PROFILES IN COURAGE

by

JOHN F. KENNEDY

President of the United States
of America

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

THE ROLES OF COURAGE and conscience in politics are points of enduring interest and keen debate in every society of free men Numerous dramas of conscience in conflict with popular opinion have been played upon the floor of the United States Senate and President Kennedy, in a book entitled *Profiles in Courage*, has told the stories of eight Senators who had been protagonists in such dramas

Profiles in Courage was written in 1956 when Mr Kennedy, a Senator himself at that time, was faced with the demand for unusual courage He had just survived spinal surgery during which his life was in jeopardy The rehabilitation of his health and his career depended upon courage and patient determination Not content to wait idly through the long months of convalescence, Mr Kennedy set about exhaustive research into the history of the office in which he was then serving Particularly he sought out and set down in his book the qualities of character and the circumstances which inspired greatness and nobility in several of his predecessors in the office of U S Senator

This small book presents a selection from *Profiles in Courage* of three of the stories of eight courageous men which President Kennedy has told. The eight profiles in terms of time span most of the history of the United States, from 1803 to 1948. The three Senators who are represented here—Daniel Webster, Sam Houston and Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar—were contemporaries. Their careers were inextricably interwoven into the vivid fabric of America's bitter civil strife of the mid-Nineteenth Century.

Their collective chronicle encompasses the chronology of the greatest test of the American Democracy. Webster personifies the sober and urgent hour of compromise to forestall the approaching crisis. Houston embodies the clear and resolute moment of resistance to dissolution and secession. Lamar's was the tedious and trying era of reconstruction of the Union

The personal dramas of these three public men compound the saga of a whole people's passage through agony The epic of mounting tensions and tempers, the panic of withdrawal and fratricide, the patient restoration of reason and order belonged to countless men and women of the United States and the short-lived Confederate States. The trials and the moral triumphs of Webster, Houston and Lamar were the ordeals and victories of many unknown men. The stories of these three are better remembered because their voices were more widely heard and their courage of a grander degree, as a result of the time and place in which they spoke.

Giants of courage march through the three stories retold here by President Kennedy. The proportions of greatness are not exaggerated. The profiles are minutely honest and accurate and true to the details and dimensions of life. But, the real drama of these three stories will be seen to be the preservation and continuity of a principle which is the strength of democratic government: a man under free government possesses the inalienable prerogative to stand alone. In government which is truly by the people, the state may not deprive the public man of either his voice or his position in public councils. Only free and open election by the people can do that. In a democratic society, the public man has the uncontested option to risk his reputation and his career in the advocacy of unpopular aims and principles. The State is content to accept the test of validity.

And under free government, the test of validity—as with Webster, Houston and Lamar—rests with the people and with time.

COURAGE AND POLITICS

I AM NOT SO SURE, after nearly ten years of living and working in the midst of "successful democratic politicians,' that they are all "insecure and intimidated men"

I am convinced that the complication of public business and the competition for the public's attention have obscured innumerable acts of political courage—large and small—performed almost daily in the Senate Chamber

I am convinced that the decline—if there has been a decline—has been less in the Senate than in the public's appreciation of the art of politics, of the nature and necessity for compromise and balance, and of the nature of the Senate as a legislative chamber

And, finally, I am convinced that we have criticized those who have followed the crowd—and at the same time criticized those who have defied it—because we have not fully understood the responsibility of a Senator to his constituents or recognized the difficulty facing a politician conscientiously desiring, in Webster's words, "to push (his) skiff from the shore alone" into a hostile and turbulent sea. Perhaps if the American people more fully comprehended the terrible pressures which discourage acts of political courage, which drive a Senator to abandon or subdue his conscience, then they might be less critical of those who take the easier road—and more appreciative of those still able to follow the path of courage

The *first* pressure to be mentioned is a form of pressure rarely recognized by the general public Americans want to be liked—and Senators are no exception They are by nature—and of necessity—social animals We enjoy the comradeship and approval of our friends and colleagues We prefer praise to abuse, popularity to contempt Realizing that the path of the conscientious insurgent must frequently be a lonely one, we are anxious to get along with our fellow legislators, our fellow members of the club to abide by the clubhouse rules and patterns, not to pursue a unique and independent course which would embarrass or irritate the other members We realize, moreover, that our influence in the club—and the extent to which we can accomplish our objectives and those of our constituents—

are dependent in some measure on the esteem with which we are regarded by other Senators. "The way to get along," I was told when I entered Congress, "is to go along."

Going along means more than just good fellowship—it includes the use of compromise, the sense of things possible. We should not be too hasty in condemning all compromise as bad morals. For politics and legislation are not matters for inflexible principles or unattainable ideals Politics, as John Morley has acutely observed, "is a field where action is one long second best, and where the choice constantly lies between two blunders", and legislation, under the democratic way of life and the Federal system of Government, requires compromise between the desires of each individual and group and those around them. Henry Clay, who should have known, said compromise was the cement that held the Union together·

All legislation . . . is founded upon the principle of mutual concession. Let him who elevates himself above humanity, above its weaknesses, its infirmities, its wants, its necessities, say, if he pleases, "I never will compromise"; but let no one who is not above the frailties of our common nature disdain compromise.

It is compromise that prevents each set of reformers—the wets and the drys, the one-worlders and the isolationists, the vivisectionists and the anti-vivisectionists—from crushing the group on the extreme opposite end of the political spectrum The fanatics and extremists and even those conscientiously devoted to hard and fast principles are always disappointed at the failure of their Government to rush to implement all of their principles and to denounce those of their opponents. But the legislator has some responsibility to conciliate those opposing forces within his state and party and to represent them in the larger clash of interests on the national level; and he alone knows that there are few if any issues where all the truth and all the right and all the angels are on one side

Some of my colleagues who are criticized today for lack of forthright principles—or who are looked upon with scornful eyes as compromising "politicians"—are simply engaged in the fine art of conciliating, balancing and interpreting the forces and factions of public opinion, an art essential to keeping our nation united and enabling our Government to function. Their consciences may direct them from time to time to take a more rigid stand for principle—but their intellects tell them that a fair or poor bill is better than no bill at all, and that only through the give-and-take of compromise will any bill receive the successive approval of the Senate, the House, the President and the nation.

But the question is how we will compromise and with whom For it is easy to seize upon unnecessary concessions, not as means of legitimately resolving conflicts but as methods of "going along"

There were further implications in the warning that I should "go along" —implications of the rewards that would follow fulfillment of my obligation to follow the party leadership whom I had helped select All of us in the Congress are made fully aware of the importance of party unity (what sins have been committed in that name!) and the adverse effect upon our party's chances in the next election which any rebellious conduct might bring Moreover, in these days of Civil Service, the loaves and fishes of patronage available to the legislator—for distribution to those earnest campaigners whose efforts were inspired by something more than mere conviction—are comparatively few, and he who breaks the party's ranks may find that there are suddenly none at all Even the success of legislation in which he is interested depends in part on the extent to which his support of his party's programs has won him the assistance of his party's leaders

It is thinking of that next campaign—the desire to be re-elected—that provides the *second* pressure on the conscientious Senator It should not automatically be assumed that this is a wholly selfish motive—although it is not unnatural that those who have chosen politics as their profession should seek to continue their careers—for Senators who go down to defeat in a vain defense of a single principle will not be on hand to fight for that or any other principle in the future

Defeat, moreover, is not only a setback for the Senator himself—he is also obligated to consider the effect upon the party he supports, upon the friends and supporters who have "gone out on a limb" for him, and even upon the wife and children whose happiness and security—often depending at least in part upon his success in office—may mean more to him than anything else

Where else, in a non-totalitarian country, but in the political profession is the individual expected to sacrifice all—including his own career—for the national good? In private life, as in industry, we expect the individual to advance his own enlightened self-interest—within the limitations of the law—in order to achieve over-all progress But in public life we expect individuals to sacrifice their private interests to permit the national good to progress

In no other occupation but politics is it expected that a man will sacrifice honors, prestige and his chosen career on a single issue Lawyers, businessmen, teachers, doctors, all face difficult personal decisions involving their integrity—but few, if any, face them in the glare of the spotlight as do those in public office Few, if any, face the same dread finality of decision that confronts a Senator facing an important call of the roll He may want more time for his decision—he may believe there is something to be said for both sides—he may feel that a slight amendment could remove all

difficulties—but when that roll is called he cannot hide, he cannot equivocate, he cannot delay—and he senses that his constituency, like the Raven in Poe's poem, is perched there on his Senate desk, croaking "Nevermore" as he casts the vote that stakes his political future.

Few Senators "retire to Pocatello" by choice. The prospect of forced retirement, the possibilities of giving up the interesting work, the fascinating trappings and the impressive prerogatives of Congressional office, can cause even the most courageous politician serious loss of sleep. Thus, perhaps without realizing it, some Senators tend to take the easier, less troublesome path to harmonize or rationalize what at first appears to be a conflict between their conscience—or the result of their deliberations—and the majority opinion of their constituents. Such Senators are not political cowards—they have simply developed the habit of sincerely reaching conclusions inevitably in accordance with popular opinion

Still other Senators have not developed that habit—they have neither conditioned nor subdued their consciences—but they feel, sincerely and without cynicism, that they must leave consideration of conscience aside if they are to be effective. The profession of politics, they would agree, is not immoral, simply non-moral.

Not all Senators would agree—but few would deny that the desire to be re-elected exercises a strong brake on independent courage.

The *third* and most significant source of pressures which discourage political courage in the conscientious Senator or Congressman—and practically all of the problems described here apply equally to members of both Houses—is the pressure of his constituency, the interest groups, the organized letter writers, the economic blocs and even the average voter To cope with such pressures to defy them or even to satisfy them is a formidable task.

All of us occasionally have the urge to follow the example of Congressman John Steven McGroarty of California, who wrote a constituent in 1934:

One of the countless drawbacks of being in Congress is that I am compelled to receive impertinent letters from a jackass like you in which you say I promised to have the Sierra Madre mountains reforested and I have been in Congress two months and haven't done it. Will you please take two running jumps and go to hell.

Fortunately or unfortunately, few follow that urge—but the provocation is there—not only from unreasonable letters and impossible requests, but also from hopelessly inconsistent demands and endlessly unsatisfied grievances.

In my office today, for example, was a delegation representing New England textile mills, an industry essential to our prosperity They want the tariff lowered on the imported wool they buy from Australia and they want the tariff raised on the finished woolen goods imported from England with which they must compete One of my Southern colleagues told me that a similar group visited him not long ago with the same requests—but further urging that he take steps to (1) end the low-wage competition from Japan and (2) prevent the Congress from ending—through a higher minimum wage—the low-wage advantage they themselves enjoy to the dismay of my constituents Only yesterday two groups called me off the Senate floor—the first was a group of businessmen seeking to have a local Government activity closed as unfair competition for private enterprise, and the other was a group representing the men who work in the Government installation and who are worried about their jobs

All of us in the Senate meet endless examples of such conflicting pressures, which only reflect the inconsistencies inevitable in our complex economy If we tell our constituents frankly that we can do nothing, they feel we are unsympathetic or inadequate If we try and fail—usually meeting a counteraction from other Senators representing other interests—they say we are like all the rest of the politicians All we can do is retreat into the Cloakroom and weep on the shoulder of a sympathetic colleague—or go home and snarl at our wives

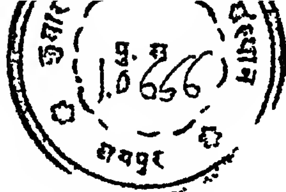
We may tell ourselves that these pressure groups and letter writers represent only a small percentage of the voters—and this is true But they are the articulate few whose views cannot be ignored and who constitute the greater part of our contacts with the public at large, whose opinions we cannot know, whose vote we must obtain and yet who in all probability have a limited idea of what we are trying to do

One Senator, since retired, said that he voted with the special interests on every issue, hoping that by election time all of them added together would constitute nearly a majority that would remember him favorably, while the other members of the public would never know about—much less remember—his vote against their welfare It is reassuring to know that this seemingly unbeatable formula did not work in his case

These, then, are some of the pressures which confront a man of conscience He cannot ignore the pressure groups, his constituents his party, the comradeship of his colleagues, the needs of his family, his own pride in office, the necessity for compromise and the importance of remaining in office He must judge for himself which path to choose, which step will most help or hinder the ideals to which he is committed

He realizes that once he begins to weigh each issue in terms of his chances for re-election, once he begins to compromise away his principles on one issue after another for fear that to do otherwise would halt his career and prevent future fights for principle, then he has lost the very freedom of conscience which justifies his continuance in office

But to decide at which point and on which issue he will risk his career is a difficult and soul-searching decision



THE TIME AND THE PLACE

GREAT CRISES produce great men, and great deeds of courage This country has known no greater crisis than that which culminated in the fratricidal war between North and South in 1861 Thus, without intending to slight other periods of American history, no work of this nature could overlook three acts of outstanding political courage—of vital importance to the eventual maintenance of the Union—which occurred in the fateful decade before the Civil War In two cases—involving Senators Sam Houston of Texas and Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, both of whom had enjoyed political dominion in their states for many years—defeat was their reward In the third—that involving Daniel Webster of Massachusetts—even death, which came within two years of his great decision, did not halt the calumnies heaped upon him by his enemies who had sadly embittered his last days

It is not surprising that this ten-year period of recurring crises, when the ties that bound the Union were successively snapping, should have brought forth the best, as it did the worst, in our political leaders All in a position of responsibility were obliged to decide between maintaining their loyalty to the nation or to their state and region For many on both sides—men who were wholly convinced of the rightness of their section's cause—the decision came easily

But to those who felt a dual loyalty to their state and their country, to those who sought compromise which would postpone or remove entirely the shadow of war which hung over them, the decision was agonizing, for the ultimate choice involved the breaking of old loyalties and friendships, and the prospect of humiliating political defeat

The cockpit in which this struggle between North and South was fought was the chamber of the United States Senate The South, faced with the steadily growing population of the North as reflected in increasing majorities in the House of Representatives, realized that its sole hope of maintaining its power and prestige lay in the Senate It was for this reason that the admission of new states into the Union, which threatened continuously to upset the precarious balance of power between the free and the slave states, between the agricultural and manufacturing regions, was at the heart of some of the great Senate debates in the first half of the nineteenth century

In 1820 a law was passed to admit Maine and Missouri into the Union together, one free, the other slave, as part of Henry Clay's first great compromise. In 1836 and 1837, Arkansas and Michigan, and in 1845 and 1846, Florida and Iowa, were admitted through legislation which coupled them together. But the seams of compromise were bursting by 1850, as vast new territories acquired by the Mexican War accelerated the pace of the slavery controversy The attention of the nation was focused on the Senate, and focused especially on the three most gifted parliamentary leaders in American history—Clay, Calhoun and Webster. Of these, only Daniel Webster was to share with Houston the ignominy of constituent wrath and the humiliation of political downfall at the hands of the states they had loved and championed We note well the courage of Webster and Houston; but if we are to understand the times that made their feats heroic, we must first note the leadership of the two Senate giants who formed with Webster the most outstanding triumvirate the Senate has ever known, Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun.

