Decatur, Ills, March 14, 1863

Dear Cowan,

What are you about? What are you thinking, and what are you doing? Are you any more hopeful of the Republic? Have you any hope at all? Do the hopes look any brighter, are the prospects for a termination of this terrible war, and the restoration of the Union, and a return to the protection of the Constitution and laws any more encouraging than when we parted? Now answer all these questions, and all others that I might ask if I would try.

There is not much in the aspect of affairs here to cheer me. The ultra Republicans are more violent, denunciatory and intolerant than ever. They are exasperated at the signal, disgraceful, and utter failure of their pet measures of confiscation, bills and proclamations, and snap, like rabid dogs, at everything that stands in their way or crosses their path.
They are not to blame. Oh no! They are the exclusive patriots, and if their measures have failed, it is not because they were inherently absurd, silly and mischievous, but because they were opposed by rebel sympathizers. They must do something to divert public attention from themselves and those who denounce, with incredulous indignation, all who dare differ with them in opinion, or question their infallibility. The President does not escape them. Yet he has allowed himself to be used as the instrument of their prejudices and malapropisms, gives heed no protection.

It is very unnecessary for them not to die for their gratification.

On the other hand, not a few of the democratic leaders are traitors at least, are in sympathy with rebellion, and had rather the government was overthrown than that it should be saved by a Republican administration. There was a time when they were powerless. They had them down. They had lost control over the masses, and could no longer rally them. But then we generously gave them the rallying cry, just as we did to the traitors in the South, and enabled them to regain their lost, and mischievous influence, and they now giving us a great deal of trouble.

Still, the members of the democratic party are loyal at least, and wish to stand by the old government, and will if they are fairly dealt by. There is much talk about resistance to the conscription law on the one hand, and much goscolding on the other about what shall be done if it is attempted. I am, however, satisfied that if the draft is conducted with prudence, moderation and justice, there will be no forcible resistance. Men do not readily, and upon slight provocation, put themselves in open, and violent collision with the government. All will submit to let the law take its course. None, we doubt, reluctantly, but they will submit. We are to have a union meeting of moderate men of both parties tomorrow night. Can we not bring all true patriots together upon the basis of the New York resolutions? I can see nothing objectionable in these—nothing of a partisan character.
that can be offensive to a loyal man of any party. We must reunite the great body of the people, of all parties, in support of the government, or we will disgracefully fail. We must check the strong tendency to monarchy and mob-law, and bring back the people to a sense of the Constitution or swift and sure destruction shall overtake us.

By the way, have we any constitution? Does not the thing we call a Constitution provide that "No senator or representative shall, during the time for which he was elected, be appointed to any civil office under the authority of the United States, which shall have been created during such time." And have not many members of Congress been appointed to Governorships, Judgeships &c. which were created during their term of service? How is this? I may be laboring under some misapprehension.

When is this war to cease, and how is to cease? Will we put down the rebellion and restore the Union, or will the separation be permanent and what is to be our future in either event? We must have a future of some sort—what, I ask?

If you are as good at answering questions as I am at asking them I shall get a great deal of valuable information from you.

Let me hear from you. How will the Conscription be received with you?

Can't you come and see me this Spring or Summer? Kind regards to Miss Tuzlgee and Frank. Bring them with you.

Yours truly,

F. H. Browning
Dear Cowan,

Your welcome favor of the 17th reached me just as I was leaving home to attend the July Term of the U.S. Court at Chicago. I have just now returned, and snatch a moment to write you a line.

Since I left Washington I have been most of the time at home, quietly engaged in professional labors, struggling to provide the wherewithal to feed and clothe myself and family. Pursuits far more congenial to my tastes, and conducive to my happiness, than tumbling in the turbid, dirty waters of politics.

Why don't you come and see me, and see how quietly and contentedly I live, and how much more sensible it is to be here than in Washington. I think it doubtful whether I shall ever be connected with public employments again.

