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## "Clisophic" essays ...

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# “Philosophic” Essays.

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## 1. THE POLITICAL REVOLUTION OF 1860

By JOHN W. APPEL, A.M.

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By W. U. HENSEL, A.M.

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LANCASTER, PA.  
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“CLIOSOPHIC” ESSAYS.

## PREFACE.

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The Cliosophic Society is a social and literary organization of Lancaster, Pa., founded in 1879. It is limited to about one hundred persons in number, representing some two score families, who entertain it at their convenience. The meetings are held fortnightly, from November to May. A topic for discussion—historical, literary or scientific—is generally selected for the winter, and at each meeting a paper, about an hour in length, is read upon some phase of the general subject; and a free discussion follows. The Society has consistently adhered to its original plan, and its vitality and the increasing interest manifested in its proceedings are a subject of constant satisfaction to its founders and its members generally.

For 1907-8 the subject of study has been American History after the Compromise of 1850. In the course of this series, three papers were read which seemed to many who heard them to be so closely inter-related and to have such merit as to be worth preservation. Though most of the work of the Society has remained unpublished, many of the papers produced have been of exceptional worth as monographs on historical subjects, literary and art criticism and scientific or religious study. The essays here published together, and having some unity of theme, will help to illustrate the character of the Society's work, and may form a slight contribution to the voluminous but ever-increasing History of the Civil War Period.

# The Political Revolution of 1860

## An Essay

Read Before

The Cliosophic Society, Lancaster, Pa.

November 15, 1907

By

John W. Appel

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"Sail, sail thy best, ship of Democracy,  
Of value is thy freight, 'tis not the present only,  
The Past is also stored in thee."

—Whitman.

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LANCASTER, PA.  
MCMVIII

## The Political Revolution of 1860.\*

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The middle of the last century marks the beginning of a new era in the history of our country. The States had been formed into a Union, but had not yet become a Nation. The principles of individual freedom and territorial expansion, as advocated by Thomas Jefferson, had held full sway for half a century and had borne rich fruitage. John Marshall had defined the boundaries and set the limitations of constitutional powers. Jackson had throttled nullification in its incipiency. Whig and Democrat had made a brilliant record for their country; but they had reached the acme of their career and the old order was changing, yielding place to new. Webster and Clay and Calhoun had reached the summit of their fame, and a new coterie of patriots was being trained for the gigantic conflict which lay dormant in the womb of the future. The old era ended with the administration of President Buchanan and the new one began with the political revolution of 1860, which made Abraham Lincoln president.

The causes which led to this revolution of political parties grew mainly out of the slavery question. With the history of that question is inwoven the record of the downfall of the old Democratic party and the rise of the Republican party.

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\*Abstract of the opening essay of The Clisophic Society for the season 1907-08.

The conflict commenced with the beginning of the government and increased in intensity until it reached its culmination in the greatest civil war of history. The stream which at its source showed only a few ripples as it flowed placidly along, became a raging torrent which no power could stem.

The first compromise on the slavery question dates back to the formation of the Union. The terms of the compromise were that the slave trade should be permitted to continue for twenty years; that three-fifths of the slaves should be counted in the apportionment of representatives in Congress; and that fugitive slaves should be returned to their owners. It was only by making these concessions that it was possible to agree to a Union of the States.

The next conflict occurred when Missouri applied for admission as a slave State into the Union. The South became defiant in its demands for the extension of the slave power, while the North took a determined stand against it. The conflict for a time seemed most serious, and was only finally allayed by the famous Missouri Compromise of 1820. This act admitted Missouri as a slave State, but with the provision that slavery should forever be prohibited north of  $36^{\circ} 31'$  in all the territory acquired from France by the Louisiana purchase.

The act forms a landmark in the history of the slave question. As we view the situation now, in the light of subsequent history, it is plain that at that time already forces were at work that presaged the terrible conflict of after years. The South demanded the admission of Missouri as a slave State into the Union as a matter of right under the Constitution, while the North strenuously opposed it.

The cotton industry became an important element in the controversy and added an economical, industrial and



social phase to the question. It had given to the South untold wealth, and being a product of slave labor entirely, it demanded the extension of slavery as a necessary social and commercial institution. The discussion became most bitter. The North became arrayed against the South, and the great statesmen of revolutionary days viewed the situation with consternation and alarm.

Henry Clay denied the constitutional power of Congress to impose conditions on newly-organized States in any way limiting their sovereign rights. Talmadge, of New York, spoke of slavery as "this monstrous scourge of the human race fraught with dire calamities to us as individuals and to our nation." William Pinkney's speech in the Senate was a brilliant effort. Clay thought it a "display of astonishing eloquence." His argument was based upon the doctrine of the sovereignty of the States. John Randolph denounced the compromise as a "dirty bargain," and called the Northern members who voted for it "dough faces."

"This momentous question," wrote Jefferson, from Monticello, "like a fire-bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror. I considered it at once as the knell of the Union." "The words civil war and disunion," wrote Clay, "are uttered without emotion."

The compromise was a Southern measure; but while it gave the South a slave State, it conceded the principle that Congress had power to prohibit slavery in the territories, which was a victory for the North. But peace was only temporary, for sectional animosities were aroused which were destined in the future to clash in the momentous conflict of 1860.

When Texas and Oregon applied for admission to the Union, a very wide-spread agitation arose out of the discussion of an amendment to a bill providing for an appropria-

tion of \$3,000,000, to be employed in negotiating a treaty with Mexico. The bill had in view the acquisition of a large amount of territory belonging to Mexico. David Wilmot, a Democratic representative from Pennsylvania, proposed the amendment.

He asserted the necessity of the war, and avowed himself in favor of the acquisition of New Mexico and California; but he offered an amendment which declared it to be an express and fundamental condition to the acquisition of any territory from Mexico, that neither slavery nor involuntary servitude should ever exist therein. This amendment, known as the famous "Wilmot Proviso," "absorbed the attention of Congress for a longer time than the Missouri Compromise; it produced a wider and deeper excitement in the country and threatened a more serious danger to the peace and integrity of the Union. The consecration of the territory of the United States to freedom became from that day a rallying cry for every State of anti-slavery sentiment, and afforded the ground on which the battle of the giants was to be waged and possibly decided. It proved a sword which cleft asunder political associations that had been close and intimate for a lifetime."

Mr. Webster voted for the proviso, but said that he could see little of the future, and that little gave him no satisfaction: "All I can scan is contention, strife and agitation. The future is full of difficulties and full of danger. We appear to be rushing on perils headlong and with our eyes all open."

The Wilmot proviso did not become a law, but it formed another landmark in the movement towards the final crisis.

The next important act in the drama was the compromises of 1850, which arose out of the admission of California into the Union. Was this land of gold to be a free State or a slave State, was the question. The discovery of gold

within her borders had made the territory famous throughout the world and had attracted thither a motley crowd of emigrants, "the seekers of El Dorado, Argonauts in search of the golden fleece." In the constitution that was adopted slavery was forever prohibited in the State. This, in a sense, was more important than the daily discoveries of new gold fields. When Congress met and the admission of the State into the Union came up for consideration, the political excitement eclipsed the gold excitement. The preponderating sentiment in the North was that the State should remain free territory; while the sentiment in the South was equally strong against any congressional legislation that should interfere with their supposed right of taking their slaves into the new territory. As Mr. Rhodes tersely expresses it: "A population of thirteen millions demanded that the common possession should be dedicated to freedom; while a population of eight millions demanded the privilege of devoting it to slavery."

When the question came up in the Senate, it called forth a most memorable debate, in which Webster, Clay and Calhoun were the chief actors. It was the last scene these giants were to play upon the political stage. Clay believed that the Union was in danger, and felt that he was the man beyond all others to save it. As a basis of compromise, he offered a series of resolutions providing for the admission of California as a free State; that territorial government should be established without restriction as to slavery; that it was inexpedient to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia; that more effective provision should be made for the rendition of fugitive slaves, etc. There was something sadly pathetic in the way in which these heroic figures of former years pleaded in the sunset of life for the preservation of the Union. "Henry Clay was in his seventy-third year, and age and ill health served to remind him that the

sands of his earthly career were almost run." He called his theme "The Awful Subject." He desired to present the olive branch to both parties of the distracted and at the present moment unhappy country. On the general subject, his leaning was more to the Northern than the Southern side of the controversy; but on the subject of fugitive slaves, he took extreme Southern ground. Calhoun followed Clay. It was his last formal speech. "Long battle with disease had wasted his frame, but, swathed in flannels, he crawled to the Senate Chamber to utter his last words of warning to the North, and to make his last appeal for what he considered justice to his own beloved South." His speech was read by Senator Mason. He admitted that universal discontent pervaded the South. Its "great and primary cause is that the equilibrium between the two sections has been destroyed;" the gradual yet steady assumption of greater powers by federal government at the expense of the rights of the States had proved an inestimable injury to the South. It is undeniable that the Union is in danger. How can it be saved? The North must give us equal right in the acquired territory; she must return our fugitive slaves; she must cease the agitation of the slave question, and she must consent to an amendment to the Constitution which will restore to the South in substance the power she possessed of protecting herself before the equilibrium between the two sections was destroyed by the action of the government. The admission of California will be the test question.

Webster followed in his celebrated 7th of March speech. He said: "I wish to speak to-day, not as a Massachusetts man, nor as a Northern man, but as an American. It is not to be denied that we live in the midst of strong agitations, and are surrounded by very considerable dangers to our institutions and government. The imprisoned winds

are let loose. The East, the North and the stormy South combine to throw the whole sea into commotion, to toss its billows to the skies, and to disclose its profoundest depths. I speak to-day for the preservation of the Union. Hear me for my cause. At the time the Constitution was adopted, there was no diversity of opinion between the North and the South upon the subject of slavery. It will be found that both parties of the country held it equally an evil, a moral and political evil. A difference of opinion showed itself, the North growing strong against slavery, the South in its support," etc. In reply to Calhoun, on the question of equilibrium, he said that the general lead in the politics of the country had been a Southern lead. He declared that from the formation of the Union to that hour, the South had monopolized three-fourths of the honors and emoluments under the Federal government. He said he would not put in the bill any Wilmot Proviso for the mere purpose of a taunt or reproach. "I will not do a thing unnecessarily that wounds the feelings of others, or that does discredit to my own understanding." On the question of fugitive slaves, he thought the complaints of the South were just, and the North had lacked in her duty.

"Sir, he who sees these States now revolving in harmony around a common center, and expects them to quit their places and fly off without convulsion, may look the next hour to see the heavenly bodies rush from their spheres, and jostle against each other in the realms of space, without causing the wreck of the universe. Instead of speaking of the possibility or utility of secession, instead of dwelling in those caverns of darkness, instead of groping with those ideas so full of all that is horrid and horrible, let us come out into the light of day; let us enjoy the fresh air of liberty and union. Never did there devolve on any generation of men higher trusts than now devolve upon us for the preser-

vation of this Constitution, and the harmony and peace of all who are destined to live under it. Let us make our generation one of the strongest and brightest links in that golden chain which is destined, I fondly believe, to grapple the people of all the States to this Constitution for all ages to come."

The speech, while it was admired for its eloquence, was a great disappointment to the people of the North. Webster was denounced as a traitor. Horace Mann said: "Webster is a fallen star; Lucifer descending from heaven." Theodore Parker said: "I know no deed in American history done by a son of New England to which I can compare this but the act of Benedict Arnold." Whittier, in song, mourned for the fallen statesman:

So fallen! so lost! the light withdrawn  
Which once he wore!  
The glory from his gray hairs gone  
Forevermore!

O, dumb be passion's stormy rage,  
When he who might  
Have lighted up and led his age,  
Falls back in night.

Of all we loved and honored, naught  
Save power remains—  
A fallen angel's pride of thought,  
Still strong in chains.

All else is gone! from those great eyes  
The soul has fled:  
When faith is lost, when honor dies  
The man is dead!

Emerson called him a man of the past, not a man of faith and hope. By many his speech was regarded as a bid for the presidency. In the light of subsequent history, public sentiment has changed in regard to Webster's posi-

tion. His dislike of slavery was strong, but his love for the Union was stronger, and he believed that the "crusade against slavery had arrived at a point where its further prosecution was hurtful to the Union."

George F. Hoar, of Plymouth, August 1, 1889, said of him: "Webster's great argument was behind every bayonet and was carried home with every cannon shot in the war which saved the Union."

Mr. Seward followed Webster. He said the public sentiment of the North would not support the enforcement of the fugitive slave act. "Has any government ever succeeded in changing the moral convictions of its subjects by force? We hold no arbitrary authority over anything. The Constitution regulates our stewardship; the Constitution devotes the domain (the territories) to union, to justice, to defence, to welfare and to liberty. But there is a higher law than the Constitution, which regulates our authority over the domain and devotes it to the same noble purposes. The territory is a part, no inconsiderable part, of the common heritage of mankind, bestowed upon them by the Creator of the universe. We are his stewards and must so discharge our trust as to secure in the highest attainable degree their happiness. I feel assured that slavery must give way, that emancipation is inevitable and is near. You cannot roll back the tide of social progress, you must be content with what you have. There will be no disunion and no secession." He closed with an appeal for the maintenance of the Union.

We quote freely from these famous speeches (perhaps too freely for such a paper as this) in order to show that the issues that were tearing asunder the North and the South centered in slavery and the limitations of federal power.

The compromise was passed finally and received the approval of the president.

The success of the compromise was largely due to the support of the Northern Democrats and the Southern Whigs; but there commenced to appear evidences of the breaking up of the old parties.

“Preachers in their pulpits, in synods and in various meetings pronounced against the Fugitive Slave Act as being in conflict with the law of God. Negroes took alarm by thousands and fled to Canada, the North assisting them in their flight.”

Charles Sumner, in the next Congress, presented a memorial from the Society of Friends, asking for the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law. He made a memorable speech in presenting it, asserting that the literature of the land condemned slavery, and it was abhorred by the outspoken, unequivocal head of the country at the time the Constitution was adopted.

The Fugitive Slave Law was perhaps the most obnoxious part of the compromises, for as it came to be applied, it brought the people of the North face to face with concrete cases of hardship, which excited their sympathies. Whittier offered up thanks for the Fugitive Slave Law, for it gave occasion for “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” which Choate boasted would make two million abolitionists.

When Mr. Pierce was elected president, he made an appeal for the Union, holding that the compromise measures of 1850 were strictly constitutional and should be unhesitatingly carried into effect; and the people as a whole were inclined to give him their support. But just as the dreams of the great compromises of 1850 seemed to be about to be realized, like a thunder clap from a blue sky, there was introduced in Congress a measure which set the entire country aflame and ultimately led to political revolution.

Stephen A. Douglas was the author of the measure which he introduced when the bill for the organization of



the territory of Nebraska came before Congress, and which proposed to leave to the inhabitants of Nebraska the decision as to whether or not they should have slavery, thereby virtually repealing the provisions of the Missouri Compromise. It affirmed that the restrictions of the Missouri Compromise were superseded by the principles of the legislation of 1850, and were declared inoperative.