Henry Clay of Kentucky—bold, autocratic and magnetic, fiery in manner with a charm so compelling that an opponent once declined a meeting which would subject him to the appeal of Harry of the West. To Abraham Lincoln, "He was my beau ideal", to the half-mad, half-genius John Randolph of Roanoke, he was, in what is perhaps the most memorable and malignant sentence in the history of personal abuse, "a being, so brilliant yet so corrupt, which, like a rotten mackerel by moonlight, shines and stinks." Not even John Calhoun, who had fought him for years, was impervious to his fascination "I don't like Henry Clay He is a bad man, an impostor, a creator of wicked schemes. I wouldn't speak to him, but, by God, I love him "

Others beside John Calhoun loved him. He reveled in a love for life, and had a matchless gift for winning and holding the hearts of his fellow countrymen—and women Elected to the Senate when still below the constitutional age of thirty, he was subsequently sent to the House where in a move never duplicated before or since he was immediately elected Speaker at the age of thirty-five.

Though he lacked the intellectual resources of Webster and Calhoun, Henry Clay nevertheless had visions of a greater America beyond those held by either of his famous colleagues. And so, in 1820, 1833 and 1850 he initiated, hammered and charmed through reluctant Congresses the three great compromises that preserved the Union until 1861, by which time the strength of the North was such that secession was doomed to failure.

The second and probably the most extraordinary of the triumvirate was John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, with bristling hair and eyes that burned like heavy coals, "the cast-iron man," according to the English

spinster, Harriet Martineau "who looks as if he had never been born, and never could be extinguished" Calhoun, in spite of this appearance, had been born—in 1782, the same year as Webster and five years after Clay He was six feet, two inches tall, a graduate of Yale University, a Member of Congress at the age of twenty-nine, a War Hawk who joined Henry Clay in driving the United States into the War of 1812, a nationalist who turned sectionalist in the 1820's as the economic pressures of the tariff began to tell on the agricultural economy of South Carolina Calhoun had a mind that was cold, narrow, concentrated and powerful Webster considered him "much the ablest man in the Senate," the greatest in fact that he had met in his entire public life "He could have," he declared, "demolished Newton, Calvin or even John Locke as a logician"

His speeches, stripped of all excess verbiage marched across the Senate floor in even columns, measured, disciplined, carrying all before them Strangely enough, although he had the appearance, especially in his later days, of a fanatic, he was a man of infinite charm and personality He was reputed to be the best conversationalist in South Carolina, and he won to him through their emotions men who failed to comprehend his closely reasoned arguments His hold upon the imagination and affection of the entire South steadily grew, and at his death in the midst of the great debate of 1850 he was universally mourned

Calhoun believed that the Constitutional Convention had not nationalized our government, that the sovereign states still retained "the right of judging.. when the Congress encroached upon the individual state's power and liberty"

All of the currents of conflict and disunion, of growth and decline, of strength and weakness, came to a climax in 1850

The three chief protagonists in the Washington drama of 1850 had been colleagues in Congress as far back as 1813 Then they were young, full of pride and passion and hope and the world lay waiting before them Now nearly forty years later in the sunset of their lives—for they would all be dead within two years—with youth and illusions gone they moved once again to the center of the stage

But they were not alone in the struggle Senator Sam Houston was not dwarfed by the towering reputations of his three colleagues That secession did not occur in 1850 instead of 1861 is due in great part to Daniel Webster who was in large measure responsible for the country's acceptance of Henry Clay's compromise Texas joined the Confederacy, but not without a struggle that made Senator Houston's old age a shipwreck

DANIEL WEBSTER

"To speak true rather than pleasing things . ."

THE BLIZZARDY NIGHT of January 21, 1850, was no night in Washington for an ailing old man to be out But wheezing and coughing fitfully, Henry Clay made his way through the snowdrifts to the home of Daniel Webster He had a plan—a plan to save the Union—and he knew he must have the support of the North's most renowned orator and statesman. He knew that he had no time to lose, for that very afternoon President Taylor, in a message to Congress asking California's admission as a free state, had only thrown fuel on the raging fire that threatened to consume the Union Tempers mounted, plots unfolded, disunity was abroad in the land.

But Henry Clay had a plan—a plan for another Great Compromise to preserve the nation For an hour he outlined its contents to Daniel Webster in the warmth of the latter's comfortable home, and together they talked of saving the Union. Few meetings in American history have ever been so productive or so ironic in their consequences For the Compromise of 1850 added to Henry Clay's garlands as the great Pacificator, but Daniel Webster's support which insured its success resulted in his political crucifixion, and, for half a century or more, his historical condemnation

The man upon whom Henry Clay called that wintry night was one of the most extraordinary figures in American political history. Webster, wrote one of his intimate friends, was "a compound of strength and weakness, dust and divinity."

There could be no mistaking he was a great man—he looked like one, talked like one, was treated like one and insisted he was one With all his faults and failings, Daniel Webster was undoubtedly the most talented figure in our Congressional history· not in his ability to win men to a cause—he was no match in that with Henry Clay, not in his ability to hammer out a philosophy of government—Calhoun outshone him there; but in his ability to make alive and supreme the latent sense of oneness, of Union, that all Americans felt but which few could express.

But how Daniel Webster could express it! How he could express almost any sentiments! Ever since his first speech in Congress—attacking the War of 1812—had riveted the attention of the House of Representatives as no

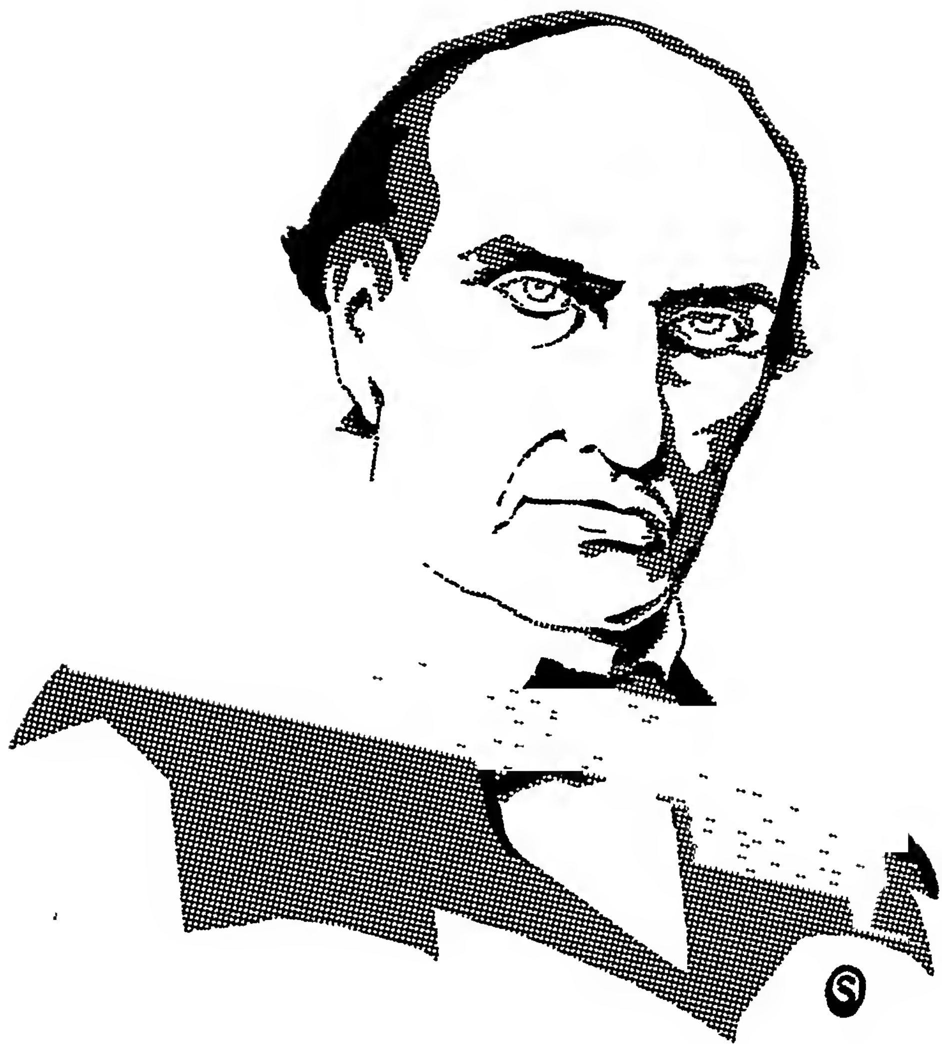
freshman had ever held it before, he was the outstanding orator of his day—indeed, of all time—in Congress, before hushed throngs in Massachusetts and as an advocate before the Supreme Court And the peroration of his reply to Senator Hayne of South Carolina, when secession had threatened twenty years earlier, was a national rallying cry memorized by every schoolboy—"Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!"

A very slow speaker, hardly averaging a hundred words a minute, Webster combined the musical charm of his deep organ-like voice, a vivid imagination, an ability to crush his opponents with a barrage of facts, a confident and deliberate manner of speaking and a striking appearance to make his orations a magnet that drew crowds hurrying to the Senate chamber He prepared his speeches with the utmost care, but seldom wrote them out in a prepared text It has been said that he could think out a speech sentence by sentence, correct the sentences in his mind without the use of a pencil and then deliver it exactly as he thought it out

Certainly that striking appearance was half the secret of his power, and convinced all who looked upon his face that he was one born to rule men. Although less than six feet tall, Webster's slender frame when contrasted with the magnificent sweep of his shoulders gave him a theatrical but formidable presence But it was his extraordinary head that contemporaries found so memorable, with the features Carlyle described for all to remember "The tanned complexion, the amorphous crag-like face, the dull black eyes under the precipice of brows, like dull anthracite furnaces needing only to be blown, the mastiff mouth accurately closed"

Daniel Webster remained the greatest orator of his day, the leading member of the American Bar, one of the most renowned leaders of the Whig party, and the only Senator capable of checking Calhoun And thus Henry Clay knew he must enlist these extraordinary talents on behalf of his Great Compromise Time and events proved he was right

As the God-like Daniel listened in thoughtful silence, the sickly Clay unfolded his last great effort to hold the Union together Its key features were five in number (1) California was to be admitted as a free (nonslaveholding) state, (2) New Mexico and Utah were to be organized as territories without legislation either for or against slavery, (3) Texas was to be compensated for some territory to be ceded to New Mexico; (4) the slave trade would be abolished in the District of Columbia, and (5) a more stringent and enforceable Fugitive Slave Law was to be enacted to guarantee return to their masters of runaway slaves captured in Northern states The Compromise would be condemned by the Southern extremists as appeasement, chiefly on its first and fourth provisions, and by the Northern abolitionists as 90 per cent concessions to the South with a meaningless



Daniel Webster

10 per cent sop thrown to the North, particularly because of the second and fifth provisions Few Northerners could stomach any strengthening of the Fugitive Slave Act, the most bitterly hated measure—and until prohibition, the most flagrantly disobeyed—ever passed by Congress Massachusetts had even enacted a law making it a crime for anyone to enforce the provisions of the Act in that state!

