Abraham Lincoln papers

From William Nelson\(^1\) to John B. S. Todd,\(^2\), April 18, 1861

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1 ID: William Nelson was a native Kentuckian and lieutenant in the navy at the outbreak of the Civil War. Nelson recruited soldiers in his home state and helped maintain Kentucky's loyalty to the Union. Nelson rose to the rank of major general and commanded troops at Shiloh and other important western battles, until he was killed by General Jefferson C. Davis in September 1862.

2 ID: John Blair Smith Todd, a distant relative of Abraham Lincoln by marriage, was a graduate of West Point and briefly served as a general in the Union Army during the Civil War. Todd spent most of the war as a delegate to Congress from the Dakota Territory (1861-65).

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Louisville: 18th April Thursday

Dear Tod—

Never in my life have I seen anything like the excitement there is here— The people have absolutely gone mad. Some of the best Union men are talking secession and acting as officers of secession meetings: I have met several people and a Union meeting is arranged for to night— Mr Guthrie will speak— Gov. Magoffin is here doing all he can to encourage secession, damn him! Mr Crittenden will take the stump on Tuesday— Bell attempted to answer Breckenridge the other day a Versailles and was floored so I am told. Ellwood Fisher that pestilential knave is taking up both sides of fire place at the Club here talking secession and doing more harm than you can well conceive— We had a passage of arms last night—

You can tell the President that I think that Kentucky can be held still — but it will require exertion— Magoffins' coarse reply to the Secretary of War has been of service to the cause for it is universally condemned both for its bad taste and in his failing to comply with his sworn duty

An immense pressure is brought to bear upon all officers to resign and some few are weak enough to be bullied into it— Three did so yesterday—

Last night a hundred men went off to Alabama— There is a thousand enrolled, under the command of Col Blanton Duncan— I have taken opinion of friends on the idea of swearing out a warrant against Duncan for treason &c but they say that it will only do harm in this state of excitement
There is another thing that must be attended to — that is it should be: Dr. Breckenridge resigned the office of Physician to the Marine Hospital at this place (Louisville) on the 4th of March— It is still vacant — but there are a number of applications for it of course— Among the applicants is Dr John Mathews — a union man of character an reputation — he is recommended by Mr Crittenden, by Mr Mallory the member from this district and his appointment would give great satisfaction— If you can, have him appointed — so that he will take office in the midst of this excitement — appoint him now— He had determind to [withown?] his application, on account of the political aspect and it was at my remonstrance that he did not do so— Attend to this!

The President if he has time to read the papers will find himself damned well abused in this region, but I think Ky can be held still!

Yours truly W. Nelson