"The Independent Democrats in Congress issued an appeal to the people of the United States, arraigning the bill as a gross violation of a sacred pledge, as a criminal betrayal of precious rights. One journalist wrote that if the politicians of Washington have any doubt about the public opinion, let them put their ears to the ground, and "they will hear the roar of the tide coming in."

When the measure came up for consideration, Mr. Douglas made a somewhat violent and abusive, though able and ingenious speech in its favor. He contended that in the various preceding acts of compromise the principle established was:

"Congressional non-intervention as to slavery; that the people of the territories were to be allowed to do as they pleased on the question, subject only to the provisions of the Constitution. We all know," he said, "that the object of the compromise measures of 1850 was to establish certain great principles which would avoid the slavery agitation in all time to come. Was it our object simply to provide for a temporary evil? Was that the object for which the eminent and venerable senator from Kentucky (Clay) came here and sacrificed even his last energies upon the altar of his country? Was that the object for which Webster, Clay and Cass, and all the patriots of that day struggled so long and so strenuously? Was it merely the affliction of a temporary expedient in agreeing to stand by past and dead legislation that the Baltimore platform

pledged us to sustain the compromise of 1850? Was it the understanding of the Whig party when they adopted the compromise measures of 1850 as an article of political faith that they were only agreeing to that which was past, and had no reference to the future? By no means. In the legislation of 1850 a principle was adopted—the principle of Congressional non-interference with slavery. The legal effect of this bill is neither to legislate slavery into these territories nor out of them, but to let the people do as they please. If they wish slavery, they have a right to it. If they do not want it, they will not have it, and you should not force it upon them.” Thus Douglas proclaimed his famous doctrine of popular sovereignty.

In reply to Douglas, Mr. Chase made a speech against the Kansas-Nebraska Bill and took a place in the foremost rank of anti-slavery statesmen. He appealed to the senators to reject the bill, as it was a violation of the plighted faith and solemn compact which our fathers made, and which we, their sons, are bound by every sacred tie of obligation sacredly to maintain. Wade, Seward and Sumner made speeches against the bill. Sumner spoke to the cultivated people of Massachusetts. He said the country is directly summoned to consider face to face a cause which is connected with all that is divine in religion, with all that is pure and noble in morals, with all that is truly practical and constitutional in politics. To every man in the land it says, with clear, penetrating voice, “Are you for freedom or are you for slavery”?

Edward Everett also made a speech against the bill in the Senate. “The storm that is rising,” wrote Seward, “is such a one as this country has never yet seen.” When the bill came before the Senate to be voted on, Douglas rose, a half hour before midnight, to close the debate. Always a splendid fighter, says Mr. Rhodes, he seemed

this night like a gladiator who contended against great odds; for, while he was backed by thirty-seven senators, among his fourteen opponents were the ablest men of the Senate, and their arguments must be answered if he expected to ride out the storm which had been raised against him. Never in the United States, in the arena of debate, had a bad cause been more splendidly advocated; never more effectively was the worst made to appear the better reason. We are contending, he said, for the great fundamental principle of popular sovereignty, and as the Missouri restriction is inconsistent with that principle, it ought to be abrogated. The bill does equal and exact justice to the whole Union, and every part of it; it violates the rights of no state or territory, but places each on a perfect equality, and leaves the people thereof to the free enjoyment of all their rights under the Constitution. The "Little Giant," as he was called, spoke until daybreak and the crowd remained to hear his last words. The bill was passed by a vote of thirty-seven to fourteen. Douglas boasted of the triumph of his doctrine of popular sovereignty.

Chase said: "They celebrate a present victory, but the echoes they awake will not rest until slavery itself shall die."

Mr. Rhodes says the speech of Douglas was an epoch-making event in the decade of 1850-60.

The bill finally passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 113 yeas to 100 nays, was approved by the president and became the law of the land. More than forty Democratic Representatives of the North voted against the repeal.

The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, followed by the Dred Scott decision, a few years later, forms the high-water mark of the aggressions of slavery. It let loose the furies of agitation throughout the land, and stirred up, in

the worst forms of bitterness, strife, anger, heart-burning and hatred. In the judgment of the North, it was a great conspiracy against human freedom. In the South, it was viewed as an honest effort to recover rights of which they had been unjustly deprived. No previous excitement bore any comparison with that which spread over the North after the bill became a law. It produced, says Mr. Blaine, almost a frenzy of wrath on the part of thousands and tens of thousands in both the old parties who had never before taken part in anti-slavery agitation. The New York *Independent* teemed with articles, and Henry Ward Beecher thundered with eloquence against the act. Lincoln, in his autobiography, says: "I was losing interest in politics when the repeal of the Missouri Compromise aroused me again." Greeley said Pierce and Douglas had made more abolitionists in three months than Garrison and Phillips could have made in half a century. Emerson said: "The Fugitive Slave Law did much to unglue the eyes of men, and now the Nebraska bill leaves us staring."

The Kansas-Nebraska Act was perhaps the most momentous that passed Congress prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. It sealed the doom of the Whig party. It made the Fugitive Slave Law a dead letter in the North; it alienated the Germans from, and led to the downfall of, the Democratic party; and it caused the formation of the Republican party. The measure was uncalled for and can only be accounted for by the overpowering ambition of its author.

While the Act was under consideration, a meeting was held at Ripon, Wisconsin, which recommended the organization of a new party, under the name Republican. Later, on July 6, 1854, another meeting was held at Jackson, Michigan, which declared slavery to be a great moral, social and political evil, and demanded the repeal of the

Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Fugitive Slave Law, and the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia; and a ticket was nominated.

Shortly after the passage of the Act, thirty members of the House of Congress met and decided that it was necessary to form a new party, under the name of Republican. Greeley, Wade, Sumner and other influential men fell in with the movement.

The first Republican National Convention met in Philadelphia, June 17, 1856, and in its ranks were all shades of anti-slavery opinions, the abolitionists, the Free Soilers, the Democrats who had supported the Wilmot Proviso, and the Whigs who had followed Seward.

Thaddeus Stevens advocated the nomination of Judge McLean of the Supreme Court as a candidate for the presidency, and made an address in regard to which Mr. Washbourne said: "I never heard a man speak with more feeling or in more persuasive accent." Mr. Rhodes says that one great objection to McLean was that he was on the Supreme Court bench, and a feeling prevailed that judges of the higher courts lowered themselves and their courts when they entered into a contest for the presidency. Mr. Blaine says, however, that Judge McLean was old and the Republican party was young. He belonged to the past, the party was looking to the future. It demanded a more energetic and attractive candidate, and John C. Fremont was chosen on the first ballot. The convention declared that slavery should by positive law be excluded from the territories.

On the second day of June, 1856, the Democratic National Convention met at Cincinnati and nominated James Buchanan for president, and adopted a platform resolving that "The American Democracy recognize and adopt the principles contained in the organic laws establishing the terri-

tories of Nebraska and Kansas as embodying the only sound and safe solution of the slavery question." The issue was clearly defined.

"Never in our history, and probably never in the history of the world, had a more pure, more disinterested and more intelligent body of men banded together for a noble political object than those who now enrolled themselves under the Republican banner. The clergymen, the professors in the colleges, the men devoted to literature and science, and teachers, were for the most part Republicans. Silliman, of Yale, Felton, of Harvard, Emerson, Longfellow, Bryant, George William Curtis, N. P. Willis and Washington Irving strenuously advocated the Republican cause." The *New York Independent* said: "Vote as you pray, pray as you vote."

Longfellow wrote to Sumner that one reason why he did not want to go to Europe was on account of losing his vote in the autumn. The contest in Pennsylvania was very warm. It is said \$150,000 was sent into the State for the slave-holding States. August Belmont contributed \$50,000 and Wall Street put into Forney's hands \$100,000 more for the campaign. Mr. Dana wrote before the election: "The election in Pennsylvania will go by from 30,000 to 40,000 majority against Buchanan. The tide is rising with a rush, as it does in the Bay of Fundy; and you will hear an awful squealing among hogs and jackasses when they come to drown." Buchanan's majority in Pennsylvania was less than 3,000, out of 423,000 votes.

The Republicans were defeated, but their magnificent contest made them feel as though they had won the battle. The Democrats were surprised by the large popular vote against them. Mr. Blaine, speaking of the result, said: "The distinct and avowed marshalling of a solid North against a solid South had begun and the result of the

presidential election of 1856 settled nothing except that a mightier struggle was in the future;" while Whittier sang:

"If months have well-nigh won the field,  
What may not four years do!"

Soon after President Buchanan's inauguration, the Supreme Court delivered its famous decision in the Dred Scott case, in which it declared that the act of Congress prohibiting slavery in the territories north of 36°30' was unconstitutional and void. The repeal of the Missouri Compromise was approved by the highest judicial tribunal. Not only was the appeal approved, its re-enactment was forbidden. The decision only rendered the contest more intense and bitter. It was received throughout the North with scorn and indignation. It entered at once into the political discussions of the people and remained there until it was remanded to the arbitrament of war. Mr. Sumner said that Taney would be hooted down the pages of history, and that an emancipated country would fix upon his name the stigma it deserved. Mr. Wilson denounced the decision as "the greatest crime in the judicial annals of the Republic, and declared it to be the abhorrence, the scoff, the jeer of the patriotic hearts of America."

It was at this juncture in the genetic development of the forces that wrought the revolution of '60, that there emerged from the body of the people a man of prophetic vision, of homely phrase but heroic mould, upon whose broad shoulders the burdens of the nation were destined to be cast in the most acute crisis of its history, who defined the issue in language that was almost scriptural in truth and simplicity.

In opening the senatorial contest in Illinois, he said: "I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave, half free. I do not expect the house to fall, but

I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the farther spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of absolute extinction, or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South." Born and bred in the wilderness, a rough child of nature, untutored in the schools, this strangely marked man of destiny, against the advice of his intimate friends, thus boldly and plainly proclaimed the handwriting of fate as no other had as yet done. Possessed of a keen moral sense, loving truth for the truth's sake, he exposed the fallacy of his opponent's position that it was a matter of indifference whether slavery was voted up or down; and by propounding a series of questions to him, forced him to show his hand in a way that meant choosing between the North and the South. Mr. Douglas won the contest by a majority of eight in the Legislature, while his opponent received a plurality of 4,000 in the popular vote. He won the victory in the State, but it proved his destruction in the wider field of national politics. It was the beginning of the end of Democratic harmony. Even at the risk of destroying the Democratic party, the Southern leaders resolved to punish Douglas for betraying their cause. With this end in view, accordingly, in session following the debate the Democratic senators laid down a series of resolutions, declaring that neither Congress nor a territorial Legislature possessed the power to impair the right of any citizen of the United States to take his slave property into the common territories and there hold and enjoy the same, and if the territorial government should fail to provide adequate protection to the rights of the slave holder, it would be the duty of Congress to supply such deficiency. To this extreme



position the Northern Democrats could not subscribe. They felt that if they wished to remain in the ranks of the Democracy they would be compelled to trample on the principles and surrender the prejudices of a lifetime. "The situation was a cause of deep regret to the Northern Democrats, by whom the traditions of Jefferson and Madison and Jackson were devoutly treasured. That a party whose history was inwoven with the glory of the Republic should now come to its end in a quarrel over the status of the negro, in a region where his labor was not wanted, was, to many of its members, as incomprehensible as it was sorrowful and exasperating. They protested, but could not prevent. Anger was aroused and men refused to listen to reason. They were borne along; they knew not whither or by what force. Time might have restored the party to harmony, but at the very height of the factional contest, the representatives of both sections were hurried forward to the National Convention of 1860, with principles subordinated to passion, with judgment displaced by a desire for revenge." The storm clouds commenced to thicken and serious men everywhere began to realize the gravity of the situation.

The National Convention of the Democratic party met at Charleston, in April, 1860. The Southern members demanded an explicit assertion of the right of citizens to settle in the territories with their slaves, and of the duty of the Federal government to protect slavery in the territories, and wherever else its constitutional authority extended. To this extreme position the Northern Democrats were vigorously opposed. There was a split in the convention and seven Southern States withdrew and organized a separate assemblage. Unable to come to an agreement, the convention adjourned, to meet in Baltimore on the 18th of June. When this convention reassembled, it divided and

the Southern delegation nominated John C. Breckenridge for president, while the Northern convention nominated Stephen A. Douglas.

On the 9th of May, 1860, a party, calling themselves the Constitutional Union Party, met at Baltimore and nominated John Bell, of Tennessee, for president and Edward Everett, of Massachusetts, for vice-president. The platform was "The Constitution of the Country and the Union of the States, and the Enforcement of the Laws."

After the Charleston Convention, Jefferson Davis said in the Senate: "We claim protection for slavery, first, because it is right; second, because it is the duty of the general government. What right has Congress to abdicate any power conferred upon it as trustees of the States? But we make you no threats, we only give you a warning."

In conversation shortly after adjournment, Alexander Stephens said: "Men will be cutting one another's throats in a little while. In less than twelve months we shall be in a war, and that the bloodiest in history. Men seem to be utterly blinded to the future. What is to become of us then? God only knows. The Union will certainly be disrupted."

On May 16, 1860, the Republicans met in National Convention in Chicago. It was a representative meeting of the active and able men of both the old parties in the North who came together on the one absorbing issue of the hour. They thought alike on the one subject of putting a stop to the extension of slavery. George Ashman, of Massachusetts, was elected permanent chairman. Thaddeus Stevens and Andrew H. Reeder were delegates from Pennsylvania. Mr. Seward, of New York, was placed in nomination by his life-long friend, Mr. Thurlow Weed. His cause was advocated by the eloquent tongue of William M. Evarts. He pleaded for the Republic, for the party that would save it,

for the great statesmen who had founded the party and knew where and how to lead it. "It is said that the great career of Mr. Seward was never so illumined as by the brilliant painting of Mr. Evarts."

Mr. Greeley, Andrew G. Curtin and Alexander K. McClure were among those who opposed the nomination of Mr. Seward.

The delegates from Illinois presented the name of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln himself was present and John Hanks marched in among the crowd in the Wigwam, bearing on his shoulders the two historic rails on which was inscribed: "From a lot made by Abraham Lincoln and John Hanks in the Sagamon bottom in the year 1830."

On the first ballot, Mr. Seward received  $173\frac{1}{2}$  votes, Mr. Lincoln, 102; Mr. Cameron,  $50\frac{1}{2}$ ; Mr. Chase, 49; Mr. Bates, 48; scattering, 42. On the second ballot, Mr. Seward received  $184\frac{1}{2}$ ; Mr. Lincoln, 181; and the rest  $99\frac{1}{2}$ . On the third ballot, Mr. Seward had 180, while Mr. Lincoln had  $231\frac{1}{2}$ . As soon as Mr. Evarts could obtain the floor, he moved to make the nomination unanimous, which was promptly and enthusiastically done. The nomination was followed by great rejoicing throughout the North and West.