How could Henry Clay then hope to win to such a plan Daniel Webster of Massachusetts? Was he not specifically on record as a consistent foe of slavery? Had he not told the Senate

I shall oppose all slavery extension and all increase of slave representation in all places, at all times, under all circumstances, even against all inducements, against all supposed limitation of great interests, against all combinations, against all compromises

That very week he had written a friend "From my earliest youth, I have regarded slavery as a great moral and political evil You need not fear that I shall vote for any compromise or do anything inconsistent with the past "

But Daniel Webster feared that civil violence "would only rivet the chains of slavery the more strongly " And the preservation of the Union was far dearer to his heart than his opposition to slavery

And thus on that fateful January night, Daniel Webster promised Henry Clay his conditional support, and took inventory of the crisis about him At first he shared the views of those critics and historians who scoffed at the possibility of secession in 1850 But as he talked with Southern leaders and observed "the condition of the country, I thought the inevitable consequences of leaving the existing controversies unadjusted would be Civil War " "I am nearly broken down with labor and anxiety," he wrote his son, "I know not how to meet the present emergency, or with what weapons to beat down the Northern and Southern follies now raging in equal extremes I have poor spirits and little courage "

Two groups were threatening in 1850 to break away from the United States of America In New England, Garrison was publicly proclaiming, "I am an Abolitionist and, therefore, for the dissolution of the Union " And a mass meeting of Northern Abolitionists declared that "the Constitution is a covenant with death and an agreement with hell " In the South, Calhoun was writing a friend in February of 1850, "Disunion is the only alternative that is left for us " And in his last great address to the Senate, read for him on March 4, only a few short weeks before his death, while he sat by too feeble to speak, he declared, "The South will be forced to choose between abolition and secession."

A preliminary convention of Southerners, also instigated by Calhoun, urged a full-scale convention of the South at Nashville for June of that fateful year to popularize the idea of dissolution

The time was ripe for secession, and few were prepared to speak for Union Even Alexander Stephens of Georgia, anxious to preserve the Union, wrote friends in the South who were sympathetic with his views that "the feeling among the Southern members for a dissolution of the Union...is becoming much more general. Men are now beginning to talk of it seriously who twelve months ago hardly permitted themselves to think of it .the crisis is not far ahead ..A dismemberment of this Republic I now consider inevitable." During the critical month preceding Webster's speech, six Southern states, each to secede ten years later, approved the aims of the Nashville Convention and appointed delegates.

Such was the perilous state of the nation in the early months of 1850

By the end of February, the Senator from Massachusetts had determined upon his course Only the Clay Compromise, Daniel Webster decided, could avert secession and civil war; and he wrote a friend that he planned "to make an honest truth-telling speech and a Union speech and discharge a clear conscience " As he set to work preparing his notes, he received abundant warning of the attacks his message would provoke. His constituents and Massachusetts newspapers admonished him strongly not to waver in his consistent anti-slavery stand, and many urged him to employ still tougher tones against the South But the Senator from Massachusetts had made up his mind, as he told his friends on March 6, "to push my skiff from the shore alone " He would act according to the creed with which he had challenged the Senate several years earlier.

Inconsistencies of opinion arising from changes of circumstances are often justifiable But there is one sort of inconsistency that is culpable. it is the inconsistency between a man's conviction and his vote, between his conscience and his conduct No man shall ever charge me with an inconsistency of that kind.

And so came the 7th of March, 1850, the only day in history which would become the title of a speech delivered on the Senate floor. No one recalls today—no one even recalled in 1851—the formal title Webster gave his address, for it had become the "Seventh of March" speech as much as Independence Day is known as the Fourth of July.

Realizing after months of insomnia that this might be the last great effort his health would permit, Webster devoted the morning to polishing up his notes He was excitedly interrupted by the Sergeant at Arms, who told him that even then—two hours before the Senate was to meet—the chamber, the galleries, the anterooms and even the corridors of the Capitol were filled with those who had been traveling for days from all parts of the

nation to hear Daniel Webster Many foreign diplomats and most of the House of Representatives were among those vying for standing room As the Senate met, members could scarcely walk to their seats through the crowd of spectators and temporary seats made of public documents stacked on top of each other Most Senators gave up their seats to ladies and stood in the aisles awaiting Webster's opening blast

The crowd fell silent as Daniel Webster rose slowly to his feet all the impressive powers of his extraordinary physical appearance—the great dark, brooding eyes, the wonderfully bronzed complexion, the majestic domed forehead—commanding the same awe they had commanded for more than thirty years Garbed in his familiar blue tailed coat with brass buttons and a buff waistcoat and breeches, he deliberately paused a moment as he gazed about at the greatest assemblage of Senators ever to gather in that chamber—Clay, Benton, Houston, Jefferson Davis, Hale, Bell, Cass, Seward, Chase, Stephen A Douglas and others But one face was missing —that of the ailing John C Calhoun

All eyes were fixed on the speaker, no spectator save his own son knew what he would say "I have never before," wrote a newspaper correspondent, "witnessed an occasion on which there was deeper feeling enlisted or more universal anxiety to catch the most distinct echo of the speaker's voice "

In his moments of magnificent inspiration, as Emerson once described him, Webster was truly "the great cannon loaded to the lips " Summoning for the last time that spellbinding oratorical ability he abandoned his previous opposition to slavery in the territories, abandoned his constituents' abhorrence of the Fugitive Slave Law, abandoned his own place in the history and hearts of his countrymen and abandoned his last chance for the goal that had eluded him for over twenty years—the Presidency Daniel Webster preferred to risk his career and his reputation rather than risk the Union

"Mr President, he began, "I wish to speak today, not as a Massachusetts man, nor as a Northern man, but as an American and a Member of the Senate of the United States I speak today for the preservation of the Union Hear me for my cause "

He had spoken but for a short time when the gaunt bent form of Calhoun, wrapped in a black cloak, was dramatically assisted into his seat, where he sat trembling, scarcely able to move, and unnoticed by the speaker After several expressions of regret by Webster that illness prevented the distinguished Senator from South Carolina from being present Calhoun struggled up, grasping the arms of his chair, and in a clear and ghostly voice proudly announced, "The Senator from South Carolina *is* in his

seat " Webster was touched, and with tears in his eyes he extended a bow toward Calhoun, who sank back exhausted and feeble, eyeing the Massachusetts orator with a sphinx-like expression which disclosed no hint of either approval or disapproval

For three hours and eleven minutes, with only a few references to his extensive notes, Daniel Webster pleaded the Union's cause. Relating the grievances of each side, he asked for conciliation and understanding in the name of patriotism. The Senate's main concern, he insisted, was neither to promote slavery nor to abolish it, but to preserve the United States of America And with telling logic and remarkable foresight he bitterly attacked the idea of "peaceable secession"

Sir, your eyes and mine are never destined to see that miracle The dismemberment of this vast country without convulsion! Who is so foolish .. as to expect to see any such thing?.. Instead of speaking of the possibility or utility of secession, instead of dwelling in those caverns of darkness, . let us enjoy the fresh air of liberty and union .. Let us make our generation one of the strongest and brightest links in that golden chain which is destined, I fondly believe, to grapple the people of all the states to this Constitution for ages to come.

There was no applause. Buzzing and astonished whispering, yet, but no applause. Perhaps his hearers were too intent—or too astonished. A reporter rushed to the telegraph office "Mr. Webster has assumed a great responsibility," he wired his paper, "and whether he succeeds or fails, the courage with which he has come forth at least entitles him to the respect of the country."

Daniel Webster did succeed. Even though his speech was repudiated by many in the North, the very fact that one who represented such a belligerent constituency would appeal for understanding in the name of unity and patriotism was recognized in Washington and throughout the South as a *bona fide* assurance of Southern rights. The New Orleans *Picayune* hailed Webster for "the moral courage to do what he believes to be just in itself and necessary for the peace and safety of the country."

And so the danger of immediate secession and bloodshed passed As Senator Winthrop remarked, Webster's speech had "disarmed and quieted the South (and) knocked the Nashville Convention into a cocked hat." The *Journal of Commerce* was to remark in later months that "Webster did more than any other man in the whole country, and at a great hazard of personal popularity, to stem and roll back the torrent of sectionalism which in 1850 threatened to overthrow the pillars of the Constitution and the Union."

Some historians deny that secession would have occurred in 1850 without such compromises; and others maintain that subsequent events proved

eventual secession was inevitable regardless of what compromises were made But still others insist that delaying war for ten years narrowed the issues between North and South and in the long run helped preserve the Union. The spirit of conciliation in Webster's speech gave the North the righteous feeling that it had made every attempt to treat the South with fairness, and the defenders of the Union were thus united more strongly against what they felt to be Southern violations of those compromises ten years later Even from the military point of view of the North, postponement of the battle for ten years enabled the Northern states to increase tremendously their lead in popularity, voting power, production and railroads

Undoubtedly this was understood by many of Webster's supporters, including the business and professional men of Massachusetts who helped distribute hundreds of thousands of copies of the Seventh of March speech throughout the country It was understood by Daniel Webster, who dedicated the printed copies to the people of Massachusetts with these words "Necessity compels me to speak true rather than pleasing things I should indeed like to please you, but I prefer to save you, whatever be your attitude toward me "

But it was not understood by the Abolitionists and Free Soilers of 1850 Few politicians have had the distinction of being scourged by such talented constituents The Rev Theodore Parker, heedless of the dangers of secession, who had boasted of harboring a fugitive slave in his cellar, denounced Webster in merciless fashion from his pulpit, an attack he would continue even after Webster's death "No living man has done so much," he cried, "to debauch the conscience of the nation I know of no deed in American history done by a son of New England to which I can compare this, but the act of Benedict Arnold " "Webster," said Horace Mann, "is a fallen star! Lucifer descending from Heaven!" Longfellow asked the world "Is it possible? Is this the Titan who hurled mountains at Hayne years ago?" And Emerson proclaimed that "Every drop of blood in that man's veins has eyes that look downward Webster's absence of moral faculty is degrading to the country." To William Cullen Bryant, Webster was "a man who deserted the cause which he lately defended, and deserted it under circumstances which force upon him the imputation of a sordid motive " And to James Russell Lowell he was "the most meanly and foolishly treacherous man I ever heard of "

A mass meeting in Faneuil Hall condemned the speech as "unworthy of a wise statesman and a good man," and resolved that "Constitution or no Constitution, law or no law, we will not allow a fugitive slave to be taken from the state of Massachusetts " As the Massachusetts Legislature enacted further resolutions wholly contrary to the spirit of the Seventh of March speech, one member called Webster "a recreant son of Massachusetts who misrepresents her in the Senate", and another stated that

"Daniel Webster will be a fortunate man if God, in his sparing mercy, shall preserve his life long enough for him to repent of this act and efface this stain on his name."

The Boston *Courier* pronounced that it was "unable to find that any Northern Whig member of Congress concurs with Mr. Webster"; and his old defender, the Boston *Atlas* stated, "His sentiments are not our sentiments nor we venture to say of the Whigs of New England." The New York *Tribune* considered it "unequal to the occasion and unworthy of its author", the New York *Evening Post* spoke in terms of a "traitorous retreat .. a man who deserted the cause which he lately defended"; and the Abolitionist press called it "the scarlet infamy of Daniel Webster ... An indescribably base and wicked speech"

Edmund Quincy spoke bitterly of the "ineffable meanness of the lion turned spaniel in his fawnings on the masters whose hands he was licking for the sake of the dirty puddings they might have to toss to him" And finally, the name of Daniel Webster was humiliated for all time in the literature of our land by the cutting words of the usually gentle John Greenleaf Whittier in his immortal poem "Ichabod".

So fallen! so lost! the light withdrawn
Which once he wore!
The glory from his gray hairs gone
Forevermore!...
Then pay the reverence of old days
To his dead fame;
Walk backward, with averted gaze,
And hide the shame!

Webster was saddened by the failure of a single other New England Whig to rise to his defense, and he remarked that he was "engaged in a controversy in which I have neither a leader nor a follower from among my own immediate friends ... I am tired of standing up here, almost alone from Massachusetts, contending for practical measures absolutely essential to the good of the country .... For five months ... no one of my colleagues manifested the slightest concurrence in my sentiments .. . Since the 7th of March there has not been an hour in which I have not felt a crushing weight of anxiety. I have sat down to no breakfast or dinner to which I have brought an unconcerned and easy mind"

But, although he sought to explain his objectives and reassure his friends of his continued opposition to slavery, he nevertheless insisted he would "stand on the principle of my speech to the end .... If necessary I will take the stump in every village in New England ... What is to come of the present commotion in men's minds I cannot foresee; but my own

convictions of duty are fixed and strong, and I shall continue to follow those convictions without faltering "

And the following year, despite his seventy years, Webster went on extended speaking tours defending his position "If the chances had been one in a thousand that Civil War would be the result, I should still have felt that thousandth chance should be guarded against by any reasonable sacrifice " When his efforts — and those of Clay, Douglas and others — on behalf of compromise were ultimately successful, he noted sarcastically that many of his colleagues were now saying "They always meant to stand by the Union to the last "

But Daniel Webster was doomed to disappointment in his hopes that this latent support might again enable him to seek the Presidency For his speech had so thoroughly destroyed those prospects that the recurring popularity of his position could not possibly satisfy the great masses of voters in New England and the North He could not receive the Presidential nomination he had so long desired, but neither could he ever put to rest the assertion that his real objective in the Seventh of March speech was a bid for Southern support for the Presidency

But this "profound selfishness," which Emerson was so certain the speech represented, could not have entered into Daniel Webster's motivations Webster was sufficiently acute politically to know that a divided party such as his would turn away from politically controversial figures and move to an uncommitted neutral individual And the 1852 Whig Convention followed exactly this course After the vote had been divided for fifty-two ballots between Webster and President Fillmore, the convention turned to the popular General Winfield Scott Not a single Southern Whig supported Webster

So Daniel Webster, who neither could have intended his speech as an improvement of his political popularity nor permitted his ambitions to weaken his plea for the Union, died a disappointed and discouraged death in 1852 But to the very end he was true to character, asking on his deathbed. "Wife, children, doctor, I trust on this occasion I have said nothing unworthy of Daniel Webster." And to the end he had been true to the Union, and to his greatest act of courageous principle; for in his last words to the Senate, Webster had written his own epitaph .

