

Beacon Lights of History, Volume 12 eBook

Beacon Lights of History, Volume 12 by John Lord

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BEACON LIGHTS OF HISTORY.

ANDREW JACKSON.

1767-1845.

PERSONAL POLITICS.

It is very seldom that a man arises from an obscure and humble position to an exalted pre-eminence, without peculiar fitness for the work on which his fame rests, and which probably no one else could have done so well. He may not be learned, or cultured; he may be even unlettered and rough; he may be stained by vulgar defects and vices which are fatal to all dignity of character; but there must be something about him which calls out the respect and admiration of those with whom he is surrounded, so as to give him a start, and open a way for success in the business or enterprise where his genius lies.

Such a man was Andrew Jackson. Whether as a youth, or as a man pursuing his career of village lawyer in the backwoods of a frontier settlement, he was about the last person of whom one would predict that he should arise to a great position and unbounded national popularity. His birth was plebeian and obscure. His father, of Scotch-Irish descent, lived in a miserable hamlet in North Carolina, near the South Carolina line, without owning a single acre of land,—one of the poorest of the poor whites. The boy Andrew, born shortly after his father's death in 1767, was reared in poverty and almost without education, learning at school only to "read, write, and cipher;" nor did he have any marked desire for knowledge, and never could spell correctly. At the age of thirteen he was driven from his native village by its devastation at the hands of the English soldiers, during the Revolutionary War. His mother, a worthy and most self-reliant woman, was an ardent patriot, and all her boys—Hugh, Robert, and Andrew—enlisted in the local home-guard. The elder two died, Hugh of exposure

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and Robert of prison small-pox, while Andrew, who had also been captured and sick of the disease, survived this early training in the scenes of war for further usefulness. The mother made her way on foot to Charleston, S.C., to nurse the sick patriots in the prison-ships, and there died of the prison fever, in 1781. The physical endurance and force of character of this mother constituted evidently the chief legacy that Andrew inherited, and it served him well through a long and arduous life.

At fifteen the boy was “a homeless orphan, a sick and sorrowful orphan,” working for a saddler in Charleston a few hours of the day, as his health would permit. With returning strength he got possession of a horse; but his army associates had led him into evil ways, and he became indebted to his landlord for board. This he managed to pay only by staking his horse in a game of dice against \$200, which he fortunately won; and this squared him with the world and enabled him to start afresh, on a better way.

Poor and obscure as he was, and imperfectly educated, he aspired to be a lawyer; and at eighteen years of age he became a law-student in the office of Mr. Spruce McCay in Salisbury, North Carolina. Two years later, in 1787, he was admitted to the bar. Not making much headway in Salisbury, he wandered to that part of the State which is now Tennessee, then an almost unbroken wilderness, exposed to Indian massacres and depredations; and finally he located himself at Nashville, where there was a small settlement,—chiefly of adventurers, who led lives of license and idleness.

It seems that Jackson, who was appointed district-attorney, had a considerable practice in his profession of a rough sort, in that frontier region where the slightest legal knowledge was sufficient for success. He was in no sense a student, like Jefferson and Madison in the early part of their careers in Virginia as village lawyers, although he was engaged in as many cases, and had perhaps as large an income as they. But what was he doing all this while, when he was not in his log-office and in the log-court-room, sixteen feet square? Was he pondering the principles or precedents of law, and storing his mind with the knowledge gained from books? Not at all. He was attending horse-races and cock-fightings and all the sports which marked the Southern people one hundred years ago; and his associates were not the most cultivated and wealthy of them either, but ignorant, rough, drinking, swearing, gambling, fighting rowdies, whose society was repulsive to people of taste, intelligence, and virtue.

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The young lawyer became a favorite with these men, and with their wives and sisters and daughters. He could ride a horse better than any of his neighbors; he entered into their quarrels with zeal and devotion; he was bold, rash, and adventurous, ever ready to hunt a hostile Indian, or fight a duel, or defend an innocent man who had suffered injury and injustice. He showed himself capable of the warmest and most devoted friendship as well as the bitterest and most unrelenting hatred. He was quick to join a dangerous enterprise, and ever showing ability to lead it,—the first on the spot to put out a fire; the first to expose himself in a common danger; commanding respect for his honesty, sincerity, and integrity; exciting fear from his fierce wrath when insulted,—a man terribly in earnest; always as courteous and chivalric to women as he was hard and savage to treacherous men. Above all, he was now a man of commanding stature, graceful manners, dignified deportment, and a naturally distinguished air; so that he was looked up to by men and admired by women. What did those violent, quarrelsome, adventurous settlers on the western confines of American civilization care whether their favorite was learned or ignorant, so long as he was manifestly superior to them in their chosen pursuits and pleasures, was capable of leading them in any enterprise, and sympathized with them in all their ideas and prejudices,—a born democrat, as well as a born leader. His claim upon them, however, was not without its worthy elements. He was perfectly fearless in enforcing the law, laughing at intimidation. He often had to ride hundreds of miles to professional duties on circuit, through forests infested by Indians, and towns cowed by ruffians; and he and his rifle were held in great respect. He was renowned as the foremost Indian fighter in that country, and as a prosecuting attorney whom no danger and no temptation could swerve from his duty. He was feared, trusted, and boundlessly popular.

The people therefore rallied about this man. When in 1796 a convention was called for framing a State constitution, Jackson was one of their influential delegates; and in December of that year he was sent to Congress as their most popular representative. Of course he was totally unfitted for legislative business, in which he never could have made any mark. On his return in 1797, a vacancy occurring in the United States Senate, he was elected senator, on the strength of his popularity as representative. But he remained only a year at Philadelphia, finding his calling dull, and probably conscious that he had no fitness for legislation, while the opportunity for professional and pecuniary success in Tennessee was very apparent to him.



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Next we read of his being made chief-justice of the Superior Court of Tennessee, with no more fitness for administering the law than he had for making it, or interest in it. Mr. Parton tells an anecdote of Jackson at this time which, whether true or not, illustrates his character as well as the rude conditions amid which he made himself felt. He was holding court in a little village in Tennessee, when a great, hulking fellow, armed with a pistol and bowie-knife, paraded before the little court-house, and cursed judge, jury, and all assembled. Jackson ordered the sheriff to arrest him, but that functionary failed to do it, either alone or with a posse. Whereupon Jackson caused the sheriff to summon *him* as posse, adjourned court for ten minutes, walked out and told the fellow to yield or be shot.

In telling why he surrendered to one man, when he had defied a crowd, the ruffian afterwards said: "When he came up I looked him in the eye, and I saw *shoot*. There wasn't *shoot* in nary other eye in the crowd. I said to myself, it is about time to sing small; and so I did."

It was by such bold, fearless conduct that Jackson won admiration,—not by his law, of which he knew but little, and never could have learned much. The law, moreover, was uncongenial to this man of action, and he resigned his judgeship and went for a short time into business,—trading land, selling horses, groceries, and dry-goods,—when he was appointed major-general of militia. This was just what he wanted. He had now found his place and was equal to it. His habits, enterprises, dangers, and bloody encounters, all alike fitted him for it. Henceforth his duty and his pleasure ran together in the same line. His personal peculiarities had made him popular; this popularity had made him prominent and secured to him offices for which he had no talent, seeing which he dropped them; but when a situation was offered for which he was fitted, he soon gained distinction, and his true career began.

It was as an Indian fighter that he laid the foundation of his fame. His popularity with rough people was succeeded by a series of heroic actions which brought him before the eyes of the nation. There was no sham in these victories. He fairly earned his laurels, and they so wrought on the imagination of the people that he quickly became famous.

But before his military exploits brought him a national reputation he had become notorious in his neighborhood as a duellist. He was always ready to fight when he deemed himself insulted. His numerous duels were very severely commented on when he became a candidate for the presidency, especially in New England. But duelling was a peculiar Southern institution; most Southern people settled their difficulties with pistols. Some of Jackson's duels were desperate and ferocious. He was the best shot in Tennessee, and, it is said, could lodge two successive balls in the same hole. As early as 1795 he fought with a fellow lawyer by the name of Avery. In 1806 he killed in a duel Charles Dickinson, who had spoken disparagingly of his wife, whom he had lately married, a divorced woman, but to whom he was tenderly attached as long as she

lived. Still later he fought with Thomas H. Benton, and received a wound from which he never fully recovered.



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Such was the life of Jackson until he was forty-five years of age,—that of a violent, passionate, arbitrary man, beloved as a friend, and feared as an enemy. It was the Creek war and the war with England which developed his extraordinary energies. When the war of 1812 broke out he was major-general of Tennessee militia, and at once offered his services to the government, which were eagerly accepted, and he was authorized to raise a body of volunteers in Tennessee and to report with them at New Orleans. He found no difficulty in collecting about sixteen hundred men, and in January, 1813, took them down the Cumberland, the Ohio, and Mississippi to Natchez, in such flat-bottomed boats as he could collect; another body of mounted men crossed the country five hundred miles to the rendezvous, and went into camp at Natchez, Feb. 15, 1813.

The Southern Department was under the command of General James Wilkinson, with headquarters at New Orleans,—a disagreeable and contentious man, who did not like Jackson. Through his influence the Tennessee detachment, after two months' delay in Natchez, was ordered by the authorities at Washington to be dismissed,—without pay, five hundred miles from home. Jackson promptly decided not to obey the command, but to keep his forces together, provide at his own expense for their food and transportation, and take them back to Tennessee in good order. He accomplished this, putting sick men on his own three horses, and himself marching on foot with the men, who, enthusiastic over his elastic toughness, dubbed him “Old Hickory,”—a title of affection that is familiar to this day. The government afterwards reimbursed him for his outlay in this matter, but his generosity, self-denial, energy, and masterly force added immensely to his popularity.

Jackson's disobedience of orders attracted but little attention at Washington, in that time of greater events, while his own patriotism and fighting zeal were not abated by his failure to get at the enemy. And very soon his desires were to be granted.

In 1811, before the war with England was declared, a general confederation of Indians had been made under the influence of the celebrated Tecumseh, a chief of the Shawanoc tribe. He was a man of magnificent figure, stately and noble as a Greek warrior, and withal eloquent. With his twin brother, the Prophet, Tecumseh travelled from the Great Lakes in the North to the Gulf of Mexico, inducing tribe after tribe to unite against the rapacious and advancing whites. But he did not accomplish much until the war with England broke out in 1812, when he saw a possibility of realizing his grand idea; and by the summer of 1813 he had the Creek nation, including a number of tribes, organized for war. How far he was aided by English intrigues is not fully known, but he doubtless received encouragement from English agents. From the British and the Spaniards, the Indians received arms and ammunition.

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The first attack of these Indians was on August 13, 1813, at Fort Mims, in Alabama, where there were nearly two hundred American troops, and where five hundred people were collected for safety. The Indians, chiefly Creeks, were led by Red Eagle, who utterly annihilated the defenders of the fort under Major Beasley, and scalped the women and children. When reports of this unexpected and atrocious massacre reached Tennessee the whole population was aroused to vengeance, and General Jackson, his arm still in a sling from his duel with Benton, set out to punish the savage foes. But he was impeded by lack of provisions, and quarrels among his subordinates, and general insubordination. In surmounting his difficulties he showed extraordinary tact and energy. His measures were most vigorous. He did not hesitate to shoot, whether legally or illegally, those who were insubordinate, thus restoring military discipline, the first and last necessity in war. Soldiers soon learn to appreciate the worth of such decision, and follow such a leader with determination almost equal to his own. Jackson's troops did splendid marching and fighting.

So rapid and relentless were his movements against the enemy that the campaign lasted but seven months, and the Indians were nearly all killed or dispersed. I need not enumerate his engagements, which were regarded as brilliant. His early dangers and adventures, and his acquaintance with Indian warfare ever since he could handle a rifle, now stood him in good stead. On the 21st of April, 1814, the militia under his command returned home victorious, and Jackson for his heroism and ability was made a major-general in the regular army, he then being forty-seven years of age. It was in this war that we first hear of the famous frontiersman Davy Crockett, and of Sam Houston, afterwards so unique a figure in the war for Texan independence. In this war, too, General Harrison gained his success at Tippecanoe, which was never forgotten; but his military genius was far inferior to that of Jackson. It is probable that had Jackson been sent to the North by the Secretary of War, he would have driven the British troops out of Canada. There is no question about his military ability, although his reputation was sullied by high-handed and arbitrary measures. What he saw fit to do, he did, without scruples or regard to consequences. In war everything is tested by success; and in view of that, if sufficiently brilliant, everything else is forgotten.

The successful and rapid conquest of the Creeks opened the way for Jackson's Southern campaign against the English. As major-general he was sent to conclude a treaty with the Indians, which he soon arranged, and was then put in command of the Southern Division of the army, with headquarters at Mobile. The English made the neutral Spanish territory of Florida a basis of operations along the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, thus putting in peril both Mobile and New



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Orleans. They virtually possessed Pensacola, the Spanish force being too feeble to hold it, and made it the rendezvous of their fleets. The Spanish authorities made a show, indeed, of friendship with the United States, but the English flag floated over the forts of the city, and the governor was in sympathy with England. Such was the state of affairs when Jackson arrived at Mobile at the head of parts of three regiments of regulars, with a thousand miles of coast to defend, and without a fort adequately armed or garrisoned. He applied to the Secretary of War for permission to take Pensacola; but the government hesitated to attack a friendly power without further knowledge of their unfriendly acts, and the delayed response, ordering caution and waiting, did not reach him. Thrown upon his own resources, asking for orders and getting none, he was obliged to act without instructions, in face of vastly superior forces. And for this he can scarcely be blamed, since his situation demanded vigorous and rapid measures, before they could be indorsed by the Secretary of War. Pensacola, at the end of a beautiful bay, ten miles from the sea, with a fine harbor, was defended by Fort Barrancas, six miles from the town. Before it lay eight English men-of-war at anchor, the source of military supplies for the fort, on which floated the flags of both England and Spain. The fleet was in command of Captain Lord Percy, whose flagship was the "Hermes," while Colonel Nichols commanded the troops. This latter boastful and imprudent officer was foolish enough to issue a proclamation to the inhabitants of Louisiana and Kentucky to take up arms against their country. A body of Indians were also drilled in the service of the British, so far as Indians can be drilled to regular warfare.

As soon as the true intentions of the English were known to General Jackson, who had made up his mind to take possession of Pensacola, he wrote to the Spanish governor, —a pompous, inefficient old grandee,—and demanded the surrender of certain hostile Creek chieftains, who had taken refuge in the town.

The demand was haughtily rejected. Jackson waited until three thousand Tennessee militia, for whom he had urgently sent, arrived at Mobile, under the command of General Coffee, one of his efficient coadjutors in the Creek War, and Colonel Butler, and then promptly and successfully stormed Pensacola, driving out the British, who blew up Fort Barrancas and escaped to their ships. After which he retired to Mobile to defend that important town against the British forces, who threatened an attack.



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The city of Mobile could be defended by fortifications on Mobile Point, thirty miles distant, at the mouth of the bay, since opposite it was a narrow channel through which alone vessels of any considerable size could enter the bay. At this point was Fort Bowyer, in a state of dilapidation, mounting but a few pieces of cannon. Into this fort Jackson at once threw a garrison of one hundred and sixty regular infantry under Major Lawrence, a most gallant officer. These troops were of course unacquainted with the use of artillery, but they put the fort in the best condition they could, and on the 12th of September the enemy appeared, the fleet under Captain Percy, and a body of marines and Indians under Colonel Nichols. Jackson, then at Mobile, apprised of the appearance of the British, hastily reinforced the fort, about to be attacked by a large force confident of success. On the 15th of September the attack began; the English battered down the ramparts of the fortifications, and anchored their ships within gunshot of the fort; but so gallant was the defence that the ships were disabled, and the enemy retreated, with a loss of about one hundred men. This victory saved Mobile; and more, it gave confidence to the small army on whom the defence of the coast of the Gulf of Mexico depended.

Jackson forthwith issued his bulletins or proclamations in a truly Napoleonic style to the inhabitants of Louisiana, to rally to the defence of New Orleans, which he saw would probably be the next object of attack on the part of the British. On the 2d of December he personally reached that city and made preparations for the expected assault, and, ably assisted by Edward Livingston, the most prominent lawyer of the city, enlisted for the defence the French creoles, the American residents, and a few Spaniards.

New Orleans was a prize which the English coveted, and to possess it that government had willingly expended a million of pounds sterling. The city not only controlled the commerce of the Mississippi, but in it were stored one hundred and fifty thousand bales of cotton, and eight hundred and ten thousand hogsheads of sugar, all of which the English government expected to seize. It contained at that time about twenty thousand people,—less than half of whom were whites, and these chiefly French creoles,—besides a floating population of sailors and traders.

New Orleans is built on a bend in the Mississippi, in the shape of a horse-shoe, about one hundred miles from where by a sinuous southeasterly course the river empties into the Gulf of Mexico. At the city the river was about a mile wide, with a current of four miles an hour, and back of the town was a swamp, draining to the north into Lake Ponchartrain, and to the east into Lake Borgne, which opens out into the Gulf east of the city. It was difficult for sailing-vessels at that time to ascend the river one hundred miles against the current, if forts and batteries

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were erected on its banks; and a sort of back entrance was afforded to the city for small vessels through lakes and lagoons at a comparatively short distance. On one of these lakes, Lake Borgne, a flotilla of light gunboats was placed for defence, under the command of Lieutenant Jones, but on December 14th an overpowering force of small British vessels dispersed the American squadron, and on the twenty-second about fifteen hundred regulars, the picked men of the British army, fresh from European victories under Wellington, contrived to find their way unperceived through the swamps and lagoons to the belt of plantations between the river and the swamps, about nine miles below New Orleans.

When the news arrived of the loss of the gunboats, which made the enemy the masters of Lake Borgne, a panic spread over the city, for the forces of the enemy were greatly exaggerated. But Jackson was equal to the emergency, though having but just arrived. He coolly adopted the most vigorous measures, and restored confidence. Times of confusion, difficulty, and danger were always his best opportunities. He proclaimed martial law; he sent in all directions for reinforcements; he called upon the people to organize for defence; he released and enlisted the convicts, and accepted the proffered services of Jean Lafitte, the ex-"pirate"—or, rather, smuggler—of the Gulf, with two companies of his ex-buccaneers; he appealed to "the noble-hearted, generous, free men of color" to enlist, and the whole town was instantly transformed into a military camp. Within a fortnight he had five thousand men, one-fifth regulars and the rest militia. General Jackson's address to his soldiers was spirited but inflated, encouraging and boastful, with a great patriotic ring, and, of course effective. The population of the city was united in resolving to make a sturdy defence.

Had the British marched as soon as they landed, they probably would have taken the city, in the existing consternation. But they waited for larger forces from their ships, which carried six thousand troops, and in their turn exaggerated the number of the defenders, which at the first were only about two thousand badly frightened men. The delay was a godsend to the Americans, who now learned the strength of the enemy.

On the 23d—as always, eager to be at his enemy, and moving with his characteristic energy—Jackson sent a small force down to make a night attack on the British camp; also a schooner, heavily armed with cannon, to co-operate from the river. It was a wild and inconsequent fight; but it checked the advance of the British, who now were still more impressed with the need of reinforcements; it aroused the confidence and fighting spirit of the Americans, and it enabled Jackson to take up a defensive line behind an old canal, extending across the plain from river to swamp, and gave him time to fortify it. At once he raised a formidable barricade of mud and timber, and strengthened it with cotton-bales from the neighboring plantations. The cotton, however, proved rather a nuisance than a help, as it took fire under the attack, and smoked, annoying the men. The "fortifications of cotton-bales" were only a romance of the war.



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On the 25th arrived Sir Edward Pakenham, brother-in-law of Wellington and an able soldier, to take command, and on the 28th the British attacked the extemporized but strong breastworks, confident of success. But the sharp-shooters from the backwoods of Tennessee under Carroll, and from Kentucky under Coffee, who fought with every advantage, protected by their mud defences, were equally confident. The slaughter of the British troops, utterly unprotected though brave and gallant, was terrible, and they were repulsed. Preparations were now made for a still more vigorous, systematic, and general assault, and a force was sent across the river to menace the city from that side.

On the 8th of January the decisive battle was fought which extinguished forever all dreams of the conquest of America, on the part of the British. General Pakenham, who commanded the advancing columns in person, was killed, and their authorities state their loss to have been two thousand killed, wounded, and missing. The American loss was eight killed and thirteen wounded. It was a rash presumption for the British to attack a fortified entrenchment ten feet high in some places, and ten feet thick, with detached redoubts to flank it and three thousand men behind it. The conflict was not strictly a battle,—not like an encounter in the open field, where the raw troops under Jackson, most of them militia, would have stood no chance with the veterans whom Wellington had led to victory and glory.

Jackson's brilliant defence at New Orleans was admirably planned and energetically executed. It had no effect on the war, for the treaty of peace, although not yet heard of, had been signed weeks before; but it enabled America to close the conflict with a splendid success, which offset the disasters and mistakes of the Northern campaigns. Naturally, it was magnified into a great military exploit, and raised the fame of Jackson to such a height, all over the country, that nothing could ever afterwards weaken his popularity, no matter what he did, lawful or unlawful. He was a victor over the Indians and over the English, and all his arbitrary acts were condoned by an admiring people who had but few military heroes to boast of.

His successes had a bad effect on Jackson himself. He came to feel that he had a right to ride over precedents and law when it seemed to him expedient. He set up his will against constituted authorities, and everybody who did not endorse his measures he regarded as a personal enemy, to be crushed if possible. It was never said of him that he was unpatriotic in his intentions, only that he was wilful, vindictive, and ignorant. From the 8th of January, 1815, to the day of his death he was the most popular man that this country ever saw,—excepting, perhaps, Washington and Lincoln,—the central figure in American politics, with prodigious influence even after he had finally retired from public life. Immediately after the defence of New Orleans the legislatures of

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different States, and Congress itself, passed grateful resolutions for his military services, and the nation heaped all the honor on the hero that was in its power to give, —medals, swords, and rewards, and Congress remitted a fine which had been imposed by Judge Hall, in New Orleans, for contempt of court. Jackson's severity in executing six militia-men for mutiny was approved generally as a wholesome exercise of military discipline, and all his acts were glorified. Wherever he went there was a round of festivities. He began to be talked about, as soon as the war was closed, as a candidate for the presidency, although when the idea was first proposed to him he repelled it with genuine indignation.

Scarcely had the British troops been withdrawn from the Gulf of Mexico to fight more successfully at Waterloo, when Jackson was called to put an end to the Seminole war in Florida, which Spanish territory he occupied on the ground of self-defence. The Indians —Seminoles and Creeks—with many runaway negroes, had been pillaging the border of Georgia. Jackson drove them off, seized the Spanish fort on Appalachee Bay, and again took possession of Pensacola on the plea that the Spanish officials were aiding the Indians. It required all the skill of the government at Washington to defend his despotic acts, for he was as complete an autocrat in his limited sphere as Caesar or Napoleon. The only limits he regarded were the limits to his power. But in whatever he did, he had a firm conviction that he was right. Even John Quincy Adams justified his acts in Florida, when his enemies were loud in their complaints of his needless executions, especially of two British traders, Arbuthnot and Ambruter, whom he had court-martialled and shot as abettors of the Indians. He had invaded the territory of a neutral power and driven off its representatives; but everything was condoned. And when, shortly after, Florida became United States territory by purchase from Spain, he was made its first governor,—a new field for him, but an appointment which President Monroe felt it necessary to make.

In April, 1821, having resigned his commission in the army, Jackson left Nashville with his family to take up his residence in Pensacola, enchanted with its climate and fruits and flowers, its refreshing sea-breezes, and its beautiful situation, in spite of hot weather. As governor of Florida he was invested with extraordinary powers. Indeed, there was scarcely any limit to them, except that he had no power to levy and collect taxes, and seize the property of the mixed races who dwelt in the land of oranges and flowers. It would appear that, aside from arbitrary acts, he did all he could for the good of the territory, under the influence of his wife, a Christian woman, whom he indulged in all things, especially in shutting up grog-shops, putting a stop to play-going, and securing an outward respect for the Sabbath. His term of office, however, was brief, and as his health was poor, for he was never vigorous, in November of the same year he gladly returned to Nashville, and about this time built his well-known residence, the "Hermitage." As a farmer he was unusually successful, making agriculture lucrative even with slave-labor.

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Jackson had now become a prominent candidate for the presidency, and as a part of the political plan, he was, in 1823, made senator from Tennessee in Congress, where he served parts of two terms, without, however, distinguishing himself as a legislator. He made but few speeches, and these were short, but cast his vote on occasions of importance, voting against a reduction of duty on iron and woollen and cotton goods, against imprisonment for debt, and favoring some internal improvements. In 1824 he wrote a letter advocating a "careful tariff," so far as it should afford revenues for the national defence, and to pay off the national debt, and "give a proper distribution of our labor;" but a tariff to enrich capitalists at the expense of the laboring classes, he always abhorred.

The administration of James Monroe, in two full terms, from 1817 to 1825, had not been marked by any great events or popular movements of especial historical interest. It was "the era of good feeling." The times were placid, and party animosities had nearly subsided. The opening of the slavery discussions resulted in the Missouri Compromise of 1820, and the irritations of that great topic were allayed for the time. Like all his predecessors after Washington, Monroe had been successively a diplomatist and Secretary of State, and the presidency seemed to fall to him as a matter of course. He was a most respectable man, although not of commanding abilities, and discharged his duties creditably in the absence of exciting questions. The only event of his administration which had a marked influence on the destinies of the United States was the announcement that the future colonization of the country by any European State would not be permitted. This is called the "Monroe doctrine," and had the warm support of Webster and other leading statesmen. It not only proclaimed the idea of complete American independence of all foreign powers, but opposed all interference of European States in American affairs. The ultimate influence of the application of this doctrine cannot be exaggerated in importance, whether it originated with the President or not. Monroe was educated for the bar, but was neither a good speaker nor a ready writer. Nor was he a man of extensive culture or attainments. The one great idea attributed to him was: "America for the Americans." He was succeeded, however, by a man of fine attainments and large experience, who had passed through the great offices of State with distinguished credit.

In February, 1824, Jackson was almost unanimously nominated for the presidency by the Democratic party, through the convention in Harrisburg, and John C. Calhoun was nominated for the vice-presidency. Jackson's main rivals in the election which followed were John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay, both of whom had rendered great civil services, and were better fitted for the post. But Jackson was the most popular, and he obtained ninety-nine electoral votes,



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Adams eighty-four, and Clay thirty-seven. No one having a majority, the election was thrown into the House of Representatives. Clay, who never liked nor trusted Jackson, threw his influence in favor of Adams, and Adams was elected by the vote of thirteen States. Jackson and his friends always maintained that he was cheated out of the election,—that Adams and Clay made a bargain between themselves,—which seemed to be confirmed by the fact that Clay was made Secretary of State in Adams's cabinet; although this was a natural enough sequence of Clay's throwing his political strength to make Adams president. Jackson returned, wrathful and disappointed, to his farm, but amid boisterous demonstrations of respect wherever he went. If he had not cared much about the presidency before, he was now determined to achieve it, and to crush his opponents, whom he promptly regarded as enemies.

John Quincy Adams entered upon office in 1825, free from "personal obligations" and "partisan entanglements," but with an unfriendly Congress. This, however, was not of much consequence, since no great subjects were before Congress for discussion. It was a period of great tranquillity, fitted for the development of the peaceful arts, and of internal improvements in the land, rather than of genius in the presidential chair. Not one public event of great importance occurred, although many commercial treaties were signed, and some internal improvements were made. Mr. Adams lived in friendly relations with his cabinet, composed of able men, and he was generally respected for the simplicity of his life, and the conscientious discharge of his routine duties. He was industrious and painstaking, rising early in the morning and retiring early in the evening. He was not popular, being cold and austere in manner, but he had a lofty self-respect, disdainful to conciliate foes or reward friends,—a New England Puritan of the severest type, sternly incorruptible, learned without genius, eloquent without rhetoric, experienced without wisdom, religious without orthodoxy, and liberal-minded with strong prejudices.

Perhaps the most marked thing in the political history of that administration was the strife for the next presidency, and the beginning of that angry and bitter conflict between politicians which had no cessation until the Civil War. The sessions of Congress were occupied in the manufacture of political capital; for a cloud had arisen in the political heavens, portending storms and animosities, and the discussion of important subjects of national scope, such as had not agitated the country before,—pertaining to finances, to tariffs, to constitutional limitations, to retrenchments, and innovations. There arose new political parties, or rather a great movement, extending to every town and hamlet, to give a new impetus to the Democratic sway. The leaders in this movement were the great antagonists of Clay and Webster,—a new class of politicians, like Benton, Amos Kendall, Martin

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Van Buren, Duff Green, W.B. Lewis, and others. A new era of “politics” was inaugurated, with all the then novel but now customary machinery of local clubs, partisan “campaign newspapers,” and the organized use of pledges and promises of appointments to office to reward “workers.” This system had been efficiently perfected in New York State under Mr. Van Buren and other leaders, but now it was brought into Federal politics, and the whole country was stirred into a fever heat of party strife.

In a political storm, therefore, Jackson was elected, and commenced his memorable reign in 1829,—John Quincy Adams retiring to his farm in disgust and wrath. The new president was carried into office on an avalanche of Democratic voters, receiving two hundred and sixty-one electoral votes, while Adams had only eighty-three, notwithstanding his long public services and his acknowledged worth. This was too great a disappointment for the retiring statesman to bear complacently, or even philosophically. He gave vent to his irritated feelings in unbecoming language, exaggerating the ignorance of Jackson and his general unfitness for the high office,—in this, however, betraying an estimate of the incoming President which was common among educated and conservative men. I well remember at college the contempt which the president and all the professors had for the Western warrior. It was generally believed by literary men that “Old Hickory” could scarcely write his name.

But the speeches of Jackson were always to the point, if not studied and elaborate, while his messages were certainly respectable, though rather too long. It is generally supposed that he furnished the rough drafts to his few intimate friends, who recast and polished them, while some think that William Lewis, Amos Kendall, and others wrote the whole of them, as well as all his public papers. In reading the early letters of Jackson, however, it is clear that they are anything but illiterate, whatever mistakes in spelling and grammatical errors there may be. His ideas were distinct, his sentiments unmistakable; and although he was fond of a kind of spread-eagle eloquence, his views on public questions were generally just and vigorously expressed. A Tennessee general, brought up with horse-jockeys, gamblers, and cock-fighters, and who never had even a fair common-school education, could not be expected to be very accomplished in the arts of composition, whatever talents and good sense he naturally may have had. Certain it is that Jackson’s mind was clear and his convictions were strong upon the national policy to be pursued by him; and if he opposed banks and tariffs it was because he believed that their influence was hostile to the true interests of the country. He doubtless well understood the issues of great public questions; only, his view of them was contrary to the views of moneyed men and bankers and the educated classes of his day generally. It is to be remarked, however, that the views he took on questions of political economy are now endorsed by many able college professors and some American manufacturers who are leading public opinion in opposition to tariffs for protection and in the direction of free trade.



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The first thing for Jackson to do after his inauguration was to select his cabinet. It was not a strong one. He wanted clerks, not advisers. He was all-sufficient to himself. He rarely held a cabinet meeting. In a very short time this cabinet was dissolved by a scandal. General Eaton, Secretary of War, had married the daughter of a tavern-keeper, who was remarkable for her wit and social brilliancy. The aristocratic wives of the cabinet ministers would not associate with her, and the President took the side of the neglected woman, in accordance with his chivalric nature. His error was in attempting to force his cabinet to accord to her a social position,—a matter which naturally belonged to women to settle. So bitter was the quarrel, and so persistent was the President in attempting to produce harmony in his cabinet on a mere social question that the ministers resigned rather than fight so obstinate and irascible a man as Jackson in a matter which was outside his proper sphere of action.

The new cabinet was both more able and more subservient. Edward Livingston of Louisiana, who wrote most of Jackson's documents when he commanded in New Orleans, was made Secretary of State, Louis McLane of Delaware, Secretary of the Treasury; Lewis Cass, governor for nineteen years of Michigan, Secretary of War; Levi Woodbury of New Hampshire, Secretary of the Navy; Roger B. Taney of Maryland, Attorney-General,—all distinguished for abilities. But even these able men were seldom summoned to a cabinet meeting. The confidential advisers of the President were Amos Kendall, afterwards Postmaster-General; Duff Green, a Democratic editor; Isaac Hill, a violent partisan, who edited a paper in Concord, New Hampshire, and was made second auditor of the treasury; and William B. Lewis, an old friend of the general in Tennessee,—all able men, but unscrupulous politicians, who enjoyed power rather than the display of it. These advisers became known in the party contests of the time as the president's "Kitchen Cabinet."

Jackson had not been long inaugurated before the influence of the "Kitchen Cabinet" was seen and felt; for it was probably through the influence of these men that the President brought about a marked change in the policy of the government; and it is this change which made Jackson's administration so memorable. It was the intrusion of personality, instead of public policy, into the management of party politics. Madison did not depart from the general policy of Jefferson, nor did Monroe. "The Virginia dynasty" kept up the traditions of the government as originally constituted. But Jackson cut loose from all traditions and precedents, especially in the matter of assuming responsibilities, and attempted to carry on the government independently of Congress in many important respects. It is the duty of the President to execute the laws as he finds them, until repealed or altered by the national Legislature; but it was the disposition of Jackson to disregard those laws which he disapproved,—an encroachment hard to be distinguished from usurpation. And this is the most serious charge against him as President; not his ignorance, but his despotic temper, and his self-conceit in supposing himself wiser than the collected wisdom and experience of the representatives of the nation,—a notion which neither Washington nor Jefferson nor Madison ever entertained.



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Again, Jackson's system of appointments to office—the removal of men already satisfactorily doing the work of the government, in order to make places for his personal and political supporters—was a great innovation, against all the experience of governments, whether despotic or constitutional. It led to the reign of demagogues, and gave rewards, not to those who deserved promotion from their able and conscientious discharge of duty in public trusts, but to those who most unscrupulously and zealously advocated or advanced the interests of the party in power. It led to perpetual rotations in office without reasonable cause, and made the election of party chiefs of more importance than the support of right principles. The imperfect civil service reforms which have been secured during the last few years with so much difficulty show the political mischief for which Jackson is responsible, and which has disgraced every succeeding administration,—an evil so gigantic that no president has been strong enough to overcome it; not only injurious to the welfare of the nation by depriving it of the services of experienced men, but inflicting an onerous load on the President himself which he finds it impossible to shake off,—the great obstacle to the proper discharge of his own public duties, and the bar to all private enjoyment. What is more perplexing and irritating to an incoming president than the persistent and unreasonable demands of office-seekers, nine out of ten of whom are doomed to disappointment, and who consequently become enemies rather than friends of the administration?

This “spoils system” which Jackson inaugurated has proved fatal to all dignity of office, and all honesty in elections. It has divested politics of all attraction to superior men, and put government largely into the hands of the most venal and unblushing of demagogues. It has proved as great and fatal a mistake as has the establishment of universal suffrage which Jefferson encouraged,—a mistake at least in the great cities of the country,—an evil which can never be remedied except by revolution. Doubtless it was a generous impulse on the part of Jackson to reward his friends with the spoils of office, as it was a logical sequence of the doctrine of political equality to give every man a vote, whether virtuous or wicked, intelligent or ignorant. Until Jackson was intrusted with the reins of government, no president of the United States, however inclined to reward political friends, dared to establish such a principle as rotation in office or removal without sufficient cause. Not one there was who would not have shrunk from such a dangerous precedent, a policy certain to produce an inferior class of public servants, and take away from political life all that is lofty and ennobling, except in positions entirely independent of presidential control, such as the national legislature.

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The Senate, especially during Jackson's administration, was composed of remarkably gifted men, the most distinguished of whom opposed and detested the measures and policy he pursued, with such unbending obstinacy that he was filled with bitterness and wrath. This feeling was especially manifested towards Clay, Webster, and Calhoun, the great lights of the Senate Chamber,—although Jackson's party had the majority of both Houses much of the time, and thus, while often hindered, he was in the end unchecked in his innovations and hostilities. But these three giants he had to fight during most of his presidential career, which kept him in a state of perpetual irritation. Their opposition was to him a bitter pill. They were beyond his power, as independent as he. Until then, in his military and gubernatorial capacity, his will had been supreme. He had no opponents whom he could not crush. He was accustomed to rule despotically. As president he could be defied and restrained by Congress. His measures had to be of the nature of recommendation, except in the power of veto which he did not hesitate to use unsparingly; but the Senate could refuse to ratify his appointments, and often did refuse, which drove him beyond the verge of swearing. Again, in the great questions which came up for discussion, especially those in the domain of political economy, there would be honest differences of opinion; for political economy has settled very little, and is not, therefore, strictly a science, any more than medicine is. It is a system of theories based on imperfect inductions. There can be no science except what is based on *indisputable* facts, or accepted principles. There are no incontrovertible doctrines pertaining to tariffs or financial operations, which are modified by circumstances.

The three great things which most signally marked the administration of Jackson were the debates on the tariffs, the quarrel with the United States Bank, and the Nullification theories of Calhoun. It would seem that Jackson, when inaugurated, was in favor of a moderate tariff to aid military operations and to raise the necessary revenue for federal expenses, but was opposed to high protective duties. Even in 1831 he waived many of his scruples as to internal improvements in deference to public opinion, and signed the bills which made appropriations for the improvement of harbors and rivers, for the continuation of the Cumberland road, for the encouragement of the culture of the vine and olive, and for granting an extended copyright to authors. It was only during his second term that his hostility to tariffs became a passion,—not from any well-defined views of political economy, for which he had no adequate intellectual training, but because “protection” was unpopular in the southwestern States, and because he instinctively felt that it favored monopolists at the expense of the people. What he hated most intensely were capitalists and moneyed institutions;

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like Jefferson, he feared their influence on elections. As he was probably conscious of his inability to grasp the complex questions of political economy, he was not bitter in his opposition to tariffs, except on political grounds. Hence, generally speaking, he left Congress to discuss that theme. We shall have occasion to look into it in the lecture on Henry Clay, and here only mention the great debates of Jackson's time on the subject, —a subject on which Congress has been debating for fifty years, and will probably be debating for fifty years to come, since the whole matter depends practically on changing circumstances, whatever may be the abstract theories of doctrinaires.

While Jackson, then, on the whole, left tariffs to Congress, he was not so discreet in matters of finance. His war with the United States Bank was an important episode in his life, and the chief cause of the enmity with which the moneyed and conservative classes pursued him to the end of his days. Had he let the Bank alone he would have been freed from most of the vexations and turmoils which marked his administration. He would have left a brighter name. He would not have given occasion for those assaults which met him on every hand, and which history justifies. He might even have been forgiven for his spoils system and unprecedented removals from office. In attacking the Bank he laid a profane touch upon a sacred ark and handled untempered mortar. He stopped the balance-wheel which regulated the finances of the country, and introduced no end of commercial disorders, ending in dire disasters. Like the tariff, finances were a question with which he was not competent to deal. His fault was something more than the veto on the recharter of the Bank by Congress, which he had a constitutional right to make; it was a vindictive assault on an important institution before its charter had expired, even in his first message to Congress. In this warfare we see unscrupulous violence,—prompted, not alone by his firm hostility to everything which looked like a monopoly and a moneyed power, but by the influence of advisers who hated everything like inequality of position, especially when not usable for their own purposes. They stimulated his jealousy and resentments. They played on his passions and prejudices. They flattered him as if he were the monarch of the universe, incapable of a wrong judgment.

Hostility to the money-power, however, is older than the public life of Jackson. It existed among the American democracy as early as the time of Alexander Hamilton. When he founded the first Bank of the United States he met with great opposition from the followers of Jefferson, who were jealous of the power it was supposed to wield in politics. When in 1810 the question came up of renewing the charter of the first United States Bank, the Democratic-Republicans were bitter in their opposition; and so effective was the outcry that the bank went into liquidation, its place being taken by local banks. These issued notes so extravagantly that the currency of the country, as stated by Professor Sumner, was depreciated twenty-five per cent. So great was the universal financial distress which followed the unsound system of banking operations that in 1816 a new bank was chartered, on the principles which Hamilton had laid down.

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This Bank was to run for twenty years, and its capital was thirty-five millions of dollars, seven of which were taken by the United States; many of its stockholders were widows, charitable institutions, and people of small means. Its directors were chosen by the stockholders with the exception of five appointed by the President of the United States and confirmed by the Senate. The public money was deposited in this Bank; it could be removed by the Secretary of the Treasury, but by him only on giving his reasons to Congress. The Bank was located in Philadelphia, then the money-centre of the country, but it had twenty-five branches in different cities, from Portsmouth, N.H., to New Orleans. The main institution could issue notes, not under five dollars, but the branches could not. Langdon Cleves, of South Carolina, was the first president, succeeded in 1823 by Nicholas Biddle, of Philadelphia,—a man of society, of culture, and of leisure, —a young man of thirty-seven, who could talk and write, perhaps, better than he could manage a great business.

