

ART. VI. — *The Life, Correspondence, and Speeches of HENRY CLAY.* By the REV. CALVIN COLTON, LL. D., Professor of Public Economy, Trinity College. New York: A. S. Barnes & Co. 1857. 6 vols. 8vo.

THE close of the war removes the period preceding it to a great distance from us, so that we can judge its public men as though we were the "posterity" to whom they sometimes appealed. James Buchanan still haunts the neighborhood of Lancaster, a living man, giving and receiving dinners, paying his taxes, and taking his accustomed exercise; but as an historical figure he is as complete as Bolingbroke or Walpole. It is not merely that his work is done, nor that the results of his work are apparent; but the thing upon which he wrought, by their relation to which he and his contemporaries are to be estimated, has perished. The statesmen of his day, we can all now plainly see, inherited from the founders of the Republic a problem impossible of solution, with which some of them wrestled manfully, others meanly, some wisely, others foolishly. If the workmen have not all passed away, the work is at once finished and destroyed, like the Russian ice-palace, laboriously built, then melted in the sun. We can now have the requisite sympathy with those late doctors of the body politic, who came to the consultation pledged not to attempt to *remove* the thorn from its flesh, and trained to regard it as the spear-head in the side of Epaminondas, — extract it, and the patient dies. In the writhings of the sufferer the barb has fallen out, and lo! he lives and is getting well. We can now forgive most of those blind healers, and even admire such of them as were honest and not cowards; for, in truth, it *was* an impossibility with which they had to grapple, and it was not one of their creating.

Of our public men of the sixty years preceding the war, Henry Clay was certainly the most shining figure. Was there ever a public man, not at the head of a state, so beloved as he? Who ever heard such cheers, so hearty, distinct, and ringing, as those which his magic name evoked? Men shed tears at his defeat, and women went to bed sick from pure sympathy

with his disappointment. He could not travel during the last thirty years of his life, but only make progresses. When he left his home the public seized him and bore him along over the land, the committee of one State passing him on to the committee of another, and the hurrahs of one town dying away as those of the next caught his ear. The country seemed to place all its resources at his disposal; all commodities sought his acceptance. Passing through Newark once, he thoughtlessly ordered a carriage of a certain pattern: the same evening the carriage was at the door of his hotel in New York, the gift of a few Newark friends. It was so everywhere and with everything. His house became at last a museum of curious gifts. There was the counterpane made for him by a lady ninety-three years of age, and Washington's camp-goblet given him by a lady of eighty; there were pistols, rifles, and fowling-pieces enough to defend a citadel; and, among a bundle of walking-sticks, was one cut for him from a tree that shaded Cicero's grave. There were gorgeous prayer-books, and Bibles of exceeding magnitude and splendor, and silver-ware in great profusion. On one occasion there arrived at Ashland the substantial present of twenty-three barrels of salt. In his old age, when his fine estate, through the misfortunes of his sons, was burdened with mortgages to the amount of thirty thousand dollars, and other large debts weighed heavily upon his soul, and he feared to be compelled to sell the home of fifty years and seek a strange abode, a few old friends secretly raised the needful sum, secretly paid the mortgages and discharged the debts, and then caused the aged orator to be informed of what had been done, but not of the names of the donors. "Could my life insure the success of Henry Clay, I would freely lay it down this day," exclaimed an old Rhode Island sea-captain on the morning of the Presidential election of 1844. Who has forgotten the passion of disappointment, the amazement and despair, at the result of that day's fatal work? Fatal we thought it then, little dreaming that, while it precipitated evil, it brought nearer the day of deliverance.

Our readers do not need to be reminded that popularity the most intense is not a proof of merit. The two most mischievous men this country has ever produced were extremely

popular, — one in a State, the other in every State, — and both for long periods of time. There are certain men and women and children who are natural heart-winners, and their gift of winning hearts seems something apart from their general character. We have known this sweet power over the affections of others to be possessed by very worthy and by very barren natures. There are good men who repel, and bad men who attract. We cannot, therefore, assent to the opinion held by many, that popularity is an evidence of shallowness or ill-desert. As there are pictures expressly designed to be looked at from a distance by great numbers of people at once, — the scenery of a theatre, for example, — so there are men who appear formed by Nature to stand forth before multitudes, captivating every eye, and gathering in great harvests of love with little effort. If, upon looking closely at these pictures and these men, we find them less admirable than they seemed at a distance, it is but fair to remember that they were not meant to be looked at closely, and that “scenery” has as much right to exist as a Dutch painting which bears the test of the microscope.

It must be confessed, however, that Henry Clay, who was for twenty-eight years a candidate for the Presidency, cultivated his popularity. Without ever being a hypocrite, he was habitually an actor; but the part which he enacted was Henry Clay exaggerated. He was naturally a most courteous man; but the consciousness of his position made him more elaborately and universally courteous than any man ever was from mere good-nature. A man on the stage must overdo his part, in order not to seem to underdo it. There was a time when almost every visitor to the city of Washington desired, above all things, to be presented to three men there, Clay, Webster, and Calhoun, whom to have seen was a distinction. When the country member brought forward his agitated constituent on the floor of the Senate-chamber, and introduced him to Daniel Webster, the Expounder was likely enough to thrust a hand at him without so much as turning his head or discontinuing his occupation, and the stranger shrunk away painfully conscious of his insignificance. Calhoun, on the contrary, besides receiving him with civility, would converse with him, if opportunity favored, and treat him to a disquisition on the nature of gov-

ernment and the "beauty" of nullification, striving to make a lasting impression on his intellect. Clay would rise, extend his hand with that winning grace of his, and instantly captivate him by his all-conquering courtesy. He would call him by name, inquire respecting his health, the town whence he came, how long he had been in Washington, and send him away pleased with himself and enchanted with Henry Clay. And what was his delight to receive a few weeks after, in his distant village, a copy of the Kentuckian's last speech, bearing on the cover the frank of "H. Clay"! It was almost enough to make a man think of "running for Congress"! And, what was still more intoxicating, Mr. Clay, who had a surprising memory, would be likely, on meeting this individual two years after the introduction, to address him by name.

There was a gamy flavor, in those days, about Southern men, which was very captivating to the people of the North. Reason teaches us that the barn-yard fowl is a more meritorious bird than the game-cock; but the imagination does not assent to the proposition. Clay was at once game-cock and domestic fowl. His gestures called to mind the magnificently branching trees of his Kentucky forests, and his handwriting had the neatness and delicacy of a female copyist. There was a careless, graceful ease in his movements and attitudes, like those of an Indian chief; but he was an exact man of business, who docketed his letters, and could send from Washington to Ashland for a document, telling in what pigeon-hole it could be found. Naturally impetuous, he acquired early in life an habitual moderation of statement, an habitual consideration for other men's self-love, which made him the pacificator of his time. The great compromiser was himself a compromise. The ideal of education is to tame men without lessening their vivacity, their gayety, their heartiness, — to unite in them the freedom, the dignity, the prowess of a Tecumseh, with the serviceable qualities of the civilized man. This happy union is said to be sometimes produced in the pupils of the great public schools of England, who are savages on the play-ground and gentlemen in the school-room. In no man of our knowledge has there been combined so much of the best of the forest chief with so much of the good of the trained man of business

as in Henry Clay. This was the secret of his power over classes of men so diverse as the hunters of Kentucky and the manufacturers of New England.

It used to be accounted a merit in a man to rise to high station from humble beginnings; but we now perceive that humble beginnings are favorable to the development of that force of character which wins the world's great prizes. Henry Clay found an Eton and an Oxford in Old Virginia that were better for *him* than those of Old England. Few men have been more truly fortunate in their education than he. It was said of a certain lady, that to know her was a liberal education; and there really have been, and are, women of whom that could be truly averred. But perhaps the greatest good fortune that can befall an intelligent and noble-minded youth is to come into intimate, confidential relations with a wise, learned, and good old man, one who has been greatly trusted and found worthy of trust, who knows the world by having long taken a leading part in its affairs, and has outlived illusions only to get a firmer footing in realities. This, indeed, is a liberal education; and this was the happiness of Henry Clay. Nothing in biography is so strange as the certainty with which a superior youth, in the most improbable circumstances, finds the mental nourishment he needs. Here, in the swampy region of Hanover County, Virginia, was a barefooted, ungainly urchin, a poor widow's son, without one influential relative on earth; and there, in Richmond, sat on the chancellor's bench George Wythe, venerable with years and honors, one of the grand old men of Old Virginia, the preceptor of Jefferson, signer of the Declaration of Independence, the most learned man in his profession, and one of the best men of any profession. Who could have foreseen that this friendless orphan, a Baptist preacher's son, in a State where to be a "dissenter" was social inferiority, should have found in this eminent judge a friend, a mentor, a patron, a father?

Yet it came about in the most natural way. We catch our first glimpse of the boy when he sat in a little log school-house, without windows or floor, one of a humming score of shoeless boys, where a good-natured, irritable, drinking English school-master taught him to read, write, and cipher as far as Practice.

This was the only school he ever attended, and that was all he learned at it. His widowed mother, with her seven young children, her little farm, and two or three slaves, could do no more for him. Next, we see him a tall, awkward, slender stripling of thirteen, still barefoot, clad in homespun butternut of his mother's making, tilling her fields, and going to mill with his bag of corn strapped upon the family pony. At fourteen, in the year 1791, a place was found for him in a Richmond drug-store, where he served as errand-boy and youngest clerk for one year.

Then occurred the event which decided his career. His mother having married again, her husband had influence enough to procure for the lad the place of copying clerk in the office of the Court of Chancery. The young gentlemen then employed in the office of that court long remembered the entrance among them of their new comrade. He was fifteen at the time, but very tall for his age, very slender, very awkward, and far from handsome. His good mother had arrayed him in a full suit of pepper-and-salt "figginy," an old Virginia fabric of silk and cotton. His shirt and shirt-collar were stiffly starched, and his coat-tail stood out boldly behind him. The dandy law clerks of metropolitan Richmond exchanged glances as this gawky figure entered, and took his place at a desk to begin his work. There was something in his manner which prevented their indulgence in the jests that usually greet the arrival of a country youth among city blades; and they afterwards congratulated one another that they had waited a little before beginning to tease him, for they soon found that he had brought with him from the country an exceedingly sharp tongue. Of his first service little is known, except the immense fact that he was a most diligent reader. It rests on better authority than "Campaign Lives," that, while his fellow-clerks went abroad in the evening in search of pleasure, this lad stayed at home with his books. It is a pleasure also to know that he had not a taste for the low vices. He came of sound English stock,—of a family who would not have regarded drunkenness and debauchery as "sowing wild oats," but recoiled from the thought of them with horror. Clay was far from being a saint; but it is our privilege to believe of him that he was a clean, temperate, and studious young man.