I shall stand by the Union with absolute disregard of personal consequences What are personal consequences .. in comparison with the good or evil which may befall a great country in a crisis like this? ... Let the consequences be what they will, I am careless No man can suffer too much and no man can fall too soon, if he suffer or if he fall in defense of the liberties and Constitution of his country.

SAM HOUSTON

"Do not expect me to remain here silent."

THE FIRST RAYS of dawn were streaking into the ill-lit Senate chamber of 1854, as one final speaker rose to seek recognition. Weary, haggard and unshaven Senators, slumped despondently in their chairs after the rigors of an all-night session, muttered "Vote, Vote" in the hopes of discouraging any further oratory on a bill already certain of passage. But Senator Sam Houston of Texas was not easily discouraged by overwhelming odds, and as his deep, musical voice carried the bold if unpolished words of a powerful message to his astonished colleagues, they shook off the dull stupor which had deadened their fatigued brains and sat upright and attentive.

The bill on which bitter and exhausting debate now closed was known as the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, the latest concession to the South. It repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820, and reopened the slavery extension issue though settled in the Compromise of 1850, by permitting the residents of that vast territory from Iowa to the Rockies to decide the slavery question for themselves, on the assumption that the northern part of the territory would be free and the southern part slave. For Democrats and Southerners, this bill had become "must" legislation

Sam Houston was a Democrat of long standing And Sam Houston was a Southerner by birth, residence, loyalty and philosophy. But Sam Houston was also Sam Houston, one of the most independent, unique, popular, forceful and dramatic individuals ever to enter the Senate chamber. The first Senator from Texas, his name had long before been a household word as Commander in Chief of those straggling and undermanned Texas volunteers who routed the entire Mexican Army at San Jacinto, captured its general and established the independence of Texas. He had been acclaimed as the first President of the Independent Republic of Texas, a Member of her Congress, and President again before the admission of Texas into the Union as a state. He was no easy mark at the age of sixty-four, and neither sectional nor party ties were enough to seal his lips

Sam Houston looked upon the Missouri Compromise, which he had supported in 1820 as a youthful Congressman from Tennessee, as a solemn and sacred compact between North and South, in effect a part of the Constitution

Sam Houston

when Texas was admitted into the Union Nor was he willing to discard the Compromise of 1850, which he had supported despite the enmity of Texas fire-eaters who called his vote " the damnedest outrage yet committed upon Texas. " With rugged, homely but earnest eloquence, he begged his weary colleagues in an impromptu plea not to plunge the nation into new agitations over the slavery issue

Sam Houston must have known the bill would pass, he must have known that not a single other Southern Democrat would join him, he must have known that, as rumor of his position had spread the previous week, the Richmond *Enquirer* had spoken for his constituents in declaring, " Nothing can justify this treachery, nor can anything save the traitor from the deep damnation which such treason may merit. " But, standing erect, his chin thrust forward, picturesque if not eccentric in his military cloak and panther-skin waistcoat (at times he appeared in a vast sombrero and Mexican blanket), Sam Houston, the "magnificent barbarian," made one of his rare speeches to a weary but attentive Senate:

This is an eminently perilous measure; and do you expect me to remain here silent, or to shrink from the discharge of my duty in admonishing the South of what I conceive the results will be? I will speak in spite of all the intimidations, or threats, or discountenances that may be thrown upon me. Sir, the charge that I am going with the Abolitionists or Free-Soilers affects me not. The discharge of conscious duty prompts me often to confront the united array of the very section of the country in which I reside, in which my associations are, in which my affections rest... Sir, if this is a boon that is offered to propitiate the South, I, as a Southern man, repudiate it. I will have none of it. .. Our children are either to live in after times in the enjoyment of peace, of harmony, and prosperity, or the alternative remains for them of anarchy, discord, and civil broil. We can avert the last. I trust we shall .... I adjure you to regard the contract once made to harmonize and preserve this Union Maintain the Missouri Compromise! Stir not up agitation! Give us peace!

" It was, " Houston was later to remark, " the most unpopular vote I ever gave (but) the wisest and most patriotic. " Certainly it was the most unpopular. When old Sam had first journeyed to the Senate, the baby-new state of Texas was primarily concerned with railroad, land, debt and boundary questions, without particularly strong Southern ties. But now, Texas with 150,000 valuable slaves and an overwhelmingly Democratic population consisting largely of citizens from other Southern states, identified its interests with those Houston had attacked; and with near unanimity, she cried for Houston's scalp as one who had "betrayed his state in the Senate," " joined the Abolitionists " and " deserted the South. " By a vote of 73 to 3 the Texas Legislature applauded Houston's colleague for supporting the Nebraska Bill, and condemned the stand of him who was once the most glorious hero the state had ever known. The Democratic State Convention

denounced the great warrior as "not in accordance with the sentiments of the Democracy of Texas" The Dallas *Herald* demanded that Houston resign the seat to which Texans had proudly sent him, instead of "retaining a position he has forfeited by misrepresenting them Let him heed for once the voice of an outraged, misrepresented, and betrayed constituency, so that Texas may for once have a united voice and present an undivided front in the Senate"

To make matters worse, this was not the first offense for Senator Sam Houston, merely — as described by the indignant Clarksville *Standard* — "the last feather that broke the camel's back" He had tangled with John Calhoun on the Oregon question, describing himself as a Southerner for whom "the Union was his guiding star," and who had "no fear that the North would seek to destroy the South notwithstanding the papers signed by old men and women and pretty girls" "The South has been beaten by the South — if united, she would have conquered!" cried an influential Dixie paper when Calhoun rebuked Houston and Benton for providing the winning margin for his opponents But Sam Houston would only reply

"I know neither North nor South, I know only the Union"

He would have nothing to do, moreover, with Calhoun's "hands-off" slavery resolutions and "Southern Address," attacking that revered sage of the South for his "long-cherished and ill-concealed designs against the Union," and insisting to the Senate that he, Sam Houston was "on this floor representative of the whole American people" But the Texas Legislature adopted Calhoun's resolutions, and cast a suspicious eye on the ambitious former President of Texas whose name was being mentioned, in the North as well as the South, for the White House in 1852 or 1856

Finally, Houston had been the first prominent Senator to attack Calhoun's opposition to the Clay Compromise of 1850, quoting the Scripture to label those threatening secession as mere "raging waves of sea, foaming out their own shame"

Think you, sir, after the difficulties Texans have encountered to get into the Union, that you can whip them out of it? No, sir we shed our blood to get into it We were among the last to come into the Union and being in, we will be the last to get out I call on the friends of the Union from every quarter to come forward like men, and to sacrifice their differences upon the common altar of their country's good, and to form a bulwark around the Constitution that cannot be shaken It will require manly efforts, sir, and they must expect to meet with prejudices that will assail them from every quarter They must stand firm to the Union, regardless of all personal consequences

Thus his lonely vote against the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, on that stormy dawn in 1854, was indeed the "last straw" It was loudly whispered about

the Senate that this was the last term for the colorful General. Those illustrious Senators with whom he had served, whose oratory could not attract the glory and romance which surrounded the name of Sam Houston, may have frowned upon his eccentric dress and his habit of whittling pine sticks on the Senate floor while muttering at the length of senatorial speeches. But they could not help but admire his stoical courage and rugged individualism, which his preface to a brief autobiographical sketch expressed more simply. "This book will lose me some friends. But if it lost me all and gained me none, in God's name, as I am a free man, I would publish it "

The contradictions in the life of Sam Houston a century ago may seem irreconcilable today. Although there are available endless collections of diaries, speeches and letters which throw light on every facet of his life and accomplishments, yet in the center of the stage Houston himself remains shadowed and obscured, an enigma to his friends in his own time, a mystery to the careful historian of today We may read a letter or a diary in which for a moment he seemed to have dropped his guard, but when we have finished we know little more than before. No one can say with precision by what star Sam Houston steered — his own, Texas' or the nation's.

He was fiercely ambitious, yet at the end he sacrificed for principle all he had ever won or wanted. He was a Southerner, and yet he steadfastly maintained his loyalty to the Union. He was a slaveholder who defended the right of Northern ministers to petition Congress against slavery; he was a notorious drinker who took the vow of temperance; he was an adopted son of the Cherokee Indians who won his first military honors fighting the Creeks; he was a Governor of Tennessee and later a Senator from Texas He was in turn magnanimous yet vindictive, affectionate yet cruel, eccentric yet self-conscious, faithful yet opportunistic. But Sam Houston's contradictions actually confirm his one basic, consistent quality. indomitable individualism, sometimes spectacular, sometimes crude, sometimes mysterious, but always courageous He could be all things to all men — and yet, when faced with his greatest challenge, he was faithful to himself and to Texas. The turmoil within Sam Houston was the turmoil which racked the United States in those stormy years before the Civil War, the colorful uniqueness of Sam Houston was the expression of the frontier he had always known.

When still a dreamy and unmanageable boy, he had run away from his Tennessee frontier home, and was adopted by the Cherokee Indians, who christened him Co-lon-neh, the Raven. An infantry officer under Andrew Jackson in 1813, his right arm had been shredded by enemy bullets when he alone had dashed into enemy lines at the battle of the Horseshoe, his men cowering in the hills behind him. A natural actor with a strikingly handsome figure and a flair for picturesque dress and speech, he was a rapidly

rising success in Tennessee as prosecuting attorney, Congressman and finally Governor at thirty-five The story of his sudden resignation as Governor at the height of a popularity is shrouded in mystery Apparently he discovered but a few days after his marriage that his young and beautiful bride had been forced to accept his hand by an ambitious father, when in truth she loved another. His mind and spirit shattered, Houston had abandoned civilization for the Cherokees, drunken debauchery and political and personal exile Several years later, his balance and purpose restored, General Jackson to whom he was always faithful sent him to Texas, where his fantastic military exploits became as much a part of American folklore as Valley Forge and Gettysburg But neither adventure, adulation nor a happy second marriage ever banished the inner sadness and melancholy which seemed to some in 1856, now that political defeat approached, more evident than ever.

But Sam Houston was not one to sit morosely brooding until the whispers of impending defeat were replaced by the avalanche that would crush him He had already made several tours of Texas during the Senate's autumn recesses, denouncing with equal vigor both " the mad fanaticism of the North " and " the mad ambition of the South " Many years of living among half-civilized Indian tribes had not made him a respecter of high office, in earlier years he had physically assaulted a Congressional foe of his idol, Andrew Jackson (He later told friends it made him feel " meaner than I ever felt in my life I thought I had gotten hold of a great dog but found a contemptible whining puppy ")

Now he struck out with one grand assault on Texas officialdom by announcing himself a candidate for Governor in the 1857 election He would not run as a Democrat, or as the candidate of any faction or newspaper—or even resign from the Senate He would run as Sam Houston, to " regenerate the politics of the state "

But his votes on Kansas and other Southern measures could not be explained away to an angry constituency, and Texas handed Sam Houston the first trouncing of his political career He ought to resign from the Senate now, said the antagonistic *Gazette*, instead of " holding on to the barren office . merely to receive his per diem allowance " But Sam Houston, encouraged that the margin of his defeat was no greater than three to two, returned to Washington for his final years in the Senate unshaken in his beliefs When a Southern antagonist taunted him on the Senate floor that his vote against the Kansas-Nebraska Bill had now insured his defeat, Houston merely replied with a graceful smile that it was true " that I have received an earnest and gratifying assurance from my constituents that they intend to relieve me of further service here " He was not mistaken On November 10, 1857, Sam Houston was unceremoniously dismissed by the Texas Legislature and a more militant spokesman for the South elected as his successor

In bidding farewell to his fellow Senators, Houston told his colleagues that he desired to retire "with clean hands and a clean conscience".

I wish no prouder epitaph to mark the board or slab that may lie on my tomb than this: "He loved his country, he was a patriot; he was devoted to the Union." If it is for this that I have suffered martyrdom, it is sufficient that I stand at quits with those who have wielded the sacrificial knife.

