

Springfield, Feb. 14. 1860

Messrs. O. P. Hoall
J. R. Fullinwider
W. F. Corcell.

Gentlemen.

Your letter, in which, among other things, you ask "what I meant when I said this Union could not stand half slave and half free - and also what I meant when I said a house divided against itself could not stand" is received, and I very cheerfully answer it, as plainly as I may be able. You misquote, to some material extent, what I did say; which induces me to think you have not, very carefully, read the speech in which the expressions occur which puzzle you to understand. For this reason, and because the language I used is as plain as I can make it, I now quote at length the whole paragraph in which the expressions which puzzle you occur. It is as follows: "We are now far into the fifth

year since a policy was initiated with the
avowed object, and confident promise of
putting an end to slavery agitation— Under the
operation of that policy that agitation has
not only not ceased, but constantly augmented.
I believe it will not cease until a crisis
shall have been reached, and passed— A
house divided against itself can not stand—
I believe this government can not endure
permanently, half slave, and half free— I
do not expect the Union to be dissolved;
I do not expect the house to fall; but
I do expect it will cease to be divided—
It will become all one thing, or all the other.
Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the
further spread of it, and place it where the
public mind shall rest in the belief that it is
in course of ultimate extinction; or its advo-
cates will push it forward till it will become
as legal in all the States, old as well
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That is the whole paragraph; and it puzzles
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it carefully, and conclude I meant all I said, and
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upon this, ~~in~~ saying it was a declaration of war
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If I had said "I believe this government can
not last always, half slave and half free"
would you understand it any better than
you do? "Endure permanently" and "last
always" have exactly the same meaning—

If you, or any of you, will state to me
some meaning which you suppose I had, I
can, and will instantly tell you whether
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Yours very truly
A. Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln

*Letter to Oliver P. Hall, Jacob N. Fullinwider,
and William F. Correll*

February 14, 1860

Regenstem
Catalog

One of Lincoln's most famous and memorable speeches was the "House Divided" speech delivered at the Illinois State Republican Convention in Springfield, June 16, 1858. Lincoln had just been nominated to oppose Stephen A. Douglas in the senatorial race, a campaign which included the historic Lincoln-Douglas debates and launched him on the road to the White House. Eighteen months later, three Sangamon County farmers, Hall, Fullinwider and Correll, wrote asking him to explain more clearly his meaning in the much-quoted first paragraph of the Convention speech.

On exhibit is Lincoln's "cheerful" reply to this request. Since he was not sure that the enquirers had read the text accurately, he quoted the entire significant paragraph. Then he said that he could not think how his meaning could possibly have been expressed more plainly—"conclude that I meant all I said and did not mean anything I did not say, and you will have my meaning."

From the William E. Barton Collection of
Lincolniana

Handwritten notes in the top left corner, possibly including the name "H. H. H."

Faint, illegible text at the top of the page, possibly a header or title.

Main body of faint, illegible text, appearing to be several lines of a letter or document.

Bottom section of faint, illegible text, possibly a signature or closing.