Richmond, the town of the young Republic that had most in it of the metropolitan, proved to this aspiring youth as true a University as the printing-office in old Boston was to Benjamin Franklin ; for he found in it the culture best suited to him and his circumstances. Chancellor Wythe, then sixty-seven years of age, overflowing with knowledge and good nature, was the president of that university. Its professors were the cluster of able men who had gone along with Washington and Jefferson in the measures which resulted in the independence of the country. Patrick Henry was there to teach him the arts of oratory. There was a flourishing and famous debating society, the pride of the young men of Richmond, in which to try his half-fledged powers. The impulse given to thought by the American Revolution was quickened and prolonged by the thrilling news which every vessel brought from France of the revolution there. There was an atmosphere in Virginia favorable to the growth of a sympathetic mind. Young Clay's excellent handwriting brought him gradually into the most affectionate relations with Chancellor Wythe, whose aged hand trembled to such a degree that he was glad to borrow a copyist from the clerk's office. For nearly four years it was the young man's principal duty to copy the decisions of the venerable Chancellor, which were curiously learned and elaborate ; for it was the bent of the Chancellor's mind to trace the law to its sources in the ancient world, and fortify his positions by citations from Greek and Latin authors. The Greek passages were a plague to the copyist, who knew not the alphabet of that language, but copied it, so to speak, by rote.

Here we have another proof that, no matter what a man's opportunities are, he only learns what is congenial with his nature and circumstances. Living under the influence of this learned judge, Henry Clay might have become a man of learning. George Wythe was a "scholar" in the ancient acceptation of the word. The whole education of his youth consisted in his acquiring the Latin language, which his mother taught him. Early inheriting a considerable fortune, he squandered it in dissipation, and sat down at thirty, a reformed man, to the study of the law. To his youthful Latin he now added Greek, which he studied assiduously for many years, becoming,

probably, the best Greek scholar in Virginia. His mind would have wholly lived in the ancient world, and been exclusively nourished from the ancient literatures, but for the necessities of his profession and the stirring political events of his later life. The Stamp Act and the Revolution varied and completed his education. His young copyist was not attracted by him to the study of Greek and Latin, nor did he catch from him the habit of probing a subject to the bottom, and ascending from the questions of the moment to universal principles. Henry Clay probed nothing to the bottom, except, perhaps, the game of whist; and though his instincts and tendencies were high and noble, he had no grasp of general truths. Under Wythe, he became a stanch Republican of the Jeffersonian school. Under Wythe, who emancipated his slaves before his death, and set apart a portion of his estate for their maintenance, he acquired a repugnance to slavery which he never lost. The Chancellor's learning and philosophy were not for him, and so he passed them by.

The tranquil wisdom of the judge was counteracted, in some degree, by the excitements of the debating society. As he grew older, the raw and awkward stripling became a young man whose every movement had a winning or a commanding grace. Handsome he never was; but his ruddy face and abundant light hair, the grandeur of his forehead and the speaking intelligence of his countenance, more than atoned for the irregularity of his features. His face, too, was a compromise. With all its vivacity of expression, there was always something that spoke of the Baptist preacher's son,—just as Andrew Jackson's face had the set expression of a Presbyterian elder. But of all the bodily gifts bestowed by Nature upon this favored child, the most unique and admirable was his voice. Who ever heard one more melodious? There was a depth of tone in it, a volume, a compass, a rich and tender harmony, which invested all he said with majesty. We heard it last when he was an old man past seventy; and all he said was a few words of acknowledgment to a group of ladies in the largest hall in Philadelphia. He spoke only in the ordinary tone of conversation; but his voice filled the room as the organ fills a great cathedral, and the ladies stood spellbound as the swelling cadences rolled about the vast apartment. We have heard

much of Whitefield's piercing voice and Patrick Henry's silvery tones, but we cannot believe that either of those natural orators possessed an organ superior to Clay's majestic bass. No one who ever heard him speak will find it difficult to believe what tradition reports, that he was the peerless star of the Richmond Debating Society in 1795.

Oratory was then in the highest vogue. Young Virginians did not need to look beyond the sea in order to learn that the orator was the man most in request in the dawn of freedom. Chatham, Burke, Fox, Sheridan, and Pitt were inconceivably imposing names at that day; but was not Patrick Henry the foremost man in Virginia, only because he could think and entertain an audience? And what made John Adams President but his fiery utterances in favor of the Declaration of Independence? There were other speakers then in Virginia who would have had to this day a world-wide fame if they had spoken where the world could hear them. The tendency now is to undervalue oratory, and we regret it. We believe that, in a free country, every citizen should be able to stand undaunted before his fellow-citizens, and give an account of the faith that is in him. It is no argument against oratory to point to the Disraelis of both countries, and say that a gift possessed by such men cannot be a valuable one. It is the unmanly timidity and shamefacedness of the rest of us that give to such men their preposterous importance. It were a calamity to America if, in the present rage for ball-playing and boat-rowing, which we heartily rejoice in, the debating society should be forgotten. Let us rather end the sway of oratory by all becoming orators. Most men who can talk well seated in a chair can *learn* to talk well standing on their legs; and a man who can move or instruct five persons in a small room can learn to move or instruct two thousand in a large one.

That Henry Clay cultivated his oratorical talent in Richmond, we have his own explicit testimony. He told a class of law students once that he owed his success in life to a habit early formed, and for some years continued, of reading daily in a book of history or science, and declaiming the substance of what he had read in some solitary place, — a corn-field, the forest, a barn, with only oxen and horses for auditors. "It is,"

said he, "to this early practice of the art of all arts that I am indebted for the primary and leading impulses that stimulated my progress, and have shaped and moulded my entire destiny." We should be glad to know more of this self-training; but Mr. Clay's "campaign" biographers have stuffed their volumes too full of eulogy to leave room for such instructive details. We do not even know the books from which he declaimed. Plutarch's Lives were favorite reading with him, we accidentally learn; and his speeches contain evidence that he was powerfully influenced by the writings of Dr. Franklin. We believe it was from Franklin that he learned very much of the art of managing men. Franklin, we think, aided this impetuous and exaggerating spirit to acquire his habitual moderation of statement, and that sleepless courtesy which, in his keenest encounters, generally kept him within parliamentary bounds, and enabled him to live pleasantly with men from whom he differed in opinion. Obsolete as many of his speeches are, from the transient nature of the topics of which they treat, they may still be studied with profit by young orators and old politicians as examples of parliamentary politeness. It was the good-natured and wise Franklin that helped him to this. It is certain, too, that at some part of his earlier life he read translations of Demosthenes; for of all modern orators Henry Clay was the most Demosthenian. Calhoun purposely and consciously imitated the Athenian orator; but Clay was a kindred spirit with Demosthenes. We could select passages from both these orators, and no man could tell which was American and which was Greek, unless he chanced to remember the passage. Tell us, gentle reader, were the sentences following spoken by Henry Clay after the war of 1812 at the Federalists who had opposed that war, or by Demosthenes against the degenerate Greeks who favored the designs of Philip?

"From first to last I have uniformly pursued the just and virtuous course,—asserter of the honors, of the prerogatives, of the glory of my country. Studious to support them, zealous to advance them, my whole being is devoted to this glorious cause. I was never known to walk through the city with a face of joy and exultation at the success of a foreign power, embracing and announcing the joyous tidings to those who I supposed

would transmit it to the proper place. I was never known to receive the successes of my own country with trembling, with sighs, with my eyes bent to the earth, like those impious men who are the defamers of their country, as if by such conduct they were not defamers of themselves."

Is it Clay, or is it Demosthenes? Or have we made a mistake, and copied a passage from the speech of a Unionist of 1865?

After serving four years as clerk and amanuensis, barely earning a subsistence, Clay was advised by his venerable friend, the Chancellor, to study law; and a place was procured for him in the office of the Attorney-General of the State. In less than a year after formally beginning his studies he was admitted to the bar. This seems a short preparation; but the whole period of his connection with Chancellor Wythe was a study of the law. The Chancellor was what a certain other Chancellor styles "a full man," and Henry Clay was a receptive youth.

When he had obtained his license to practise he was twenty years of age. Debating-society fame and drawing-room popularity do not, in an old commonwealth like Virginia, bring practice to a lawyer of twenty. But, as a distinguished French author has recently remarked of Julius Cæsar, "In him was united the elegance of manner which wins, to the energy of character which commands." He sought, therefore, a new sphere of exertion far from the refinements of Richmond. Kentucky, which Boone explored in 1770, was a part of Virginia when Clay was a child, and only became a State in 1792, when first he began to copy Chancellor Wythe's decisions. The first white family settled in it in 1775; but when our young barrister obtained his license, twenty-two years after, it contained a white population of nearly two hundred thousand. His mother, with five of her children and a second husband, had gone thither five years before. In 1797 Henry Clay removed to Lexington, the new State's oldest town and capital, though then containing, it is said, but fifty houses. He was a stranger there, and almost penniless. He took board, not knowing where the money was to come from to pay for it. There were already several lawyers of repute in the place. "I remember," said Mr. Clay, forty-five years after, "how com-

fortable I thought I should be if I could make one hundred pounds a year, Virginia money; and with what delight I received my first fifteen-shilling fee. My hopes were more than realized. I immediately rushed into a successful and lucrative practice." In a year and a half he was in a position to marry the daughter of one of the first men of the State, Colonel Thomas Hart, a man exceedingly beloved in Lexington.

It is surprising how addicted to litigation were the early settlers of the Western States. The imperfect surveys of land, the universal habit of getting goods on credit at the store, and "difficulties" between individuals ending in bloodshed, filled the court calendars with land disputes, suits for debt, and exciting murder cases, which gave to lawyers more importance and better chances of advancement than they possessed in the older States. Mr. Clay had two strings to his bow. Besides being a man of red tape and pigeon-holes, exact, methodical, and strictly attentive to business, he had a power over a Kentucky jury such as no other man has ever wielded. To this day nothing pleases aged Kentuckians better than to tell stories which they heard their fathers tell, of Clay's happy repartees to opposing counsel, his ingenious cross-questioning of witnesses, his sweeping torrents of invective, his captivating courtesy, his melting pathos. Single gestures, attitudes, tones, have come down to us through two or three memories, and still please the curious guest at Kentucky firesides. But when we turn to the cold records of this part of his life, we find little to justify his traditional celebrity. It appears that the principal use to which his talents were applied during the first year of his practice at the bar was in defending murderers. He seems to have shared the feeling which then prevailed in the Western country, that to defend a prisoner at the bar is a nobler thing than to assist in defending the public against his further depredations; and he threw all his force into the defence of some men who would have been "none the worse for a hanging." One day, in the streets of Lexington, a drunken fellow whom he had rescued from the murderer's doom cried out, "Here comes Mr. Clay, who saved my life." "Ah! my poor fellow," replied the advocate, "I fear I have saved too many like you, who ought to be hanged." The anecdotes printed of his ex-

plots in cheating the gallows of its due are of a quality which shows that the power of this man over a jury lay much in his manner. His delivery, which "bears absolute sway in oratory," was bewitching and irresistible, and gave to quite commonplace wit and very questionable sentiment an amazing power to please and subdue.