The affairs of the Bank went on smoothly for ten or twelve years, and the financial condition of the country was never better than when controlled by this great central institution. Nicholas Biddle of course was magnified into a great financier of uncommon genius,—the first business man in the whole country, a great financial autocrat, the idol of Philadelphia. But he was hated by Democratic politicians as a man who was intrusted with too much power, which might be perverted to political purposes, and which they asserted was used to help his aristocratic friends in difficulty. Moreover, they looked with envy on the many positions its offices afforded, which, as it was a “government institution,” they thought should be controlled by the governing party.

Among Biddle’s especial enemies were the members of the “Kitchen Cabinet,” who with sycophantic adroitness used Jackson as a tool.

Isaac Hill, of New Hampshire, was one of the most envenomed of these politicians, who hated not only Biddle but those who adhered to the old Federalist party, and rich men generally. He had sufficient plausibility and influence to enlist Levi Woodbury, Senator from New Hampshire, to forward his schemes.

In consequence, Woodbury, on June 27, 1829, wrote to Ingham, Secretary of the Treasury, making complaints against the president of the branch bank in Portsmouth for roughness of manner, partiality in loans, and severity in collections. The accused official was no less a man than Jeremiah Mason, probably the greatest lawyer in New England, if not of the whole country, the peer as well as the friend of Webster. Ingham sent Woodbury’s letter to Biddle, intimating that it was political partiality that was complained of. Then ensued a correspondence between Biddle and Ingham,—the former defending Mason and claiming complete independence for the Bank as to its management, so long as it could not be shown to be involved in political movements; and the latter accusing, threatening to remove deposits, attempting to take away the pension agency from the Portsmouth branch, *et cetera*. It was a stormy summer for the Bank.



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Thus things stood until November, when a letter appeared in the New York "Courier and Inquirer," stating that President Jackson, in his forthcoming first annual message to Congress, would come out strongly against the Bank itself. And sure enough, the President, in his message, astonished the whole country by a paragraph attacking the Bank, and opposing its recharter. The part of the message about the Bank was referred to both Houses of Congress. The committees reported in favor of the Bank, as nothing could be said against its management. Again, in the message of the President in 1830, he attacked the Bank, and Benton, one of the chief supporters of Jackson in spite of their early duel, declared in the Senate that the charter of the Bank ought not to be renewed. Here the matter dropped for a while, as Jackson and his friends were engrossed in electioneering schemes for the next presidential contest, and the troubles of the cabinet on account of the Eaton scandal had to be attended to. As already noted, they ended in its dissolution, followed by a new and stronger cabinet, in which Ingham was succeeded as Secretary of the Treasury by Louis McLane.

It was not till 1832,—the great session of Jackson's administrations,—that the contest was taken up again. The Bank aimed to have its charter renewed, although that would not expire for five years yet; and as the Senate was partly hostile to the President, it seemed a propitious time for the effort. Jackson, on the other hand, fearing that the Bank would succeed in getting its charter renewed with a friendly Congress, redoubled his energies to defeat it. The more hostile the President showed himself, the more eager were the friends of the Bank for immediate action. It was, with them, now or never. If the matter were delayed, and Jackson were re-elected, it would be impossible to secure a renewal of the charter, while it was hoped that Jackson would not dare to veto the charter on the eve of a presidential election, and thus lose, perhaps, the vote of the great State of Pennsylvania. So it was resolved by the friends of the Bank to press the measure.

Five months were consumed in the discussion of this important matter, in which the leading members of the Senate, except Benton, supported the Bank. The bill to renew the charter passed the Senate on the 11th of June, by a vote of twenty-eight to twenty, and the House on the 3d of July by a majority of thirty-three. It was immediately vetoed by the President, on the ground that the Bank was an odious monopoly, with nearly a third of its stock held by foreigners, and not only odious, but dangerous as a money-power to bribe Congress and influence elections. The message accompanying the veto was able, and was supposed to be written by Edward Livingston or Amos Kendall. Biddle remained calm and confident. Like Clay, he never dreamed that Jackson would dare to persist in a hostility against the enlightened public sentiment of the country. But Jackson was the idol of the Democracy, who would support all his measures and condone all his faults, and the Democracy ruled,—as it always will rule, except in great public dangers, when power naturally falls into the hands of men of genius, honesty, and experience, almost independently of their political associations.

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The veto aroused a thunder of debate, Webster and Clay leading the assault upon it, and Benton, with other Jacksonians, defending it. The attempt to pass the re-charter bill over the veto failed of the necessary two-thirds majority, and the President was triumphant.

Jackson had no idea of yielding his opinions or his will to anybody, least of all to his political enemies. The war with the Bank must go on; but its charter had three or four years still to run. All he could do legally was to cripple it by removing the deposits. His animosity, inflamed by the denunciations of Benton, Kendall, Blair, Hill, and others, became ungovernable.

McLane was now succeeded in the Treasury department by Mr. Duane of Philadelphia, the firmest and most incorruptible of men, for whom the President felt the greatest respect, but whom he expected to bend to his purposes as he had Ingham. Only the Secretary of the Treasury could remove the deposits, and this Mr. Duane unexpectedly but persistently refused to do. Jackson brought to bear upon him all his powers of persuasion and friendship; Duane still stood firm. Then the President resorted to threats, all to no purpose; at length Duane was dismissed from his office, and Roger B. Taney became Secretary of the Treasury, 23d of September, 1833. Three days afterwards, Taney directed collectors to deposit the public money in certain banks which he designated. It seems singular that the man who two years later was appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and who discharged the duties of that office so ably and uprightly, should so readily have complied with the President's desire; but this must be accounted for by the facts that in regard to the Bank Taney's views were in harmony with those of Jackson, and that the removal of the deposits, however arbitrary, was not unconstitutional.

The removal of more than nine millions from the Bank within the period of nine months caused it necessarily to curtail its discounts, and a financial panic was the result, which again led to acrimonious debates in Congress, in which Clay took the lead. His opposition exasperated the President in the highest degree. Calhoun equalled Clay in the vehemence of his denunciation, for his hatred of Jackson was greater than his hostility to moneyed corporations. Webster was less irritating, but equally strong in his disapproval. Jackson, in his message of December, 1833, reiterated his charge against the Bank as "a permanent electioneering engine," attempting "to control public opinion through the distresses of some, and the fears of others." The Senate passed resolutions denouncing the high-handed measures of the government, which, however, were afterwards expunged when the Senate had become Democratic. One of the most eloquent passages that Clay ever uttered was his famous apostrophe to Vice President Van Buren when presiding over the Senate, in reference to the financial distress which existed throughout the country,

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and which, of course, he traced to the removal of the deposits. Deputations of great respectability poured in upon the President from every quarter to induce him to change his policy,—all of which he summarily and rudely dismissed. All that these deputations could get out of him was, “Go to Nicholas Biddle; he has all the money.” In 1834, during the second term of Jackson’s office, there were committees sent to investigate the affairs of the Bank, who were very cavalierly treated by Biddle, so that their mission failed, amid much derision. He was not dethroned from his financial power until the United States Bank of Pennsylvania—the style under which the United States Bank accepted a State charter in 1836, when its original national charter expired—succumbed to the general crash in 1837.

It is now generally admitted that Jackson’s war on the Bank was violent and reckless, although it would be difficult to point out wherein his hostility exceeded constitutional limits. The consequences were most disastrous to the immediate interests of the country, but probably not to its ultimate interests. The substitution of “pet banks” for government deposits led to a great inflation of paper money, followed by a general mania for speculation. When the bubble burst these banks were unable to redeem their notes in gold and silver, and suspended their payments. Then the stringency of the money market equalled the previous inflation. In consequence there were innumerable failures and everything fell in value,—lands, houses, and goods. Such was the general depression and scarcity of money that in many States it was difficult to raise money even to pay necessary taxes. I have somewhere read that in one of the Western States the sheriffs sold at auction a good four-horse wagon for five dollars and fifty cents, two horses for four dollars, and two cows for two dollars. The Western farmers were driven to despair. Such was the general depression that President Van Buren was compelled in 1837 to call an extra session of Congress; nor were the difficulties removed until the celebrated Bankrupt Law was passed in 1840, chiefly through the efforts of Daniel Webster, which virtually wiped out all debts of those who chose to avail themselves of the privilege. What a contrast was the financial state of the country at that time, to what it was when Jackson entered upon his administration!

It is not just to attribute all the commercial disasters which followed the winding up of the old United States Bank to General Jackson, and to the financial schemes of Van Buren. It was the spirit of speculation, fostered by the inflation of paper money by irresponsible banks when the great balance-wheel was stopped, which was the direct cause. The indirect causes of commercial disaster, however, may be attributed to Jackson’s war on the Bank. The long fight in Congress to secure a recharter of the Bank, though unsuccessful, was dignified and statesmanlike; but

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the ungoverned passions displayed by the removal of deposits resulted in nothing, and could have resulted in nothing of advantage to any theory of the Bank's management; and it would be difficult to say who were most to blame for the foolish and undignified crimination and recrimination which followed,—the President, or the hostile Senate. It was, at any rate, a fight in which Jackson won, but which, from the animosities it kindled, brought down his gray hairs in sorrow to the grave. It gave him a doubtful place in the history of the nation.

If Jackson's hostility to the United States Bank was inexpedient and violent, and resulted in financial disasters, his vigorous efforts to put down Nullification were patriotic, and called forth the approval and gratitude of the nation. This was a real service of immense value, and it is probable that no other public man then on the stage could have done this important work so well. Like all Jackson's measures, it was summary and decided.

Nullification grew out of the tariffs which Congress had imposed. The South wanted no protective duties at all; indeed, it wanted absolute free trade, so that planters might obtain the articles which they needed at the smallest possible cost, and sell as much cotton and tobacco as they could with the least delay and embarrassment. Professor Sumner argues that Southern industries either supported the Federal government, or paid tribute to the Northern manufacturers, and that consequently the grievances of the Southern States were natural and just,—that their interests were sacrificed to national interests, as the New England interests had been sacrificed to the national interests at the time of the Embargo. Undoubtedly, the South had cause of complaint, and we cannot wonder at its irritation and opposition to the taxes imposed on all for the protection of American manufactures. On the other hand, it was a grave question whether the interests of the nation at large should be sacrificed to build up the interests of the South,—to say nothing of the great moral issues which underlie all material questions. In other words, in matters of national importance, which should rule? Should the majority yield to the minority, or the minority to the majority? In accordance with the democratic principles on which this government is founded, there is only one reply to the question: The majority must rule. This is the basal stone of all constitutional government, whose disruption would produce revolution and anarchy. It is a bitter and humiliating necessity which compels the intellect, the wealth, the rank, and the fashion of England to yield to the small majority in the House of Commons, in the matter of Irish Home Rule, but an Irishman's vote is as good as that of the son of an English peer. The rule of the majority is the price of political liberty, for which enlightened nations are willing to pay.

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Henry Clay deserves great praise and glory for his persistent efforts at conciliation,—not only in matters pertaining to the tariff, but in the question of slavery to harmonize conflicting interests. But Calhoun—the greatest man whom the South has produced—would listen to no concessions, foreseeing that the slightest would endanger the institution with which the interests and pride of the Southern States were identified. At this crisis the country needed a man at the helm whose will was known to be inflexible.

In the session of 1830, on a question concerning the sales of public (U.S.) lands in the several States, arose the great debate between Colonel R.Y. Hayne, of South Carolina, and Daniel Webster on the limitations of Federal power; and Hayne's declaration of the right of a State to nullify a Federal law that was prejudicial to its interests gained him great applause throughout the South. John C. Calhoun, United States Senator from South Carolina, was at the head of the extreme State Sovereignty party, and at a banquet celebrating the birthday of Jefferson, January 13, 1830, he proffered the toast "The Union: next to Liberty, the most dear; may we all remember that it can only be preserved by respecting the rights of the States, and distributing equally the benefit and burden of the Union." Jackson, as President, and practical chief of the Democracy, was of course present at this political banquet. His profound patriotism and keen political instinct scented danger, and with his usual impulse to go well forward to meet an enemy, he gave, "The Federal Union: it must be preserved." This simple declaration was worth more than all the wordy messages and proclamations he ever issued; it not only served notice upon the seceders of his time that they had a great principle to deal with, but it echoed after him, and was the call to which the nation victoriously rallied in its supreme struggle with treason, thirty years later.

Notwithstanding the evident stand taken by the President, the Calhoun party continued their opposition on State lines to the Federal authority. And when Congress passed the tariff of July, 1832, the South Carolina legislature in the autumn called a convention, which pronounced that Act and the Tariff Act of 1828 unconstitutional,—“null and void, and no law;” called on the State legislature to pass laws to prevent the execution of the Federal revenue acts; and declared that any attempt at coercion on the part of the Federal authorities would be regarded as absolving South Carolina and all its people from all further obligation to retain their union with the other States, and that they should then forthwith proceed to organize a separate government, as a sovereign and independent State.

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If such a man as Buchanan had then been in the presidential chair there probably would have been a Southern Confederacy; and in 1832 it might have been successful. But Jackson was a man of different mould. Democrat and Southern sympathizer as he was, he instantly took the most vigorous measures to suppress such a thing in the bud, before there was time to concert measures of disunion among the other Southern States. He sent General Scott to Charleston, with a body of troops stationed not far away. He ordered two war-vessels to the harbor of the misguided and rebellious city. On December 4 in his annual message he called the attention of Congress to the opposition to the revenue laws and intimated that he should enforce them. On December 11 he issued a proclamation to the inhabitants of South Carolina, written by Livingston, moderate in tone, in which it was set forth that the power of one State to annul a law of the United States was incompatible with the existence of the Union, and inconsistent with the spirit of the constitution. Governor Hayne issued a counter-proclamation, while Calhoun resigned the vice-presidency in order to represent South Carolina on the floor of the Senate. In January the President sent another message to Congress asking for authority to suppress rebellion.

Congress rallied around the Executive and a bill was passed providing for the enforcement of the collection of the customs at Charleston, and arming the President with extraordinary powers to see that the dangers were averted. Most of the States passed resolutions against Nullification, and there was general approval of the vigorous measures to be enforced if necessary. The Nullifiers, unprepared to resist the whole military power of the country, yielded, but with ill grace, to the threatened force. Henry Clay in February introduced a compromise tariff, and on the 27th of that month it was completed, together with an Enforcement Act. On March 3 it became a law, and on March 11 the South Carolina Nullifiers held an adjourned meeting of their convention and nullified their previous nullification. The triumph of Jackson was complete, and his popularity reached its apex.

It is not to be supposed that the collection of duties in Southern parts was the only cause of Nullification. The deeper cause was not at first avowed. It was the question of slavery, which is too large a topic to be discussed in this connection. It will be treated more fully in a subsequent lecture.

An important event took place during the administration of Jackson, which demands our notice, although it can in no way be traced to his influence; and this was the Anti-Masonic movement, ending in the formation of a new political party.



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The beginning of this party was obscure enough. One Morgan in Western New York was abducted and murdered for revealing the alleged secrets of Freemasonry. These were in reality of small importance, but Morgan had mortally offended a great secret society of which he was a member, by bringing it into public contempt. His punishment was greater than his crime, which had been not against morality, but against a powerful body of men who never did any harm, but rather much good in the way of charities. The outrage aroused public indignation,—that a man should be murdered for making innocent revelations of mere ceremonies and pretensions of small moment; and as the Masons would make no apologies, and no efforts to bring the offenders to justice, it was inferred by the credulous public that Masons were not fit to be entrusted with political office. The outrage was seized upon by cunning politicians to make political capital. Jackson was a Mason. Hence the new party of Anti-Masons made war against him. As they had been his supporters, the Democratic party of the State of New York was divided.

The leading Democratic leaders had endeavored to suppress this schism; but it daily increased, founded on popular ignorance and prejudice, until it became formidable. In 1830, four years after the murder, the Anti-Masons had held conventions and framed a political platform of principles, the chief of which was hostility to all secret societies. The party, against all reason, rapidly spread through New York, Pennsylvania, and New England,—its stronghold being among the farmers of Vermont. Ambitious politicians soon perceived that a union with this party would favor their interests, and men of high position became its leaders. In 1831 the party was strong enough to assemble a convention in Baltimore to nominate candidates for the presidency, and William Wirt, the great Maryland lawyer, was nominated, not with any hope of election, but with the view of dividing the ranks of the Democratic party, and of strengthening the opposition headed by Clay,—the National Republican party, which in the next campaign absorbed all the old Federalist remnants, and became the Whig party.

All opposition to Jackson, however, was to no purpose. He was elected for his second term, beginning in 1833. The Anti-Masonic movement subsided as rapidly as it was created, having no well-defined principles to stand upon. It has already passed into oblivion.

I have now presented the principal subjects which made the administrations of Jackson memorable. There are others of minor importance which could be mentioned, like the removal of the Indians to remote hunting-grounds in the West, the West India trade, the successful settlement of the Spoliation Claims against France, which threatened to involve the country in war,—prevented by the arbitration of England; similar settlements with Denmark, Spain, and Naples; treaties of commerce with Russia and Turkey;



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and other matters in which Jackson's decided character appeared to advantage. But it is not my purpose to write a complete history of Jackson or of his administrations. Those who want fuller information should read Parton's long biography, in which almost every subject under the sun is alluded to, and yet which, in spite of its inartistic and unclassical execution, is the best thesaurus I know of for Jacksonian materials. More recent histories are dissertations in disguise, on disputed points.

Here, then, I bring this lecture to a close with a brief allusion to those things which made up the character of a very remarkable man, who did both good and evil in his public career. His private life is unusually interesting, by no means a model for others to imitate, yet showing great energy, a wonderful power of will, and undoubted honesty of purpose. His faults were those which may be traced to an imperfect education, excessive prejudices, a violent temper, and the incense of flatterers,—which turned his head and of which he was inordinately fond. We fail to see in him the modesty which marked Washington and most of the succeeding presidents. As a young man he fought duels without sufficient provocation. He put himself in his military career above the law, and in his presidential career above precedents and customs, which subjected him to grave animadversion. As a general he hanged two respectable foreigners as spies, without sufficient evidence. He inflicted unnecessary cruelties in order to maintain military discipline,—wholesome, doubtless, but such as less arbitrary commanders would have hesitated to do. He invaded the territory of a neutral state on the plea of self-defence. In his conversation he used expletives not considered in good taste, and which might be called swearing, without meaning any irreverence to the Deity, although in later life he seldom used any other oath than "By the Eternal!"

Personally, Jackson's habits were irreproachable. In regard to the pleasures of the table he was temperate, almost abstemious. He was always religiously inclined and joined the Church before he died,—perhaps, however, out of loyalty to his wife, whom he adored, rather than from theological convictions. But whatever he deemed his duty, he made every sacrifice to perform. Although fond of power, he was easily accessible, and he was frank and genial among his intimate friends. With great ideas of personal dignity, he was unconventional in all his habits, and detested useless ceremonies and the etiquette of courts. He put a great value on personal friendships, and never broke them except under necessity. For his enemies he cherished a vindictive wrath, as unforgiving as Nemesis.

In the White House Jackson was remarkably hospitable, and he returned to his beloved Hermitage poorer than when he left it. He cared little for money, although an excellent manager of his farm. He was high-minded and just in the discharge of debts, and, although arbitrary, he was indulgent to his servants.



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He loved frankness in his dealings with advisers, although he was easily imposed upon. While he leaned on the counsels of his "Kitchen Cabinet" he rarely summoned a council of constitutional advisers. He parted with one of the ablest and best of his cabinet who acted from a sense of duty in a matter where he was plainly right. Toward Nicholas Biddle and Henry Clay he cherished the most inexorable animosity for crossing his path.

When we remember his lack of political knowledge, his "spoils system," his indifference to internal improvements, his war on the United States Bank, and his arbitrary conduct in general, we feel that Jackson's elevation to the presidency was a mistake and a national misfortune, however popular he was with the masses. Yet he was in accord with his generation.

It is singular that this man did nothing to attract national notice until he was forty-five years of age. The fortune of war placed him on a throne, where he reigned as a dictator, so far as his powers would allow. Happily, in his eventful administration he was impeded by hostile and cynical senators; but this wholesale restraint embittered his life. His great personal popularity continued to the end of his life in 1845, but his influence is felt to this day, both for good and for evil. His patriotism and his prejudices, his sturdy friendships and his relentless hatreds, his fearless discharge of duty and his obstinacy of self-will, his splendid public services and the vast public ills he inaugurated, will ever make this picturesque old hero a puzzle to moralists. His life was turbulent, and he was glad, when the time came, to lay down his burden and prepare himself for that dread Tribunal before which all mortals will be finally summoned,—the one tribunal in which he believed, and the only one which he was prompt to acknowledge.

AUTHORITIES.

The works written on Jackson are very numerous. Probably the best is the biography written by Parton, defective as it is. Professor W.E. Sumner's work, in the series of "American Statesmen," is full of interesting and important facts, especially in the matters of tariff and finance. See also Benton's *Thirty Years in the United States Senate*; Cobbett's *Life of Jackson*; Curtis's *Life of Webster*; Colton's *Life and Times of Henry Clay*, as well as Carl Schurz on the same subject; Von Holst, *Life of Calhoun*; *Memoir of John Quincy Adams*; Tyler's *Life of Taney*; Sargent's *Public Men*; the *Speeches of Webster, Clay, and Calhoun*.

HENRY CLAY.

1777-1852.

COMPROMISE LEGISLATION.



All the presidents of the United States, with the exception of three or four, must yield in influence to Henry Clay, so far as concerns directing the policy, and shaping the institutions of this country. Only two other American statesmen—Hamilton and Webster—can be compared to him in genius, power, and services. These two great characters will be found treated elsewhere.



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In regard to what is called “birth,” Clay was not a patrician, like Washington, nor had he so humble an origin as Andrew Jackson or Abraham Lincoln. Like most other great men, he was the architect of his own fortunes, doomed to drudgeries in the early part of his career, and climbing into notice by energy and force of character.

He was born, 1777, in a little Virginian hamlet called the “Slashes,” in Hanover County, the son of a Baptist minister, who preached to poor people, and who died when Henry was four years old, leaving six other children and a widow, with very scanty means of support. The little country school taught him “the rudiments,” and his small earnings as plough-boy and mill-boy meantime helped his mother. The mother was marked by sterling traits of character, and married for her second husband a Captain Watkins, of Richmond. This worthy man treated his step-son kindly, and put him into a retail store at the age of fourteen, no better educated than most country lads,—too poor to go to college, but with aspirations, which all bright and ambitious boys are apt to have, especially if they have no fitness for selling the common things of life, and are fond of reading. Henry’s step-father, having an influential friend, secured for the disgusted and discontented youth a position in the office of the Clerk of the High Court of Chancery, of which the eminent jurist, George Wythe, was chancellor. The judge and the young copyist thus naturally became acquainted, and acquaintance ripened into friendship, for the youth was bright and useful, and made an excellent amanuensis to the learned old lawyer, in whose office both Thomas Jefferson and John Marshall had been students of law.

After serving four years, Clay resolved to become a lawyer, entered the office of the Attorney-General of the State, and one year after was admitted to the bar, having in all probability acquired much legal knowledge from the communicative Chancellor, whom everybody loved and honored,—one of the earliest in Virginia to emancipate his slaves, and provide for their support. The young fellow’s reading, also, had been guided by his learned friend, in the direction of history, English grammar, and the beginnings of law.

The young lawyer, with his pleasing manners, quick intelligence, and real kindness of heart soon became a favorite in Richmond society. He was neither handsome, nor elegant, nor aristocratic, but he had personal geniality, wit, brilliancy in conversation, irreproachable morals, and was prominent in the debating society,—a school where young men learn the art of public speaking, like Gladstone at Oxford. It is thought probable that Clay’s native oratorical ability, which he assiduously cultivated,—the gift which, as Schurz says, “enabled him to make little tell for much, and to outshine men of vastly greater learning,”—misled him as to the necessity for systematic and thorough study. Lack of thoroughness and of solid information was his especial weakness through life, in spite of the charm and power of his personal oratory.



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It is always up-hill work for a young lawyer to succeed in a fashionable city, where there is more intellect than business, and when he himself has neither family, nor money, nor mercantile friends. So Henry Clay, at twenty-one, turned his eyes to the West,—the land of promise, which was especially attractive to impecunious lawyers, needy farmers, spendthrift gentlemen, merchants without capital, and vigorous men of enterprise,—where everybody trusts and is trusted, and where talents and character are of more value than money. He had not much legal knowledge, nor did he need much in the frontier settlements on the Ohio and its valleys; the people generally were rough and illiterate, and attached more importance to common-sense and industry than to legal technicalities and the subtle distinctions of Coke and Blackstone. If an advocate could grasp a principle which appealed to consciousness, and enforce it with native eloquence, he was more likely to succeed than one versed in learned precedents without energy or plausible utterances.

The locality which Clay selected was Lexington in Kentucky,—then a small village in the midst of beautiful groves without underbrush, where the soil was of virgin richness, and the landscape painted with almost perpetual verdure; one of the most attractive spots by nature on the face of the earth,—a great contrast to the flat prairies of Illinois, or the tangled forests of Michigan, or the alluvial deposits of the Mississippi. It was a paradise of hills and vales, easily converted into lawns and gardens, such as the primitive settlers of New England would have looked upon with blended envy and astonishment.

Lexington in 1797, the year that Clay settled in it as a lawyer, was called “the intellectual centre of the Far West,” as the Ohio valley was then regarded. In reality it was a border-post, the inhabitants of which were devoted to horse-racing, hunting, and whiskey-drinking, with a sprinkling of educated people, among whom the young lawyer soon distinguished himself,—a born orator, logical as well as rhetorical.

Clay’s law practice at first was chiefly directed to the defence of criminals, and it is said that no murderer whom he defended was ever hanged; but he soon was equally successful in civil cases, gradually acquiring a lucrative practice, without taking a high rank as a jurist. He was never a close student, being too much absorbed in politics, society, and pleasure, except on rare occasions, for which he “crammed.” His reading was desultory, and his favorite works were political speeches, many of which he committed to memory and then declaimed, to the delight of all who heard him. His progress at the bar must have been remarkably rapid, since within two years he could afford to purchase six hundred acres of land, near Lexington, and take unto himself a wife,—domestic, thrifty, painstaking, who attended to all the details of the farm, which he called “Ashland.” As he grew in wealth, his popularity also increased, until in all Kentucky no one was so generally beloved as he. Yet he would not now be called opulent, and he never became rich, since his hospitalities were disproportionate to his means, and his living was more like that of a Virginia country gentleman than of a hard-working lawyer.



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At this time Clay was tall, erect, commanding, with long arms, small hands, a large mouth, blue, electrical eyes, high forehead, a sanguine temperament, excitable, easy in his manners, self-possessed, courteous, deferential, with a voice penetrating and musical, with great command of language, and so earnest that he impressed everybody with his blended sincerity and kindness of heart.

The true field for such a man was politics, which Clay loved, so that his duties and pleasures went hand in hand,—an essential thing for great success. His first efforts were in connection with a constitutional convention in Kentucky, when he earnestly advocated a system of gradual emancipation of slaves,—unpopular as that idea was among his fellow-citizens. It did not seem, however, to hurt his political prospects, for in 1803 he was solicited to become a member of the State legislature, and was easily elected, being a member of the Democratic-Republican party as led by Jefferson. He made his mark at once as an orator, and so brilliant and rapid was his legislative career that he was elected in 1806 to the United States Senate to fill the unexpired term, of John Adair,—being only twenty-nine years old, the youngest man that ever sat in that body of legislators. All that could then be said of him was that he made a good impression in the debates and on the committees, and was a man of great promise, a favorite in society, attending all parties of pleasure, and never at home in the evening. On his return to Kentucky he was again elected as a member of the lower House in the State legislature, and chosen Speaker,—an excellent training for the larger place he was to fill. In the winter of 1809-10 he was a second time sent to the United States Senate, for two years, to fill the unexpired term of Buckner Thurston, where he made speeches in favor of encouraging American manufacturing industries, not to the extent of exportation,—which he thought should be confined to surplus farm-produce,—but enough to supply the people with clothing and to make them independent of foreign countries for many things unnecessarily imported. He also made himself felt on many other important topics, and was recognized as a rising man.

When his term had expired in the Senate, he was chosen a member of the House of Representatives at Washington,—a more agreeable field to him than the Senate, as giving him greater scope for his peculiar eloquence. He was promptly elected Speaker, which position, however, did not interfere with his speech-making whenever the House went into Committee of the Whole. It was as Speaker of the House of Representatives that Clay drew upon himself the eyes of the nation; and his truly great congressional career began in 1811, on the eve of the war with Great Britain in Madison's administration.

Clay was now the most influential, and certainly the most popular man in public life, in the whole country, which was very remarkable, considering that he was only thirty-seven years of age. Daniel Webster was then practising law in Portsmouth, N.H., two years before his election to Congress, and John C. Calhoun had not yet entered the Senate, but was chairman of the Committee of Foreign Relations in the House of Representatives, and a warm friend of the Speaker.



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The absorbing subject of national interest at that time was the threatened war with England, which Clay did his best to bring about, and Webster to prevent. It was Webster's Fourth-of-July Oration at Portsmouth, in 1812, which led to his election to Congress as a Federalist, in which oration he deprecated war. The West generally was in favor of it, having not much to lose or to fear from a contest which chiefly affected commerce, and which would jeopardize only New England interests and the safety of maritime towns. Clay, who had from his first appearance at Washington made himself a champion of American interests, American honor, and American ideas generally, represented the popular party, and gave his voice for war, into which the government had drifted under pressure of the outrages inflicted by British cruisers, the impressment of our seamen, and the contempt with which the United States were held and spoken of on all occasions by England,—the latter an element more offensive to none than to the independent and bellicose settlers in Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee.

Clay is generally credited with having turned the scales in favor of the war with Great Britain, when the United States comprised less than eight millions of people, when the country had no navy of any account, and a very small army without experienced officers, while Great Britain was mistress of the seas, with an enormous army, and the leader of the allied Powers that withstood Napoleon in Spain and Portugal. To the eyes of the Federalists, the contest was rash, inexpedient, and doubtful in its issues; and their views were justified by the disasters that ensued in Canada, the incompetency of Hull, the successive defeats of American generals with the exception of Jackson, and the final treaty of peace without allusion to the main causes which had led to the war. But the Republicans claimed that the war, if disastrous on the land, had been glorious on the water; that the national honor had been vindicated; that a navy had been created; that the impressment of American seamen was practically ended forever; and that England had learned to treat the great republic with outward respect as an independent, powerful, and constantly increasing empire.

As the champion of the war, and for the brilliancy and patriotism of his speeches, all appealing to the national heart and to national pride, Clay stood out as the most eminent statesman of his day, with unbounded popularity, especially in Kentucky, where to the last he retained his hold on popular admiration and affection. His speeches on the war are more marked for pungency of satire and bitterness of invective against England than for moral wisdom. They are appeals to passions rather than to reason, of great force in their day, but of not much value to posterity. They are not read and quoted like Webster's masterpieces. They will not compare, except in popular eloquence, with Clay's own subsequent efforts in the Senate, when he had more maturity of knowledge, and more insight into the principles of political economy. But they had great influence at the time, and added to his fame as an orator.



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In the summer of 1814 Clay resigned his speakership of the House of Representatives to accept a diplomatic mission as Peace Commissioner to confer with commissioners from Great Britain. He had as associates John Quincy Adams, James A. Bayard, Jonathan Russell, and Albert Gallatin—the ablest financier in the country after the death of Hamilton. The Commissioners met at Ghent, and spent five tedious months in that dull city. The English commissioners at once took very high ground, and made imperious demands,—that the territory now occupied by the States of Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, and a part of Ohio should be set apart for the Indians under an English protectorate; that the United States should relinquish the right of keeping armed vessels on the great Lakes; that a part of Maine should be ceded to Great Britain to make a road from Halifax to Quebec, and that all questions relating to the right of search, blockades, and impressment of seamen should remain undiscussed as before the war. At these preposterous demands Clay was especially indignant. In fact, he was opposed to any treaty at all which should not place the United States and Great Britain on an equality, and would not have been grieved if the war had lasted three years longer. Adams and Gallatin had their hands full to keep the Western lion from breaking loose and returning home in disgust, while they desired to get the best treaty they could, rather than no treaty at all. Gradually the British commissioners abated their demands, and gave up all territorial and fishery claims, and on December 14, 1814, concluded the negotiations on the basis of things before the war,—the *status quo ante bellum*. Clay was deeply chagrined. He signed the document with great reluctance, and always spoke of it as “a damned bad treaty,” since it made no allusion to the grievance which provoked the war which he had so eloquently advocated.

Gallatin and Clay spent some time in Paris, and most of the ensuing summer in London on further negotiations of details. But Clay had no sooner returned to Lexington than he was re-elected to the national legislature, where he was again chosen Speaker, December 4, 1815, having declined the Russian mission, and the more tempting post of the Secretary of War. He justly felt that his arena was the House of Representatives, which, as well as the Senate, had a Republican majority. It was his mission to make speeches and pull political wires, and not perplex himself with the details of office, which required more executive ability and better business habits than he possessed, and which would seriously interfere with his social life. How could he play cards all night if he was obliged to be at his office at ten o'clock in the morning, day after day, superintending clerks, and doing work which to him was drudgery? Much more pleasant to him was it to preside over stormy debates, appoint important committees, write letters to friends, and occasionally address the House in Committee of the Whole, when his voice would sway the passions of his intelligent listeners; for he had the power “to move to pity, and excite to rage.”



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Besides all this, there were questions to be discussed and settled by Congress, important to the public, and very interesting to politicians. The war had bequeathed a debt. To provide for its payment, taxes must be imposed. But all taxation is unpopular. The problem was, to make taxes as easy as possible. Should they be direct or indirect? Should they be imposed for a revenue only, or to stimulate and protect infant manufactures? The country was expanding; should there be national provision for internal improvements,—roads, canals, *etc.*? There were questions about the currency, about commerce, about the Indians, about education, about foreign relations, about the territories, which demanded the attention of Congress. The most important of these were those connected with revenues and tariffs.

It was this latter question, connected with internal improvements and the sales of public lands, in which Clay was most interested, and which, more than any other, brought out and developed his genius. He is generally quoted as “the father of the protective policy,” to develop American manufactures. The genius of Hamilton had been directed to the best way to raise a revenue for a new and impoverished country; that of Clay sought to secure independence of those foreign products which go so far to enrich nations.

Webster, when reproached for his change of views respecting tariffs, is said to have coolly remarked that when he advocated the shipping interest he represented a great commercial city; and when he afterwards advocated tariffs, he spoke as the representative of a manufacturing State,—a sophistical reply which showed that he was more desirous of popularity with his constituents than of being the advocate of abstract truth.

Calhoun advocated the new tariff as a means to advance the cotton interests of the South, and the defence of the country in time of war. Thus neither of the great political leaders had in view national interests, but only sectional, except Clay, whose policy was more far-reaching. And here began his great career as a statesman. Before this he was rather a politician, greedy of popularity, and desirous to make friends.

The war of 1812 had, by shutting out foreign products, stimulated certain manufactures difficult to import, but necessary for military operations, like cheap clothing for soldiers, blankets, gunpowder, and certain other articles for general use, especially such as are made of iron. When the war closed and the ports opened, the country received a great inflow of British products. Hence the tariff of 1816, the earliest for protection, imposed a tax of about thirty-five per cent on articles for which the home industry was unable to supply the demand, and twenty per cent on coarse fabrics of cotton and wool, distilled spirits, and iron; while those industries which were in small demand were admitted free or paid a mere revenue tax. This tariff, substantially proposed by George M. Dallas, Secretary of the Treasury, was ably supported by Clay. But his mind was not yet fully opened to the magnitude and consequences of this measure,—his chief arguments being based on the safety of the country in time of war. In this movement he joined

hands with Calhoun, one of his warmest friends, and one from whose greater logical genius he perhaps drew his conclusions.



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At that time party lines were not distinctly drawn. The old Federalists had lost their prestige and power. The Republicans were in a great majority; even John Quincy Adams and his friends swelled their ranks. Jefferson had lost much of his interest in politics, and was cultivating his estates and building up the University of Virginia. Madison was anticipating the pleasures of private life, and Monroe, a plain, noncommittal man, the last of "the Virginia dynasty," thought only of following the footsteps of his illustrious predecessors, and living in peace with all men.

The next important movement in Congress was in reference to the charter of the newly proposed second United States Bank, and in this the great influence of Clay was felt. He was in favor of it, as a necessity, in view of the miserable state of the finances, the suspension of specie payments, and the multiplication of State banks. In the earlier part of his career, in 1811, he had opposed a recharter of Hamilton's National Bank as a dangerous money-corporation, and withal unconstitutional on the ground that the general government had no power to charter companies. All this was in accordance with Western democracy, ever jealous of the money-power, and the theorizing proclivities of Jefferson, who pretended to hate everything which was supported in the old country. But with advancing light and the experience of depreciated currency from the multiplication of State banks, Clay had changed his views, exposing himself to the charge of inconsistency; which, however, he met with engaging candor, claiming rather credit for his ability and willingness to see the change of public needs. He now therefore supported the bill of Calhoun, which created a national bank with a capital of thirty-five million dollars, substantially such as was proposed by Hamilton. The charter was finally given in April, 1816, to run for twenty years.

Doubtless such a great money-corporation—great for those times—did wield a political influence, and it might have been better if the Bank had been chartered with a smaller capital. It would have created fewer enemies, and might have escaped the future wrath of General Jackson. Webster at first opposed the bill of Calhoun; but when it was afterwards seen that the Bank as created as an advantage to the country, he became one of its strongest supporters. Webster was strongly conservative by nature; but when anything was established, like Lord Thurlow he ceased all opposition, especially if it worked well.

In 1816 James Monroe was elected President, and Clay expected to be made Secretary of State, as a step to the presidency, which he now ardently desired. But he was disappointed, John Quincy Adams being chosen by Monroe as Secretary of State. Monroe offered to Clay the mission to England and the Department of War, both of which he declined, preferring the speakership, to which he was almost unanimously re-elected. Here Clay brought his influence to bear, in opposition to the views of the administration, to promote internal improvements to which some objected on constitutional grounds, but which he defended both as a statesman and a Western man. The result was a debate, ending in a resolution "that Congress has power under

the Constitution to appropriate money for the construction of post roads, military and other roads, and of canals for the improvement of water-courses.”

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Meanwhile a subject of far greater interest called out the best energies of Mr. Clay,—the beginning of a memorable struggle, even the agitation of the Slavery question, which was not to end until all the slaves in the United States were emancipated by a single stroke of Abraham Lincoln's pen. So long as the products of slave labor were unprofitable, through the exhaustion of the tobacco-fields, there was a sort of sentimental philanthropy among disinterested Southern men tending to a partial emancipation; but when the cotton gin (invented in 1793) had trebled the value of slaves, and the breeding of them became a profitable industry, the philanthropy of the planters vanished. The English demand for American cotton grew rapidly, and in 1813 Francis C. Lowell established cotton manufactures in New England, so that cotton leaped into great importance. Thus the South had now become jealous of interference with its "favorite institution."

In an address in Manchester, England, October, 1863,—the first of that tremendous series of mob-controlling speeches with which Henry Ward Beecher put a check on the English government by convincing the English people of the righteousness of the Federal cause during our Civil War,—that "minister-plenipotentiary," as Oliver Wendell Holmes called him, gave a witty summary of this change. After showing that the great Fathers of Revolutionary times, and notably the great Southerners, were antislavery men; that the first abolition society was formed in the Middle and Border States, and not in the Northeast; and that emancipation was enacted by the Eastern and Middle States as a natural consequence of the growth of that sentiment, the orator said:—

"What was it, then, when the country had advanced so far towards universal emancipation in the period of our national formation, that stopped this onward tide? First, the wonderful demand for cotton throughout the world, precisely when, from the invention of the cotton gin, it became easy to turn it to service. Slaves that before had been worth from three to four hundred dollars began to be worth six hundred dollars. That knocked away one third of adherence to the moral law. Then they became worth seven hundred dollars, and half the law went; then, eight or nine hundred dollars, and there was no such thing as moral law; then, one thousand or twelve hundred dollars,—and slavery became one of the Beatitudes."