But we cannot conclude our story of Senator Sam Houston's political courage with his retirement from the Senate. Returning to his ranch in Texas, the doughty ex-Senator found the Governor who had defeated him two years previously was threatening to lead the state into secession So in the fall of 1859, the aging warrior again ran as an independent candidate for Governor, again with no party, no newspaper and no organization behind him, and making but one campaign speech He would rely, he told his audience in that still fascinating voice, "upon the Constitution and the Union . In politics I am an old fogy, because I cling devotedly to those primitive principles upon which our government was founded"

Although his opponents repeatedly insisted that secession and reopening the Texas slave trade were not real issues, Houston pressed hard on these grounds. It was a bitter campaign, the Democrats and newspapers assailing Houston with acrimonious passion But strangely enough, the appeal of the issues he had raised, his personal following among his old comrades, new popularity which Houston had acquired just prior to his retirement by his exposure on the Senate floor of a corrupt federal judge, and a surge of sentimental feeling toward him upon his return to his beloved Texas, all combined to elect Sam Houston Governor in a complete reversal of his defeat two years earlier. It was the first setback for Southern extremists in a decade, and the Governor-elect was attacked by Texas newspapers as "a traitor who ought to fall never to rise again" and "one of the greatest enemies to the South—a Southern Free Soiler."

The old Jacksonian nationalism which had motivated his entire career now faced its severest trial. Maintaining that the overwhelmingly hostile Democratic Legislature did not truly represent the people, Governor Houston violated all precedent by delivering his inaugural address directly to the people from the steps of the Capitol, instead of before a joint session of the Legislature. To an immense audience gathered on the Capitol grounds, Houston declared that he was Governor of the people and not of any party, and that "When Texas united her destiny with that of the United States, she entered not into the North or South, her connection was not sectional, but national"

Houston told the Legislature in his first general message in 1860:

Notwithstanding the ravings of deluded zealots, or the impious threats of fanatical disunionists, the love of our common country still burns with the

fire of the olden time in the hearts of the conservative people of Texas Texas will maintain the Constitution and stand by the Union It is all that can save us as a nation Destroy it, and anarchy awaits us

When South Carolina invited Texas to send delegates to the Southern Convention to protest "assaults upon the institution of slavery and upon the rights of the South," Houston transmitted the communication to the Legislature as a matter of courtesy, but warned in a masterful document "The Union was intended to be a perpetuity" By skillful political manoeuvres, he prevented acceptance of South Carolina's invitation, causing Senator Iverson of Georgia to call for some "Texan Brutus" to "rise and rid his country of the hoary-headed incubus"

As sentiment grew overwhelmingly in favor of secession during the heated Presidential campaign of 1860, Governor Houston could not implore his impatient constituents to wait and see what Mr Lincoln's attitude would be, if elected But the fact that he had received a few unsolicited votes in the Republican Convention as Lincoln's running mate furnished further ammunition to his enemies Houston's speech in Waco denouncing secession was answered by the explosion of a keg of powder behind the hotel in which he slept unharmed But heedless of personal or political danger, he arose from a sickbed in September to make one final appeal

I ask not the defeat of sectionalism by sectionalism, but by nationality These are no new sentiments to me I uttered them in the American Senate in 1856 I utter them now I was denounced then as a traitor I am denounced now Be it so! Men who never endured the privation, the toil, the peril that I have for my country call me a traitor because I am willing to yield obedience to the Constitution and the constituted authorities Let them suffer what I have for this Union, and they will feel it entwining so closely around their hearts that it will be like snapping the cords of life to give it up What are the people who call me a traitor? Are they those who march under the national flag and are ready to defend it? That is my banner! and so long as it waves proudly o'er me, even as it has waved amid stormy scenes where these men were not, I can forget that I am called a traitor

Abraham Lincoln was elected President, and immediately throughout Texas the Lone Star flag was hoisted in an atmosphere of excited and belligerent expectation Houston's plea that Texas fight for her rights "in the Union and for the sake of the Union" fell on deaf ears "A sentiment of servility" snapped the press, and Governor Houston was shoved aside as a Secession Convention was called

Sam Houston, fighting desperately to hold on to the reins of government, called special session of the State Legislature, denouncing extremists both North and South and insisting that he had "not yet lost the hope that

our rights can be maintained in the Union" If not, he maintained, independence is preferable to joining the Southern camp.

But the Secession Convention leaders, recognized by the legislature and aided by the desertion of the Union commander in Texas, could not be stopped and their headlong rush into secession was momentarily disturbed only by the surprise appearance of the Governor they hated but feared. On the day the Ordinance of Secession was to be adopted, Sam Houston sat on the platform grimly silent, his presence renewing the courage of those few friends of Union who remained in the hall "To those who tell of his wonderful charge up the hill at San Jacinto," said the historian Wharton, "I say it took a thousand times more courage when he stalked into the Secession Convention at Austin and alone defied and awed them." When, encouraged by the magic of Houston's presence, James W. Throckmorton cast one of the seven votes against secession, he was loudly and bitterly hissed, and rising in his place he made the memorable reply, "When the rabble hiss, well may patriots tremble."

But there were few who trembled as the Ordinance was adopted and submitted to the people for their approval at the polls one month later. Immediately the fighting ex-Senator took the stump in a one-man campaign to keep Texas in the Union. Ugly crowds, stones and denunciation as a traitor met him throughout the state. At Waco, his life was threatened. At Belton, an armed thug suddenly arose and started toward him. But old Sam Houston, looking him right in the eye, put each hand on his own pistols "Ladies and Gentlemen, keep your seats It is nothing but a fice barking at the lion in his den."

Unharmed, he stalked the state in characteristic fashion, confounding his enemies with powerful sarcasm. Asked to express his honest opinion of the secessionist leader, Houston replied: "He has all the characteristics of a dog except fidelity." Now seventy years old, but still an impressively straight figure with those penetrating eyes and massive white hair, Old Sam closed his tour in Galveston before a jeering and ugly mob. "Some of you laugh to scorn the idea of bloodshed as the result of secession," he cried, "but let me tell you what is coming. You may, after the sacrifice of countless millions of treasures and hundreds of thousands of precious lives, as a bare possibility, win Southern independence, if God be not against you. But I doubt it. The North is determined to preserve this Union"

His prophecy was unheeded. On February 23, Texas voted for secession by a large margin; and on March 2, the anniversary of Houston's birthday and Texan independence, the special convention reassembled at Austin and declared that Texas had seceded. Governor Houston, still desperately attempting to regain the initiative, indicated he would make known his plans on the matter to the legislature. Angry at his insistence that its legal authority

had ended, the Convention by a thumping vote of 109 to 2 declared Texas to be a part of the Southern Confederacy, and decreed that all state officers must take the new oath of allegiance on the fourteenth of March The Governor's secretary merely replied that Governor Houston "did not acknowledge the existence of the Convention and should not regard its action as binding upon him "

On March 14, as an eyewitness described it, the Convention hall was "crowded . electrified with fiery radiations, of men tingling with passion, and glowing and burning with the anticipation of revengeful battle The air was full of the stirring clamor of a multitude of voices—angry, triumphant, scornful with an occasional oath or epithet of contempt—but the voice of Sam Houston was not heard "

At the appointed hour, the Convention clerk was instructed to call the roll of state officials Silence settled over the vast audience, and every eye peered anxiously for a glimpse of the old hero

"Sam Houston!" There was no response.

"Sam Houston! Sam Houston!" The rumbling and contemptuous voices began again The office of Governor of Texas, Confederate States of America, was declared to be officially vacant, and Lieutenant Governor Edward Clark, "an insignificant creature, contemptible, spry and pert," stepped up to take the oath (A close personal and political friend elected on Houston's ticket, Clark would later enter the executive office to demand the archives of the state, only to have his former mentor wheel slowly in his chair to face him with the grandly scornful question "And what is your name, sir?")

In another part of the Capitol, the hero of San Jacinto, casting aside a lifetime of political fortune, fame and devotion from his people, was scrawling out his last message as Governor with a broken heart

Fellow Citizens, in the name of your rights and liberty, which I believe have been trampled upon, I refuse to take this oath In the name of my own conscience and my own manhood I refuse to take this oath (But) I love Texas too well to bring civil strife and bloodshed upon her I shall make no endeavor to maintain my authority as Chief Executive of this state, except by the peaceful exercise of my functions When I can no longer do this, I shall calmly withdraw from the scene I am .stricken down because I will not yield those principles which I have fought for . The severest pang is that the blow comes in the name of the state of Texas

THE TIME AND THE PLACE

THE END OF the costly military struggle between North and South did not restore peace and unity on the political front. Appomattox had ended the shooting of brother by brother; but it did not halt the political invasions, the economic plundering and the intersectional hatred that still racked a divided land The bitter animosities on both sides, which had engulfed Daniel Webster and Sam Houston, continued unabated for some two decades after the war. Those in the North who sought to bind up the wounds of the nation and treat the South with mercy and fairness—men like President Andrew Johnson, and those Senators who stood by him in his impeachment—were pilloried for their lack of patriotism by those who waved the "bloody shirt." Those in the South who sought to demonstrate to the nation that the fanatical sectionalism of their region had been forgotten—men like Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar of Mississippi—were attacked by their constituents as deserters to the conquering enemy. When Confederate General Bob Toombs was asked why he did not petition Congress for his pardon, Toombs replied with quiet grandeur "Pardon for what? I have not yet pardoned the North."

But gradually, the old conflicts over emancipation and reconstruction faded away, and exploitation of the newly opened West and the trampled South brought new issues and new faces to the Senate.

Lucius Lamar, by his gentle but firm determination to be a statesman, was instrumental in reuniting the nation in preparation for the new challenges which lay ahead.

LUCIUS QUINTUS CINCINNATUS LAMAR

"armed with honest convictions of my duty "

NO ONE HAD ever seen that hardened veteran politician, Speaker of the House, James G Blaine, cry But there he sat, with the tears streaming unashamedly down his cheeks, unable to conceal his emotions from the full view of the House members and spectators But few on the floor or in the galleries on that dramatic day in 1874 were paying much attention to Mr Blaine, and most were making no attempt to hide their own tears Democrats and Republicans alike, battle-scarred veterans of the Civil War and the violence of politics, sat in somber silence, as they listened to the urgent entreaties of the Congressman from Mississippi Speaking simply and clearly, without resorting to the customary rhetorical devices, his full, rich voice touched the hearts of every listener with its simple plea for amity and justice between North and South

All were touched, yes, by his message, but stunned, too, by its impact —for Lucius Lamar of Mississippi was appealing in the name of the South's most implacable enemy, the Radical Republican who had helped make the Reconstruction Period a black nightmare the South never could forget Charles Sumner of Massachusetts Charles Sumner—who assailed Daniel Webster as a traitor for seeking to keep the South in the Union—whose own death was hastened by the terrible caning administered to him on the Senate floor years earlier by Congressman Brooks of South Carolina, who thereupon became a Southern hero—Charles Sumner was now dead And Lucius Lamar, known in the prewar days as one of the most rabid "fire-eaters" ever to come out of the deep South, was standing on the floor of the House and delivering a moving eulogy lamenting his departure

Charles Sumner before he died, Lamar told his hushed audience *believed that all occasion for strife and distrust between the North and, South had passed away Is not that the common sentiment—or if it is not, ought it not to be—of the great mass of our people, North and South? Shall we not lay aside the concealments which serve only to perpetuate misunderstandings and distrust, and frankly confess that on both sides we most earnestly desire to be one. .in feeling and in heart?* .

Would that the spirit of the illustrious dead whom we lament today could speak from the grave to both parties to this deplorable discord in tones which should reach each and every heart throughout this broad territory · "My countrymen! know one another, and you will love one another!"

There was an ominous silence—a silence of both meditation and shock Then a spontaneous burst of applause rolled out from all sides. "My God, what a speech!" said Congressman Lyman Tremaine of New York. "It will ring through the country."

Few speeches in American political history have had such immediate impact. Overnight it raised Lamar to the first rank in the Congress and in the country; and more importantly it marked a turning point in the relations between North and South. Two weeks after the Sumner eulogy, Carl Schurz of Missouri rose before ten thousand citizens of Boston and hailed Lamar as the prophet of a new day in the relations between North and South. The Boston *Globe* called Lamar's speech on Sumner "evidence of the restoration of the Union in the South", and the Boston *Advertiser* said it was "the most significant and hopeful utterance that has been heard from the South since the war."

It was inevitable that some both North and South would misunderstand it Northerners whose political power depended on maintaining the Federal hegemony over the former Confederate states resisted any effort to heal sectional strife.

Southerners to whom Charles Sumner symbolized the worst of the prewar abolitionist movement and the postwar reconstruction felt betrayed. Several leading Mississippi newspapers, including the Columbus *Democrat*, the Canton *Mail*, and the Meridian *Mercury*, vigorously criticized Lamar, as did many of his old friends, maintaining that he had surrendered Southern principle and honor. To his wife, Lamar wrote:

No one here thinks I lowered the Southern flag, but the Southern press is down on me.. .Our people have suffered so much, have been betrayed so often by those in whom they had the strongest reason to confide, that it is but natural that they should be suspicious of any word or act of overture to the North by a Southern man. I know for once that I have done her good.. that I have awakened sympathies where before existed animosities If she condemns me, while I shall not be indifferent to her disapprobation, I shall not be...resentful. I shall be cheered by the thought that I have done a beneficial thing for her. It is time for a public man to try to serve the South, and not to observe her irritated feelings... I shall serve no other interest than hers, and will calmly and silently retire to private life if her people do not approve me.