We are far from thinking that he was not a very able lawyer. Judge Story, we remember, before whom he argued a cause later in life, was of opinion that he would have won a high position at the bar of the Supreme Court, if he had not been early drawn away to public life. In Kentucky he was a brilliant, successful practitioner, such as Kentucky wanted and could appreciate. In a very few years he was the possessor of a fine estate near Lexington, and to the single slave who came to him as his share of his father's property were added several others. His wife being a skilful and vigorous manager, he was in independent circumstances, and ready to serve the public, if the public wished him, when he had been but ten years in his Western home. Thus he had a basis for a public career, without which few men can long serve the public with honor and success. And this was a principal reason of the former supremacy of Southern men in Washington; nearly all of them being men who owned land, which slaves tilled for them, whether they were present or absent.

The young lawyer took to politics very naturally. Posterity, which will judge the public men of that period chiefly by their course with regard to slavery, will note with pleasure that Clay's first public act was an attempt to deliver the infant State of Kentucky from that curse. The State Constitution was to be remodelled in 1799. Fresh from the society of Chancellor Wythe, an abolitionist who had set free his own slaves,—fresh from Richmond, where every man of note, from Jefferson and Patrick Henry downwards, was an abolitionist,—Henry Clay began in 1798, being then twenty-one years of age, to write a series of articles for a newspaper, advocating the gradual abolition of slavery in Kentucky. He afterwards spoke on that side at public meetings. Young as he was, he took the lead of the public-spirited young men who strove to purge the State from this iniquity; but in the Convention the proposi-

tion was voted down by a majority so decisive as to banish the subject from politics for fifty years. Still more honorable was it in Mr. Clay, that, in 1829, when Calhoun was maturing nullification, he could publicly say that among the acts of his life which he reflected upon with most satisfaction was his youthful effort to secure emancipation in Kentucky.

The chapter of our history most abounding in all the elements of interest will be that one which will relate the rise and first national triumph of the Democratic party. Young Clay came to the Kentucky stump just when the country was at the crisis of the struggle between the Old and the New. But in Kentucky it was not a struggle; for the people there, mostly of Virginian birth, had been personally benefited by Jefferson's equalizing measures, and were in the fullest sympathy with his political doctrines. When, therefore, this brilliant and commanding youth, with that magnificent voice of his, and large gesticulation, mounted the wagon that usually served as platform in the open-air meetings of Kentucky, and gave forth, in fervid oratory, the republican principles he had imbibed in Richmond, he won that immediate and intense popularity which an orator always wins who gives powerful expression to the sentiments of his hearers. We cannot wonder that, at the close of an impassioned address upon the Alien and Seditious Laws, the multitude should have pressed about him, and borne him aloft in triumph upon their shoulders; nor that Kentucky should have hastened to employ him in her public business as soon as he was of the requisite age. At thirty he was, to use the language of the stump, "Kentucky's favorite son," and incomparably the finest orator in the Western country. Kentucky had tried him, and found him perfectly to her mind. He was an easy, comfortable man to associate with, wholly in the Jeffersonian taste. His wit was not of the highest quality, but he had plenty of it; and if he said a good thing, he had such a way of saying it as gave it ten times its natural force. He chewed tobacco and took snuff,—practices which lowered the tone of his health all his life. In familiar conversation he used language of the most Western description; and he had a singularly careless, graceful way with him, that was in strong contrast with the vigor and dignity of his public efforts. He was an honest

and brave young man, altogether above lying, hypocrisy, and meanness, — full of the idea of Republican America and her great destiny. The splendor of his talents concealed his defects and glorified his foibles; and Kentucky rejoiced in him, loved him, trusted him, and sent him forth to represent her in the national council.

During the first thirteen years of Henry Clay's active life as a politician, — from his twenty-first to his thirty-fourth year, — he appears in politics only as the eloquent champion of the policy of Mr. Jefferson, whom he esteemed the first and best of living men. After defending him on the stump and aiding him in the Kentucky Legislature, he was sent in 1826, when he was scarcely thirty, to fill for one term a seat in the Senate of the United States, made vacant by the resignation of one of the Kentucky Senators. Mr. Jefferson received his affectionate young disciple with cordiality, and admitted him to his confidence. Clay had been recently defending Burr before a Kentucky court, entirely believing that his designs were lawful and sanctioned. Mr. Jefferson showed him the cipher letters of that mysterious and ill-starred adventurer, which convinced Mr. Clay that Burr was certainly a liar, if he was not a traitor. Mr. Jefferson's perplexity in 1806 was similar to that of Jackson in 1833, — too much money in the treasury. The revenue then was fifteen millions; and, after paying all the expenses of the government and the stipulated portion of the national debt, there was an obstinate and most embarrassing surplus. What to do with this irrepressible surplus was the question then discussed in Mr. Jefferson's Cabinet. The President, being a free-trader, would naturally have said, Reduce the duties. But the younger men of the party, who had no pet theories, and particularly our young Senator, who had just come in from a six weeks' horseback flounder over bridgeless roads, urged another solution of the difficulty, — Internal Improvements. But the President was a strict-constructionist, denied the authority of Congress to vote money for public works, and was fully committed to that opinion.

Mr. Jefferson yielded. The most beautiful theories will not always endure the wear and tear of practice. The President, it is true, still maintained that an amendment to the Constitu-

tion ought to precede appropriations for public works ; but he said this very briefly and without emphasis, while he stated at some length, and with force, the desirableness of expending the surplus revenue in improving the country. As time wore on, less and less was said about the amendment, more and more about the importance of internal improvements ; until, at last, the Republican party, under Clay, Adams, Calhoun, and Rush, went as far in this business of road-making and canal-digging as Hamilton himself could have desired. Thus it was that Jefferson rendered true his own saying, " We are all Federalists, we are all Republicans." Jefferson yielded, also, on the question of free-trade. There is a passage of a few lines in Mr. Jefferson's Message of 1806, the year of Henry Clay's first appearance in Washington, which may be regarded as the text of half the Kentuckian's speeches, and the inspiration of his public life. The President is discussing the question, What shall we do with the surplus ?

" Shall we suppress the impost, and give that advantage to foreign over domestic manufactures ? On a few articles of more general and necessary use, the suppression, in due season, will doubtless be right ; but the great mass of the articles upon which impost is paid are foreign luxuries, purchased by those only who are rich enough to afford themselves the use of them. Their patriotism would certainly prefer its continuance, and application to the great purposes of the public education, roads, rivers, canals, and such other objects of public improvement as it may be thought proper to add to the constitutional enumeration of Federal powers. By these operations, new channels of communication will be opened between the States, the lines of separation will disappear, their interests will be identified, and their union cemented by new and indissoluble bonds."

Upon these hints, the young Senator delayed not to speak and act ; nor did he wait for an amendment to the Constitution. His first speech in the Senate was in favor of building a bridge over the Potomac ; one of his first acts, to propose an appropriation of lands for a canal round the Falls of the Ohio at Louisville ; and soon he brought forward a resolution directing the Secretary of the Treasury to report a system of

roads and canals for the consideration of Congress. The seed of the President's Message had fallen into good ground.

Returning home at the end of the session, and re-entering the Kentucky Legislature, we still find him a strict follower of Mr. Jefferson. In support of the President's non-intercourse policy (which was Franklin's policy of 1775 applied to the circumstances of 1808), Mr. Clay proposed that the members of the Legislature should bind themselves to wear nothing that was not of American manufacture. A Federalist, ignorant of the illustrious origin of this idea, ignorant that the homespun system had caused the repeal of the Stamp Act, and *would* have postponed the Revolution but for the accident of Lexington, denounced Mr. Clay's proposition as the act of a shameless demagogue. Clay challenged this ill-informed gentleman, and a duel resulted, in which two shots were exchanged, and both antagonists were slightly wounded. Elected again to the Senate for an unexpired term, he reappeared in that body in 1809, and sat during two sessions. Homespun was again the theme of his speeches. His ideas on the subject of protecting and encouraging American manufactures were not derived from books, nor expressed in the language of political economy. At his own Kentucky home, Mrs. Clay, assisted by her servants, was spinning and weaving, knitting and sewing, most of the garments required in her little kingdom of six hundred acres, while her husband was away over the mountains serving his country. "Let the nation do what we Kentucky farmers are doing," said Mr. Clay to the Senate. "Let us manufacture enough to be independent of foreign nations in things essential,—no more." He discoursed on this subject in a very pleasant, humorous manner, without referring to the abstract principle involved, or employing any of the technical language of economists.

His service in the Senate during these two sessions enhanced his reputation greatly, and the galleries were filled when he was expected to speak, little known as he was to the nation at large. We have a glimpse of him in one of Washington Irving's letters of February, 1811: "Clay, from Kentucky, spoke against the Bank. He is one of the finest fellows I have seen here, and one of the finest orators in the Senate, though I believe

the youngest man in it. The galleries, however, were so much crowded with ladies and gentlemen, and such expectations had been expressed concerning his speech, that he was completely frightened, and acquitted himself very little to his own satisfaction. He is a man I have great personal regard for." This was the anti-bank speech which General Jackson used to say had convinced him of the impolicy of a national bank, and which, with ingenious malice, he covertly quoted in making up his Bank Veto Message of 1832.

Mr. Clay's public life proper began in November, 1811, when he appeared in Washington as a member of the House of Representatives, and was immediately elected Speaker by the war party, by the decisive majority of thirty-one. He was then thirty-four years of age. His election to the Speakership on his first appearance in the House gave him, at once, national standing. His master in political doctrine and his partisan chief, Thomas Jefferson, was gone from the scene; and Clay could now be a planet instead of a satellite. Restive as he had been under the arrogant aggressions of England, he had schooled himself to patient waiting, aided by Jefferson's benign sentiments and great example. But his voice was now for war; and such was the temper of the public in those months, that the eloquence of Henry Clay, seconded by the power of the Speaker, rendered the war unavoidable.

It is agreed that to Henry Clay, Speaker of the House of Representatives, more than to any other individual, we owe the war of 1812. When the House hesitated, it was he who, descending from the chair, spoke so as to reassure it. When President Madison faltered, it was the stimulus of Clay's resistless presence that put heart into him again. If the people seemed reluctant, it was Clay's trumpet harangues that fired their minds. And when the war was declared, it was he, more than President or Cabinet or War Committee, that carried it along upon his shoulders. All our wars begin in disaster; it was Clay who restored the country to confidence when it was disheartened by the loss of Detroit and its betrayed garrison. It was Clay alone who could encounter without flinching the acrid sarcasm of John Randolph, and exhibit the nothingness of his telling arguments. It was he alone who could ade-

quately deal with Quincy of Massachusetts, who alluded to the Speaker and his friends as "young politicians, with their pinfeathers yet unshed, the shell still sticking upon them, — perfectly unfledged, though they fluttered and cackled on the floor." Clay it was whose clarion notes rang out over departing regiments, and kindled within them the martial fire; and it was Clay's speeches which the soldiers loved to read by the camp-fire. Fiery Jackson read them, and found them perfectly to his taste. Gentle Harrison read them to his Tippecanoe heroes. When the war was going all wrong in the first year, President Madison wished to appoint Clay Commander-in-Chief of the land forces; but, said Gallatin, "What shall we do without him in the House of Representatives?"