I would sacrifice much for our poor,
unhappy, bleeding county, but am satisfied that I could be of no possible service to it in public position. My opinions of what is wise, just, and expedient are so directly in conflict with those of the men who, for the time being, control our destinies, as to make it impossible for me to be useful in the public councils. In private life I may render some service, on a very limited theatre, in restraining the tendencies to insanity. Rulers and people are alike mad, and must recover of their madness before our troubles can end. The face of affairs is brighter than when I last wrote you, but the end is not yet. If we had forces enough to push our advantages without interruption little the rebel armies were everywhere overthrown, captured or dispersed, and our rulers would then retrace some of the false steps they have taken, and offer an amnesty and protection of person and property to the people everywhere who would
return to their allegiance, the end might be done. But this, I fear, will not be done. Our victories instead of being used as the means of peace I fear will only intensify the bitterness of the radicals and make them more impracticable than they were before. Their favorite theory now seems to be that the rebel states are all out of the Union—no longer a part of it—and that they cannot get back except by permission of the general government, and on terms and conditions to be dictated by her and to judge from intimations occasionally thrown out these terms are to be such as neither can, nor will be accepted.

There is but one way to proceed, viz: for the beleaguered states, as fast as the rebel armies are driven from them, to re-organize their state governments, and resume their places in the Union under the Constitution, with all the rights, privileges, protections are guaranteed they were entitled to before the rebellion.
began. This is an affair of their own. This they have a right to do whenever they can, and well. But will they be permitted to exercise this right? A committee from Louisiana asks permission of the President to hold a State election, and he refuses it.

What has he to do with State elections? If this is to be the programme the Union will never be restored, but the monstrous doctrines put forward by the President, in his letter to the Albany Committee will prevail, and this government become a consolidated despotism. I have much more to say, but neither time nor space to say it.

Who is to be the next Republican Candidate for the Presidency, and upon what platform? I dread to see a contest between the radicals of the two parties. Can not the patriots of all parties, those who really wish to save the Country, organize an intermediate party between the two extremes, and wrest the power from their hands? If we cannot I shall be almost without hope.

I send you a speech, but do not require you to read it. There is no dullest reader to me those of tall orations.

Well well. Mrs. Browning and Emma send their kind regards. We all go to watering place in a few days for a week or two. Do write. Don't delay so long. Let me hear from you fully. Truly yours, 

| Mrs. Browning |
Dear Cousin,

I am a lazy dog that I have not before acknowledged your courtesy in sending me a copy of your speech, and you are another that you have not written me a line to say how the world was wagging with you, and what you were doing and thinking about. Since my return home my hours have been consecrated to idleness, and I have begrudged every moment that has been given to any thing else. When I left Washington I was weary and worn when I left Washington, but have had a happy season at home, and am now refreshed ready to resume my labors, and Providence permitting, will be in Washington by the first of October. Mrs Browning will not go at present, but will follow in early winter. We are building a new residence. She
help me out of it. Tell me what you think, and what you are going
to do. Can McClellan be elected, and if elected will he give himself up
to the control of the corrupt, bad, rebel sympathizing part of the
Democratic party? This nomination
is received here with great enthusiasm
by the Democratic party, and I am
inclined to think there are many
Republicans why quietly rejoice at it, and will secretly support him,
that the great majority of the Repub-
licans are still crazy.

How does the nomination take in Peru?
What are Abraham's prospects? To be
to be Secor for a second term, and
if so what is to be the consequences
to the country: fortunate, or disastrous?
I am seeking light and knowledge
impart there. I am in a situation
to act with entire independence.
I am neither an office holder or
office seeker, but am prepared
wishes to remain here as long as she can to superintend, and will join me in December.

I have no need your speech with great pleasure, to day, and think I may venture to say that you will not be ashamed of it in the future. It is gratifying to me to find a complete coincidence in our views still existing. Do tell me what you think of the "situation," political and military. Is this unhappy war ever to end, and if so how, and when?

I cannot see that there is any hope of a permanent peace without union, and I can as little see how the union is to be restored, and fraternal relations re-established, by an adherence to our present policy.

Have we any thing to hope by contining the present administration, and if we overthrow it may we not yet out of the "frying pan into the fire?" I am in a strait. D
to sacrifice all personal prejudices, preconceptions and affections, and all political ties and obligations to what I may conscientiously believe to be the best interests of our unhappy Country. You know, B., as I may Deem to you, that I am personally attached to the President, and have faithfully tried to uphold him and make him respectable; this I never have been able to persuade myself that he was big enough for his position. Still, I thought he might cut through, as many a boy has cut through College, without this place, and without knowledge, but I fear he is a failure.

I think Mr. Lincoln a good man—a true patriot and the ablest man we have had, but don't know what sort of President he would make.

Let me hear from you, you lazy loafer, without delay?

Mrs. Browning and Emma are well, and unite with me in kind regards to yourself and family, especially Miss Diggie, to whom give my love.

 Truly yours

O. H. Browning

[Signature]