Such attacks, however, were in the minority. It was generally recognized, North and South, that the speech was in fact a notable triumph It was obvious that moved by the strange forces of history and personal destiny, the man and the occasion had met that day in Washington

Who was the man?

Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar was, in 1874, a "public man " No petty issues, no political trivia, not even private affairs, were permitted to clutter up his intellect No partisan, personal or sectional considerations could outweigh his devotion to the national interest and to the truth He was not only a statesman but also a scholar and one of the few original thinkers of his day Henry Adams considered him to be one of "the calmest most reasonable and most amiable men in the United States, and quite unusual in social charm Above all he had tact and humor " Henry Watterson, the famous Washington reporter, called him the "most interesting and lovable of men I rather think that Lamar was the biggest brained of all the men I have met in Washington " And Senator Hoar once remarked

The late Matthew Arnold used to say that American public men lacked what he called " distinction " Nobody would have said that of Mr Lamar. He would have been a conspicuous personality anywhere, with a character and quality of his own He was a very interesting and very remarkable and very noble character

His youth was on the whole a happy one, on a plantation in the area where Joel Harris was to collect his Uncle Remus and Brer Rabbit tales Lamar himself was famous later for his stories of the rural South, as noted by Henry Adams in speaking of how effective a representative of the Confederacy Lamar would have made in London "London society would have delighted in him, his stories would have won success, his manners would have made him loved; his oratory would have swept every audience "

Lamar from the beginning under his mother's direction showed a notable aptitude for study Many years later he said, "Books! I was surrounded with books The first book I remember having had put into my hands by my mother was Franklin's *Autobiography* " The second was Rollin's *History* Lamar became well read in diplomacy and the law, but he was also passionately fond of light literature, as several correspondents discovered years later when they assisted Lamar in gathering several books which had accidentally spilled from his official brief case as he entered the White House for a Cabinet meeting They were all cheap novels!

Emory College, which Lamar attended, was a hotbed of states' rights Its President, a member of the celebrated Longstreet family, was a flaming flower of Calhoun, and his influence over Lamar, always strong, increased when Lamar married his daughter When Longstreet left Georgia to take

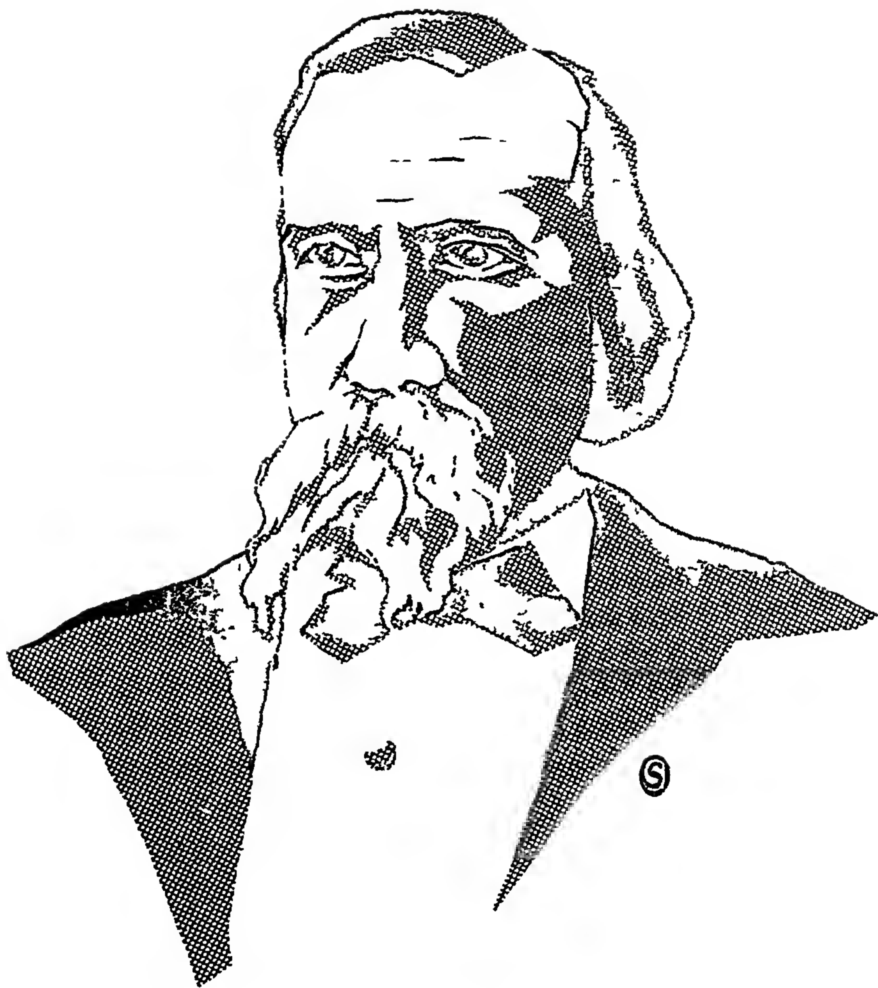
over the presidency of the State University at Oxford, Mississippi, Lamar accompanied him to practice law and to teach, and it was while at the university that Lamar was presented with the opportunity which commenced his public career.

On March 5, 1850, the Legislature of the State of Mississippi adopted a series of resolutions instructing the representatives of Mississippi to vote against the admission of California When Senator Foote disregarded these instructions in a noticeable display of courage, Lamar was prevailed upon by a committee of states' rights Democrats to debate the Senator upon the latter's return to Mississippi to run for Governor Lamar was only twenty-six years of age, new to the state and the political life of his day, and was given only a few hours to prepare for debate against one of the most skilled and aggressive politicians of the times. But his extemporaneous speech, in which he chastised Senator Foote for ignoring the instructions of the Mississippi Legislature (as he himself was to do twenty-eight years later), was a notable success, and at the end of the debate the students of the university "bore him away upon their shoulders"

His election to Congress as a strong supporter of the doctrines of Calhoun and Jefferson Davis followed In Congress, while Alexander Stephens, Robert Toombs, and other Southern Unionists were vainly seeking to stem the sectional tide, Lamar was violently pro-Southern. "Others may boast," he said on the floor of the House, "of their widely extended patriotism, and their enlarged and comprehensive love of this Union. With me, I confess that the promotion of Southern interests is second in importance only to the preservation of Southern honor" He did not proceed, however, on his course unmindful of its certain end. In a letter he wrote "Dissolution cannot take place quietly. ..When the sun of the Union sets it will go down in blood"

By 1860 he passed, in the words of Henry Adams, "for the worst of the Southern fire-eaters." Having lost all hope that the South could obtain justice in the Federal Union, he walked out of the Democratic Convention in Charleston with Jefferson Davis, helping to break still another link in the chain of Union His prewar career reached its climax in 1861 when he drafted the ordinance of secession dissolving Mississippi's ties with the Union The wind had been sown; now Lamar and Mississippi were to reap the whirlwind

On both it fell with equal violence. Certainly many of the trials and much of the agony which dogged the South in the years after the war were due to the loss in the struggle of those who might have been expected to assert the leadership of the region. Control in government had always been narrowly held in the South, compared to the North, and among the ruling families "the spilling of the wine" was especially heavy. Of the thirteen



Lucius Lamar

descendants of the first Lamar in America who served in the Confederate Armies with the rank of lieutenant colonel or above, seven perished in the war. Lamar's youngest brother, supposedly the most brilliant, Jefferson Mirabeau, was killed as he leaped his horse over the enemy's breastworks at Crampton's Gap His cousin John, one of the largest slaveholders in the South, fell near him. Two years later Lamar's other brother, Thompson Bird, Colonel of the Fifth Florida, was killed in the bloody fighting at Petersburg Lamar's two law partners were both killed: Colonel Mott at Williamsburg where Lamar fought at his side, and James Autrey, in the slaughter at Murfreesboro Symbolic of the dark days that were coming, the shattered office shingle bearing the names of the three partners was found floating in the river

Lamar's own military career was ended by an attack of apoplexy, a disease from which he suffered throughout his entire life and which hung over him like death in moments of high excitement He served nearly all of the remainder of the war as a diplomatic agent for the Confederate Government.

With the end of the war which had blasted all of Lamar's hopes and illusions, he was under strong pressure to leave the wreck of the past and go to another country. He felt, in the words of his biographer, Wirt Armistead Cate, that he was discredited—a leader who had carried his people into the wilderness from which there had been no return. But he followed Robert Lee's advice to the leaders of the South to remain and " share the fate of their respective states, " and from 1865 to 1872 Lamar lived quietly in Mississippi teaching and practicing law, as his state passed through the bitter days of its reconstruction.

No state suffered more from carpetbag rule than Mississippi. Adelbert Ames, first Senator and then Governor, was a native of Maine He was chosen Governor by a majority composed of freed slaves and radical Republicans, sustained and nourished by Federal bayonets. One Cardoza, under indictment for larceny in New York, was placed at the head of the public schools and two former slaves held the offices of Lieutenant Governor and Secretary of State. Vast areas of northern Mississippi lay in ruins Taxes increased to a level fourteen times as high as normal in order to support the extravagances of the reconstruction government and heavy state and national war debts.

As he passed through these troubled times, Lamar came to understand that the sole hope for the South lay not in pursuing its ancient quarrels with the North but in promoting conciliation and in the development and restitution of normal Federal-state relations and the withdrawal of military rule. This in turn could only be accomplished by making the North comprehend that the South no longer desired—in Lamar's words—to be the

"agitator and agitated pendulum of American politics " Lamar hoped to make the North realize that the abrogation of the Constitutional guarantees of the people of the South must inevitably affect the liberties of the people of the North He came to believe that the future happiness of the country could only lie in a spirit of mutual conciliation and cooperation between the people of all sections and all states

There were two forces in opposition to this policy On the one hand were those Republican leaders who believed that only by waving the bloody shirt could they maintain their support in the North and East, and who were convinced by the elections of 1868 that, if the Southern states should once again be controlled by the Democrats, those states—together with their allies in the North—would make the Republicans a permanent minority nationally On the other hand there were those in the South who traveled the easy road to influence and popularity through pandering to and exploiting the natural resentment and bitterness of the defeated South against its occupiers

In contrast, Lamar believed that "the only course I, in common with other Southern representatives have to follow, is to do what we can to allay excitement between the sections and to bring peace and reconciliation "

In 1872 he was elected to Congress, and his petition for a pardon from the disabilities imposed on all Confederate officials by the Fourteenth Amendment was granted. Sumner's death, and the invitation of Representative Hoar of Massachusetts to pronounce the eulogy, furnished the ideal occasion for which Lamar had long waited to hold out the hand of friendship to the North Everything conspired to insure his success his prewar reputation as a disunionist, his service as a Confederate official, the fact that Sumner was widely hated in Mississippi and in the South, and his own exceptional skill as an orator All these factors in his favor were reinforced by his impressive personal appearance "that peculiar swarthy complexion, pale but clear, the splendid gray eyes, the high cheekbones; dark brown hair, the firm fixed mouth " His memorable eulogy of Sumner was Lucius Lamar's first opportunity to demonstrate a new kind of Southern statesmanship But it would not be his last

Mississippians, on the whole, came either to understand and admire the sentiments of the Sumner eulogy, to respect Lamar's sincerity if they did not admire it, or to forgive him for what they considered to be one serious error of judgment if they were strongly opposed to it Riding a wave of popularity and the 1876 return to Democratic rule in Mississippi, Lamar was elected by the legislature to the United States Senate But even before he moved from the House to the Senate, Lamar again outraged many of his backers by abandoning his party and section on another heated issue

The Hayes-Tilden Presidential contest of 1876 had been a bitter struggle, apparently culminating in a close electoral-vote victory for the Democrat Tilden. Although Hayes at first accepted his defeat with philosophic resignation, his lieutenants, with the cooperation of the Republican *New York Times*, converted the apparent certainty of Tilden's election into doubt by claiming the closely contested states of South Carolina, Louisiana and Florida—and then attempted to convert that doubt into the certainty of Hayes' election by procuring from the carpetbag governments of those three states doctored election returns. With rumors of violence and military dictatorship rife, Congress determined upon arbitration by a supposedly nonpartisan Electoral Commission—and Lucius Lamar, confident that an objective inquiry would demonstrate the palpable fraud of the Republican case, agreed to this solution to prevent a recurrence of the tragic conflict which had so aged his spirit and broadened his outlook.

But when the Commission, acting wholly along party lines. awarded the disputed states and the election to Hayes with 185 electoral votes to 184 for Tilden, the South was outraged. Four more years of Republican rule meant four more years of Southern bondage and exploitation, four more years before the South could regain her dignity and her rightful place in the nation Lamar was accused of trading his vote and his section's honor for a promise of a future position; he was accused of cowardice, of being afraid to stand up for his state when it meant a fight; and he was accused of deserting his people and his party in the very hour when triumph should have been at last rightfully theirs His enemies, realizing that six years would pass before Senator-elect Lamar would be forced to run for re-election, vowed never to forget that day of perfidy.