The platform denounced the dogma that the Constitution carried slavery into the territories, declared the democratic doctrine and popular sovereignty a deception and a fraud, branded the recent re-opening of the African slave trade as a crime against humanity and a burning shame to our country and age.

"In the four presidential tickets in the field, every shade of political opinion was represented. Mr. Lincoln was in favor of prohibiting the extension of slavery by law; Mr. Breckenridge was in favor of protecting its extension by law; Mr. Douglas desired to evade it and advocated the

doctrine of non-intervention, and Mr. Bell desired to lead the people away from every issue except the abstract one of preserving the Union."

The canvass was most strenuous. The torch-bearers of literature, Holmes, Whittier, Bryant, Curtis and Lowell ardently espoused the cause of Mr. Lincoln. Mr. Lowell said: "We believe this election is a turning point in our history. We have only two parties in the field—those who favor the extension of slavery and those who oppose it. It is in a moral aversion of slavery as a great wrong that the chief strength of the Republican party lies." Henry Ward Beecher and Dr. Chapin delivered political speeches from their pulpits on Sunday evening before the election.

Mr. Lincoln gained steadily as the campaign progressed, and on the popular vote received 1,857,610, being 930,170 votes less than all his opponents combined. There was great joy throughout the North over the victory. Mr. Longfellow wrote in his diary: "Lincoln is elected; overwhelming majorities in New York and Pennsylvania. This is a great victory. It is the redemption of the country. Freedom is triumphant."

Mr. Motley said: "I rejoice at last in the triumph of freedom over slavery more than I can express. Thank God it can no longer be said that the common law of my country is slavery, and that the American flag carries slavery with it wherever it goes."

Thus was achieved the political revolution of 1860. The Republican party won a notable victory in the battle of the ballots, and the Democratic party, which had dominated the country for half a century, suffered a most signal defeat. The long political struggle, reaching far back, almost to the beginnings of the government, was over; and for the first time in the history of the country, the South was defeated in a presidential election where an issue affecting the slavery question was involved.

As we have endeavored to show, the revolution was the culmination of a struggle which was inherent in the Constitution of the government. Every time the clash came it seemed to grow more violent; and although it was settled from time to time by conciliation and compromise, it was evident that the issues which were becoming more and more clearly defined, would eventually have to be squarely met and decided.

The conflict was dimly foreshadowed as early as when the Constitution itself was framed and adopted. It appeared in the discussions over the Louisiana question of 1812, in the admission of Missouri and the annexation of Texas. In the compromises of 1850 it threatened the destruction of the Union; and in the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and the Kansas struggles and in the Dred Scott decision it was precipitated to final settlement. It was these events, as Mr. Blaine well says, "that led often slowly, but always with directness, to the political revolution of 1860."

The contest was irrepressible and inevitable. It is sometimes maintained that if it had not been for the repeal of the Missouri Compromise the conflict might have been avoided; and that those who precipitated that measure must be held responsible for the dire consequences that followed. This is only partially true. The men who forced that measure through no doubt hastened the conflict, for it led the North to lose all faith in compromises and to become fixed in the conviction that the house divided against itself could not stand and that the Republic half slave, half free, could not endure. But the event was only an incident in the movement, it was not the ultimate cause. Two irreconcilable forces were at work in the life of the people, and the political events which brought the agitation to the surface only indicated the hidden volcanic fires underneath. Mr. Seward correctly defined the situa-

tion when he said, in his speech at Rochester, October 25, 1858: "It is an irrepressible conflict between opposing and enduring forces and it means that the United States must and will, sooner or later, become either a slave-holding nation or entirely a free-labor nation."

Although industrial, sociological and religious problems were involved in it, the immediate occasion of the conflict, no doubt, was slavery. As Mr. Rhodes put it: "Two causes operated in the formation of the Republican party—the cause of the slave and the political power of the slave oligarchy." On this question, men on both sides no doubt were at fault. It must be admitted that there was much that was reprehensible in the extreme radicalism of the North; but the brunt of responsibility for the disasters that followed the conflict must be borne by the South, on account of its unwarranted aggressions on the slavery question. The North was aggressive in the way of agitation and resistance, but it never passed an act interfering with the right of the South to their property in slaves. Mr. Buchanan admits this when he says, in his fourth annual message, December 3, 1860: "It is a remarkable fact in our history that, notwithstanding the repeated efforts of the anti-slavery party, no single act has every passed Congress, unless we may possibly except the Missouri Compromise, impairing in the slightest degree the right of the South to their property in slaves," etc.

But beneath the slavery and industrial question, and as a part of the cause of the conflict, especially as the issues became crystallized in the Civil War, was the broader question of States' Rights and Federal Authority. With the election of Abraham Lincoln began the era of strong government, of Federal authority as over against State sovereignty. This question was involved in the slavery question from the beginning and went hand in hand with it. It

was discussed in the speeches of Davis and Calhoun and Clay and Seward and Sumner and Webster, who made it the climax of his celebrated speech against Hayne.

Mr. Buchanan, in his inaugural address, said: "I desire to state at the commencement of my administration that long experience and observation have convinced me that a strict construction of the powers of the government is the only true, as well as the only safe, theory of the Constitution. The Federal Constitution is a grant from the States to Congress of certain specific powers," etc.

Mr. Lincoln, after his election, said: "Having never been States, either in substance or in name, outside of the Union, whence this magical omnipotence of states rights? Much is said about the sovereignty of the States, but the word even is not in the National Constitution. The States have their status in the Union, and they have no other legal status. This relative matter of national power and states right, as a principle, is no other than the principle of generality and locality," etc.

The right of a State to secede and to resist Federal authority had been an open question and was stoutly maintained by eminent men in the North as well as by the leading men in the South. When Abraham Lincoln assumed the reins of government, while he arrayed himself against slavery as a great moral and political wrong, he set his face sternly against secession and disunion, and proclaimed that the Union must and should be preserved. He was opposed to slavery, but he was more opposed to secession. The preservation of the Union to him was the paramount concern. The slavery question fired the minds of the people often to white heat in the political contest of 1860; but the moment Sumter was fired on, the main cry that went up from the North was for the preservation of the Union. "Down with rebellion!" "Down with secession!" were in

the clarion call to arms. Many patriotic men in the North, who had little sympathy with the anti-slavery agitation, shouldered their muskets and went forth to fight for the Union. They would have scorned to have been told that they were fighting for the cause of the negro. Mr. Sumner and Mr. Schurz and many of Mr. Lincoln's friends and advisers were constantly urging him to come forth positively with a message proclaiming to the world that the cause of the war was slavery, and that the government was waging a war for the freedom of the slaves.

Mr. Schurz was particularly insistent upon Mr. Lincoln doing this, as he states in his recent "Reminiscences," believing that such an announcement would enlist England and the nations of Europe in the cause of the North; but Mr. Lincoln persistently refused to take such a step, believing that the cause of the Union was deeper than the cause of slavery, and knowing that such action on his part would create dissension among patriotic men of the North. Herein Mr. Lincoln showed deeper foresight and greater political wisdom than the coterie of great men who surrounded him. He was maligned and slandered and traduced and sneered at by scholars and statesmen who believed themselves to be his superiors; but he towered above them all and stands justified before the bar of history for the position he took. He believed in strong government and, in his determination to save the Union and to crush rebellion, he assumed powers on the part of the Federal government as over against the States that had never before been exercised. He was berated in this regard as much as President Roosevelt is to-day. Vallandigham called him "The Cæsar of the American Republic." Wendell Phillips said of him that he was "A more unlimited despot than the world knows this side of China;" and Senator Grimes spoke of going to see the president as an



And it was necessary that the old order should die in order that the new one might live. The nation, as over against the Confederacy, was in its birth throes. The nation has had two births; first, its birth to Union, under Washington and Hamilton; second, its birth to liberty and national unity under Lincoln. It was a great thing to purge the nation of slavery; but it was a greater thing to weld the States into a nation and to make us one people. The Revolution of 1860 accomplished both: It abolished slavery; but it at the same time crushed forever the doctrine of the right of secession, expanded the idea of National Sovereignty, and inscribed upon the national ensign, in characters that can never be effaced, that sentiment, dear to every true American heart:

“LIBERTY AND UNION, NOW AND FOREVER, ONE AND  
INSEPARABLE.”

# Buchanan's Administration

ON THE

## Eve of the Rebellion

A Paper Read

before

The Cliosophic Society

Lancaster, Pa., January 24, 1908

by

W. U. Hensel

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"It is Easy to be Wise After the Event."

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LANCASTER, PA.

MCMVIII

# Buchanan's Administration on the Eve of the Rebellion.

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Mr. CHAIRMAN, MEMBERS OF THE PHILOSOPHIC SOCIETY AND  
GUESTS :

We have so far progressed with the development and discussion of the topic for the present Clio season as to easily recognize and fully appreciate its comprehensive character. A half century of history, during a period so pregnant with great events, testing the very unity of our nation and the endurance of its institutions, under changes of the most revolutionary character, has been made the subject of many thousands of volumes of historical narration and philosophic discussion. In contemplating even the outside of them, one is at some loss to determine whether the telescopic or the microscopic system of investigation is the more satisfactory treatment for the purposes of this Society's entertainment—not to say its instruction—whether the spectacular contemplation of the panorama or the perhaps more tedious study of the miniature is nearer to your tastes and more conformable to your temper.

Howbeit no considerable figure in the period of political stress and storm which marked the agitation of the slavery issue and collateral questions can be fairly treated, as to the events of his life, the relation to his times and contemporaries, his place in the final judgment of history and in the last analysis of patriotic character and motive, within the limits of a sixty-minute paper.

For myself, I incline, from the observation and experience of many years, to the opinion that the range of our studies should be narrowed and focussed, and the subject of a single

winter could be better comprehended and more satisfactorily handled within a short space of time; that they should center in the life and influence of some single conspicuous historical personage, the works, if not the work of a great creative genius, or revolve about one epoch in the life of our own or the history of some other nation.

For many reasons I shall confine my treatment of Mr. Buchanan's public career and his attitude toward public questions to that closing period of his administration and of his official life which intervened the election and inauguration of his successor; only contrasting his executive aims and acts with those of Mr. Lincoln at the outset of the latter's term, when the conditions were most nearly corresponding.

I shall assume that the main events of his life are familiar to any Lancaster audience—his pre-eminent ability as a lawyer, his long experience and signal services in the many places of public trust he held; his unsullied private character and unquestioned personal integrity; his almost continuous discharge of high official duties through the many years in which he rose from the rank of State legislator, through service as representative, diplomat, senator, secretary of state and ambassador, to the highest office under our government—advancing to the place by those gradations of experience, once familiar and common, but known no longer in our political system; since now—for better or for worse—canned statesmanship, like condensed food and preserved music, are furnished to order, on short notice and ready for immediate use—accepted generally for the gaudiness of the label rather than on the merits of the contents.

Herbert Spencer, in "Man versus The State," observes that "unquestionably among monstrous beliefs one of the most monstrous is that while for a simple handicraft such

as shoemaking a long apprenticeship is needful, the sole thing which needs *no* apprenticeship is making a nation's laws." Mr. Buchanan was not made president by reason of any such popular or party delusion. In reaching that place he only came to his own.

Moreover, had he realized his sincere belief that the notable decision of the Supreme Court upon the slavery question, which was almost contemporaneous with his inauguration, would have been accepted by people and politicians as the decisive judgment of the supreme federal tribunal, upon the question of then greatest federal and popular concern, it may easily be conceived his administration and himself would have gone down to history as identified with one of the most notable executive terms since the beginning of the government. Mr. Bryce, the most far-sighted and fair-minded foreign critic of our institutions, and Mr. Rhodes, probably the most accurate historian of the period he treats, agree that our material progress during 1850-60 was greater than that of any preceding decade; and the American gives many illustrations of the tremendous advances in the intellectual, social and moral state of the people of that time.

Again, had success attended the earnest efforts of those who so strenuously sought to avert war in 1861; had the vigorously pressed Crittenden measures of compromise been adopted and accepted; or had Virginia's effort to save the Union—accepted by twenty-one states who composed the Peace Congress, presided over by one who had been President of the Republic—had this or any like movement prevailed, the Buchanan administration would have been signalized as marking at once the most awful crisis and the safest deliverance in all our internal history; and the sunset of his political life would have been irradiated with the "gold and glory of a perfect day."

## THE VERDICT OF HISTORY.

As it happened, I only record what is the overwhelming and apparently fixed conclusion of by far the greater number of the historic writers of this period, that his administration was inglorious and feeble, that it failed where it ought to have succeeded, and that this was largely due to the weakness of the executive head, if not to his actual lack of patriotism.

I believe it is the sincere belief of a great majority of even the intelligent people of this country who have honestly tried to study its history, that Mr. Buchanan, as president, at the outbreak of the secession movement, was a weak, timid, old man; who had gained his place by the favor of, if not through the bargain with, an arrogant, unscrupulous, slaveholding oligarchy of the South; that he was an accessory after, if not before, the fact, to the plot of a partisan majority of the Supreme Court to withhold the Dred Scott decision until after his election and then make it cover a point not vital to it, for unscrupulous political purposes; that he was the tool of crafty Southern leaders, who used him and his cabinet to bring to successful issue long predetermined plans to break up the Union; that in the development of these, he permitted, if he did not connive at, the weakening, scattering and disintegrating of the armed forces of federal power on land and sea, the distribution throughout the Southern States of great and disproportionate quantities of muskets, rifles and cannon, so that the impending Confederacy might have a long start on the Union forces in physical preparation for armed conflict; that he obstructed Congress in its efforts to avert rebellion and war, or to properly, promptly and effectively meet it when declared; that he drooped the colors of presidential dignity when he treated the envoys of

defiant rebellion with a consideration due only to foreign ambassadors; that he parleyed over the re-inforcement of federal forces in government forts until the Confederates could rally enough troops to capture them; that he repudiated the right to assert some existing constitutional executive power to levy war against a rebellious state government or the people of a rebellious commonwealth; and that when he quit the office, March 4, 1861, he was succeeded by a firm, resolute, patriotic successor, whose policies, methods and executive acts, in striking contrast with, and immediate reversal of, Mr. Buchanan's, asserted the proper presidential prerogative, antagonized rebels, roused patriotism, re-inforced forts, inspired Congress, raised armies, established national credit, waged war; and, with a combination of Jefferson's statesmanship, Jackson's courage, Washington's patriotism, Hamilton's skill and Webster's enthusiasm, after four years of civil war, the expenditure of ten billions of treasure and the loss of a half million human lives, accomplished what Mr. Buchanan could have done bloodlessly and economically had he not been a dotard or a traitor!

I cannot reasonably quarrel with the young student who, off-hand, accepts these conclusions; nor with a younger generation, who find it more convenient—even though more unjust—to adopt than to dispute or dislodge them.