Therefore, when in 1818 the territory of Missouri applied for admission to the Union as a State, the South was greatly excited by the proposition from Mr. Tallmadge, of New York, that its admission should be conditioned upon the prohibition of slavery within its limits. It was a revelation to the people of the North that so bitter a feeling should be aroused by opposition to the extension of an acknowledged evil, which had been abolished in all their own States. The Southern leaders, on their side, maintained that Congress could not, under the Constitution, legislate

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on such a subject,—that it was a matter for the States alone to decide; and that slavery was essential to the prosperity of the Southern States, as white men could not labor in the cotton and rice fields. The Northern orators maintained that not only had the right of Congress to exclude slavery from the Territories been generally admitted, but that it was a demoralizing institution and more injurious to the whites even than to the blacks. The Southern leaders became furiously agitated, and threatened to secede from the Union rather than submit to Northern dictation; while at the North the State legislatures demanded the exclusion of slaves from Missouri.

Carl Schurz, in his admirable life of Clay, makes a pertinent summary: “The slaveholders watched with apprehension the steady growth of the Free States in population, wealth, and power.... As the slaveholders had no longer the ultimate extinction, but now the perpetuation, of slavery in view, the question of sectional power became one of first importance to them, and with it the necessity of having more slave States for the purpose of maintaining the political equilibrium, at least in the Senate. A struggle for more slave States was to them a struggle for life.”

Thus the two elements of commercial profit and political power were involved in the struggle of the South for the maintenance and extension of slavery.

The House of Representatives in 1819 adopted the Missouri bill with the amendment restricting slavery, but the Senate did not concur; and Alabama was admitted as a Territory without slavery restriction. In the next Congress Missouri was again introduced, but the antislavery amendment was voted down. In 1820 Mr. Thomas, a senator from Illinois, proposed, as a mutual concession, that Missouri should be admitted without restriction, but that in all that part of the territory outside that State ceded by France to the United States, north of the latitude of 36 deg. 30' (the southern boundary of Missouri), slaves should thereafter be excluded; and this bill was finally passed March 2, 1820. Mr. Clay is credited with being the father of this compromise, but, according to Mr. Schurz, he did not deserve the honor. He adopted it, however, and advocated it with so much eloquence and power that it owed its success largely to his efforts, and therefore it is still generally ascribed to him.

At that time no statesmen, North or South, had fully grasped the slavery question. Even Mr. Calhoun once seemed to have no doubt as to the authority of Congress to exclude slavery from the Territories, but he was decided enough in his opposition when he saw that it involved an irreconcilable conflict of interests,—that slavery and freedom are antagonistic ideas, concerning which there can be no genuine compromise. “There may be compromises,” says Von Holst, “with regard to measures, but never between principles.” And slavery, when the Missouri Compromise was started, was looked upon as a measure rather than as a principle, concerning which few statesmen had thought deeply. As the agitation increased, measures were lost sight of in principles.



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The compromise by which Missouri was admitted as a slave State, while slavery should be excluded from all territory outside of it north of 36 deg. 30', was a temporary measure of expediency, and at that period was probably a wise one; since, if slavery had been excluded from Missouri, there might have been a dissolution of the Union. The preservation of the Union was the dearest object to the heart of Clay, who was genuinely and thoroughly patriotic. Herein he doubtless rendered a great public service, and proved himself to be a broad-minded statesman. To effect this compromise Clay had put forth all his energies, not only in eloquent speeches and tireless labors in committees and a series of parliamentary devices for harmonizing the strife, but in innumerable interviews with individuals.

In 1820, Clay retired to private life in order to retrieve his fortunes by practice at the bar. Few men without either a professional or a private income can afford a long-continued public service. Although the members of Congress were paid, the pay was not large enough,—only eight dollars a day at that time. But Clay's interval of rest was soon cut short. In three years he was again elected to the House of Representatives, and in December, 1823, was promptly chosen Speaker by a large majority. He had now recovered his popularity, and was generally spoken of as "the great pacificator."

In Congress his voice was heard again in defence of internal improvements,—the making of roads and canals,—President Monroe having vetoed a bill favoring them on the ground that it was unconstitutional for Congress to vote money for them. Clay, however, succeeded in inducing Congress to make an appropriation for a survey of such roads as might be deemed of national importance, which Mr. Monroe did not oppose. It was ever of vital necessity, in the eyes of Mr. Clay, to open up the West to settlers from the East, and he gloried in the prospect of the indefinite expanse of the country even to the Pacific ocean. "Sir," said he, in the debate on this question, "it is a subject of peculiar delight to me to look forward to the proud and happy period, distant as it may be, when circulation and association between the Atlantic and the Pacific and the Mexican Gulf shall be as free and perfect as they are at this moment in England, the most highly improved country on the globe. Sir, a new world has come into being since the Constitution was adopted.... Are we to neglect and refuse the redemption of that vast wilderness which once stretched unbroken beyond the Alleghany?" In these views he proved himself one of the most far-sighted statesmen that had as yet appeared in Congress,—a typical Western man of enthusiasm and boundless hope.

Not less enthusiastic was he in his open expressions of sympathy with the Greek struggle for liberty; as was the case also with Daniel Webster,—both advocating relief to the Greeks, not merely from sentiment, but to strike a blow at the "Holy Alliance" of European kingdoms, then bent on extinguishing liberty in every country in Europe. Clay's noble speech in defence of the Greeks was not, however, received with unanimous admiration, since many members of Congress were fearful of entangling the United States in European disputes and wars; and the movement came to naught.

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Then followed the great debates which led to the famous tariff of 1824, in which Mr. Clay, although Speaker of the House, took a prominent part in Committee of the Whole, advocating an increase of duties for the protection of American manufactures of iron, hemp, glass, lead, wool, woollen and cotton goods, while duties on importations which did not interfere with American manufactures were to be left on a mere revenue basis. This tariff had become necessary, as he thought, in view of the prevailing distress produced by dependence on foreign markets. He would provide a home consumption for American manufactures, and thus develop home industries, which could be done only by imposing import taxes that should “protect” them against foreign competition. His speech on what he called the “American System” was one of the most elaborate he ever made, and Mr. Carl Schurz says of it that “his skill of statement, his ingenuity in the grouping of facts and principles, his plausibility of reasoning, his brilliant imagination, the fervor of his diction, the warm patriotic tone of his appeals” presented “the arguments which were current among high-tariff men then and which remain so still;” while, on the other hand, “his superficial research, his habit of satisfying himself with half-knowledge, and his disinclination to reason out propositions logically in all their consequences” gave incompleteness to his otherwise brilliant effort. It made a great impression in spite of its weak points, and called out in opposition the extraordinary abilities of Daniel Webster, through whose massive sentences appeared his “superiority in keenness of analysis, in logical reasoning, in extent and accuracy of knowledge, in reach of thought and mastery of fundamental principles,” over all the other speakers of the day. And this speech of Mr. Webster’s stands unanswered, notwithstanding the opposite views he himself maintained four years afterwards, when he spoke again on the tariff, but representing manufacturing interests rather than those of shipping and commerce, advocating expediency rather than abstract principles the truth of which cannot be gainsaid. The bill as supported by Mr. Clay passed by a small majority, the members from the South generally voting against it.

After the tariff of 1824 the New England States went extensively into manufacturing, and the Middle States also. The protective idea had become popular in the North, and, under strong protests from the agricultural South, in 1828 a new tariff bill was enacted, largely on the principle of giving more protection to every interest that asked for it. This, called by its opponents “the tariff of abominations,” was passed while Clay was Secretary of State; the discontent under it was to give rise to Southern Nullification, and to afford Clay another opportunity to act as “pacificator.” All this tariff war is set forth in clear detail in Professor Sumner’s “Life of Jackson.”

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This question of tariffs has, for seventy years now, been the great issue, next to slavery, between the North and South. More debates have taken place on this question than on any other in our Congressional history, and it still remains unsettled, like most other questions of political economy. The warfare has been constant and uninterrupted between those who argue subjects from abstract truths and those who look at local interests, and maintain that all political questions should be determined by circumstances. When it seemed to be the interest of Great Britain to advocate protection for her varied products, protection was the policy of the government; when it became evidently for her interest to defend free trade, then free trade became the law of Parliament.

On abstract grounds there is little dispute on the question: if all the world acted on the principles of free trade, protection would be indefensible. Practically, it is a matter of local interest: it is the interest of New England to secure protection for its varied industries and to secure free raw materials for manufacture; it is the interest of agricultural States to buy wares in the cheapest market and to seek foreign markets for their surplus breadstuffs. The question, however, on broad grounds is whether protection is or is not for the interest of the whole country; and on that point there are differences of opinion among both politicians and statesmen. Formerly, few discussed the subject on abstract principles except college professors and doctrinaires; but it is a most momentous subject from a material point of view, and the great scale on which protection has been tried in America since the Civil War has produced a multiplicity of consequences—industrial and economic—which have set up wide-spread discussions of both principles and practical applications. How it will be finally settled, no one can predict; perhaps through a series of compromises, with ever lessening restriction, until the millennial dream of universal free trade shall become practicable. Protection has good points and bad ones. While it stimulates manufactures, it also creates monopolies and widens the distinctions between the rich and the poor. Disproportionate fortunes were one of the principal causes of the fall of the Roman Empire, and are a grave danger to our modern civilization.

But then it is difficult to point out any period in the history of civilization when disproportionate fortunes did not exist, except in primitive agricultural States in the enjoyment of personal liberty, like Switzerland and New England one hundred years ago. They certainly existed in feudal Europe as they do in England to-day. The great cotton lords are feudal barons under another name. Where money is worshipped there will be money-aristocrats, who in vulgar pride and power rival the worst specimens of an hereditary nobility. There is really little that is new in human organizations,—little that Solomon and Aristotle had not learned. When we go to the foundation of society it is the same story, in all ages and countries. Most that is new is superficial and transitory. The permanent is eternally based on the certitudes of life, which are moral and intellectual rather than mechanical and material. Whatever promotes these certitudes is the highest political wisdom.



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We now turn to contemplate the beginnings of Mr. Clay's aspirations to the presidency, which from this time never left him until he had one foot in the grave. As a successful, popular, and ambitious man who had already rendered important services, we cannot wonder that he sought the envied prize. Who in the nation was more eminent than he? But such a consummation of ambition is not attained by merit alone. He had enemies, and he had powerful rivals.

In 1824 John Quincy Adams, as Monroe's Secretary of State, was in the line of promotion,—a statesman of experience and abilities, the superior of Clay in learning, who had spent his life in the public service, and in honorable positions, especially as a foreign minister. He belonged to the reigning party and was the choice of New England. Moreover he had the prestige of a great name. He was, it is true, far from popular, was cold and severe in manners, and irritable in temperament; but he was public-spirited, patriotic, incorruptible, lofty in sentiment, and unstained by vices.

Andrew Jackson was also a formidable competitor,—a military hero, the idol of the West, and a man of extraordinary force of character, with undoubted executive abilities, but without much experience in civil affairs, self-willed, despotic in temper, and unscrupulous. Crawford, of Georgia, Secretary of the Treasury, with great Southern prestige, and an adroit politician, was also a candidate. Superior to all these candidates in political genius was Calhoun of South Carolina, not yet so prominent as he afterwards became.

The popular choice in 1824 lay between Jackson and Adams, and as no candidate obtained a majority of the electoral votes, the election reverted to the House of Representatives, and Adams was chosen, much to the chagrin of Jackson, who had the largest number of popular votes, and the disappointment of Clay, who did not attempt to conceal it. When the latter saw that his own chances were small, however, he had thrown his influence in favor of Adams, securing his election, and became his Secretary of State. Jackson was indignant, as he felt he had been robbed of the prize by a secret bargain, or coalition, between Clay and Adams. In retiring from the speakership of the House, which he had held so long, Clay received the formal and hearty thanks of that body for his undeniably distinguished services as presiding officer. In knowledge of parliamentary law and tactics, in prompt decisions,—never once overruled in all his long career,—in fairness, courtesy, self-command, and control of the House at the stormiest times, he certainly never had a superior. Friends and enemies alike recognized and cordially expressed their sense of his masterly abilities.

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The administration of Adams was not eventful, but to his credit he made only four removals from office during his term of service, and these for good cause; he followed out the policy of his predecessors, even under pressure from his cabinet refusing to recognize either friends or enemies as such, but simply holding public officers to their duty. So, too, in his foreign policy, which was conservative and prudent, and free from entangling alliances, at a time when the struggle for independence among the South American republics presented an occasion for interference, and when the debates on the Panama mission—a proposed council of South and Central American republics at Panama, to which the United States were invited to send representatives—were embarrassing to the Executive.

The services of Mr. Clay as Secretary of State were not distinguished. He made a number of satisfactory treaties with foreign powers, and exhibited great catholicity of mind; but he was embroiled in quarrels and disputes anything but glorious, and he further found his situation irksome. His field was the legislature; as an executive officer he was out of place. It may be doubted whether he would have made as good a President as many inferior politicians. He detested office labor, and was sensitive to hostile criticism. His acceptance of the office of Secretary of State was probably a blunder, as his appointment was (though unjustly) thought by many to be in fulfilment of a bargain, and it did not advance his popularity. He was subject to slanders and misrepresentations. The secretaryship, instead of being a step to the presidency, was thus rather an impediment in his way. It was not even a position of as much power as the speakership. It gave him no excitement, and did not keep him before the eyes of the people. His health failed. He even thought of resignation.

The supporters of the Adams administration, those who more and more came to rank themselves as promoters of tariffs and internal improvements, with liberal views as to the constitutional powers of the national government, gradually consolidated in opposition to the party headed by Jackson. The former called themselves National Republicans, and the latter, Democratic Republicans. During the Jacksonian administrations they became known more simply as Whigs and Democrats.

On the accession of General Jackson to the presidency in 1829, Mr. Clay retired to his farm at Ashland; but while he amused himself by raising fine cattle and horses, and straightening out his embarrassed finances, he was still the recognized leader of the National Republican party. He was then fifty-two years of age, at his very best and strongest period. He took more interest in politics than in agriculture or in literary matters. He was not a learned man, nor a great reader, but a close observer of men and of all political movements. He was a great favorite, and received perpetual ovations whenever

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he travelled, always ready to make speeches at public meetings, which were undoubtedly eloquent and instructive, but not masterpieces like those of Webster at Plymouth and Bunker Hill. They were not rich in fundamental principles of government and political science, and far from being elaborate, but were earnest, patriotic, and impassioned. Clay was fearless, ingenuous, and chivalric, and won the hearts of the people, which Webster failed to do. Both were great debaters, the one appealing to the understanding, and the other to popular sentiments. Webster was cold, massive, logical, although occasionally illuminating his argument with a grand glow of eloquence,—the admiration of lawyers and clergymen. Clay was the delight of the common people,—impulsive, electrical, brilliant, calling out the sympathies of his hearers, and captivating them by his obvious sincerity and frankness,—not so much convincing them as moving them and stimulating them to action. Webster rarely lost his temper, but he could be terribly sarcastic, harsh, and even fierce. Clay was passionate and irritable, but forgiving and generous, loath to lose a friend and eager for popularity; Webster seemed indifferent to applause, and even to ordinary friendship, proud, and self-sustained. Clay was vain and susceptible to flattery. No stranger could approach Webster, but Clay was as accessible as a primitive bishop. New England was proud of Webster, but the West loved Clay. Kentucky would follow her favorite to the last, whatever mistakes he might make, but Massachusetts deserted Webster when he failed to respond to her popular convictions. Both men were disappointed in the prize they sought: one because he was not loved by the people, colossal as they admitted him to be,—a frowning Jupiter Tonans absorbed in his own majesty; the other because he had incurred the hatred of Jackson and other party chiefs who were envious of his popularity, and fearful of his ascendancy.

The hatred which Clay and Jackson had for each other was inexorable. It steeped them both in bitterness and uncompromising opposition. They were rivals,—the heads of their respective parties. Clay regarded Jackson as an ignorant, despotic, unscrupulous military chieftain, who had been raised to power by the blind adoration of military success; while Jackson looked upon Clay as an intriguing politician, without honesty, industry, or consistency, gifted only in speech-making. Their quarrels and mutual abuse formed no small part of the political history of the country during Jackson's administration, and have received from historians more attention than they deserved. Mr. Colton takes up about one half of his first volume of the "Life of Clay" in dismal documents which few care about, relating to what he calls the "Great Conspiracy," that is, the intrigues of politicians to rob Clay of his rights,—the miserable party warfare which raged so furiously and blindly from 1825 to 1836. I need not here dwell on the contentions and slanders and hatreds which were so prominent at the time the two great national parties were formed, and which divided the country until the Civil War.

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The most notable portion of Henry Clay's life was his great career as Senator in Congress, which he entered in December, 1831, two years after the inauguration of President Jackson. The first subject of national importance to which he gave his attention was the one with which his name and fame are mostly identified,—the tariff, to a moderate form of which the President in 1829 had announced himself to be favorable, but which he afterwards more and more opposed, on the ground that the revenues already produced were in excess of the needs of the government. The subject was ably discussed,—first, in a resolution introduced by Senator Clay declarative of principles involving some reduction of duties on articles that did not compete with American industries, but maintaining generally the “American System” successfully introduced by him in the tariff of 1824; and then, in a bill framed in accordance with the resolution,—both of which were passed in 1832.

Clay's speeches on this tariff of 1832 were among the strongest and ablest he ever delivered. Indeed, he apparently exhausted his subject. Little has been added by political economists to the arguments for protection since his day. His main points were: that it was beneficial to all parts of the Union, and absolutely necessary to much the largest portion; that the price of cotton and of other agricultural products had been sustained and a decline averted, by the protective system; that even if the foreign demand for cotton had been diminished by the operation of this system (the plea of the Southern leaders), the diminution had been more than compensated in the additional demand created at home; that the competition produced by the system reduces the price of manufactured articles,—for which he adduced his facts; and finally that the policy of free trade, without benefiting any section of the Union, would, by subjecting us to foreign legislation, regulated by foreign interests, lead to the prostration and ruin of our manufactories.

It must be remembered that this speech was made in 1832, before our manufactures—really “infant industries”—could compete successfully with foreigners in anything. At the present time there are many interests which need no protection at all, and the protection of these interests, as a matter of course, fosters monopolies. And hence, the progress which is continually being made in manufactures, enabling this country to be independent of foreign industries, makes protective duties on many articles undesirable now which were expedient and even necessary sixty years ago,—an illustration of the fallacy of tariffs founded on immutable principles, when they are simply matters of expediency according to the changing interests of nations.



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We have already, in the lecture on Jackson, described the Nullification episode, with the threatening protests against the tariff of 1828 and its amendments of 1832; Jackson's prompt action; and Clay's patriotic and earnest efforts resulting in the Compromise Tariff of March, 1833. By this bill duties were to be gradually reduced from 25 per cent *ad valorem* to 20 per cent. Mr. Webster was not altogether satisfied, nor were the extreme tariff men, who would have run the risks of the threatened nullification by South Carolina. It proved, however, a popular measure, and did much to tranquillize the nation; yet it did not wholly satisfy the South, nor any extreme partisans, as compromises seldom do, and Clay lost many friends in consequence, a result which he anticipated and manfully met. It led to one of his finest bursts of eloquence.

"I have," said he, "been accused of ambition in presenting this measure. Ambition! inordinate ambition! Low, grovelling souls who are utterly incapable of elevating themselves to the higher and nobler duties of pure patriotism—beings who, forever keeping their own selfish aims in view, decide all public measures by their presumed influence on their own aggrandizement—judge me by the venal rule which they prescribe for themselves. I am no candidate for any office in the gift of these States, united or separated. I never wish, never expect to be. Pass this bill, tranquillize the country, restore confidence and affection for the Union, and I am willing to go to Ashland and renounce public service forever. Yes, I have ambition, but it is the ambition of being the humble instrument in the hands of Providence to reconcile a divided people, once more to revive concord and harmony in a distracted land,—the pleasing ambition of contemplating the glorious spectacle of a free, united, prosperous, and fraternal people."

The policy which Mr. Clay advocated with so much ability during the whole of his congressional life was that manufactures, as well as the culture of rice, tobacco, and cotton, would enrich this country, and therefore ought to be fostered and protected by Congress, whatever Mr. Hayne or Mr. Calhoun should say to the contrary, or even General Jackson himself, whose sympathies were with the South, and consequently with slavery. Therefore Clay is called the father of the American System,—he was the advocate, not of any local interests, but the interests of the country as a whole, thus establishing his claim to be a statesman rather than a politician who never looks beyond local and transient interests, and is especially subservient to party dictation. The Southern politicians may not have wished to root out manufacturing altogether, but it was their policy to keep the agricultural interests in the ascendent.



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Soon after the close of the session of the Twenty-Second Congress, Mr. Clay, on his return to Ashland, put into execution a project he had long contemplated of visiting the Eastern cities. At that period even an excursion of one thousand miles was a serious affair, and attended with great discomfort. Wherever Mr. Clay went he was received with enthusiasm. Receptions, public dinners, and fetes succeeded each other in all the principal cities. In Baltimore, in Wilmington, and in Philadelphia, he was entertained at balls and banquets. In New York he was the guest of the city and was visited by thousands eager to shake his hand. The company controlling the line between New York and Boston tendered to him the use of one of their fine steamers to Rhode Island, where every social honor was publicly given him. In Boston he was welcomed by a committee of forty, in behalf of the young men, headed by Mr. Winthrop, and was received by a committee of old men, when he was eloquently addressed by Mr. William Sullivan, and was subsequently waited upon by the mayor and aldermen of the city. Deputations from Portland and Portsmouth besought the honor of a visit. At Charlestown, on Bunker Hill Edward Everett welcomed him in behalf of the city, and pronounced one of his felicitous speeches. At Faneuil Hall a delegation of young men presented him with a pair of silver pitchers. He was even dragged to lyceum lectures during the two weeks he remained in Boston. He thence proceeded amid public demonstrations to Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, Northampton, Pittsfield, Troy, Albany, and back again to New York. The carriage-makers of Newark begged his acceptance of one of their most costly carriages for the use of his wife. No one except Washington, Lafayette, and General Grant ever received more enthusiastic ovations in New England,—all in recognition of his services as a statesman, without his having reached any higher position than that of Senator or Secretary of State.

In such a rapid review of the career of Mr. Clay as we are obliged to make, it is impossible to enter upon the details of political movements and the shifting grounds of party organizations and warfare. We must not, however, lose sight of that most characteristic element of Clay's public life,—his perennial candidature for the presidency. We have already seen him in 1824, when his failure was evident, throwing his influence into the scale for John Quincy Adams. In 1828, as Adams' Secretary of State, he could not be a rival to his chief, and so escaped the whelming overthrow with which Jackson defeated their party. In 1832 he was an intensely popular candidate of the National Republicans, especially the merchants and manufacturers of the North and East and the friends of the United States Bank; but Southern hostility to his tariff principles and the rally of "the people" in support of Jackson's war on moneyed institutions threw him out again in notable defeat. In 1836 and again in 1840, Clay



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was prominent before the Conventions of the Whig or National Republican party, but other interests subordinated his claims to nomination, and the election of Van Buren by the Democrats in 1836, and of Harrison by the Whigs in 1840, kept him still in abeyance. In 1844 Clay was again the Whig candidate, the chief issue being the admission of Texas, but he was defeated by Polk and the Democrats; and after that the paramount slavery question pushed him aside, and he dropped out of the race.

The bitter war which Clay made on the administration of General Jackson, especially in reference to the United States Bank question, has already been noticed, and although it is an important passage in his history, I must pass it by to avoid repetition, which is always tedious. All I would say in this connection is that Clay was foremost among the supporters of the Bank, and opposed not only the removal of deposits but also the sub-treasury scheme of Mr. Van Buren that followed the failure to maintain the Bank. Some of his ablest oratory was expended in the unsuccessful opposition to these Democratic measures.

In 1837, came the bursting of the money-bubble, which had turned everybody's head and led to the most extravagant speculations, high prices, high rents, and lofty expectations in all parts of the country. This was followed of course by the commercial crisis, the general distress, and all the evils which Clay and Webster had predicted, but to which the government of Van Buren seemed to be indifferent while enforcing its pet schemes, against all the settled laws of trade and the experiences of the past. But the country was elastic after all, and a great reaction set in. New political combinations were made to express the general indignation against the responsible party in power, and the Whig party arose, joined by many leading Democrats like Rives of Virginia and Tallmadge of New York, while Calhoun went over to Van Buren, and dissolved his alliance with Clay, which in reality for several years had been hollow. In the presidential election of 1840 Mr. Van Buren was defeated by an overwhelming majority, and the Whigs came into power under the presidency of General Harrison, chosen not for talents or services, but for his availability.

The best that can be said of Harrison is that he was an honest man. He was a small farmer in Ohio with no definite political principles, but had gained some military *ec/lat* in the War of 1812. The presidential campaign of 1840 is well described by Carl Schurz as "a popular frolic," with its "monster mass-meetings," with log-cabins, raccoons, hard cider, with "huge picnics," and ridiculous "doggerel about 'Tippecanoe and Tyler too.'" The reason why it called out so great enthusiasm was frivolous enough in itself, but it expressed the popular reaction against the misrule of Jackson and Van Buren, which had plunged the country into financial distress, notwithstanding the general prosperity which existed when Jackson was raised to power,—a lesson to all future presidents who set up their own will against the collected experience and wisdom of the leading intellects of the country.



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President Harrison offered to the great chieftain of the Whig party the first place in his cabinet, which he declined, preferring his senatorial dignity and power. Besides, he had been Secretary of State under John Quincy Adams and found the office irksome. He knew full well that his true arena was the Senate Chamber,—which also was most favorable to his presidential aspirations. But Webster was induced to take the office declined by Clay, having for his associates in the cabinet such able men as Ewing, Badger, Bell, Crittenden, and Granger.

Mr. Clay had lost no time, when Congress assembled in December, 1840, in offering a resolution for the repeal of the sub-treasury act; but as the Democrats had still a majority in the Senate the resolution failed. When the next Congress assembled, General Harrison having lived only one month after his inauguration and the Vice-president, John Tyler, having succeeded him, the sub-treasury act was repealed; but the President refused to give his signature to the bill for the re-charter of the United States Bank, to the dismay of the Whigs, and the deep disappointment of Clay, who at once severed his alliance with Tyler, and became his bitter opponent, carrying with him the cabinet, which resigned, with the exception of Webster, who was engaged in important negotiations in reference to the northeastern boundary. The new cabinet was made up of Tyler's personal friends, who had been Jackson Democrats, and the fruits of the great Whig victory were therefore in a measure lost. The Democratic party gradually regained its ascendancy, which it retained with a brief interval till the election of Abraham Lincoln.

A question greater than banks and tariffs, if moral questions are greater than material ones, now began again to be discussed in Congress, ending only in civil war. This was the slavery question. I have already spoken of the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which Mr. Clay has the chief credit of effecting, but the time now came for him to meet the question on other grounds. The abolitionists, through the constant growth of the antislavery sentiment throughout the North, had become a power, and demanded that slavery should be abolished in the District of Columbia.

And here again I feel it best to defer what I have to say on antislavery agitation to the next lecture, especially as Clay was mixed up in it only by his attempt to pour oil on the troubled waters. He himself was a Southerner, and was not supposed to take a leading part in the conflict, although opposed to slavery on philanthropic grounds. Without being an abolitionist, he dreaded the extension of the slave-power; yet as he wished to be President he was afraid of losing votes, and did not wish to alienate either the North or the South. But for his inordinate desire for the presidential office he might have been a leader in the antislavery movement. All his sympathies were with freedom. He took the deepest interest in colonization, and was president of the Colonization Society, which had for its aim the sending of manumitted negroes to Liberia.



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The question of the annexation of Texas, forced to the front in the interest of the slaveholding States, united the Democrats and elected James K. Polk President in 1844; while Clay and the Whig Party, who confidently expected success, lost the election by reason of the growth of the Antislavery or Liberty party which cast a large vote in New York,—the pivotal State, without whose support in the Electoral College the carrying of the other Northern States went for nought. The Mexican War followed; and in 1846 David Wilmot of Pennsylvania moved an amendment to a bill appropriating \$2,000,000 for final negotiations, providing that in all territories acquired from Mexico slavery should be prohibited. The Wilmot Proviso was lost, but arose during the next four years, again and again, in different forms, but always as the standard of the antislavery Northerners.

When the antislavery agitation had reached an alarming extent, and threatened to drive the South into secession from the Union, Clay appeared once again in his great role as a pacificator. To preserve the Union was the dearest object of his public life. He would by a timely concession avert the catastrophe which the Southern leaders threatened, and he probably warded off the inevitable combat when, in 1850, he made his great speech, in favor of sacrificing the Wilmot Proviso, and enacting a more stringent fugitive-slave law.

In 1848, embittered by having been set aside as the nominee of the Whig party for the presidency in favor of General Taylor, one of the successful military chieftains in the Mexican War,—who as a Southern man, with no political principles or enemies, was thought to be more “available,”—Clay had retired from the Senate, and for a year had remained at Ashland, nominally and avowedly “out of politics,” but intensely interested, and writing letters about the new slavery complications. In December, 1849, he was returned to the Senate, and inevitably became again one of the foremost in all the debates.

When the conflict had grown hot and fierce, in January, 1850, Clay introduced a bill for harmonizing all interests. As to the disputed question of slavery in the new territory, he would pacify the North by admitting California as a free State, and abolishing slavery and the slave-trade in the District of Columbia; while the South was to be placated by leaving Utah and New Mexico unrestricted as to slavery, and by a more efficient law for the pursuit and capture of fugitive slaves. His speech occupied two days, delivered in great physical exhaustion, and was “an appeal to the North for concession and to the South for peace.” Like Webster, who followed with his renowned “Seventh-of-March speech” and who alienated Massachusetts because he did not go far enough for freedom, Clay showed that there could be no peaceable secession, that secession meant war, and that it would be war to propagate a wrong, in which the sympathy of all mankind would be against us.



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Calhoun followed, defending the interests of slavery, which he called “the rights of the South,” though too weak to deliver his speech, which was read for him. He clearly saw the issue,—that slavery was doomed if the Union were preserved,—and therefore welcomed war before the North should be prepared for it. It was the South Carolinian’s last great effort in the Senate, for the hand of death was upon him. He realized that if the South did not resist and put down agitation on the slavery question, the cause would be lost. It was already virtually lost, since the conflict between freedom and slavery was manifestly irrepressible, and would come in spite of concessions, which only put off the evil day.

On the 11th of March Seward, of New York, now becoming prominent in the Senate, spoke, deprecating all compromise on a matter of principle, and declaring that there was a “higher law than the Constitution itself.” He therefore would at least prevent the extension of slavery by any means in the power of Congress, on the ground of moral right, not of political expediency, undismayed by all the threats of secession. Two weeks afterward Chase of Ohio took the same ground as Seward. From that time Seward and Chase supplanted Webster and Clay in the confidence of the North, on all antislavery questions.

After seven months of acrimonious debate in both houses of Congress and during a session of extraordinary length, the compromise measures of Clay were substantially passed,—a truce rather than a peace, which put off the dreadful issue for eleven years longer. It was the best thing to do, for the South was in deadly earnest, exceedingly exasperated, and blinded. A war in 1851 would have had uncertain issues, with such a man as Fillmore in the presidential chair, to which he had succeeded on the death of Taylor. He was a most respectable man and of fair abilities, but not of sufficient force and character to guide the nation. It was better to submit for a while to the Fugitive Slave Law than drive the South out of the Union, with the logical consequences of the separation. But the abolitionists had no idea of submitting to a law which was inhuman, even to pacify the South, and the law was resisted in Boston, which again kindled the smothered flames, to the great disappointment and alarm of Clay, for he thought that his compromise bill had settled the existing difficulties.

In the meantime the health of the great pacificator began to decline. He was forced by a threatening and distressing cough to seek the air of Cuba, which did him no good. He was obliged to decline an invitation of the citizens of New York to address them on the affairs of the nation, but wrote a long letter instead, addressed more to the South than to the North, for he more than any other man, saw the impending dangers. Although there was a large majority at the South in favor of Union, yet the minority had become furious, and comprised the ablest leaders, concerning whose intention such men as Seward and Chase and John P. Hale were sceptical. In the ferment of excited passions it is not safe to calculate on men’s acting according to reason. It is wiser to predict that they will act against reason. Here Clay was wiser in his anxiety than the Northern statesmen generally, who thought there would be peace because it was reasonable.



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Clay did not live to see all compromises thrown to the winds. He died June 29, 1852, in the seventy-sixth year of his age, at the National Hotel in Washington. Imposing funeral ceremonies took place amid general lamentation, and the whole country responded with glowing eulogies.

I have omitted allusion to other speeches which the great statesman made in his long public career, and have presented only the salient points of his life, in which his parliamentary eloquence blazed with the greatest heat; for he was the greatest orator, in general estimation, that this country has produced, although inferior to Webster in massive power, in purity of style, in weight of argument, and breadth of knowledge. To my mind his speeches are diffuse and exaggerated, and wanting in simplicity. But what reads the best is not always the most effective in debate. Certainly no American orator approached him in electrical power. No one had more devoted friends. No one was more generally beloved. No one had greater experience, or rendered more valuable public services.

And yet he failed to reach the presidency, to which for thirty years he had aspired, and which at times seemed within his grasp. He had made powerful enemies, especially in Jackson and his partisans, and politicians dreaded his ascendancy, and feared that as President he would be dictatorial, though not perhaps arbitrary like Jackson. He would have been a happier man if he had not so eagerly coveted a prize which it seems is unattainable by mere force of intellect, and is often conferred apparently by accidental circumstances. It is too high an office to be sought, either by genius or services, except in the military line; but even General Scott, the real hero of the Mexican war, failed in his ambitious aspirations, as well as Webster, Clay, Calhoun, Benton, Seward, Chase, and Douglas, while less prominent men were selected, and probably ever will be. This may be looked at as a rebuke to political ambition, which ought to be satisfied with the fame conferred by genius rather than that of place, which never yet made a man really great. The presidency would have added nothing to the glory which Clay won in the Congress of the United States. It certainly added nothing to the fame of Grant, which was won on the battlefield, and it detracted from that of Jackson. And yet Clay felt keenly the disappointment, that with all his talents and services, weaker men were preferred to him.

Aside from the weakness of Clay in attempting to grasp a phantom, his character stands out in an interesting light on the whole. He had his faults and failings which did not interfere with his ambition, and great and noble traits which more than balanced them, the most marked of which was the patriotism whose fire never went out. If any man ever loved his country, and devoted all the energies of his mind and soul to promote its welfare and secure its lasting union, that man was the illustrious Senator from Kentucky, whose eloquent pleadings were household words for nearly half a century throughout the length and breadth of the land. With him there was no East, no West, no North, and no South, to be especially favored or served, but the whole country, one and indivisible

for ages to come. And no other man in high position had a more glowing conviction of its ever-increasing power and glory than he.



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“Whether,” says his best biographer, “he thundered against British tyranny on the seas, or urged the recognition of the South American sister republics, or attacked the high-handed conduct of the military chieftain in the Florida war, or advocated protection and internal improvements, or assailed the one-man power and spoils politics in the person of Andrew Jackson, or entreated for compromise and conciliation regarding the tariff or slavery,—there was always ringing through his words a fervid plea for his country, a zealous appeal in behalf of the honor and the future greatness and glory of the republic, or an anxious warning lest the Union be put in jeopardy.”

One thing is certain, that no man in the country exercised so great an influence, for a generation, in shaping the policy of national legislation as Henry Clay, a policy which, on the whole, has proved enlightened, benignant, and useful. And hence his name and memory will not only be honorably mentioned by historians, but will be fondly cherished so long as American institutions shall endure. He is one of the greater lights in the galaxy of American stars, as he was the advocate of principles which have proved conducive to national prosperity in the first century of the nation's history. It is a great thing to give shape to the beneficent institutions of a country, and especially to be a source of patriotic inspiration to its people. It is greater glory than to be enrolled in the list of presidents, especially if they are mentioned only as the fortunate occupants of a great office to which they were blindly elected. Of the long succession of the occupants of the Papal Chair, the most august of worldly dignities, not one in twenty has left a mark, or is of any historical importance, while hundreds of churchmen and theologians in comparatively humble positions have left an immortal fame. The glory of Clay is not dimmed because he failed in reaching a worthy object of ambition. It is enough to be embalmed in the hearts of the people as a national benefactor, and to shine as a star of the first magnitude in the political firmament.

AUTHORITIES.

Carl Schurz's *Life of Henry Clay* is far the ablest and most interesting that I have read. *The Life of Clay* by Colton is fuller and more pretentious, but is diffuse. Benton's *Thirty Years in Congress* should be consulted; also the various *Lives of Webster and Calhoun*. See also Wilson's *Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America*. The writings of the political economists, like Sumner, Walker, Carey, and others, should be consulted in reference to tariffs. *The Life of Andrew Jackson* sheds light on Clay's hostility to the hero of New Orleans.

DANIEL WEBSTER.

A.D. 1782-1852.

THE AMERICAN UNION.

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If I were required to single out the most prominent political genius in the history of the United States, after the death of Hamilton, I should say it was Daniel Webster. He reigned for thirty years as a political dictator to his party, and at the same time was the acknowledged head of the American Bar. He occupied two spheres, in each of which he gained pre-eminence. But for envy, and the enemies he made, he probably would have reached the highest honor that the nation had to bestow. His influence was vast, until those discussions arose which provoked one of the most gigantic wars of modern times. For a generation he was the object of universal admiration for his eloquence and power. In political wisdom and experience he had no contemporaneous superior; there was no public man from 1820 to 1850 who had so great a prestige, and whose name and labors are so well remembered. His speeches and forensic arguments are more often quoted than those of any other statesman and lawyer the country has produced. His works are in every library, and are still read. His fame has not waned, in spite of the stirring events which have taken place since his death. Great generals have arisen and passed out of mind, but the name and memory of Webster are still fresh. Amid the tumults and parties of the war he foresaw and dreaded, his glory may have passed through an eclipse, but his name is to-day one of the proudest connected with our history. Living men, occupying great official positions, are of course more talked about and thought of than he; but of those illustrious characters who figured in public affairs a generation ago, no one has so great a posthumous fame and influence as the distinguished senator from Massachusetts. No man since the days of Jefferson is seated on a loftier pedestal; and no one is likely to live longer, if not in the nation's heart, yet in its admiration for intellectual superiority and respect for political services. While he reigned as a political oracle for more than thirty years,—almost an idol in the eyes of his constituents,—it was his misfortune to be dethroned and reviled, in the last ten years of his life, by the very people who had exalted and honored him, and at last to die broken-hearted, from the loss of his well-earned popularity and the failure of his ambitious expectations. His life is sad as well as proud, like that of so many other great men who at one time led, and at another time opposed, popular sentiments. Their names stand out on every page of history, examples of the mutability of fortune,—alike joyous and saddened men, reaping both glory and shame; and sometimes glory for what is evil, and shame for what is good.



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When Daniel Webster was born,—1782, in Salisbury, New Hampshire, near the close of our Revolutionary struggle,—there were very few prominent and wealthy families in New England, very few men more respectable than the village lawyers, doctors, and merchants, or even thrifty and intelligent farmers. Very few great fortunes had been acquired, and these chiefly by the merchants of Boston, Salem, Portsmouth, and other seaports whose ships had penetrated to all parts of the world Webster sprang from the agricultural class,—larger then in proportion to the other classes than now at the East, —at a time when manufactures were in their infancy and needed protection; when travel was limited; when it was a rare thing for a man to visit Europe; when the people were obliged to practise the most rigid economy; when everybody went to church; when religious scepticism sent those who avowed it to Coventry; when ministers were the leading power; when the press was feeble, and elections were not controlled by foreign immigrants; when men drank rum instead of whiskey, and lager beer had never been heard of, nor the great inventions and scientific wonders which make our age an era had anywhere appeared. The age of progress had scarcely then set in, and everybody was obliged to work in some way to get an honest living; for the Revolutionary War had left the country poor, and had shut up many channels of industry. The farmers at that time were the most numerous and powerful class, sharp, but honest and intelligent; who honored learning, and enjoyed discussions on metaphysical divinity. Their sons did not then leave the paternal acres to become clerks in distant cities; nor did their daughters spend their time in reading French novels, or sneering at rustic duties and labors. This age of progress had not arisen when everybody looks forward to a millennium of idleness and luxury, or to a fortune acquired by speculation and gambling rather than by the sweat of the brow,—an age, in many important respects, justly extolled, especially for scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions, yet not remarkable for religious earnestness or moral elevation.