But Lucius Lamar, a man of law and honor, could not now repudiate the findings, however shocking, of the Commission he had helped establish. He supported the findings of the Commission because he believed that only force could prevent Hayes' Inaugural and that it would be disastrous to travel that road again. It was better, he believed, for the South—in spite of provocation—to accept defeat on this occasion He was skillful enough, however, to get Hayes committed to concessions for the South, including the withdrawal of military occupation forces and a return to Home Rule in key states This genuine service to his state, on an occasion when many Southern politicians were talking of open defiance, was at first largely obscured. But unmoved by the storm of opposition which poured forth from Mississippi, Lamar braced himself in preparation for the most crucial test of his role as a nonsectional, nonpartisan statesman which lay ahead in the Senate.

No other high-ranking Confederate officer had yet entered the Senate. Nor had many Senators forgotten that nearly twenty years earlier Lamar was an extreme sectionalist Congressman, who had resigned his seat to draft

the Mississippi Ordinance of Secession The time was not auspicious for his return The Republicans were accusing the Democrats of harboring insurrectionists and traitors

As Senator Lamar, ill and fatigued, rested at home throughout much of 1877, a new movement was sweeping the South and West, a movement which would plague the political parties of the nation for a generation to come—"free silver" The Moses of the silver forces, William Jennings Bryan, had not yet appeared on the scene; but "Silver Dick" Bland, the Democratic Representative from Missouri, was leading the way with his bill for the free coinage of all silver brought to the Mint Inasmuch as a tremendous spurt in the production of the western silver mines had caused its value in relation to gold to shrink considerably, the single purpose of the silver forces was clear, simple and appealing—easy, inflationary money

It was a tremendously popular cause in Mississippi The panic of 1873 had engulfed the nation into the most terrible depression it had ever suffered, and the already impoverished states of the South were particularly hard hit Businesses failed by the thousands, unemployment increased and wages were reduced. Farm prices dropped rapidly from their high wartime levels and the farmers of Mississippi—desperate for cash—vowed support of any bill which would raise the price of their commodities, lower the value of their debts, and increase the availability of money The South foresaw itself in a state of permanent indebtedness to the financial institutions of the East unless easy money could be made available to pay its heavy debts

Silver suddenly acquired a political appeal as the poor man's friend—in contrast to gold, the rich man's money, silver was the money of the prairies and small towns, unlike gold, the money of Wall Street Silver was going to provide an easy solution to everyone's problems—falling farm prices, high interest rates, heavy debts and all the rest Although the Democratic party since the days of Jackson had been the party of hard money, it rushed to exploit this new and popular issue—and it was naturally assumed that the freshman Democratic Senator from poverty-stricken Mississippi would enthusiastically join the fight

But Lamar, the learned scholar and professor, approached the issue somewhat differently than his colleagues Paying but little heed to the demands of his constituents, he exhausted all available treatises on both sides of the controversy His study convinced him that the only sound position was in support of sound money The payment of our government's debts in a debased, inflated currency, as the Bland Bill encouraged and the accompanying Matthews Resolution specifically provided, was an ethical wrong and a practical mistake, he felt, certain to embarrass our standing in the eyes of the world, and promoted not as a permanent financial program but as a spurious relief bill to alleviate the nation's economic distress

On January 24, 1878, in a courageous and learned address—his first major speech on the Senate floor—Lamar rejected the pleas of Mississippi voters and assailed elaborate rationalizations behind the two silver measures as artificial and exaggerated And the following day he voted " No " on the Matthews Resolution, in opposition to his colleague from Mississippi, a Negro Republican of exceptional talents elected several years earlier by the old " carpetbag " Legislature.

Praise for Senator Lamar's masterly and statesmanlike analysis of the issue emanated from many parts of the country, but from Mississippi came little but condemnation On January 30, the State Legislature adopted a Memorial omitting all mention of Lamar but—in an obvious and deliberate slap—congratulating and thanking his colleague (to whom the white Democratic legislators normally were bitterly opposed) for voting the opposite way and thus reflecting " the sentiment and will of his constituents " The Memorial deeply hurt Lamar, and he was little consoled by a letter from his close friend, the Speaker of the Mississippi House, who termed it " a damned outrage " but explained

The people are under a pressure of hard times and scarcity of money, and their representatives felt bound to strike at something which might give relief, the how or wherefor very few of them could explain

But the Legislature was not through On February 4, a resolution was passed by both Houses instructing Lamar to vote for the Bland Silver Bill, and to use his efforts as spokesman for Mississippi to secure its passage

Lamar was deeply troubled by this action He knew that the right of binding legislative instructions had firm roots in the South But writing to his wife about the demands of the Legislature that had appointed him, he confided " I cannot do it, I had rather quit politics forever " He attempted to explain at length to a friend in the Legislature that he recognized the right of that body to express its opinions upon questions of federal policy and the obligation of a Senator to abide by those expressions whenever he was doubtful as to what his course should be But in this particular case, he insisted, " their wishes are directly in conflict with the convictions of my whole life, and had I voted (on the Matthews Resolution) as directed, I should have cast my first vote against my conscience "

If (a Senator) allows himself to be governed by the opinions of his friends at home, however devoted he may be to them or they to him, he throws away all the rich results of a previous preparation and study, and simply becomes a commonplace exponent of those popular sentiments which may change in a few days. . Such a course will dwarf any man's statesmanship and his vote would be simply considered as an echo of current opinion, not the result of mature deliberations

Moreover, consistent with the courageous philosophy that had governed his return to public life, Lamar was determined not to back down merely because his section was contrary minded He would not purchase the respect of the North for himself and his section by a calculated and cringing course, but having decided, on the merits, that the bill was wrong, he was anxious to demonstrate to the nation that statesmanship was not dead in the South nor was the South desirous of repudiating national obligations and honor He felt that on this issue it was of particular importance that the South should not follow a narrow sectional course of action For years it had been argued that Southern Democrats would seek to abrogate the obligations that the United States Government had incurred during the Civil War and for which the South felt no responsibility Lamar alone among the Southern Democrats opposed the " free silver " movement, except for Senator Ben Hill of Georgia, who said that while he had done his best during the war to make the Union bondholder who purchased a dollar bond at sixty cents lose the sixty cents he had given, he was now for repaying him the dollar he was promised

One week later, the Bland Silver Bill came before the Senate for a final vote As the debate neared its end, Senator Lamar rose unexpectedly to his feet No notes were in his hand, for he was one of the most brilliant extemporaneous speakers ever to sit in the Senate (" The pen is an extinguisher upon my mind, " he said, " and a torture to my nerves ") Instead he held an official document which bore the great seal of the State of Mississippi, and this he dispatched by page to the desk With apologies to his colleagues, Senator Lamar explained that, although he had already expressed his views on the Silver Bill, he had " one other duty to perform, a very painful one, but which is nonetheless clear " He then asked that the resolutions which he had sent to the desk be read

The Senate was first astonished and then attentively silent as the Clerk droned the express will of the Mississippi Legislature that its Senators vote for the Bland Silver Bill As the Clerk completed the instructions, all eyes turned toward Lamar, no one certain what to expect As the reporter for the Washington *Capitol* described it

Remembering the embarrassing position of this gentleman with respect to the pending bill, every Senator immediately gave his attention, and the Chamber became as silent as the tomb

A massive but lone figure on the Senate floor, Lucius Lamar spoke in a quiet yet powerful voice, a voice which "grew tremulous with emotion, as his body fairly shook with agitation "

MR PRESIDENT Between these resolutions and my convictions there is a great gulf I cannot pass it Upon the youth of my state whom it has been my privilege to assist in education I have always endeavored to impress the belief that truth was better than falsehood, honesty better than policy, courage

better than cowardice. Today my lessons confront me Today I must be true or false, honest or cunning, faithful or unfaithful to my people Even in this hour of their legislative displeasure and disapprobation, I cannot vote as these resolutions direct

My reasons for my vote shall be given to my people. Then it will be for them to determine if adherence to my honest convictions has disqualified me from representing them, whether a difference of opinion upon a difficult and complicated subject to which I have given patient, long-continued, conscientious study, to which I have brought entire honesty and singleness of purpose, and upon which I have spent whatever ability God has given me, is now to separate us, .. but be their present decision what it may, I know that the time is not far distant when they will recognize my action today as wise and just, and, armed with honest convictions of my duty, I shall calmly await the results, believing in the utterance of a great American that " truth is omnipotent, and public justice certain."

Senators on both sides of the bill immediately crowded about his desk to commend his courage. Lamar knew that his speech and vote could not prevent passage of the Bland Bill by a tremendous margin, and its subsequent enactment over the veto of President Hayes Yet his intentional and stunningly courageous disobedience to the will of his constituents was not wholly in vain Throughout the North the speech was highly praised Distrust toward the South, and suspicion of its attitude toward the national debt and national credit, diminished *Harper's Weekly*, pointing out that Lamar voted in opposition to "the strong and general public feeling of his state," concluded

No Senator has shown himself more worthy of universal respect than Mr. Lamar, for none has stood more manfully by his principles, in the face of the most authoritative remonstrance from his state . The Democratic Senator from Mississippi has shown the manly courage which becomes an American statesman.

The Nation editorialized that the brief speech of Lucius Lamar in explanation of his disregard for the instructions of his state, " for manliness, dignity and pathos has never been surpassed in Congress His vote will probably cost him his seat "

This prediction seemed certain of fulfillment The assault upon the Senator in Mississippi was instantaneous and vigorous He had turned his back on his people and his section In the words of one political orator. he had " made such haste to join the ranks of the enemy that he went stumbling over the graves of his fallen comrades." His old friend Jefferson Davis hurt him deeply by publicly condemning Lamar's disregard of the Legislature's instructions as an attack upon " the foundation of our political system " and the long-standing practice of the Southern Democratic party To refuse either to obey or to resign the office, so that his constituents " might select

someone else who might truly represent them," was to deny, said Davis, that the people had the requisite amount of intelligence to govern !

Lamar was hard hit by the attitude of his former chieftain, but it is illuminating to note that a few days later, when Senator Hoar sought to deny Davis the Mexican War Pension to which he was by law entitled, it was Lamar who spoke for the Confederate leader in a memorable and dramatic defense

Sir, it required no courage to do that, the gentleman, I believe, takes rank among the Christian statesmen He might have learned a better lesson from the pages of mythology When Prometheus was bound to the rock, it was not an eagle, it was a vulture that buried his beak in the tortured vitals of the victim

All agreed that Lamar was politically dead after one term, and the only question was who would succeed him Lamar loved Mississippi, and its criticism depressed him deeply. He wrote his wife that he wished he was in a position to vacate his office without doing his family injustice

This world is a miserable one to me except in its connection with you I get a great many complimentary letters from the North, very few from Mississippi Can it be true that the South will condemn the disinterested love of those who, perceiving her real interests, offer their unarmored breasts as barriers against the invasion of error? It is indeed a heavy cross to lay upon the heart of a public man to have to take a stand which causes the love and confidence of his constituents to flow away from him

But, Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar was not afraid of overwhelming odds Admittedly he had violated the instructions of the Legislature, he said "I will appeal to the sovereign people, the masters of the legislature who undertake to instruct me"

With this declaration, Senator Lamar launched successive tours of Mississippi Speaking to thousands of people in crowded halls and open fields, Lamar stated frankly that he was well aware that he had not pleased his constituents, that he was equally well aware that the easier path was to exploit that sectional cause to which he had always been devoted, but that it was his intention to help create a feeling of confidence and mutuality between North and South by voting in the national interest without regard to sectional pressures

For three or four hours at a time, his passionate and imaginative oratory held spellbound the crowds that came to jeer "He spoke like the mountain torrent," as several observers later described it, "sweeping away the boulders in the stream that attempted to oppose his course"

But Lamar did not employ oratorical tricks to sway emotions while dodging issues On the contrary, his speeches were a learned explanation of

his position, setting forth the Constitutional history of the Senate and its relationship to the state legislatures, and the statements and examples of Burke, and of Calhoun, Webster, and other famous Senators who had disagreed with Legislative instructions: "Better to follow the example of the illustrious men whose names have been given than to abandon altogether judgment and conviction in deference to popular clamor."

At each meeting he told of an incident which he swore had occurred during the war. Lamar, in the company of other prominent military and civilian officers of the Confederacy, was on board a blockade runner making for Savannah harbor. Although the high-ranking officers after consultation had decided it was safe to go ahead, Lamar related, the Captain had sent Sailor Billy Summers to the top mast to look for Yankee gunboats in the harbor, and Billy said he had seen ten. That distinguished array of officers knew where the Yankee fleet was, and it was *not* in Savannah, and they told the Captain that Billy was wrong and the ship must proceed ahead. The Captain refused, insisting that while the officers knew a great deal more about military affairs, Billy Summers on the top mast with a powerful glass had a much better opportunity to judge the immediate situation at hand.

It later developed that Billy was right, Lamar said, and if they had gone ahead they would have all been captured. And like Sailor Billy Summers, he did not claim to be wiser than the Mississippi Legislature. But he did believe that he was in a better position as a Member of the United States Senate to judge what was best for the interests of his constituents.