Although nowadays we pay only one or two cents for a morning or evening newspaper, we are unreasonable enough to expect that what is printed therein, so far as it purports to be news and a narration of facts, has been gathered at the expense of its readers and patrons, with some regard for truth and accuracy. None of us has the time or the money to verify the same. Nevertheless, as we so often find that what is published regarding the things of which we have some knowledge is grossly inaccurate, unreliable and untruthful, we would also find, had we the means to

test it, a vast deal of what passes for "a brief abstract and chronicle of the time" to be merely the "baseless fabric of a vision." So if the touchstone of historical truth be applied to much that the history makers have set down as established fact or invincible opinion, it will be found to be unsupported by testimony and unsustainable by fair argument.

### MR. BUCHANAN'S CRITICS.

Thus in the elaborate and voluminous Albert Bushnell Hart series, "The American Nation," Prof. Smith, in the volume on "Parties and Slavery," dismisses Buchanan with the curt criticism: "No president has a record of more hopeless ill success." Chadwick, in his "Causes of the Civil War," in the same series, speaks of him as a weak "old man," surrounded by traitorous counsellors and afraid to do the duty which was plain before him.

Schouler, in his five-volume history of the United States of America, "Under the Constitution," which period he seems to think begins with the Revolution and ends with the Civil War, complains that in 1860-1 the country lacked an executive who made "a bold and manly stand," "a free avowal that the Union must be preserved and the laws of the land obeyed." This he blithely declares "would have relieved the gloom and despondency which was already gathering in business circles," etc.; and he dismisses the subject by re-echoing what he calls "the spontaneous cry of conscience Democrats": "Oh! for an hour of Jackson." In the language of the street, however, he "gives himself away" by confessing that the weak point in our system is that which kept the government's resources sequestered for four months "after the people had declared their will, in control of an administration and Congress defeated at the polls." As a historian, he makes nothing by trying to



shift the blame for the forwardness of the Confederate cause from Buchanan to Congress; for he should have known, if he is a true historian, that the Congress which met one month after Lincoln's election was a Republican Congress, organized and controlled by the political opposition to Mr. Buchanan, and from December 3, 1860, when it met, until March 4, 1861, when it expired, it never passed an act nor did a deed in support of Buchanan's efforts to avert war or to suppress the incipient rebellion. And though the next Congress, elected in 1860, and overwhelmingly Republican, could have been called into extra session March 5, 1861, no effort was made by the incoming Republican administration to assemble it until July 4, 1861—nearly three months after the flag had been fired upon.

Mr. Rhodes, who makes a resolute and in the main as successful an effort to be fair as anyone with his strong bias can be, clings to the view that Buchanan was "lame and apologetic" and by his executive headship so far dominated Dix, Black, Stanton and Holt, of his Cabinet, as to prevent a policy of "vigorous defense prompted by strong patriotic and national sentiments." John A. Logan, who of course is entitled to no rank as a historian or political philosopher, but whose opinion is significant because (Saul-of-Tarsus-like) he was converted over night from a pro-slavery Democrat to a red-mouthed Republican, and was seriously considered—by himself at least—as a presidential possibility, speaks of the Buchanan outfit, in his "Great Conspiracy," as "an imbecile administration, which stood with dejected mien and folded hands helplessly awaiting the coming catastrophe." Gen. Benj. F. Butler, who had voted fifty-seven times for Jefferson Davis as the fit Democratic nominee for president of the United States, has recalled in "his book" how the question of secession could have been settled and "life and treasure incalculable" saved

had Buchanan accepted his advice and arrested the Secession Commissioners for treason. As Mr. Buchanan's successor had the benefit of Gen. Butler's services, civil and military, and as all political parties had his help at one time, and his opposition at another, it probably may not be quite fair to quote him as authority on any side of any question.

Mr. Blaine, who possesses some of the consistent qualities of a genuine historical critic, even of politics, considers that Mr. Buchanan lacked will, fortitude and moral courage; and professes to believe that if he had possessed "the unconquerable will of Jackson or the stubborn courage of Taylor he could have changed the history of the revolt against the Union." John Sherman recalls in his "Recollections" with manifest self-satisfaction that he wrote, in December, 1860, "Treason sits in the councils and timidity controls the executive power;" and, commenting in 1895, on Mr. Buchanan's attitude, he characterizes it as "feebleness, vacillation and dishonor." Schurz denounces him as "the most miserable presidential figure in American history." Mr. Elson, whose work is probably the best of all the single-volume histories, calls him "a weak and vacillating president."

Noah Brooks, in his life of Lincoln, stigmatizes his predecessor as cowardly, senile and vacillating, because he did not stamp out secession and reinforce Fort Sumter. John T. Morse, who has carefully excluded Buchanan from his "American Statesman Series," though it comprises many men of much inferior rank, arraigns him bitterly in the life of Lincoln, which he himself wrote; and yet page after page of it discredits his own estimate.

I could multiply these citations almost without limit. Let it suffice to recall that Horace Greeley, the very rankest of disunionists, in his "Recollections," finds it impossible

to reconcile Mr. Buchanan's conduct at the initial stages of the rebellion with any other hypothesis than that of "secret pledges made by him, or for him, to the Southern leaders, when he was an aspirant to the presidency, that fettered and paralyzed him when they perverted the power enjoyed by them, as members of his cabinet, to the disruption and overthrow of the Union."

### AN UNJUST JUDGMENT.

I recall these opinions and I cite this very general judgment of contemporary history for the purpose of demonstrating that they are unhistorical, unjudicial, untrue, unjust and cruel. The subject affords fresh illustration of how easily Error and Falsehood can outrun Justice and Truth in a short race. A very brief examination into the facts of the case will, on the other hand, demonstrate how simple it is for those who earnestly desire and honestly strive to get at the truth to ascertain and grasp it.

From the same authorities whose opinions I have quoted I reach and undertake to sustain certain conclusions of fact which utterly subvert, undermine and reverse these false and mistaken judgments. From their own admissions it is manifest that Mr. Buchanan was no more of a disunionist than Mr. Lincoln, and not nearly so much of one as Seward, Greely, Beecher or Wendell Phillips; that the doctrine of secession, the right of a State to withdraw from the Federal Union, was not solely indigenous to the South; that the views of the Buchanan administration on the constitutional right of the executive to coerce a seceding state, or to make war on its people, were exactly those then held by substantially all the great lawyers, judges and statesmen of the country, including Abraham Lincoln; that there was no spoliation of the public treasury, no apportionment of the federal military equipment, nor dispersion of the navy in

the interest of any particular section; that in his efforts to maintain peace and prevent dismemberment of the Union, Mr. Buchanan was more aggressive, positive and definite than was Mr. Lincoln at the time; that his Secretary of State, during the time the secession movement was organizing, was more courageous and determined than Mr. Lincoln's premier, even after rebellion became far more defiant and threatening; that the attitude of Lincoln's administration toward the Confederate agents of peace was more conciliatory than Buchanan's; that in his efforts to preserve peace and effect a compromise, Mr. Buchanan had the encouragement and support of an overwhelming majority of the Northern people, and was hearkening to the almost unanimous voice of those who represented their great moral and material interests; that no act of his hastened or encouraged the outbreak of hostilities, and that nothing he might have done, and left undone, could have checked, prevented or suppressed the rebellion and the ensuing war; that Mr. Lincoln's utterances against force, invasion of Southern territory and resort to arms, from the time of his election until his inauguration, were much more emphatic for peace and conciliation than Mr. Buchanan's; that a Republican House of Representatives and Congress, as a whole, during that period, did nothing, and did not offer to do anything, to justify or support the president in assuming any other attitude toward the South or its rebellion than he assumed—in short, that Mr. Buchanan did no less than Mr. Lincoln would or could have done in his place during those four months, and Mr. Lincoln did, dared and said nothing before, at and immediately after his inauguration to show he was not in full accord and sympathy with the policies of the Buchanan administration.

As to the general proposition of acknowledging the right of secession or the policy of disunion, there is not to be

found a line or letter in any document Mr. Buchanan ever wrote, or in any speech he ever uttered, to justify such an aspersion. While extremists North and South concurred in this view, he never entertained nor countenanced it. He was a Jackson Democrat from start to finish, and went the whole length of that warrior-statesman in antagonism to Calhoun's doctrine of nullification—which must not be confounded with secession. Some of the most eminent representatives of Southern sentiment, like Jefferson Davis, who believed in the right of secession, disputed nullification; and others—like Alexander H. Stephens and John B. Floyd—who conceded the right of secession, had consistently demonstrated the political and economic folly of its exercise. Howell Cobb, in his canvass for Governor of Georgia, had made an able and powerful argument against the right of secession; and Mr. Buchanan himself records that this was the principal reason he selected Cobb for a seat in his cabinet.

On the other hand, there can be no mistake about the strong sentiment of the Abolitionists and the New Englanders generally, of such advanced leaders as Josiah Quincy, and John Quincy Adams, in their time, and of Horace Greely, William H. Seward, Henry Ward Beecher, William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips, of a later day, that secession was right and disunion was desirable.

It was in Massachusetts, not in Alabama; by the Abolitionists, not the Democrats; led by Garrison, not by Davis, Toombs or Yancey—that the Constitution of the United States was publicly burned; the few hisses and wrathful exclamations that the deed drew forth were overborne by a thousand shouts of "Amen." It is an indisputable historical fact that when the extreme anti-slavery Northerners felt the constitutional contract and the final judicial construction of it warranted not only the existence of human

slavery, but its extension into the territories; that the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law was a duty imposed upon the States and on their people, and that there was no legal escape from these logical conclusions, they were quite ready to declare the Federal Constitution a "league with death, and a covenant with hell;" to "half mast the starry flag, tear down the flaunting lie;" and to submit to a dissolution of the compact of the States. It is reasonable to suppose that had the law been, or had it been construed to be, otherwise, the Southern extremists would have been just as disloyal and refractory, for it is as true of the righteous as of the rogues that they ne'er feel the halter draw, "with good opinion of the law."

It is quite true, the Virginia and Kentucky resolutions of 1798 and 1799 declared the rights of States to nullify Federal statutes; but the Federalists, in opposing the annexation of Louisiana and the war of 1812, and the Hartford Convention of 1814, proclaimed the right of secession in even more defiant terms; and down until the thunder of hostile cannon shook the land, the great body of Northern Abolitionists believed in the political preaching of Jedidiah Morse, that New England should get out of the Union to get rid of slavery.

On the other hand, John C. Ropes, whose "Story of the Civil War" is probably the fairest and keenest of like dimensions yet written, says not a word dropped from Buchanan's lips to encourage the Southern hope "that the North would consent to a peaceable dissolution of the Union;" "nor did he ever yield an iota on the point of the abstract right of the Federal Government to maintain its hold on all the Southern forts."

### ALL SECTIONS OPPOSED TO WAR.

None the less, the great mass of the people, North and South, were neither for disunion nor for war. They were favorable to almost any compromise on the slavery question that would preserve peace and union; and Mr. Lincoln, long after the war began, expressed the popular notion when he said that if he could save the Union by destroying slavery he would destroy it, but that if he could save the Union by continuing slavery he was for its continuance. His inaugural pledged him to enforce the fugitive slave law.

I am not now concerned to inquire whether this view was sagacious or ethical, humane or even statesmanlike. My proposition is that in the winter of 1860 and 1861 it was the view of the great majority of the Northern people; that Mr. Lincoln reflected and espoused it as fully and sincerely, and expressed it as freely and unmistakably, as Mr. Buchanan; and that it is a shallow, false and wicked judgment which reprobates the one as cowardly and senile and praises the other as brave and sensible for cherishing the same notions, even though they were erroneous.

I hasten to the support of my second proposition, that they concurred in their views as to what was then discussed as the right and policy of "coercion." The expiring Thirty-sixth Congress met less than a month after Lincoln's election. That House was in full control of the Republicans, and they had elected the next Congress. Within three months they would be in complete power. Mr. Buchanan has been chiefly denounced for the tone of his annual message to that Congress. Not a blow had been struck; no State had passed an ordinance of secession; the North did not believe the South would secede; the South did not believe the North would fight. The discussion was as yet only academic.

Nevertheless, the New York "Tribune," whose editor was the most potential force in nominating and electing Mr. Lincoln, and which newspaper was "the most powerful organ of its party," declared three days after his election: "If the cotton States shall decide that they can do better out of the Union than in it, we insist on letting them go in peace. The right to secede may be a revolutionary one, *but it exists nevertheless.* \* \* \* We shall resist all coercive measures." These views were reiterated from day to day. They were re-echoed by the Albany "Evening Journal," edited by Thurlow Weed, the nearest friend of Mr. Seward. Henry Ward Beecher, in his famous Boston speech, declared, about the same time, "I hold it will be an advantage for the South to go off." Gen. Scott, who had been a Whig candidate for president, who was the Commanding General of the Army, and who later became one of Mr. Buchanan's severest critics, in his famous "Views," of October, 1860, had said: "To save time, the right of secession may be conceded." In March, 1861, when he was most intimate with Secretary Seward, and was discouraging the relief of Sumter, he urged the North to say to the seceding States, "Wayward Sisters, go in peace."

If Mr. Lincoln antagonized these notions, he at least made no serious sound nor sign. He was the rising sun; Buchanan was an evening star; and any views a retiring president might have had to express would have been cold and feeble rays by contrast with the bursting effulgence of the great orb of day. If the clarion call to battle was to be then sounded, it ought to have emanated from Springfield; if there was a demand for a Jackson, he should have ridden, like "Young Lochinvar," "out of the West."

Nevertheless, while the leaders of Mr. Lincoln's party, and the chieftains of his campaign, were thus proclaiming the right of disunion and encouraging the South to secede,



Mr. Buchanan declared in his message that grave danger threatened the country against which he had long sounded warnings; he prayed God to preserve the Constitution and the Union throughout all generations; with courteous regard for his successor, he proclaimed that he had been fairly and constitutionally elected, and that his success justified no revolution; he recognized guarantees that Mr. Lincoln "would not attempt violation of any clear constitutional right." He stated the doctrine of secession and denounced it as "wholly inconsistent with the history as well as the character of the Constitution," and cited Jackson and Madison, Southern statesmen, to contravene it. With fine touches of eloquence, he said:

"This government, therefore, is a great and powerful government, invested with all the attributes of sovereignty over the special subjects to which its authority extends. Its framers never intended to implant in its bosom the seeds of its own destruction, nor were they at its creation guilty of the absurdity of providing for its own dissolution. It was not intended by its framers to be 'the baseless fabric of a vision,' which, at the touch of the enchanter, would vanish into thin air, but a substantial and mighty fabric, capable of resisting the slow decay of time, and of defying the storms of ages."

Again he said:

"The fact is, that our Union rests upon public opinion, and can never be cemented by the blood of its citizens shed in civil war. If it cannot live in the affections of the people, it must one day perish. Congress possesses many means of preserving it by conciliation; but the sword was not placed in their hand to preserve it by force.