The life of Daniel Webster is familiar to all intelligent people. His early days were spent amid the toils and blessedness of a New England farm-house, favored by the teachings of intelligent, God-fearing parents, who had the means to send him to Phillips Academy in Exeter, then recently founded, where he fitted for college, and shortly after entered Dartmouth, at the age of fifteen. In connection with Webster, I do not read of any remarkable precocity, at school or college, such as marked Cicero, Macaulay, and Gladstone; but it seems that he won the esteem of both teachers and students, and was regarded as a very promising youth. After his graduation he taught an academy at Fryeburg, for a time, and then began the study of the law,—first at Salisbury, and subsequently in Boston, in the office of the celebrated Governor



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Gore. He was admitted to the bar in 1805, and established himself in Boscawen, but soon afterwards removed to Portsmouth, where he entered on a large practice, encountering such able lawyers as Jeremiah Mason and Jeremiah Smith, who both became his friends and admirers, for Webster's legal powers were soon the talk of the State. At the early age of thirty-one he entered Congress (1813), and took the whole House by surprise with his remarkable speeches, during the war with Great Britain,—on such topics as the enlargement of the navy, the repeal of the embargo, and the complicated financial questions of the day. In 1815 he retired awhile from public life, and removed to Boston, where he enjoyed a lucrative practice. In 1822 he re-entered Congress. So popular was he at this time, that, on his re-election to Congress in 1824, he received four thousand nine hundred and ninety votes out of five thousand votes cast. In 1827 he entered the Senate, where he was to reign as one of its greatest chiefs,—the idol of his party in New England, practising his profession at the same time, a leader of the American Bar, and an oracle in politics on all constitutional questions.

With this rapid sketch, I proceed to enumerate the services of Daniel Webster to his country, since on these enduring fame and gratitude are based. And first, I allude to his career as a lawyer,—not a narrow, technical lawyer, seeking to gain his case any way he can, with an eye on pecuniary rewards alone, but a lawyer devoting himself to the study of great constitutional questions and fundamental principles. In his legal career, when for nearly forty years he discussed almost every issue that can arise between individuals and communities, some half-a-dozen cases have become historical, because of the importance of the principles and interests involved. In the Gibbons and Ogden case he assumed the broad ground that the grant of power to regulate commerce was exclusively the right of the General Government. William Wirt, his distinguished antagonist,—then at the height of his fame,—relied on the coasting license given by States; but the lucid and luminous arguments of the young lawyer astonished the court, and made old Judge Marshall lay down his pen, drop back in his chair, turn up his coat-cuffs, and stare at the speaker in amazement at his powers.

The first great case which gave Webster a national reputation was that pertaining to Dartmouth College, his *alma mater*, which he loved as Newton loved Cambridge. The college was in the hands of politicians, and Webster recovered the college from their hands and restored it to the trustees, laying down such broad principles that every literary and benevolent institution in this land will be grateful to him forever. This case, which was argued with consummate ability, and with words as eloquent as they were logical and lucid, melting a cold court into tears, placed Webster in the front rank of lawyers, which he kept until



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he died. In the Ogden and Saunders case he settled the constitutionality of State bankrupt laws; in that of the United States Bank he maintained the right of a citizen of one State to perform any legal act in another; in that which related to the efficacy of Stephen Girard's will, he demonstrated the vital importance of Christianity to the success of free institutions,—so that this very college, which excluded clergymen from being teachers in it, or even visiting it, has since been presided over by laymen of high religious character, like Judge Jones and Doctor Allen. In the Rhode Island case he proved the right of a State to modify its own institutions of government. In the Knapp murder case he brought out the power of conscience—the voice of God to the soul—with such terrible forensic eloquence that he was the admiration of all Christian people. No better sermon was ever preached than this appeal to the conscience of men.

In these and other cases he settled very difficult and important questions, so that the courts of law will long be ruled by his wisdom. He enriched the science of jurisprudence itself by bringing out the fundamental laws of justice and equity on which the whole science rests. He was not as learned as he was logical and comprehensive. His greatness as a lawyer consisted in seeing and seizing some vital point not obvious, or whose importance was not perceived by his opponent, and then bringing to bear on this point the whole power of his intellect. His knowledge was marvellous on those points essential to his argument; but he was not probably learned, like Kent, in questions outside his cases,—I mean the details and technicalities of law. He did, however, know the fundamental principles on which his great cases turned, and these he enforced with much eloquence and power, so that his ablest opponents quailed before him. Perhaps his commanding presence and powerful tones and wonderful eye had something to do with his success at the Bar as well as in the Senate,—a brow, a voice, and an eye that meant war when he was fairly aroused; although he appealed generally to reason, without tricks of rhetoric. If he sometimes intimidated, he rarely resorted to exaggerations, but confined himself strictly to the facts, so that he seemed the fairest of men. This moderation had great weight with an intelligent jury and with learned judges. He always paid great deference to the court, and was generally courteous to his opponents. Of all his antagonists at the Bar, perhaps it was Jeremiah Mason and Rufus Choate whom he most dreaded; yet both of these great men were his warm friends. Warfare at the Bar does not mean personal animosity,—it is generally mutual admiration, except in the antagonism of such rivals as Hamilton and Burr. Webster's admiration for Wirt, Pinkney, Curtis, and Mason was free from all envy; in fact, Webster was too great a man for envy, and great lawyers were those whom he loved best, whom he felt to be his brethren, not secret enemies. His admiration for Jeremiah Mason was only equalled by that for Judge Marshall, who was not a rival. Webster praised Marshall as he might have Erskine or Lyndhurst.



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Mr. Webster, again, attained to great eminence in another sphere, in which lawyers have not always succeeded,—that of popular oratory, in the shape of speeches and lectures and orations to the people directly. In this sphere I doubt if he ever had an equal in this country, although Edward Everett, Rufus Choate, Wendell Phillips, and others were distinguished for their popular eloquence, and in some respects were the equals of Webster. But he was a great teacher of the people, directly,—a sort of lecturer on the principles of government, of finance, of education, of agriculture, of commerce. He was superbly eloquent in his eulogies of great men like Adams and Jefferson. His Bunker Hill and Plymouth addresses are immortal. He lectured occasionally before lyceums and literary institutions. He spoke to farmers in their agricultural meetings, and to merchants in marts of commerce. He did not go into political campaigns to any great extent, as is now the custom with political leaders on the eve of important elections. He did not seek to show the people how they should vote, so much as to teach them elemental principles. He was the oracle, the sage, the teacher,—not the politician.

In the popular assemblies—whether for the discussion of political truths or those which bear on literature, education, history, finance, or industrial pursuits—Mr. Webster was pre-eminent. What audiences were ever more enthusiastic than those that gathered to hear his wisdom and eloquence in public halls or in the open air? It is true that in his later years he lost much of his wonderful personal magnetism, and did not rise to public expectation except on great occasions; but in middle life, in the earlier part of his congressional career, he had no peer as a popular orator. Edward Everett, on some occasions, was his equal, so far as manner and words were concerned; but, on the whole, even in his grandest efforts, Everett was cold compared with Webster in his palmy days. He never touched the heart and reason as did Webster; although it must be conceded that Everett was a great rhetorician, and was master of many of the graces of oratory.

The speeches and orations of Webster were not only weighty in matter, but were wonderful for their style,—so clear, so simple, so direct, that everybody could understand him. He rarely attempted to express more than one thought in a single sentence; so that his sentences never wearied an audience, being always logical and precise, not involved and long and complicated, like the periods of Chalmers and Choate and so many of the English orators. It was only in his grand perorations that he was Ciceronian. He despised purely extemporaneous efforts; he did not believe in them. He admits somewhere that he never could make a good speech without careful preparation. The principles embodied in his famous reply to Colonel Hayne of South Carolina, in the debate in the Senate on the right of “nullification,” had lain brooding in his mind for eighteen months. To a young minister he said, There is no such thing as extemporaneous acquisition.

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Webster's speeches are likely to live for their style alone, outside their truths, like those of Cicero and Demosthenes, like the histories of Voltaire and Macaulay, like the essays of Pascal and Rousseau; and they will live, not only for both style and matter, but for the exalted patriotism which burns in them from first to last, for those sentiments which consecrate cherished institutions. How nobly he recognizes Christianity as the bulwark of national prosperity! How delightfully he presents the endearments of home, the certitudes of friendship, the peace of agricultural life, the repose of all industrial pursuits, however humble and obscure! It was this fervid patriotism, this public recognition of what is purest in human life, and exalted in aspirations, and profound in experience,—teaching the value of our privileges and the glory of our institutions,—which gave such effect to his eloquence, and endeared him to the hearts of the people until he opposed their passions. If we read any of these speeches, extending over thirty years, we shall find everywhere the same consistent spirit of liberty, of union, of conciliation, the same moral wisdom, the same insight into great truths, the same recognition of what is sacred, the same repose on what is permanent, the same faith in the expanding glories of this great nation which he loved with all his heart. In all his speeches one cannot find a sentence which insults the consecrated sentiments of religion or patriotism. He never casts a fling at Christianity; he never utters a sarcasm in reference to revealed truths; he never flippantly aspires to be wiser than Moses or Paul in reference to theological dogmas. “Ah, my friends,” said he, in 1825, “let us remember that it is only religion and morals and knowledge that can make men respectable and happy under any form of government; that no government is respectable which is not just; that without unspotted purity of public faith, without sacred public principle, fidelity, and honor, no mere form of government, no machinery of laws, can give dignity to political society.”

Thus did he discourse in those proud days when he was accepted as a national idol and a national benefactor,—those days of triumph and of victory, when the people gathered around him as they gather around a successful general. Ah! how they thronged to the spot where he was expected to speak,—as the Scotch people thronged to Edinboro' and Glasgow to hear Gladstone:—

“And when they saw his chariot but appear,
Did they not make an universal shout,
That Tiber trembled underneath her banks
To hear the replication of their sounds
Made in her concave shores?”

But it is time that I allude to those great services which Webster rendered to his country when he was a member of Congress,—services that can never be forgotten, and which made him a national benefactor.

There were three classes of subjects on which his genius pre-eminently shone,—questions of finance, the development of American industries, and the defence of the Constitution.



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As early as 1815, Mr. Webster acquired a national reputation by his speech on the proposition to establish a national bank, which he opposed, since it was to be relieved from the necessity of redeeming its notes in specie. This was at the close of the war with Great Britain, when the country was poor, business prostrated, and the finances disordered. To relieve this pressure, many wanted an inflated paper currency, which should stimulate trade. But all this Mr. Webster opposed, as certain to add to the evils it was designed to cure. He would have a bank, indeed, but he insisted it should be established on sound financial principles, with notes redeemable in gold and silver. And he brought a great array of facts to show the certain and utter failure of a system of banking operations which disregarded the fundamental financial laws. He maintained that an inflated currency produced only temporary and illusive benefits. Nor did he believe in hopes which were not sustained by experience. "Banks," said he, "are not revenue. They may afford facilities for its collection and distribution, but they cannot be sources of national income, which must flow from deeper fountains. Whatever bank-notes are not convertible into gold and silver, at the will of the holder, become of less value than gold and silver. No solidity of funds, no confidence in banking operations, has ever enabled them to keep up their paper to the value of gold and silver any longer than they paid gold and silver on demand." Similar sentiments he advanced, in 1816, in his speech on the legal currency, and also in 1832, when he said that a disordered currency is one of the greatest of political evils,—fatal to industry, frugality, and economy. "It fosters the spirit of speculation and extravagance. It is the most effectual of inventions to fertilize the rich man's field by the sweat of the poor man's brow." In these days, when principles of finance are better understood, these remarks may seem like platitudes; but they were not so fifty or sixty years ago, for then they had the force of new truth, although even then they were the result of political wisdom, based on knowledge and experience; and his views were adopted, for he appealed to reason.

Webster's financial speeches are very calm, like the papers of Hamilton and Jay in "The Federalist," but as interesting and persuasive as those of Gladstone, the greatest finance-minister of modern times. They are plain, simple, direct, without much attempt at rhetoric. He spoke like a great lawyer to a bench of judges. The solidity and soundness of his views made him greatly respected, and were remarkable in a young man of thirty-four. The subsequent financial history of the country shows that he was prophetic. All his predictions have come to pass. What is more marked in our history than the extravagance and speculation attending the expansion of paper money irredeemable in gold and silver? What misery and disappointment have resulted from



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inflated values! It was doubtless necessary to do without gold and silver in our life-and-death struggle with the South; but it was nevertheless a misfortune, seen in the gambling operations and the wild fever of speculation which attended the immense issue of paper money after the war. The bubble was sure to burst, sooner or later, like John Law's Mississippi scheme in the time of Louis XV. How many thousands thought themselves rich, in New York and Chicago, in fact everywhere, when they were really poor,—as any man is poor when his house or farm is not worth the mortgage. As soon as we returned to gold and silver, or it was known we should return to them, then all values shrank, and even many a successful merchant found he was really no richer than he was before the war. It had been easy to secure heavy mortgages on inflated values, and also to get a great interest on investments; but when these mortgages and investments shrank to what they were really worth, the holders of them became embarrassed and impoverished. The fit of commercial intoxication was succeeded by depression and unhappiness, and the moral evils of inflated values were greater than the financial, since of all demoralizing things the spirit of speculation and gambling brings, at last, the most dismal train of disappointments and miseries. Inflation and uncertainty in values, whether in stocks or real estate, alternating with the return of prosperity, seem to have marked the commercial and financial history of this country during the last fifty years, more than that of any other nation under the sun, and given rise to the spirit of extravagant speculations, both disgraceful and ruinous.

Equally remarkable were Mr. Webster's speeches on tariffs and protective industries. He here seemed to borrow from Alexander Hamilton, who is the father of our protective system. Here he co-operated with Henry Clay; and the result of his eloquence and wisdom on those great principles of political economy was the adherence to a policy—against great opposition—which built up New England and did not impoverish the West. Where would the towns of Lowell, Manchester, and Lawrence have been without the aid extended to manufacturing interests? They made the nation comparatively independent of other nations; they enriched the country, even as manufactures enriched Great Britain and France. What would England be if it were only an agricultural country? It would have been impossible to establish manufactures of textile fabrics, without protection. Without aid from governments, this branch of American industry would have had no chance to contend with the cheap labor of European artisans. I do not believe in cheap labor. I do not believe in reducing intelligent people to the condition of animals. I would give them the chance to rise; and they cannot rise if they are doomed to labor for a mere pittance. The more wages men can get for honest labor, the better is the condition of the whole country. Withdraw



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protection from infant industries, and either they perish, or those who work in them sink to the condition of the laboring classes of Europe. Nor do I believe it is a good thing for a nation to have all its eggs in one basket. I would not make this country exclusively agricultural because we have boundless fields and can raise corn cheap, any more than I would recommend a Minnesota farmer to raise nothing but wheat. Insects and mildews and unexpected heats may blast a whole harvest, and the farmer has nothing to fall back upon. He may make more money, for a time, by raising wheat exclusively; but he impoverishes his farm. He should raise cattle and sheep and grass and vegetables, as well as wheat or corn. Then he is more independent and more intelligent, even as a nation is by various industries, which call out all kinds of talent.

I know that this is a controverted point. Everything *is* controverted in political economy. There is scarcely a question which is settled in its whole range of subjects; and I know that many intellectual and enlightened men are in favor of what they call free-trade, especially professors in colleges. But there is no such thing as free-trade, strictly, in any nation, or in the history of nations. No nation legislates for universal humanity on philanthropic principles; it legislates for itself. There is no country where there are not high duties on some things, not even England. No nation can be governed on abstract principles and in disregard of its necessities. When it was for the interest of England to remove duties on corn, in order that manufactures might be stimulated, they took off duties on corn, because the laboring-classes in the mills had to be fed. Agricultural interests gave way, for a time, to manufacturing interests, because the wealth of the country was based on them rather than on lands, and because landlords did not anticipate that bread-stuffs brought from this country would interfere with the value of their rents. But England, with all her proud and selfish boasts about free-trade, may yet have to take a retrograde course, like France and Prussia, or her landed interests may be imperilled. The English aristocracy, who rule the country, cannot afford to have the value of their lands reduced one-half, for those lands are so heavily mortgaged that such a reduction of value would ruin them; nor will they like to be forced to raise vegetables rather than wheat, and turn themselves into market-gardeners instead of great proprietors. The landlords of Great Britain may yet demand protection for themselves, and, as they control Parliament, they will look out for themselves by enacting measures of protection, unless they are intimidated by the people who demand cheap bread, or unless they submit to revolution. It is eternal equity and wisdom that the weak should be protected. There may be industries strong enough now to dispense with protection; but unless they are assisted when they are feeble,

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they will cease to exist at all. Take our shipping, for instance, with foreign ports,—it is not merely crippled, it is almost annihilated. Is it desirable to cut off that great arm of national strength? Shall we march on to our destiny, blind and lame and halt? What will we do if England and other countries shall find it necessary to protect themselves from impoverishment, and reintroduce duties on bread-stuffs high enough to make the culture of wheat profitable? Where then will our farmers find a market for their superfluous corn, except to those engaged in industries which we should crush by removing protection?

I maintain that Mr. Webster, in defending our various industries with so much ability, for the benefit of the nation on the whole, rendered very important services, even as Hamilton and Clay did; although the solid South, wishing cheap labor, and engaged exclusively in agriculture, was opposed to him. The independent South would have established free-trade,—as Mr. Calhoun advocated, and as any enlightened statesman would advocate, when any interest can stand alone and defy competition, as was the case with the manufactures of Great Britain fifty years ago. The interests of the South and those of the North, under the institution of slavery, were not identical; indeed, they had been in fierce opposition for more than fifty years. Mr. Webster was, in his arguments on tariffs and cognate questions, the champion of the North, as Mr. Calhoun was of the South; and this opposition and antagonism gave great force to Webster's eloquence at this time. His sentences are short, interrogative, idiomatic. He is intensely in earnest. He grapples with sophistries and scatters them to the winds; both reason and passion vivify him.

This was the period of Webster's greatest popularity, as the defender of Northern industries. This made him the idol of the merchants and manufacturers of New England. He made them rich; no wonder they made him presents. They ought, in gratitude, to have paid his debts over and over again. What if he did, in straitened circumstances, accept their aid? They owed to him more than he owed to them; and with all their favor and bounty Webster remained poor. He was never a rich man, but always an embarrassed man, because he had expensive tastes, like Cicero at Rome and Bacon in England. This, truly, was not to his credit; it was a flaw in his character; it involved him in debt, created enemies, and injured his reputation. It may have lessened his independence, and it certainly impaired his dignity. But there were also patriotic motives which prompted him, and which kept him poor. Had he devoted his great talents exclusively to the law, he might have been rich; but he gave his time to his country.

His greatest services to his country, however, were as the defender of the Constitution. Here he soared to the highest rank of political fame. Here he was a statesman, having in view the interests of the whole country. He never was what we call a politician. He never was such a miserable creature as that. I mean a mere politician, whose calling is

the meanest a man can follow, since it seeks only spoils, and is a perpetual deception, incompatible with all dignity and independence, whose only watchword is success.



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Not such was Webster. He was too proud and too dignified for that form of degradation; and he perhaps sacrificed his popularity to his intellectual dignity, and the glorious consciousness of being a national benefactor,—as a real statesman seeks to be, and is, when he falls back on the elemental principles of justice and morality, like a late Premier of England, one of the most conscientious statesmen that ever controlled the destinies of a nation. Webster, like Burke, was haughty, austere, and brave; but such a man is not likely to remain the favorite of the people, who prefer an Alcibiades to a Cato, except in great crises, when they look to a man who can save them, and whom they can forget.

I cannot enumerate the magnificent bursts of eloquence which electrified the whole country when Webster stood out as the defender of the Constitution, when he combated secession and defended the Union. How noble and gigantic he was when he answered the aspersions of the Southern orators,—great men as they were,—and elaborately showed that the Union meant something more than a league of sovereign States! The great leaders of secession were overthrown in a contest which they courted, and in which they expected victory. His reply to Hayne is, perhaps, the most masterly speech in American political history. It is one of the immortal orations of the world, extorting praise and admiration from Americans and foreigners alike. In his various encounters with Hayne, McDuffee, and Calhoun, he taught the principles of political union to the rising generation. He produced those convictions which sustained the North in its subsequent contest to preserve the integrity of the Nation. There can be no estimate of the services he rendered to the country by those grand and patriotic efforts. But for these, the people might have succumbed to the sophistries of Calhoun; for he was almost as great a giant as Webster, and was more faultless in his private life. He had an immense influence; he ruled the whole South; he made it solid. The speeches of Webster in the Senate made him the oracle of the North. He was not only the great champion of the North, and of Northern interests, but he was the teacher of the whole country. He expounded the principles of the Constitution,—that this great country is one, to be forever united in all its parts; that its stars and stripes were to float over every city and fortress in the land, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the river St. Lawrence to the Gulf of Mexico, and “bearing for their motto no such miserable interrogatory as, What are all these worth? nor those other words of delusion and folly, Liberty first and Union afterwards; but that other sentiment, dear to every American heart, Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!”



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It was after his memorable speech in reply to Hayne that I saw Webster for the first time. I was a boy in college, and he had come to visit it; and well do I remember the unbounded admiration, yea, the veneration, felt for him by every young man in that college and throughout the town,—indeed, throughout the whole North, for he was the pride and glory of the land. It was then that they called him godlike, looking like an Olympian statue, or one of the creations of Michael Angelo when he wished to represent majesty and dignity and power in repose,—the most commanding human presence ever seen in the Capitol at Washington.

When we recall those patriotic and noble speeches which were read and admired by every merchant and farmer and lawyer in the country, and by which he produced great convictions and taught great lessons, we cannot but wonder why his glory was dimmed, and he was pulled down from his pedestal, and became no longer an idol. It is affirmed by many that it was his famous 7th of March speech which killed him, which disappointed his friends and alienated his constituents. I am therefore compelled to say something about that speech, and of his history at that time.

Mr. Webster was doubtless an ambitious man. He aspired to the presidency. And why not? It is and will be a great dignity, such as ought to be conferred on great ability and patriotism. Was he not able and patriotic? Had he not rendered great services? Was he not universally admired for his genius and experience and wisdom? Who was more prominent than he, among the statesmen of the country, or more thoroughly fitted to fulfil the duties of that high office? Was it not natural that he should have aspired to be one of the successors of Washington and Adams and Jefferson? He comprehended the honor and the dignity of that office. He did not seek it in order to divide its spoils, or to reward his friends; but he did wish to secure the highest prize that could be won by political services; he did desire to receive the highest honor in the gift of the people, even as Cicero sought the consulate at Rome; he did believe himself capable of representing the country in its most exacting position. It is nothing against a man that he is ambitious, provided his ambition is lofty. Most of the illustrious men of history have been ambitious,—Cromwell, Pitt, Thiers, Guizot, Bismarck,—but ambitious to be useful to their country, as well as to receive its highest rewards. Webster failed to reach the position he desired, because of his enemies, and, possibly, from jealousy of his towering height,—just as Clay failed, and Aaron Burr, and Alexander Hamilton, and Stephen Douglas, and William H. Seward. The politicians, who control the people, prefer men in the presidential chair whom they think they can manage and use, not those to whom they will be forced to succumb. Webster was not a man to be controlled or used, and so the politicians rejected him. This he deeply felt, and even resented. His failure saddened his latter days and embittered his soul, although he was too proud to make loud complaints.



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I grant he did not here show magnanimity. He thought that the presidency should be given to the ablest and most experienced statesman. He did not appear to see that this proud position is too commanding to be bestowed except for the most exalted services, and such services as attract the common eye, especially in war. Presidents in so great a country as this reign, like the old feudal kings, by the grace of God. They are selected by divine Providence, as David was from the sheepfold. No American, however great his genius, except the successful warrior, can ever hope to climb to this dizzy height, unless personal ambition is lost sight of in public services. This is wisely ordered, to defeat unscrupulous ambition. It is only in England that a man can rise to supreme power by force of genius, since he is selected virtually by his peers, and not by the popular voice. He who leads Parliament is the real king of England for the time, since Parliament is omnipotent. Had Webster been an Englishman, and as powerful in the House of Commons as he was in Congress at one time, he might have been prime minister. But he could not be president of the United States, although the presidential power is much inferior to that exercised by an English premier. It is the dignity of the office, not its power, which constitutes the value of the presidency. And Webster loved dignity even more than power.

In order to arrive at this coveted office,—although its duties probably would have been irksome,—it is possible that he sought to conciliate the South and win the favor of Southern leaders. But I do not believe he ever sought to win their favor by any abandonment of his former principles, or by any treachery to the cause he had espoused. Yet it is this of which he has been accused by his enemies,—many of those enemies his former friends. The real cause of this estrangement, and of all the accusations against him, was this,—he did not sympathize with the Abolition party; he was not prepared to embark in a crusade against slavery, the basal institution of the South. He did not like slavery; but he knew it to be an institution which the Constitution, of which he was the great defender, had accepted,—accepted as a compromise, in those dark days which tried men's souls. Many of the famous statesmen who deliberated in that venerated hall in Philadelphia also disliked and detested slavery; but they could not have had a constitution, they could not have had a united country, unless that institution was acknowledged and guaranteed. So they accepted it as the lesser evil. They made a compromise, and the Constitution was signed. Now, everybody knows that the Abolitionists of the North, about the year 1833, attacked slavery, although it was guaranteed by the Constitution; attacked it, not as an evil merely, but as a sin; attacked it, by virtue of a higher law than constitutional provision. And as an evil, as a stain on our country, as an insult



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to the virtue and intelligence of the age, as a crime against humanity, these people of the North declared that slavery ought to be swept away. Mr. Webster, as well as Mr. Fillmore, Mr. Lincoln, Mr. Everett, and many other acknowledged patriots, was for letting slavery alone, as an evil too great to be removed without war; which, moreover, could not be removed without an infringement on what the South considered as its rights. He was for conciliation, in order to preserve the Constitution as well as the Union. The Abolitionists were violent in their denunciations. And although it took many years to permeate the North with their leaven, they were in earnest; and under persecutions and mobs and ostracism and contempt they persevered until they created a terrible public opinion. The South had early taken the alarm, and in order to protect their peculiar and favorite institution, had at various times attempted to extend it into newly acquired territories where it did not exist, claiming the protection of the Constitution. Mr. Webster was one of their foremost opponents in this, contesting their right to do it under the Constitution. But in 1848 the Antislavery opinion at the North crystallized in a political organization,—the Free-Soil Party; and on the other hand the South proposed to abrogate the Missouri Compromise of 1820 as an offset to the admission of California as a free State, and at the same time asked in further concession the passage of the Fugitive Slave Bill; and, in anticipation of failing to get these, threatened secession, which of course meant war.

It was at this crisis that Mr. Webster delivered his celebrated 7th of March speech,—in many respects his greatest,—in which he advocated conciliation and adherence to the Constitution, but which was represented to support Southern interests, which all his life he had opposed; and more, to advocate these interests, in order to secure Southern votes for the presidency. Some of the rich and influential men of Boston who disliked Webster for other reasons,—for he used to snub them, even after they had lent him money,—made the most they could of that speech, to alienate the people. The Abolitionists, at last hostile to Mr. Webster, who stood in their way and would not adopt their dictation or advice, also bitterly denounced this speech, until it finally came to be regarded by the common people, few of whom ever read it, as a very unpatriotic production, entirely at variance with the views that Webster formerly advanced; and they forsook him.

Now, what is the real gist and spirit of that speech? The passions which agitated the country when it was delivered have passed away, and not only can we now calmly criticise it, but people will listen to the criticism with all the attention it deserves.

It is my opinion, shared by Peter Harvey and other friends of Mr. Webster, that in no speech he ever made are patriotic and Union sentiments more fully avowed. Said he, with fiery emphasis:—



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“I hear with distress and anguish the word ‘secession.’ Secession! peaceable secession! Sir, your eyes and mine are never destined to see that miracle. The dismemberment of this great country without convulsion! The breaking up the fountains of the great deep without ruffling the surface! There can be no such thing as peaceable secession. It is an utter impossibility. Is this great Constitution, under which we live, to be melted and thawed away by secession, as the snows on the mountains are melted away under the influence of the vernal sun? No, sir; I see as plainly as the sun in the heavens what that disruption must produce. I see it must produce war.”

“Peaceable secession! peaceable secession! What would be the result? Where is the line to be drawn? What States are to secede? What is to remain American? What am I to be? Am I to be an American no longer,—a sectional man, a local man, a separatist, with no country in common? Heaven forbid! Where is the flag of the Union to remain? Where is the eagle still to tower? What is to become of the army? What is to become of the navy? What is to become of the public lands? How is each of the thirty States to defend itself? Will you cut the Mississippi in two, leaving free States on its branches and slave States at its mouth? Can any one suppose that this population on its banks can be severed by a line that divides them from the territory of a foreign and alien government, down somewhere,—the Lord knows where,—upon the lower branches of the Mississippi? Sir, I dislike to pursue this subject. I have utter disgust for it. I would rather hear of national blasts and mildews and pestilence and famine, than hear gentlemen talk about secession. To break up this great government! To dismember this glorious country! To astonish Europe with an act of folly, such as Europe for two centuries has never beheld in any government! No, sir; such talk is enough to make the bones of Andrew Jackson turn round in his coffin.”

Now, what are we to think of these sentiments, drawn from the 7th of March speech, so disgracefully misrepresented by the politicians and the fanatics? Do they sound like bidding for Southern votes? Can any Union sentiments be stronger? Can anything be more decided or more patriotic? He warns, he entreats, he predicts like a prophet. He proves that secession is incompatible with national existence; he sees nothing in it but war. And of all things he dreaded and hated, it was war. He knew what war meant. He knew that a civil war would be the direst calamity. He would ward it off. He would be conciliating. He would take away the excuse of war, by adhering to the Constitution,—the written Constitution which our fathers framed, and which has been the admiration of the world, under which we have advanced to prosperity and glory as no nation ever before advanced.

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But a large class regarded the Constitution as unsound, in some respects a wicked Constitution, since it recognized slavery as an institution. By “the higher law,” they would sweep slavery away, perhaps by moral means, but by endless agitations, until it was destroyed. Mr. Webster, I confess, did not like those agitations, since he knew they would end in war. He had a great insight, such as few people had at that time. But his prophetic insight was just what a large class of people did not like, especially in his own State. He uttered disagreeable truths,—as all prophets do,—and they took up stones to stone him,—to stone him for the bravest act of his whole life, in which a transcendent wisdom appeared, and which will be duly honored when the truth shall be seen.

The fact was, at that time Mr. Webster seemed to be a croaker, a Jeremiah, as Burke at one time seemed to his generation, when he denounced the recklessness of the French Revolution. Very few people at the North dreamed of war. It was never supposed that the Southern leaders would actually become rebels. And they, on the other hand, never dreamed that the North would rise up solidly and put them down. And if war were to happen, it was supposed that it would be brief. Even so great and sagacious a statesman as Seward thought this. The South thought that it could easily whip the Yankees; and the North thought that it could suppress a Southern rebellion in six weeks. Both sides miscalculated. And so, in spite of warnings, the nation drifted into war; but as it turned out in the end it seems a providential event, —the way God took to break up slavery, the root and source of all our sectional animosities; a terrible but apparently necessary catastrophe, since more than a million of brave men perished, and more than five thousand millions of dollars were spent. Had the North been wise, it would have compensated the South for its slaves. Had the South been wise, it would have accepted the compensation and set them free, But it was not to be. That issue could only be settled by the most terrible contest of modern times.

I will not dwell on that war, which Webster predicted and dreaded. I only wish to show that it was not for want of patriotism that he became unpopular, but because he did not fall in with the prevailing passions of the day, or with the public sentiment of the North in reference to slavery, not as to its evils and wickedness, but as to the way in which it was to be opposed. The great reforms of England, since the accession of William III., have been effected by using constitutional means,—not violence, not revolution, not war; but by an appeal to reason and intelligence and justice. No reforms in any nation have been greater and more glorious than those of the nineteenth century,—all effected by constitutional methods. Mr. Webster vainly attempted constitutional means. He was a lawyer. He revered the Constitution, with all its compromises.



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He would observe the law of contracts. Yet no man in the nation was more impatient than he at the threats of secession. He foretold that secession would lead to war. And if Mr. Webster had lived to see the war of which he had such anxious prescience, I firmly believe that he would have marched under the banner of the North with patriotism equal to any man. He would have been where Mr. Everett was. One of his own sons was slain in that war. He was not a Northern man with Southern principles; his whole life attested his Northern principles. There never was a time when he was not hated and mistrusted by the Southern leaders. It is not a proof that he was Southern in his sympathies because he was not an Abolitionist; and by an Abolitionist I mean what was meant thirty years ago,—one who was unscrupulously bent on removing slavery by any means, good or bad; since slavery, in his eyes, was a *malum per se*, not a misfortune, an evil, a sin, but a crime to be washed out by the besom of destruction.

Mr. Webster did not sympathize with these extreme views. He was not a reformer; but that does not show that he was unpatriotic, or a Southern man in his heart. “The higher law,” to him, was the fulfilment of a contract; the maintenance of promises made in good faith, whether those promises were wise or foolish; the observance of laws so long as they were laws. There was, undeniably, a great evil and shame to be removed, but he was not responsible for it; and he left that evil in the hands of Him who said, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay,”—as He did repay in four years’ devastations, miseries, and calamities, and these so awful, so unexpected, so ill-prepared for, that a thoughtful and kind-hearted person, in view of them, will weep rather than rejoice; for it is not pleasant to witness chastisements and punishments, even if necessary and just, unless the people who suffer are fiends and incarnate devils, as very few men are. Human nature is about the same everywhere, and individuals and nations peculiarly sinful are generally made so by their surroundings and circumstances. The reckless people of frontier mining districts are not naturally worse than adventurers in New York or Philadelphia; nor is any vulgar and ignorant man, in any part of the country, suddenly made rich, probably any coarser in his pleasures, or more sensual in his appearance, or more profane in his language, than was Vitellius, or Heliogabalus, or Otho, on an imperial throne.

But even suppose Mr. Webster, in the decline of his life, intoxicated by his magnificent position or led astray by ambition, made serious political errors. What then? All great men have made errors, both in judgment and in morals,—Caesar, when he crossed the Rubicon; Theodosius, when he slaughtered the citizens of Thessalonica; Luther, when he quarrelled with Zwingli; Henry IV., when he stooped at Canossa; Elizabeth, when she executed Mary Stuart; Cromwell, when he bequeathed absolute power to his son; Bacon,

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when he took bribes; Napoleon, when he divorced Josephine; Hamilton, when he fought Burr. The sun itself passes through eclipses, as it gives light to the bodies which revolve around it. Even David and Peter stumbled. Because Webster professed to know as much of the interests of the country as the shoemakers of Lynn, and refused to be instructed in his political duties by Garrison and Wendell Phillips, does he deserve eternal reprobation? Because he opposed the public sentiments of his constituents on one point, when perhaps they were right, is he to be hurled from his lofty pedestal? Are all his services to be forgotten because he did not lift up his trumpet voice in favor of immediate emancipation? And even suppose he sought to conciliate the South when the South was preparing for rebellion,—is peace-making such a dreadful thing? Go still farther: suppose he wished to conciliate the South in order to get Southern support for the presidency—which I grant he wanted, and possibly sought,—is he to be unforgiven, and his name to be blasted, and he held up to the rising generation as a fallen man? Does a man fall hopelessly because he stumbles? Is a man to be dethroned because he is not perfect? When was Webster's vote ever bought and sold? Who ever sat with more dignity in the councils of the nation? Would he have voted for "back pay"? Would he have bought a seat in the Senate, even if he had been as rich as a bonanza king?

Consider how few errors Webster really committed in a public career of nearly forty years. Consider the beneficence and wisdom of the measures which he generally advocated, and which would have been lost but for his eloquence and power. Consider the greatness and lustre of his congressional career on the whole. Who has proved a greater benefactor to this nation, on the floor of Congress, than he? I do not wish to eulogize, still less to whitewash, so great a man, but only to render simple justice to his memory and deeds. The time has come to lift the veil which for thirty years has concealed his noble political services. The time has come to cry shame on those boys who mocked a prophet, and said, "Go up, thou bald-head!"—although no bears were found to devour them. The time has come for this nation to bury the old slanders of an exciting political warfare, and render thanks for the services performed by the greatest intellectual giant of the past generation,—services rendered not on the floor of the Senate alone, not in the national legislature for thirty years, but in one of the great offices of State, when he made a treaty with England which saved us from an entangling war. The Ashburton treaty is the brightest gem in the coronet with which he should be crowned. It was the proudest day in Webster's life when Rufus Choate announced to him one evening that the Senate had confirmed the treaty. It was not when he closed his magnificent argument in behalf of Dartmouth College, not when he addressed the intelligence of New England at Bunker Hill, not when he demolished Governor Hayne, not when he sat on the woolsack with Lord Brougham, not when he was entertained by Louis Philippe, that the proudest emotions swelled in his bosom, but when he learned that he had prevented a war with England,—for he knew that England and America could not afford to fight; that it would be a fight where gain is loss and glory is shame.



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At last, worn out with labor and disease, and perhaps embittered by disappointment, and saddened to see the increasing tendency to elevate little men to power,—the “grasshoppers, who make the field ring with their importunate chinks, while the great cattle chew the cud and are silent,”—Webster died at Marshfield, Oct. 24, 1852, at seventy years of age. At the time he was Secretary of State. He died in the consolations of a religion in which he believed, surrounded with loving friends; and even his enemies felt that a great man in Israel had fallen. Nothing then was said of his defects, for great defects he had,—a towering intellectual pride like Chatham, an austerity like Gladstone, passions like those of Mirabeau, extravagance like that of Cicero, indifference to pecuniary obligations, like Pitt and Fox and Sheridan; but these were overbalanced by the warmth of his affections for his faithful friends, simplicity of manners and taste, courteous treatment of opponents, dignity of character, kindness to the poor, hospitality, enjoyment of rural scenes and sports, profound religious instincts, devotion to what he deemed the welfare of his country, independence of opinions and boldness in asserting them at any hazard and against all opposition, and unbounded contempt of all lies and shams and tricks. These traits will make his memory dear to all who knew him. And as Florence, too late, repented of her ingratitude to Dante, and appointed her most learned men to expound the “Divine Comedy” when he was dead, so will the writings of Webster be more and more a study among lawyers and statesmen. His fame will spread, and grow wider and greater, like that of Bacon and Burke, and of other benefactors of mankind; and his ideas will not pass away until the glorious fabric of American institutions, whose foundations were laid by God-fearing people, shall be utterly destroyed, and the Capitol, where his noblest efforts were made, shall become a mass of broken and prostrate columns beneath the debris of the nation’s ruin! No, not then shall they perish, even if such gloomy changes are possible, any more than the genius of Cicero has faded among the ruins of the Eternal City; but they shall shine upon the most distant works of man, since they are drawn from the wisdom of all preceding generations, and are based on those principles which underlie all possible civilizations!

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JOHN C. CALHOUN.

1782-1850.

THE SLAVERY QUESTION.

The extraordinary abilities of John C. Calhoun, the great influence he exerted as the representative of Southern interests in the National Legislature, and especially his connection with the Slavery Question, make it necessary to include him among the statesmen who, for evil or good, have powerfully affected the destinies of the United States. He is a great historical character,—the peer of Webster and Clay in congressional history, and more unsullied than either of them in the virtues of private life. In South Carolina he was regarded as little less than a demigod, and until the antislavery agitation began he was viewed as among the foremost statesmen of the land. His elevation to commanding influence in Congress was very rapid, and but for his identification with partisan interests and a bad institution, there was no office in the gift of the nation to which he could not reasonably have aspired.

John Caldwell Calhoun was born in 1782, of highly respectable Protestant-Irish descent, in the Abbeville District in South Carolina. He was not a patrician, according to the ideas of rich planters. He had but a slender school education in boyhood, but was prepared for college by a Presbyterian clergyman, entered the Junior Class of Yale College in 1802, and was graduated with high honors. He chose the law for his profession, studied laboriously for three years, spending eighteen months at the then famous law school at Litchfield, Connecticut, and gave great promise, in his remarkable logical powers, of becoming an eminent lawyer.

Whatever abilities Mr. Calhoun may have had for the law, it does not appear that he practised it long, or to any great extent. His taste and his genius inclined him to politics. And, having married a lady with some fortune, he had sufficient means to live without professional drudgery. After serving a short time in the State Legislature of South Carolina, he was elected a member of Congress, and took his seat in the House of Representatives in 1811, at the age of twenty-nine. From the very first his voice was



heard. He made a speech in favor of raising ten thousand additional men to our army to resist the encroachments of Great Britain and prepare for hostilities should the country drift into war. It was an able speech for a young man, and its scornful



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repudiation of reckoning the costs of war against insult and violated rights had a chivalric ring about it: "Sir, I here enter my solemn protest against a low and calculating avarice entering this hall of legislation. It is only fit for shops and counting-houses.... It is a compromising spirit, always ready to yield a part to save the residue." Here at an early date we hear the key-note of his life,—hatred of compromises and half-measures. If it were necessary to go to war at all, he would fight regardless of expense.