Henry Clay was not a man of blood. On the contrary, he was eminently pacific, both in his disposition and in his politics. Yet he believed in the war of 1812, and his whole heart was in it. The question occurs, then, Was it right and best for the United States to declare war against Great Britain in 1812? The proper answer to this question depends upon another. What ought we to think of Napoleon Bonaparte? If Napoleon *was*, what English Tories and American Federalists said he was, the enemy of mankind, — and if England, in warring upon him, *was* fighting the battle of mankind, — then the injuries received by neutral nations might have been borne without dishonor. When those giant belligerents were hurling continents at one another, the damage done to by-standers from the flying off of fragments was a thing to be expected, and submitted to as their share of the general ruin, — to be compensated by the final suppression of the common foe. To have endured this, and even to have submitted, for a time, to the searching of ships, so that not one Englishman should be allowed to skulk from such a fight, had not been pusillanimity, but magnanimity. But if, as English Whigs and American Democrats contended, Napoleon Bonaparte was the armed soldier of democracy, the rightful heir of the Revolution, the sole alternative to anarchy, the *legitimate* ruler of France; if the responsibility of those enormous desolating wars does not lie at his door, but belongs to George III. and the Tory party of England; if it is a fact that Napoleon always stood ready to

make a just peace, which George III. and William Pitt refused, *not* in the interest of mankind and civilization, but in that of the Tory party and the allied dynasties, — then America was right in resenting the searching and seizure of her ships, and right, after exhausting every peaceful expedient, in declaring war.

That this was really the point in dispute between our two parties is shown in the debates, newspapers, and pamphlets of the time. The Federalists, as Mr. Clay observed in one of his speeches, compared Napoleon to “every monster and beast, from that mentioned in the Revelation down to the most insignificant quadruped.” The Republicans, on the contrary, spoke of him always with moderation and decency, sometimes with commendation, and occasionally he was toasted at their public dinners with enthusiasm. Mr. Clay himself, while lamenting his enormous power and the suspension of ancient nationalities, always had a lurking sympathy with him. “Bonaparte,” said he in his great war speech of 1813, “has been called the scourge of mankind, the destroyer of Europe, the great robber, the infidel, the modern Attila, and Heaven knows by what other names. Really, gentlemen remind me of an obscure lady, in a city not very far off, who also took it into her head, in conversation with an accomplished French gentleman, to talk of the affairs of Europe. She, too, spoke of the destruction of the balance of power; stormed and raged about the insatiable ambition of the Emperor; called him the curse of mankind, the destroyer of Europe. The Frenchman listened to her with perfect patience, and when she had ceased said to her, with ineffable politeness, ‘Madam, it would give my master, the Emperor, infinite pain if he knew how hardly you thought of him.’” This brief passage suffices to show the prevailing tone of the two parties when Napoleon was the theme of discourse.

It is, of course, impossible for us to enter into this question of Napoleon’s moral position. Intelligent opinion, ever since the means of forming an opinion were accessible, has been constantly judging Napoleon more leniently, and the Tory party more severely. We can only say, that, in our opinion, the war of 1812 was just and necessary; and that Henry Clay, both in

supporting Mr. Jefferson's policy of non-intercourse and in supporting President Madison's policy of war, deserved well of his country. Postponed that war might have been. But, human nature being what it is, and the English government being what it was, we do not believe that the United States could ever have been distinctly recognized as one of the powers of the earth without another fight for it.

The war being ended and the Federal party extinct, upon the young Republicans, who had carried on the war, devolved the task of "reconstruction." Before they had made much progress in it, they came within an ace of being consigned to private life, — Clay himself having as narrow an escape as any of them.

And here we may note one point of superiority of the American government over others. In other countries it can sometimes be the interest of politicians to foment and declare war. A war strengthens a tottering dynasty, an imperial *parvenu*, an odious tyrant, a feeble ministry ; and the glory won in battle on land and sea redounds to the credit of government, without raising up competitors for its high places. But let American politicians take note. It is never *their* interest to bring on a war ; because a war is certain to generate a host of popular heroes to outshine them and push them from their places. It may sometimes be their duty to advocate war, but it is never their interest. At this moment we see both parties striving which shall present to the people the most attractive list of military candidates ; and when a busy ward politician seeks his reward in custom-house or department, he finds a dozen lame soldiers competing for the place ; one of whom gets it, — as he ought. What city has presented Mr. Stanton with a house, or Mr. Welles with fifty thousand dollars' worth of government bonds ? Calhoun precipitated the country into a war with Mexico ; but what did he gain by it but new bitterness of disappointment, while the winner of three little battles was elected President ? Henry Clay was the animating soul of the war of 1812, and we honor him for it ; but while Jackson, Brown, Scott, Perry, and Decatur came out of that war the idols of the nation, Clay was promptly notified that *his* footing in the public councils, *his* hold of the popular favor, was by no means stable.

His offence was that he voted for the compensation bill of 1816, which merely changed the pay of members of Congress from the pittance of six dollars a day to the pittance of fifteen hundred dollars a year. He who before was lord paramount in Kentucky saved his seat only by prodigious efforts on the stump, and by exerting all the magic of his presence in the canvass.

No one ever bore cutting disappointment with an airier grace than this high-spirited thorough-bred ; but he evidently felt this apparent injustice. Some years later, when it was proposed in Congress to pension Commodore Perry's mother, Mr. Clay, in a speech of five minutes, totally extinguished the proposition. Pointing to the vast rewards bestowed upon such successful soldiers as Marlborough, Napoleon, and Wellington, he said, with thrilling effect: "How different is the fate of the statesman ! In his quiet and less brilliant career, after having advanced, by the wisdom of his measures, the national prosperity to the highest point of elevation, and after having sacrificed his fortune, his time, and perhaps his health, in the public service, what, too often, are the rewards that await him ? Who thinks of *his* family, impoverished by the devotion of his attention to his country, instead of their advancement ? Who proposes to pension him, — much less his *mother* ?" He spoke the more feelingly, because he, who could have earned more than the President's income by the practice of his profession, was often pinched for money, and was once obliged to leave Congress for the sole purpose of taking care of his shattered fortune. He felt the importance of this subject in a national point of view. He wrote in 1817 to a friend : "Short as has been my service in the public councils, I have seen some of the most valuable members quitting the body from their inability to sustain the weight of these sacrifices. And in process of time, I apprehend, this mischief will be more and more felt. Even now there are few, if any, instances of members dedicating their lives to the duties of legislation. Members stay a year or two ; curiosity is satisfied ; the novelty wears off ; expensive habits are brought or acquired ; their affairs at home are neglected ; their fortunes are wasting away ; and they are compelled to retire."

The eight years of Mr. Monroe's administration — from 1817 to 1825 — were the most brilliant period of Henry Clay's career. His position as Speaker of the House of Representatives would naturally have excluded him from leadership; but the House was as fond of hearing him speak as he could be of speaking, and opportunities were continually furnished him by going into Committee of the Whole. In a certain sense he was in opposition to the administration. When one party has so frequently and decidedly beaten the party opposed to it, that the defeated party goes out of existence, the conquering party soon divides. The triumphant Republicans of 1816 obeyed this law of their position; — one wing of the party, under Mr. Monroe, being reluctant to depart from the old Jeffersonian policy; the other wing, under Henry Clay, being inclined to go very far in internal improvements and a protective tariff. Mr. Clay now appears as the great champion of what he proudly styled the American System. He departed farther and farther from the simple doctrines of the earlier Democrats. Before the war he had opposed a national bank; now he advocated the establishment of one, and handsomely acknowledged the change of opinion. Before the war, he proposed only such a tariff as would render America independent of foreign nations in articles of the first necessity; now he contemplated the establishment of a great manufacturing system, which should attract from Europe skilful workmen, and supply the people with everything they consumed, even to jewelry and silver-ware. Such success had he with his American System, that, before many years rolled away, we see the rival wings of the Republican party striving which could concede most to the manufacturers in the way of an increased tariff. Every four years, when a President was to be elected, there was an inevitable revision of the tariff, each faction outbidding the other in conciliating the manufacturing interest; until at length the near discharge of the national debt suddenly threw into politics a prospective surplus, — one of twelve millions a year, — which came near crushing the American System, and gave Mr. Calhoun his pretext for nullification.

At present, with such a debt as we have, the tariff is no longer a question with us. The government must have its million

a day; and as no tax is less offensive to the people than a duty on imported commodities, we seem compelled to a practically protective system for many years to come. But, of all men, a citizen of the United States should be the very last to accept the protective system as final; for when he looks abroad over the great assemblage of sovereignties which he calls the United States, and asks himself the reason of their rapid and uniform prosperity for the last eighty years, what answer can he give but this?— *There is free trade among them.* And if he extends his survey over the whole earth, he can scarcely avoid the conclusion that free trade among all nations would be as advantageous to all nations as it is to the thirty-seven States of the American Union. But nations are not governed by theories and theorists, but by circumstances and politicians. The most perfect theory must sometimes give way to exceptional fact. We find, accordingly, Mr. Mill, the great English champion of free trade, fully sustaining Henry Clay's moderate tariff of 1816, but sustaining it only as a temporary measure. The paragraph of Mr. Mill's Political Economy which touches this subject seems to us to express so exactly the true policy of the United States with regard to the tariff, that we will take the liberty of quoting it.

“The only case in which, on mere principles of political economy, protecting duties can be defensible, is when they are imposed temporarily, (especially in a young and rising nation,) in hopes of naturalizing a foreign industry, in itself perfectly suitable to the circumstances of the country. The superiority of one country over another in a branch of production often arises only from having begun it sooner. There may be no inherent advantage on one part, or disadvantage on the other, but only a present superiority of acquired skill and experience. A country which has this skill and experience yet to acquire may, in other respects, be better adapted to the production than those which were earlier in the field; and besides, it is a just remark of Mr. Rae, that nothing has a greater tendency to promote improvement in any branch of production, than its trial under a new set of conditions. But it cannot be expected that individuals should, at their own risk, or rather to their certain loss, introduce a new manufacture, and bear the burden of carrying it on, until the producers have been educated up to the level of those with whom the processes are traditional. A protecting duty, continued for a reasonable time, will sometimes be the least incon-

venient mode in which the nation can tax itself for the support of such an experiment. But the protection should be confined to cases in which there is good ground of assurance that the industry which it fosters will after a time be able to dispense with it; nor should the domestic producers ever be allowed to expect that it will be continued to them beyond the time necessary for a fair trial of what they are capable of accomplishing.\*

In the quiet of his library at Ashland, Mr. Clay, we believe, would, at any period of his public life, have assented to the doctrines of this passage. But at Washington he was a party leader and an orator. Having set the ball in motion, he could not stop it; nor does he appear to have felt the necessity of stopping it, until, in 1831, he was suddenly confronted by three Gorgons at once, — a coming Surplus, a President that vetoed internal improvements, and an ambitious Calhoun, resolved on using the surplus either as a stepping-stone to the Presidency or a wedge with which to split the Union. The time to have put down the brakes was in 1828, when the national debt was within seven years of being paid off; but precisely *then* it was that both divisions of the Democratic party — one under Mr. Van Buren, the other under Mr. Clay — were running a kind of tariff race, neck and neck, in which Van Buren won. Mr. Clay, it is true, was not in Congress then, — he was Secretary of State; but he was the soul of his party, and his voice was the voice of a master. In all his letters and speeches there is not a word to show that he then anticipated the surplus, or the embarrassments to which it gave rise; though he could not have forgotten that a very trifling surplus was one of the chief anxieties of Mr. Jefferson's administration. Mr. Clay's error, we think, arose from his not perceiving clearly that a protective tariff, though justifiable sometimes, is always in itself an evil, and is never to be accepted as the permanent policy of any country; and that, being an evil, it must be reduced to the minimum that will answer the temporary purpose.

