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Suggested Citation:

Conklin, Forrest. " 'Grape for the Rebel Masses and Hemp for Their Ladies': Parson Brownlow's Celebrated Tour of Northern Cities, 1862." *The Journal of East Tennessee History* 77 (2005): 49-75.

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"GRAPE FOR THE REBEL MASSES AND HEMP FOR THEIR LEADERS": *Parson Brownlow's Celebrated Tour of Northern Cities, 1862*

By Forrest Conklin*

In early January 1862, the editor of the Columbus, Georgia, *Times* treated his readers to a bitter harangue that concluded, "Now, this hoary-headed and persistent traitor is occupying too much time and attention of the country. HE DESERVES DEATH AND WE VOTE TO KILL HIM."¹ This Rebel writer ironically pronounced his death sentence on a fellow Southern editor, a journalist whom eager Southerners had once praised for his advocacy of Southern ideals and institutions. Shortly over three years later this Methodist Church preacher would begin serving two terms as governor of Tennessee before taking a seat in the United States Senate. At this time, however, the man lay languishing in a Confederate jail accused of treason as a result of his unrelenting and vehement opposition to the Confederate government. He would soon embark on a triumphant speaking tour of Northern Cities as a celebrated foe of the Confederacy. The target of the Georgia editor's venom was William G. "Parson" Brownlow.²

Parson Brownlow was no stranger to rough-and-tumble journalism and political affairs in Tennessee. From the outset of his career, first as a circuit rider for the Methodist Church and later as an editor of a political newspaper, he had engaged in clashes with a diverse group of opponents over a variety of religious, social and political

*The author is professor emeritus of Communication Studies at the University of Northern Iowa and a former faculty member and debate coach at Carson Newman College.

¹William G. Brownlow, *Sketches of the Rise, Progress, and Decline of Secession: With a Narrative of Personal Adventures among the Rebels* (Philadelphia, 1862), 348. [Hereafter *Parson Brownlow's Book*.]

² Three authors have examined Brownlow's 1862 speaking tour: Steve Humphrey devoted four pages to the tour in his biography, *That D_____d Brownlow* (Boone, NC, 1978), 255-258; Royal Forrest Conklin provided a more detailed description of the tour, upon which this article is based (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio University, 1967), 162-175; E. Merton Coulter produced a study about the Parson's tour for the East Tennessee Historical Society's *Publications* 7 (1935): 3-27. He substantially reproduced this article in his biography, *William G. Brownlow: Fighting Parson of the Southern Highlands* (Chapel Hill, 1937), 210-234. Humphrey's discussion of the tour is described only briefly due to his focus on Brownlow's career as a journalist. Conklin's analysis of the tour, however, related it as an event in Brownlow's extensive public speaking career, a career that contributed significantly to his rise in regional and national prominence. Overall, the Humphrey and Conklin studies offer a more favorable view of Brownlow's tour than does Coulter's volume. An able and articulate writer, Coulter brought to his biography a partisan historical perspective out of the Dunning school of history and his work has been the source most readily available for the study of Brownlow. Gradually the need to re-examine the dimensions of Brownlow's career has become apparent and

issues. Moving from one battle to another, his career took on the appearance of an endless verbal war, and he did not bank the fires of his bellicose nature throughout his public career. This characteristic prompted friend and foe alike to dub him the "Fighting Parson." He used the pulpit, the political stump, and his beloved *Knoxville Whig* to focus attacks on those persons and institutions committed to positions he disliked, and his dislikes were so passionate that a Methodist superior, Bishop Gilbert Haven, once described him as a "good hater."³

It was the secession movement and the Confederacy that led Brownlow to his most intense "hate." Although he had vigorously defended Southern views toward abolitionism and slavery, he bitterly opposed proposals leading to the secession of Southern states from the Union. Nor was he a late comer in condemning any such effort. Beginning in 1832 when he denounced nullification, the Parson repeatedly attacked any proposal suggesting a dismemberment of the Union.⁴ But the Parson's worst fears became reality following Lincoln's election. Demonstrating remarkable personal restraint, he published one of his most moderate and conciliatory editorials immediately after the campaign. Basically he counseled the Southern states to avoid impulsive action and give the President-elect an opportunity to evidence policies that would undermine southern interests. He advised:

But the attempt to break up the Union, before awaiting a single overt act, or even the manifestation of the purpose of the President-elect, would be wicked, treacherous, unjustifiable, unprecedented, and without the shadow of an excuse. . . . What the people of the Southern States should do may be summed up in a single word: PAUSE! It will be time enough to fight Lincoln with powder and sword – to resist him with regiments of "minute-men" – when we find that constitutional resistance

historians are beginning to fill that need. For example, see Robert Tracy McKenzie, "Contesting Secession: Parson Brownlow and the Rhetoric of Proslavery Unionism, 1860-1861," *Civil War History* 48 (December 2002): 294-312. The article presented herein is offered to provide a clearer view of the Parson's status with northern audiences which later provided him with a public platform in the north during his struggle to counter Andrew Johnson's 1866 "Swing around the Circle." See Forrest Conklin, "Wiping out 'Andy' Johnson's Moccasin Tracks: The Canvass of Northern States by Southern Radicals, 1866," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 52 (Summer 1993): 122-133.

³ R. N. Price, *Holston Methodism: From Its Origin to the Present Time* (Nashville, 1908), 3:322. Over the years, Brownlow's journal was published under various titles depending on its location and circumstance: *Elizabethton Tennessee Whig*; *Jonesborough Tennessee Whig*; *Jonesboro Whig and Independent Journal*; *Knoxville Whig and Independent Journal*; *Knoxville Whig and Rebel Ventilator*.

⁴ See: Rev. W. G. Brownlow and Rev. A. Pryne, *Ought American Slavery to be Perpetuated? A Debate between Rev. W. G. Brownlow and Rev. A. Pryne, Held at Philadelphia, September, 1858* (Philadelphia, 1858). *Parson Brownlow's Book*, 21-25. According to Brownlow, he published a pamphlet urging readers to reject nullification. At the time of publication he was riding a circuit for the Methodist Church in South Carolina. Efforts to locate an extant copy of this pamphlet have been unsuccessful.

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⁵ *Knoxville Whig*, November

⁶ *Knoxville Whig*, January 2
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are bent on our humiliation
and destruction. Let every
man in every Southern State
stand up for the Union as
long as it is possible to pre-
vent it.⁵

If Tennessee's secessionists and
their leader, Governor Isham G. Har-
ris, became aware of Brownlow's ad-
vice they did not "PAUSE" for reflec-
tion after the election. The governor
called a special session of the General
Assembly within a month after Lin-
coln's election "to consider the present
condition of the country." When it
assembled, Harris suggested that the
representatives call a convention to re-
view the state's relation to the federal
government. Doubting their author-
ity to do so, the legislators decided to
submit the calling of a secession con-
vention to a statewide referendum on
February 9, 1861.

Tennessee's Unionists girded themselves for battle by nominating a slate of able
and influential delegates who would stand for election to the convention. These can-
didates set about canvassing their districts in an attempt to thwart the secessionists'
plans. Brownlow added weight to the struggle through his powerful pen. He remind-
ed his readers "We have no parties but Union men and Disunionists. Let the good
people of East Tennessee see to it that not a single Disunionist shall go to the conven-
tion. There is no dodging the issue. Hold them to it and require them to speak out."
Responding to Unionists' appeals Tennessee voters rejected the call for a convention
and "the simple question of secession, which was in effect voted on in the choice of
delegates, was defeated by a majority of 91,803 to 24,749."⁶

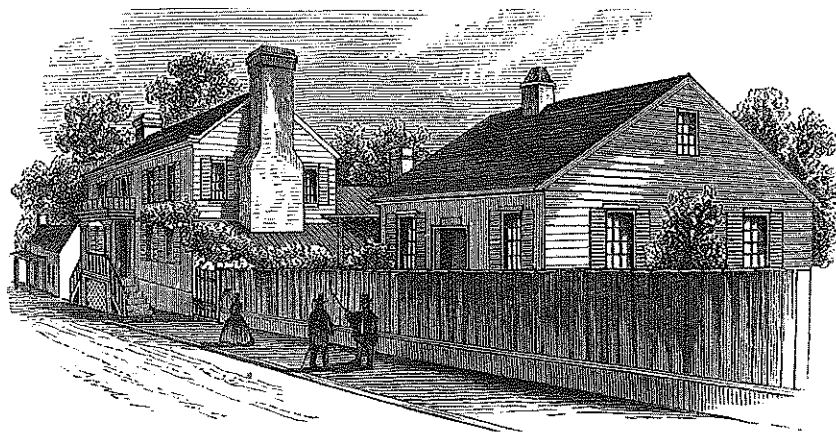
Apparently crushed at the polls, Tennessee's secessionists remained subdued until
after the firing on Fort Sumter when Governor Harris called another special session
of the General Assembly to meet on April 25. Within a week after assembling, the



William Gannaway "Parson" Brownlow,
East Tennessee newspaper editor whose staunch
support of the United States government led to
his eviction from East Tennessee and a celebrated
speaking tour of northern cities. Courtesy of
the Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection
of the Knox County Public Library.

⁵ *Knoxville Whig*, November 17, 1860.

⁶ *Knoxville Whig*, January 26, 1861; James W. Patton, *Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee, 1860-1869* (Chapel Hill, 1937), 12.



The Knoxville home of William G. Brownlow. From *Lossing, A Pictorial History of the Civil War*, courtesy of the Calvin M. McClung Collection of the Knox County Public Library.

legislators ordered the governor to establish a military pact with the Confederate States. Less than a fortnight later, Harris reported the successful execution of the alliance. The Assembly thereupon considered and adopted a Declaration of Independence and Ordinance to terminate the state's relations with the federal government. Only then did Tennessee's legislature call for a plebiscite on its action.