Thus Calhoun began his public career as an advocate of war with Great Britain. The old Revolutionary sores had not yet had time to heal, and there was general hostility to England, except among the Virginia aristocrats and the Federalists of the North. Although a young man, Calhoun was placed upon the important committee of Foreign Affairs, of which he was soon made chairman.

Calhoun's early speeches in Congress gave promise of rare abilities. The most able of them were those on the repeal of the Embargo, in 1814; on the commercial convention with Great Britain in 1816; on the United States Bank Bill and the tariff the same year; and on the Internal Improvement Bill in 1817. The main subject which occupied Congress from 1812 to 1814 was the war with Great Britain, during the administration of Madison; and afterwards, till 1817, the great questions at issue were in reference to tariffs and internal improvements.

In the discussion of these subjects Calhoun took broad and patriotic ground. At that time we see no sectional interests predominating in his mind. He favored internal improvements, great permanent roads, and even the protection of manufactures, and a National Bank. On all these questions his sectional interests at a later day led him to support the exact opposite of these early national views. Says Von Holst: "His speech on the new tariff bill (April 6, 1816) was a long and carefully prepared argument in favor of the whole economical platform on which the Whig party stood to the last day of its existence.... Even Henry Clay and Horace Greeley have not been able to put their favorite doctrine into stronger language.... His final aim was the industrial independence of the United States from Europe; and this, he thought, could be obtained by protective duties."

Calhoun's speeches, during the six years that he was a member of the House of Representatives, were so able as to attract the attention of the nation, and in 1817 Monroe selected him as his Secretary of War. And he made a good executive officer in this branch of the public service, putting things to rights, and bringing order out of confusion, living on terms of friendship with John Quincy Adams and other members of the cabinet, planning military roads, introducing a system of strict economy in his department, and making salutary reforms. He tolerated no abuses. He was disposed to do justice to the Indians, and raise



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them from their degradation, even seeking to educate them, when it was more than probable that they would return to their barbaric habits,—a race, as it would seem from experience, very difficult to civilize. Adams thus spoke of his young colleague: “Mr. Calhoun is a man of fair and candid mind, of honorable principles, of quick and clear understanding, of cool self-possession, of enlarged philosophical views, and of ardent patriotism. He is above all sectional and factious prejudices more than any other statesman of this Union with whom I have ever acted,”—a very different verdict from what he wrote in his diary in 1831. Judge Story wrote of him in 1823 in these terms: “I have great admiration for Mr. Calhoun, and think few men have more enlarged and liberal views of the true policy of the national government.”

The post he held, however, was not Calhoun’s true arena, but one which an ambitious young man of thirty-five could not well decline, from the honor it brought. The secretaryship of war is the least important of all the cabinet offices in time of peace, and was especially so when the army was reduced to six thousand men. Its functions amounted to little more than sending small detachments to military posts, making contracts for the commissariat, visiting occasionally the forts and fortifications, and making a figure in Washington society. It furnished no field for extensive operations, or the exercise of remarkable qualities of mind. But inasmuch as it made Calhoun a member of the cabinet, it gave him an opportunity to express his mind on all national issues, and exercise an influence on the President himself. It did not make him prominent in the eyes of the nation. He was simply the head of a bureau, although an important personage in the eyes of the cadets of West Point and of some lazy lieutenants stationed among the Indians. But whatever the part he was required to play, he did his duty, showed ability, and won confidence. He doubtless added to his reputation, else he would not have been talked about as a candidate for the presidency, selected as a candidate for the vice-presidency, and chosen to that position by Northern votes, as he was in 1824, when the election was thrown into the House of Representatives, and the friends of Henry Clay made Adams, instead of Jackson, President. Calhoun’s popularity with all parties resulted in his election as vice-president by a very large popular vote. He deserved it. The day had not come for the ascendancy of mere politicians, and their division of the spoils of office.

The condition of the slaveholding States at this period was most prosperous. The culture of cotton had become exceedingly lucrative. Rich planters spent their summers at the North in luxurious independence. It was the era of general “good feeling.” No agitating questions had arisen. Young men at the South sought education in the New England colleges; manufacturing interests were in their infancy, and

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had not, as yet, excited Southern jealousy. Commercial prosperity in New England was the main object desired, although the war with Great Britain had proved disastrous to it. Political influence seemed to centre in the Southern States. These States had furnished four presidents out of five. The great West had not arisen in its might; it had no great cities: but Charleston and Boston were centres of culture and wealth, and on good terms with each other, both equally free from agitating questions, and both equally benignant to the institution of slavery, which the Constitution was supposed to have made secure forever. The Adams administration was notable for nothing but beginnings of the tariff question and the protectionist Act of 1828, the growth of the Democratic party, the final intensity of the presidential campaign of 1828, and the election of Jackson, with Calhoun as Vice-president.

As the incumbent of this office for two terms, Mr. Calhoun did not make a great mark in history. His office was one of dignity and not of power; but during his vice-presidency important discussions took place in Congress which placed him, as presiding officer of the Senate, in an embarrassing position. He was between two fires, and gradually became alienated from the two opposing parties to whom he owed his election. He could go neither with Adams nor with Jackson on public measures, and both interfered with his aspirations for the presidency. His personal relations with Jackson, who had been his warm friend and supporter, became strained after his second election as Vice-President. He took part against Jackson in the President's undignified attempt to force his cabinet to recognize the social position of Mrs. Eaton. Further, it was divulged by Crawford, who had been Secretary of the Treasury in Monroe's cabinet when Calhoun was Secretary of War, that the latter had in 1818 favored a censure of Jackson for his unauthorized seizure of Spanish territory in the Florida campaign during the Seminole War; and this increased the growing animosity. What had been an alienation between the two highest officers of the government ripened into intense hatred, which was fatal to the aspirations of Calhoun for the presidency; for no man could be President against the overpowering influence of Jackson. This was a bitter disappointment to Calhoun, for he had set his heart on being the successor of Jackson in the presidential chair.

There were two subjects which had arisen to great importance during Mr. Calhoun's terms of executive office which not only blasted his prospects for the presidency, but separated him forever from his former friends and allies.



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One of these was the tariff question, which gave him great uneasiness. He opened his eyes to see that protection and internal improvements, so ably advocated by Henry Clay, and even by himself in 1816, were becoming the policy of the government to the enriching of the North. True, it was only an economical question, but it seemed to him to lay the axe to the root of Southern prosperity. It was his settled conviction that tariffs for protection would increase the burdens of the South by raising the price of all those articles which it was compelled to buy, and that large profits on articles manufactured in the United States would only enrich the Northern manufacturers. The South, being an agricultural country exclusively, naturally sought to buy in the cheapest market, and therefore wanted no tariff except for revenue. When Mr. Calhoun saw that protectionist duties were an injury to the slaveholding States he reversed entirely his former opinions. And what influence he could exert as the presiding officer of the Senate was now displayed against the Adams party, which had favored his election to the vice-presidency, and of course alienated his Northern supporters, especially Adams, who now turned against him, and as bitterly denounced as once he had favored and praised him. Calhoun had now both the Jackson and Adams parties against him, though for different reasons.

Up to this time, until the agitation of the tariff question began, Mr. Calhoun had not been a party man. He was regarded throughout the country as a statesman, rather than as a politician.

But when manufactures of cotton and woollen goods were being established in Lowell, Lawrence, Dover, Great Falls, and other places in New England, wherever there was a water-power to turn the mills, it became obvious that a new tariff would be imposed to protect these infant industries and manufacturing interests everywhere. The tariff of 1824 had borne heavily on the South, producing great irritation, and very naturally "the planters complained that they had to bear all the burdens of protection without enjoying its benefits,—that the things they had to buy had become dearer, while the things produced and exported found a less market." Financial ruin stared them in the face. It seemed to them a great injustice that the interests of the planters should be sacrificed to the monopolists of the North.

In the defence of Southern interests Mr. Calhoun in the Senate at first appealed to reason and patriotism. It is true that he now became a partisan, but he had been sent to Congress as the champion of the cotton lords. He was no more unpatriotic than Webster, who at first, as the representative of the merchants of Boston, advocated freer trade in the interests of commerce, and afterwards, as the representative of Massachusetts at large, turned round and advocated protective duties for the benefit of the manufacturer. It is a nice question, as to where a Congressman should

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draw the line of advocacy between local and general interests. What are men sent to Congress for, except to advance the interests intrusted to them by their constituents? When are these to be merged in national considerations? Calhoun's mission was to protect Southern interests, and he defended them with admirable logical power. He was one of three great masters of debate in the Senate. No one could reasonably blame him for the opinions he advanced, for he had a right to them; and if he took sectional ground he did as most party leaders do. It was merely a congressional fight.

But when, after the tariff of 1828, it appeared to Calhoun that there was no remedy; that protection had become the avowed and permanent policy of the government; that the tobacco and cotton of the South, being the chief bulk of our exports, were paying tribute to Northern manufactures, which were growing strong under protection of Federal taxes on competing imports; and that the South was menaced with financial ruin,—he took a new departure, the first serious political error of his life, and became disloyal to the Union.

In July, 1831, he made an elaborate address to the people of South Carolina, in which, discussing the theoretical relations of the States to the Union, he put forth the doctrine that any State could nullify the laws of Congress when it deemed them unconstitutional, as he regarded the existing tariff to be. He looked upon the State, rather than the Union of States, as supreme, and declared that the State could secede if the Union enforced unconstitutional measures. This, as Von Hoist points out, practically meant that, “whenever different views are entertained about the powers conferred by the Constitution upon the Federal government, those of the *minority* were to prevail,”—an evident absurdity under a republican government.

In June, 1832, was passed another tariff bill, offering some reductions, but still based on protection as the underlying principle. In consequence, South Carolina, entirely subservient to the influence of Calhoun, who in August issued another manifesto, passed in November the nullification ordinance, to take effect the following February. As already recited, President Jackson took the most vigorous measures, sustained by Congress, and gave the nullifiers clearly to understand that if they resisted the laws of the United States, the whole power of the government would be arrayed against them. They received the proclamation defiantly, and the governor issued a counter one.

It was in this crisis that Calhoun resigned the vice-presidency, and was immediately elected to the United States Senate, where he could fight more advantageously. Then the President sent a message to Congress requesting new powers to put down the nullifiers by force, should the necessity arrive, which were granted, for he was now at the height of his popularity and influence. The nullifiers enraged him, and though they abstained from resorting to extreme measures, they continued their threats. The country appeared to be on the verge of war.



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The party leaders felt the necessity of a compromise, and Henry Clay brought forward in the Senate a bill which, in March, 1833, became a law, which reduced the tariff. It apparently appeased the South, not yet prepared to go out of the Union, and the storm blew over. There was no doubt, however, that, had the South Carolinians resisted the government with force of arms they would have been put down, for Jackson was both infuriated and firm. He had even threatened to hang Calhoun as high as Haman,—an absurd threat, for he had no power to hang anybody, except one with arms in his hands,—and then only through due process of law,—while Calhoun was a Senator, as yet using only legitimate means to gain his ends.

In the compromise which Clay effected, the South had the best of the bargain, and in view of it the culmination of the “irrepressible conflict” was delayed nearly thirty years. Calhoun himself maintained that the Compromise Tariff of 1833 was due to the resistance which his State had made, but he also felt that the Force Bill with which Congress had backed up the President was a standing menace, and, as usual with him, he looked forward to impending dangers. The Compromise Tariff, which reduced duties to twenty per cent in the main, and made provision for still further reduction, found great opponents in the Senate, and was regarded by Webster as anything but a protection bill; nor was Calhoun altogether satisfied with it. It was received with favor by the country generally, however, and South Carolina repealed her nullification ordinance.

That subject being disposed of for the present, the attention of Congress and the country was now turned to the President’s war on the United States Bank. As this most important matter has already been treated in the lecture on Jackson, I have only to show the course Mr. Calhoun took in reference to it. He was now fifty-three years old, in the prime of his life and the full vigor of his powers. In the Senate he had but two peers, Clay and Webster, and was not in sympathy with either of them, though not in decided hostility as he was toward Jackson. He was now neither Whig nor Democrat, but a South Carolinian, having in view the welfare of the South alone, of whose interests he was the recognized guardian. It was only when questions arose which did not directly bear on Southern interests that he was the candid and patriotic statesman, sometimes voting with one party and sometimes with another. He was opposed to the removal of deposits from the United States Bank, and yet was opposed to a renewal of its charter. His leading idea in reference to the matter was, the necessity of divorcing the government altogether from the banking system, as a dangerous money-power which might be perverted to political purposes. In pointing out the dangers, he spoke with great power and astuteness, for he was always on the look-out for breakers. He therefore argued against the removal of deposits

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as an unwarrantable assumption of power on the part of the President, which could not be constitutionally exercised; here he agreed with his great rivals, while he was more moderate than they in his language. He made war on measures rather than on men personally, regarding the latter as of temporary importance, of passing interest. So far as the removal of deposits seemed an arbitrary act on the part of the Executive, he severely denounced it, as done with a view to grasp unconstitutional power for party purposes, thus corrupting the country, and as a measure to get control of money. Said he: "With money we will get partisans, with partisans votes, and with votes money, is the maxim of our political pilferers." He regarded the measure as a part of the "spoils system" which marked Jackson's departure from the policy of his predecessors.

Calhoun detested the system of making politics a game, since it would throw the government into the hands of political adventurers and mere machine-politicians. He was too lofty a man to encourage anything like this, and here we are compelled to do him honor. Whatever he said or did was in obedience to his convictions. He was above and beyond all deceit and trickery and personal selfishness. His contempt for political wire-pullers amounted almost to loathing. He was incapable of doing a mean thing. He might be wrong in his views, and hence might do evil instead of good, but he was honest. In his severe self-respect and cold dignity of character he resembled William Pitt. His integrity was peerless. He could neither be bought nor seduced from his course. Private considerations had no weight with him, except his aspiration for the presidency, and even that seems to have passed away when his disagreement with Jackson put him out of the Democratic race, and when the new crisis arose in Southern interests, to which he ever after devoted himself with entire self-abnegation.

In moral character Calhoun was as reproachless as Washington. He neither drank to excess, nor gambled, nor violated the seventh commandment. He had no fellowship with either fools or knaves. He believed that the office of Senator was the highest to which Americans could ordinarily attain, and he gave dignity to it, and felt its responsibilities. He thought that only the best and most capable men should be elevated to that post. Nor would he seek it by unworthy ends. The office sought him, not he the office. It was this pure and exalted character which gave him such an ascendancy at the South, as much as his marvellous logical powers and his devotion to Southern interests. His constituents believed in him and followed him, perhaps blindly. Therefore, when we consider what are generally acknowledged as his mistakes, we should bear in mind the palliating circumstances.



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Calhoun was the incarnation of Southern public opinion,—bigoted, narrow, prejudiced, but intense in its delusions and loyal to its dogmas. Hence he enslaved others as he was himself enslaved. He was alike the idol and the leader of his State, impossible to be dethroned, as Webster was with the people of Massachusetts until he misrepresented their convictions. The consistency of his career was marvellous,—not that he did not change some of his opinions, for there is no intellectual progress to a man who does not. How can a young man, however gifted, be infallible? But whatever the changes through which his mind passed, they did not result from self-interest or ambition, but were the result of more enlightened views and enlarged experience. Political wisdom is not a natural instinct, but a progressive growth, like that of Burke,—the profoundest of all the intellects of his generation.

Calhoun made several great speeches in the Senate of the United States, besides those in reference to a banking system connected with the government, which, whether wise or erroneous, contained some important truths. But the logical deduction of them all may be summed up in one idea,—the supremacy of State rights in opposition to a central government. This, from the time when the diverging interests of the North and the South made him feel the dangers in “the unchecked will of a majority of the whole,” was the dogma of his life, from which he never swerved, and which he pursued to all its legitimate conclusions. Whatever measure tended to the consolidation of central power, whether in reference to the encroachments of the Executive or the usurpations of Congress, he denounced with terrible earnestness and sometimes with great eloquence. This is the key to the significant portion of his political career.

In his speech on the Force Bill, in 1834, he says:

“If we now raise our eyes and direct them towards that once beautiful system, with all its various, separate, and independent parts blended into one harmonious whole, we must be struck with the mighty change! All have disappeared, gone,—absorbed, concentrated, and consolidated in this government, which is left alone in the midst of the desolation of the system, the sole and unrestricted representative of an absolute and despotic majority.... In the place of their admirably contrived system, the act proposed to be repealed has erected our great Consolidated Government. Can it be necessary for me to show what must be the inevitable consequences?... It was clearly foreseen and foretold on the formation of the Constitution what these consequences would be. All the calamities we have experienced, and those which are yet to come, are the result of the consolidating tendency of this government; and unless this tendency be arrested, all that has been foretold will certainly befall us,—even to the pouring out of the last vial of wrath, military despotism.”



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That was what Mr. Calhoun feared,—that the consolidation of a central power would be fatal to the liberties of the country and the rights of the States, and would introduce a system of spoils and the reign of demagogues, all in subserviency to a mere military chieftain, utterly unfit to guide the nation in its complicated interests. But his gloomy predictions fortunately were not fulfilled, in spite of all the misrule and obstinacy of the man he intensely distrusted and disliked. The tendency has been to usurpations by Congress rather than by the Executive.

It is impossible not to admire the lofty tone, free from personal animus, which is seen in all Calhoun's speeches. They may have been sophistical, but they appealed purely to the intellect of those whom he addressed, without the rhetoric of his great antagonists. His speeches are compact arguments, such as one would address to the Supreme Court on his side of the question.

Thus far his speeches in the Senate had been in reference to economic theories and legislation antagonistic to the interests of the South, and the usurpations of executive power, which threatened directly the rights of independent States, and indirectly the liberties of the people and the political degradation of the nation; but now new issues arose from the agitation of the slavery question, and his fame chiefly rests on his persistent efforts to suppress this agitation, as logically leading to the dissolution of the Union and the destruction of the institution with which its prosperity was supposed to be identified.

The early Abolitionists, as I remember them, were, as a body, of very little social or political influence. They were earnest, clear-headed, and uncompromising in denouncing slavery as a great moral evil, indeed as a sin, disgraceful to a free people, and hostile alike to morality and civilization. But in the general apathy as to an institution with which the Constitution did not meddle, and the general government could not interfere, except in districts and territories under its exclusive control, the Abolitionists were generally regarded as fanatical and mischievous. They had but few friends and supporters among the upper classes and none among politicians. The pulpit, the bar, the press, and the colleges were highly conservative, and did not like the popular agitation much better than the Southerners themselves. But the leaders of the antislavery movement persevered in their denunciations of slaveholders, and of all who sympathized with them; they held public meetings everywhere and gradually became fierce and irritating.

It was the period of lyceum lectures, when all moral subjects were discussed before the people with fearlessness, and often with acrimony. Most of the popular lecturers were men of radical sympathies, and were inclined to view all evils on abstract principles as well as in their practical effects. Thus, the advocates of peace believed that war under all circumstances was wicked. The temperance reformers insisted that the use of alcoholic liquors in all cases was a sin. Learned professors in theological schools attempted to prove that the wines of Palestine were unfermented, and could not

intoxicate. The radical Abolitionists, in like manner, asserted that it was wicked to hold a man in bondage under any form of government, or under any guarantee of the Constitution.



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At first they were contented to point out the moral evils of slavery, both on the master and the slave; but this did not provoke much opposition, since the evils were open and confessed, even at the South; only, it was regarded as none of their business, since the evils could not be remedied, and had always been lamented. That slavery was simply an evil, and generally acknowledged to be, both North and South, was taking rather tame ground, even as peace doctrines were unexciting when it was allowed that, if we must fight, we must. But there was some excitement in the questions whether it were allowable to fight at all, or drink wine at any time, or hold a slave under any circumstances. The lecturers must take stronger grounds if they wished to be heard or to excite interest. So they next unhesitatingly assumed the ground that war was a *malum per se*, and wine-drinking also, and all slave-holding, and a host of other things. Their discussions aroused the intellect, as well as appealed to the moral sense. Even "strong-minded" women fearlessly went into fierce discussions, and became intolerant. Gradually the whole North and West were aroused, not merely to the moral evils of slavery, which were admitted without discussion, but to the intolerable abomination of holding a slave under any conditions, as against reason, against conscience, and against humanity.

The Southerners themselves felt that the evil was a great one, and made some attempt to remedy it by colonization societies. They would send free blacks to Liberia to Christianize and civilize the natives, sunk in the lowest abyss of misery and shame. Many were the Christian men and women at the South who pitied the hard condition under which their slaves were born, and desired to do all they could to ameliorate it.

But when the Abolitionists announced that all slaveholding was a sin, and when public opinion at the North was evidently drifting to this doctrine, then the planters grew indignant and enraged. It became unpleasant for a Northern merchant or traveller to visit a Southern city, and equally unpleasant for a Southern student to enter a Northern college, or a planter to resort to a Northern watering-place. The common-sense of the planter was outraged when told that he was a sinner above all others. He was exasperated beyond measure when incendiary publications were transmitted through Southern mails. He did not believe that he was necessarily immoral because he retained an institution bequeathed to him by his ancestors, and recognized by the Constitution of the United States.

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Calhoun was the impersonation of Southern feelings as well as the representative of Southern interests. He intensely felt the indignity which the Abolitionists cast upon his native State, and upon its peculiar institution. And he was clear-headed enough to see that if public opinion settled down into the conviction that slavery was a sin as well as an inherited evil, the North and South could not long live together in harmony and peace. He saw that any institution would be endangered with the verdict of the civilized world against it. He knew that public opinion was an amazing power, which might be defied, but not successfully resisted. He saw no way to stop the continually increasing attacks of the antislavery agitators except by adopting an entirely new position,—a position which should unite all the slaveholding States in the strongest ties of interest.

Accordingly he declared, as the leader of Southern opinions and interests, that slavery was neither an evil nor a sin, but a positive good and blessing, supported even by the Bible as well as by the Constitution. In assuming these premises he may have argued logically, but he lost the admiration he had gained by twenty years' services in the national legislature. His premises were wrong, and his arguments would necessarily be sophistical and fall to the ground. He stepped down from the lofty pedestal he had hitherto occupied, to become not merely a partisan, but an unscrupulous politician. He had a right to defend his beloved institutions as the leader of interests intrusted to him to guard. His fault was not in being a partisan, for most politicians are party men; it was in advancing a falsehood as the basis of his arguments. But, if he had stultified his own magnificent intellect, he could not impose on the convictions of mankind. From the time he assumed a ground utterly untenable, whatever were his motives or real convictions, his general influence waned. His arguments did not convince, since they were deductions from wrong premises, and premises which shocked and insulted the reason.

Calhoun now became a man of one idea, and that a false one. He was a gigantic crank,—an arch-Jesuit, indifferent to means so long as he could bring about his end; and he became not merely a casuist, but a dictatorial and arrogant politician. He defied that patriotic burst of public opinion which had compelled him to change his ground, that mighty wave of thought, no more to be resisted than a storm upon the ocean, and which he saw would gradually sweep away his cherished institution unless his constituents and the whole South should be made to feel that their cause was right and just; that slavery had not only materially enriched the Southern States, but had converted fetich idolaters to the true worship of God, and widened the domain of civilization. The planters, one and all, responded to this sophistical and seductive plea, and said to one another, "Now we can defy the universe on



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moral grounds. We stand united,—what care we for the ravings of fanatics outside our borders, so long as our institution is a blessing to us, planted on the rock of Christianity, and endorsed by the best men among us!" The theologians took up the cause, both North and South, and made their pulpits ring with appeals to Scripture. "Were not," they said, "the negroes descendants of Ham, and had not these descendants been cursed by the Almighty, and given over to the control of the children of Shem and Japhet,—not, indeed, to be trodden down like beasts, but to be elevated and softened by them, and made useful in the toils which white men could not endure?" Ultra-Calvinists united with politicians in building up a public sentiment in favor of slavery as the best possible condition for the ignorant, sensuous, and superstitious races who, when put under the training and guardianship of a civilized and Christian people, had escaped the harder lot which their fathers endured in the deserts and the swamps of Africa.

The agitation at the North had been gradually but constantly increasing. In 1831 William Lloyd Garrison started "The Liberator;" in 1832 the New England Antislavery Society was founded in Boston; in 1833 New York had a corresponding society, and Joshua Leavitt established "The Emancipator." Books, tracts, and other publications began to be circulated. By lectures, newspapers, meetings, and all manner of means the propagandism was carried on. On the other hand, the most violent opposition had been manifested throughout the North to these so-called "fanatics." No language was too opprobrious to apply to them. The churches and ministry were either dumb on the subject, or defended slavery from the Scriptures. Mobs broke up antislavery meetings, and in some cases proceeded even to the extreme of attack and murder,—as in the case of Lovejoy of Illinois. The approach of the political campaign of 1836, when Van Buren was running as the successor of Jackson, involved the Democratic party as the ally of the South for political purposes, and "Harmony and Union" were the offsets to the cry for "Emancipation."

By 1835 the excitement was at its height, and especially along the line of the moral and religious argumentation, where the proslavery men met talk with talk. What could the Abolitionists do now with their Northern societies to show that slavery was a wrong and a sin? Their weapons fell harmless on the bucklers of warriors who supposed themselves fighting under the protection of Almighty power in order to elevate and Christianize a doomed race. Victory seemed to be snatched from victors, and in the moral contest the Southern planters and their Northern supporters swelled the air with triumphant shouts. They were impregnable in their new defences, since they claimed to be in the right. Both parties had now alike appealed to reason and Scripture, and where were the judges who could settle conflicting opinions? The Abolitionists, somewhat

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discouraged, but undaunted, then changed their mode of attack. They said, "We will waive the moral question, for we talk to men without conscience, and we will instead make it a political one. We will appeal to majorities. We will attack the hostile forces in a citadel which they cannot hold. The District of Columbia belongs to Congress. Congress can abolish slavery if it chooses in its own territory. Having possession of this great fortress, we can extend our political warfare to the vast and indefinite West, and, at least, prevent the further extension of slave-power. We will trust to time and circumstance and truth to do the rest. We will petition Congress itself."

And from 1835 onward petitions rolled into both Houses from all parts of the North and West to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, which Congress could constitutionally do. The venerable and enlightened John Quincy Adams headed the group of petitioners in the House of representatives. There were now two thousand antislavery societies in the United States. In 1837 three hundred thousand persons petitioned for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. The legislatures of Massachusetts and Vermont had gone so far as to censure Congress for its inaction and indifference to the rights of humanity.

But it was in January, 1836, that John C. Calhoun arose in his wrath and denied the right of petition. The indignant North responded to such an assumption in flaming words. "What," said the leaders of public opinion, "cannot the lowest subjects of the Czar or the Shah appeal to ultimate authority? Has there ever been an empire so despotic as to deny so obvious a right? Did not Caesar and Cyrus, Louis and Napoleon receive petitions? Shall an enlightened Congress reject the prayers of the most powerful of their constituents, and to remove an evil which people generally regard as an outrage, and all people as a misfortune?"

"We will not allow the reception of petitions at all," said the Southern leaders, "for they will lead to discussion on a forbidden subject. They are only an entrance wedge to disrupt the Union. The Constitution has guaranteed to us exclusively the preservation of an institution on which our welfare rests. You usurp a privilege which you call a right. Your demands are dangerous to the peace of the Union, and are preposterous. You violate unwritten law. You seek to do what the founders of our republic never dreamed of. When two of the States ceded their own slave territory to the central government, it was with the understanding that slavery should remain as it was in the district we owned and controlled. You cannot lawfully even discuss the matter. It is none of your concern. It is an institution which was the basis of that great compromise without which there never could have been a united nation,—only a league of sovereign States. We have the same right to exclude the discussion of this question from these halls as from

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the capitals of our respective States. The right of petition on such a subject is tantamount to consideration and discussion, which would be unlawful interference with our greatest institution, leading legitimately and logically to disunion and war. Is it right, is it generous, is it patriotic to drive us to such an alternative? We only ask to be let alone. You assail a sacred ark where dwell the seraphim and cherubim of our liberties, of our honor, of our interests, of our loyalty itself. To this we never will consent.”

Mr. Clay then came forward in Congress as an advocate for considering the question of petitions. He was for free argument on the subject. He admitted that the Abolitionists were dangerous, but he could not shut his eyes to an indisputable right. So he went half-way, as was his custom, pleasing neither party, and alienating friends; but at the same time with great tact laying out a middle ground where the opposing parties could still stand together without open conflict. “I am no friend,” said he, “to slavery. The Searcher of hearts knows that every pulsation of mine beats high and strong in the cause of civil liberty. Wherever it is practicable and safe I desire to see every portion of the human family in the enjoyment of it; but I prefer the liberty of my own country to that of other people. The liberty of the descendants of Africa in the United States is incompatible with the liberty and safety of the European descendants.” Such were the sentiments of the leading classes of the North, not yet educated up to the doctrines which afterwards prevailed. But the sentiments declared by Clay lost him the presidency. His political sins, like those of Webster, were sins of omission rather than of commission. Neither of them saw that the little cloud in the horizon would soon cover the heavens, and pour down a deluge to sweep away abominations worse than Ahab ever dreamed of. Clay did not go far enough to please the rising party. He did not see the power or sustain the rightful exercise of this new moral force, but he did argue on grounds of political expediency for the citizens’ right of petition,—a right conceded even to the subjects of unlimited despotism. An Ahasuerus could throw petitions into the mire, without reading, but it was customary to accept them.

The result was a decision on the part of Congress to admit the petitions, but to pay no further attention to them.

The Abolitionists, however, had resorted to less scrupulous measures. They sent incendiary matter through the mails, not with the object of inciting the slaves to rebellion,—this was hopeless,—but with the design of aiding their escape from bondage, and perchance of influencing traitors in the Southern camp. To this new attack Calhoun responded with dignity and with logic. And we cannot reasonably blame him for repelling it. The Southern cities had as good a right to exclude inflammatory pamphlets as New York or Boston has to prevent the introduction of the cholera. It was the instinct of self-preservation; whatever may be said of their favorite institution on ethical grounds, they had the legal right to protect it from incendiary matter.

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But what was incendiary matter? Who should determine that point? President Jackson in 1835 had recommended Congress to pass a law prohibiting under severe penalties the circulation in the Southern States, through the mails, of incendiary publications. But this did not satisfy the Southern dictator. He denied the right of Congress to determine what publications should be or should not be excluded. He maintained that this was a matter for the States alone to decide. He would not trust postmasters, for they were officers of the United States government. It was not for them to be inquisitors, nor for the Federal government to interfere, even for the protection of a State institution, with its own judgment. He proposed instead a law forbidding Federal postmasters to deliver publications prohibited by the laws of a State, Territory, or District. In this, as in all other controverted questions, Calhoun found means to argue for the supremacy of the State and the subordination of the Union. His bill did not pass, but the force of his argument went forth into the land.

How far antislavery documents had influence on the slaves themselves, it is difficult to say. They could neither read nor write; but it is remarkable that from this period a large number of slaves made their escape from the South and fled to the North, protected by philanthropists, Abolitionists, and kind-hearted-people generally.

How they contrived to travel a thousand miles without money, without suitable clothing, pursued by blood-hounds and hell-hounds, hiding in the daytime in swamps, morasses, and forests, walking by night in darkness and gloom, until passed by friendly hands through “underground railroads” until they reached Canada, is a mystery. But these efforts to escape from their hard and cruel masters further intensified the exasperation of the South.

It was in 1836 that Michigan and Arkansas applied for admission as States into the Union,—one free and the other with slavery. Discussions on some technicalities concerning the conditions of Michigan’s admission gave Mr. Calhoun a chance for more argumentation about the sovereignty of a State, which, considering the fact that Michigan had not then been admitted but was awaiting the permission of Congress *to be* a State, showed the weakness of his logic in the falsity of his premise. Besides Arkansas, the slave-power also gained access to a strip of free territory north of the compromise line of 36 deg.30’ and the Missouri River. In 1837 John Quincy Adams, “the old man eloquent” of the House of Representatives, narrowly escaped censure for introducing a petition from slaves in the District of Columbia. In 1838 Calhoun introduced resolutions declaring that petitions relative to slavery in the District were “a direct and dangerous attack on the institutions of all the slave-holding States.” In 1839 Henry Clay offered a petition for the repression of all agitation respecting slavery



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in the District. Calhoun saw and constantly denounced the danger. He knew the power of public opinion, and saw the rising tide. Conservatism heeded the warning, and the opposition to agitation intensified all over the South and the North; but to no avail. New societies were formed; new papers were established; religious bodies began to take position for and against the agitation; the Maine legislature passed in the lower House, and almost in the upper, resolutions denouncing slavery in the District; while the Abolitionists labored incessantly and vigorously to "Blow the trumpet; cry aloud and spare not; show my people their sins," as to slavery.

In 1840 Van Buren and Harrison, the Democratic and Whig candidates for the presidency were both in the hands of the slave-power; and Tyler, who as Vice-President succeeded to the Executive chair on Harrison's death, was a Virginian slaveholder. The ruling classes and politicians all over the land were violently opposed to the antislavery cause, and every test of strength gave new securities and pledges to the Southern elements and their Northern sympathizers.

Notwithstanding the frequent triumphs of the South, aided by Whigs and Democrats from the North, who played into the hands of Southern politicians, Mr. Calhoun was not entirely at rest in his mind. He saw with alarm the increasing immigration into the Western States, which threatened to disturb the balance of power which the South had ever held; and with the aid of Southern leaders he now devised a new and bold scheme, which was to annex Texas to the United States and thus enlarge enormously the area of slavery. It was probably his design, not so much to strengthen the slaveholding interests of South Carolina, as to increase the political power of the South. By the addition of new slave States he could hope for more favorable legislation in Congress. The arch-conspirator—the haughty and defiant dictator—would not only exclude Congress from all legislation over its own territory in the national District, but he now would make Congress bolster up his cause. He could calculate on a "solid South," and also upon the aid of the leaders of the political parties at the North,—“Northern men with Southern principles,”—who were strangely indifferent to the extension of slavery.

The Abolitionists were indeed now a power, but the antislavery sentiment had not reached its culmination, although it had become politically organized. For the campaign of 1840, seeing the futility of petition and the folly of expecting action on issues foreign to those on which Congressmen had been elected, the Abolitionists boldly called a National Convention, in which six States were represented, and nominated candidates for the presidency and vice-presidency. It was a small and despised beginning, but it was the germ of a mighty growth. From that time the Liberty Party began to hold State and National Conventions, and to vote directly on the question of representatives.

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They did not for years elect anybody, but they defeated many an ultra pro-slavery man, and their influence began to be felt. In 1841 Joshua R. Giddings, from Ohio, and in 1843 John P. Hale from New Hampshire and Hannibal Hamlin from Maine brought in fresh Northern air and confronted the slave-power in Congress, in alliance with grand old John Quincy Adams,—whose last years were his best years, and have illumined his name.

Most of the antislavery men were still denounced as fanatics, meddling with what was none of their business. In 1843 they had not enrolled in their ranks the most influential men in the community. Ministers, professors, lawyers, and merchants generally still held aloof from the controversy, and were either hostile or indifferent to it. So, with the aid of the “Dough-Faces,” as they were stigmatized by the progressive party, Calhoun was confident of success in the Texan scheme.

At that time many adventurers had settled in Texas, which was then a province of Mexico, and had carried with them their slaves. In 1820 Moses Austin, a Connecticut man, long resident in Missouri, obtained large grants of land in Texas from the Mexican government, and his son Stephen carried out after the father's death a scheme of colonization of some three hundred families from Missouri and Louisiana. They were a rough and lawless population, but self-reliant and enterprising. They increased rapidly, until, in 1833, being twenty thousand in number, they tried to form a State government under Mexico; and, this being denied them, declared their independence and made revolution. They were headed by Sam Houston, who had fought under General Jackson, and had been Governor of Tennessee. In 1836 the independence of Texas was proclaimed. Soon after followed the battle of San Jacinto, in which Santa Anna, the President of the Mexican republic and the commander of the Mexican forces, was taken prisoner.

Immediately after this battle Mr. Calhoun tried to have it announced as the policy of the government to recognize the independence of Texas. When Tyler became President, by the death of Harrison, although elected by Whig votes he entered heart and soul into the schemes of Calhoun, who, to forward them, left the Senate, and became Secretary of State, as successor to Mr. Upshur. In 1843 it became apparent that Texas would be annexed to the United States. In that same year Iowa and Florida—one free, the other slave—were admitted to the Union.

The Liberty party beheld the proposed annexation of Texas with alarm, and sturdily opposed it as far as they could through their friends in Congress, predicting that it would be tantamount to a war with Mexico. The Mexican minister declared the same result. But “Texas or Disunion!” became the rallying cry of the South. The election of Polk, the annexationist Democrat, in 1844, was seized upon as a “popular mandate” for

annexation, although had not the Liberty Party, who like the Whigs were anti-annexationists,

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divided the vote in New York State, Clay would have been elected. The matter was hurried through Congress; the Northern Democrats made no serious opposition, since they saw in this annexation a vast accession of territory around the Gulf of Mexico, of indefinite extent. Thus, Texas, on March 1, 1845, was offered annexation by a Joint Resolution of the Senate and House of Representatives, in the face of protests from the wisest men of the country, and in spite of certain hostilities with Mexico. On the following fourth of July Texas, accepting annexation, was admitted to the Union as a slave State, to the dismay of Channing, of Garrison, of Phillips, of Sumner, of Adams, and of the whole antislavery party, now aroused to the necessity of more united effort, in view of this great victory to the South; for it was provided that at any time, by the consent of its own citizens, Texas might be divided into four States, whenever its population should be large enough; its territory was four times as large as France.

The Democratic President Polk took office in March, 1845; the Mexican War, beginning in May, 1846, was fought to a successful close in a year and five months, ending September, 1847; the fertile territory of Oregon, purchased from Spain, had been peaceably occupied by rapid immigration and by settlement of disputed boundaries with Great Britain; California—a Mexican province—had been secured to the American settlers of its lovely hills and valleys by the prompt daring of Capt. John C. Fremont; and the result of the war was the formal cession to the United States by Mexico of the territories of California and New Mexico, and recognition of the annexation and statehood of Texas.

Both the North and the South had thus gained large possibilities, and at the North the spirit of enterprise and the clear perception of the economic value of free labor as against slave labor were working mightily to help men see the moral arguments of the antislavery people. The division of interest was becoming plain; the forces of good sense and the principles of liberty were consolidating the North against farther extension of the slave-power. The perils foreseen by Calhoun, which he had striven to avoid by repression of all political discussion of slavery, were nigh at hand. The politicians of the North, too, scented the change, and began to range themselves with their section; and, while there was a long struggle yet ahead before the issues would be made up, to the eye of faith the end was already in sight, and the "Free-Soilers" now redoubled their efforts both in discussion and in political action.

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Thus far, most of the political victories had been with the slave-power, and the South became correspondently arrogant and defiant. The war of ideas against Southern interests now raged with ominous and increasing force in all the Northern States. Public opinion became more and more inflamed. Passions became excited in cities and towns and villages which had been dormant since the Constitution had been adopted. The decree of the North went forth that there should be no more accession of slave territory; and, more than this, the population spread with unexampled rapidity toward the Pacific Ocean in consequence of the discovery of gold in California, in 1848, and attracted by the fertile soil of Oregon. Immigrants from all nations came to seek their fortunes in territories north of 36 deg.30'.

What Calhoun had anticipated in 1836, when he cast his eyes on Texas, did not take place. Slave territory indeed was increased, but free territory increased still more rapidly. The North was becoming richer and richer, and the South scarcely held its own. The balance which he thought would be in favor of the South, he now saw inclining to the North. Northern States became more numerous than Southern ones, and more populous, more wealthy, and more intelligent. The political power of the Union, when Mr. Polk closed his inglorious administration, was perceptibly with the North, and not political power only, but moral power. The great West was the soil of freemen.