"But may I be permitted solemnly to invoke my countrymen to pause and deliberate, before they determine to destroy this, the grandest temple which has ever been dedi-

cated to human freedom since the world began. It has been consecrated by the blood of our fathers, by the glories of the past and by the hopes of the future. The Union has already made us the most prosperous, and ere long will, if preserved, render us the most powerful nation on the face of the earth. In every foreign region of the globe the title of American citizen is held in the highest respect, and when pronounced in a foreign land, it causes the hearts of our countrymen to swell with honest pride. Surely, when we reach the brink of the yawning abyss, we shall recoil with horror from the last fatal plunge.

“By such a dread catastrophe, the hopes of the friends of freedom throughout the world would be destroyed, and a long night of leaden despotism would enshroud the nations. Our example for more than eighty years would not only be lost, but it would be quoted as conclusive proof that man is unfit for self-government.”

I might quote many like passages throbbing with the loftiest patriotism. Certainly no man can recall them without feeling that the touching and oft-quoted sentiments of Mr. Lincoln's inaugural reached no higher plane of patriotic sentiment and touched no deeper chord of popular feeling. George Ticknor Curtis, a Yankee of Yankees, who had argued the Dred Scott case for the slave, declares: “After a long familiarity with our constitutional literature, I know of no document which, within the same compass, states so clearly and accurately what I regard as the true theory of our Constitution as this message of President Buchanan. Had I the power to change it, I would not alter a word.” It may be said that Mr. Curtis was the paid biographer of Mr. Buchanan; but he was also the biographer of Mr. Webster, and he had a reputation as a constitutional lawyer that he would not risk for any paltry reward of political literature.

\*

**NEITHER TIMID NOR WEAK.**

Meantime, as conditions changed, the situation became more alarming. States seceded, Congressmen withdrew and cabinet ministers who sympathized with secession quit or were forced out of his cabinet, but Mr. Buchanan only persisted and became correspondingly more emphatic in his acts and utterances. There was, however, no reversion nor inconsistency in the executive position—neither timidity nor show of weakness. In his special message of January 8, 1861, he repeated his conviction that “no State has a right by its own act to secede from the Union or throw off its Federal obligations at pleasure.” While he declared, in almost the same terms that Mr. Lincoln adopted—months later and when the rebellion was far more advanced—that he “had no right to make aggressive war upon any State,” he declared, on the other hand, in words that his successor, sixty days later, almost identically appropriated, “The right and duty to use military force defensively against those who resist the Federal officers in the execution of their legal functions, and against those who assail the property of the Federal Government, is clear and undeniable.” Lawyer and statesman as he was, he knew the limitations upon the executive, and what were the constitutional prerogatives of the legislative branch of government. He had taken a solemn oath to regard both these, and he was liable to impeachment and subject to disgrace if he did not. He declared Congress, which was in session, to be “the only tribunal under Providence possessing the power to meet the existing emergency.” He said: “To them, exclusively, belongs the power to declare war, or to authorize the employment of military force in all cases contemplated by the Constitution; and they alone possess the power to remove grievances which might lead to war, and to secure peace

and union to this distracted country. On them, and on them alone, rests the responsibility."

In his views and in his manner of expressing them, the president not only had the advice and cordial approval of his Attorney-General, Jeremiah S. Black—to whom Rhodes gives unstinted praise for purity, patriotism, statesmanship and legal learning—but what is far more to our present purpose, all that Buchanan then said and all he did had the legal, cordial and unqualified support of three other members of his cabinet, who subsequently became most illustrious leaders of the Republican party, Edwin M. Stanton, the great War Secretary—the erection of a statue to him has just been recommended by Secretary Taft; Joseph Holt, to whom, after eminent service, Lincoln offered the Attorney Generalship; John A. Dix, later a Major General, Republican Governor of New York and Ambassador to France—and yet best remembered because, as a Democrat, and from his seat in Buchanan's cabinet, he sent out that thrilling message, "If any man hauls down the American flag, shoot him on the spot." Judge Holt is on record as testifying that Mr. Buchanan's official labors ought to be crowned by the glory that belongs "to an enlightened statesmanship and unsullied patriotism."

Not only did they all accept, approve and stand by their chief's public declarations, but they remained in his confidence and trusting him until he took his seat beside Mr. Lincoln in the carriage which bore them to the ceremony of transferring the presidency. It is inconceivable that these eminent loyalists and high-minded gentlemen could have stayed in his political household if he was the base and timid creature whom partisan historians have pictured and pilloried. Whether he dominated them or subjected himself to their guidance, it is an indecent judgment that stigmatizes the administration of which they were all members as "weak" or "disloyal."

Meantime, what answer was Congress, with a Republican House of Representatives, making to the executive alarms and appeals? For three months, to the last day of his administration, that body remained in session; and Buchanan exhausted all power he had over its successor by calling an extra session of the Senate, to meet March 5, 1861. While the outgoing Congress repudiated all proposals of compromise to prevent civil war, it took no measures whatever to retain the cotton or the border States within the Union. It heard of one State seceding after another, and witnessed the withdrawal of member after member of Congress. The senators who had listened with "cold neutrality" to Jefferson Davis's vindictive attacks upon Mr. Buchanan, for denying the right of secession, sobbed with personal sympathy when Mr. Davis delivered his famous and pathetic speech of withdrawal from association with his colleagues. That even then this most conspicuous of Southern leaders was not without hope of a peaceful reconciliation is attested by a touching domestic annal, recorded by Mrs. Davis: "Inexpressibly sad he left the Senate chamber with faint hope; and that night I heard the oft-reiterated prayer: 'May God have us in His holy keeping, and grant that before it is too late peaceful counsels may prevail.'"

### AN INACTIVE CONGRESS.

It makes nothing against Mr. Buchanan's policy to undertake to justify the inaction of Congress by the tremendous political and popular efforts then making in every quarter to effect a compromise and avert war; or by the very general belief that any aggression by Congress would fan into conflagration a flame, otherwise soon to flicker out. Certainly if the only branch of government to which are entrusted the raising of money, the equipment

of armies and the declaration and carrying on of war remained inert, after repeated warnings, no right nor power existed in the president to supplant or even supplement it. All the more was this the case in view of the fact that a new executive was so soon to be inaugurated and a new Congress qualified.

It must also be remembered that although the Federal statutes then gave the executive power to call forth the militia to suppress insurrections against a State Government, no such power existed to suppress insurrections against the Federal Government. This omission was permitted to exist until after the end of Mr. Buchanan's term; its grant to Lincoln, by the Act of July 29, 1861, was evidence of the necessity for it. Every request for like power to President Buchanan was ignored; and even after forts and mints had been seized, and the aggressions begun which he always declared would justify defensive warfare, a bill to give the president power to call out militia or accept volunteers to protect and recover military forts, magazines, arsenals and other property belonging to the United States was withdrawn the same day it was reported—killed as soon as it saw light. Four bills in all to furnish the president with military means to provide for the collection of duties at Southern ports of entry were introduced and not one of them was passed.

Nor let it be forgotten that when President Jackson grappled with nullification, a patriotic Congress gave him the "Compromise Act" and "Force Bill", which enabled him to act with vigor and success. These powers expired by limitation in 1834, and what had been given to Jackson then was persistently denied to his loyal follower in the executive chair in 1861. A striking contrast of legislative support to the executive is afforded by the alacrity with which Congress strengthened Madison's hands, in 1812;

likewise the wild rush with which a later Congress led, if it did not drive, McKinley to war with Spain.

In the face of these historical facts, what a pitiful subterfuge to lay the blame of the war or the earlier successes of the Confederacy to the deliberate dispersion of the army and navy, the surrender of forts and stores and the plunder of the arsenals—with connivance of the Federal administration! I pause with little patience to refute these well-worn lies. Any student or inquirer who really wants to get at the truth can easily reach the head-waters; though it is certainly discouraging to see how recklessly the falsehood persists. Mr. Buchanan effectually refuted it in his book, published in 1865; Judge Black apparently stamped the life out of it in his unanswerable letters to Henry Wilson; as early as 1861, a Republican committee of a Republican House, organized to convict ex-Secretary Floyd, the very head and front of this offending, reported the case not made out, its chairman expressed the opinion that the charges were founded in “rumor, speculation and misapprehension.” The facts were that of the useful muskets distributed by the Government in 1860, the Northern States received three times as many as the Southern; of the rifles, there were divided in all between six Southern States scarcely enough in the aggregate for half a regiment. Two years before Lincoln was elected the Government had condemned as worthless and unserviceable 500,000 muskets—and after nobody could be induced to buy them at any price, less than one-third of these condemned weapons were shipped to Southern arsenals, in order to make room in Northern storehouses for useful and effective arms. As their recoil was worse than their discharge, the North would have been lucky had the Confederates got the whole of them. The story of the cannon surreptitiously shipped from Pittsburg to Galveston is best answered by a resolu-

tion of the Northern City's Councils, officially thanking Buchanan, Black and Holt for *preventing* any such shipment. Mr. Rhodes, after careful investigation of the whole story, unhesitatingly accepts the refutation of these long-lived canards. Gen. Samuel W. Crawford, one of the few who were in Fort Sumter when the flag went down, and again when it was hauled up, in his "Genesis of the Civil War," also demonstrates their falsity.

The idea that the naval arm of the government's power was disarranged to favor secession has not the slightest historic foundation. The head of that department was a New England Unionist, Isaac Toucey. He was a man of utmost loyalty and highest integrity. Every attempt by official investigation failed to discredit him. He fully satisfied a hostile Senate Committee that at the outbreak of Secession our squadrons at foreign stations were feeble; they had not been augmented in proportion to the increase of our commerce; none of them could have been diminished without sacrificing its safety and the interests and safety of those engaged in it. While the nation was praying and protesting that war might be averted, to have recalled our foreign squadrons certainly would have been "lunatic rashness;" and it would only have helped to "make trouble," without contributing to its suppression or relief.

One of the most frequent of the reckless accusations against Mr. Buchanan is that when the Federal office-holders in the seceding States abandoned their places, he did not promptly fill them. He repeatedly demonstrated to Congress that he could get no other citizens of these States to take the offices and discharge their duties; but, as Mr. Rhodes frankly points out, when he named for Collector of Charleston, Peter McIntire, of Pennsylvania, an eminently fit man, of high courage and decision of character, the Senate never acted on the nomination; and, in brief, no



Congressional aid whatever was extended to the president in any effort to avert war, effect compromise, defend the government property, re-take military stations or fill the abandoned posts of civil duty.

### THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE.

But if the action—or rather, the non-action—of Congress justified the attitude and conduct of the administration in those days of doubt, how immeasurably more was it the reflection of and backed by the overwhelming voice of the people, all over the North, and manifested in so many and various forms?

While the venerable Crittenden was so strenuously urging upon Congress the adoption of his compromise measures, the country waited patiently to see if Mr. Seward—destined to sit at Mr. Lincoln's right hand—was to unite the genius of Clay for compromise with the enthusiasm of Webster for the Union. The radical Republicans of the North, and the fire-eating Secessionists of the South, were alike disappointed, and no authoritative voice from the new administration commanded attention or following.

John Sherman says: "At this time the public mind in the North was decidedly in favor of concessions to the South. The Democrats of the North would have agreed to any proposition to secure peace and the Union, and the Republicans would have acquiesced in the Crittenden compromise or in any measure approved by Lincoln and Seward."

Had the incoming Lincoln administration then declared for compromise, there would have been no war. Had it declared for effective and aggressive measures of coercion, it would only have hastened the outbreak of hostilities at a time when the country was even less prepared for and more averse to it than when Sumter was fired upon. How-

ever, the oracle was dumb—and nothing that can be said in denunciation of Buchanan's vacillation and uncertainty cannot be said with far more truth and more force of Mr. Lincoln, of those who had been his chief supporters and of those who were about to become his Cabinet Council.

Another illustration of the preponderating public desire—North and South—to avert war is found in the response which answered Virginia's call for a Peace Congress. Twenty-one States sent commissioners to assemble on the same day that only six of the Cotton States met to form the Southern Confederacy. The Peace Congress was made up of men of "character, ability and distinction." One of the Pennsylvania delegates was our own late townsman, Hon. Thomas E. Franklin. An eminent lawyer, a man of property, lineage and high social position, a churchman and a Republican in politics, he was a fine type of the best citizenship of that day. The "plan of adjustment" this conference agreed upon was not accepted with favor by Congress. I do not refer to it in approval, but only to further illustrate the earnest, organized, official efforts making for peace. For a president to have arrested or disturbed them by precipitate call to arms would have been met with overwhelming rebuke and indignation; it could only have weakened the Union cause and invigorated the aggressions of the Disunionists. Absolute proof of this contention is afforded by the contemporary expressions of popular opinion, and by the utterances not only of Mr. Lincoln, on his way from his Illinois home to the White House, but from the lips of men who already were, or were to become, pillars of his administration and party. Gen. Daniel E. Sickles, who is the only living member of that memorable House of 1860-1, and who became a Union hero and a Republican martyr—threatened that the secession of the Southern States would be followed by New York

City; Gen. Dix concurred; Senator Simon Cameron—Lincoln's first Secretary of War—was desirous of saving the Union and preserving peace "at the sacrifice not only of feeling, but of principle."

All reliable authorities agree that up to, and for a considerable time after, the end of Mr. Buchanan's term, a large majority of the people of the North, and a very considerable portion of the South, were earnestly for peace—at almost any price. Tumultuous popular assemblies all over the North loudly voiced this demand. In the Republican city of Philadelphia, in Independence Hall, where American freedom was born, Bishop Potter blessing the gathering and the cause, and Mayor Henry presiding, eloquent orators of all parties were cheered to the echo when they pleaded and declared in town meeting for a policy of forbearance and protection to the slaveholders in their constitutional rights. In the city of Boston, head and heart of New England, Faneuil Hall, "the cradle of liberty," rocked with the surging oratory of like appeals. In the very recently published life—almost an autobiography—of William Pitt Fessenden, it is recorded that "in all the great cities, especially among public men, it was hoped that a compromise would be effected. \* \* \* Republican who favored a vigorous policy, seemed temporarily out of favor. Conciliation was the popular term. Mr. Lincoln believed that gentleness and a conciliatory attitude would prevent secession."

It is true that the voice of Senator "Zach" Chandler sounded discordant above the prevailing placidity; but his sanguinary expressions that "without a little blood-letting this Union will not be worth a rush"—like the gory demand of a Southern bravado that "we must sprinkle blood in their faces"—was generally regarded as incendiary and fratricidal—if not impious. Even the fierce and fiery

John A. Logan testifies that he "believed in exhausting all peaceable means before a resort to arms."

### FOR PEACE AT ANY PRICE.

Appleton's Annual Encyclopædia for 1861 estimates that of four million voters for president, over three million would have approved such a peaceable settlement of the difficulties as might have been satisfactory to all the Southern States whose complaints were founded upon questions connected with slavery. "*The voice of the people of the country at that time,*" this authority says, "was overwhelmingly in favor of conciliation, forbearance and compromise."