Again Brownlow and other Unionists launched a month-long campaign in opposition to the Declaration and Ordinance. "Let every man," the Parson urged, "old and young, halt and blind, contrive to be at the polls on that day [to vote on the Declaration and Ordinance]. If we lose then, our liberties are gone and we are swallowed up by a military despotism more odious than any now existing in any monarchy in Europe."⁷

He also denounced the activities of the General Assembly as "the most outrageous, high-handed and infamous legislature ever known to the civilized world."⁸ Despite strenuous efforts by leading Unionists and Parson Brownlow, the June 8 plebiscite reversed the decision reached through the earlier referendum although nearly 70 percent of East Tennesseans voted in opposition.

The Parson's defiance of the Confederacy became legendary. Early in February he hoisted a Union flag above his home and continued to fly it after secession despite several attempts by Rebel sympathizers to tear it down. His editorials assaulted the Confederate leadership with his choicest satire, exemplified by the following directed at Jefferson Davis:

⁷ *Knoxville Whig*, May 11, 1861.

⁸ *Ibid.*, May 18, 1861.

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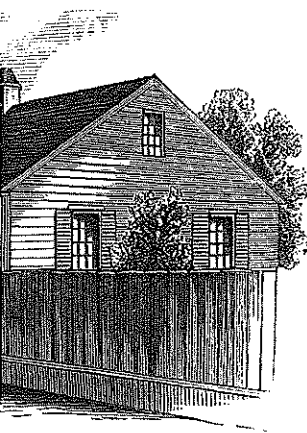
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⁹ *Ibid.*, June 29, 1861.

¹⁰ See David Madden, "Union
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¹¹ Bad blood had existed for y
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I have been expected to state in every issue of my paper, that the mantle of Washington sits well on Jeff Davis! This would be a funny publication. The bow of Ulysses in the hands of a pigmy! The robes of the giant adorning Tom Thumb! The curls of a Hyperion on the brow of a Satyr! The Aurora Borealis of a cotton farm melting down the icy North! This would be to metamorphose a minnow into a WHALE!⁹

He intensified his attacks with numerous accounts of Confederate oppression and atrocities committed on Union men, each account designed to embarrass Rebel officials and inflame the population. Brownlow's defiance finally reached such proportions that Confederate authorities arranged to silence the *Whig* in late October 1861 – the last Union committed paper remaining in the South.

At the insistence of family and friends who feared for his safety, Brownlow retired to the sanctuary of the Smoky Mountains in early November. Shortly after he left Knoxville, a rash of partially successful railroad bridge burnings in East Tennessee threatened to interrupt rail service between Virginia and the southwestern Confederate states.¹⁰ Rumors circulated that the Parson participated in the bridge burning plot, an accusation he consistently denied.

Moving from his mountain sanctuary to a hideaway nearer Knoxville, Brownlow entered into secret negotiations with the Confederate military commander in Knoxville. Under terms for his surrender, the Parson believed the military would shelter him from civilian authorities who were personal enemies while he awaited a passport that would exile him to the North. Communications evidently broke down. As Brownlow feared, the Confederate commissioner, Robert B. Reynolds, issued a warrant for his arrest upon the sworn oath of the Confederate district attorney, James Crozier Ramsey, son of James G. M. Ramsey, one of Knoxville's most belligerent secessionist. The Parson was seized on his return to Knoxville and jailed on a charge of "treason."¹¹

Knoxville's secessionists aimed to mete out harsh and relentless punishment to Brownlow for his unrelenting attacks on them. In contrast, the Confederate Sec-

⁹ Ibid., June 29, 1861.

¹⁰ See David Madden, "Union Resistance to Confederate Occupation: The Bridge Burners of East Tennessee," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 52-53 (1980-1981): 22-39.

¹¹ Bad blood had existed for years between Brownlow and the Ramsey family. Reynolds and Ramsey offered inconsistent rationales for charging Brownlow with "treason." Ramsey contended that Brownlow had knowledge of, or participated in, the November 8 bridge burnings since he advocated such in an editorial in the *Knoxville Whig*, May 25, 1861. J. C. Ramsey to J. P. Benjamin, December 7 and 17, 1861, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, 1880-1901), series II, vol. I, 907-908, 910, 911 (hereafter *OR*). Reynolds, perhaps anticipating that Ramsey's charge of "treason" would not stand because it was published prior to Tennessee's secession on June 9, argued the charge

retary of War, Judah P. Benjamin, earlier proposed a different course during negotiations for the Parson's surrender. He had ordered that the Parson be exiled to the North, a proposal that had met Brownlow's approval. After a few days in jail and feeling betrayed, the Parson fired a caustic note to Benjamin.

Knoxville Jail, Dec. 16, 1861

Hon. J. P. Benjamin

You authorized Gen. George B. Crittenden to give me passports [sic], and an escort to send me into the old Government, and he invited me here for that purpose. But a third rate County Court Lawyer, acting as your Confederate Attorney, took me out of his hands and cast me into this prison. I am anxious to learn which is your highest authority, the Secretary of War, a Major General, or a dirty little drunken Attorney, such as *J. C. Ramsey* is!

You are reported to have said to a gentleman in Richmond that, I am a bad man, dangerous to the Confederacy, and you desire me out of it. Just give me my passports [sic], and I will do for your Confederacy, more than the Devil has ever done, I will quit the country!

I am, etc,

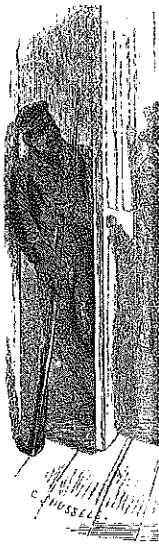
W. G. Brownlow¹²

Parson Brownlow suffered through numerous appalling experiences during his imprisonment. Treatment of incarcerated inmates in the grossly overcrowded jail—rancid food, polluted drinking water, little space to lay down, brutal harassment by guards—bordered on the inhumane. Each day brought incidents of terror to the imprisoned Tennessee Unionists. Accused bridge burners were quickly arrested, given drumhead trials, denied legal defense or appeal, and marched out to the gallows, leaving wives and children destitute. Preachers were jailed for offering prayers on behalf of the Union. Union sympathizers were assaulted and severely beaten. Unionists by the score, young and old, were shipped off to Rebel prisons throughout the South, many of whom would never see family or home again. The Rebels even conscripted some captives into Confederate service through intimidation and browbeating.

Brownlow never knew if the next day would find him condemned to death, so he composed a speech to be delivered from the gallows. No deed, according to the Parson, was too heinous for the Confederates to perpetrate. While spending less than a

resulted from a series of editorials published in the *Whig* after the secession vote. R. B. Reynolds to Marshal, District of Tennessee, December 6, 1861, *OR*, Series II, I:922. See Brownlow's response, W. G. Brownlow to G. B. Crittenden, December 6, 1861, *ibid*.

¹² Brownlow included a reproduction of his note in *Parson Brownlow's Book*, between pages 318 and 319.



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¹³ *Parson Brownlow's Book*
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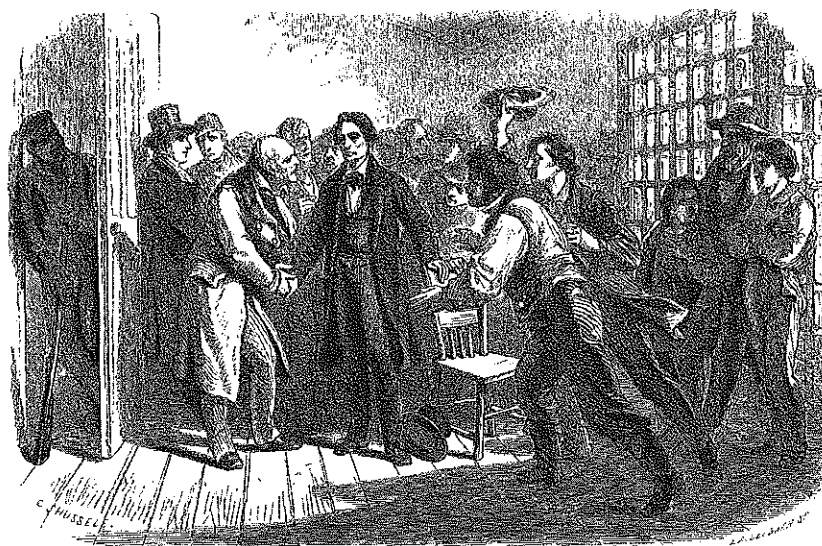
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William G. Brownlow in the Knoxville jail being greeted by fellow political prisoners. From *Brownlow's Sketches of the Rise, Progress, and Decline of Secession*, courtesy of the Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection of the Knox County Public Library.

month confined in the Knoxville jail, the experiences he endured while in the hands
 of the Rebels became the major substance of speeches he would deliver before north-
 ern audiences a few months later.¹³

For some years Brownlow had suffered from poor health and the privations of jail
 took its toll on his weakened body. Soon after imprisonment, he became so ill as to
 require medical attention, and Confederate authorities offered to parole him to his
 home. At first the Parson rejected the offer, but finally his health declined to the point
 that he agreed. In the comfort of his home he received medical attention while he
 remained under day and night guard.

The Parson's health showed some improvement in late February and arrangements
 were made to send him to Union occupied Nashville. Leaving most of his family be-
 hind, he was escorted out of Knoxville early on March 3 by two Confederate officers.
 At noon on March 15 Brownlow crossed over into Federal territory. Upon reaching
 the Federal pickets, soldiers and officers crowded around him. The Parson exclaimed
 in his unique style, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill
 toward men, except a few hell born and hell-bound rebels in Knoxville."¹⁴ He soon

¹³ *Parson Brownlow's Book*, 330-337. The Parson secretly kept a diary of his jail experience. The diary entries
 were later reported in *Parson Brownlow's Book*, 271-458.

¹⁴ The Confederate officers for his escort were of Brownlow's choosing: his wife's cousin Lt. John W. O'Brien,
 and Col. Casey H. Young. The party included sons, John Bell Brownlow and James Patton Brownlow, and
 his friend, attorney Samuel H. Rogers. O. P. Temple, *Notable Men of Tennessee: From 1833 to 1875* (New
 York, 1912), 315.

climbed aboard a buggy for the five mile trip into Nashville and made his way to the St. Cloud Hotel. As he entered the hotel lobby, a group of Federal soldiers learned his identity and surrounded him; all wanted to gaze at this East Tennessee warrior and listen to his ordeals at the hand of Rebels. Old friends, Connally F. Trigg, Horace Maynard and Emerson Ethridge, hearing of his arrival, rushed to the St. Cloud to welcome him back from the perils of Rebel "justice."