But the haughty and defiant spirit of Calhoun was not broken. He prophesied woes. He became sad and dejected, but more and more uncompromising, more and more dictatorial. He would not yield. "If we yield an inch," said he, "we are lost." The slightest concession, in his eyes, would be fatal. When he declared his nullification doctrines it was because he thought that State rights were invaded by hostile tariffs. But after the Mexican War slavery was to him a matter of life and death. He made many excellent and powerful speeches, which tasked the intellect of Webster to refute; but, whatever the subject, it was seen only through his Southern spectacles, and argued from partisan grounds and with partisan zeal. Everything he uttered was with a view of consolidating the South, and preparing it for disunion and secession, as the only way to preserve the beloved institution. In his eyes, slavery and the Union could not co-exist. This he saw plainly, but if either must perish it should be the Union; and this doctrine he so constantly reiterated that he won over to it nearly the entire South. But in consolidating the South, he also consolidated the North. He forced on the issue, believing that even yet the South, united with Northern allies, was the stronger, and that it could establish its independence on a slavery basis. The Union was no union at all, and its Constitution was a worthless parchment. "He proposed a convention of the Southern States which should agree that, until

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full justice was rendered to the South, all the Southern ports should be closed to the sea-going vessels of the North.” He arrogantly would deprive the North even of its constitutional rights in reference to the exclusion of slavery from the Territories. In no way should the North meddle with the slavery question, on penalty of secession; and the sooner this was understood the better. “We are,” said he, “relatively stronger than we shall be hereafter, politically and morally.”

The great fight arose in 1849. The people in the Northwestern territories had been encouraged to form governments, and had already tasted the delights of self-rule. President Polk had recommended the extension of the old Missouri Compromise line of 36 deg. 30' westward to the Pacific, leaving the territory south of that open to slavery. This would divide California, and was opposed by all parties. Calhoun now went so far as to claim the constitutional right to take slaves into any Territory, while Webster argued the power of Congress to rule the Territories until they should become States. So excited was the discussion that a convention of Southern States was held to frame a separate government for the “United States South.” The threat of secession was ever their most potent argument. The contest in Congress centred upon the admission of California as a State and the condition of slavery in the Territories of Utah and New Mexico.

A great crisis had now arrived. Clay, “the great pacificator,” once more stepped into the arena with a new compromise. To provide for concessions on either side, he proposed the admission of California (whose new constitution prohibited slavery); the organization of Utah and New Mexico as Territories without mention of slavery (leaving it to the people); the arrangement of the boundary of Texas; the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia; and the enactment of a more stringent fugitive-slave law, commanding the assistance of people in the free States to capture runaways, when summoned by the authorities.

The general excitement over the discussion of this bill will never be forgotten by those who witnessed it. The South raged, and the North blazed with indignation,—especially over the Fugitive-Slave Bill.

Meanwhile Calhoun was dying. His figure was bent, his voice was feeble, his face was haggard, but his superb intellect still retained its vigor to the last. Among the multitude of ringing appeals to the reason and moral sense of the North was a newspaper article from *The Independent* of New York, by a young Congregational minister, Henry Ward Beecher. It was entitled “Shall we Compromise?” and made clear and plain the issue before the people: “Slavery is right; Slavery is wrong: Slavery shall live; Slavery shall die: are these conflicts to be settled by any mode of parcelling out certain Territories?” This article was read to Calhoun upon his dying bed. “Who wrote that?” he asked. The name was given him. “That man understands the thing. He has gone to the bottom of

it. He will be heard from again.” It was what the great Southerner had foreseen and foretold from the first.

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The compromise bill at last became a law. It averted the final outbreak for ten years longer, but contained elements that were to be potent factors in insuring the final crisis.

With the burden of the whole South upon his shoulders Calhoun tottered to the grave a most unhappy man, for though he saw the “irrepressible conflict” as clearly as Seward had done, he also saw that the South, even if successful, as he hoped, must go through a sea of tribulation. When he was no longer able to address the Senate in person he still waged the battle. His last great speech was read to the Senate by Mr. Mason of Virginia, on the 4th of March, 1850. It was not bitter, nor acrimonious; it was a doleful lament that the Southern States could not long remain in the Union with any dignity, now that the equilibrium was destroyed. He felt that he had failed, but also that he had done his duty; and this was his only consolation in view of approaching disasters. On the last day of March he died, leaving behind him his principles, so full of danger and sophistries, but at the same time an unsullied name, and the memory of earlier public services and of private virtues which had secured to him the respect of all who knew him.

In reviewing the career of Mr. Calhoun it would seem that the great error and mistake of his life was his disloyalty to the Union. When he advocated State rights as paramount over those of the general government he merely took the ground which was discussed over and over again at the formation of the Constitution, and which resulted in a compromise that, with control over matters of interest common to all States, the central government should have no power over the institution of slavery, which was a domestic affair in the Southern States. Only these States, it was settled, had supreme control over their own “peculiar institution.” As a politician, representing Southern interests, he cannot be severely condemned for his fear and anger over the discussion of the slavery question, which, politically considered, was out of the range of Congressional legislation or popular agitation. But when he advocated or threatened the secession of the Southern States from the Union, unless the slavery question was let alone entirely both by Congress and the Northern States, he was unpatriotic, false in his allegiance, and unconstitutional in his utterances. A State has a right to enter the Union or not, remaining of course, in either case, United States territory, over which Congress has legislative power. But when once it has entered into the Union, it must remain there as a part of the whole. Otherwise the States would be a mere league, as in the Revolutionary times.



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Mr. Calhoun had a right to bring the whole pressure of the slave States on a congressional vote on any question. He could say, as the Irish members of Parliament say, "Unless you do this or that we will obstruct the wheels of government, and thus compel the consideration of our grievances, so long as we hold the balance of power between contending parties." But it is quite another thing for the Irish legislators to say, "Unless you do this or that, we will secede from the Union," which Ireland could not do without war and revolution. Mr. Calhoun, in his onesidedness, entirely overlooked the fact that the discontented States could not secede without a terrible war; for if there is one sentiment dear to the American people, it is the preservation of the Union, and for it they will make any sacrifice.

And the same may be said in reference to Calhoun's nullification doctrines. He would, if he could, have taken his State out of the Union, because he and the South did not like the tariff. He had the right, as a Senator in Congress, to bring all the influence he could command to compel Congress to modify the tariff, or abolish it altogether. And with this he ought to have been contented. With a solid South and a divided North, he could have compelled a favorable compromise, or prevented any legislation at all. It is legitimate legislation for members of Congress to maintain their local and sectional interest at any cost, short of disunion; only, it may be neither wise nor patriotic, since men who are supposed to be statesmen would by so doing acknowledge themselves to be mere politicians, bound hand and foot in subjection to selfish constituents, and indifferent to the general good.

Mr. Calhoun became blind to general interests in his zeal to perpetuate slavery, or advance whatever would be desirable to the South, indifferent to the rest of the country; and thus he was a mere partisan, narrow and local. What made him so powerful and popular at the South equally made him to be feared and distrusted at the North. He was a firebrand, infinitely more dangerous and incendiary than any Abolitionist whom he denounced. Calhoun's congressional career was the opposite of that of Henry Clay, who was more patriotic and more of a statesman, for he always professed allegiance to the whole Union, and did all he could to maintain it. His whole soul was devoted to tariffs and internal improvements, but he would yield important points to produce harmony and ward off dangers. Calhoun, with his State-sovereignty doctrines, his partisanship, and his unscrupulous defiance of the Constitution, forfeited his place among great statesmen, and lost the esteem and confidence of a majority of his countrymen, except so far as his abilities and his unsullied private life entitled him to admiration.

AUTHORITIES.



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I know of no abler and more candid life of Calhoun than that of Von Holst. Although deficient in incidents, it is no small contribution to American literature, apparently drawn from a careful study of the speeches of the great Nullifier. If the author had had more material to work upon, he would probably have made a more popular work, such as Carl Schurz has written of Henry Clay, and Henry Cabot Lodge of Daniel Webster and Alexander Hamilton. In connection read the biographies of Clay, Webster, and Jackson; see Wilson's History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power, also Benton's Thirty Years of Congressional History, and Calhoun's Speeches.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

1809-1865.

CIVIL WAR: PRESERVATION OF THE UNION.

In the year 1830, or thereabouts, a traveller on the frontier settlements of Illinois (if a traveller was ever known in those dreary regions) might have seen a tall, gaunt, awkward, homely, sad-looking young man of twenty-one, clothed in a suit of brown jean dyed with walnut-bark, hard at work near a log cabin on the banks of the river Sangamon,—a small stream emptying into the Illinois River. The man was splitting rails, which he furnished to a poor woman in exchange for some homespun cloth to make a pair of trousers, at the rate of four hundred rails per yard. His father, one of the most shiftless of the poor whites of Kentucky, a carpenter by trade, had migrated to Indiana, and, after a short residence, had sought another home on a bluff near the Sangamon River, where he had cleared, with the assistance of his son, about fifteen acres of land. From this he gained a miserable and precarious living.

The young rail-splitter had also a knack of slaughtering hogs, for which he received thirty cents a day. Physically he had extraordinary strength, and no one could beat him in wrestling and other athletic exercises. Mentally, he was bright, inquiring, and not wholly illiterate. He had learned, during his various peregrinations, to read, write, and cipher. He was reliable and honest, and had in 1828 been employed, when his father lived in Indiana, by a Mr. Gentry, to accompany his son to New Orleans, with a flat-boat of produce, which he sold successfully.

It is not my object to dwell on the early life of Abraham Lincoln. It has been made familiar by every historian who has written about him, in accordance with the natural curiosity to know the beginnings of illustrious men; and the more humble, the more interesting these are to most people. It is quite enough to say that no man in the United States ever reached eminence from a more obscure origin.



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Rail-splitting did not achieve the results to which the ambition of young Lincoln aspired, so he contrived to go into the grocery business; but in this he was unsuccessful, owing to an inherent deficiency in business habits and aptitude. He was, however, gifted with shrewd sense, a quick sense of humor with keen wit, and a marked steadiness of character, which gained him both friends and popularity in the miserable little community where he lived; and in 1832 he was elected captain of a military company to fight Indians in the Black Hawk War. There is no evidence that he ever saw the enemy. He probably would have fought well had he been so fortunate as to encounter the foe; for he was cool, fearless, strong, agile, and active without rashness. In 1833 he was made postmaster of a small village; but the office paid nothing, and his principal profit from it was the opportunity to read newspapers and some magazine trash. He was still very poor, and was surrounded with rough people who lived chiefly on corn bread and salt pork, who slept in cabins without windows, and who drank whiskey to excess, yet who were more intelligent than they seemed.

Such was Abraham Lincoln at the age of twenty-four,—obscure, unknown, poverty-stricken, and without a calling. Suppose at that time some supernatural being had appeared to him in a dream, and announced that he would some day be President of the United States; and not merely this, but that he would rule the nation in a great crisis, and save it from dismemberment and anarchy by force of wisdom and character, and leave behind him when he died a fame second only to that of Washington! Would he not have felt, on awaking from his dream, pretty much as did the aged patriarch whose name he bore, when the angel of the Lord assured him that he would be the father of many nations, that his seed would outnumber the sands of the sea, and that through him all humanity would be blessed from generation to generation? Would he not have felt as the stripling David, among the sheep and the goats of his father's flocks, when the prophet Samuel announced to him that he should be king over Israel, and rule with such success and splendor that the greatness and prosperity of the Jewish nation would be forever dated from his matchless reign?

The obscure postmaster, without a dollar in his pocket, and carrying the mail in his hat, had indeed no intimation of his future elevation: but his career was just as mysterious as that of David, and an old-fashioned religious man would say that it was equally providential; for of all the leading men of this great nation it would seem that he turned out to be the fittest for the work assigned to him,—chosen, not because he was learned or cultivated or experienced or famous, or even interesting, but because his steps were so ordered that he fell into the paths which naturally led to his great position, although no genius could have foreseen the events which logically controlled

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the result. If Lincoln had not been gifted with innate greatness, though unknown to himself and all the world, to be developed as occasions should arise, no fortunate circumstances could have produced so extraordinary a career. If Lincoln had not the germs of greatness in him,—certain qualities which were necessary for the guidance of a nation in an emergency,—to be developed subsequently as the need came, then his career is utterly insoluble according to any known laws of human success; and when history cannot solve the mysteries of human success,—in other words, “justify the ways of Providence to man,”—then it loses half its charm, and more than half its moral force. It ceases to be the great teacher which all nations claim it to be.

However obscure the birth of Lincoln, and untoward as were all the circumstances which environed him, he was doubtless born ambitious, that is, with a strong and unceasing desire to “better his condition.” That at the age of twenty-four he ever dreamed of reaching an exalted position is improbable. But when he saw the ascendancy that his wit and character had gained for him among rude and uncultivated settlers on the borders of civilization, then, being a born leader of men, as Jackson was, it was perfectly natural that he should aspire to be a politician. Politics ever have been the passion of Western men with more than average ability, and it required but little learning and culture under the sovereignty of “squatters” to become a member of the State legislature, especially in the border States, where population was sparse, and the people mostly poor and ignorant.

Hence, “smart” young men, in rude villages, early learned to make speeches in social and political meetings. Every village had its favorite stump orator, who knew all the affairs of the nation, and a little more, and who, with windy declamation, amused and delighted his rustic hearers. Lincoln was one of these. There was never a time, even in his early career, when he could not make a speech in which there was more wit than knowledge; although as he increased in knowledge he also grew in wisdom, and his good sense, with his habit of patient thinking, gave him the power of clear and convincing statement. Moreover, at twenty-four, he was already tolerably intelligent, and had devoured all the books he could lay his hand upon. Indeed, it was to the reading of books that Lincoln, like Henry Clay, owed pretty much all his schooling. Beginning with Weems’s “Life of Washington” when a mere lad, he perseveringly read, through all his fortunes, all manner of books,—not only during leisure hours by day, when tending mill or store, but for long months by the light of pine shavings from the cooper’s shop at night, and in later times when traversing the country in his various callings. And his persistent reading gave him new ideas and broader views.

With his growing thoughts his aspirations grew. So, like others, he took the stump, and as early as 1832 offered himself a candidate for the State legislature. His maiden speech in an obscure village is thus reported: “Fellow citizens, I am humble Abraham Lincoln. My politics are short and sweet, like the old woman’s dance. I am in favor of a

National Bank, of internal improvements, and a high protective tariff. These are my sentiments. If elected, I shall be thankful; if not, it will be all the same.”

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Lincoln was not elected, although supported by the citizens of New Salem, where he lived, and to whom he had promised the improvement of the Sangamon River. Disappointed, he went into the grocery business once again, and again failed, partly because he had no capital, and partly because he had no business talents in that line; although from his known integrity he was able to raise what money he needed. He then set about the study of the law, as a step to political success, read books, and the occasional newspapers, told stories, and kept his soul in patience,—which was easier to him than to keep his body in decent clothes.

It was necessary for him to do something for a living while he studied law, since the grocery business had failed, and hence he became an assistant to John Calhoun, the county surveyor, who was overburdened with work. Just as he had patiently worked through an English Grammar, to enable him to speak correctly, he took up a work on surveying and prepared himself for his new employment in six weeks. He was soon enabled to live more decently, and to make valuable acquaintances, meanwhile diligently pursuing his law studies, not only during his leisure, but even as he travelled about the country to and from his work; on foot or on horseback, his companion was sure to be a law-book.

In 1834 a new election of representatives for the State legislature took place, and Lincoln became a candidate,—this time with more success, owing to the assistance of influential friends. He went to Vandalia, the State capital, as a Whig, and a great admirer of Henry Clay. He was placed on the Committee of Public Accounts and Expenditures, but made no mark; yet that he gained respect was obvious from the fact that he was re-elected by a very large vote. He served a second term, and made himself popular by advocating schemes to “gridiron” every county with railroads, straighten out the courses of rivers, dig canals, and cut up the State into towns, cities, and house-lots. One might suppose that a man so cool and sensible as he afterwards proved himself to be must have seen the absurdity of these wild schemes, and hence only fell in with them from policy as a rising member of the legislature, to gain favor with his constituents. Yet he and his colleagues were all crude and inexperienced legislators, and it is no discredit to Lincoln that he was borne along with the rest in an enthusiasm for “developing the country.” The mania for speculation was nearly universal, especially in the new Western States. Illinois alone projected 1,350 miles of railroad, without money and without credit to carry out this Bedlam legislation, and in almost every village there were “corner lots” enough to be sold to make a great city. Aside from this participation in a bubble destined to burst, and to be followed by disasters, bankruptcies, and universal distress, Lincoln was credited with steadiness, and gained great influence. He was prominent in securing the passage



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of a bill which removed the seat of government to Springfield, and was regarded as a good debater. In this session, too, he and Daniel Stone, the two representatives from Sangamon County, introduced a resolution declaring that the institution of slavery was “founded on both injustice and bad policy;” that the Congress had no power to interfere with slavery in the States; that it had power in the District of Columbia, but should not exercise it unless at the request of the people of the District. There were no votes for these resolutions, but it is interesting to see how early Lincoln took both moral and constitutional ground concerning national action on this vexed question.

In March, 1837, Lincoln, then twenty-eight years old, was admitted to the bar, and made choice of Springfield, the new capital, as a residence, then a thriving village of one or two thousand inhabitants, with some pretension to culture and refinement. It was certainly a political, if not a social, centre. The following year he was again elected to the legislature, and came within a few votes of being made Speaker of the House. He carried on the practice of the law with his duties as a legislator. Indeed, law and politics went hand in hand; as a lawyer he gained influence in the House of Representatives, and as a member of the legislature he increased his practice in the courts. He had for a partner a Major Stuart, who in 1841 left him, having been elected Representative in Congress, and was succeeded in the firm by Stephen T. Logan. Lincoln’s law practice was far from lucrative, and he was compelled to live in the strictest economy. Litigation was very simple, and it required but little legal learning to conduct cases. The lawyers’ fees were small among a people who were mostly poor. Considering, however, his defective education and other disadvantages, Lincoln’s success as a lawyer was certainly respectable, if not great, in his small sphere.

In 1840, three years after his admission to the bar, Lincoln was chosen as an elector in the Harrison presidential contest, and he stumped the State, frequently encountering Stephen A. Douglas in debate, with great credit to himself, for Douglas was the most prominent political orator of the day. The heart of Lincoln, from the start, was in politics rather than the law, for which he had no especial liking. He was born to make speeches in political gatherings, and not to argue complicated legal questions in the courts. All his aspirations were political. As early as 1843 he aspired to be a member of Congress, but was defeated by Colonel Baker. In 1846, however, his political ambition was gratified by an election to the House of Representatives. His record in Congress was a fair one; but he was not distinguished, although great questions were being discussed in connection with the Mexican War. He made but three speeches during his term, in the last of which he ridiculed General Cass’s aspiration for the presidency with considerable humor and wit, which was not lost on his constituents. His career in Congress terminated in 1848, he not being re-elected.

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In the meantime Lincoln married, in 1842, Miss Mary Todd, from Lexington, Kentucky, a lady of good education and higher social position than his own, whom he had known for two or three years. As everybody knows, this marriage did not prove a happy one, and domestic troubles account, in a measure, for Lincoln's sad and melancholy countenance. Biographers have devoted more space than is wise to this marriage since the sorrows of a great man claim but small attention compared with his public services. Had Lincoln not been an honorable man, it is probable that the marriage would never have taken place, in view of incompatibilities of temper which no one saw more clearly than he himself, and which disenchanting him. The engagement was broken, and renewed, for, as the matter stood,—the lady being determined and the lover uncertain,—the only course consistent with Lincoln's honor was to take the risk of marriage, and devote himself with renewed ardor to his profession,—to bury his domestic troubles in work, and persistently avoid all quarrels. And this is all the world need know of this sad affair, which, though a matter of gossip, never was a scandal. It is unfortunate for the fame of many great men that we know too much of their private lives. Mr. Froude, in his desire for historical impartiality, did no good to the memory of his friend Carlyle. Had the hero's peculiarities been vices, like those of Byron, the biographer might have cited them as warnings to abate the ardor of popular idolatry of genius. If we knew no more of the private failings of Webster than we do of those of Calhoun or Jefferson Davis, he might never have been dethroned from the lofty position he occupied, which, as a public benefactor, he did not deserve to lose.

After his marriage, Lincoln was more devoted to his profession, and gradually became a good lawyer; but I doubt if he was ever a great one, like his friend Judge Davis. His law partner and biographer, William H. Herndon, who became associated with him in 1845, is not particularly eulogistic as to his legal abilities, although he concedes that he had many of the qualities of a great lawyer, such as the ability to see important points, lucidity of statement, and extraordinary logical power. He did not like to undertake the management of a case which had not justice and right on its side. He had no method in his business, and detested mechanical drudgery. He rarely studied law-books, unless in reference to a case in which he was employed. He was not learned in the decisions of the higher courts. He was a poor defender of a wrong cause, but was unappalled by the difficulties of an intricate case; was patient and painstaking, and not imposed upon by sophistries.

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Lincoln's love of truth, for truth's sake, even in such a technical matter as the law, was remarkable. No important error ever went undetected by him. His intellectual vision was clear, since he was rarely swayed by his feelings. As an advocate he was lucid, cold, and logical, rather than rhetorical or passionate. He had no taste for platitudes and "glittering generalities." There was nothing mercenary in his practice, and with rare conscientiousness he measured his charges by the services rendered, contented if the fees were small. He carried the strictest honesty into his calling, which greatly added to his influence. If there was ever an honest lawyer he was doubtless one. Even in arguing a case, he never misrepresented the evidence of a witness, and was always candid and fair. He would frequently, against his own interest, persuade a litigant of the injustice of his case, and induce him to throw it up. If not the undisputed leader of his circuit, he was the most beloved. Sometimes he disturbed the court by his droll and humorous illustrations, which called out irrepressible laughter but generally he was grave and earnest in matters of importance; and he was always at home in the courtroom, quiet, collected, and dignified, awkward as was his figure and his gesticulation.

But it was not as a lawyer that Lincoln was famous. Nor as a public speaker would he compare with Douglas in eloquence or renown. As a member of Congress it is not probable that he would ever have taken a commanding rank, like Clay or Webster or Calhoun, or even like Seward. His great fame rests on his moral character, his identification with a great cause, his marvellous ability as a conservative defender of radical principles, and his no less wonderful tact as a leader of men.

The cause for which he stands was the Antislavery movement, as it grew into a political necessity rather than as a protest against moral evil. Although from his youth an antislavery man, Lincoln was not an Abolitionist in the early days of the slavery agitation. He rather kept aloof from the discussion, although such writers as Theodore Parker, Dr. Channing, and Horace Greeley had great charm for him. He was a politician, and therefore discreet in the avowal of opinions. His turn of mind was conservative and moderate, and therefore he thought that all political action should be along the lines established by law under the Constitution.

But when the Southern leaders, not content with non-interference by Congress with their favorite institution in their own States, sought to compel Congress to allow the extension of slavery in the Territories it controlled, then the indignation of Lincoln burst the bounds, and he became the leader in his State in opposition to any movement to establish in national territory that institution "founded on both injustice and bad policy." Although he was in Congress in 1847-8, his political career really began about the year 1854, four years after the death of Calhoun.

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As has been shown in previous chapters, the great slavery agitation of 1850, when the whole country was convulsed by discussions and ominous threats of disunion, was laid at rest for a while by the celebrated compromise bill which Henry Clay succeeded in passing through Congress. By the terms of this compromise California was admitted to the Union as a free State; the Territories of New Mexico and Utah were organized to come in as States, with or without slavery as their people might determine when the time should arrive; the domestic slave-trade in the District of Columbia was abolished; a more stringent fugitive-slave law was passed; and for the adjustment of State boundaries, which reduced the positive slave-area in Texas and threw it into the debatable territory of New Mexico, Texas received ten millions of dollars. Although this adjustment was not entirely satisfactory to either the North or the South, the nation settled itself for a period of quiet to repair the waste and utilize the conquests of the Mexican War. It became absorbed in the expansion of its commerce, the development of its manufactures, and the growth of its emigration, all quickened by the richness of its marvellous new gold-fields,—until, unexpectedly and suddenly, it found itself once again plunged into political controversy more distracting and more ominous than the worst it had yet experienced.

For, while calmly accepting the divers political arrangements made for distant States and Territories, the men of the North, who had fumed and argued against the passage of the Fugitive-Slave Law, when its enforcement was attempted in their very presence were altogether outraged. When the “man-hunters” chased and caught negroes in their village market-places and city streets, when free men were summoned to obey that law by helping to seize trembling fugitives and send them back to worse than death, then they burst forth in a fierce storm of rage that could not be quieted. The agitation rose and spread; lecturers thundered; newspapers denounced; great meetings were held; politicians trembled. And even yet the conservatism of the North was not wholly inflamed; for political partisanship is in itself a kind of slavery, and while the Northern Democrats stood squarely with the South, the Northern Whigs, fearing division and defeat, made strenuous efforts to stand on both sides, and, admitting slavery to be an “evil,” to uphold the Fugitive-Slave Law because it was a part of the “great compromise.” In Congress and out, in national conventions, and with all the power of the party press, this view was strenuously advocated; but in 1852 the Democrats elected Franklin Pierce as President, while the compromising Whigs were cast out. Webster, the leader of the compromisers, had not even secured a nomination, but General Scott was the Whig candidate; while William H. Seward, at the head of the Antislavery Whigs, had at least the satisfaction of seeing that, amid the dissolving elements of the Whig party, the antislavery sentiment was gaining strength day by day. The old issues of tariffs and internal improvements were losing their vitality, while *Freedom* and *Slavery* were the new poles about which new crystallizations were beginning to form.



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But the Compromise of 1850 had loosed from its Pandora's box another fomenter of trouble, in the idea of leaving to the people of the Territories the settlement of whether their incoming States should be slave or free,—the doctrine of “popular sovereignty” as it was called. The nation had accepted that theory as a makeshift for the emergency of that day; but slave cultivation had already exhausted much of the Southern land, and, not content with Utah and New Mexico for their propagandism, the slaveholders cast envious eyes upon the great territory of the Northwest, stretching out from the Missouri border, although it was north of the prohibited line of 36 deg. 30'. And so it came about that, within four short years after the compromise of 1850, the unrest of the North under the Fugitive-Slave Law, followed by the efforts of the South to break down the earlier compromise of 1821, awoke again with renewed fierceness the slavery agitation, in discussing the bill for the organization of the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska,—an immense area, extending from the borders of Missouri, Iowa, and Minnesota, west to the Rocky Mountains, and from the line of 36 deg. 30' north to British America.

The mover of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, Stephen A. Douglas, Senator from Illinois, a Democrat and a man of remarkable abilities, now came into prominent notice. He wanted to be President of the United States, and his popularity, his legal attainments, his congressional services, his attractive eloquence and skill in debate, marked him out as the rising man of his party. He was a Vermonter by birth, and like Lincoln had arisen from nothing,—a self-made man, so talented that the people called him “the little giant,” but nevertheless inferior to the giants who had led the Senate for twenty years, while equal to them in ambition, and superior as a wire-pulling politician. He was among those who at first supposed that the Missouri Compromise of 1821 was a final settlement, and was hostile to the further agitation of the slavery question. He was a great believer in “American Destiny,” and the absorption of all North America in one grand confederation, in certain portions of which slavery should be tolerated. As chairman of the Senate Committee on Territories he had great influence in opening new routes of travel, and favored the extension of white settlements, even in territory which had been given to the Indians.

To further his ambitious aspirations, Douglas began now to court the favor of Southern leaders, and introduced his famous Kansas-Nebraska Bill, which was virtually the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, inasmuch as it opened the vast territories to the north of 36 deg. 30' to the introduction of slavery if their people should so elect. This the South needed, to secure what they called the balance of power, but what was really the preponderance of the Slave States, or at least the curtailment of the political power of the Free States. In 1854, during the administration of Franklin Pierce, and under the domination of the Democratic party, which played into the hands of the Southern leaders, the compromise which Clay had effected in 1821 was repealed under the influence of his compromise of 1850, and the slavery question was thus reopened for political discussion in every State of the Union,—showing how dangerous it is to compromise principle in shaping a policy.



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Popular indignation at the North knew no bounds at this new retrograde movement. The Whigs uttered protests, while the Free-Soil party, just coming into notice, composed mainly of moderate antislavery men from both the old parties, were loud in their denunciations of the encroachments of the South. Even some leading Democrats opened their eyes, and joined the rising party. The newspapers, the pulpits, and the platforms sent forth a united cry of wrath. The Whigs and the Abolitionists were plainly approaching each other. The year 1854 saw a continuous and solid political campaign to repress the further spread of slavery. The Territories being then thrown open, there now began an intense emulation to people them, on the one hand, with advocates of slavery, and on the other, with free-soilers. Emigration societies were founded to assist *bona fide* settlers, and a great tide of families poured into Kansas from the Northern States; while the Southern States, and chiefly Missouri, sent also large numbers of men.

At the South the repeal of the Missouri Compromise was universally welcomed, and the Southern leaders felt encouragement and exultation. The South had gained a great victory, aided by Northern Democrats, and boldly denounced Chase, Hale, Sumner, Seward, and Giddings in the Congress as incendiaries, plotting to destroy precious rights. A memorable contest took place in the House of Representatives to prevent the election of Banks of Massachusetts as Speaker. But the tide was beginning to turn, and Banks, by a vote of 113 against 104, obtained the Speakership.

Then followed "border ruffianism" in Kansas, when armed invaders from Missouri, casting thousands of illegal votes, elected, by fraud and violence, a legislature favorable to slavery, accompanied with civil war, in which the most disgraceful outrages were perpetrated, the central government at Washington being blind and deaf and dumb to it all. The *bona fide* settlers in Kansas who were opposed to slavery then assembled at Topeka, refused to recognize the bogus laws, and framed a constitution which President Pierce—"a Northern man with Southern principles," gentlemanly and cultivated, but not strong—pronounced to be revolutionary. Nor was ruffianism confined to Kansas. In 1856 Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, one of the most eloquent and forceful denunciators of all the pro-slavery lawlessness, was attacked at his desk in the Senate chamber, after an adjournment, and unmercifully beaten with a heavy cane by Preston Brooks, a member of the House of Representatives, and nephew of Senator Butler of South Carolina. It took years for Sumner to recover, while the aristocratic ruffian was unmolested, and went unpunished; for, though censured by the House and compelled to resign his seat, he was immediately re-elected by his constituents.



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But this was not all. In that same year the Supreme Court came to the aid of the South, already supported by the Executive and the Senate. Six judges out of nine, headed by Chief Justice Taney, pronounced judgment that slaves, whether fugitive or taken by their masters into the free States, should be returned to their owners. This celebrated case arose in Missouri, where a negro named Dred Scott—who had been taken by his master to States where slavery was prohibited by law, who had, with his master's consent, married and had children in the free States, and been brought back to Missouri—sued for his freedom. The local court granted it; the highest court of the State reversed the decision; and on appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States the case was twice argued there, and excited a wide and deep interest. The court might have simply sent it back, as a matter belonging to the State court to decide; but it permitted itself to argue the question throughout, and pronounced on the natural inferiority of the negro, and his legal condition as property, the competence of the State courts to decide his freedom or slavery, and the right of slaveholders under the Constitution to control their property in the free States or Territories, any legislation by Congress or local legislatures to the contrary notwithstanding. This was the climax of slavery triumphs. The North and West, at last aroused, declared in conventions and legislative halls that slavery should advance no further. The conflict now indeed became "irrepressible."

At this crisis, Abraham Lincoln stepped upon the political stage, and his great career began.

As a local lawyer, even as a local politician, his work was practically done. He came forth as an avowed antagonist of Douglas, who was the strongest man in Illinois, and the leader of the Democratic party in Congress. He came forth as the champion of the antislavery cause in his native State, and soon attracted the eyes of the whole nation. His memorable controversy with Douglas was the turning-point of his life. He became a statesman, as well as a patriot, broad, lofty, and indignant at wrongs. Theretofore he had been a conservative Whig, a devoted follower of Clay. But as soon as the Missouri Compromise was repealed he put forth his noblest energies in behalf of justice, of right, and of humanity.

As he was driving one day from a little town in which court had been held, a brother lawyer said to him, "Lincoln, the time is coming when we shall either be Abolitionists or Democrats;" to which he replied, musingly, "When that time comes, my mind is made up, for I believe the slavery question can never be successfully compromised." And when his mind was made up, after earnest deliberation, he rarely changed it, and became as firm as a rock. His convictions were exceedingly strong, and few influences could shake them. That quiet conversation in his buggy, in a retired road, with a brother lawyer, was a political baptism. He had taken his stand on one side of a great question which would rend in twain the whole country, and make a mighty conflagration, out of whose fires the truth should come victorious.



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The Whig party was now politically dead, and the Republican party arose, composed of conscientious and independent-minded men from all the old organizations, not afraid to put principle before party, conservative and law-abiding, yet deeply aroused on the great issue of the day, and united against the further extension of slavery,—organizing with great enthusiasm for a first presidential campaign in 1856, under Fremont, “the Pathfinder,” as their candidate. They were defeated, and James Buchanan, the Democratic candidate, became President; but, accepting defeat as a lesson toward victory, they grew stronger and stronger every day, until at last they swept the country and secured to the principle “non-extension of slavery” complete representation in the national government.

Lincoln, who was in 1857 the Republican candidate for United States Senator from Illinois, while Douglas sought the votes of the Democracy, first entered the lists against his rival at Springfield, in a speech attacking that wily politician’s position as to the Dred-Scott decision. He tried to force Douglas to a declaration of the logical consequence of his position, namely, that, while he upheld the decision as a wise interpretation of the rights of the slave-owners to hold slaves in the Territories, yet the people of a Territory, under “the great principle of Popular Sovereignty” (which was Douglas’s chief stock in trade), could exclude slavery from its limits even before it had formed a State constitution. “If we succeed in bringing him to this point,” he wrote a friend, “he will say that slavery cannot actually exist in the Territories unless the people desire it, which will offend the South.” If Douglas did not answer Lincoln’s question he would jeopardize his election as Senator; if he did answer he would offend the South, for his doctrine of “squatter sovereignty” conflicted not only with the interests of slavery, but with his defence of the Dred-Scott decision,—a fact which Lincoln was not slow to point out. Douglas did answer, and the result was as Lincoln predicted.

The position taken by Lincoln himself in the debate was bold and clear. Said he, “A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure half-slave and half-free. Either the opponents of slavery will avert the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States,—old as well as new, North as well as South.” When his friends objected that this kind of talk would defeat him for senatorship, he replied, “But it is *true* ... I would rather be defeated with these expressions in my speech held up and discussed before the people than be victorious without it.” He was defeated: but the debates made his fame national and resulted in his being president; while the politic Douglas gained the senatorship and lost the greater prize.



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In these famous debates between the leaders, Lincoln proved himself quite the equal of his antagonist, who was already famous as a trained and prompt debater. Lincoln canvassed the State. He made in one campaign as many as fifty speeches. It is impossible, within my narrow limits, to go into the details of those great debates. In them Lincoln rose above all technicalities and sophistries, and not only planted himself on eternal right, but showed marvellous political wisdom. The keynote of all his utterances was that "a house divided against itself could not stand." Yet he did not pass beyond the constitutional limit in his argument: he admitted the right of the South to a fugitive-slave law, and the right of a Territory to enact slavery for itself on becoming a State; he favored abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia only on the request of its inhabitants, and would forward the colonization of the negroes in Liberia if they wished it and their masters consented. He was a pronounced antislavery man, but not an Abolitionist, and took with the great mass of the Northerners a firm stand against the *extension* of slavery. It was this intuitive perception of the common-sense of the situation that made him and kept him the remarkable representative of the Northern people that he was to the very end.

Lincoln gained so much fame from his contest with Douglas that he was, during the spring of the following year, invited to speak in the Eastern States; and in the great hall of the Cooper Institute in New York, in February, 1860, he addressed a magnificent audience presided over by Bryant the poet. He had made elaborate preparation for this speech, which was a careful review of the slavery question from the foundation of the republic to that time, and a masterly analysis of the relative positions of political parties to it. The address made a deep impression. The speaker was simply introduced as a distinguished politician from the West. The speech was a surprise to those who were familiar with Western oratory. There was no attempt at rhetoric, but the address was pure logic from beginning to end, like an argument before the Supreme Court, and exceedingly forcible. The chief point made was the political necessity of excluding slavery from the Territories. The orator did not dwell on slavery as a crime, but as a wrong which had gradually been forced upon the nation, the remedy for which was not in violent denunciations. He did not abuse the South; he simply pleaded for harmony in the Republican ranks, and avoided giving offence to extreme partisans on any side, contending that if slavery could be excluded from the Territories it would gradually become extinct, as both unprofitable and unjust. He would tolerate slavery within its present limits, and even return fugitive slaves to their owners, according to the laws, but would not extend the evil where it did not at present exist. As it was a wrong, it must not be perpetuated.



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The moderation of this speech, coming from an Illinois politician, did much to draw attention to him as a possible future candidate for the presidency, to which, by this time, he undoubtedly aspired. And why not? He was the leader of his party in Illinois, a great speech-maker, who had defeated Douglas himself in debate, a shrewd, cool, far-sighted man, looking to the future rather than the present; and political friends had already gathered about him as a strong political factor.

Mr. Lincoln after his great speech in New York returned to his home. He had a few years before given some political speeches in Boston and the adjacent towns, which were well received, but made no deep impression,—from no fault of his, but simply because he had not the right material to work upon, where culture was more in demand than vigor of intellect.

Indeed, one result of the election of Lincoln, and of the war which followed, was to open the eyes of Eastern people to the intellect and intelligence of the West. Western lawyers and politicians might not have the culture of Sumner, the polished elocution of Everett, the urbanity of Van Buren, and the courtly manners of Winthrop, but they had brain-power, a faculty for speech-making, and great political sagacity. And they were generally more in sympathy with the people, having mostly sprung from their ranks. Their hard and rugged intellects *told* on the floor of Congress, where every one is soon judged according to his merits, and not according to his clothes. And the East saw that thereafter political power would centre in the West, and dominate the whole country,—against which it was useless to complain or rebel, since, according to all political axioms, the majority will rule, and ought to rule. And the more the East saw of the leading men of the West, the more it respected their force of mind, their broad and comprehensive views, and their fitness for high place under the government.

It was not the people of the United States who called for the nomination of Lincoln, as in the case of General Jackson. He was not much known outside of Illinois, except as a skilful debater and stump orator. He had filled no high office to bring him before the eyes of the nation. He was not a general covered with military laurels, nor a Senator in Congress, nor governor of a large State, nor a cabinet officer. No man had thus far been nominated for President unless he was a military success, or was in the line of party promotion. Though a party leader in Illinois, Lincoln was simply a private citizen, with no antecedents which marked him out for such exalted position. But he was “available,”—a man who could be trusted, moderate in his views, a Whig and yet committed to antislavery views, of great logical powers, and well-informed on all the political issues of the day. He was not likely to be rash, or impulsive, or hasty, or to stand in the way of political aspirants. He was eminently a safe man in an approaching



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crisis, with a judicial intellect, and above all a man without enemies, whom few envied, and some laughed at for his grotesque humor and awkward manners. He was also modest and unpretending, and had the tact to veil his ambition. In his own State he was exceedingly popular. It was not strange, therefore, that the Illinois Republican State Convention nominated him as their presidential candidate, to be supported in the larger national convention about to assemble.

In May, 1860, the memorable National Republican Convention met in Chicago, in an immense building called the Wigwam, to select a candidate for the presidency. Among the prominent Republican leaders were Seward, Chase, Cameron, Dayton, and Bates. The Eastern people supposed that Seward would receive the nomination, from his conceded ability, his political experience, his prominence as an antislavery Whig, and the prestige of office; but he had enemies, and an unconciliatory disposition. It soon became evident that he could not carry all the States. The contest was between Seward, Chase, and Lincoln; and when, on the third ballot, Lincoln received within a vote and a-half of the majority, Ohio gave him four votes from Chase, and then delegation after delegation changed its vote for the victor, and amid great enthusiasm the nomination became unanimous.

The election followed, and Lincoln, the Republican, received one hundred and eighty electoral votes; Breckinridge, the Southern Democrat, seventy-two; Bell, of the Union ticket—the last fragment of the old Whig party—thirty-nine; and Douglas, of the Northern Democracy, but twelve. The rail-splitter became President of the United States, and Senator Hannibal Hamlin, of Maine, Vice President. It was a victory of ideas. It was the triumph of the North over the South,—of the aroused conscience and intelligence of the people against bigotry, arrogance, and wrong. Men and measures in that great contest paled before the grandeur of everlasting principles. It was not for Lincoln that bonfires were kindled and cannons roared and bells were rung and huzzas ascended to heaven, but for the great check given to the slave-power, which, since the formation of the Constitution, had dominated the nation. The Republicans did not gain a majority of the popular vote, as the combined opposing tickets cast 930,170 votes more than they; but their vote was much larger than that for any other ticket, and gave them a handsome majority in the electoral college.