Thurlow Weed, the confidential adviser of Seward, urged concession and a constitutional convention. The New York "Herald" deprecated coercion and declared each State had the right to break the tie of the Confederacy and to repel coercion as a nation might repel invasion.

Nor did this prevailing condition of popular sentiment terminate with Mr. Buchanan's retirement. Mr. Morse admits that during all the three months in which his conduct has been so savagely criticised, one-half the people of the South were opposed to division; in the North everywhere words of compromise and secession were spoken; coercion was mentioned only to be denounced. Had the executive, he concedes, "asserted the right and duty of forcible coercion, he would not have found at his back the indispensable force, moral and physical, of the people." For over a month of the Lincoln administration this state of popular feeling continued, and up to the very time of firing on Fort Sumter, he says "the almost universal feeling of the people at the North, so far as it could be discerned, was compromising, conciliatory and strongly opposed to any act of war."

As late as April 5, 1861, Gen. Robert Anderson wrote, in a private letter, that he must take upon himself all the blame for the government not sending him relief. Had he demanded re-inforcements, he says he knows President Buchanan's Secretary of War would have dispatched them at all hazards; but he says he knew the coming of additional troops would inaugurate civil war; and his policy, he declares, was to keep still and preserve peace.

Because, then, "a little fire" ultimately kindled "a great matter," shall one be denounced as "timid" or "traitorous" because he strove to quench the spark, or refused to blow it into ravaging flame?

Surely it is not necessary to show that during all this period, and even later, Mr. Lincoln was in full accord with the policy of his predecessor and his own party; that he was alike submissive to and controlled by the manifest popular will of the Union-loving and peace-seeking part of the country. Neither one moved more slowly toward war than the other; and no faster in accelerating the outbreak of hostilities.

But to clinch a proposition which I earnestly maintain has been nailed fast, let us swiftly follow Mr. Lincoln's tour eastward. He said at one place—and I challenge you to find it more strongly stated in any of Mr. Buchanan's utterances—"The marching of an army into South Carolina without the consent of her people, and with hostile intent toward them, would be invasion; and it would be coercion, also, if the South Carolinians were forced to submit."

Remembering the declarations of himself and his party's platform against the lawless "invasion" of any State, what less or more could these words mean to the South than its people inferred from any declaration Mr. Buchanan had made?

At Columbus, Mr. Lincoln expressed much less solicitude about the future than President Buchanan was exhibiting. He said: "Nobody is suffering anything \* \* \* all we want is time, patience and a reliance on that God who has never forsaken His people." At Pittsburg he declared there was "no crisis but an artificial one," and predicted that if people only kept cool, the trouble would come to an end. In Philadelphia he assumed a decidedly anti-war tone: "There need be no bloodshed or war. There is no necessity for it. I am not in favor of such a course; \* \* \* there will be no bloodshed unless it be forced upon the government, and then it will be compelled to act in self-defense." "The crisis, the panic, the anxiety of the country at this time is artificial." At Harrisburg, when the speaker of welcome tendered him military support from Pennsylvania, Lincoln rebuked him, and said: "It is not with any pleasure that I contemplate the possibility that a necessity may arise in this country for the use of the military arm."

In none of these is heard the voice of the "Son of Thunder"—at no time the iron ring of the "Rough Rider's" hoofs. It is true, he said, "the right of a State to secede is not an open or debatable question," but Mr. Buchanan had said exactly this to Congress and the country two months earlier. The concluding words of the Lincoln inaugural are classic in the literature of eloquence; but in parallel passages with extracts already quoted from Mr. Buchanan's message, these latter may challenge comparison for sound law, lofty patriotism and even for rich rhetoric.

### MR. LINCOLN'S EARLY ATTITUDE.

The incoming president reiterated the pledge of his platform that each separate state had a right to control its own domestic institutions; he denounced the lawless invasion of the soil of any State or Territory by armed force as the gravest of

crimes. He gave his full adherence to the fugitive slave law and its enforcement, as guaranteed by the constitution. Strictly in accord with the policy and declarations of Mr. Buchanan, he promised there should be no bloodshed or violence unless forced upon the National authority; that Federal property would be protected and the Federal revenues collected, but, beyond what might be necessary for this, he declared there would be "no invasion, no using of force against or among the people anywhere." To the criticism that Mr. Buchanan had not filled the vacant Federal offices in the South, Mr. Lincoln then made an answer, that ought to be conclusive now: "While the strict legal right may exist in the Government to enforce the exercise of these offices, the attempt to do so would be so irritating, and so nearly impracticable withal, I deem it better for the time to forego for the time *the uses of such offices.*" Mr. Elson admits that this was a plain avowal that he would follow Buchanan's policy for the time in his attitude toward Secession.

The only significant act of the Congress just deceased had been to adopt a constitutional amendment practically making it impossible to ever abolish or interfere with slavery. Mr. Lincoln went out of his way to say not only that that was already implied constitutional law, but he set his personal stamp of approval upon it by saying, "I have no objections to its being made express and irrevocable." And yet for signing the measure which the noble Lincoln thus approved, the despised Buchanan is denounced by many so-called historians of the present day as a dough-faced dotard and a double-dyed dastard!

Surely when Thersites plays the role of Herodotus and Plutarch, Clio must hide her face in shame.

Old Richard W. Thompson, as garrulous as most men must be who boast and write "Recollections of Sixteen

Presidents," sees in Buchanan's peace policy an imitation of Nero fiddling while Rome burned; but Mr. Lincoln's similar temporizing is to the same dim eyes due only to "the promptings of his own generous nature" and the hope that his appeal to the reason and patriotism of the Secessionists would not be unavailing.

Is it any wonder Sir Robert Walpole said: "Anything but history for history must be false!"

It is often said that when Mr. Lincoln raised the flag over Independence Hall a new star glittered in the field; but the act admitting the thirty-fourth State was approved by Mr. Buchanan; and "bleeding Kansas"—so long the spoil of contending foes—alternately outraged like the Sabine matrons and slashed like the stainless daughter of Virginius—now quite recovered from her wounds and woes, without a furrow on her forehead or a ruffle on her raiment, quietly glided into the sisterhood of States at the pen stroke of a Democratic executive.

But if Mr. Lincoln was no advance upon Mr. Buchanan in aggressiveness and indicated no departure from his policy in the inaugural, how much more bloodthirsty and belligerent was his attitude during the month or more that passed before rebel guns boomed across the placid waters of Charleston harbor?

At the risk of having to tire your patience and confront melting ice cream and cooling coffee, for the sake of too tardy justice to a man long dead—and very dead—I beg you hear briefly the story of those five weeks; and remember how much further and with what long leaps Rebellion had advanced.

The most notable cabinet appointments were, of course, the Secretaries of State and of War. We have already seen how much further Seward was willing to go in surrender of the Union than Buchanan; and surely it was not so serious



a strain upon Cameron to "sacrifice principle" for policy—for in this respect he and Buchanan furnished life-long illustrations of opposing ideas of public duty and political propriety.

Nicolay and Hay give their subject credit for "infinite tact" in dealing with Mr. Seward; but is it permissible to find treason, cowardice and timidity in Mr. Buchanan's dalliance with incipient secession in the closet and yet praise the attitude of Seward and Lincoln in temporizing with full-armed Rebellion in the open?

John Sherman admits that the first forty days of the Lincoln administration was the darkest hour in the history of the United States. He declares that it was "a time of humiliation, timidity and feebleness." Sumner deprecated Lincoln's "deplorable hesitancy." Six weeks after his inauguration, Stanton wrote to Buchanan that there was a strong feeling of distrust in the candor and sincerity of Lincoln personally and of his cabinet. Emerson, with rare literary skill, condones the president's perplexities because "the new pilot was hurried to the helm in a tornado."

It is to the discredit of our political system—no particular reproach to Mr. Lincoln—that for months the chief concern of his administration was the distribution of the offices to clamorous partisans, rather than the distribution of troops to suppress the rebellion. The demands upon his time and the solicitation of his supporters were not to avert war, save the Union or suppress the rebels, but to lavishly ladle out patronage. Not only do Stanton, Schurz and Seward testify to this, but Mr. Lincoln himself said: "I seem like one sitting in a palace, assigning apartments to importunate applicants, while the structure is on fire and likely soon to perish."

With this disaster in prospect, we find, as late as March

12th, five of his cabinet ministers voting against provisioning Fort Sumter—and only one for it. Mr. Lincoln let them determine his course. And yet Buchanan was “weak” and his cabinet a “nest of traitors,” because they had not relieved and supported Major Anderson! As late as July 16, 1861, Stanton wrote to Buchanan: “Your administration’s policy, in reference to both Sumter and Pickens, is fully vindicated by the course of the present administration for forty days after the inauguration of Lincoln.”

Mr. Buchanan has been hounded from Dan to Beersheba, because three months earlier he had, with courtesy and dignity, accorded a single interview to the Commissioners from South Carolina. Before the year 1860 closed, he had peremptorily rejected their demands for the withdrawal of Federal troops from Charleston harbor; he had firmly declared to them his purpose to defend Fort Sumter by all the means in his power against hostile attacks from whatever quarter they might proceed; and a few days later, when they replied disrespectfully, he declined to receive their communication or to ever again see or negotiate with them. Later, through his Secretary of War, he warned South Carolina of the fearful responsibility it took if its authorities assaulted Sumter, and by periling the lives of “the handful of brave and loyal men shut up within its walls,” “plunged our common country into the horrors of civil war.”

And yet long after Jefferson Davis had been elected president of the Confederacy; and while its Congress was formulating plans to organize an army and navy; when State after State had wheeled into the secession column, Confederate Commissioners to the Lincoln administration came with confidence to Washington; though they were not formally received, they were in close touch with Seward; they remained long enough to get his assurances that the

evacuation of Fort Sumter was the arranged policy of the new administration. Mr. Morse is forced to admit that even later Mr. Lincoln gave the Confederates assurances that "no provisioning or re-inforcement should be attempted without warning"—and it will be remembered that the assault only began after he gave such notice. Secretary Seward was even then writing to Mr. Charles Francis Adams, our minister to England, the hopelessness of carrying on a civil war; and so distant seemed the danger of it, that Massachusetts, under the lead of her great war governor, John A. Andrew, as late as April 11, after having made military preparations for three months, practically disarmed the Commonwealth.

About the same time, Wendell Phillips declared the Gulf States had a right to a separate government and defiantly said: "You cannot go through Massachusetts and recruit men to bombard Charleston or New Orleans."

Even when Montgomery Blair—the only Jackson Democrat in Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet—urged that Fort Sumter be relieved, without reference to Pickens or any other Federal possession—and warned his chief that South Carolina would strike a blow at National authority from which it would take "years of bloody strife" to recover—Mr. Lincoln, with at least as great "timidity" and "indecision" as ever Mr. Buchanan had shown, sided with and acted upon the contrary advice of Seward, Chase and Cameron.

On April 13, the most Mr. Lincoln would say to the Virginia Commissioners was that he *might* repossess himself of the public property and suspend the mail service in the States then in defiant rebellion against the nation. He substantially repeated this in his subsequent message to Congress, which, be it noted, he did not assemble for four months.

And yet Mr. Blaine, who at times tries to be fair, thinks

if Buchanan had had Jackson's hickory will and Taylor's stubborn courage, history would have been changed. It is a little difficult to see why Lincoln could not have called these martial "spirits from the vasty deep" as easily as Buchanan; they would just as likely have come at one summons as the other—as readily in the balmy April spring days, when rebellion's crop was high in the stalk, as in the cheerless December time, when its roots were yet locked in winter's clutch.

### JUDGE BLACK ON MR. BUCHANAN.

Not to prolong my share in the argument—which we shall soon see has another side—nor to multiply illustrations from a copious, if not inexhaustible, fountain of authorities, I quote and adopt a summary of Mr. Buchanan's character and conduct from a source so much more authoritative and by a pen so much more skillful than mine, that no paraphrase could fail to mar it:

"The proofs of his great ability and his eminent public services are found on every page of his country's history, from 1820 to 1861. During all that long period he steadily, faithfully and powerfully sustained the principles of free constitutional government. This nation never had a truer friend, nor its laws a defender who would more cheerfully have given his life to save them from violation. No man was ever slandered so brutally. His life was literally lied away. In the last months of his administration he devoted all the energies of his mind and body to the great duty of saving the Union, if possible, from dissolution and civil war. He knew all the dangers to which it was exposed, and it would, therefore, be vain to say that he was not alarmed for his country; but he showed no sign of unmanly fear on his own account. He met all his vast responsibilities as fairly as any chief magistrate we ever

had. In no case did he shrink from or attempt to evade them. The accusation of timidity and indecision is most preposterous. His faults were all of another kind; his resolutions once formed were generally immovable to a degree that bordered on obstinacy. On every matter of great importance he deliberated cautiously, and sometimes tried the patience of his friends by refusing to act until he had made up an opinion which he could live and die by. These characteristics explain the fact that his whole political life, from the time he entered Congress until he retired from the presidency—all his acts, speeches and papers—have a consistency which belongs to those of no other American statesman. He never found it necessary to cross his own path or go back upon his pledges.”

I have touched upon a single epoch of his public life—a brief three months of his official career—albeit, upon another and more fitting occasion I should not shrink from the task of maintaining the proposition with which, in 1883, his biographer concluded his work: “He was the most eminent statesman yet given by this great Commonwealth to the service of the country since the Constitution was established.” I re-affirm this, after twenty-five years, notwithstanding Senator Penrose is a hopeful candidate for re-election; Senator Knox is even a less hopeless candidate for president, and the sculptor has nearly finished the heroic statue of Senator Quay, which is soon to add splendor to an already too splendid State capitol.

At the further risk of being tiresome and irrelevant, I must ask you to listen to a postscript. I have little faith in reported death-bed experiences. Dr. Osler has said that hundreds of recorded and reported cases, studied particularly with reference to modes of death and the sensation of dying, have satisfied medical science that the educated man at least dies usually “wondering, but uncertain, generally

unconscious and unconcerned;" and that the Preacher was right: "As the one dieth so dieth the other." And yet, somehow, fanciful as it may be, I like to think that the righteous man will realize the confidence of the Psalmist, "I will lay me down in peace."

From the time he left the presidency, Mr. Buchanan lived here among us. Many of the people of this town were no kinder to him than the historians have been, and quite as unjust. He outlived the storm of war, but while it raged, no unpatriotic sentiment ever fell from his lips or pen. In the fall of 1861, he wrote a public letter, appealing to a "loyal and powerful people" to sustain "a war made inevitable by the Confederate assault," calling for "brave and patriotic volunteers," and declaring that it was no time for peace propositions, but only for "prompt, energetic and united action" to support the president "with all the men and the means at the command of the country in a vigorous and successful prosecution of the war." He maintained that attitude until it ended. During its continuance, lest the publication might embarrass his successors, he withheld the defense and vindication which he was eager to print in 1861.