In estimating Henry Clay, we are always to remember that he was an orator. He had a genius for oratory. There is, we believe, no example of a man endowed with a genius for oratory who also possessed an understanding of the first order.

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\* Mill's Principles of Political Economy, Book V. Ch. X. § 1.

Mr. Clay's oratory was vivified by a good heart and a genuine love of country; and on occasions which required only a good heart, patriotic feeling, and an eloquent tongue, he served his country well. But as a party leader he had sometimes to deal with matters which demanded a radical and far-seeing intellect; and then, perhaps, he failed to guide his followers aright. At Washington, during the thirteen years of his Speakership, he led the gay life of a popular hero and drawing-room favorite; and his position was supposed to compel him to entertain much company. As a young lawyer in Kentucky, he was addicted to playing those games of mere chance which alone at that day were styled gambling. He played high and often, as was the custom then all over the world. It was his boast, even in those wild days, that he never played at home, and never had a pack of cards in his house; but when the lawyers and judges were assembled during court sessions, there was much high play among them at the tavern after the day's work was done. In 1806, when Mr. Clay was elected to the Senate, he resolved to gamble no more,—that is, to play at hazard and “brag” no more,—and he kept his resolution. Whist, being a game depending partly on skill, was not included in this resolution; and whist was thenceforth a very favorite game with him, and he greatly excelled in it. It was said of him, as it was of Charles James Fox, that, at any moment of a hand, he could name all the cards that remained to be played. He discounted high stakes; and we believe he never, after 1806, played for more than five dollars “a corner.” These, we know, were the stakes at Ghent, where he played whist for many months with the British Commissioners during the negotiations for peace in 1815. We mention his whist-playing only as part of the evidence that he was a gay, pleasant, easy man of the world,—not a student, not a thinker, not a philosopher. Often, in reading over his speeches of this period, we are ready to exclaim, “Ah! Mr. Clay, if you had played whist a little less, and studied history and statesmanship a great deal more, you would have avoided some errors!” A trifling anecdote related by Mr. Colton lets us into the Speaker's way of life. “How can you preside over that House today?” asked a friend, as he set Mr. Clay down at his own

door, *after sunrise*, from a party. "Come up, and you shall see how I will throw the reins over their necks," replied the Speaker, as he stepped from the carriage.

But when noble feeling and a gifted tongue sufficed for the occasion, how grandly sometimes he acquitted himself, in those brilliant years, when, descending from the Speaker's lofty seat, he held the House and the crowded galleries spellbound by his magnificent oratory! His speech of 1818, for example, favoring the recognition of the South American republics, was almost as wise as it was eloquent; for, although the provinces of South America are still far from being what we could wish them to be, yet it is certain that no single step of progress was possible for them until their connection with Spain was severed. Cuba, to-day, proves Mr. Clay's position. The amiable and intelligent Creoles of that beautiful island are nearly ready for the abolition of slavery and for regulated freedom; but they lie languishing under the hated incubus of Spanish rule, and dare not risk a war of independence, outnumbered as they are by untamed or half-tamed Africans. Mr. Clay's speeches in behalf of the young republics of South America were read by Bolivar at the head of his troops, and justly rendered his name dear to the struggling patriots. He had a clear conviction, like his master, Thomas Jefferson, that the interests of the United States lie chiefly *in America*, not Europe; and it was a favorite dream of his to see the Western Continent occupied by flourishing republics, independent, but closely allied,—a genuine Holy Alliance.

The supreme effort of Mr. Clay's Congressional life was in connection with the Missouri Compromise of 1821. He did not originate the plan of compromise, but it was certainly his influence and tact which caused the plan to prevail. Fortunately, he had been absent from Congress during some of the earlier attempts to admit Missouri; and thus he arrived in Washington in January, 1821, calm, uncommitted, and welcome to both parties. Fierce debate had wrought up the minds of members to that point where useful discussion ceases to be possible. Almost every man had given personal offence and taken personal offence; the two sides seemed reduced to the most hopeless incompatibility; and the affair was at a dead lock.

No matter what the subject of debate, Missouri was sure, in some way, to get involved in it; and the mere mention of the name was like a spark upon loose gunpowder. In February, for example, the House had to go through the ceremony of counting the votes for President of the United States, — a mere ceremony, since Mr. Monroe had been re-elected almost unanimously, and the votes of Missouri were of no importance. The tellers, to avoid giving cause of contention, announced that Mr. Monroe had received two hundred and thirty-one votes, including those of Missouri, and two hundred and twenty-eight if they were excluded. At this announcement members sprang to their feet, and such a scene of confusion arose that no man could make himself heard. After a long struggle with the riot, the Speaker declared the House adjourned.

For six weeks Mr. Clay exerted his eloquence, his arts of pacification, and all the might of his personality, to bring members to their senses. He even had a long conference with his ancient foe, John Randolph. He threw himself into this work with such ardor, and labored at it so continuously, day and night, that, when the final triumph was won, he declared that, if Missouri had been kept out of the Union two weeks longer, he should have been a dead man. Thirty-four years after these events Mr. S. G. Goodrich wrote: "I was in the House of Representatives but a single hour. While I was present there was no direct discussion of the agitating subject which already filled everybody's mind, but still the excitement flared out occasionally in incidental allusions to it, like puffs of smoke and jets of flame which issue from a house that is on fire within. I recollect that Clay made a brief speech, thrilling the House by a single passage, in which he spoke of '*poor, unheard Missouri,*' she being then without a representative in Congress. His tall, tossing form, his long, sweeping gestures, and, above all, his musical yet thrilling tones, made an impression upon me which I can never forget."

Mr. Clay, at length, had completed his preparations. He moved for a committee of the House to confer with a committee of the Senate. He himself wrote out the list of members whom he desired should be elected, and they were elected. At the last conference of the joint committees, which was held on a

Sunday, Mr. Clay insisted that their report, to have the requisite effect upon Congress and the country, must be unanimous; and unanimous it was. Both Houses, with a surprising approach to unanimity, adopted the compromise proposed; and thus was again postponed the bloody arbitrament to which the irrepressible controversy has since been submitted.

Clay's masterly conduct on this occasion added his name to the long list of gentlemen who were mentioned for the succession to Mr. Monroe in 1825. If the city of Washington had been the United States, if the House of Representatives had possessed the right to elect a President, Henry Clay might have been its choice. During the thirteen years of his Speakership not one of his decisions had been reversed; and he had presided over the turbulent and restive House with that perfect blending of courtesy and firmness which at once restrains and charms. The debates just before the war, during the war, and after the war, had been violent and acrimonious; but he had kept his own temper, and compelled the House to observe an approach to decorum. On one occasion he came into such sharp collision with the excitable Randolph, that the dispute was transferred to the newspapers, and narrowly escaped degenerating from a war of "cards" to a conflict with pistols. But the Speaker triumphed; the House and the country sustained him. On occasions of ceremony the Speaker enchanted every beholder by the superb dignity of his bearing, the fitness of his words, and the tranquil depth of his tones. What could be more eloquent, more appropriate, than the Speaker's address of welcome to Lafayette, when the guest of the nation was conducted to the floor of the House of Representatives? The House and the galleries were proud of the Speaker that day. No one who never heard this captivator of hearts can form the slightest conception of the penetrating effect of the closing sentences, though they were spoken only in the tone of conversation.

"The vain wish has been sometimes indulged, that Providence would allow the patriot, after death, to return to his country, and to contemplate the intermediate changes which had taken place; to view the forests felled, the cities built, the mountains levelled, the canals cut, the highways constructed, the progress of the arts, the advancement of

learning, and the increase of population. General, your present visit to the United States is a realization of the consoling object of that wish. You are in the midst of posterity. Everywhere you must have been struck with the great changes, physical and moral, which have occurred since you left us. Even this very city, bearing a venerated name, alike endeared to you and to us, has since emerged from the forest which then covered its site. In one respect you behold us unaltered, and this is in the sentiment of continued devotion to liberty, and of ardent affection and profound gratitude to your departed friend, the father of his country, and to you, and to your illustrious associates in the field and in the cabinet, for the multiplied blessings which surround us, and for the very privilege of addressing you which I now exercise. This sentiment, now fondly cherished by more than ten millions of people, will be transmitted with unabated vigor down the tide of time, through the countless millions who are destined to inhabit this continent, to the latest posterity."

The appropriateness of these sentiments to the occasion and to the man is evident to every one who remembers that Lafayette's love of George Washington was a Frenchman's romantic passion. Nor, indeed, did he need to have a sensitive French heart to be moved to tears by such words and such a welcome.

From 1822 to 1848, a period of twenty-six years, Henry Clay lived the strange life of a candidate for the Presidency. It was enough to ruin any man, body and soul. To live always in the gaze of millions; to be the object of eulogy the most extravagant and incessant from one half of the newspapers, and of vituperation still more preposterous from the other half; to be surrounded by flatterers interested and disinterested, and to be confronted by another body intent on misrepresenting every act and word; to have to stop and consider the effect of every utterance, public and private, upon the next "campaign"; not to be able to stir abroad without having to harangue a deputation of political friends, and stand to be kissed by ladies and pump-handled by men, and hide the enormous bore of it beneath a fixed smile till the very muscles of the face are rigid; to receive by every mail letters enough for a large town; to have your life written several times a year; to be obliged continually to refute calumnies and "define your position"; to live under a horrid necessity to be pointedly civil to all the world; to find your most casual remarks and most private con-

versations getting distorted in print,—this, and more than this, it was to be a candidate for the Presidency. The most wonderful thing that we have to say of Henry Clay is, that, such were his native sincerity and healthfulness of mind, he came out of this fiery trial still a patriot and a man of honor. We believe it was a weakness in him, as it is in any man, to set his heart upon living four years in the White House; but we can most confidently say, that, having entered the game, he played it fairly, and bore his repeated disappointments with genuine, high-bred composure. The closest scrutiny into the life of this man still permits us to believe that, when he said, “I would rather be right than be President,” he spoke the real sentiments of his heart; and that, when he said to one of his political opponents, “Tell General Jackson that, if he will sign my Land Bill, I will pledge myself to retire from public life and never to re-enter it,” he meant what he said, and would have stood to it. It is our privilege to believe this of Henry Clay; nor do we think that there was ever anything morbidly excessive in his desire for the Presidency. He was the head and choice of a great political party; in the principles of that party he fully believed; and we think he did truly desire an election to the Presidency more from conviction than ambition. This may not have been the case in 1824, but we believe it was in 1832 and in 1844.

