

*The Lady and the President: The Letters of Dorothea Dix and Millard Fillmore.* By Charles M. Snyder. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1975. Pp. 400. Notes, selected bibliography, index. \$9.50.)

Millard Fillmore is probably the least remembered president in United States history. This not entirely inexplicable because what can you say about Millard Fillmore? Likewise Dorothea Dix is among the forgotten humanitarians of the nineteenth century. Not even the women's liberation movement of today has done much to revive interest in her. Until several years ago it was believed the Fillmore Papers had been destroyed in 1889. Within the last few years a large number of Fillmore letters have been discovered including ones written between Fillmore and Dix. In all, more than one hundred and fifty items covering a span of nearly twenty years were found. From these Charles M. Snyder has produced this book.

Snyder begins with several chapters on the lives of Fillmore and Dix up to their first acquaintance in 1850. He then presents the letters in sequence with an annotated introduction to each one. The early chapters successfully capture the essence of personality exhibited by both the lady and the president. Certainly Fillmore is made more understandable and appealing by the literary ability of Snyder. In the letters written by Fillmore, both in and out of the White House, there is an obvious and sincere concern for the humanitarian efforts by Dix to improve the treatment of the mentally ill. For her part, Dix expressed her hopes and ambitions quite frankly to Fillmore. That she experienced numerous disappointments is clear. Dix believed she had not received full support from the public not only because they did not care but also because she was a woman.

Fillmore's wife died soon after her husband retired from the presidency and within another year Fillmore's daughter died. The letters from Dix show compassion for the bereaved man and are touching in sentiment. One wonders whether Dix entertained a secret desire to fill the void in Fillmore's life by becoming more than a friend. Although Fillmore lived until 1874, the last extant correspondence with Dix came in 1869. Since the bulk of the letters were written in the 1850s they provide little dealing with the years of the Civil War and beyond.

The book is well edited and is suitably printed and bound. In no way does it offer a major contribution to United States history in the antebellum era. The importance of the book lies in the revelation of two minds that crossed paths and exchanged ideas long ago—and as such represents a valuable footnote to the political and social history of the 1850s.

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*Lincoln and the War Democrats: The Grand Erosion of Conservative Tradition.* By Christopher Dell. (Rutherford, N.J.: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1975. Pp. 455. Notes, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$18.50.)

This book is attractively presented, thoroughly organized, and well written. Christopher Dell pursues his points with vigor and determination. His thesis is that Abraham Lincoln utilized the War Democrats as the most important element in his Union party coalition to abolish slavery, undermine states' rights, and save the Union, but destroyed their own conservative principles in the process. The author manages to present his case in a manner uncritical readers may find convincing.

The chief fault of this book is its excessive reliance on secondary sources—especially late nineteenth and early twentieth century state histories and biographies—many of which are of dubious quality. For example, Dell treats a three volume *Political History of New York* (1906-1909) as authoritative. He cites the six volume *History of Maine* (1919) five consecutive times in discussing the triumph of conservative Republicans over radicals in Maine in 1863 and the parallel defeat of the peace faction by the War Democrats (pp. 240-41). Good secondary sources such as William B. Hesseltine's *Lincoln and the War Governors* (1955) are frequently used, but James D. Horan's fictionalized *Confederate Agent: A Discovery in History* (1954) is cited as a reliable source on the Northwest Conspiracy and the Indiana treason trials (pp. 150-51, 301). Dell also places unwarranted dependence on Clifton R. Hall's *Andrew Johnson, Military Governor of Tennessee* (1919) and the *Dictionary of American Biography*.

Of primary sources, Dell uses the *Congressional Globe* extensively. Contemporary newspapers are cited sporadically,