Unionists in Nashville yearned to learn first hand about Brownlow's adventures among Rebels in East Tennessee. They restrained their urge for several days before placing a demand on his stamina. On March 19, they could no longer resist their curiosity. A crowd gathered in front of the St. Cloud Hotel where he resided and demanded a speech. The Parson begged to be excused from addressing them because "My throat has been disordered for the past three years and I have been compelled to almost abandon public speaking."

The crowd protested his reluctance, and he obliged by recounting his suffering while in Rebel hands and the abuses he experienced. He described his illness while in the Rebel jail, but added that on reaching Federal picked lines near Nashville, "My depression ceased, and returning life and health seemed suddenly to invigorate my system and to arouse my physical constitution." Proudly claiming his Southern heritage, he denied the right of the South to wage war, and optimistically claimed that "Secession is well-nigh played out" due to a lack of supplies. He then asked to be excused from further speaking because "I am growing hoarse in this fierce wind" and because "I am otherwise feeble, not having attempted to make a speech in months." Closing his remarks, he expressed the sentiment that would distinguish his public addresses over the coming months, "Grape for the Rebel masses, and hemp for their leaders."¹⁵

Four days after addressing the Unionists in Nashville, Brownlow boarded the steamboat *Jacob Strader* and floated down the Cumberland River to the Ohio, with Cincinnati as his ultimate destination. When the steamer pulled into Cincinnati on the evening of March 27, the proprietors of the Gibson House met the boat and escorted the Parson to their guest quarters. At the hotel, he was "waited on" by a committee appointed by the Union Convention to conduct him to the Merchants Exchange. On their arrival at the Exchange, Brownlow found that many leaders of the Queen City had assembled. He was introduced to them by Joseph C. Butler, president of the Chamber of Commerce. After making a few remarks regarding conditions in East Tennessee, the Parson promised them a longer address on another occasion. The Committee spent the next week introducing him to the community and showering him with the hospitality of the city. Meanwhile, he rested, made a couple of brief appearances before city groups, and received delegations from other cities who urged him to visit their communities.¹⁶

¹⁵ *Parson Brownlow's Book*, 385-389.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 399-400; *Cincinnati Gazette*, March 29, 1862. The delegations came from Chicago; Chillicothe,

One of his appearances in the editorial room, Mitchell introduced the Reverend Dr. Kingsley. Brownlow, reflecting on conditions of the class of men now in the Unionist and Presbyterian pulpits, had previously preached from pulpits. Even worse were ministers who "and raise the blockade" had but one aim, "It is my motto," he declared "my motto

Brownlow's formal speech on his arrival. He delivered his speech to a crowd. The patrons, each with a flag and bunting, greeted the Parson's honor. At the end of the arm of Joseph C. Butler, unmatched in personal

For an hour and 20 minutes of his illness, his ancestors recounted pathetic stories to the audience that he would but blamed the South. He would confiscate all property, declared, in conclusion, that he starved out the South. A military recruiter, and a series of resolutions concluded with the singing

The printed text of the speech presented the general content

Ohio; Springfield, Illinois, and *Journal*, April 4, 1862. For his speech, 1, 1862.

¹⁷ William G. Brownlow, *Parson Brownlow's Last Editorial in the Knoxville Press* (Indianapolis, 1862).

¹⁸ *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, 400-425. General Carey was a Unionist in 1876 would be nominated

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delegations came from Chicago; Chillicothe,

One of his appearances in Cincinnati took place before a group of Methodist ministers in the editorial room of the *Western Christian Advocate*. The Reverend J. T. Mitchell introduced the Parson to the group followed by a welcoming speech by Reverend Dr. Kingsley. Brownlow opened his remarks by accepting their plaudits before reflecting on conditions in the South. "I am sorry to say," he reported, "that the worse class of men now in the Southern Confederacy are the Episcopalian, Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian preachers." He decried the many Southern ministers who piously preached from pulpits on Sunday, "but swear and get drunk during the week." Even worse were ministers who prayed "that the Lord would send lightning and storm and raise the blockade" Lincoln had ordered. The parson then explained that he now had but one aim, "It is my intention to go back to Knoxville and start my paper," and he declared "my motto is 'Grape for the masses, but hemp for the leaders.'"¹⁷

Brownlow's formal speech to the citizens of Cincinnati occurred a week after his arrival. He delivered his address at Pike's Opera House on April 4 to an immense crowd. The patrons, each paying a 50 cent admission, filled every seat and even the aisles; flags and bunting decorated the hall; 372 school children sang a special song in the Parson's honor. At eight o'clock the feeble Parson mounted the platform, leaning on the arm of Joseph C. Butler who introduced and identified him as a great patriot, unmatched in personal courage.

For an hour and 20 minutes the Parson captivated the audience with the incidents of his illness, his ancestry, and his political activity over the past quarter century. He recounted pathetic stories of the suffering of East Tennessee Unionists. Reminding the audience that he was a Southerner, he admitted that he still believed in slavery but blamed the South more than the North for the war. As for the Confederates, he would confiscate all their property to repay the Unionists for their losses. He declared, in conclusion, that the rebellion would soon end as the blockade had almost starved out the South. When the Parson finished, General Samuel F. Carey, a Union military recruiter, and Kentucky's Lt. Governor John F. Fisk delivered brief speeches, and series of resolutions of appreciation for Brownlow were adopted. The program concluded with the singing of "Hail Columbia."¹⁸

The printed text of Brownlow's "Speech in the Opera House" apparently represented the general content of the addresses he would deliver during his lecture tour

Ohio; Springfield, Illinois, and three other cities to request the Parson to visit their cities. *Indianapolis Daily Journal*, April 4, 1862. For his appearances in Cincinnati, see *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, March 29, April 1, 1862.

¹⁷ William G. Brownlow, *Portrait and Biography of Parson Brownlow, the Tennessee Patriot, Together with his Last Editorial in the Knoxville Whig; also, his recent Speeches, Rehearsing his Experience with Secession, and his Prison Life*. (Indianapolis, 1862), 44-45.

¹⁸ *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, April 5, 1862; *Cincinnati Gazette*, April 5, 1862; *Parson Brownlow's Book*, 400-425. General Carey was a well-known temperance orator. He would be elected to Congress in 1866 and in 1876 would be nominated as vice president on the Greenback ticket.

of Northern cities over the next several months. He included it in *Parson Brownlow's Book* "because it was substantially what I said at all other points." However, the Parson stated that he was delivering an "extemporaneous speech" on this occasion. This implies that rather than publishing the actual speech he delivered, Brownlow included in his book a brief reconstruction of the address. He reported that his address lasted one hour and twenty minutes. The text of the address in his book falls far short of the volume of wording needed for a speech of that length and therefore it should be read as an abstract of his remarks rather than as his actual address.¹⁹

The Parson's Cincinnati lecture initiated a triumphant tour that carried Brownlow through nearly every state north of the Mason-Dixon line. This tour offered the Parson more than an opportunity to attack the hated Rebels, for his audiences were quite willing to pay an admission fee. Brownlow, who had accumulated few personal savings, desperately needed to provide for his family and to accumulate sufficient capital to re-establish his *Knoxville Whig*. As a start to this end, on Monday morning following his appearance at the Opera House the sponsors presented him with \$1,125 derived from the lecture admissions.²⁰

For the next nine months or more, Brownlow probably was the most lionized personality in the Union. Everywhere he went leading and important citizens vied for the honor of entertaining him and ordinary citizens were eager to hear about his confrontations with the Rebels. After leaving Cincinnati, one writer observed that his train was "greeted with one continued ovation during the journey [to Indianapolis]. At almost every station the cars [of his train] were surrounded with eager crowds, to see and welcome the tried hero and patriot." His first stop was in Dayton where he addressed a large gathering at the depot. After his train reached Indianapolis, he became the guest of Indiana Governor Oliver Perry Morton. The governor introduced Brownlow to the audience before his lecture in Metropolitan Hall and sat on the platform along with Mayor Samuel D. Maxwell and other prominent community leaders while the Parson delivered his address to an audience which was "equal to any assembled there." He commented at considerable length on the rebellion and declared that: "if the issue was to be made between the Union without Slavery, and slavery without the Union, he was for the Union and let slavery perish. (Great applause) Let

¹⁹ *Parson Brownlow's Book*, 404. Technically an extemporaneous speech is one wherein the speaker has previously prepared and organized the ideas he will include in the presentation but leaves the specific wording of the address to the moment of delivery. This approach is in contrast to a manuscript speech wherein the speaker constructs both the content and the wording prior to delivery and presents what he has prepared to the audience. Likely, what Brownlow meant by "extemporaneous" was that he was speaking "impromptu" — that is, "off the cuff" with no specific preparation for the address. The normal rate of speaking is about 120 to 160 words per minute. Applying this standard to the Cincinnati address demonstrates he included only about 35 percent of his presentation in the book. Likely what he included were the highlights of his address rather than its complete text. Most, if not all, of his "speeches" included in *Parson Brownlow's Book* should be assessed as only abstracts of the remarks he made rather than treated as the full text of his addresses.

²⁰ *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, April 7, 1862. The Confederates had confiscated his printing plant in Knoxville and turned it into a shop for remodeling firearms to be used by the Rebel military.