The history of Henry Clay’s Presidential aspirations and defeats is little more than the history of a personal feud. In the year 1819, it was his fortune to incur the hatred of the best hater then living,—Andrew Jackson. They met for the first time in November, 1815, when the hero of New Orleans came to Washington to consult with the administration respecting the Indian and military affairs of his department. Each of these eminent men truly admired the other. Jackson saw in Clay the civil hero of the war, whose fiery eloquence had powerfully seconded its military heroes. Clay beheld in Jackson the man whose gallantry and skill had done most to justify the war in the sight of the people. They became immediately and cordially intimate. Jackson engaged to visit Ashland in the course of the next summer, and spend a week there. On every occasion when Mr. Clay spoke of the heroes of the war, he bestowed on Jackson the warmest praise.

In 1818 General Jackson invaded Florida, put to death two Indian chiefs in cold blood, and executed two British subjects, Arbuthnot and Ambrister.\* During the twenty-seven days' debate upon these proceedings, in 1819, the Speaker sided with those who disapproved them, and he delivered a set speech against Jackson. This speech, though it did full justice to General Jackson's motives, and contained a fine eulogium upon his previous services, gave the General deadly offence. Such was Jackson's self-love that he could not believe in the honesty of any opposition to him, but invariably attributed such opposition to low personal motives. Now it was a fact well known to Jackson, that Henry Clay had expected the appointment of Secretary of State under Mr. Monroe; and it was part of the gossip of the time that Mr. Monroe's preference of Mr. Adams was the reason of Clay's occasional opposition to measures favored by the administration. We do not believe this, because the measures which Mr. Clay opposed were such as he *must* have disapproved, and which well-informed posterity will forever disapprove. After much debate in the Cabinet, Mr. Monroe, who was peculiarly bound to Jackson, and who had reasons of his own for not offending him, determined to sustain him *in toto*, both at home and in the courts of Spain and England. Hence, in condemning General Jackson, Mr. Clay was again in opposition to the administration; and the General of course concluded, that the Speaker designed, in ruining him, merely to further his own political schemes. How he boiled with fury against Mr. Clay, his published letters amusingly attest. "The hypocrisy and baseness of Clay," wrote the General, "in pretending friendship to me, and endeavoring to crush the Executive through me, makes me despise the villain."

Jackson, as we all know, was triumphantly sustained by the House. In fact, Mr. Clay's speech was totally unworthy of the occasion. Instead of argument and fact, he gave the House and the galleries beautiful declamation. The evidence was before him; he had it in his hands; but, instead of getting up his case with patient assiduity, and exhibiting the damning proofs of Jackson's misconduct, he merely glanced over the mass of

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\* This is the correct spelling of the name, as we learn from a living relative of the unfortunate man. It has been hitherto spelled Ambrister.

papers, fell into some enormous blunders, passed over some most material points, and then endeavored to supply all deficiencies by an imposing eloquence. He even acknowledges that he had not examined the testimony. "It is *possible*," said he, "that a critical examination of the evidence *would* show" that Arbuthnot was an innocent trader. We have had occasion to examine that evidence since, and we can testify that this conjecture was correct. But why was it a *conjecture*? Why did Mr. Clay neglect to convert the conjecture into certainty? It fell to him, as representing the civilization and humanity of the United States, to vindicate the memory of an honorable old man, who had done all that was possible to prevent the war, and who had been ruthlessly murdered by men wearing the uniform of American soldiers. It fell to him to bar the further advancement of a man most unfit for civil rule. To this duty he was imperatively called, but he only half did it, and thus exasperated the tiger without disabling him.

Four years passed. In December, 1823, General Jackson reappeared in Washington to take his seat in the Senate, to which he had been elected by his wire-pullers for the purpose of promoting his interests as a candidate for the Presidency. Before he left home two or three of his friends had besought him to assume a mild and conciliatory demeanor at the capital. It would never do, they told him, for a candidate for the Presidency to threaten to cut off the ears of gentlemen who disapproved his public conduct; he must restrain himself and make friends. This advice he followed. He was reconciled with General Winfield Scott, whom, in 1817, he had styled an "assassin," a "hectoring bully," and an "intermeddling pimp and spy of the War Office." He made friends with Colonel Thomas H. Benton, with whom he had fought in the streets of Nashville, while he still carried in his body a bullet received in that bloody affray. With Henry Clay, too, he resumed friendly intercourse, met him twice at dinner-parties, rode and exchanged visits with him, and attended one of the Speaker's Congressional dinners.

When next these party chieftains met, in the spring of 1825, it was about to devolve upon the House of Representatives to decide which of three men should be the next President, —

Jackson, Adams, or Crawford. They exchanged visits as before ; Mr. Clay being desirous, as he said, to show General Jackson that, in the vote which he had determined to give, he was influenced only by public considerations. No reader needs to be informed that Mr. Clay and his friends were able to decide the election, and that they decided it in favor of Mr. Adams. We believe that Mr. Clay was wrong in so doing. As a Democrat he ought, we think, to have been willing to gratify the plurality of his fellow-citizens, who had voted for General Jackson. His motives we fully believe to have been disinterested. Indeed, it was plainly intimated to him that, if he gave the Presidency to General Jackson, General Jackson would make him his heir apparent, or, in other words, his Secretary of State.

The anger of General Jackson at his disappointment was not the blind and wild fury of his earlier days ; it was a deeper, a deadlier wrath, which he governed and concealed in order to wreak a feller vengeance. On the evening of the day on which the election in the House occurred there was a levee at the Presidential mansion, which General Jackson attended. Who, that saw him dart forward and grasp Mr. Adams cordially by the hand, could have supposed that he then entirely believed that Mr. Adams had stolen the Presidency from him by a corrupt bargain with Mr. Clay ? Who could have supposed that he and his friends had been, for fourteen days, hatching a plot to blast the good name of Mr. Adams and Mr. Clay, by spreading abroad the base insinuation that Clay had been bought over to the support of Adams by the promise of the first place in the Cabinet ? Who could have supposed that, on his way home to Tennessee, while the newspapers were paragraphing his magnanimity in defeat, as shown by his behavior at the levee, he would denounce Adams and Clay, in bar-rooms and public places, as guilty of a foul compact to frustrate the wishes of the people ?

It was calumny's masterpiece. It was a rare stroke of art to get an old dotard of a member of Congress to publish, twelve days *before* the election, that Mr. Clay had agreed to vote for Mr. Adams, and that Mr. Adams had agreed to reward him by the office of Secretary of State. When the vote had been given and the office conferred, how plausible, how convincing, the charge of bargain !

It is common to censure Mr. Clay for accepting office under Mr. Adams. We honor him for his courage in doing so. Having made Mr. Adams President, it had been unlike the gallant Kentuckian to shrink from the possible odium of the act by refusing his proper place in the administration. The calumny which anticipated his acceptance of office was a defiance: *Take office if you dare!* It was simply worthy of Henry Clay to accept the challenge, and brave all the consequences of what he had deliberately and conscientiously done.

In the office of Secretary of State Mr. Clay exhibited an admirable talent for the despatch of business. He negotiated an unusual number of useful treaties. He exerted himself to secure a recognition of the principles, that, in time of war, private property should enjoy on the ocean the same protection as on land, and that paper blockades are not to be regarded. He seconded Mr. Adams in his determination not to remove from office any man on account of his previous or present opposition to the administration; and he carried this policy so far, that, in selecting the newspapers for the publication of the laws, he refused to consider their political character. This was in strict accordance with the practice of all previous administrations; but it is so pleasant to recur to the times when that honorable policy prevailed, that we cannot help alluding to it. In his intercourse with foreign ministers, Mr. Clay had an opportunity to display all the charms of an unequalled courtesy: they remained his friends long after he had retired. His Wednesday dinners and his pleasant evening receptions were remembered for many years. How far he sympathized with Mr. Adams's extravagant dreams of a system of national works that should rival the magnificent structures of ancient Rome, or with the extreme opinions of his colleague, Mr. Rush, as to the power and importance of government, we do not know. He worked twelve hours a day in his office, he tells us; and was content therewith. He was the last high officer of the government to fight a duel. That bloodless contest between the Secretary of State and John Randolph was as romantic and absurd as a duel could well be. Colonel Benton's narrative of it is at once the most amusing and the most affecting piece of gossip which our political annals contain. Randolph, as the

most unmanageable of members of Congress, had been for fifteen years a thorn in Mr. Clay's side, and Clay's later politics had been most exasperating to Mr. Randolph; but the two men loved one another in their hearts, after all. Nothing has ever exceeded the thorough-bred courtesy and tender consideration with which they set about the work of putting one another to death; and their joy was unbounded when, after the second fire, each discovered that the other was unharmed. If all duels could have such a result, duelling would be the prettiest thing in the world.

The election of 1828 swept the administration from power. No man has ever bowed more gracefully to the decision of the people than Henry Clay. His remarks at the public dinner given him in Washington, on his leaving for home, were entirely admirable. Andrew Jackson, he said, had wronged him, but he was now the Chief Magistrate of his country, and, as such, he should be treated with decorum, and his public acts judged with candor. His journey to Ashland was more like the progress of a victor than the return homeward of a rejected statesman.

He now entered largely into his favorite branch of rural business, the raising of superior animals. Fifty merino sheep were driven over the mountains from Pennsylvania to his farm, and he imported from England some Durham and Hertford cattle. He had an Arabian horse in his stable. For the improvement of the breed of mules, he imported an ass from Malta, and another from Spain. Pigs, goats, and dogs he also raised, and endeavored to improve. His slaves being about fifty in number, he was able to carry on the raising of hemp and corn, as well as the breeding of stock, and both on a considerable scale. Mrs. Clay sent every morning to the principal hotel of Lexington thirty gallons of milk, and her husband had large consignments to make to his factor in New Orleans. His letters of this period show how he delighted in his animals and his growing crops, and how thoughtfully he considered the most trifling details of management. His health improved. He told his old friend, Washington Irving, that he found it was as good for men as for beasts to be turned out to grass occasionally. Though not without domestic afflictions, he was very happy in

his home. One of his sons graduated second at West Point, and two of his daughters were happily married. He was, perhaps, a too indulgent father; but his children loved him most tenderly, and were guided by his opinion. It is pleasing to read in the letters of his sons to him such passages as this: "You tell me that you wish me to receive your opinions, not as commands, but as advice. Yet I must consider them as commands, doubly binding; for they proceed from one so vastly my superior in all respects, and to whom I am under such great obligations, that the mere intimation of an opinion will be sufficient to govern my conduct."