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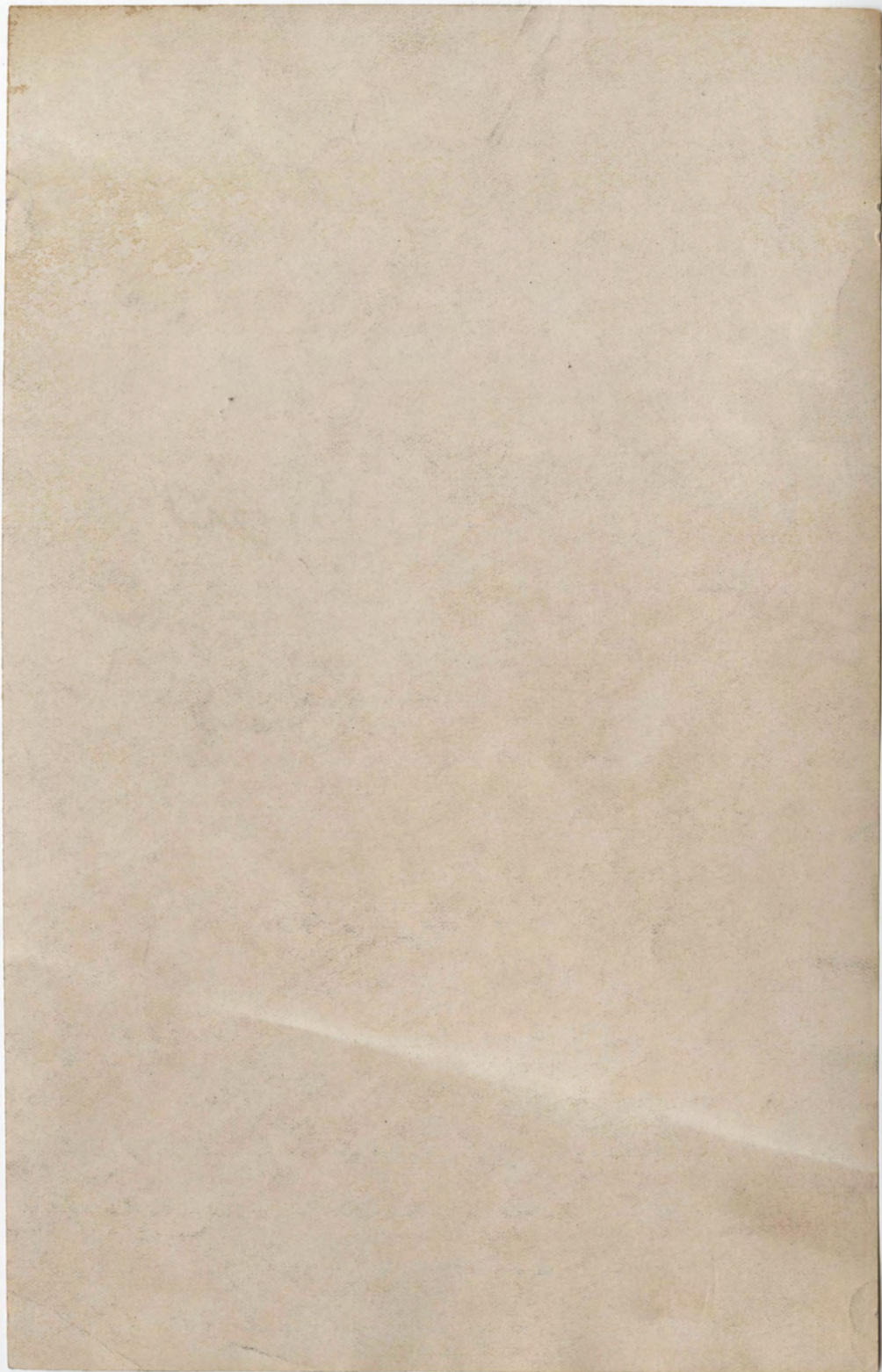
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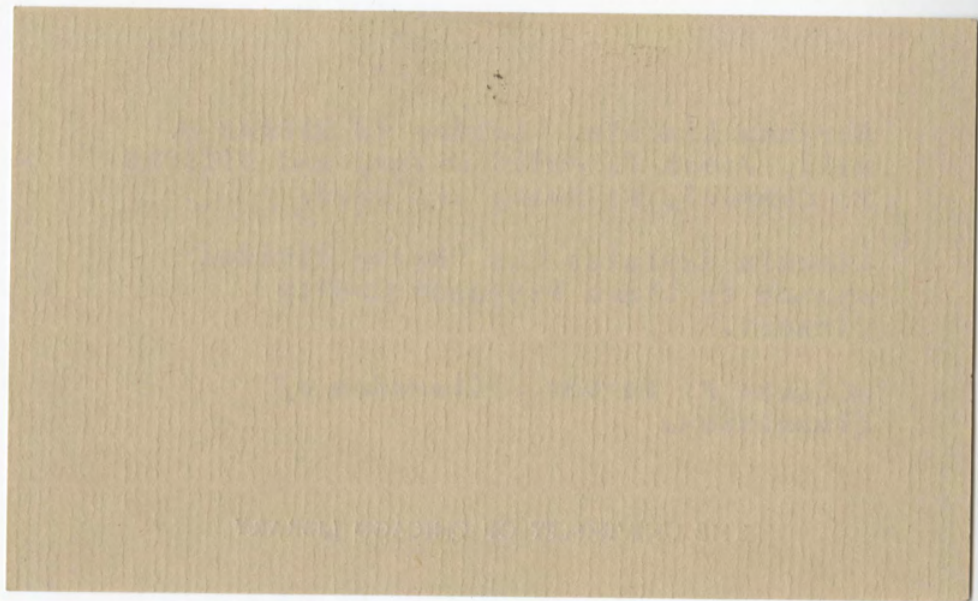


Abraham Lincoln. *Letter to Oliver P. Hall, Jacob N. Fullinwider, and William F. Correll, February 14, 1860.*

Lincoln explains his "House Divided" speech to three Sangamon County farmers.