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²¹ *Portrait and Biography*, 49-50

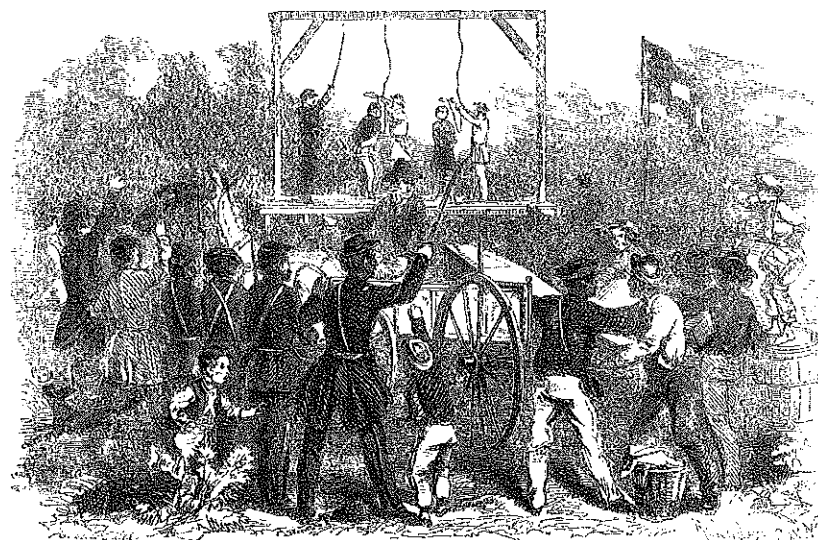
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which was probably the most lionized and important citizens vied for his attention. Citizens were eager to hear about his tour. Cincinnati, one writer observed that his tour during the journey [to Indianapolis]. He was surrounded with eager crowds, to his first stop was in Dayton where he and his train reached Indianapolis, he became a sensation. Morton. The governor introduced him to the Metropolitan Hall and sat on the platform. Other prominent community leaders were present, a silence which was "equal to any assemblage on the rebellion and declared for the Union without Slavery, and slavery and slavery perish. (Great applause) Let

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He had confiscated his printing plant in Knoxville by the Rebel military.



Jacob Harmon and his son Henry were convicted of burning the Lick Creek bridge in Greene County and executed in Knoxville on December 17, 1861. The story of their execution, in which Henry was hanged first while his father was forced to watch, was a standard part of Brownlow's lecture during his 1862 tour. From *Brownlow's Sketches of the Rise, Progress, and Decline of Secession*, courtesy of the Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection of the Knox County Public Library.

every institution die first, and until the issue was made between the Union and the religion of Jesus Christ, he was for the Union." The meeting was judged to be "the most intellectual and spirit-stirring entertainment Indianapolis ever had."²¹

Arriving in Chicago, Brownlow received an ovation accorded only the most celebrated. Learning of his approach to the city, the board of aldermen appointed a delegation of prominent citizens to meet the Parson in Michigan City. Upon the Parson's arrival, Federal Judge Thomas Drummond offered a welcoming speech before the assembled crowd that praised Brownlow's heroism. Thereafter, the delegation accompanied him to lodgings in Chicago's Sherman House. After settling into his quarters, Brownlow was escorted on a grand sightseeing tour of the city before appearing before the Board of Trade at the Merchants Exchange in response to a special invitation to address its membership. Chicago mayor Julian Sidney Rumsey introduced the Parson to "the immense throng" whereupon a member of the Board, J. C. Wright, lauded him and contended that when the history of the rebellion is recorded "it will be sadly deficient if its pages do not tell, in words that burn, the story of your wrongs, your fortitude, and your unswerving devotion to your country in the hour of her great trial. Our children will need no romance to stir their young hearts; but

²¹ *Portrait and Biography*, 49-50.

the truthful picture of your suffering and heroism will fill the place of high-wrought fiction." With this ringing endorsement, Brownlow addressed the throng about the torment suffered by Tennessee Unionists. The next evening he delivered his message to "an overwhelming audience" before being "given the hospitality of the 'Sherman House' by city authorities."²²

Brownlow headed east the next day. He stopped for the night at Lafayette, Indiana, where he spoke to "a large and enthusiastic audience." After passing through Cincinnati, the Parson arrived in Columbus, Ohio, on April 14. He had received an invitation from the Ohio legislature, endorsed by the Columbus city council, to speak at the state capital. Upon his arrival in town, he was met by Ohio's 69th Regiment and its band which escorted him to the capitol.

The Ohio legislature met in joint session to hear an address from the "courageous patriot from East Tennessee." Precisely at half-past three the Parson entered the House chamber arm-in-arm with Governor David Tod. The governor introduced him to the legislators whereupon James Monroe, President *pro tem* of the Senate, offered an extended greeting to him on behalf of the members. "Parson Brownlow proceeded to address the Legislature and audience in the manner that is so peculiarly his own, and which stirs and fascinates by its tones of earnestness as well as by his words of Power."²³

That same evening former Ohio governor William Dennison presented Brownlow to the audience attending his public lecture. The Parson reported that on this occasion he spoke to "a full house, for more than one hour," after which, "Luther Donalson, President of the City Council, gave us a handsome entertainment at his residence on State Street." The guests included the governor and many Ohio legislators, "also many handsome ladies."²⁴

When Brownlow reached Pennsylvania on his journey east, the civil governments of Pittsburg and Alleghany City combined forces to present the keys of both cities to him. The Mayors and Aldermen from both communities ushered him to one of the best hotels, the Monongahela House, and showered him with hospitality. Through the insistence of local citizens, he presented an hour and a half lecture to an audience that evening. The next day he left for Philadelphia aboard a train of the Pennsylvania Railroad and the train crew honored him with an invitation to ride part of the way in the locomotive.²⁵

²² Ibid, 65-72; *Parson Brownlow's Book*, 429.

²³ *Ohio State Journal*, cited in *Parson Brownlow's Book*, 435-436.

²⁴ Brownlow sketched some of the events of his tour in his book, 425-446. His record of the tour stops with his appearance in Philadelphia. For a more complete account of his visits to the various cities, see the local newspapers of the day, especially the *Indianapolis Daily Journal*, April 9, 1862; *Chicago Tribune*, April 9, 10, 11, 1862; *Columbus The Ohio Statesman*, April 15, 16, 1862.

²⁵ *Parson Brownlow's Book*, 436-437.

When the train pulled at the depot" headed by Porter, and members of Brownlow responded to Philadelphia, crowds gave a few remarks.²⁶

Brownlow's train entered Despite the lateness of the Philadelphia Common Council Hotel, "perhaps the most of the Councils" accompanied after which he spoke "for that his speech, "with s was substantially the same length." In the South, he to wash their dirty faces while every little rebel he among the tangles." Up gave him "three long and was so great that the eve behind locked doors a fe

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²⁶ Lancaster (Pennsylvania) *Daily*

²⁷ *Parson Brownlow's Book*, 441.

²⁸ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, A

²⁹ *Parson Brownlow's Book*, 437. book.

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April 9, 1862; *Chicago Tribune*, April 9, 10,

When the train pulled into Harrisburg, an "immense concourse [had] gathered at the depot" headed by Governor Andrew Curtin, former governor George Bryan Porter, and members of the governor's executive staff. During the brief rest stop, Brownlow responded to the demands for a speech. As the train continued toward Philadelphia, crowds gathered at each station along the route and "loudly called for" a few remarks.²⁶

Brownlow's train entered the West Philadelphia Depot at midnight on April 18. Despite the lateness of the hour, he was met by a special delegation appointed by the Philadelphia Common Council which escorted him to his quarters in the Continental Hotel, "perhaps the most elegant in America." The next morning, "Committees of the Councils" accompanied him to Independence Hall for a reception in his honor, after which he spoke "for nearly one hour, to an immense audience." He explained that his speech, "with some variation caused by the surrounding circumstances, was substantially the same as at Cincinnati and other towns where I had spoken at length." In the South, he reported in his remarks, "They are out of soap with which to wash their dirty faces; they were out of every thing, including fine tooth combs, while every little rebel head was full of squatter-sovereigns, looking for 'their rights' among the tangles." Upon the conclusion of this "off-hand address" the audience gave him "three long and hearty cheers" and rushed forward to greet him. The crush was so great that the event's sponsors led the Parson into Independence Hall where behind locked doors a few enthusiasts were admitted at a time to greet him.²⁷

On the morning of his appearance at Independence Hall, Brownlow received an invitation from President Abraham Lincoln to visit the White House. The Parson also had received an invitation to make appearances in Baltimore. He opted instead, after receiving a number of East Tennessee refugees, to leave for the country to recuperate from the fatigue of his recent travels and to prepare the manuscript for a book.²⁸ Brownlow had received offers from several publishers who wanted to print the story of his struggles against secession and his suffering at the hands of the Confederates. However, he signed a contract with "that prince of clever fellows, George W. Childs, the extensive and energetic Philadelphia publisher," — a contract destined to reward both parties handsomely.²⁹

Brownlow spent the next month near Crosswicks and Bordertown, New Jersey, recuperating and finishing the manuscript of his book. While there, a Quaker preacher and two members of his congregation invited the Parson to make a speech at their meeting house. He accepted and spent an hour and a half addressing the crowded

²⁶ Lancaster (Pennsylvania) *Daily Express*, April 18, 1862; *Parson Brownlow's Book*, 437-440.

²⁷ *Parson Brownlow's Book*, 441-442; *Philadelphia Daily Evening Bulletin*, April 18, 1862.

²⁸ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, April 19, 1862.

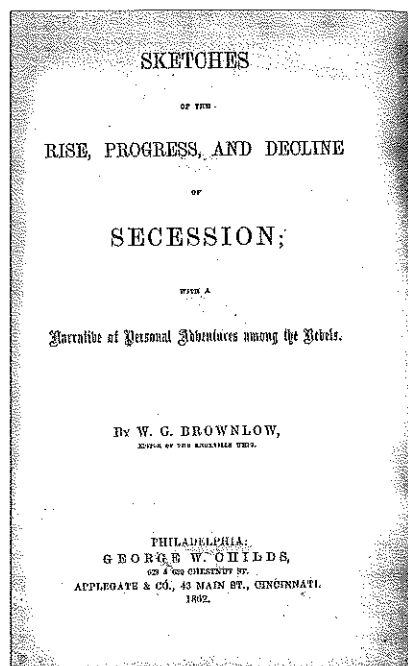
²⁹ *Parson Brownlow's Book*, 437. It has been estimated that the publisher sold over 100,000 copies of the book.

house. "This was considered a great complement, as they never extend such favors to other churches, or to politicians. The cheering was considerable; and it was remarked that this venerable building had not received such a shock since the war of the Revolution."³⁰

By mid-May Brownlow finished the manuscript for his book complete with full page engravings depicting the atrocities described in his diary. It was published before the end of May and by September an estimated 100,000 copies had been sold. His family had abandoned their Knoxville home when ordered out by the Rebels, the only financial resource he possessed when expelled from Tennessee. Until the royalties came in, he needed—or wanted—to return to the lucrative lecture circuit. During his rest period, the Parson continued to receive numerous speaking invitations and consequently he moved on to New York City.