The President, meanwhile, was paying such homage to the farmer of Ashland as no President of the United States had ever paid to a private individual. General Jackson's principal object — the object nearest his heart — appears to have been to wound and injure Henry Clay. His appointments, his measures, and his vetoes seem to have been chiefly inspired by resentment against him. Ingham of Pennsylvania, who had taken the lead in that State in giving currency to the "bargain" calumny, was appointed Secretary of the Treasury. Eaton, who had aided in the original concoction of that foul slander, was appointed Secretary of War. Branch, who received the appointment of Secretary of the Navy, was one of the few Senators who had voted and spoken against the confirmation of Henry Clay to the office of Secretary of State in 1825; and Berrien, Attorney-General, was another. Barry, appointed Postmaster-General, was the Kentuckian who had done most to inflict upon Mr. Clay the mortification of seeing his own Kentucky siding against him. John Randolph, Clay's recent antagonist in a duel, and the most unfit man in the world for a diplomatic mission, was sent Minister to Russia. Pope, an old Kentucky Federalist, Clay's opponent and competitor for half a lifetime, received the appointment of Governor of the Territory of Arkansas. General Harrison, who had generously defended Clay against the charge of bargain and corruption, was recalled from a foreign mission on the fourth day after General Jackson's accession to power, though he had scarcely reached the country to which he was accredited. In the place of General Harrison was sent a Kentuckian peculiarly obnoxious to Mr. Clay. In

Kentucky itself there was a clean sweep from office of Mr. Clay's friends; not one man of them was left. His brother-in-law, James Brown, was instantly recalled from a diplomatic post in Europe. Kendall, the chief of the Kitchen Cabinet, had once been tutor to Mr. Clay's children, and had won the favor of Jackson by lending a dexterous hand in carrying Kentucky against his benefactor. Francis Blair, editor of the *Globe*, had also been the particular friend and correspondent of Mr. Clay, but had turned against him. From the Departments in Washington, all of Mr. Clay's known friends were immediately removed, except a few who had made themselves indispensable, and a few others whom Mr. Van Buren contrived to have spared. In nearly every instance, the men who succeeded to the best places had made themselves conspicuous by their vituperation of Mr. Clay. He was strictly correct when he said, "Every movement of the President is dictated by personal hostility toward me"; but he was deceived when he added that it all conduced to his benefit. Every mind that was both just and well-informed warmed toward the object of such pitiless and demoniac wrath; but in what land are minds just and well-informed a majority?

It was not only the appointments and removals that were aimed at Mr. Clay. The sudden expulsion of gray hairs from the offices they had honored, the precipitation of many into poverty, — this did not satisfy the President's vengeance. He assailed Henry Clay in his first Message. In recommending a change in the mode of electing the President, he said that, when the election devolves upon the House of Representatives, circumstances may give the power of deciding the election to one man. "May he not be tempted," added the President, "to name his reward?" He vetoed appropriations for the Cumberland Road, because the name and the honor of Henry Clay were peculiarly identified with that work. He destroyed the Bank of the United States, because he believed its power and influence were to be used in favor of Mr. Clay's elevation to the Presidency. He took care, in his Message vetoing the recharter of the Bank, to employ some of the arguments which Clay had used in opposing the recharter of the United States Bank in 1811. Miserably sick and infirm as

he was, he consented to stand for re-election, because there was no other candidate strong enough to defeat Henry Clay ; and he employed all his art, and the whole power of the administration, during his second term, to smooth Mr. Van Buren's path to the Presidency, to the exclusion of Henry Clay. Plans were formed, too, and engagements made, the grand object of which was to keep Clay from the Presidency, even after Mr. Van Buren should have served his anticipated eight years. General Jackson left Washington in 1837, expecting that Martin Van Buren would be President until 1845, and that he would then be succeeded by Thomas H. Benton. Nothing prevented the fulfilment of this programme but the financial collapse of 1837, the effects of which continued during the whole of Mr. Van Buren's term, and caused his defeat in 1840.

Mr. Clay accepted the defiance implied in General Jackson's conduct. He reappeared in Washington in 1831, in the character of Senator and candidate for the Presidency. His journey to Washington was again a triumphal progress, and again the galleries were crowded to hear him speak. A great and brilliant party gathered round him, strong in talents, character, property, and supposed to be strong in numbers. He at once proved himself to be a most unskilful party leader. Every movement of his in *that* character was a mistake. He was precipitate when he ought to have been cautious, and cautious when nothing but audacity could have availed. The first subject upon which he was called upon to act was the tariff. The national debt being within two or three years of liquidation, Calhoun threatening nullification, and Jackson vetoing all internal improvement bills, it was necessary to provide against an enormous surplus. Clay maintained that the *protective* duties should remain intact, and that only those duties should be reduced which protected no American interest. This was done ; the revenue was reduced three millions ; and the surplus was as threatening as before. It was *impossible* to save the protective duties entire without raising too much revenue. Mr. Clay, as it seems to us, should have plainly said this to the manufacturers, and compelled his party in Congress to warn and save them by making a judicious cut at the protective duties in 1832. This would have deprived Calhoun of his pretext, and

prepared the way for a safe and gradual reduction of duties in the years following. Such was the prosperity of the country in 1832, that the three millions lost to the revenue by Mr. Clay's bill were likely to be made up to it in three years by the mere increase in the imports and land sales.

Mr. Clay's next misstep was one of precipitation. General Jackson, after a three years' war upon the Bank, was alarmed at the outcry of its friends, and sincerely desired to make peace with it. We know, from the avowals of the men who stood nearest his person at the time, that he not only wished to keep the Bank question out of the Presidential campaign of 1832, but that he was willing to consent, on very easy conditions, to a recharter. It was Mr. Clay's commanding influence that induced the directors of the Bank to press for a recharter in 1832, and force the President to retraction or a veto. So ignorant was this able and high-minded man of human nature and of the American people, that he supposed a popular enthusiasm could be kindled in behalf of a *bank*! Such was the infatuation of some of his friends, that they went to the expense of circulating copies of the veto message gratis, for the purpose of lessening the vote for its author! Mr. Clay was ludicrously deceived as to his strength with the masses of the people, — the *dumb* masses, — those who have no eloquent orators, no leading newspapers, no brilliant pamphleteers, to speak for them, but who assert themselves with decisive effect on election day.

It was another capital error in Mr. Clay, as the leader of a party, to run at all against General Jackson. He should have hoarded his prestige for 1836, when the magical name of Jackson would no longer captivate the ignorant voter. Mr. Clay's defeat in 1832, so unexpected, so overwhelming, lamed him for life as a candidate for the Presidency. He lost faith in his star. In 1836, when there *was* a chance of success, — just a chance, — he would not suffer his name to appear in the canvass. The vote of the opposition was divided among three candidates, — General Harrison, Hugh L. White, and Daniel Webster; and Mr. Van Buren, of course, had an easy victory. Fortunately for his own happiness, Mr. Clay's desire for the Presidency diminished as his chances of reaching it diminished. That desire had never been morbid, it now became exceedingly moder-

ate ; nor do we believe that, after his crushing defeat of 1832, he ever had much expectation of winning the prize. He knew too well the arts by which success is assured, to believe that an honorable man could be elected to the Presidency by honorable means only.

Three other attempts were made to raise him to the highest office, and it was always Andrew Jackson who struck him down. In 1840, he was set aside by his party, and General Harrison nominated in his stead. This was Jackson's doing ; for it was the great defeat of 1832 which had robbed Clay of prestige, and it was General Jackson's uniform success that suggested the selection of a military candidate. Again, in 1844, when the Texas issue was presented to the people, it was by the adroit use of General Jackson's name that the question of annexation was precipitated upon the country. In 1848, a military man was again nominated, to the exclusion of Henry Clay.

Mr. Clay used to boast of his consistency, averring that he had never changed his opinion upon a public question but once. We think he was much too consistent. A notable example of an excessive consistency was his adhering to the project of a United States Bank, when there was scarcely a possibility of establishing one, and his too steadfast opposition to the harmless expedient of the Sub-treasury. The Sub-treasury system has now been in operation for a quarter of a century. Call it a bungling and antiquated system, if you will ; it has nevertheless answered its purpose. The public money is taken out of politics. If the few millions lying idle in the " Strong Box " do no good, they at least do no harm ; and we have no overshadowing national bank to compete with private capital, and to furnish, every few years, a theme for demagogues. Mr. Clay saw in the Sub-treasury the ruin of the Republic. In his great speech of 1838, in opposition to it, he uttered, in his most solemn and impressive manner, the following words :—

" Mr. President, a great, novel, and untried measure is perseveringly urged upon the acceptance of Congress. That it is pregnant with tremendous consequences, for good or evil, is undeniable, and admitted by all. We firmly believe that it will be fatal to the best interests of this country, and ultimately subversive of its liberties."

No one acquainted with Mr. Clay, and no man, himself sincere, who reads this eloquent and most labored speech, can doubt Mr. Clay's sincerity. Observe the awful solemnity of his first sentences : —

“I have seen some public service, passed through many troubled times, and often addressed public assemblies, in this Capitol and elsewhere ; but never before have I risen in a deliberative body under more oppressed feelings, or with a deeper sense of awful responsibility. Never before have I risen to express my opinions upon any public measure fraught with such tremendous consequences to the welfare and prosperity of the country, and so perilous to the liberties of the people, as I solemnly believe the bill under consideration will be. If you knew, sir, what sleepless hours reflection upon it has cost me, if you knew with what fervor and sincerity I have implored Divine assistance to strengthen and sustain me in my opposition to it, I should have credit with you, at least, for the sincerity of my convictions, if I shall be so unfortunate as not to have your concurrence as to the dangerous character of the measure. And I have thanked my God that he has prolonged my life until the present time, to enable me to exert myself, in the service of my country, against a project far transcending in pernicious tendency any that I have ever had occasion to consider. I thank him for the health I am permitted to enjoy ; I thank him for the soft and sweet repose which I experienced last night ; I thank him for the bright and glorious sun which shines upon us this day.”

And what *was* the question at issue ? It was whether Nicholas Biddle should have the custody of the public money at Philadelphia, and use the average balance in discounting notes ; or whether Mr. Cisco should keep it at New York in an exceedingly strong vault, and not use any of it in discounting notes.

As the leader of a national party Mr. Clay failed utterly ; for he was neither bad enough to succeed by foul means, nor skilful enough to succeed by fair means. But in his character of patriot, orator, or statesman, he had some brilliant successes in his later years. When Jackson was ready to concede *all* to the Nullifiers, and that suddenly, to the total ruin of the protected manufacturers, it was Clay's tact, parliamentary experience, and personal power, that interposed the compromise tariff, which reduced duties gradually instead of suddenly. The Compromise of 1850, also, which postponed the Rebellion ten years, was chiefly his work. That Compromise was the best

then attainable ; and we think that the country owes gratitude to the man who deferred the Rebellion to a time when the United States was strong enough to subdue it.