Between the election in November, 1860, and the following March, when Lincoln took the reins of government, several of the Southern States had already seceded from the Union and had organized a government at Montgomery. Making the excuse of the election of a “sectional and minority president,” they had put into effect the action for which their leaders during several months had been secretly preparing. They had seized nearly all the Federal forts, arsenals, dock-yards, custom-houses, and post-offices within their limits, while a large number of the officers of the United States army

and navy had resigned, and entered into their service, on the principle that the authority of their States was paramount to the Federal power.



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Amid all these preparations for war on the part of the seceding States, and the seizure of Federal property, Buchanan was irresolute and perplexed. He was doubtless patriotic and honest, but he did not know what to do. The state of things was much more serious than when South Carolina threatened to secede in the time of General Jackson. The want of firmness and decision on the part of the President has been severely criticised, but it seems to me to have been not without excuse in the perplexing conditions of the time, while it was certainly fortunate that he did not precipitate the crisis by sending troops to reinforce Fort Sumter, in Charleston harbor, which was invested and threatened by South Carolina troops. The contest was inevitable anyway, and the management of the war was better in the hands of Lincoln than it could have been in those of Buchanan, with traitors in his cabinet, or even after they had left and a new and loyal cabinet was summoned, but with an undecided man at the head. There was needed a new and stronger government when hostilities should actually break out.

On the 4th of March, 1861, the inauguration of Lincoln took place, and well do I remember the ceremony. The day was warm and beautiful, and nature smiled in mockery of the bloody tragedy which was so soon to follow. I mingled with the crowd at the eastern portico of the Capitol, and was so fortunate as to hear and see all that took place,—the high officials who surrounded the President, his own sad and pensive face, his awkward but not undignified person arrayed in a faultless suit of black, the long address he made, the oath of office administered by Chief Justice Taney, and the dispersion of the civil and military functionaries to their homes. It was not a great pageant, but was an impressive gathering. Society, in which the Southern element predominated, sneered at the tall ruler who had learned so few of its graces and insincerities, and took but little note of the thunder-clouds in the political atmosphere,—the distant rumblings which heralded the approaching storm so soon to break with satanic force.

The inaugural address was not only an earnest appeal for peace, but a calm and steadfast announcement of the law-abiding policy of the government, and a putting of the responsibility for any bloodshed upon those who should resist the law. Two brief paragraphs contain the whole:—

“The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imposts; but beyond what may be necessary for these objects there will be no invasion, no use of force among the people anywhere.

“In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors.”

This was the original chart of the course which the President followed, and his final justification when by use of “the power confided to him” he had accomplished the

complete restoration of the authority of the Federal Union over all the vast territory which the seceded States had seized and so desperately tried to control.



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Lincoln was judicious and fortunate in his cabinet. Seward, the ablest and most experienced statesman of the day, accepted the office of Secretary of State; Salmon P. Chase, who had been governor of Ohio, and United States Senator, was made Secretary of the Treasury; Gideon Welles, of great executive ability and untiring energy, became Secretary of the Navy; Simon Cameron, an influential politician of Pennsylvania, held the post of Secretary of War for a time, when he was succeeded by Edwin M. Stanton, a man of immense capacity for work; Montgomery Blair, a noted antislavery leader, was made Postmaster-General; Caleb B. Smith became Secretary of the Interior; and Edward Bates, of Missouri, Attorney-General. Every one of these cabinet ministers was a strong man, and was found to be greater than he had seemed.

Jefferson Davis, of Mississippi, an old-time Democrat, was elected President of the Southern Confederacy, and Alexander H. Stephens, a prominent Whig of Georgia, Vice-President. Davis was born in Kentucky in 1808, and was a graduate of West Point. He was a Congressman on the outbreak of the Mexican War, resigned his seat, entered the army, and distinguished himself, rising to the rank of colonel. He was Secretary of War in President Pierce's cabinet, and Senator from Mississippi on the accession of President Buchanan,—a position which he held until the secession of his State. He thus had had considerable military and political experience. He was a man of great ability, but was proud, reserved, and cold, “a Democrat by party name, an autocrat in feeling and sentiment,—a type of the highest Southern culture, and exclusive Southern caste.” To his friends—and they were many, in spite of his reserve—there was a peculiar charm in his social intercourse; he was beloved in his family, and his private life was irreproachable. He selected an able cabinet, among whom were Walker of Alabama, Toombs of Georgia, and Benjamin of Louisiana. The Provisional Congress authorized a regular army of ten thousand men, one hundred thousand volunteers, and a loan of fifteen millions of dollars.

But actual hostilities had not as yet commenced. The Confederates, during the close of Buchanan's administration, were not without hopes of a peaceful settlement and recognition of secession, and several conferences had taken place,—one overture being made even to the new administration, but of course in vain.

The spark which kindled the conflagration—but little more than a month after Lincoln's inauguration, April 12, 1861—was the firing on Fort Sumter, and its surrender to the South Carolinians. This aroused both the indignation and the military enthusiasm of the North, which in a single day was, as by a lightning flash, fused in a white heat of patriotism and a desire to avenge the dishonored flag. For the time all party lines disappeared, and the whole population were united and solid in defence of the Union. Both



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sides now prepared to fight in good earnest. The sword was drawn, the scabbard thrown away. Both sides were confident of victory. The Southern leaders were under the delusion that the Yankees would not fight, and that they cared more for dollars than for their country. Moreover, the Southern States had long been training their young men in the military schools, and had for months been collecting materials of war. As cotton was an acknowledged "king," the planters calculated on the support of England, which could not do without their bales. Lastly, they knew that the North had been divided against itself, and that the Democratic politicians sympathized with them in reference to slavery. The Federal leaders, on the other hand, relied on the force of numbers, of wealth, and national prestige. Very few supposed that the contest would be protracted. Seward thought that it would not last over three months. Nor did the South think of conquering the North, but supposed it could secure its own independence. It certainly was resolved on making a desperate fight to defend its peculiar institution. As it was generally thought in England that this attempt would succeed, as England had no special love for the Union, and as the Union, and not opposition to slavery, was the rallying cry of the North, England gave to the South its moral support.

Lincoln assumed his burden with great modesty, but with a steady firmness and determination, and surprised his cabinet by his force of will. Nicolay and Hay relate an anecdote of great significance. Seward, who occupied the first place in the cabinet, which he deserved on account of his experience and abilities, was not altogether pleased with the slow progress of things, and wrote to Lincoln an extraordinary letter in less than a month after his inauguration, suggesting more active operations, with specific memoranda of a proposed policy. "Whatever policy we adopt," said he, "there must be an energetic prosecution of it. For this purpose it must be somebody's business to pursue and direct it incessantly. Either the President must do it himself, or devolve it on some member of his cabinet. It is not my especial province; but I neither seek to evade nor assume responsibility." In brief, it was an intimation, "If you feel not equal to the emergency, perhaps you can find a man not a thousand miles away who is equal to it."

Lincoln, in his reply, showed transcendent tact. Although an inexperienced local politician, suddenly placed at the head of a great nation, in a tremendous crisis, and surrounded in his cabinet and in Congress by men of acknowledged expert ability in statecraft, he had his own ideas, but he needed the counsel and help of these men as well. He could not afford to part with the services of a man like Seward, nor would he offend him by any assumption of dignity or resentment at his unasked advice. He good-naturedly replied, in substance: "The policy laid down in my inaugural met your distinct approval, and it has thus far been exactly followed. As to attending to its prosecution, if this must be done, I must do it, and I wish, and suppose I am entitled to have, the advice of all the cabinet."



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After this, no member of the cabinet dared to attempt to usurp any authority which belonged to the elected Commander-in-chief of the army and navy,—unless it were Chase, at a later time. As the head of the government in whom supreme Federal power was invested in time of war, Lincoln was willing and eager to consult his cabinet, but reserved his decisions and assumed all responsibilities. He probably made mistakes, but who could have done better on the whole? The choice of the nation was justified by results.

It is not my object in this paper to attempt to compress the political and military history of the United States during the memorable administration of Mr. Lincoln. If one wishes to know the details he must go to the ten octavo biographical volumes of Lincoln's private secretaries, to the huge and voluminous quarto reports of the government, to the multifarious books on the war and its actors. I can only glance at salient points, and even here I must confine myself to those movements which are intimately connected with the agency and influence of Lincoln himself. It is his life, and not a history of the war, that it is my business to present. Nor has the time come for an impartial and luminous account of the greatest event of modern times. The jealousy and dissensions of generals, the prejudices of the people both North and South, the uncertainty and inconsistency of much of the material published, and the conceit of politicians, alike prevent a history which will be satisfactory, no matter how gifted and learned may be the historian. When all the actors of that famous tragedy, both great and small, have passed away, new light will appear, and poetry will add her charms to what is now too hideous a reality, glorious as were the achievements of heroes and statesmen.

After the Battle of Bull Run, July 21, 1861, won by the Confederate General Beauregard over General McDowell, against all expectation, to the dismay and indignation of the whole North,—the result of over-confidence on the part of the Union troops, and a wretchedly mismanaged affair,—the attention of the Federal government was mainly directed to the defence of Washington, which might have fallen into the hands of the enemy had the victors been confident and quick enough to pursue the advantage they had gained; for nothing could exceed the panic at the capital after the disastrous defeat of McDowell. The demoralization of the Union forces was awful. Happily, the condition of the Confederate troops was not much better.

But the country rallied after the crisis had passed. Lincoln issued his proclamation for five hundred thousand additional men. Congress authorized as large a loan as was needed. The governors of the various States raised regiment after regiment, and sent them to Washington, as the way through Maryland, at first obstructed by local secessionists, was now clear, General Butler having intrenched himself at Baltimore. Most fortunately the governor of Maryland was a Union man, and with the aid of the Northern forces had repressed the rebellious tendency in Maryland, which State afterward remained permanently in the Union, and offered no further resistance to the passage of Federal troops. Arlington Heights in Virginia, opposite Washington, had

already been fortified by General Scott; but additional defences were made, and the capital was out of danger.

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With the rapid concentration of troops at Washington, the government again assumed the offensive. General George B. McClellan, having distinguished himself in West Virginia, was called to Washington, at the recommendation of the best military authorities, and intrusted with the command of the Army of the Potomac; and soon after, on the retirement of General Scott, now aged and infirm, and unable to mount a horse, McClellan took his place as commander of all the forces of the United States.

At the beginning of the rebellion McClellan was simply a captain, but was regarded as one of the most able and accomplished officers of the army. His promotion was rapid beyond precedent; but his head was turned by his elevation, and he became arrogant and opinionated, and before long even insulted the President, and assumed the airs of a national liberator on whose shoulders was laid the burden of the war. He consequently estranged Congress, offended Scott, became distrusted by the President, and provoked the jealousies of the other generals. But he was popular with the army and his subordinates, and if he offended his superiors his soldiers were devoted to him, and looked upon him as a second Napoleon.

The best thing that can be said of this general is that he was a great organizer, and admirably disciplined for their future encounters the raw troops which were placed under his command. And he was too prudent to risk the lives of his men until his preparations were made, although constantly urged to attempt, if not impossibilities, at least what was exceedingly hazardous.

It was expected by the President, the Secretary of War, and Congress, that he would hasten his preparations, and advance upon the enemy, as he had over one hundred thousand men; and he made grand promises and gave assurances that he would march speedily upon Richmond. But he did not march. Delay succeeded delay, under various pretences, to the disappointment of the country, and the indignation of the responsible government. It was not till April, 1862, after five months of inaction, that he was ready to move upon Richmond, and then not according to pre-arranged plans, but by a longer route, by the way of Fortress Monroe, up the Peninsula between the York and James rivers, and not directly across Virginia by Manassas Junction, which had been evacuated in view of his superior forces,—the largest army theretofore seen on this continent.

It is not for me, utterly ignorant of military matters, to make any criticism of the plan of operations, in which the President and McClellan were at issue, or to censure the general in command for the long delay, against the expostulations of the Executive and of Congress. He maintained that his army was not sufficiently drilled, or large enough for an immediate advance, that the Confederate forces were greater than his own, and were posted in impregnable positions. He was always calling for reinforcements, until his

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army comprised over two hundred thousand men, and when at last imperatively commanded to move, some-whither,—at any rate to move,—he left Washington not sufficiently defended, which necessitated the withdrawal of McDowell's corps from him to secure the safety of the capital. Without enumerating or describing the terrible battles on the Peninsula, and the "change of base," which practically was a retreat, and virtually the confession of failure, it may be said in defence or palliation of McClellan that it afterwards took Grant, with still greater forces, and when the Confederates were weakened and demoralized, a year to do what McClellan was expected to do in three months.

The war had now been going on for more than a year, without any decisive results so far as the Army of the Potomac was concerned, but on the contrary with great disasters and bitter humiliations. The most prodigious efforts had been made by the Union troops without success, and thus far the Confederates had the best of it, and were filled with triumph. As yet no Union generals could be compared with Lee, or Johnston, or Longstreet, or Stonewall Jackson, while the men under their command were quite equal to the Northern soldiers in bravery and discipline.

The times were dark and gloomy at the North, and especially so to the President, as commander-in-chief of the army and navy, after all the energies he put forth in the general direction of affairs. He was maligned and misrepresented and ridiculed; yet he opened not his mouth, and kept his soul in patience,—magnanimous, forbearing, and modest. In his manners and conduct, though intrusted with greater powers than any American before him had ever exercised, he showed no haughtiness, no resentments, no disdain, but was accessible to everybody who had any claim on his time, and was as simple and courteous as he had been in a private station. But what anxieties, what silent grief, what a burden, had he to bear! And here was his greatness, which endeared him to the American heart,—that he usurped no authority, offended no one, and claimed nothing, when most men, armed as he was with almost unlimited authority, would have been reserved, arrogant, and dictatorial. He did not even assume the cold dignity which Washington felt it necessary to put on, but shook hands, told stories, and uttered jokes, as if he were without office on the prairies of Illinois; yet all the while resolute in purpose and invincible in spirit,—an impersonation of logical intellect before which everybody succumbed, as firm, when he saw his way clear, as Bismarck himself.

His tact in managing men showed his native shrewdness and kindness, as well as the value of all his early training in the arts of the politician. Always ready to listen, and to give men free chance to relieve their minds in talk, he never directly antagonized their opinions, but, deftly embodying an argument in an apt joke or story, would manage to switch them off from their track to his own without their exactly perceiving the process. His innate courtesy often made him seem uncertain of his ground, but he probably had

his own way quite as frequently as Andrew Jackson, and without that irascible old fighter's friction.



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But darker days were yet to come, and more perplexing duties had yet to be discharged. The President was obliged to retire McClellan from his command when, in August, 1862, that general's procrastination could no longer be endured. McClellan had made no fatal blunders, was endeared to his men, and when it was obvious that he could not take Richmond, although within four miles of it at one time, he had made a successful and masterly retreat to Harrison's Landing; yet the campaign against the Confederate capital had been a failure, as many believed, by reason of unnecessary delays on the part of the commander, and the President had to take the responsibility of sustaining or removing him. He chose the latter.

What general would Lincoln select to succeed McClellan? He chose General John Pope, but not with the powers which had been conferred on McClellan. Pope had been graduated at West Point in 1842, had served with distinction in the Mexican War, and had also done good service in the West. But it was his misfortune at this time to lose the second battle of Bull Run, or Manassas, when there was no necessity of fighting. He himself attributed his disaster to the inaction and disobedience of General Porter, who was cashiered for it,—a verdict which was reversed by a careful military inquiry after the war. Pope's defeat was followed, although against the advice of the cabinet, by the restoration of McClellan, since Washington was again in danger. After he had put the capital in safety, McClellan advanced slowly against Lee, who had crossed the Potomac into Maryland with designs on Pennsylvania. He made his usual complaint of inadequate forces, and exaggerated the forces of the enemy. He won, however, the battle of Antietam,—for, although the Confederates afterwards claimed that it was a drawn battle, they immediately retired,—but even then failed to pursue his advantage, and allowed Lee to recross the Potomac and escape, to the deep disgust of everybody and the grief of Lincoln. Encouraged by McClellan's continued inaction, Lee sent his cavalry under Stuart, who with two thousand men encircled the Federal army, and made a raid into Pennsylvania, gathering supplies, and retired again into Virginia, unhindered and unharmed. The President now deprived McClellan again of his command, and that general's military career ended. He retired to private life, emerging again only as an unsuccessful Democratic candidate for the presidency against Lincoln in 1864.

It was a difficult matter for Lincoln to decide upon a new general to command the Army of the Potomac. He made choice of Ambrose E. Burnside, the next in rank,—a man of pleasing address and a gallant soldier, but not of sufficient abilities for the task imposed upon him. The result was the greatest military blunder of the whole war. With the idea of advancing directly upon Richmond through Fredericksburg, Burnside made the sad error of attacking equal forces strongly intrenched on the Fredericksburg Heights, while he advanced from the valley of the Rappahannock below, crossing the river under a plunging fire, and attacking the enemy on the hill. It was a dismal slaughter, but Burnside magnanimously took the whole blame upon himself, and was not disgraced, although removed from his command. He did good service afterwards as a corps-commander.



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It was soon after Burnside's unfortunate failure at Fredericksburg, perhaps the gloomiest period of the war, when military reverses saddened the whole North, and dissensions in the cabinet itself added to the embarrassments of the President, that Lincoln performed the most momentous act of his life, and probably the most important act of the whole war, in his final proclamation emancipating the slaves, and utilizing them in the Union service, as a military necessity.

Ever since the beginning of hostilities had this act been urged upon the President by the antislavery men of the North,—a body growing more intense and larger in numbers as the war advanced. But Lincoln remained steady to his original purpose of *saving the Union*,—whether with or without slavery. Naturally, and always opposed to slavery, he did not believe that he had any right to indulge his private feeling in violation of the Constitutional limitations of his civil power, unless, as he said, “measures otherwise unconstitutional might become lawful by becoming indispensable to the preservation of the Constitution through the preservation of the nation.”

Thus when in 1861 Fremont in Missouri proclaimed emancipation to the slaves of persistent rebels, although this was hailed with delight by vast numbers at the North, the President countermanded it as not yet an indispensable necessity. In March, 1862, he approved Acts of Congress legalizing General B.F. Butler's shrewd device of declaring all slaves of rebels in arms as “contraband of war,” and thus, when they came within the army lines, to be freed and used by the Northern armies. In March, May, and July, 1862, he made earnest appeals to the Border States to favor compensated emancipation, because he foresaw that military emancipation would become necessary before long. When Lee was in Maryland and Pennsylvania, he felt that the time had arrived, and awaited only some marked military success, so that the measure should seem a mightier blow to the rebels and not a cry for help. And this was a necessary condition, for, while hundreds of thousands of Democrats had joined the armies and had become Republicans for the war,—in fact, all the best generals and a large proportion of the soldiers of the North had been Democrats before the flag was fired on,—yet the Democratic politicians of the proslavery type were still alive and active throughout the North, doing all they could to discredit the national cause, and hinder the government; and Lincoln intuitively knew that this act must commend itself to the great mass of the Northern people, or it would be a colossal blunder.



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Therefore, when Lee had been driven back, on September 22, 1862, the President issued a preliminary proclamation, stating that he should again recommend Congress to favor an Act tendering pecuniary aid to slaveholders in States not in rebellion, who would adopt immediate or gradual abolishment of slavery within their limits; but that on the first day of January, 1863, "all persons held as slaves within any State, or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall be in rebellion against the United States, shall be thenceforward and forever free." And accordingly,—in spite of Burnside's dreadful disaster before Fredericksburg on December 13, unfavorable results in the fall elections throughout the North, much criticism of his course in the newly-assembled Congress, and the unpopular necessity of more men and more money to be drawn from the loyal States,—on January 1, 1863, the courageous leader sent forth his final and peremptory Decree of Emancipation. He issued it, "by virtue of the power in me vested as commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war-measure for suppressing said rebellion."

Of course such an edict would have no immediate force in the remoter States controlled by the Confederate government, nor at the time did it produce any remarkable sensation except to arouse bitter animadversion at the North and renewed desperation of effort at the South; but it immediately began to reduce the workers on intrenchments and fortifications along the Confederate front and to increase those of the Federal forces, while soon also providing actual troops for the Union armies; and, since it was subsequently indorsed by all the States, through an amendment to the Constitution by which slavery was forever prohibited in the States and Territories of the United States, and in view of its immense consequences, the Emancipation Proclamation of Lincoln must be regarded as perhaps the culminating event in the war. It was his own act; and he accepted all the responsibilities. The abolition of slavery is therefore forever identified with the administration of Lincoln.

In the early part of 1863 Lincoln relieved Burnside of his command, and appointed General Joseph Hooker to succeed him. This officer had distinguished himself as a brilliant tactician; he was known as "fighting Joe;" but he was rash. He made a bold and successful march, crossed the Rappahannock and Rapidan rivers and advanced upon the enemy, but early in May, 1863, was defeated at Chancellorsville, in one of the bloodiest battles of the war. The Confederates were now exceedingly elated; and Lee, with a largely increased army of ninety thousand splendid fighting men, resolved on invading Pennsylvania in force. Evading Hooker, he passed through the Shenandoah Valley, and about the middle of June was in Pennsylvania before the Union forces could be gathered to oppose him. He took York and Carlisle and threatened Harrisburg. The invasion filled the North with dismay. Hooker, feeling his incompetency, and on bad terms with Halleck, the general-in-chief, asked to be relieved, and his request was at once granted.



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General George C. Meade was appointed his successor on June 28. Striking due north with all speed, ably supported by a remarkable group of corps-commanders and the veteran Army of the Potomac handsomely reinforced and keenly eager to fight, Meade brought Lee to bay near the village of Gettysburg, and after three days of terrific fighting, in which the losses of the two armies aggregated over forty-five thousand men, on the 3d of July he defeated Lee's army and turned it rapidly southward. This was the most decisive battle of the war, and the most bloody, finally lost by Lee through his making the same mistake that Burnside did at Fredericksburg, in attacking equal forces intrenched on a hill. Nothing was left to Lee but retreat across the Potomac, and Meade—an able but not a great captain—made the mistake that McClellan had made at Antietam in not following up his advantage, but allowing Lee to escape into Virginia.

To cap the climax of Union success, on the 4th of July General Ulysses S. Grant, who had been operating against Vicksburg on the Mississippi during four months, captured that city, with thirty-two thousand prisoners, and a few days later Port Hudson with its garrison fell into his hands. The signal combination of victories filled the North with enthusiasm and the President with profoundest gratitude. It is true, Meade's failure to follow and capture Lee was a bitter disappointment to Lincoln. The Confederate commander might have been compelled to surrender to a flushed and conquering army a third larger than his own, had Meade pursued and attacked him, and the war might perhaps virtually have ended. Yet Lee's army was by no means routed, and was in dangerous mood, while Meade's losses had been really larger than his; so that the Federal general's caution does not lack military defenders. Nevertheless, he evidently was not the man that had been sought for.

More than two years had now elapsed since the Army of the Potomac had been organized by McClellan, and yet it was no nearer the end which the President, the war minister, the cabinet, and the generals had in view,—the capture of Richmond. Thus far, more than one hundred thousand men had been lost in the contest which the politicians had supposed was to be so brief. Not a single general had arisen at the East equal to the occasion. Only a few of the generals had seen important military service before the war, and not one had evinced remarkable abilities, although many had distinguished themselves for bravery and capacity to manage well an army corps. Each army commander had failed when great responsibilities had been imposed upon him. Not one came up to popular expectation. The great soldier must be “born” as well as “made.”



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It must be observed that up to this time, in the autumn of 1863, the President had not only superintended the Army of the Potomac, but had borne the chief burden of the government and the war at large. Cabinet meetings, reports of generals, quarrels of generals, dissensions of political leaders, impertinence of editors, the premature pressure to emancipate slaves, Western campaigns, the affairs of the navy, and a thousand other things pressed upon his attention. It was his custom to follow the movements of every army with the map before him, and to be perfectly familiar with all the general, and many of the detailed, problems in every part of the vast field of the war. No man was ever more overworked. It may be a question how far he was wise in himself attending to so many details, and in giving directions to generals in high command, and sometimes against the advice of men more experienced in military matters. That is not for me to settle. He seemed to bear the government and all the armies on head and heart, as if the responsibility for everything was imposed upon him. What had been the history? In the East, two years clouded by disasters, mistakes, and national disappointments, with at last a breaking of the day,—and that, in the West.

Was ever a man more severely tried! And yet, in view of fatal errors on the part of generals, the disobedience of orders, and the unfriendly detractions of Chase,—his able, but self-important Secretary of the Treasury,—not a word of reproach had fallen from him; he was still gentle, conciliatory, patient, forgiving on all occasions, and marvellously reticent and self-sustained. His transcendent moral qualities stood out before the world unquestioned, whatever criticisms may be made as to the wisdom of all his acts.

But a brighter day was at hand. The disasters of the East—for Gettysburg was but the retrieving of a desperate situation—were compensated by great success in the West. Fort Donelson and Columbus in 1862, Vicksburg and Port Hudson in 1863, had been great achievements. The Mississippi was cleared of hostile forts upon its banks, and was opened to its mouth. New Orleans was occupied by Union troops. The finances were in good condition, for Chase had managed that great problem with brilliant effect. The national credit was restored. The navy had done wonders, and the southern coast was effectually blockaded. A war with England had been averted by the tact of Lincoln rather than the diplomacy of Seward.

Lincoln cordially sustained in his messages to Congress the financial schemes of the Secretary of the Treasury, and while he carefully watched, he did not interfere with, the orders of the Secretary of the Navy. To Farragut, Foote, and Porter was great glory due for opening the Mississippi, as much as to Grant and Sherman for cutting the Confederate States in twain. Too much praise cannot be given to Chase for the restoration of the national credit, and Lincoln bore patiently his adverse criticism in view of his transcendent services.

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At this stage of public affairs, in the latter part of 1863, General Grant was called from the West to take command of the Army of the Potomac. His great military abilities were known to the whole nation. Although a graduate of West Point, who had, when young, done good service under General Scott, his mature life had been a failure; and when the war broke out he was engaged in the tanning business at Galena, Illinois, at a salary of \$800. He offered his services to the governor of Illinois, and was made a colonel of volunteers. Shortly after entering active service he was made brigadier-general, and his ability as a commander was soon apparent. He gradually rose to the command of the military district of Southeast Missouri; then to the command of the great military rendezvous and depot at Cairo. Then followed his expedition, assisted by Commodore Foote, against Fort Henry on the Tennessee River, in the early part of 1862, with no encouragement from Halleck, the commanding-general at St. Louis. The capture of Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River came next, to the amazement and chagrin of the Confederate generals; for which he was made a major-general of volunteers. This was a great service, which resulted in the surrender of Generals Buckner and Johnston with 15,000 Confederate soldiers, 20,000 stands of arms, 48 pieces of artillery, and 3,000 horses. But this great success was nothing to the siege and capture of Vicksburg, July 4, 1863, which opened the Mississippi and divided the Confederacy, to say nothing of the surrender of nearly 30,000 men, 172 cannon, and 60,000 muskets. Then followed the great battle of Chattanooga, which shed glory on Thomas, Sherman, Burnside, and Hooker, and raised still higher the military fame of Grant, who had planned and directed it. No general in the war had approached him in success and ability. The eyes of the nation were now upon him. Congress revived for him the grade of lieutenant-general, and the conqueror of Vicksburg and Chattanooga received the honor on March 3, 1864, the first on whom the full rank had been conferred since Washington. The lieutenant-generalcy conferred on Winfield Scott after the Mexican War was a special brevet title of honor, that rank not existing in our army.

On the 8th of March the President met the successful and fortunate general for the first time, and was delighted with his quiet modesty; on the next day he gave him command of all the armies of the United States. Grant was given to understand that the work assigned to him personally was the capture of Richmond. But he was left to follow out his own plans, and march to the Confederate capital by any route he saw fit. Henceforth the President, feeling full confidence, ceased to concern himself with the plans of the general commanding the Army of the Potomac. He did not even ask to know them. All he and the Secretary of War could do was to forward the plans of the Lieutenant-General, and provide all the troops



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he wanted. Lincoln's anxieties of course remained, and he watched eagerly for news, and was seen often at the war department till late at night, waiting to learn what Grant was doing; but Grant was left with the whole military responsibility, because he was evidently competent for it; the relief to Lincoln must have been immense. The history of the war, from this time, belongs to the life of Grant rather than of Lincoln. Suggestions to that successful soldier from civilians now were like those of the Dutch Deputies when they undertook to lecture the great Marlborough on the art of war. To bring the war to a speedy close required the brain and the will and the energy of a military genius, and the rapid and concentrated efforts of veteran soldiers, disciplined by experience, and inured to the toils and dangers of war.

The only great obstacle was the difficulty of enlisting men in what was now more than ever to be dangerous work. When Grant began his march to Richmond probably half-a-million of soldiers had perished on each side, and a national debt had been contracted of over two thousand millions of dollars. In spite of patriotic calls, in spite of bounties, it became necessary to draft men into the service,—a compulsory act of power to be justified only by the exigencies of the country. In no other way could the requisite number of troops be secured. Multitudes of the survivors have been subsequently rewarded, at least partially, by pensions. The pension list, at the close of Harrison's administration in 1892, amounted to a sum greater than Germany annually expends on its gigantic army. So far as the pensioners are genuinely disabled veterans, the people make no complaint, appreciating the sacrifices which the soldiers were compelled to make in the dreadful contest. But so vast a fund for distribution attracted the inevitable horde of small lawyers and pension agents, who swelled the lists with multitudes of sham veterans and able-bodied "cripples," until many eminent ex-soldiers cried out for a purgation of that which should be a list of honor.

Nor is it disloyal or unpatriotic to shed a tear for the brave but misguided men whom the Southern leaders led to destruction without any such recompense for their wounds and hardships,—for the loss of their property, loss of military prestige, loss of political power, loss of everything but honor. At first we called them Rebels, and no penalties were deemed too severe for them to suffer; but later we called them Confederates, waging war for a cause which they honestly deemed sacred, and for which they cheerfully offered up their lives,—a monstrous delusion, indeed, but one for which we ceased to curse them, and soon learned to forgive, after their cause was lost. Resentment gave place to pity, and they became like erring brothers, whom it was our duty to forgive, and in many respects our impulse to admire,—not for their cause, but for their devotion to it. All this was foreseen and foretold by Edward Everett during the war, yet there were but few who agreed with him.



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I can devote but little space to the military movements of General Grant in Virginia until Richmond surrendered and the rebellion collapsed. There was among the Southerners no contempt of this leader, fresh from the laurels of Fort Donelson, Vicksburg, and Chattanooga; and the Confederates put forth almost superhuman efforts to defend their capital against the scientific strategy of the most successful general of the war, supported as he was by almost unlimited forces, and the unreserved confidence of his government.

The new general-in-chief established his headquarters at Culpeper Court House near the end of March, 1864. His plan of operations was simple,—to advance against Lee, before proceeding to Richmond, and defeat his army if possible. Richmond, even if taken, would be comparatively valueless unless Lee were previously defeated. Grant's forces were about one hundred and fifty thousand men, and Lee's little more than half that number, but the latter were intrenched in strong positions on the interior line. It was Grant's plan to fight whenever an opportunity was presented,—since he could afford to lose two men to one of the enemy, and was thus sure to beat in the long run; as a chess-player, having a superiority of pieces, freely exchanges as he gets opportunity. There was nothing particularly brilliant in this policy adopted by Grant, except the great fact that he chose the course most likely to succeed, whatever might be his losses. Lee at first was also ready to fight, but after the dreadful slaughter on both sides in the battles of the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, and Cold Harbor, he apparently changed his plans. One-third of his forces had melted away; he saw that he could not afford to take risks, and retreated behind his defences. Grant, too, had changed his operations, at first directed against Richmond on the northwest; and, since he found every hill and wood and morass strongly fortified, he concluded to march on Lee's flank to the James River, and attack Richmond from the south, after reducing Petersburg, and destroying the southern railroads by which the Confederates received most of their supplies.

The Federal commander had all the men he wanted. A large force was under Butler near Petersburg, and Sheridan had driven out the enemy from the Valley of the Shenandoah with his magnificent cavalry. Lee was now cooped up between Fredericksburg and Richmond. He was too great a general to lead his army into either of these strongholds, where they might be taken as Pemberton's army was at Vicksburg. He wisely kept the field, although he would not fight except behind his intrenchments, when he was absolutely forced by the aggressive foe.

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Henceforth, from June, 1864, to the close of the war the operations of Grant resembled a siege rather than a series of battles. He had lost over fifty thousand men thus far in his march, and he, too, now became economical of his soldiers' blood. He complained not, but doggedly carried out his plans without consulting the government at Washington, or his own generals. His work was hard and discouraging. He had to fight his way, step by step, against strong intrenchments,—the only thing to do, but he had the will and patience to do it. He had ordered an attack on Petersburg, which must be reduced before he could advance to Richmond; but the attack had failed, and he now sat down to a regular siege of that strong and important position. The siege lasted ten months, when Lee was driven within his inner line of defences, and, seeing that all was lost, on April 2, 1865, evacuated his position, and began his retreat to the west, hoping to reach Lynchburg, and after that effect a junction with Johnston coming up from the south. But his retreat was cut off near Appomattox, and being entirely surrounded he had nothing to do but surrender to Grant with his entire army, April 9. With his surrender, Richmond, of course, fell, and the war was virtually closed.

Out of the 2,200,000 men who had enlisted on the Union side, 110,000 were killed or mortally wounded, and 250,000 died from other causes. The expense of the war was \$3,250,000,000. The losses of the Confederates were about three-quarters as much. Of the millions who had enlisted on both sides, nearly a million of men perished, and over five thousand millions of dollars were expended, probably a quarter of the whole capital of the country at that time. So great were the sacrifices made to preserve the Union,—at the cost of more blood and treasure than have been spent in any other war in modern times.

I am compelled to omit notices of military movements in other parts of the Union, especially in the West, where some of the most gallant actions of the war took place,—the brilliant strategy of Rosecrans, the signal achievements of Thomas, Sherman's march to the sea, Sheridan's raids, the naval exploits of Farragut, Porter, and Foote, and other acts of heroism, as not bearing directly on the life of Lincoln. Of course, he felt the intensest interest in all the military operations, and bore an unceasing burden of study and of anxiety, which of itself was a great strain on all his powers. If anything had gone wrong which he could remedy, his voice and his hand would have been heard and seen. But toward the last other things demanded his personal attention, and these were of great importance. There never had been a time since his inauguration when he was free from embarrassments, and when his burdens had not been oppressive.



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Among other things, the misunderstanding between him and Secretary Chase was anything but pleasant, Chase had proved himself the ablest finance minister that this country had produced after Alexander Hamilton. He was a man of remarkable dignity, integrity, and patriotism. He was not vain, but he was conscious both of his services and his abilities. And he was always inclined to underrate Lincoln, whom he misunderstood. He also had presidential aspirations. After three years' successful service he did not like to have his suggestions disregarded, and was impatient under any interference with his appointments. To say the least, his relations with the President were strained. Annoyed and vexed with some appointments of importance, he sent in his resignation, accompanied with a petulant letter. Lincoln, on its receipt, drove to the Secretary's house, handed back to him his letter, and persuaded him to reconsider his resignation. But it is difficult to mend a broken jar. The same trouble soon again occurred in reference to the appointment in New York of an assistant-treasurer by Mr. Chase, which the President, having no confidence in the appointee, could not accept; on which the Secretary again resigned, and Lincoln at once accepted his resignation, with these words: "Of all I have said in commendation of your ability and fidelity, I have nothing to unsay; and yet you and I have reached a point of mutual embarrassment in our official relations, which it seems cannot be overcome or longer sustained consistently with the public service."

Mr. Chase, however, did not long remain unemployed. On the death of Chief Justice Taney, in October, 1864, Mr. Lincoln appointed him to the head of the Supreme Court,—showing how little he cherished resentment, and how desirous he was to select the best men for all responsible positions, whether he personally liked them or not. Even when an able man had failed in one place, Lincoln generally found use for his services in another,—witness the gallant exploits of Burnside, Hooker, and Meade, after they had retired from the head of the Army of the Potomac. As a successor to Mr. Chase in the Treasury, the President, to the amazement of the country, selected Governor Tod of Ohio, who wisely declined the office. The next choice fell on Senator Wm. Pitt Fessenden, who reluctantly assumed an office which entailed such heavy responsibilities and hard work, but who made in it a fine record for efficiency. It was no slight thing to be obliged to raise one hundred millions of dollars every month for the expense of the war.

While General Grant lay apparently idle in his trenches before Petersburg, the presidential election of 1864 took place, and in spite of the unpopular draft of five hundred thousand men in July, and a summer and Autumn of severe fighting both East and West, Mr. Lincoln was elected. There had been active and even acrimonious opposition, but who could compete with him? At this time his extraordinary fitness for the highest office in the gift of the nation was generally acknowledged, and the early prejudices against him had mostly passed away. He neither sought nor declined the re-election.

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His second inaugural address has become historical for its lofty sentiments and political wisdom. It was universally admired, and his memorable words sunk into every true American heart. Said he:—

“Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may soon pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn by the lash shall be paid with another drawn by the sword,—as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, ‘The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.’” And, as showing his earnest conscientiousness, these familiar words: “With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and orphans; to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.” The eloquence of this is surpassed only by his own short speech at the dedication of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg, November 19, 1863, which threw into the shade the rhetoric of the greatest orator of his time, and stands—unstudied as it was—probably the most complete and effective utterance known in this century.

That immortal inaugural address, in March, 1865;—so simple and yet so eloquent, expresses two things in Mr. Lincoln’s character to be especially noted: first, the tenderness and compassion, blended with stern energy and iron firmness of will, which shrank from bloodshed and violence, yet counted any sacrifice of blood and treasure as of little account in comparison with the transcendent blessing of national union and liberty; and, secondly, the change which it would appear gradually took place in his mind in reference to Divine supervision in the affairs of men and nations.

I need not dwell on the first, since nothing is more unquestionable than his abhorrence of all unnecessary bloodshed, or of anything like vengeance, or punishment of enemies, whether personal or political. His leniency and forgiveness were so great as to be denounced by some of his best friends, and by all political fanatics. And this leniency and forgiveness were the more remarkable, since he was not demonstrative in his affections and friendships. From his judicial temper, and the ascendancy of his intellectual faculties over passion and interest, he was apparently cold in his nature, and impassive in view of all passing events, to such a degree that his humanity seemed to be based on a philosophy very much akin to that of Marcus Aurelius. His sympathies were keen, however, and many a distressed woman had cause for gratitude to him for interference with the stern processes of army discipline in time of war, much to the indignation of the civil or military martinets.



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In regard to the change in his religious views, this fact is more questionable, but attested by all who knew him, and by most of his biographers. As a lawyer in Springfield his religious views, according to his partner and biographer Herndon, were extremely liberal, verging upon those advanced theories which Volney and Thomas Paine advocated, even upon atheism itself. As he grew older he became more discreet as to the expression of his religious opinions. Judge Davis, who knew him well, affirms that he had no faith, in the Christian sense, but only in laws, principles, cause and effect,—that is, he had no belief in a personal God. No religion seemed to find favor with him except that of a practical and rationalistic order. He never joined a church, and was sceptical of the divine origin of the Bible, still more of what is called providential agency in this world. But when the tremendous responsibilities of his office began to press upon his mind, and the terrible calamities he deplored, but could not avert, stirred up his soul in anguish and sadness, then the recognition of the need of assistance higher than that of man, for the guidance of this great nation in its unparalleled trials, became apparent in all his utterances. When he said, “as God gives us to see the right,” he meant, if he meant anything, that wisdom to act in trying circumstances is a gift, distinct from what is ordinarily learned from experience or study. This gift, we believe, he earnestly sought.

It must have been a profound satisfaction to Mr. Lincoln that he lived to see the total collapse of the rebellion,—the fall of Richmond, the surrender of Lee, and the flight of Jefferson Davis,—the complete triumph of the cause which it was intrusted to him to guard. How happy he must have been to see that the choice he made of a general-in-chief in the person of Ulysses Grant had brought the war to a successful close, whatever the sacrifices which this great general found it necessary to make to win ultimate success! What a wonder it is that Mr. Lincoln, surrounded with so many dangers and so many enemies, should have lived to see the completion of the work for which he was raised up! No life of ease or luxury or exultation did he lead after he was inaugurated,—having not even time to visit the places where his earlier life was passed; for him there were no triumphal visits to New York and Boston,—no great ovations anywhere; his great office brought him only hard and unceasing toil, which taxed all his energies.

It was while seeking a momentary relaxation from his cares and duties, but a few weeks after his second inauguration, that he met his fate at the hands of the assassin, from peril of whose murderous designs no great actor on the scene of mortal strife and labor can be said to be free. All that a grateful and sorrowing nation could do was done in honor of his services and character. His remains were carried across the land to their last resting-place in Illinois, through our largest cities, with a funeral pageantry unexampled in the history of nations; and ever since, orators have exhausted language in their encomiums of his greatness and glory.