Many people in New York City urged the Union's "hero from East Tennessee" to make an appearance in their community. During the morning of May 13 his party arrived on the Camden and Amboy boat to be greeted by a crowd that had awaited his arrival for four hours. The dignitaries, after appropriate ceremonies, escorted the Parson, his family, and publisher to the hospitality of the Astor House. A busy 10 days of receptions, ceremonies, sightseeing, and speeches marked him as perhaps the most important celebrity in town. On Wednesday he spoke to the New England Soldiers' Relief Association and the Chamber of Commerce, followed by a reception in his honor at the Astor House. The next evening, May 15, he addressed an audience at New York's Academy of Music. Upon entering the Academy's auditorium the Parson saw before him "a dense throng, thousands in number" who "filled all the seats, aisles, and lobbies." Many in the audience had assembled long before the time announced for the start of the proceedings. "Hundreds of leading citizens occupied the stage . . . evincing by their presence on this occasion their desire to render a just tribute of praise to the gallant Parson, whose sufferings, as a Union man, had awakened so general a sympathy throughout the

³⁰ *Parson Brownlow's Book*, 445.



Cover page from William Brownlow's *Sketches of the Rise, Progress, and Decline of Secession*, written during his 1862 tour. Proceeds from the book and the tour were critical in allowing the Parson to reestablish his newspaper in Knoxville. Courtesy of the Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection of the Knox County Public Library

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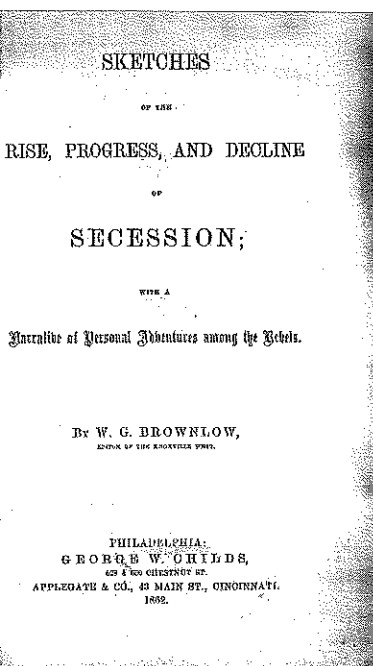
Brownlow was escorted to Men's Republican Union, where he was "received with the most cheering of their feet, waving their hats of applause."

Rogers opened the program with D. Morgan who was expected to express the Governor's regret over the war. Upon Rogers called William Parson, he contended, we cannot put in its strength the Confederates [Southern Unionists] as a barrier all over the land." Then amidst applause he spoke.³¹

He opened his remarks by saying that "captivates and fascinates the mind what I shall say than to the mind. It had been "Independent in all its actions, entirely neutral, but have always been the audience that he would not be widely distributed paper. "I

as I have said at the South, the demagogue for having brought of the North . . . we have asked, all promise and admission and hence, I repeat tempt to dissolve the shadow of a cat

³¹ Parson Brownlow, "Sufferings of the Union," Supplement No. 1 (July 15, 1862): 1. Brownlow's shorthand, and his transcription was a religious Character of the Rebellion. The book contains some misspelled names and is probably the most accurate and complete record of Northern cities and has been used as a source for that Coulter, in his biography of Brownlow, of Confederate atrocities. As shown in the first part of his tour. See Charles B. Collar, *Pulpit and Rostrum*.



Cover page from William Brownlow's *Sketches of the Rise, Progress, and Decline of Secession*, written during his 1862 tour. Proceeds from the book and the tour were critical in allowing the Parson to reestablish his newspaper in Knoxville. Courtesy of the Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection of the Knox County Public Library

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whole community."

Brownlow was escorted to the stage by Charles T. Rodgers, president of the Young Men's Republican Union, the event's sponsor. As the Parson appeared on stage he was "received with the most rapturous applause, the audience, *en masse*, rising to their feet, waving their hats and handkerchiefs, and joining in one universal shout of applause."

Rogers opened the program by reading a letter from New York's Governor Edwin D. Morgan who was expected to introduce the Parson to the audience. The letter expressed the Governor's regrets that other duties prevented his attendance whereupon Rogers called William M. Evarts to the podium to welcome the Parson. Evarts expressed "his appreciation of the heroism of Mr. Brownlow." With men like the Parson, he contended, we can go about "subduing the rebellion, and then of re-instituting in its strength the Constitution as it is, and the Union as it is. . . . Upon them [Southern Unionists] as a basis we could reinstate the dominion of the Government all over the land." Then amid loud and repeated applause, Brownlow stepped forward to speak.³¹

He opened his remarks by denying he had the eloquence that charms or the diction that "captivates and fascinates an assemblage." Rather, "I shall therefore look more to what I shall say than to the manner of saying it." He pointed out that in his career he had been "Independent in all things, and under all circumstances, I have never been entirely neutral, but have always taken a hand in what was afloat." He proposed to the audience that he would not say anything to them that he had not expressed in his widely distributed paper. "I say to you, then," he declared,

as I have said at home time and again, that the people of the South, the demagogues and leaders of the South, are to blame for having brought about this state of things, and not the people of the North You have granted us, from first to last, all we have asked, all we have desired [repeal of Missouri Compromise and admission of Texas to the Union as a slave state]; and hence, I repeat that this thing of secession, this wicked attempt to dissolve the Union, has been brought about without the shadow of a cause. It is the work of the worst men that ever

³¹ Parson Brownlow, "Sufferings of Union Men," a speech recorded by Charles B. Collar, *Pulpit and Rostrum*, Supplement No. 1 (July 15, 1862): 8-24. Collar recorded the content of the Academy of Music speech in shorthand, and his transcription was published in several cities. Collar also recorded the Parson's speech, "Irreligious Character of the Rebellion" delivered at Cooper Union a few days later. Although Collar's account contains some misspelled names and is similar in many regards to that found in *Parson Brownlow's Book*, it is probably the most accurate and complete text of any of the addresses Brownlow delivered on his tour of Northern cities and has been used as the source for the quotations on the following pages. It is also significant that Coulter, in his biography of Brownlow, gives little attention to Brownlow's vindictive and bitter accounts of Confederate atrocities. As shown by Collar, this was the primary element of Brownlow's speeches, at least during the first part of his tour. See W.G. Brownlow, "Irreligious Character of the Rebellion," recorded by Charles B. Collar, *Pulpit and Rostrum*, Supplement No. 1 (July 15, 1862): 25-36.

God permitted to live on the face of this earth. It is the work of a set of men down South who, in winding up this rebellion, if our administration and Government shall fail to hang them as high as Human – hang every one of them – they will make an utter failure.

He pointed out that the North had such a one who could bring this about, the “gallant and glorious man, [General] McClellan,” commander of the Federal army in Washington.

Let anyone in the audience question his loyalty, Brownlow trumpeted, “I have been a Union man all my life.” For proof he referred to the 1832 pamphlet he wrote and published denouncing South Carolina nullifiers, “and they threatened to hang me then.” More recently, Rebel troops

commenced to ride Union men [in East Tennessee] upon rails. I have seen that done in the streets . . . and [their] coming before my house with ropes in their hands, they would groan out, “Let us give old Brownlow a turn, the d___d old scoundrel; come out, and we will hang you to the first tree.” I would appear . . . on the front portico of my house, and would address them in this way: “Men, what do you want with me? . . . ‘We want a speech from you; we want you to come out for the Southern Confederacy.’ To which I replied: “I have no speech to make for you. You know me as well as I know you; I am utterly and irreconcilably opposed to this infernal rebellion in which you are engaged, and I shall fight it to the bitter end.” . . . These threats toward me were repeated every day and every week, until finally they crushed out my paper, destroyed my office, [and] appropriated the building to an old smith’s shop.

Brownlow argued that he was not alone in suffering this abuse. The secessionist Legislature empowered armed groups to confiscate “all the arms, pistols, guns, dirks, swords, and everything of the sort from all the Union men, and they paid a visit to every Union house in the state.” If this was not enough, they went about grabbing “all the fine horses of Union men everywhere, without fee or reward, for cavalry horses, and seizing upon the fat hogs, corn, fodder, and sheep, going into houses and pulling the beds off the bedsteads in the daytime, seizing upon all the blankets they could find, for the army; after breaking open chests, bureaus, drawers and everything of that sort.” As a result, some of the people rose up “in rebellion” and at “precisely at 11 o’clock [p.m.], from Chattanooga to the Virginia line – a distance of 300 miles – all the railroad bridges took fire at one time. [Cheers and applause.] It was purely accidental. I happened to be out from home at the time. [Laughter.]”

The Parson stated to the assembly that he had really ridden out to collect the fees

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owed to him after the Rebels had suppressed his paper,

and as these bridges took fire while I was out of town, they
[Confederate authorities in Knoxville] swore I was the bell-
weather and ringleader of all the devilment that was going on,
and hence that I must have had a hand in it. They wanted a
pretext to seize upon me, and upon the 6th day of December
they marched me off to jail – a miserable, uncomfortable, damp
and desperate jail.

When the Rebels marched him into imprisonment, Brownlow disclosed that he
found "there was not in the whole jail a chair, bench, stool or table, or any piece of
furniture, except a dirty old wooden bucket and a pair of tin dippers to drink with."
Some 150 incarcerated Union men welcomed his entry. "I knew them all," he said,
"and they knew me, as I had been among them for thirty years." They gathered round
him, glad to see an old friend. Some smiling, took him by the hand wanting to know
news from the outside, while others were speechless with tears streaming down their
face. Brownlow then described his remarks to them.