Posterity, however, will read the speeches of Mr. Clay upon the various slavery questions agitated from 1835 to 1850 with mingled feelings of admiration and regret. A man compelled to live in the midst of slavery must hate it and actively oppose it, or else be, in some degree, corrupted by it. As Thomas Jefferson came at length to acquiesce in slavery, and live contentedly with it, so did Henry Clay lose some of his early horror of the system, and accept it as a necessity. True, he never lapsed into the imbecility of pretending to think slavery right or best, but he saw no way of escaping from it ; and when asked his opinion as to the final solution of the problem, he could only throw it upon Providence. Providence, he said, would remove the evil in its own good time, and nothing remained for men but to cease the agitation of the subject. His first efforts, as his last, were directed to the silencing of both parties, but most especially the Abolitionists, whose character and aims he misconceived. With John C. Calhoun sitting near him in the Senate-chamber, and with fire-eaters swarming at the other end of the Capitol, he could, as late as 1843, cast the whole blame of the slavery excitement upon the few individuals at the North who were beginning to discern the ulterior designs of the Nullifiers. Among his letters of 1843 there is one addressed to a friend who was about to write a pamphlet against the Abolitionists. Mr. Clay gave him an outline of what he thought the pamphlet ought to be.

“The great aim and object of your tract should be to arouse the laboring classes in the Free States against abolition. Depict the consequences to them of immediate abolition. The slaves, being free, would be dispersed throughout the Union ; they would enter into competition with the free laborer, with the American, the Irish, the German ; reduce his wages ; be confounded with him, and affect his moral and social standing. And as the ultras go for both abolition and amalgamation, show that their object is to unite in marriage the laboring white man and the laboring black man, and to reduce the white laboring man to the despised and degraded condition of the black man.

“I would show their opposition to colonization. Show its humane,

religious, and patriotic aims ; that they are to separate those whom God has separated. Why do the Abolitionists oppose colonization ? To keep and amalgamate together the two races, in violation of God's will, and to keep the blacks here, that they may interfere with, degrade, and debase the laboring whites. Show that the British nation is co-operating with the Abolitionists, for the purpose of dissolving the Union, etc."

This is so very absurd, that, if we did not know it to express Mr. Clay's habitual feeling at that time, we should be compelled to see in it, not Henry Clay, but the candidate for the Presidency. He really thought so in 1843. He was perfectly convinced that the white race and the black could not exist together on equal terms. One of his last acts was to propose emancipation in Kentucky ; but it was an essential feature of his plan to transport the emancipated blacks to Africa. When we look over Mr. Clay's letters and speeches of those years, we meet with so much that is short-sighted and grossly erroneous, that we are obliged to confess that this man, gifted as he was, and dear as his memory is to us, shared the judicial blindness of his order. Its baseness and arrogance he did not share. His head was often wrong, but his heart was generally right. It atones for all his mere errors of abstract opinion, that he was never admitted to the confidence of the Nullifiers, and that he uniformly voted against the measures inspired by them. He was against the untimely annexation of Texas ; he opposed the rejection of the anti-slavery petitions ; and he declared that no earthly power should ever induce him to consent to the addition of one acre of slave territory to the possessions of the United States.

It is proof positive of a man's essential soundness, that he improves as he grows old. Henry Clay's last years were his best ; he ripened to the very end. His friends remarked the moderation of his later opinions, and his charity for those who had injured him most. During the last ten years of his life no one ever heard him utter a harsh judgment of an opponent. Domestic afflictions, frequent and severe, had chastened his heart ; his six affectionate and happy daughters were dead ; one son was a hopeless lunatic in an asylum ; another was not what such a father had a right to expect ; and, at length, his favorite and most promising son, Henry, in the year 1847, fell

at the battle of Buena Vista. It was just after this last crushing loss, and probably in consequence of it, that he was baptized and confirmed a member of the Episcopal Church.

When, in 1849, he reappeared in the Senate, to assist, if possible, in removing the slavery question from politics, he was an infirm and serious, but not sad, old man of seventy-two. He never lost his cheerfulness or his faith, but he felt deeply for his distracted country. During that memorable session of Congress he spoke seventy times. Often extremely sick and feeble, scarcely able, with the assistance of a friend's arm, to climb the steps of the Capitol, he was never absent on the days when the Compromise was to be debated. It appears to be well attested, that his last great speech on the Compromise was the immediate cause of his death. On the morning on which he began his speech, he was accompanied by a clerical friend, to whom he said, on reaching the long flight of steps leading to the Capitol, "Will you lend me your arm, my friend? for I find myself quite weak and exhausted this morning." Every few steps he was obliged to stop and take breath. "Had you not better defer your speech?" asked the clergyman. "My dear friend," said the dying orator, "I consider our country in danger; and if I can be the means, in any measure, of averting that danger, my health or life is of little consequence." When he rose to speak, it was but too evident that he was unfit for the task he had undertaken. But, as he kindled with his subject, his cough left him, and his bent form resumed all its wonted erectness and majesty. He may, in the prime of his strength, have spoken with more energy, but never with so much pathos and grandeur. His speech lasted two days, and, though he lived two years longer, he never recovered from the effects of the effort. Toward the close of the second day, his friends repeatedly proposed an adjournment; but he would not desist until he had given complete utterance to his feelings. He said afterwards that he was not sure, if he gave way to an adjournment, that he should ever be able to resume.

In the course of this long debate, Mr. Clay said some things to which the late war has given a new interest. He knew, at last, what the fire-eaters meant. He perceived now that it was not the few abhorred Abolitionists of the Northern States from

whom danger to the Union was to be apprehended. On one occasion allusion was made to a South Carolina hot-head, who had publicly proposed to raise the flag of disunion. Thunders of applause broke from the galleries when Mr. Clay retorted by saying, that, if Mr. Rhett had really made that proposition, and should follow it up by corresponding acts, he would be a TRAITOR; "and," added Mr. Clay, "I hope he will meet a traitor's fate." When the chairman had succeeded in restoring silence, Mr. Clay made that celebrated declaration which was so frequently quoted in 1861: "If Kentucky to-morrow should unfurl the banner of resistance unjustly, I will never fight under that banner. I owe a paramount allegiance to the whole Union, — a subordinate one to my own State." He said also: "If any one State, or a portion of the people of any State, choose to place themselves in military array against the government of the Union, I am for trying the strength of the government. I am for ascertaining whether we have a government or not." Again: "The Senator speaks of Virginia being my country. This UNION, Sir, is my country; the thirty States are my country; Kentucky is my country, and Virginia no more than any State in the Union." And yet again: "There are those who think that the Union must be preserved by an exclusive reliance upon love and reason. That is not my opinion. I have some confidence in this instrumentality; but, depend upon it that no human government can exist without the power of applying force, and the actual application of it in extreme cases."

Who can estimate the influence of these clear and emphatic utterances ten years after? The crowded galleries, the numberless newspaper reports, the quickly succeeding death of the great orator, — all aided to give them currency and effect. We shall never know how many wavering minds they aided to decide in 1861. Not that Mr. Clay really believed the conflict would occur: he was mercifully permitted to die in the conviction that the Compromise of 1850 had removed all immediate danger, and greatly lessened that of the future. Far indeed was he from foreseeing that the ambition of a man born in New England, calling himself a disciple of Andrew Jackson, would, within five years, destroy all compromises, and render

all future compromise impossible, by procuring the repeal of the first, — the Missouri Compromise of 1821.

Henry Clay was formed by nature to please, to move, and to impress his countrymen. Never was there a more captivating presence. We remember hearing Horace Greeley say that, if a man only saw Henry Clay's back, he would know that it was the back of a distinguished man. How his presence filled a drawing-room! With what an easy sway he held captive ten acres of mass-meeting! And, in the Senate, how skilfully he showed himself respectfully conscious of the galleries, without appearing to address them! Take him for all in all, we must regard him as the first of American orators; but posterity will not assign him that rank, because posterity will not hear that matchless voice, will not see those large gestures, those striking attitudes, that grand manner, which gave to second-rate composition first-rate effect. He could not have been a great statesman if he had been ever so greatly endowed. While slavery existed no statesmanship was possible, except that which was temporary and temporizing. The thorn, we repeat, was in the flesh; and the doctors were all pledged to try and cure the patient without extracting it. They could do nothing but dress the wound, put on this salve and that, give the sufferer a little respite from anguish, and, after a brief interval, repeat the operation. Of all these physicians Henry Clay was the most skilful and effective. He both handled the sore place with consummate dexterity, and kept up the constitution of the patient by stimulants, which enabled him, at last, to live through the appalling operation which removed the cause of his agony.

Henry Clay was a man of honor and a gentleman. He kept his word. He was true to his friends, his party, and his convictions. He paid his debts and his son's debts. The instinct of solvency was very strong in him. He had a religion, of which the main component parts were self-respect and love of country. These were supremely authoritative with him; he would not do anything which he felt to be beneath Henry Clay, or which he thought would be injurious to the United States. Five times a candidate for the Presidency, no man can say that he ever purchased support by the promise of an office, or by

any other engagement savoring of dishonor. Great talents and a great understanding are seldom bestowed on the same individual. Mr. Clay's usefulness as a statesman was limited by his talent as an orator. He relied too much on his oratory; he was never such a student as a man intrusted with public business ought to be. Hence he originated nothing and established nothing. His speeches will long be interesting as the relics of a magnificent and dazzling personality, and for the light they cast upon the history of parties; but they add scarcely anything to the intellectual property of the nation. Of American orators he was the first whose speeches were ever collected in a volume. Millions read them with admiration in his lifetime; but already they have sunk to the level of the works "without which no gentleman's library is complete," — works which every one possesses and no one reads.

Henry Clay, regarded as a subject for biography, is still untouched. Campaign Lives of him can be collected by the score; and the Rev. Calvin Colton wrote three volumes purporting to be the Life of Henry Clay. Mr. Colton was a very honest gentleman, and not wanting in ability; but writing, as he did, in Mr. Clay's own house, he became, as it were, enchanted by his subject. He was enamored of Mr. Clay to such a degree that his pen ran into eulogy by an impulse which was irresistible, and which he never attempted to resist. In point of arrangement, too, his work is chaos come again. A proper biography of Mr. Clay would be one of the most entertaining and instructive of works. It would embrace the ever-memorable rise and first triumphs of the Democratic party; the wild and picturesque life of the early settlers of Kentucky; the war of 1812; Congress from 1806 to 1852; the fury and corruption of Jackson's reign; and the three great compromises which postponed the Rebellion. All the leading men and all the striking events of our history would contribute something to the interest and value of the work. Why go to antiquity or to the Old World for subjects, when such a subject as this remains unwritten?

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 ERRATA IN NO. CCX.

- Page 161, line 12, *for* 1826, *read* 1806.  
 " 274, " 1, " perspicuity, *read* perspicacity.  
 " 317, " 12, " collected, " collated.  
 " " " 35 and 37, *for* time, " line.