the masses loyal—

In conclusion I will venture a single suggestion on another point— It would be arrogance and folly in an humble individual like myself to presume to counsel the chief Magistrate of a great nation but having closely watched the progress of this war, and the policy of your administration, I may be pardoned for expressing the result of my observations, and a single suggestion—

Your Emancipation proclamation opened the grandest issue involved in this sanguinary struggle, and may prove the heaviest blow dealt the rebellion— But as I understand it, and as it is unwisely interpreted in the South, it frees all the Slaves within the territory to which applies without offering any indemnity to loyal citizens— In this respect it is wanting— There are many loyal slaveholders in the South, and your proclamation has driven some, and will drive others over to the rebels— I know within my circle of acquaintances several with whom it has had this effect— In my own town two gentlemen, who before the proclamation were regarded as union men, and furnished substitutes to the rebels with great reluctance, immediately after the promulgation of the document, entered the Confederate service, one as a Colonel, and another as captain— Not only were these two men added to the rebel army, but the influence of their example was by no means insignificant—

Since then you can not desire the innocent to suffer for the misdeeds of the guilty, that the loyal should receive — the wages of treason, let another proclamation be issued, promising loyal citizens of the South reasonable compensation for the slaves liberated, out of the confiscated property of the disloyal, and the two proclamations together will quickly prove, with assistance of the army now in the field, the heaviest blows, and the death blows of the rebellion—

Such is the belief of your dying, and,

Obedient Servant—

Wm Fitzgerald