Is it for stealing you are here? No. Is it for counterfeiting? No. Is
it for manslaughter? No. You are here, boys, because you adhere
to the flag and the Constitution of our country. [Cheers.] I am
here with you for no other offense but that; and as God is my
judge, boys, I look upon the 6th day of December as the proud-
est day of my life. [Great applause.] And here I intend to stay
until I die of old age, or until they choose to hang me. I will
never renounce my principles. [Cheers.]

The Parson reported to his audience that Rebel officials often came to the jail and
offered to free the Union men if they would "take the oath of allegiance to the South-
ern Confederacy and volunteer to go into the [military] service." Some did. When
the offer was made to him, Brownlow described himself as rising to his feet and star-
ing the officer in the eye and saying:

I intend to lie here until I rot from disease, or die of old age, be-
fore I will take the oath of allegiance to your government. I deny
your right to administer such an oath. I deny that you have any
government other than a Southern mob. You have never been
recognized by any civilized power on the face of the earth, and
you never will be. [Applause.] And sir, preacher as I am, I will
see the Southern Confederacy, and you and me on top of it, in
the infernal regions, before I will do it. "Well," said he, "that's
d___d plain talk." [Laughter and applause.] Yes, I replied, that's

the way to talk in revolutionary times. [Applause.]

The preceding highlights reflect the content in the first third of Brownlow's address at the Academy of Music, a speech that lasted an estimated 75-90 minutes. The remaining two-thirds of his remarks were devoted to detailing atrocities committed by Rebel authorities and the horrible conditions Unionists faced in a Rebel prison. The Parson recalled that two of the prisoners were elderly Baptist clergymen, Mr. Pope and Mr. Cate. One had been jailed for offering prayers for the President of the United States and the other because he cheered the "Stars and Stripes as they passed his house, borne by a company of Union volunteers." Mr. Cate, "prostrated from fever and unable to eat," had three sons in the jail. One of them, James Madison Cate, was locked up for refusing to "volunteer [for the Confederate army]," and was lying on the floor "in the very agonies of death." When his wife with babe in arms came to visit she was refused admittance. Brownlow interceded, "for God's sake, . . . let the poor woman come in" and see her dying husband. The Rebel guards granted her 15 minutes. She entered and on seeing her husband gave signs of fainting. Before she could fall the Parson took the child and she fell to the floor and lay on her husband's breast. Brownlow declared to his audience, "I hope I may never see such a scene again; and yet such cases were common all over East Tennessee."

Brownlow then related the story of two accused bridge burners in Andrew Johnson's town of Greeneville. Confederate Col. Danville Leadbetter apprehended the men shortly after the assault on the bridges, gave them a drum-head court-martial, and sentenced them to hang. Whereupon he:

took these two men [Jacob M. Hensie and Henry Fry], tied them with his own hands upon on limb, immediately over the railroad track, in the town of Greeneville, and ordered them to hang four days and nights, and directed all the engineers and conductors to go by that hanging concern slow, in a kind of snail gallop, up and down the road, to give the passengers an opportunity to kick the rigid bodies and strike them with a rattan. And they did it.

The Parson next described incidents of Union men in his home county of Knox who were abused by secessionists. These Rebels "caught up Union men, tied them upon logs, elevated the logs upon blocks six or ten inches from the ground, put the men upon their breasts, tying their hands and feet under the log, stripped their backs entirely bare, and then, with switches, cut their backs literally to pieces, the blood running down at every stroke." Brownlow reported that Unionist prisoners never knew when a wagon drove up to the jail hauling "an ugly, rough, flat-topped coffin upon it," who would be next to go to the gallows. Sometimes the wagon bore two coffins. On one occasion:

A poor old man of twenty-five [Henry] on the same gallows a Methodist class-leader hang till he was dead. nite Union shrieker next." He sank, but halter, and swung b

Next, the Parson sketched a burner and a young man who took him to the gallows where his request, the executioners "own army" who reported that denying he apologized for his would do it again." The Parson Union man, as an East Tenn

The final hanging episode was a burner that had a happier outcome drum-head court-martial. On his last visit, but emotionally broken, begging Brownlow she begged for mercy. The Parson related that he v

HON. JEFFERSON
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President Davis returned Commander not to hang S a certain time." The Parson home, and Elizabeth was

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[Applause.]

in the first third of Brownlow's address, estimated an estimated 75-90 minutes. The address detailed atrocities committed against Unionists faced in a Rebel prison. There were elderly Baptist clergymen, Mr. Cate, "prostrated from fever," offering prayers for the President of the United States, the "Stars and Stripes as they passed the gallows." Mr. Cate, "prostrated from fever." One of them, James Madison Cate, "the Confederate army," and was lying on the floor when his wife with babe in arms came to intercede, "for God's sake, . . . let the rebels hang." The Rebel guards granted her 15 minutes and gave signs of fainting. Before she lay on the floor and lay on her husband's back, "I hope I may never see such a scene in East Tennessee."

Accused bridge burners in Andrew Johnson's Danville Leadbetter apprehended the rebels gave them a drum-head court-martial,

Ansie and Henry Fry], tied to a limb, immediately over the gallows, and ordered them to execute all the engineers and mechanics, to give the passengers an opportunity to strike them with a rat-

Union men in his home county of Knox were "caught up Union men, tied them to the gallows, or ten inches from the ground, put the rebels' feet under the log, stripped their backs, and their backs literally to pieces, the blood reported that Unionist prisoners never lived, lying 'an ugly, rough, flat-topped coffin' on the gallows. Sometimes the wagon bore two

A poor old man of sixty-five [Jacob Harmon] and his son of twenty-five [Henry] were marched out at one time and hanged on the same gallows. They made that poor old man, who was a Methodist class-leader, sit by [on his coffin] and see his son hang till he was dead, and then they called him a damned Lincolnite Union shrieker [sec.], and said "Come on; it is your turn next." He sank, but they propped him up and led him to the gallows, and swung both off on the same gallows.

Next, the Parson sketched the story of J. C. Haum [Haun], an accused bridge burner and a young man with a wife and four or five children at home. The Rebels took him to the gallows where he requested the service of a Union minister. Denying his request, the executioners substituted "an unprincipled, drunken chaplain, of their own army" who reported that Haum "regrets the course he took." Haum spoke out denying he apologized for his actions and declared that "if it were to be done over, I would do it again." The Parson recounted that, "He died like a man; he died like a Union man, as an East Tennessean ought to die."

The final hanging episode presented by Brownlow involved another accused bridge burner that had a happier outcome. Harrison Self was sentenced to hang after another drum-head court-martial. On the day of his execution, his young daughter came for a last visit, but emotionally broke down "sobbing and crying" when they parted. Rushing to Brownlow she begged him to help prepare a plea to the Confederate President. The Parson related that he worded the brief plea to be telegraphed to Davis:

HON. JEFFERSON DAVIS [I did not believe the first word I wrote was the truth, but I put it there for the sake of form] — My father, Hessing [sic] Self, is sentenced to be hanged at four o'clock to-day. I am living at home, and my mother is dead. My father is my earthly all; upon him my hopes are centered, and, friend, I pray you to pardon him.

Respectfully,

ELIZABETH SELF

President Davis returned an answer immediately. In it he instructed the Military Commander not to hang Self but to "keep him in jail and let him atone for his crimes a certain time." The Parson reported that after serving a short term Mr. Self returned home, and Elizabeth was "saved the grief of being left alone without a father."

Brownlow presented the details of these episodes in greater length in his address. He also interspersed the facts of his stories with condemnations that defamed, denigrated, and vilified the Confederate authorities and secessionists for their oppression of East Tennessee Unionists. As he began concluding his remarks, he epitomized the current political atmosphere in the South:

This, ladies and gentlemen, is the spirit of secession all over the South; it is the spirit that actuates them everywhere; it is the spirit of murder, it is the spirit of the infernal regions, and, in God's name, can you any longer excuse or apologize for such murderous and bloodthirsty demons as live down in the Southern Confederacy? [Loud cries of "No, no."] Hanging is going on all over East Tennessee; and, as strange as it may seem to you, in the counties of Campbell and Anderson, they actually lacerate with switches the bodies of females, wives and daughters of Union men – clever, respectable women. They show no quarter to male or female; they rob their houses and they throw them into prison.

Based on these conditions the Parson urged for the North to come to the relief of East Tennessee,

for a more loyal, a more devoted people to the Stars and Stripes never lived on the face of God's earth than the Union people of Tennessee. [Loud cheers.] With tears in their eyes, they begged me, upon leaving East Tennessee, for God Almighty's sake, to see the President, to see the army officers, so as to have relief sent to them and bring them out of jail. I hope, gentlemen, you will use your influence with the army and navy, and all concerned, to relieve these people. They are the most abused, down-trodden, persecuted, and proscribed people that ever lived on the face of the earth.

Brownlow then predicted "that the rebellion will soon be played out. Thank God for his mercies, it will soon have been played out. [Enthusiastic cheers.]" He expressed confidence that McClellan would soon capture Richmond, that he had "confidence and faith in Fremont, and hope he may rush into East Tennessee," and "if Halleck, Buell & Co. – [loud cheers] – will only capture . . . Corinth and take Memphis, the play is out and the dog is dead. [Laughter and cheers.]" Upon reaching these goals, "let us drive the leaders down into the Gulf of Mexico, like the devils drove the hogs into the sea of Galilee. [Laughter and applause.]" Upon this note, Brownlow closed his address by relating his public clash in Knoxville 18 months earlier with William L. Yancey, the outspoken secessionist from Montgomery, Alabama.³²

The response to his address was enthusiastic. The audience interrupted his re-

³² For more about Brownlow's clash with Yancey see: John W. Du Bose, *Life and Times of William Lowndes Yancey* (Birmingham, 1892), 494-496; T. W. Humes, *The Loyal Mountaineers of Tennessee* (Knoxville, 1888), 81-84; *Parson Brownlow's Book*, 67.

marks over 80 times with a \$2,500 toward the re-establishment of the paper was begun. The list for the paper was begun. The offering of the Tennessee Union.

The day after his Academy, Brownlow left Knoxville for the River to attend a party in the postmaster. The following day, the Association, which contributed to the ill, he returned to his local presentation.