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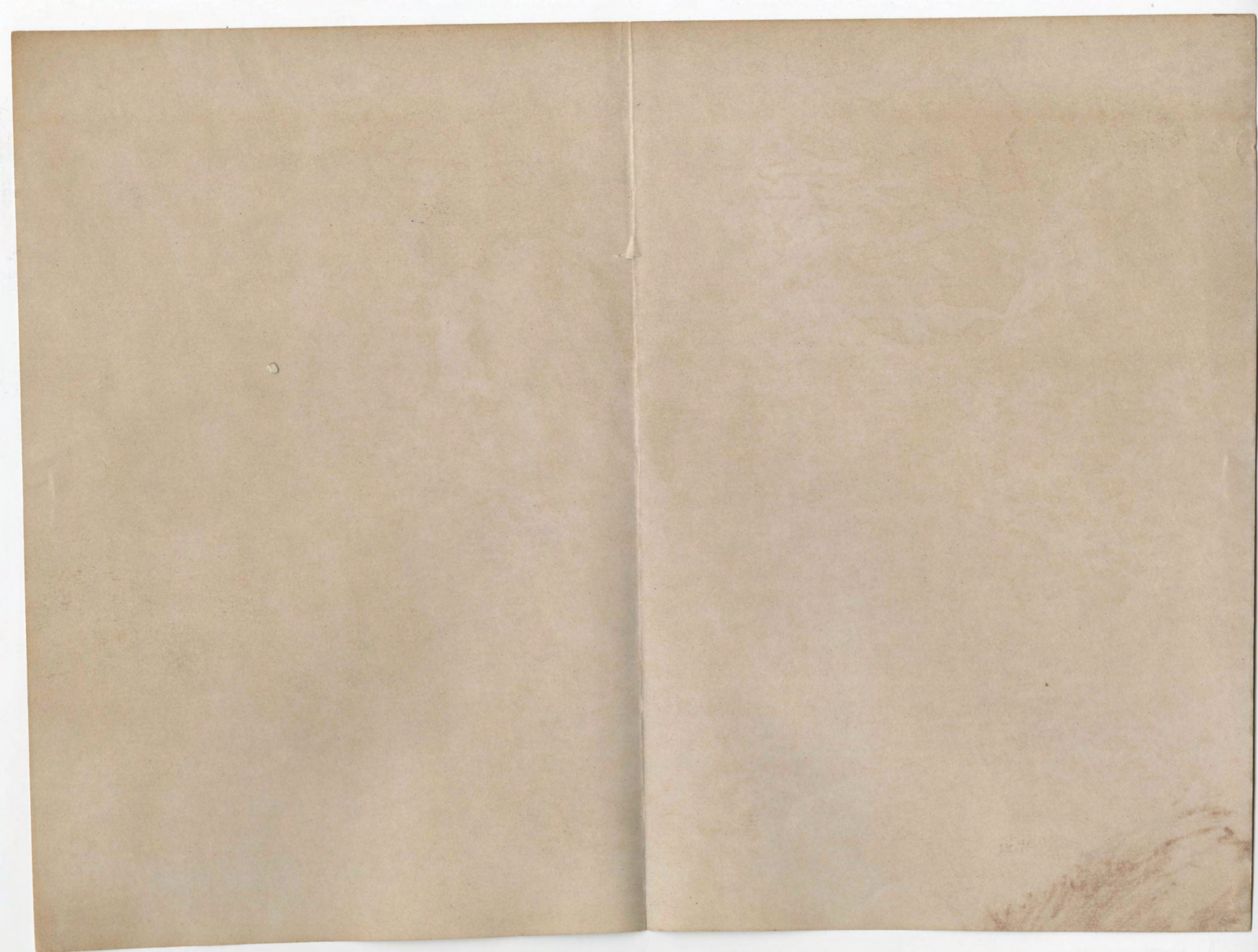
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