

COMPROMISE WITH THE SOUTH

BY THOMAS NAST

[1864]

PRESIDENTIAL CANVASS of 1864 drew to a close, a master of caricature stepped suddenly into public prominence. Nast had attracted some attention by his patriotic drawings in *Harper's Weekly*. "Comic cartoons," said Lincoln, "have never failed to arouse and patriotism, and have always seemed to come just when these getting scarce." He became famous with this design, "dedicated to the Chicago Convention," which the *Weekly* published on September 1. A second cartoon of Nast's, published on October 1, was the general theme of this drawing—the betrayal of the republic by the Democratic platform. But being an illustration of about twenty pictures, each illustrating an extract from the document, it lacked the direct, stinging, convincing force of the first.

The Democratic Convention had laid itself open to this attack. The platform of the Lincoln Administration for "four years of failure and to the end that at the earliest possible moment peace may be made on the basis of the Federal Union of the States." Every shrewd man who had an armistice were proclaimed while the Confederate army was undefeated, it would lead rather to a dissolution of the Union than to its restoration on terms that would mean a triumph of Southern independence. In vain did the great mass of Union Democrats assert that they would demand such a vigorous prosecution under McClellan. Some an idea, which millions of Americans undoubtedly accepted, that the Chicago platform meant surrender to the South. Cartoons produced by the political campaign of 1864 a number of which dealt with the same idea. The *Currier & Ives* print "Peace Commissioners" shows Lee and Jefferson Davis facing Sherman, Sheridan and Farragut. "Can't think of surrendering," says Lee, "but allow me through the Chicago platform to propose a suspension of hostilities." "That's it, Lee," chimes in Sherman, "I demand your unconditional surrender." Another "Little Mac's double feat of Equitation," hit off his embarrassment. In a circus ring, he was trying to ride standing on two horses, "Acceptance" and "Chicago Platform"—and the platform was too heavy for him. But none of these attacks on appeasement and defeatism did as much of genius shown in Nast's powerful conception.