On Sunday evening, a when the announcement of Brownlow appeared in the paper, it revealed that the past week's haughtiness had exhausted him to the point of collapse. He offered apologies to the congregation. After a few remarks, his companion, Samuel F. Campbell, reported the Northern war effort. A man from the *Tribune* was pretty strong and distinct in notice, who saw him in his since, was struck with the personal appearance, as he

Brownlow recovered his New York during his stay. The Christian Association at Cooper's the "Irreligious Character of the usual stories of Rebel atrocities and religious leaders. He epitomized

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³³ *New York Tribune*, May 19, 1862.

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Du Bose, *Life and Times of William Lowndes*
Mountaineers of Tennessee (Knoxville, 1888),

marks over 80 times with applause, laughter, cheering, shouts, etc. The speech netted \$2,500 toward the re-establishment of Brownlow's *Knoxville Whig* and a subscription list for the paper was begun. Reporters and critics alike lauded his telling of the suffering of the Tennessee Unionists and life under the Confederacy.

The day after his Academy address, Friday May 16, Brownlow crossed the East River to attend a party in his honor at the home of George S. Lincoln, Brooklyn postmaster. The following evening he spoke before the Brooklyn Mercantile Library Association, which contributed \$1,200 toward reconstruction of the *Whig*. Feeling ill, he returned to his lodgings in Manhattan's Astor Hotel immediately after this presentation.

On Sunday evening, a large crowd gathered at the Hedding Methodist Church when the announcement went abroad that the Parson would speak there. When Brownlow appeared in the pulpit, he begged to be excused from preaching. He revealed that the past week's festivities, and particularly his visit to Brooklyn, had exhausted him to the point of illness. He explained that he had left his bed to make apologies to the congregation assembled for not being able to deliver his usual message. After a few remarks on "secessdom," he turned the pulpit over to his traveling companion, Samuel F. Cary, who exhorted the crowd to dedicate themselves to support the Northern war effort. When reporting his observations of this event, a newsman from the *Tribune* wrote of the Parson's personal appearance: "Mr. B. spoke in pretty strong and distinct accents, but he was evidently quite feeble. The writer of this notice, who saw him in his editorial sanctum of *The Knoxville Whig* some three years since, was struck with the great change that had taken place in the patriot editor's personal appearance, as he was then apparently very rugged and hearty."³³

Brownlow recovered his strength sufficiently to make one other major address in New York during his stay. On Monday, May 19, he addressed the Young Men's Christian Association at Cooper Institute. His subject for the evening was announced as the "Irreligious Character of the Rebellion." In this presentation Brownlow left his usual stories of Rebel atrocities to deliver a condemnation of the South and its religious leaders. He epitomized the whole theme of this address when he concluded:

All the iniquities that ever prevailed anywhere on the face of God's green earth they have in full blossom in every State south of Mason and Dixon's line. I repeat to you that the churches there are all utterly ruined; they are all going to destruction. The ministers, class-leaders, deacons, exhorters, are all talking secession, lying secession, drinking mean liquor, and advocating the cause of Jeff Davis and the devil; and they have abandoned God and His holy religion. Wicked as you are reported to have

³³ *New York Tribune*, May 19, 1862.

been, I invoke, to-night, the prayers of the people of New York for these vile, unmitigated devils of the South.³⁴

He ended the address with the narrative of his trip to Nashville following his imprisonment. The Parson remained in New York City two more days after making this speech before continuing his tour in Boston.³⁵

The demands on Brownlow's services were legion, as the "reputation of the 'Parson' had long preceded him, and there are but few who have not heard of and desired to know him."³⁶ His itinerary from New York took him through every New England state, save Vermont. In Boston he spent the week making speeches, sightseeing, and being entertained by the governor and other important public figures. His speaking tour then moved on to North Bridgewater, Salem, and Lowell, Massachusetts; to Portland, Maine; and Dover, New Hampshire; back to Roxbury, Massachusetts; then to Providence, Rhode Island; Norwich and Hartford, Connecticut; and finally back to Springfield, Amherst, and Worcester, Massachusetts.³⁷ His appearances in each of these communities were greeted with the same adulation he had received earlier on his tour.

He returned to Philadelphia for a June 13 speech at the Academy of Music. The Parson remained in Philadelphia several days, attending Sanitary Fairs and meetings of relief societies. There he performed ceremonial duties, and one reporter observed, "generally says a few words in his vigorous style on such occasion, and retires after a process of hand-shaking, which is no mean test of his power of endurance."³⁸ After a trip to Cincinnati to settle his family, the Parson returned to Washington to testify at a Congressional hearing.³⁹ By the end of July he made his way to Central New York and by mid-August had spoken in Albany, Saratoga, Utica, Syracuse, Oswego, Rochester, and Buffalo.⁴⁰ From mid-August to mid-September, Brownlow evidently

³⁴ Brownlow, "Irreligious Character of the Rebellion," 32.

³⁵ The accounts of Brownlow's activities in New York City can be found in the following issues of local newspapers: *New York Times*, May 14-16, 1862; *New York Tribune*, May 13-21, 1862; *New York World*, May 12, 15-17, 23, 1862; *New York Herald*, May 15-17, 19, 20, 1862; and *Brooklyn Eagle*, May 15-17, 22, 1862.

³⁶ *New York Tribune*, May 21, 1862; and *Boston Morning Journal*, May 24, 1862.

³⁷ For the account of Brownlow's activities in Boston and some reports of his appearances in other communities, see *Boston Evening Transcript*, May 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 28, 29, 1862, and *Boston Morning Journal*, May 23, 24, 28, June 2, 1862. The Parson's itinerary is presented in the *Boston Morning Journal*, May 28, 1862.

³⁸ Philadelphia *Daily Evening Bulletin*, June 21, 1862.

³⁹ See Forrest Conklin, ed., "'Parson' Brownlow on the Impeachment of Judge Humphreys and Other Matters in Washington, D.C. - June 1862," East Tennessee Historical Society's *Publications* 56 & 57 (1984-1985): 120-131.

⁴⁰ Brownlow was announced to appear in Albany on July 31, but there is no account of his performance.

located at Philadelphia, giving only occasional appearances and writing in behalf of a favorite project—the military relief of Tennessee.⁴¹

In the latter part of September, Brownlow went to Michigan and Illinois in the final phase of his tour. At these stops he included new elements in his presentations—his endorsement of the President's announced emancipation policy and his involvement in partisan politics. The first element demonstrated again his political agenda that placed the salvation of the Union at his allegiance to the Union. He had made, with the position element demonstrated partisan politics.

Brownlow opened his tour in Detroit on September 10. At the Agricultural Fair the next day he addressed the policy. Newspaper accounts of the audiences as he addressed the audiences as he described the horrors of the Confederacy and the end.⁴²

Two days later, the Society. The following

Albany *Atlas and Argus*, July 31, 1862. See Brownlow's tour. He spoke in Syracuse on August 1, 1862. *Oswego Commercial Times*, August 1, 1862.

⁴¹ *Jamestown (New York) Journal*, August 1, 1862.

⁴² *Detroit Advertiser and Free Press*, September 11, 1862.

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tics. The first element dem-
onstrated again his personal
agenda that placed the preser-
vation of the Union above and beyond his well-known defense of slavery. Indeed,
his allegiance to the Union cause took precedence over any previous commitment he
had made, with the possible exception of his beloved Methodist Church. The second
element demonstrated that the Parson could not refrain from becoming involved in
partisan politics.

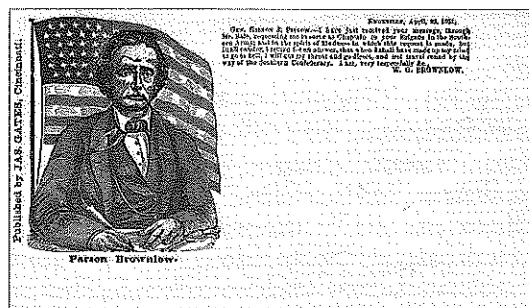
Brownlow opened his tour in Michigan at the Republican State Convention in
Detroit on September 24 and spoke before 20,000 people at the Michigan State Ag-
ricultural Fair the next day. In both speeches he echoed approval of Lincoln's slavery
policy. Newspaper accounts of his Michigan speeches indicate a shift in his appeals to
the audiences as he abandoned some of his stories of Confederate atrocities. Instead,
he described the horrible economic and social plight brought about in the south by
the Confederacy and recommended military tactics to bring the war to a favorable
end.⁴²

Two days later, the Parson spoke again in Detroit, this time to the Young Men's
Society. The following week, he began speaking at county fairs and remained in

Albany *Atlas and Argus*, July 28, 1862. He spoke twice in Utica, August 5 and 6, and in Saratoga before
those dates. See Brownlow MSS, W. G. Brownlow to George Childs, August 7, 1862, Library of Congress.
He spoke in Syracuse on August 7 and Oswego on August 8. See *Syracuse Journal*, August 5, 7, 8, 1862, and
Oswego Commercial Times, August 5, 6, 9, 1862.

⁴¹ *Jamestown* (New York) *Journal*, September 19, 1862.

⁴² *Detroit Advertiser and Tribune*, September 23-27, 1862; *Detroit Free Press*, September 26, 1862.



Brownlow's celebrity status is evidenced by the popularity
of such items as this souvenir spoon and pictorial envelope.
Courtesy of the Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection of
the Knox County Public Library.

Michigan for the next month.⁴³ On October 25 he was the principal speaker at a huge Republican rally in Chicago. By then the Republican Party had openly assumed sponsorship of his appearances and announced an ambitious schedule of eight speaking engagements in eight different towns over ten days. The Parson, they said, "will address the people [of Illinois] on the Rebellion, the President's [Emancipation] Proclamation, and Modern Tories."⁴⁴

Brownlow's Mid-Western appearances evidenced that an evolution had taken place in his thinking during the span of his tour. Whereas he had been a rabid opponent of abolition, he now wholeheartedly subscribed to Lincoln's emancipation policy. Whereas he had fought the "Black" Republicans in the 1860 Presidential campaign, he now actively supported their candidates. Whereas he had agitated for Southern institutions and customs, he now urged extermination of all Southern Rebels and the confiscation of their property to pay for the war.

