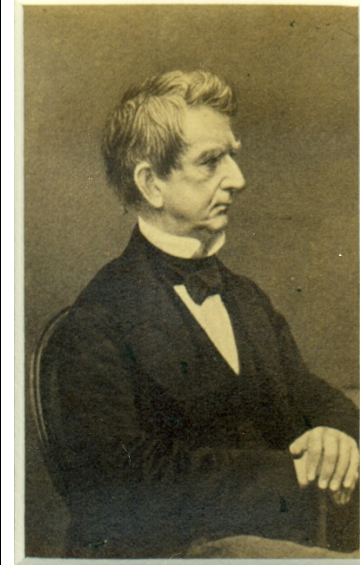


Chapter 321 – Seward Oversteps His Bounds And Lincoln Reacts Forcefully



Dates:
April 1, 1860

Sections:

- Seward Offers Up A “Foreign War” Plot That He Might Lead In Lincoln’s Place

Date: April 1, 1861

Seward Offers Up A “Foreign War” Plot That He Might Lead In Lincoln’s Place



William Henry Seward (1801-1872)

April Fool’s Day concludes with one other telling incident that will define the relationship between Henry Seward and Abraham Lincoln over the remaining four years of their time together.

Seward believes that he is clearly superior to the President in seeing “the big picture” affecting the destiny of the nation. For him that involves finding any way possible to bring the seceding states back into the Union. But he is no longer certain that evacuating the forts would produce that outcome, even if he could finally convince Lincoln to go along.

What is needed, he thinks, is a different strategy, something so compelling that the South will be persuaded to heal the breach and come home. His intricate mind lands on finding a “common enemy” such as Spain, and provoking a conflict with them over something the South might fight for in unison with the North, such as acquiring Cuba or other potential plantation territories.

With this in mind, he sends a memorandum to Lincoln in which he politely offers to take the lead in the current crisis if it is producing too much strain on the President.

Lincoln is taken aback by the proposal, but decides to use it to put Seward in his place and establish the working relationship he wants and needs going forward. He summons Seward and tells him straight out that Ft. Sumter must be defended and that the final decision belongs with him:

If this must be done; I must do it.

His tone with Seward is gentle, not harsh, and he insures him that he his support as Secretary of State will be crucial to this and all future decisions during his presidency.

It is generally agreed that from that time forward. Seward will always remain willing to openly and aggressively offer advice to Lincoln, without ever again overstepping his bounds.