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Some think that Lincoln died fortunately for his fame,—that had he lived he might have made mistakes, especially in the work of reconstruction, which would have seriously affected his claim as a great national benefactor.

On the other hand, had he lived, he might have put the work of reconstruction on a basis which would have added to his great services to the country. The South had no better friend than he, and he was incapable of animosity or revenge. Certain it is that this work of reconstruction requires even yet the greatest patriotism and a marvellous political wisdom. The terrible fact that five millions of free negroes are yet doomed to ignorance, while even the more intelligent and industrious have failed to realize the ideals of citizenship, makes the negro question still one of paramount importance in the South. The great question whether they shall enjoy the right of suffrage seems to be disposed of for the present; but the greater problem of their education must be solved. The subject is receiving most serious consideration, and encouraging progress is already making in the direction of their general and industrial training: but they are fast increasing; their labor is a necessity; and they must be educated to citizenship, both in mind and in morals, or the fairest portion of our country will find their presence a continuous menace to peace and prosperity.

These questions it was not given to Mr. Lincoln to consider. He died prematurely as a martyr. Nothing consecrates a human memory like martyrdom. Nothing so effectually ends all jealousies, animosities, and prejudices as the assassin's dagger. If Caesar had not been assassinated it is doubtful if even he, the greatest man of all antiquity, could have bequeathed universal empire to his heirs. Lincoln's death unnerved the strongest mind, and touched the heart of the nation with undissembled sadness and pity. From that time no one has dared to write anything derogatory to his greatness. That he was a very great man no one now questions.

It is impossible, however, for any one yet to set him in the historical place, which, as an immortal benefactor, he is destined to occupy. All speculation as to his comparative rank is worse than useless. Time effects wonderful changes in human opinions. There are some people in these days who affect to regard Washington as commonplace, as the lawyers of Edinburgh at one time regarded Sir Walter Scott, because he made no effort to be brilliant in after-dinner speeches. There are others who, in the warmth of their innocent enthusiasm, think that Lincoln's fame will go on increasing until, in the whole Eastern world, among the mountains of Thibet, on the shores of China and Japan, among the jungles of India, in the wilds of darkest Africa, in the furthestmost islands of the sea, his praises will be sung as second to no political benefactor that the world has seen. As all exaggerations provoke antagonism, it is wisest not to compare him with any national idols, but leave him to the undisputed verdict of the best judges, that lie was one of the few immortals who will live in a nation's heart and the world's esteem from age to age. Is this not fame enough for a modest man, who felt his inferiority, in many respects, to those to whom he himself intrusted power?



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Lincoln's character is difficult to read, from its many-sided aspects. He rarely revealed to the same person more than a single side. His individuality was marvellous. "Let us take him," in the words of his latest good biographer, "as simply Abraham Lincoln, singular and solitary as we all see that he was. Let us be thankful if we can make a niche big enough for him among the world's heroes without worrying ourselves about the proportion it may bear to other niches; and there let him remain forever, lonely, as in his strong lifetime, impressive, mysterious, unmeasured, and unsolved."

One thing may be confidently affirmed of this man,—that he stands as a notable exemplar, in the highest grade, of the American of this century,—the natural development of the self-reliant English stock upon our continent. Lowell, in his "Commemoration Ode," has set forth Lincoln's greatness and this fine representative quality of his, in words that may well conclude our study of the man and of the first full epoch of American life:—

"Here was a type of the true elder race,
And one of Plutarch's men talked with us face to face.
I praise him not; it were too late;
And some innate weakness there must be
In him who condescends to victory
Such as the Present gives, and cannot wait,
Safe in himself as in a fate.
So always firmly he:
He knew to bide his time,
And can his fame abide,
Still patient in his simple faith sublime,
Till the wise years decide.
Great captains, with their guns and drums,
Disturb our judgment for the hour,
But at last silence comes;
These all are gone, and, standing like a tower,
Our children shall behold his fame,
The kindly earnest, brave, foreseeing man,
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,
New birth of our new soil, the first American."

AUTHORITIES.

The most voluminous of the Lives of Abraham Lincoln is that of Nicolay and Hay, which seems to be fair and candid without great exaggerations; but it is more a political and military history of the United States than a Life of Lincoln himself. Herndon's Life is probably the most satisfactory of the period before Lincoln's inauguration. Holland, Lamar, Stoddard, Arnold, and Morse have all written interesting biographies. See also Ford's History of Illinois, Greeley's American Conflict, Lincoln and Douglas Debates,



Lincoln's Speeches, published by the Century Co., Secretary Chase's Diary, Swinton's Army of the Potomac, Lives of Seward, McClellan, Garrison, and Grant, Grant's Autobiography, McClure's Lincoln and Men of War Times, Wilson's History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power.

ROBERT EDWARD LEE.

1807-1870.

THE SOUTHERN CONFEDERACY.

BY E. BENJAMIN ANDREWS, LL.D.



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Robert Edward Lee had perhaps a more illustrious traceable lineage than any American not of his family. His ancestor, Lionel Lee, crossed the English Channel with William the Conqueror. Another scion of the clan fought beside Richard the Lion-hearted at Acre in the Third Crusade. To Richard Lee, the great landowner on Northern Neck, the Virginia Colony was much indebted for royal recognition. His grandson, Henry Lee, was the grandfather of "Light-horse Harry" Lee, of Revolutionary fame, who was the father of Robert Edward Lee.

Robert E. Lee was born on Jan. 19, 1807, in Westmoreland County, Va., the same county that gave to the world George Washington and James Monroe. Though he was fatherless at eleven, the father's blood in him inclined him to the profession of arms, and when eighteen,—in 1825,—on an appointment obtained for him by General Andrew Jackson, he entered the Military Academy at West Point. He graduated in 1829, being second in rank in a class of forty-six. Among his classmates were two men whom one delights to name with him,—Ormsby M. Mitchell, later a general in the Federal army, and Joseph E. Johnston, the famous Confederate. Lee was at once made Lieutenant of Engineers, but, till the Mexican War, attained only a captaincy. This was conferred on him in 1838.

In 1831, Lee had been married to Miss Mary Randolph Custis, the grand-daughter of Mrs. George Washington. By this marriage he became possessor of the beautiful estate at Arlington, opposite Washington, his home till the Civil War. The union, blessed by seven children, was in all respects most happy.

In his prime, Lee was spoken of as the handsomest man in the army. He was about six feet tall, perfectly built, healthy, fond of outdoor life, enthusiastic in his profession, gentle, dignified, studious, broad-minded, and positively, though unobtrusively, religious. If he had faults, which those nearest him doubted, they were excess of modesty and excess of tenderness.

During the Mexican War, Captain Lee directed all the most important engineering operations of the American army,—a work vital to its wonderful success. Already, at the siege of Vera Cruz, General Scott mentioned him as having "greatly distinguished himself." He was prominent in all the operations thence to Cerro Gordo, where, in April, 1847, he was brevetted Major. Both at Contreras and at Churubusco he was credited with gallant and meritorious services. At the charge up Chapultepec, in which Joseph E. Johnston, George B. McClellan, George E. Pickett, and Thomas J. Jackson participated, Lee bore Scott's orders to all points until from loss of blood by a wound, and from the loss of two nights' sleep at the batteries, he actually fainted away in the discharge of his duty. Such ability and devotion brought him home from Mexico bearing the brevet rank of Colonel. General Scott had learned to think of him as "the greatest military genius in America."



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In 1852 Lee was made Superintendent of the West Point Military Academy. In 1855 he was commissioned Lieutenant-Colonel of Col. Albert Sidney Johnston's new cavalry regiment, just raised to serve in Texas. March, 1861, saw him Colonel of the First United States Cavalry. With the possible exception of the two Johnstons, he was now the most promising candidate for General Scott's position whenever that venerable hero vacated it, as he was sure to do soon.

On the initiative of Mississippi, a provisional Congress had met at Montgomery on Feb. 4, 1861, and created a provisional constitution for the Confederate States of America. By March 11 a permanent constitution was drafted, reproducing that of the United States, with certain modifications. Slavery and State-sovereignty received elaborate guarantees. Bounties and protective tariffs were absolutely forbidden. Cabinet members had seats in Congress. Parts of appropriation bills could be vetoed. The presidential term was six years, and a president could not be re-elected. This constitution, having been ratified by five or more legislatures, was set in play by the provisional Congress. Virginia on seceding was taken into the Confederacy, and the Confederate capital changed from Montgomery to Richmond.

Lee was a Virginian, and Virginia, about to secede and at length seceding, in most earnest tones besought her distinguished son to join her. It seemed to him the call of duty, and that call, as he understood it, was one which it was not in him to disobey. President Lincoln knew the value of the man, and sent Frank Blair to him to say that if he would abide by the Union he should soon command the whole active army. That would probably have meant his election, in due time, to the presidency of his country. "For God's sake, don't resign, Lee!" General Scott—himself a Virginian—is said to have pleaded. He replied: "I am compelled to; I cannot consult my own feelings in the matter." Accordingly, on April 20, 1861, three days after Virginia passed its ordinance of secession, Lee sent to Simon Cameron, Secretary of War, his resignation as an officer in the United States army.

Few at the North were able to understand the Secession movement, most denying that a man at once thoughtful and honorable could join in it. So centralized had the North by 1861 become in all social and economic particulars, that centrality in government was taken as a matter of course. Representing this, the Nation was deemed paramount to any State. Governmental sovereignty, like travel and trade, had come to ignore State lines. The whole idea and feeling of State-sovereignty, once as potent North as South, had vanished and been forgotten.

Far otherwise at the South, where, owing to the great size of States and to the paucity of railways and telegraphs, interstate association was not yet a force. Each State, being in square miles ample enough for an empire, retained to a great extent the consciousness of an independent nation. The State was near and palpable; the central government seemed a vague and distant thing. Loyalty was conceived as binding one primarily to one's own State.



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It is a misconception to explain this feeling—for in most cases it was feeling rather than reasoned conviction—by Calhoun's teaching. It resulted from geography and history, and, these factors working as they did, would have been what it was had Calhoun never lived.

With reflecting Southerners Calhoun's message no doubt had some confirmatory effect, because, historically and also in a certain legal aspect, Calhoun's view was very impressive. That the overwhelming majority of the early Americans who voted to ratify the national Constitution supposed it to be simply a compact between the States cannot be questioned, nor could ratification ever have been effected had any considerable number believed otherwise. The view that a State wishing to withdraw from the Union might for good cause do so was the prevalent one till long after the War of 1812, yielding, thereafter, at the North, less to Webster's logic than to the social and economic development just mentioned.

At the South it did not thus give way. There the propriety of secession was never aught but a question of sufficient grievance, to be settled by each State for itself, speaking through a majority of its voters. When the Secession ordinances actually passed, many individual voters in each State opposed on the ground that the occasion was insufficient; but such opponents, of whom Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia was one, nearly to a man felt bound, as good citizens, to acquiesce in the decision of their States and even to uphold this in arms.

Whether voting secession or accepting it on State mandate, Southern men naturally resented being called traitors or rebels. By the Websterian conception of the nature of our government they were so, but by Calhoun's they were simply acting out the Constitution in the best of faith. No recognized arbiter or criterion existed to determine between the two views. Massachusetts denounced seceding South Carolina as a traitor: South Carolina berated Massachusetts, seeking to impose the Union on the South against its will, as a criminal aggressor. An intelligent referee with no bias for either must have pronounced the judgments equally just.

These considerations explain how Colonel Lee, certainly one of the most conscientious men who ever lived, felt bound in duty and honor to side with seceding Virginia, though he doubted the wisdom of her course.

Lee was from the first Virginia's military hero and hope, but he did not at once become such to the Confederacy at large. He did not immediately take the field. Till after Bull Run he remained in Richmond, President Jefferson Davis's adviser and right hand man in organizing the forces incessantly arriving and pushing to the front.



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In his brief West Virginia campaign, where he first came in contact with McClellan, being looked upon as an invader rather than a friend, Lee had scant success. Some therefore called him a “mere historic name,” “Letcher’s pet,” a “West Pointer,” no fighting general. He went to South Carolina to supervise the repair and building of coast fortifications there, and it was no doubt in large part owing to his engineering skill then applied that Charleston, whose sea-door the Federals incessantly pounded from the beginning, probably wasting there more powder and iron than at all other points together, was captured only at the end of the war and then from the land side. In March, 1862, General Lee again became President Davis’s military adviser.

But though thus in relative obscurity, Lee was not forgotten. President Davis knew his man and knew that his hour would come. When, in May, 1862, the vast Federal army stood almost at Richmond’s gates, Albert Sidney Johnston being dead and Joseph E. Johnston lying wounded, the Confederacy lifted up its voice and called Robert E. Lee to assume command upon the Chickahominy front. This he did on June 1, 1862.

The Confederates’ ill-success on the second day of the Fair Oaks battle was to them a blessing in disguise. It put McClellan at his ease, giving Lee time to accomplish three extremely important ends. He could rest and recruit his army, fortify the south of Richmond with stout works, a detail which had not been attended to before, and send Stonewall Jackson down the valley of Virginia, so frightening the authorities in Washington that they dared not re-enforce McClellan.

Brilliant victory resulted. Leaving only 25,000 men between his capital and his foe, Lee, on June 26, threw the rest across the upper Chickahominy and attacked the Federal right. Fighting terribly at Mechanicsville and Gaines’s Mill, A.P. Hill and Jackson, the latter having made forced marches from the Shenandoah to join in the movement, pushed back Fitz-John Porter’s corps across the Chickahominy, sundering McClellan entirely from his York River base. The Union army was now nearer Richmond than the bulk of Lee’s, which was beyond the Chickahominy, at that time none too easily crossed. Had McClellan been Lee or Grant or Sherman he would have made a dash for Richmond. But he was McClellan, and Lee knew perfectly well that he would attempt nothing so bold. Retreat was the Northerner’s thought, and he did retreat—in good order, and hitting back venomously from White Oak Swamp and Malvern Hill—till he had reached Harrison’s Landing upon the James, where gunboats sheltered and supply-ships fed his men.

Lee felt disappointed with the seven days’ fighting in that he had not crushed McClellan. He had, however, forced him to raise the siege of Richmond and to retreat thirty or forty miles. The Confederacy breathed freely again, and its gallant chieftain began to be famous.



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The new leader had thus far given only hints of his fertile strategy. McClellan's army was still but two days' march from Richmond. Its front was perfectly fortified,—McClellan was an engineer; gunboats protected its flanks. Lee—an engineer, too—knew that to attack McClellan there would be too costly; yet McClellan must be removed, and this before he could be re-enforced for an advance. His removal was accomplished.

General Pope was threatening Richmond from the North. The government expected great things of him. In a pompous manifesto he had given out that retreating days were over, that his headquarters were to be in the saddle, and, that, as he swept on to Richmond, where he evidently expected to arrive in the course of a few days, his difficulty was going to be not to whip his enemy but to get at him in order to do so.

When Pope wrote that manifesto he knew many men, but there was one man whom he did not yet know. It was Stonewall Jackson, the most unique and interesting character rolled into notice by those tempestuous years, unless Nathan Bedford Forrest is the exception. Like the great Moslem warrior,

“Terrible he rode, alone,
With his Yemen sword for aid;
Ornament it carried none
Save the notches on its blade.”

Jackson was an intensely religious man. Unlike many good soldiers he wore his piety into camp and on to the battlefield, and would not have hesitated to offer prayer to the God of battles where every one of his thirty thousand men could see and hear. And all those soldiers believed in the efficacy of their commander's prayers. Jackson was also a stern disciplinarian. If men in any way sought to evade duty, provost-marshals were ordered to bring them into line, if necessary at the pistol's point. In consequence, when the day of battle came, there was not a man in the corps who did not feel sure that if he shirked duty Stonewall Jackson would shoot him and God Almighty would damn him. This helped to render Jackson's thirty thousand perhaps the most efficient fighting-machine which had appeared upon the battlefield since the Ironsides of Oliver Cromwell.

Pope was destined to make Jackson's acquaintance speedily—and rather unceremoniously, for Jackson was ill-mannered enough, instead of passing in his card at Pope's front door, as etiquette required, to present it at the kitchen-gate. Before Pope was aware, his enterprising opponent, whose war motto was that one man behind your enemy is worth ten in his front, had gone around through Thoroughfare Gap to Manassas Junction and planted himself (August 26, 1862) square across the only railroad that ran between Pope's army and Washington. Pope should have volted and struck Jackson like lightning before the rest of Lee's army could come up; but two considerations made him slow. One was that Longstreet's wing of Lee's army was now

rather close in his front, and the other, mortification at turning back after having started southward with such a blare of trumpets.



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Brave Confederate soldiers who were at Cedar Mountain, Second Bull Run, and Chantilly, bear witness that the blood Pope's men shed in those battles ran red. But dazed, tired, lacking confidence, and at last on short rations, and faced or flanked by Lee's whole army, while but part of McClellan's was at hand, they fought either to fall or to retreat again.

No one witnessing it can ever forget the consternation which prevailed in the fortifications about Washington the night after the battle of Chantilly. The writer's own troop, manning Fort Ward, a few miles out from Alexandria, stood to its heavy guns every moment of that dismal night, gazing frontwards for a foe. The name "Stonewall Jackson" was on each lip. At the break of dawn, when to weary soldiers trees and fences easily look "pokerish," brave artillerists swore that they could see the dreaded warrior charging down yonder hill heading a division, and in almost agonizing tones begged leave to "load for action."

Lee probably made a mistake in entering Maryland after the battle of Chantilly, and his report implies that he would not at this time have done so for merely military reasons. But, having crossed the Potomac, he did well to fight at Sharpsburg (Antietam, Sept. 17, 1862) before recrossing. This was well, because it was bold. Moreover, by bruising the Federals there he delayed them, getting ample time for ensconcing his army on the Rappahannock front for the winter.

Also for the battle of Fredericksburg (Dec. 13, 1862) Lee deserves no special praise. Doubtless his unerring engineer eye picked the fighting-line, and his already great prestige inspired his brave army. But that was all. The pluck of his officers and men and Burnside's incapacity did the rest.

Never did a general carry to battle a better plan of battle than Fighting Joe Hooker's at Chancellorsville (May 2-3, 1863), and rarely has one marched from a battle that had proved for his own side a more lamentable fiasco. Taking the offensive with vast advantage in numbers, he proposed to hold Lee in place with one of his wings while he thrust the other behind Lee's left, between the Confederate army and Richmond. But he had started a game at which two could play and had challenged a more deft and daring gamester than himself. Early divining his purpose, Lee, leaving a small part of his force to engage Hooker's left, with the rest vigorously assumed the counter-offensive, sending Jackson, as usual, around Hooker's extreme right. Both movements completely succeeded.

Now appeared the folly of promoting a general to the headship of a great army simply because of his fighting-quality and his success with a division or a corps. Attacked in front and routed on his flank, Hooker did exactly what all who knew him would have taken oath that he would never do. Instead of going straight ahead with vengeance and bidding his far left do the same, he ordered and executed a retreat to his old position north of the Rappahannock.



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There were those who laid this disaster to Hooker's intemperance. President Lincoln probably had such a suspicion, when, sending General Hooker west to join General Sherman, he admonished him in passing through Kentucky "to steer clear of Bourbon County." Though Hooker was not a total-abstainer, Chancellorsville is not to be explained by that fact any more than Jubal A. Early's defeat by Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley is referrible to his use of apple-brandy.

Hooker did not create his own defeat, as Burnside may, with little exaggeration, be said to have done at Fredericksburg. Lee defeated him, and deserved the immense fame which the victory brought. No wonder he began to plan for the offensive again. Soon the ever-memorable Gettysburg campaign was begun.

The details of this campaign, even those of the battle itself (July 1-3, 1863), we cannot give here. Nor need we. The world knows them:—the first day, with Hill's and Ewell's success, costing the Union the life of its gallant General Reynolds, commanding the First Corps; the second day, when, back and forth by the Devil's Den, Hood on one side and Dan Sickles on the other, fought their men as soldiers had never fought on the American continent before; and the third day, when for an hour a hundred cannon on Seminary Ridge belched hell-fire at a hundred cannon on Cemetery Ridge, prelude, in the natural key, to Pickett's death-defying charge.

"A thousand fell where Kemper led,
A thousand died where Garnett bled.
In blinding flame and strangling smoke
The remnant through the batteries broke
And crossed the works with Armistead."

The Union army was for the first time fighting a great battle on Union soil. The homes of many who were engaged stood within sound of the Gettysburg cannon. As the Confederates did in many other engagements, the Federals here felt that they were repelling an invader, and they fought accordingly, with a grim iron resisting power which they had never displayed before.

Great praise was due to General Hancock, and perhaps still more to General Howard, for early perceiving the strength of Cemetery Hill as a defensible position. On the first day, after General Reynolds had fallen at his post of duty with the First Corps, General Doubleday, next in command, was on the point of ordering a retreat, the attack seeming too fearful to be withstood. But Howard, coming up with the Eleventh Corps and assuming command of the field, overruled Doubleday, and, by enforcing a most stubborn resistance against Hill's and Ewell's desperate onsets, probably saved Cemetery Hill from capture that evening.



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So far as has ever yet been made apparent, every plan which Lee formed for the battle of Gettysburg, every order which he gave, was wise and right. We do not except even his management on the third day. It is easy to find fault with dispositions when they have failed of happy results. Men have said that instead of attacking in front on that day Lee should have drawn Ewell from the left and thrown him to Longstreet's right, manoeuvring Meade out of his position. But in this matter, too, Lee's judgment was probably good. Changing his plan of attack would have been a partial confession of defeat, to some extent disheartening his men. The Union Sixth Corps, fresh and free, General John Sedgwick at its head, was sure to have pounced on any troops seeking to trouble Meade's left, and, had Meade been successfully flanked and forced back, he would have retired to Pipe Creek and been stronger than ever.

Of course, Pickett should never have been sent forward alone. You could wade the Atlantic as easily as he, unsupported, could go beyond that stone wall. But, from all one can learn, Lee was in fact not responsible for Pickett's lack of support, although in almost guilty nobleness of spirit he assumed the responsibility, and silently rested under the imputation of it till his death.

Had Lee's great subordinates, Ewell at nightfall on the first day, and Longstreet on the other two days, seconded him with the alacrity and devotion usually displayed by them, or had Stonewall Jackson been still alive and in the place of either of these generals, the issue of the battle would almost to a certainty have been very different from what it was. A soldier who had often followed to victory the enterprising Graham of Claverhouse, but, under a weaker leader, saw a battle wavering, cried out, "O for one hour of Dundee!" So must Lee often have sighed for Stonewall, the loss of whom at Chancellorsville made that, for the Confederacy, a sort of Pyrrhic victory.

Lee's skill at Gettysburg has been questioned in that he fought his army upon the longer line, the big fishhook described by his position lying outside the little one formed by the Federal army. But Lee fought on the outer line also at Second Bull Run, winning one of the neatest victories in modern warfare.

John Codman Ropes, the well-known military critic, says of this battle: "It would be hard to find a better instance of that masterly comprehension of the actual condition of things which marks a great general than was exhibited in General Lee's allowing our formidable attack, in which more than half the Federal army was taking part, to be fully developed and to burst upon the exhausted troops of Stonewall Jackson, while Lee, relying upon the ability of that able soldier to maintain his position, was maturing and arranging for the great attack on our left flank by the powerful corps of Longstreet."



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In Prussia's war with Austria in 1866, Von Moltke's plan at the battle of Sadowa, where he splendidly triumphed, was in the same respect a close imitation of Lee's at Gettysburg. The Prussians occupied the outer fish-hook line, the Austrians the inner. When the pickets closed in the morning Von Moltke saluted King William and said: "Your Majesty will to-day win not only the battle but the campaign." At noon this did not appear possible. Prince Frederick Charles's corps were withering under the hottest artillery fire of the century, save that at Gettysburg, just three years earlier to the hour. It seemed as if in fifteen minutes they must give way. But, hark! What means that cheering on the left? New cannons boom and the Austrian fire slackens! Von Moltke knows perfectly well what it means. The Crown-Prince has arrived with his fresh corps. He has stormed the Heights of Chlum—the Culp's Hill of that battlefield. He enfilades the whole Austrian line. Benedek is beaten; on to Vienna; the war is ended!

It was with a heavy heart that General Lee ordered his brave men southward again—a heart made heavier by many a stinging criticism against him in the Southern press. The resolution that bore him up at this crisis was morally sublime. He could not hope to strengthen his army more. For a time he had to weaken it by sending Longstreet west to assist Bragg in fighting the battle of Chickamauga. Clothing, rations, animals, and forage, as well as men, were increasingly scarce. The South was exhausted much sooner than any expected, having greatly overestimated its wealth by taking exports and imports for gauge. Doubtful if ever before was so large and populous a region so far from self-sustaining. The force against Lee, on the other hand, was daily becoming stronger.

Till Gettysburg, Lee had toyed with the Army of the Potomac—not because the rank and file of that army was at fault, and not mainly because of its generals' inability, but mostly because of political interference with its operations. The great and revered President Lincoln, with all his powers, was not a military man. No more was Secretary Stanton. They secured the best military aid they could. From an early period General Halleck—"Old Brains," men called him because of his immense military information—was their constant adviser; and though he was a scholar rather than a genius, he could doubtless have saved them many an error had they heeded his counsel instead of civilian clamor.

How impressively did not the Civil War teach that fine military scholarship alone, while it may greatly add to a general's efficiency, cannot make a true military leader! Compare Halleck with Grant or Sherman! The Creoles of Louisiana considered their Beauregard the *ne plus ultra* military genius of the South. One of them was once asked his opinion of General Lee. He replied in his broken English: "O, Gen Lee a ve'y good gen'l, ve'y good gen'l indeed; Gen Beaugar speak ve'y fav'ble of Gen Lee." So, at last, did Halleck speak "ve'y fav'ble" of Grant.



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But Gettysburg convinced Lee that he could toy with the Potomac army no longer, and this was more than ever impossible after Grant took command. Then Greek met Greek, and the death grapple began. At the Wilderness, at Spottsylvania, and most mercilessly of all at Cold Harbor, Grant drove his colossal battering-ram against Lee's gray wall, only to find it solid as Gibraltar.

This struggle tested both commanders' mettle to the utmost. At the end of the hammering campaign, after losing men enough to form an army as large as Lee's, Grant's van was full twice as far from Richmond as McClellan's had been two years before. Not once was Lee flanked, duped, or surprised. As always hitherto, so now, his darling mode of defence was offence,—to fight,—Grant's every blow being met with another before it hit. Only once were Lee's lines forced straight back to stay. Even then, at the Spottsylvania "bloody angle," the ground he lost hardly sufficed to graveyard the Union men killed in getting it. In swinging round to Petersburg, and again at the springing of the Petersburg Mine, Grant thought himself sure to make enormous gains; but Lee's insight into his purposes, and lightning celerity in checkmating these, foiled both movements, giving the mine operation, moreover, the effect of a deadly boomerang.

Spite of all this, the end of the Confederacy was in sight from the moment of Grant's arrival at Petersburg. During the three years that Lee and his indomitable aides and soldiers had been holding at bay brave and perfectly appointed armies vastly outnumbering them, and twice boldly assuming the offensive, with disaster indeed, yet with glory, two other grand campaigns had been going on wherein the Confederacy had fared much worse. The capture of New Orleans, of Island No. Ten, and of Vicksburg, had let the Father of Waters again run "unvexed to the sea." A second line of operations *via* Murfreesborough, Chattanooga, Atlanta, and Savannah, had divided the Confederacy afresh. Sherman's army, which had achieved this, began on Feb. 1, 1865, to march northward from Savannah.

Bravery in camp and field and deathless endurance at home could not take the place of bread. The blockade was, to be sure, for some time extensively evaded, admitting English wares of all sorts in great quantities. But in no long time the blockade tightened. Moreover, comparatively little cotton was raised which could in any event have been exported. Credit failing, imports, if any, had to be paid for in money. This, of course, was soon spent, and then importation ceased. Privateers destroyed but could bring nothing home.

As the war progressed, Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee, Louisiana, and with the fall of Vicksburg the whole immense Trans-Mississippi tract, were lost to the Confederacy. Sherman's march isolated also Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia.



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The dearth of necessaries, save corn and bacon, became desperate. Salt and wheat bread were rare luxuries. In 1864 a suit of jean cost \$600, a spool of cotton \$30, a pound of bacon \$15. It should, of course, be borne in mind that these high prices in part represented the depreciation of Confederate paper money. Drastic drafting and the arming of negroes could avail little for lack of accoutrements and food. Thus Lee's capitulation at Appomattox (April 9, 1865) represents less a defeat of his army than the breakdown of the Confederacy at large. So true and impressive is this that reflection upon it makes the last year of Lee's commandership seem peculiarly glorious. Only by rarest genius, surely, were those dazzling tactics, that lynx-eyed, sleepless watchfulness, that superhuman patience and superhuman valor, protracted, incessant for a whole year, keeping intact, victorious, and full of inspiration that gray line, ever longer, ever thinner, of men outnumbered two, then three, and at last five to one, whose food and clothing grew scantier with the days, while the bounties of a continent replenished their opponents,—keeping that tenuous line unbroken till very starvation unfitted soldiers to handle muskets which must be used empty if at all, because ammunition was spent! And when we recall that all this was accomplished not because the Union army was cowardly, ill-led, or asleep, but in spite of Grant's relentless push and an ably led army as brave, wary, and determined as ever marched: let us ask critics versed in the history of war, if books tell of generalship more complete than this!

Lee's military conduct revealed, it must be admitted, one weakness, that of undue leniency toward slack, dilatory, and opinionated subordinates. This was, however, only in part Lee's personal fault. Mainly it was the military counterpart of the rope-of-sand infirmity inherent in a Confederacy which in every possible way deified the individual State and snubbed the central power. Without jeopardizing the Confederacy, Lee could not at Gettysburg deal with Longstreet as Grant did with Warren at Five Forks, or as Sherman did with Palmer in North Carolina. It seems that Lee's orders to his main subordinates were habitually of the nature of requests. Yet what obedience was not accorded him in spite of this!

Most striking among the characteristics of General Lee which made him so successful was his exalted and unmatched excellence as a man, his unselfishness, sweetness, gentleness, patience, love of justice, and general elevation of soul. Lee much loved to quote Sir William Hamilton's words: "On earth nothing great but man: in man nothing great but mind." He always added, however: "In mind nothing great save devotion to truth and duty." Though a soldier, and at last very eminent as a soldier, he retained from the beginning to the end of his career the entire temper and character of an ideal civilian. He did not sink the man in the military man. He had all a soldier's virtues, the "chevalier without fear and without reproach," but he was glorified by a whole galaxy of excellences which soldiers too often lack. He was pure of speech and of habit, never intemperate, never obscene, never profane, never irreverent. In domestic life he was an absolute model. Lofty command did not make him vain.



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The Southern army had one prominent officer with a high ecclesiastical title, the Rt. Rev. Lieutenant-General Leonidas Polk, D.D., LL.D., Bishop of Louisiana, commanding a corps in Bragg's army. He was killed in battle at Pine Mountain, Ga., during Sherman's advance on Atlanta. Stonewall Jackson was so famed for his rather obtrusive though awfully real piety that men named him the Havelock of the army. But none who knew the three will call Lee less a Christian than either of the others. He prayed daily for his enemies in arms, and no word of hate toward the North ever escaped his tongue or his pen. He had the faith and devotion of a true crusader. His letters breathe the spirit of a better earth than this. Collected into a volume, they would make an invaluable book of devotional literature. No wonder officers and men passionately loved such a commander, glad, at his bidding, to crowd where the fight was thickest and death the surest.

Sir Thomas Malory's words are not inaptly applied to Lee: "Ah, Sir Lancelot, thou wert head of all Christian knights; thou wert never matched of earthly knight's hand; and thou wert the courtliest knight that ever bare shield; and thou wert the kindest man that ever strake with sword; and thou wert the goodliest person that ever came among press of knights; and thou wert the meekest man and the gentlest that ever ate in hall among ladies; and thou wert the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in rest."

Exquisitely appropriate is also Professor Trent's comparison of Lee "with Belisarius and Turenne and Marlborough and Moltke, on the one hand, and on the other with Callicratidas, and Saint Louis, with the Chevalier Bayard and Sir Philip Sidney."

A remarkable trait of General Lee's military character was his tireless and irresistible energy. While one whom he deemed a foe of his State remained on her soil, he could not rest. From the moment he took command of the Army of Northern Virginia, all was action in that army. During the nine weeks after A.P. Hill struck Mechanicsville that earthquake shock, how did not the war-map change! Richmond was set free; Washington was threatened. Lee whipped McClellan before Pope could help, then Pope before McClellan could help. The first evening at Gettysburg, Longstreet having impressively pointed out the strength of Meade's position on Cemetery Hill, Lee instantly replied, "If he is there in the morning, I shall attack him." The second morning of the Wilderness battle, Grant, obviously expecting to anticipate all movement upon the other side, ordered charge at five o'clock. Lee charged at half-past four. Grant was determined to reach Spottsylvania first, but there, too, Lee awaited him, having had some hours to rest. Prostrate and half-delirious in his tent one day during Grant's effort to flank him, he kept murmuring: "We must strike them; we must not let them pass without striking them." Longstreet was too slow for him, and so was even the ever-ready A.P. Hill. Years later, Lee's dying words were: "Tell Hill he *must* come up."



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To appreciate his cat-like agility, one must remember that Lee was the oldest general made famous by the war. It is thought that years accounted for Napoleon's refusal to fight the Old Guard at Borodino, as his ablest generals urged. Napoleon was then forty-three, eleven years younger than Lee was when our war began. It is to young Napoleon we must turn to find parallels for Lee's celerity. Second Bull Run and Chancellorsville may fitly be compared to Arcola and Rivoli. It has been observed that, like Napoleon, Lee avoided passive defence, seeming the assailant even when on the defensive. Like him, he was swift and terrible in availing himself of an enemy's mistakes. It can hardly be doubted that Lee's campaigns furnished more or less inspiration and direction for Von Moltke's immortal movements in 1866 and in 1870-71.

That Lee was brave need not be said. He was not as rash as Hood and Cleburne sometimes were. He knew the value of his life to the great cause, and, usually at least, did not expose himself needlessly. Prudence he had, but no fear. His resolution to lead the charge at the Bloody Angle—rashness for once—shows fearlessness. Tender-hearted as he was, Lee felt battle frenzy as hardly another great commander ever did. From him it spread like magnetism to his officers and men, thrilling all as if the chief himself were close by in the fray, shouting, "Now fight, my good fellows, fight!" Yet such was Lee's self-command that this dreadful ardor never carried him too far. Once, namely, at Fredericksburg, recovery from the fighting mood perhaps occurred too promptly. Some have thought this, suggesting that had the leash not been applied to the dogs of war so early, Burnside's retreat might have been made a rout.

But Lee possessed another order of courage infinitely higher and rarer than this,—the sort so often lacking even in generals who have served with utmost distinction in high subordinate places, when they are called to the sole and decisive direction of armies: he had that royal mettle, that preternatural decision of character, ever tempered with caution and wisdom, which leads a great commander, when true occasion arises, resolutely to give general battle, or to swing out away from his base upon a precarious but promising campaign. Here you have moral heroism; ordinary valor is more impulsive. A weaker man, albeit total stranger to fear, ready to lead his division or his corps into the very mouth of hell, if commanded, being set himself to direct an army, will be either rash or else too timid, or fidget from one extreme to the other, losing all.

Hooker began bravely at Chancellorsville, but soon grew faint and afraid. Hood says that Hardee's timidity lost him a great victory at Decatur, Ga., the day the Union General McPherson fell; and that Cheatham's, at Spring Hill, during his northward pursuit of Thomas, lost him another. Yet Hooker, Hardee, and Cheatham were men to whom personal fear was a meaningless phrase. Stonewall Jackson was personally no braver than they; it was his bravery of the higher sort that set him as a general so incomparably above them. The same high quality belonged to Grant and Sherman, and to Washington and Greene in the Revolutionary War.



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It was in this supreme kind of boldness that Robert Lee pre-eminently excelled. Cautious always, he still took risks and responsibilities which common generals would not have dared to take; and when he had assumed these, his mighty will forbade him to sink under the load. The braying of bitter critics, the obloquy of men who should have supported him, the shots from behind, dismayed him no more than did Burnside's cannon at Fredericksburg. On he pressed, stout as a Titan, relentless as fate. What time bravest hearts failed at victory's delay, this Dreadnaught rose to his best, and furnished courage for the whole Confederacy.

Lee's campaigns and battles "exhibit the triumph of profound intelligence, of calculation, and of well-employed force over numbers and disunited counsels."

Lee always manoeuvred; he never merely "pitched in." As he right-flanked McClellan, so both at Manassas and at Chantilly he right-flanked Pope,—all three times using for the work Jackson, the tireless and the terrible. At Second Bull Run, to show that he was no slave to one form of strategy, he muffled up Pope's left instead of his right, here using Longstreet. His tactics were as masterful as his strategy. At Second Bull Run, fearfully hammered by the noble Fifth Corps, that had fought like so many tigers at Gaines's Mill and Malvern Hill, even Stonewall Jackson cried to Lee for aid. Aid came, but not in men. Longstreet's cannon, cunningly planted to enfilade the Fifth Corps' front, shattered the Federals' attacking column and placed Stonewall at his ease.

Considering everything, his paucity of men and means, the necessity always upon him of reckoning with political as well as with military situations, and his success in holding even Grant at bay so long, Lee's masterful campaigns of 1862, 1863, 1864, and 1865 not only constitute him the foremost military virtuoso of his own land, but write his name high on the scroll of the greatest captains of history, beside those of Gustavus Adolphus, William of Orange, Tilly, Frederic the Great, Prince Eugene, Napoleon, Wellington, and Von Moltke.

In a sense, of course, the cause for which Lee fought was "lost;" yet a very great part of what he and his *confreres* sought, the war actually secured and assured. His cause was not "lost" as Hannibal's was, whose country, with its institutions, spite of his genius and devotion, utterly perished from the earth. Yet Hannibal is remembered more widely than Scipio. Were Lee in the same case with Hannibal, men would magnify his name as long as history is read. "Of illustrious men," says Thucydides, "the whole earth is the sepulchre. They are immortalized not alone by columns and inscriptions in their own lands; memorials to them rise in foreign countries as well,—not of stone, it may be, but unwritten, in the thoughts of posterity."

Lee's case resembles Cromwell's much more than Hannibal's. The *regime* against which Cromwell warred returned in spite of him; but it returned modified, involving all the reforms for which the chieftain had bled. So the best of what Lee drew sword for is here in our actual America, and, please God, shall remain here forever.



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Decisions of the United States Supreme Court since Secession give a sweep and a certainty to the rights of States and limit the central power in this Republic as had never been done before. The wild doctrines of Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens on these points are not our law. If the Union is perpetual, equally so is each State. The Republic is "an indestructible Union of indestructible States." If this part of our law had in 1861 received its present definition and emphasis, and if the Southern States had then been sure, come what might, of the freedom they actually now enjoy each to govern itself in its own way, even South Carolina might never have voted secession. And inasmuch as the war, better than aught else could have done, forced this phase of the Constitution out into clear expression, General Lee did not fight in vain. The essential good he wished has come, while the Republic, with its priceless benedictions to us all, remains intact. All Americans thus have part in Robert Lee, not only as a peerless man and soldier, but as the sturdy miner, sledge-hammering the rock of our liberties till it gave forth its gold. None are prouder of his record than those who fought against him, who, while recognizing the purity of his motive, thought him in error in going from under the Stars and Stripes. It is likely that more American hearts day by day think lovingly of Lee than of any other Civil War celebrity, save Lincoln alone. And his praise will increase.

It was thoroughly characteristic of Lee that he would not after the war leave the country, as a few eminent Confederates did, and also that he refused all mere titular positions with high salaries, several of which were urged on him out of consideration for his character and fame. He was, however, persuaded to accept in 1865 the presidency of Washington College, at Lexington, Va., an institution founded on gifts made by Washington, and at present known as Washington and Lee University. In this position the great man spent his remaining years, joining refinement and dignity to usefulness, and revered by all who came within the charmed circle of his influence. Since 1863 he had suffered more or less with rheumatism of the heart, and from the middle of 1869 was never quite strong. Spite of this, with the exception of brief holidays, he performed all his duties till Sept. 28, 1870, when, at his family tea-table as he stood to say grace;—it was his wont to say grace before meat and to stand in doing so,—he was stricken, had to sit, then be helped to his bed. He never rose, though languishing a number of days. He died at nine in the morning, Oct. 12, 1870. *Ave, pia anima!*

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