The Parson's appearances in Michigan and Illinois drew his triumphant tour of Northern cities to a close.⁴⁵ For the past nine months, he had been hailed as a hero across the North for his devotion to the Union and for the risk he took as a southerner in defying the Confederacy and its leadership. This adoration came in a manner accorded only the most celebrated visitors.

The underlying objective of Brownlow's tour, aside from gathering capital to support his family and reestablish his paper, was to energize and intensify the public's support for the Union's war effort. In any war, public commitment is essential for victory, and Brownlow believed this attitude could only be reached when his listeners visualized the Southern Confederates not as opponents requiring accommodations but as a hated enemy who must be crushed if the nation was to survive. Brownlow set about this mission by demonizing the Confederates with the blazing rhetoric for which he was noted. In more tranquil times his invective and epithets cultured before his East Tennessee constituency might have repelled Northern listeners. But as one critic observed, "when he opens his lips his language, although without positive profanity — except when quoting other men's — is often so grating to polite ears that it saves sensitive listeners from blushes only because it irresistibly provokes laughter."⁴⁶

⁴³ Detroit *Advertiser and Tribune*, September 26, 27, 1862; *Battle Creek Journal*, October 3, 31, 1862; Ann Arbor *The Michigan Argus*, October 3, 10, 1862; *Chicago Tribune*, October 26, 1862. See also W. G. Brownlow to Dr. Sprague, October 2, 1862, Library of Congress.

⁴⁴ Springfield *The Illinois State Journal*, October 22, 1862. For reports on these appearances, see Springfield *The Illinois State Journal*, October 22, 27, 28, 29, 31, November 1, 2, 3, 1862; *Jacksonville Sentinel*, October 31, 1862; *Peoria Morning Mail*, November 2, 1862.

⁴⁵ After this time, Brownlow joined his family in Cincinnati. He only filled two speaking engagements in 1863. On January 1, he addressed an audience in Cleveland and on February 17, Washington's Birthday, he spoke to a gathering of Northern soldiers in Nashville.

⁴⁶ Editorial, *The Ladies Repository* 22 (July 1862): 385-386.

⁴⁷ Editorial, "A Martyr Missionary," *The New York Times*, May 22, 1862.

The laughter Brownlow sought to accompany his invective belittled the credibility of the atrocities committed by the rebels. To avoid viewing the Rebels as monsters on the alter of their political demons must be destroyed. This prompted the *New York Union* by his speeches in

It is impossible to quantify the Federal military commitment to the Federal war effort. Brownlow, an army recruiter, was at the tour. News accounts often after the Parson completed his tour. Southern leaders concluded that they arranged for him to be by Southern sympathizers that potentially could have

Publishers realized that Brownlow's story in print. *Parson Brownlow's Book*, for 25-50 cents apiece, told the account of the Parson's life each. Despite the Parson's dance sheet titled "Parson

Enterprising entrepreneur in the heroic defense of the Union. The image etched on the book was Brownlow's likeness printed on a General Gideon J. a Chaplain.⁴⁸ Perhaps the book produced for sale numerous copies of his visit to their city.

Most significant of Brownlow's Northerners were eager

⁴⁸ His reply to Pillow was: "I am a Chaplain to your brigade in the war, but in all candor, I return this to your throat and go directly and not &c, W. G. Brownlow."

⁴⁹ When Brownlow resumed publication in Tennessee to distribute it to northern

5 he was the principal speaker at a Republican Party had openly assumed an ambitious schedule of eight speaking days. The Parson, they said, "will be the President's [Emancipation] Proc-

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2, 1862.

The laughter Brownlow generated was the result of the sarcasm he had developed to accompany his invective. Together these rhetorical tools demeaned, ridiculed and belittled the credibility of a war-time enemy. When coupled to the Parson's vivid tales of atrocities committed by Confederates on loyal Unionists, his listeners could not avoid viewing the Rebels as degenerated devils who would sacrifice all human dignity on the altar of their political and economic interests. In the Parson's view, these demons must be destroyed for the welfare of nation. His candor and flaming rhetoric prompted the *New York Times* to conclude that he was "doing good service to the Union by his speeches in the Northern States."⁴⁷

It is impossible to quantify Brownlow's impact on his Northern audiences. Apparently the Federal military believed he motivated people toward a stronger commitment to the Federal war effort. Army enlistments had lagged, and Samuel F. Cary, an army recruiter, was attached to Brownlow's entourage during most of the lecture tour. News accounts often mentioned that the General made appeals to the audience after the Parson completed his address. Likewise, Michigan and Illinois Republican leaders concluded that voters would respond positively to Brownlow's message. They arranged for him to appear before voters in each state to counter campaigns by Southern sympathizing Copperheads during the 1862 congressional races—races that potentially could have undermined the Union's war effort.

Publishers realized that Brownlow's message was powerful and people would demand his story in print. For individuals choosing not to purchase the best selling *Parson Brownlow's Book*, at \$1.25, they provided versions of his biography. Selling for 25–50 cents apiece, these biographies sometimes were more myth than a factual account of the Parson's life. In addition, versions of his speech sold for 10–15 cents each. Despite the Parson's puritanical life-style, one publisher went so far as to issue a dance sheet titled "Parson Brownlow's Quick Step."

Enterprising entrepreneurs also offered souvenirs commemorating Brownlow's heroic defense of the Union. These included sterling silver spoons with the Parson's image etched on the bowl. In Cincinnati, Jas. Gates sold mailing envelopes with Brownlow's likeness printed on them accompanied by his satirical reply to Confederate General Gideon J. Pillow's request that the Parson join his Rebel regiment as a Chaplain.⁴⁸ Perhaps the most active entrepreneurs were the photographers who produced for sale numerous photographic pictures of the Parson on the occasion of his visit to their city.

Most significant of Brownlow's effect was the overt response of his audiences. Northerners were eager to see and hear the valiant Unionist from East Tennessee.

⁴⁸ His reply to Pillow was: "I have just received your message through Mr. Sale, requesting me to serve as Chaplain to your brigade in the Southern army; and in the spirit of kindness to which this request is made, but in all candor, I return this for an answer, that when I have made up my mind to go to hell, I will cut my throat and go directly and not travel round by the way of the Southern Confederacy. I am, very respectfully &c, W. G. Brownlow."

⁴⁹ When Brownlow resumed publishing the *Whig* he lacked an adequate mail system in war-time East Tennessee to distribute it to northern subscribers. He solved the problem by also printing the paper in Cincinnati

They accorded him all the honors their community could offer. Standing room only throngs assembled throughout his tour to hear of his adventures among the Rebels. These crowds produced substantial admission proceeds and, when added to the considerable royalties from his book, demonstrated that his message struck sympathetic chords among northern audiences. These monies were more than sufficient to support his exiled family and to achieve his resolute goal of re-establishing his Unionist paper, the *Knoxville Whig*. Many of these listeners were so impressed with the Parson they eagerly joined his subscriber's list.⁴⁹

In many respects, Parson Brownlow was the right man, in the right circumstance, at the right time to become a celebrated hero to the people of the North.⁵⁰ He exploited this status on behalf of the Union. His reputation as an unrelenting fire-brand unquestionably preceded his appearances in the north. Those individuals who had not met him created their own image of the man stemming from the numerous stories that circulated relative to his verbal and physical brawls. This perception contrasted considerably with that which they beheld when he appeared before them, as reported by a *New York Times* reporter: "They expected to see a rough, hardy, keen-featured man who might pass as a prizefighter, a bully or a rowdy: instead of which they saw a man slightly built, with stooped shoulders, a round bullet head, a quiet pleasant countenance, and an air some what depressed."⁵¹ Brownlow's audience also witnessed a relatively feeble and palsied speaker, a result of the illness he suffered over the past half decade. This physical condition enhanced the Parson's credibility by giving him the appearance of one heroically sacrificing the last ounces of his strength to warn his listeners about the danger of disregarding the Confederate menace. Such an altruistic impression called on the listeners to match his dedication to the Union's war effort.

When Burnside's army drove the Confederate military out of Knoxville in the fall of 1863, the Parson hastened to the city and immediately went about fulfilling the promise made in the North to revive his *Whig*. The Union Army discovered an unused printing press, type and ink in the Middle Tennessee village of Alexandria and shipped the equipment to Knoxville for Brownlow's use. The first issue of the restored paper, now renamed *Brownlow's Knoxville Whig and Rebel Ventilator*, made its appearance on November 11, 1863. Just two years had passed since Confederate au-

where the U. S. mail could deliver it to an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 subscribers who had been assembled during his tour.

⁵⁰ Northern heroes were in short supply during the first year of the war. Maj. Robert Anderson, Commander at Fort Sumter, was hailed briefly for his defense of the fort although some criticized him for surrendering it too early. Col. Oliver Ellsworth, a Lincoln confidant, was slain by an irate southerner immediately after he tore down a Confederate flag on the Marshall House in Alexandria, Virginia. Charles Wilkes boarded the British ship *Trent* and apprehended Confederate agents Mason and Slidell. However, the brief attention these men received quickly faded.

⁵¹ *New York Times*, May 14, 1862.

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thorities suppressed his paper. His first editorial announced: "With high regards for our friends, a decent respect for honorable enemies, and the lowest contempt for the leaders of the Rebellion, this Journal, with whatever of talents its editor can muster, launches upon the troubled sea of life." In no uncertain terms, Brownlow had set the course for his resurrected paper.

Parson Brownlow began his tour of northern cities at a fortunate moment for the Union when support for its preservation was in relative disarray. As armed clashes broke out a year earlier many northerners assumed that hostilities would end within a few months. A year later, they could not predict an end to the war. During the past year Federal troops had suffered defeats at the hands of defiant southern Rebels. Prominent military officers had deserted the army to join the southern cause. Voluntary enlistments in the military had given way to conscripted personnel. Peace Democrats had begun agitating for an end to the war even if such action required the dissolution of the Union. Brownlow stepped into this milieu as one who had clashed with the Confederacy on its home ground and observed Rebel injustice first hand as it was meted out to East Tennessee Unionists. His underlying message was one of hope and resolve, and his speaking tour successfully spread this message across the northern states.