Thus it is, my countrymen, you have sent me to topmost mast, and I tell you what I see. If you say I must come down, I will obey without a murmur, for you cannot make me lie to you; but if you return me, I can only say that I will be true to love of country, truth, and God. . . . I have always thought that the first duty of a public man in a Republic founded upon the sovereignty of the people is a frank and sincere expression of his opinion to his constituents. I prize the confidence of the people of Mississippi, but I never made popularity the standard of my action. I profoundly respect public opinion, but I believe that there is in conscious rectitude of purpose a sustaining power which will support a man of ordinary firmness under any circumstances whatever.

His tour was tremendously successful. "Men who were so hostile that they could hardly be persuaded to hear him at all would mount upon the benches and tables, swinging their hats, and huzzaing until hoarse." Others departed in silence, weighing the significance of his words. When he spoke in Yazoo County, the stronghold of his opposition, the Yazoo City *Herald* reported that like "the lion at bay," he "conquered the prejudices of hundreds who had been led to believe that his views on certain points were better adapted to the latitude of New England than to that of Mississippi." And shortly thereafter, the Yazoo Democratic County Convention adopted

a resolution that their legislators should "vote for him and work for him, first, last, and all the time, as the choice of this people for United States Senator"

It is heartening to note that the people of Mississippi continued their support of him, in spite of the fact that on three important occasions—in his eulogy of Charles Sumner, in his support of the Electoral Commission which brought about the election of the Republican Hayes and in his exception to their strongly felt stand for free silver—Lamar had stood against their immediate wishes The voters responded to the sincerity and courage which he had shown; and they continued to give him their support and affection throughout the remainder of his political life He was re-elected to the Senate by an overwhelming majority, later to become Chairman of the Senate Democratic Caucus, then Secretary of the Interior and finally Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States At no time did he, who has properly been termed the most gifted statesman given by the South to the nation from the close of the Civil War to the turn of the century, ever veer from the deep conviction he had expressed while under bitter attack in 1878

The liberty of this country and its interests will never be secure if its public men become mere menials to do the biddings of their constituents instead of being representatives in the true sense of the word, looking to the lasting prosperity and future interests of the whole country

THE MEANING OF COURAGE

THIS HAS BEEN a book about courage and politics. Politics furnished the situations, courage provided the theme Courage, the universal virtue, is comprehended by us all—but these portraits of courage do not dispel the mysteries of politics. For not a single one of the men whose stories appear in the preceding pages offers a simple, clear-cut picture of motivation and accomplishment.

Motivation, as any psychiatrist will tell us, is always difficult to assess. It is particularly difficult to trace in the murky sea of politics. Those who abandoned their state and section for the national interest—men like Daniel Webster and Sam Houston, whose ambitions for higher office could not be hidden—laid themselves open to the charge that they sought only to satisfy their ambition for the Presidency. Those who broke with their party to fight for broader principles faced the accusation that they accepted office under one banner and yet deserted it in a moment of crisis for another.

But in the particular events set forth in the preceding chapters, I am persuaded after long study of the record that the national interest rather than private or political gain, furnished the basic motivation for the actions of those whose deeds are therein described. This does not mean that many of them did not seek, though rarely with success, to wring advantage out of the difficult course they had adopted For as politicians—and it is surely no disparagement to term all of them politicians—they were clearly justified in doing so.

What caused the statesmen mentioned in the preceding pages to act as they did? It was not because they "loved the public better than themselves" On the contrary it was precisely because they did *love themselves*—because each one's need to maintain his own respect for himself was more important to him than his popularity with others—because his desire to win or maintain a reputation for integrity and courage was stronger than his desire to maintain his office—because his conscience, his personal standard of ethics, his integrity or morality, call it what you will—was stronger than the pressures of public disapproval—because his faith that *his*

course was the best one, and would ultimately be vindicated, outweighed his fear of public reprisal

Although the public good was the indirect beneficiary of his sacrifice, it was not that vague and general concept, but one or a combination of these pressures of self-love that pushed him along the course of action that resulted in the slings and arrows previously described It is when the politician loves neither the public good nor himself, or when his love for himself is limited and is satisfied by the trappings of office, that the public interest is badly served And it is when his regard for himself is so high that his own self-respect demands he follow the path of courage and conscience that all benefit.

The meaning of courage, like political motivations, is frequently misunderstood Some enjoy the excitement of its battles, but fail to note the implications of its consequences Some admire its virtues in other men and other times, but fail to comprehend its current potentialities Perhaps, to make clearer the significance of these stories of political courage, it would be well to say what this book is not

It is not intended to justify independence for the sake of independence, obstinacy to all compromise or excessively proud and stubborn adherence to one's own personal convictions It is not intended to suggest that there is, on every issue, one right side and one wrong side, and that all Senators except those who are knaves or fools will find the right side and stick to it On the contrary, I share the feelings expressed by Prime Minister Melbourne, who, when irritated by the criticism of the then youthful historian T B Macaulay, remarked that he would like to be as sure of anything as Macaulay seemed to be of everything And nine years in Congress have taught me the wisdom of Lincoln's words "There are few things wholly evil or wholly good Almost everything, especially of Government policy, is an inseparable compound of the two, so that our best judgment of the preponderance between them is continually demanded "

This book is not intended to suggest that party regularity and party responsibility are necessary evils which should at no time influence our decisions It is not intended to suggest that the local interests of one's state or region have no legitimate right to consideration at any time

Finally, this book is not intended to disparage democratic government and popular rule The examples of constituent passions unfairly condemning a man of principle are not unanswerable arguments against permitting the widest participation in the electoral process The stories of men who accomplished good in the face of cruel calumnies from the public are not final proof that we should at all times ignore the feelings of the voters on national issues For, as Winston Churchill has said, "Democracy is the worst form of government—except all those other forms that have been tried from

time to time." We can improve our democratic processes, we can enlighten our understanding of its problems, and we can increase our respect for those men of integrity who find it necessary, from time to time, to act contrary to public opinion. But we cannot solve the problems of legislative independence and responsibility by abolishing or curtailing democracy.

For democracy means much more than popular government and majority rule, much more than a system of political techniques to flatter or deceive powerful blocs of voters The true democracy, living and growing and inspiring, puts its faith in the people—faith that the people will not simply elect men who will represent their views ably and faithfully, but also elect men who will exercise their conscientious judgment—faith that the people will not condemn those whose devotion to principle leads them to unpopular courses, but will reward courage, respect honor and ultimately recognize right.

These stories are the stories of such a democracy Indeed, there would be no such stories had this nation not maintained its heritage of free speech and dissent, had it not fostered honest conflicts of opinion, had it not encouraged tolerance for unpopular views Cynics may point to our inability to provide a happy ending for each chapter. But I am certain that these stories will not be looked upon as warnings to beware of being courageous For the continued political success of many of those who withstood the pressures of public opinion, and the ultimate vindication of the rest, enables us to maintain our faith in the long-run judgment of the people

And thus neither the demonstrations of past courage nor the need for future courage are confined to the Senate alone. Not only do the problems of courage and conscience concern every officeholder in our land, however humble or mighty, and to whomever he may be responsible—voters, a legislature, a political machine or a party organization. They concern as well every voter in our land—and they concern those who do not vote, those who take no interest in Government, those who have only disdain for the politician and his profession They concern everyone who has ever complained about corruption in high places, and everyone who has ever insisted that his representative abide by his wishes. For, in a democracy, every citizen, regardless of his interest in politics, "holds office"; every one of us is in a position of responsibility; and, in the final analysis, the kind of government we get depends upon how we fulfill those responsibilities We, the people, are the boss, and we will get the kind of political leadership, be it good or bad, that we demand and deserve

These problems do not even concern politics alone—for the same basic choice of courage or compliance continually faces us all, whether we fear the anger of constituents, friends, or our union, whenever we stand against the flow of opinion on strongly contested issues. For without belittling

the courage with which men have died, we should not forget those acts of courage with which men—such as the subjects of this book—have *lived* The courage of life is often a less dramatic spectacle than the courage of a final moment, but it is no less a magnificent mixture of triumph and tragedy. A man does what he must—in spite of personal consequences, in spite of obstacles and dangers and pressures—and that is the basis of all human morality

To be courageous, these stories make clear, requires no exceptional qualifications, no magic formula, no special combination of time, place and circumstance It is an opportunity that sooner or later is presented to us all Politics merely furnishes one arena which imposes special tests of courage In whatever arena of life one may meet the challenge of courage, whatever may be the sacrifices he faces if he follows his conscience—the loss of his friends his fortune, his contentment, even the esteem of his fellow men—each man must decide for himself the course he will follow The stories of past courage can define that ingredient—they can teach, they can offer hope, they can provide inspiration But they cannot supply courage itself For this each man must look into his own soul

GLOSSARY

CONFEDERATE STATES : *The eleven Southern states that seceded from the United States in 1860 and 1861 to form the Confederate States of America South Carolina was the first state to vote to leave the Union*

ANTI-VIVISECTIONISTS : *Group opposed to surgical operation on a living animal*

RETIRE TO POCATELLO : *Retire from public life.*

SECTIONALISTS : *Those who advocated "sectionalism," or devotion to the interests peculiar to a section of the country*

WAR OF 1812-14 : *On June 18, 1812, the United States Congress voted a declaration of war on England for British seizure of American ships and sailors and British arm help to Red-Indians*

KANSAS-NEBRASKA BILL : *Became an Act on May 30, 1854 It left the issue of slavery in Kansas and Nebraska to the vote of settlers in those new states.*

MISSOURI COMPROMISE : *A bill authored by Henry Clay and passed by Congress on March 3, 1820, allowed slavery in that state but not elsewhere west of the Mississippi river north of 30 30' latitude Repealed 1854*

FIRE-EATERS : *Quarrelsome persons who seek a fight*

ABOLITIONISTS : *Those who favored abolition of Negro slavery Also called Free-soilers*

DISUNIONISTS : *Those who favored division of the United States into separate "free" and "slave holding" nations*

CARPETBAG GOVERNMENTS : *A term of contempt applied to the agencie and the civil officials, who governed the South during the reconstruction period These office-holders often had no more property than would go into a carpetbag and were interested primarily in the graft which they could collect*

SPILLING OF THE WINE : *The loss through war casualties of young leaders*

JEFFERSON DAVIS : *Senator from Mississippi, elected President of the Confederate States of America October 16, 1861, inaugurated at Montgomery, Ala, February 18, 1862, and served throughout the short-lived confederacy*

BENEDICT ARNOLD : *American Revolutionary General who turned traitor (1741-1801)*

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL *American essayist and diplomat (1819-1891)*

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT : *American poet and editor (1794-1878)*

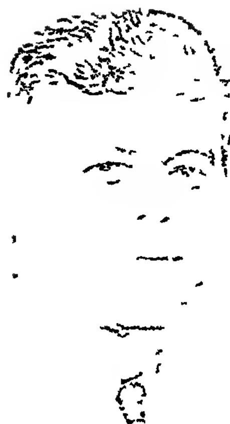
HORACE MANN : *American educator (1796-1859).*

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER : *American poet (The Quaker Poet) (1807-1892)*

LONGSTREET FAMILY : *Family of General James Longstreet of the Confederacy (1821-1904), a prominent Southern family*

WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN : *American lawyer, poet and orator (1860-1925)*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



JOHN Fitzgerald Kennedy, Thirty-fifth President of the United States of America, was born May 29, 1917, in Brookline, Massachusetts Son of Joseph Patrick (former Ambassador to the Court of St James) and Rose (Fitzgerald) Kennedy, he was educated in the Brookline public schools and the Choate School, Wallingford, Connecticut In 1935 and 1936, he studied in the London School of Economics under the renowned Harold J Laski He received a bachelor of science degree from Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1940, and later that year undertook graduate studies at Stanford University, Palo Alto, California

On September 12, 1953, John Kennedy, the then U S Senator from Massachusetts, married Jacqueline Lee Bouvier They have one daughter, Caroline Bouvier, born on November 27, 1957, and one son, John Kennedy Jr , born on November 25, 1960, just sixteen days after his father was elected President

Enlisting in the U S Navy in 1941 as a patrol torpedo boat commander, he served as a Lieutenant from 1941 to 1945 in the southwest Pacific theater of war During combat, a Japanese destroyer rammed his craft, cutting it in two In spite of injuries, he held his surviving ten wounded men together and finally led them to safety. He was awarded the Navy Cross and Purple Heart for acts of leadership and heroism in action After the war he was a correspondent for the International News Service covering in 1945 the San Francisco Conference which established the United Nations the British Election which unseated Mr Churchill and the Potsdam meeting

Mr Kennedy was elected to the U S House of Representatives in 1946 at the age of twenty-nine and re-elected in 1948 and 1950 He was also chosen one of the ten outstanding men of the year by the U.S Junior Chamber of Commerce in 1946

In the 1952 national elections, he was elected U S Senator and was re-elected in 1958.

Mr. Kennedy was unanimously nominated for the Presidency at the Democratic Party's National Convention in San Francisco, California, on July 13, 1960, and on November 8, 1960, the people of America elected him as the President of the United States of America

President Kennedy has written and published three books *Why England Slept*, published in 1940, discusses Britain's lack of preparation for World War II The present book, *Profiles in Courage*, was published in 1956 and won Pulitzer Prize for biography in 1956 *The Strategy of Peace*, edited by Allan Nevins and published in 1960, - is a collection of Mr Kennedy's speeches on foreign policy, peace and defense