The progress of events and the revolutionary changes they wrought in our governmental system, if they inspired no public regrets, certainly suggested to him no private remorse. October 21, 1865, he writes:

"I pursued a settled, consistent line of policy from the beginning to the end, and, on reviewing my past conduct, I do not recollect a single important measure which I should desire to recall, even if this were in my power. Under this conviction, I have enjoyed a tranquil and cheerful mind, notwithstanding the abuse I have received, in full confidence that my countrymen would eventually do justice."

For this he may long wait; the judgment of his own conscience, I am sure, never tarried nor faltered.

### A DEVOUT MAN.\*

Mr. Buchanan, from his youth up, was a devout man. Born of positively pious parentage, the Scriptures were his "horn-book" and private prayer his daily habit. One of his most contemptuous—I almost wrote contemptible—critics flippantly complains that he once asked for time to take with him, to closet conference with his God, a vexatious public question. His fastidious horror of being made conspicuous long withheld him from making open profession of his faith. The late Rev. Dr. John W. Nevin was his spiritual adviser; they had long and solemn conferences on theology. Dr. Nevin says "*horæ vespertinæ*" they might be called—held, as they were mostly, in the autumnal twilight, on, what seemed to be for both engaged in them, "the utmost verge of time." His spiritual adviser has recorded that Mr. Buchanan "felt himself to be on the borders of the eternal world, and was fully awake to the dread issues of the life to come. But with all this, his spirit abode in quiet confidence and peace, and the ground of his trust throughout was the mercy of God through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. There was nothing like enthusiasm, of course, in his experience; the general nature of the man made that impossible. His religion showed itself rather in the form of fixed trust in God, thankfulness for His past mercy and general resignation to His holy will." Dr. Nevin's own counsel influenced his determination to associate with the Church of his ancestors.

In the early forenoon of a September Sabbath, 1865, in

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\*Adapted from "A Pennsylvania Presbyterian President," by the Author, Lancaster, Pa., 1907.

the rather gloomy basement of the Presbyterian Church, in Lancaster, five persons only being present, this singularly pure-minded man—now old and “broken with the storms of state”—with a career behind him such as none in the city of his home has ever had before or since, came, even as a little child, and the modest minute of the proceedings runs thus:

“Hon. James Buchanan, after being examined on his experimental evidence of piety, was admitted to the Communion and fellowship of this Church.”

An hour later, the same Lord's Day, in the sight of a then not numerous congregation, he who had risen from the humble home at “Stony Batter” to the first seat in the land, who had shone resplendent at foreign courts and had stood unabashed in the presence of earthly monarchs, with bowed head and before all the people, answered the soul-searching questions in terms that sealed him to the church on earth.

As he received from the sanctified hands of his humble townsman that first communion of the broken and bleeding elements, I doubt not that he, far more than any else of them, recognized and realized that no principle of constitutional government he had ever argued, as counsellor or Congressman, was so vital as the question he then decided. No pageant he had ever witnessed as ambassador was so splendid as that simple ritual. No treaty he had ever negotiated was so far-reaching as that solemn compact with his Maker. No mandate he had ever issued as chief executive was so tremendous in its personal importance to him as the message he that day sent to the throne of the living God.

For nearly three years he worshiped and communed in this church; and when the end came, he fell away into a gentle sleep, from which he barely woke to whisper the



short Christian prayer, "O! Lord, God Almighty, as Thou wilt." He had lived as a patriot should live; and he died as a Christian statesman should die.

"Altogether, it was a death-bed experience full of tranquil light and peace, the calm evening sunset of a long life, which seemed to be itself but the brightening promise of a new and far better life beyond the grave."

And so he "passed to where, beyond these voices, there is peace."

# Abraham Lincoln

## An Essay

Read Before

The Cliosophic Society, Lancaster, Pa., February 7, 1908

By

George W. Richards, D. D.

PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES,  
AT LANCASTER, PA.

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"To link my name with something that will redound  
to the interests of my fellow men, that is all I desire to  
live for."

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LANCASTER, PA.  
MCMVIII

# Abraham Lincoln

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The general familiarity with the subject, the massiveness of the material and the traditional time-limits of this occasion make difficult a comprehensive treatment of the life and work of America's great emancipator. It will be conceded, however, that a man assumes national proportions by virtue of the magnitude of the problem with which he wrestles, the quality of character which he develops and the service which he renders his age. We shall, therefore, confine ourselves to a consideration of three points: the Problem, the Man and the Solution.

## I. THE PROBLEM.

The problem was no less a task than the preservation of the Union. It had world-wide bearings. It involved the destiny of the West. Democracy itself was hanging in the balances. The man who could quell an incipient rebellion, harmonize discordant elements, and "preserve, defend and protect the Government" would win for himself a permanent place among the immortals of history.

The tendencies of disunion were found in the peculiar conditions of the colonial period. The thirteen colonies, which gradually crystallized out of the mass of pioneers on the Atlantic border, were both divided and united by geographical, national, social and religious barriers and bonds. They were far enough apart to become, under cer-

tain circumstances, squabbling republics, after the manner of ancient Greece or mediæval Italy. They were sufficiently attached to one another to become successively a League of Friendship, a Confederation of States and an organic and indissoluble Union. The realization of one or the other of these possibilities depended on the uncertain actions of men and on the logic of events. Men of keen insight into the history of nations and in close touch with their age, had decidedly adverse convictions about a union of the American colonies. Joseph Tucker, the Dean of Gloucester, said: "As to the future grandeur of America and its being a rising empire under one head, whether republican or monarchical, it is one of the idlest and most visionary notions that ever was conceived even by writers of romance. The natural antipathies and clashing interests of the Americans, their difference of government, habitudes and manners, indicate that they will have no center of union and no common interests." Frederick the Great agreed with the English Dean, and argued that the mere extent of the country, from Maine to Georgia, would suffice, either to break up the Union or to make a monarchy necessary. Washington himself was disturbed by these prophecies of evil, and secretly had his misgivings. It is clear that at best a union of states had to be effected by a process of growth rather than by a political fiat.

A brief survey of the territory and of the genius of the colonies brings to light the centrifugal and centripetal factors and forces. The variety of climate and soil, the irregularities in the coast line, the slope of the mountains and the course of the rivers were a natural basis for the sections known as the New England, Middle and Southern States, with the differentiated life and interests of their inhabitants. The diversity of social and religious tendencies appears in the constituent nationalities and creeds.

The Latin, Celt and Teuton contributed their portions to the embryonic nation. The dominant element was English, strongly influenced by a vigorous minority of Scotch-Irish, Dutch, Swedes, Germans, French and Swiss. They represented every type of modern Christianity—the Pilgrim and the Puritan, the Anglican and the Catholic, the Baptist and the Quaker, the Lutheran and the Reformed, the Moravian and the Methodist. In those days national and religious distinctions were taken far more seriously than at present. They provoked antagonisms which not infrequently resulted in violence and blood. The selectmen of Boston ordered the Scotch-Irish to leave the town. The Quakers regarded with suspicion a people who turned to the Book of Joshua for an Indian policy. The Germans were treated with contempt by the English. Free Massachusetts pointed the finger of scorn at slave-holding South Carolina. So different was the social and political organization of the colonies, that a stiff and stubborn pride in their respective institutions became an impassable wall of separation. The people were jealous of their territorial rights. Bitter feuds sprang up on account of boundary lines. The difficulties of travel, the lack of a common literature, the isolation of communities thinly scattered from Maine to Georgia, lent themselves to the petty and contemptible antipathies of the early settlers.

In spite of these differences, there were points of contact and bonds of fellowship which held the colonies together. The territory which divided, also united, them. The racial unity was stronger than national diversity. The religious differences were surface lines. Unity of faith and purpose was found in the center and depth of the American churches. The hardships of a wilderness, the necessities of life, the presence of a common foe prowling in the forests, the recognition of the authority of a mother country, the spread of

the Great Awakening, the rise of eminent native Americans who belonged to no colony and were the pride of all, the general uprising against foreign oppression, fostered the spirit of unity or "the will-to-be-one" in the people.

Still the creation of an indissoluble union from a chaos of colonies was the task of a century. In their groping after federation, before the Revolution of '76, the colonies at most yielded only what was absolutely necessary for coöperation. Every suggestion of a complete fusion was rejected with decisive and ever-increasing emphasis. The individualism, which developed in the clearing of forests, the breaking of ground, and the building of towns, was naturally suspicious of a central government. This spirit of independence was equally strong in Rhode Island and in Virginia, in men like Samuel Adams and Richard Henry Lee. Even after the Revolution the continuance of the Confederation seemed by no means assured. The Constitutional Convention of 1787 was confronted by almost insuperable obstacles. It was divided into a number of parties. Some were made up of individuals, others of States. Some wanted a federal government much like the one they had during the war; others did not want a confederacy at all. Some stood for a strong central authority, and others guarded the sovereignty of the state. The Southern States were against the Northern, the commercial States against the agricultural, the great States against the small. To meet the difficulties, three different constitutional drafts were submitted. The first is known as the Virginia plan, by Randolph; the second, the South Carolina plan, by Charles Pinckney; and the third, the New Jersey plan, by Patterson. In the course of the debate feeling ran high and threats of leaving the convention were frequent. Some of the delegates went home in disgust and others offered concessions in vain. A constitution could be adopted

only by the policy of compromise. The little States allowed proportional representation to the great States. The free States gave representation to the negro in the slave State, counting a negro three-fifths of a white man. The agricultural and commercial States were conciliated by mutually satisfactory regulations of the slave trade and of commerce.

The ratification by the States was delayed by lukewarmness and stubborn resistance. Malcontents held popular meetings and stirred up disaffection and strife. North Carolina held out against the Constitution for two years, and Rhode Island had to be coerced into submission by threats. Two political parties arose, the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists, each one standing for a definite conception of the authority of the central government over the States. The Union was thus created but not completed. The policy of compromise concealed for a time the tension between its several sections, but compromise did not solve the latent difficulties. The question which disturbed national politics for generations to come was that of State Rights. Was the new instrument of government a Constitution of the United States or of the States united? Upon the answer to this question depends the right of nullification or of secession when States are dissatisfied with an act of the national government, or the right of the government to coerce rebellious States into submission to the Union. At the opening of the nineteenth century few statesmen, North or South, would have been bold enough to have gainsaid the prerogative of a State to secede. A half a century later the scales turned and secession was considered a crime against the Constitution.

The occasion for the assertion of the doctrine of State Rights came more than once in the early history of the Republic. When the Alien and Sedition Laws were passed the Legislatures of Virginia and Kentucky officially pro-

claimed this prerogative. It was not a theory confined to the South alone. It was held by all the States and was affirmed without reserve when the well-being of one or more was imperilled. With the success of the Anti-Federalists, in 1801, the struggle with England seriously embarrassed the industrial interests of the North, especially of New England. Then the Federalists became champions of State Rights and put into their political platforms the identical resolutions of Virginia and Kentucky.

But the great cause for division was temporarily veiled by circumlocutory phrases in the Constitution itself. It was the special interest of the slave holders in the Southern States. Slavery furnished the motive for the logical development of state sovereignty and for the translation of the theory into practice. There was historical philosophy as well as popular poetry in the third stanza of Whittier's Battle Hymn:

“What gives the wheat field blades of steel?  
What points the rebel cannon?  
What sets the grinding rabble's heel  
On the old star spangled pennon?  
What breaks the oath of the men of the South?  
What whets the knife of the Union's life?  
Hark to the answer, Slavery!”

Lincoln, in his first inaugural, reiterates this sentiment in plain prose: “One section of our country believes slavery is right and ought to be extended, while the other believes it wrong, and ought not to be extended—the only substantial dispute.”

Two aspects of the question of slavery must be considered for the understanding of its full significance. The first is its introduction, location and firm hold on a portion of our territory. The second is the rise and spread of anti-slavery sentiment, with its various shades of view and its



divers forms of organization. When the Dutch man-of-war sailed into the harbor of Jamestown, in 1619, with twenty African slaves on board, there appeared a cloud on the American horizon not bigger than a man's hand but portending an inevitable storm. Slavery was then a fact and a force in the New World. The apple of discord was cast. The institution spread rapidly over the South. The climate, soil, plantations, and social ideals favored its growth. The geographical, social and religious conditions of the Middle and Northern States were, to say the least, not conducive to its perpetuity. The Western pioneers, largely under the influence of Northern ideas, were averse to it and did not find it profitable. To summarize: the power of custom, the grip of an inherited social order, the invention of the cotton gin, the deep-rooted pride of the Southern aristocracy, which could brook no opposition and resented every form of dictation, the stinging moral censures of Northern abolitionists, and the pecuniary advantages accruing from slavery united in making it an indispensable necessity to the Southern man.

In colonial days slavery was not justified on moral grounds. The institution was regarded unmoral and inhuman. Men of the North and the South spoke against the iniquitous practice. In 1700 Judge Samuel Sewall issued the first public denunciation of slavery in a pamphlet. In 1688 the Mennonites of Germantown drew up the first petition against it. George Mason of Virginia said: "Slavery discourages arts and manufactures." Thomas Jefferson, in the original draft of the Declaration of Independence, made it one of the chief articles of indictment against George III., that he "prostituted his negative for suppressing every legitimate attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable traffic." In 1787 he wrote: "Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just and that His justice cannot sleep forever."

At the close of the eighteenth century, all the States north of Maryland had put slavery out of existence. After the national government was organized numerous petitions were submitted to Congress seeking its restriction or abolition. Congress, however, declared that it had no power to interfere with slavery or the treatment of slaves within the States. The war of pamphlets began. With the opening of the nineteenth century, all the paraphernalia of the later anti-slavery movement were in use—societies, petitions, laws, and deliberate violations of laws. The abolition sentiment was nurtured and spread by ceaseless agitation. At first it divided the South against itself, and the North against itself. Then South and North were divided against each other. Old parties were split and new parties were formed. This process of division, segregation and consolidation is clearly discernible in the salient acts and movements of the nation from the Revolution to the Rebellion.

The admission of new States into the Union intensified sectional feeling. The South realized that the maintenance of the balance of power in Congress was the safeguard of slavery. Its perpetuity depended on its extension into new territory. The creation of States out of the vast region beyond the Mississippi was bound to disturb the time-honored equilibrium. The Missouri Compromise was a temporary political armistice, but agitation against slavery could not be restrained by statutes. Public sentiment eludes and laughs at legislatures. The American Colonization Society of 1816 and the American Anti-Slavery Society of 1833 were well-meant palliatives but not cures for the disease. Garrison took the advanced ground of immediate abolition throughout the United States, because slavery was morally wrong and, therefore, ought not to be tolerated anywhere. The ethical aspect of the question

appealed more and more to the people. Feeling became so intense on both sides, North and South, that threats of secession were heard in Massachusetts as well as in South Carolina. When, in 1845, Garrison proposed that New England should withdraw from the Union unless slavery was abolished, he was applauded to the echo. Calhoun demanded that the balance of power must be restored in the House or the Union must be dissolved. The political heroes of a passing era once more came from retirement to guide the storm-tossed Ship of State and pour the oil of compromise on the angry sea. They cried, "peace," but there was no peace. Seward, Sumner and Chase struck a new note and heralded the dawn of a new period. The "irrepressible conflict" was at hand. Free-soil Whigs and free-soil Democrats organized and acted with grim determination. The deceptive peace of the compromise of 1850 was rudely disturbed by a quick succession of significant events—the announcement of the doctrine of Popular Sovereignty, the Dred Scott Decision, the Lecompton Constitution, John Brown's Raid and the election of the Republican candidate for the presidency, Abraham Lincoln.

