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Caleb Cushing Illustration and Biography

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CALEB CUSHING.

CALEB CUSHING descends from an old colonial family, of political, judicial, and military distinction, and was born in Salisbury, Massachusetts, January 17, 1800. He was graduated at Harvard College in 1817, and was subsequently a tutor of mathematics and natural philosophy in that university. He then studied law at Cambridge, was admitted to the bar in 1822, and commenced practice at Newburyport; and he also became a prominent contributor to the "North American Review," writing chiefly upon historical and legal subjects. In 1825-6 he served in the State Legislature, and in 1829 visited Europe, publishing, on his return, "Reminiscences of Spain," and an able "Historical and Political Review of the Revolution in France."

Mr. Cushing was again elected to the Massachusetts Legislature in 1833, retaining that position until 1835, when he represented the Essex district in Congress, where he served four consecutive terms. During the administration of President Tyler he was one of the few Whigs who sustained the course of the President in abandoning his political friends; and since that time he has been connected with the Democratic party. In 1843 he was sent, by the President, Commissioner to China, and empowered to negotiate the first treaty between that Empire and the United States. In 1844 the conditions of the treaty were concluded with the Emperor of China, and, in view of the commercial advantages thus secured to the United States, Mr. Cushing's mission was esteemed a great success. On his return home in 1846, he was again elected to the Massachusetts Legislature, and, during the session of 1847, was a prominent advocate of the Mexican war. Failing to induce the Legislature to aid in equipping a volunteer regiment, he furnished the requisite means; was chosen Colonel of the regiment, joined General Taylor on the Rio Grande, in the spring of 1847, and soon after received the appointment of Brigadier-General. While still in Mexico, he was nominated for Governor of Massachusetts by the Democrats, but was defeated. In 1850, for the sixth time, Mr. Cushing represented Newburyport in the Legislature of Massachusetts. In the same year he was elected the first Mayor of that city, and was

CALEB CUSHING.

re-elected the following year. In 1851 he was made Justice of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, which position he filled until 1853, when President Pierce appointed him United States Attorney-General, from which office he retired March 4, 1857. In 1857-8-9 he again served in the Legislature of Massachusetts.

The National Democratic Convention assembled at Charleston, S. C., in April, 1860, for the purpose of nominating their Presidential ticket. The presiding officer on that occasion was Caleb Cushing. The circumstances were grave; the conflicting opinions and interests of the Northern and Southern Democracy—Douglas and anti-Douglas—there represented were beyond reconciliation. The Convention broke up, and with it the party. In the following June the seceders from that body met at Baltimore, and nominated John C. Breckinridge for President. From this division in the Democratic party circumstances resulted that eventually culminated in the election of Abraham Lincoln as President. Then followed the long and terrible civil war.

Throughout the struggle Mr. Cushing kept aloof from party action, but supported the war measures of the Government in the Legislature of Massachusetts, to which he was again elected for two successive terms. Subsequently he was appointed by President Lincoln to represent the Government before the united Commission formed to determine certain claims of Great Britain against the United States. In 1866 President Johnson appointed him one of the three Commissioners to revise and codify the laws of the United States. These occupations were interrupted in 1867-8 by the special mission which he assumed from this Government to the United States of Colombia.

In 1872, during President Grant's administration, Mr. Cushing was appointed one of the Counsel of the United States on the Alabama claims, before the High Tribunal of Arbitration, convened at Geneva, Switzerland. On his return from Europe he published a history of the arbitration, entitled "The Treaty of Washington; its Negotiation, Execution, and Discussion relating thereto," which elicited grave comment both at home and abroad, by its criticism of the character and conduct of Sir Alexander Cockburn, the British Arbitrator. In December, 1873, he received the appointment of Minister to Spain.

Mr. Cushing died at Newburyport, Mass., January 2, 1879, in fulness of years, for he was as old as the century. His literary, historical, and political productions, as well as his orations and addresses, have been very numerous. He was an attractive and able speaker, a remarkable conversationalist, a thorough scholar, and a fine linguist.