

More on Civil War Lions

by GREG BALAGIAN

The United Kingdom remained officially neutral throughout the American Civil War. Elite opinion tended to favor the Confederacy, while public opinion was for the Union. Large scale trade continued in both directions, with the Americans shipping grain to Britain while Britain sent manufactured items and munitions. Immigration continued into the United States, with Britons volunteering for the Union Army.

The Confederate strategy for securing independence was largely based on the hope of military intervention by Britain and France, which never happened because it would have meant war with the United States. In the end, British involvement did not significantly affect the outcome of the war.

Meanwhile, the British Lion often appeared as a symbol of the North opposite to the donkey which was a symbol of the South (and the democrat party).

I have a cover in my collection which depicts a lion and a donkey facing each other with an inscription: "One of us must conquer." This cover was mailed during the early 1860s and bears a circular date stamp from Bardstown, Kentucky. (Fig.1)

Other Civil War cachets with lion caricatures which are known to me, are shown below.

Fig. 1. British lion & Southern donkey, "One of us must conquer," ca. 1860s.



1. A donkey is trying to disguise itself as a lion with the inscription:



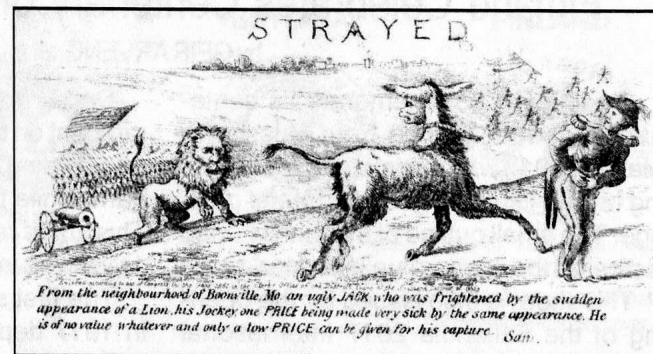
"When Southern fools depute an Ass/ In Lion's skin, to bray their cause/ And fancy that the world, en masse/ Will give the long-eared beast applause/ Why, all must say that such a master/Will prove to them a sad dis-Ass-ter!"

2. Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America, is trying to



tickle the British Lion with cotton: "Lion. - Jeff. Its no use. I can do nothing for you 'till you bring a certificate, of good character from your old Uncle Sam."

3. A lion is frightening a donkey and Confederate General Sterling Price during the Battle of Boonville in Missouri. Titled "Strayed," "From the neighborhood of Boonville, Mo. [Missouri] an ugly Jack who was frightened by the sudden appearance of a Lion, his Jockey, one PRICE being made very sick by the same appearance. He is of no value whatever and only a low PRICE can be given for his capture. Sam."



4. Caricature of Emperor Napoleon III with a British lion: "The British Lion heedless of the Trap, The string of which is held by Emp'r Nap, Boldly takes the field/Which simple Jonathan, he thinks, will yield."

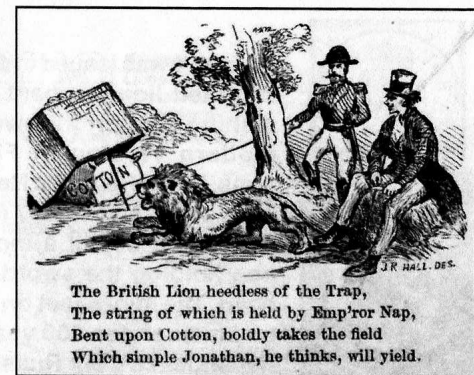
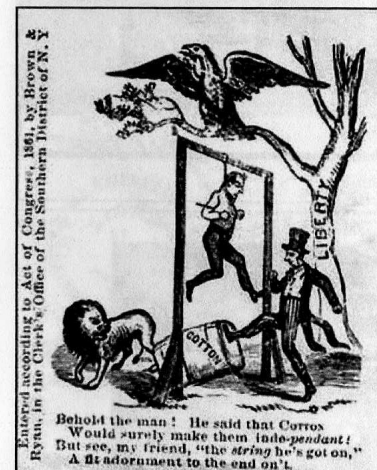
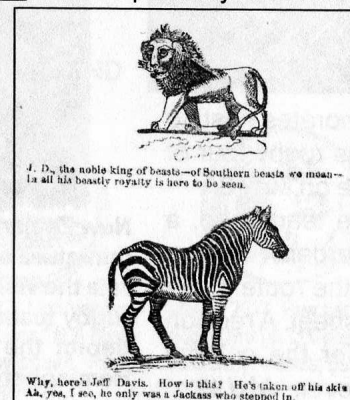


Fig. 5. A hanged Jefferson Davis, Uncle Sam and British Lion: "Behold the man! He said that Cotton/Would surely make them independent! But see, my friend 'the string he's got on' /A fit adornment to the end on't."



6. Caricature of a Lion and Zebra with an inscription: J. D., the noble king of beasts - of Southern beasts we mean/ In all his beastly royalty is here to be seen./ Why, here's Jeff Davis. How is this? He's taken off his skin/ Ah, yes, I see, he only was a jackass who stepped in."



As you can see, this is a fascinating aspect of "feline philately" which is definitely in need of more

research. Anyone who knows of any other Civil War patriotic covers with lions, please forward the image and information to either myself or the Editor.🐾

Partial List of Sources
Digital Library of Georgetown University; Collection of Civil War Patriotic Covers, Massachusetts Historical Society.