The exigencies of the hour, no less than the gradual consummation of a political and moral process, required the pursuance of a new policy in the treatment of the central national question. The Union was created and preserved up to this time by compromise. Never was there an ordinance passed, from 1787 to 1850, which squarely faced the issue and consistently expressed the convictions, either of the pro-slavery or of the anti-slavery men. Circumspect statesmen felt it their paramount mission to maintain at any cost cordial relations between the North and the South. But under the cover of expediency there grew up individuals and societies who represented logical and ethical consistency. They spoke in unvarnished terms and blew a

trumpet of no uncertain sound. On the one side, it must be abolition or war; on the other, slavery or secession. The champion of uncalculating consistency, who rose above the puritanical radicalism and political moderatism of the North as well as the aristocratic pride and sectional arrogance of the South and represented no single party but stood for all the people, came from the fresh, vigorous, homely and untutored West. The prophet of the new order announced his message in the Springfield, Ill., Convention of 1858, when he said: "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other." When Lincoln read these words to a coterie of advisers before he spoke them on the following day, they were thrown into consternation. Defeat was sure to follow such an untimely and immoderate utterance. But he calmly replied: "I should rather be defeated with this expression in the speech than be victorious without it." He lost the senatorship but he gained the presidency. The man of the hour had come into national politics.

Let us briefly summarize the results of history. They, indeed, fail to comprehend the gravity of the situation which confronted Buchanan and Lincoln whose vision is limited by the sixth decade of the century, and who contend that the problem could have been solved by a single decisive stroke. The controversy, which threatened to drench the land with fraternal blood, was the outcome of economic and moral processes extending over more than a century. For a time the different sections of the new Republic felt the pulses of growth and expansion and were bound together by the enthusiasm of youth and the sense of a community

of interests. The political honors were being equitably distributed between the North and the South by their leading statesmen, who planned nominations and directed elections by caucus and correspondence. The Southern statesmen in the beginning were warm supporters of national expansion, a moderate tariff, and a diversification of industries. But in the course of a few decades they discovered to their sorrow that they were the heirs of a social system which barred them from the great change and growth which shaped the rising nation. The South stood still in a fixed order. It passionately resisted change. Slavery so crystallized the classes and the customs of the South, that it was wholly incapable of adjusting itself to the industrial revolution which was transforming and unifying the East and the West. The population of the country grew, in the decade from 1830 to 1840, from thirteen to seventeen millions, and the immigration trebled. But the population of the South increased scarcely at all. The winning of the West changed the aspect of the national question. From its borders came the Jacksonian Democracy, protesting against the traditional rule of an aristocracy of New Englanders and Southerners. Coming to a consciousness of its own resources, the West felt that in its hands was the balance of power in national elections. The Free-soilers and the Anti-slavery men multiplied in geometrical progression. The Mississippi Valley was rapidly filled up with settlers and enriched by the products of a fertile soil and a variety of industries which sprang up in a night. In these regions slavery had a precarious existence. Even the native Southerner, coming into the Western prairies, gave up his social and political traditions, liberated his slaves, and was absorbed by the new environment. Two antagonistic and irreconcilable forms of political life gradually grew up under the protection of one constitution and government.

A house so divided against itself could not stand. The hidden dualism became the fontal source of secret prejudice and open conflict. Now it came to light in the nullification of tariff laws, and then in the threats of secession and in the war of the Rebellion. Time did not heal the breach. The tender offices of the greatest statesmen failed. The issues of the conflict became clearer and more difficult to settle. The hour arrived when an appeal had to be taken from the House, the Judiciary and the popular assembly to the field of battle, and judgment had to be written in blood. No iron-willed Jackson could have held in leash the Dogs of War, nor could legislative action have averted the terrific storm.

## II. THE MAN.

We shall now consider the man into whose hands the government was entrusted. In response to a request for the facts of his early life, Mr. Lincoln replied: "It can all be condensed into a single sentence and that sentence you will find in Gray's Elogy, 'The short and simple annals of the poor.'" The line of his paternal ancestors extends from Kentucky through Virginia, Pennsylvania, New England, to Norfolk county, England. Quaker and Puritan blood flowed in his veins, a fact which his father, Thomas, indignantly resented. For six generations the Lincolns were pioneers in the settlement of new countries. They shared the fortunes and misfortunes of the wilderness. His mother, Nancy Hanks, was the natural child of a Virginia planter, a woman of strong mind whose memory her son loved to honor. To her he traced whatever mental power he inherited. His father was shiftless and ignorant. He usually failed where everybody succeeded. True to the migratory instinct of his tribe, he moved successively from Kentucky to Indiana and from Indiana to Illinois,

seeking rest and finding none. When the family reached the banks of the Sangammon, Abraham had passed his twenty-first birthday.

His scholastic education was limited to four months of instruction by unlettered masters in log school houses. Though he was not taught in the schools, he nevertheless learned letters. His thirst for knowledge was irrepressible. Neither his poverty nor his illiterate surroundings could prevent his mental growth. His library consisted chiefly of borrowed books, and their number is easily told. His biographers find traces in his youth of *Æsop's Fables*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, a history of the United States, two lives of Washington (the one by Weems, the other by Ramsay), the *Lives of Clay* and of *Franklin* and a copy of *Shakespeare's Plays* and of *Burns' Poems*. He knew his Bible well and in early manhood mastered *Euclid*. He was an intensive rather than extensive reader, a man of one book. His mathematical problems and his early compositions he inscribed on a wooden shovel by the hearth, and shaved off the scrawls with a draw-knife to repeat the performance. At an early age he wrote verse and satirical prose, but the productions were coarse and "too indecent for publication."

He was trained chiefly in the rough surroundings of the frontier community. From childhood he was compelled to struggle for life. He was never industrious and the neighbors called him lazy. He took delight in lounging, telling stories, talking politics, reading books, attending parties and making speeches. He changed his occupation frequently. He did the odd jobs that came his way: slaughtered hogs at thirty-one cents a day, cleared forests, split rails, conducted a flat boat to New Orleans, managed a store, acted as postmaster, commanded a company of soldiers, was assistant surveyor and served in the State Legis-

lature. After his admission to the bar at Springfield he won an enviable reputation as a lawyer, but he loved politics better than law. He stumped the state for Harrison and Tyler, debated with Douglas and was elected to Congress in 1846. These are the salient facts of his life before he became a presidential possibility.

By nature and training he had great physical strength and endurance. He was tall, six feet three and one-half inches in his stockings, brawny, large-boned and awkward, "the largest and strongest of them all." The prodigious feats which legend ascribes to him would adorn the histories of Samson and Milo. He never lost his almost childlike pride in the height of his stature. Mr. Sherman relates, in his Memoirs, how he first met Mr. Lincoln the evening after his arrival in Washington, in 1861. "When introduced to him," says Mr. Sherman, "he took my hands in both of his, drew himself up to his full height and looking at me steadily, said: 'You're John Sherman. Well, I'm taller than you. Let's measure.' Thereupon we stood back to back and someone present announced that he was two inches taller than I. This was correct." He could not well conceal his contempt for short men. When he met the undersized Vermonter, Douglas, in 1844, he sneeringly said he was the "least man" he had ever seen. He broke the solemnity of the Hampton Roads Conference by passing a comment on the size of Alexander Stephens. The little Southern commissioner, eighty pounds in weight, protected his frail body against the mid-winter cold with a profusion of overcoats and wraps. In the warm cabin of the steamer *River Queen* he pulled off layer after layer. When he finally emerged, Lincoln said, in an undertone, to the Secretary of State: "Seward, that is the largest shucking for so small a nubbin that I ever saw." The time came when his gigantic body served him in good stead for bearing



the burdens of a distracted nation, which rested so heavily upon him.

Intellectually and morally he showed no evidence of extraordinary genius; still he cultivated the basal virtues of true manhood. He was honest, sober, sympathetic, thoughtful, generous and soundly ambitious. In each stage of his life he showed capacity for leadership and proved himself master of his environment. He was in a measure the creature of circumstances, but he was far more the creator of new conditions. He kept in close touch with the people *en masse*. First, with the villagers in the frontiers; then, the citizens of Illinois; and finally, the nation itself. He passed in his lifetime through all the grades of American civilization—from the open-faced cabin to the cottage, from the cottage to the mansion; from homespun to broad-cloth, from the grocery store to the Legislature, from the debating society to the political platform, from the bar to the White House. He became, in a sense, the first typical American, a child of the West. His strength increased with the magnitude of the task which was before him. His latent capacity seemed inexhaustible. He was not a scholar, but he had wisdom. He lacked the graces of polite society, but he was a gentleman. He was genial, affable and jovial; still he was reserved, cautious and secretive—"a sceptered hermit, wrapped in the solitude of his own originality." He was guileless in exterior habit; still he was sagacious and diplomatic. He was deferential and ever ready to listen and to learn, but formed his own conclusions and was immovable after he reached a decision. In finance he failed and in love he hardly succeeded. In maturer years he developed an unusual power for the analysis and penetration of a subject. He grasped the core of an argument and stated it concisely and clearly. Mr. Whitney says: "In clearness and facility of statement

he was like Webster or Jefferson; in remorseless logic, like Calhoun or John Quincy Adams; in fiery and impetuous denunciation, like Clay or Blaine; yet he excelled them all in simplicity and terseness."

He leaned by nature toward the true and the good. He was an Israelite without guile. He revolted from cruelty and craft. He never drank liquor nor smoked tobacco. His temperance speeches are still on record. He was the defender of the abused and the distressed. He was a poor advocate of a bad cause. He keenly felt the injustice of slavery. While he was in New Orleans, he witnessed the sale of a mulatto girl. He remarked to a friend by his side: "If I ever get a chance to hit that thing, I'll hit it hard." His highest ambition, to quote his own language, was "to connect my name with the events of my day and generation, and so impress myself upon them as to link my name with something that will redound to the interests of my fellow-men. That is all I desire to live for."

He was an apostle of the "square deal" and "of fair play." He did the right as he saw the right. His vision was not always clear, but his purpose was good. The secret of his life is found in the homely title which the townsmen of New Salem gave him in his youth—"honest Abe." He was forever honest, whether he clerked in a store, wrestled in the ring, argued with Douglas, or administered the affairs of a nation. Neither friend nor foe questioned his sincerity. True, Douglas was more brilliant as an orator, but when he sat down, men said, "is he honest?" When Lincoln finished his argument, men cried, "he is honest!" That conviction grew upon his countrymen, exalted him to the highest office in the gift of the nation, and won for him the affection of a distressed and scattered people in the darkest days of the Republic. He never lost faith in the people. Mr. Bancroft says: "As a child, in a dark night, on a rugged

way, clutches hold of the hand of its father for guidance and support, he clung fast to the hand of the people and moved calmly through the gloom." Such mutual confidence of leader and followers inspired and throbbed in the national slogan, "We are coming, Father Abraham, three hundred thousand strong!"

Lincoln was never a churchman. In his youth he was tainted with skepticism. At the age of twenty-five he wrote an extended essay against Christianity with a view to its publication. He was then under the influence of Thomas Paine. A friend, who acted more wisely than he knew, took the manuscript from the author's hand and cast it into the fire. There was a time when he doubted the inspiration of the Bible and the divinity of Christ. When his intermittent spells of melancholy settled upon him and wrapped him in impenetrable gloom, he questioned even the existence of a personal God and of a future life. But he was always serious, reverent and tolerant. He highly respected the religious convictions of others. Tertullian would have classed him with those who are "naturally Christian." His public writings, addresses, and state papers not only sparkle with scriptural allusions, but reveal a marked change, in mature manhood, in his attitude toward eternal realities. He then had firm faith in God, in Providence, in a moral order, in prayer and in the ultimate victory of truth and righteousness. In his letter of acceptance of the first presidential nomination, he implores the "assistance of Divine Providence." In his inaugural addresses, in his messages to Congress and in his proclamations of national thanksgivings, times without number he recognizes the power, the wisdom, the mercy and the justice of God. A man of his breadth of sincerity, however, was naturally repelled by the sectarianism and bigotry which afflicted the churches of his day. He once said:

"When any church will inscribe over its altar as its own qualification for membership, the Saviour's condensed statement of the substance of both law and gospel, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself,' that church will I join with all my heart and all my soul."

Until 1856, when Lincoln was forty-seven years of age, neither his personal attainments nor his official position indicated the necessary qualifications for national leadership. He was a lawyer, indeed, of more than local repute. He had won fame as a stump speaker and political debater. In his single term in Congress he never rose above a respectable mediocrity. When the Republican party was organized, in 1856, he lived in comparative obscurity and was overshadowed by men whose names were household words from coast to coast—Seward and Sumner, Fremont and Chase, Banks and Bissell. But in the Bloomington Convention he sprang into unexpected prominence and henceforth moved with rapid strides toward the high goal. He outdid the great Nebraskan Commoner himself by delivering a speech which held his hearers in breathless attention and inspired enthusiasm which found vent in exclamations, cheers and applause. Reporters dropped their pencils and forgot their note-books, but the sentiments which he uttered never perished from the memory of his audience. Illinois awakened to the fact that it had reared a big giant as well as a "little giant." The latent powers of Lincoln's mind were aroused to action and his face was set toward Washington. The newspapers announced him as a presidential possibility. At the Philadelphia Convention in June he polled 110 votes as a nominee for the vice-presidency. He was then chosen by the Republicans of his state as the most formidable candidate for the United States senator-

ship against the Star of the Democracy, Stephen A. Douglas. In seven joint debates Lincoln proved himself a master of the Constitution, a safe exponent of Republicanism, and a foeman worthy of the steel of the most brilliant statesman of the West, if not of the country. Without Douglas, Lincoln might have died unhonored and unsung. The "little giant" became a stepping stone to higher things; for, while he was arguing with Douglas before the people of Illinois, he was, in his own words, "playing for larger game." He made statements which at the time the public was not ready to receive. Douglas was elected to the senatorship, but Lincoln advanced a step toward the White House.

He had now become sufficiently great to attract the attention of the Young Men's Republican Association of Brooklyn, which invited him to deliver an address in Plymouth Church. The coveted, and still dreaded, privilege of standing before a metropolitan audience had come. He delivered his famous Cooper-Union speech. Notwithstanding his brand new suit of ready-made clothes, with pantaloons and coat sleeves cut too short and wrinkled and creased by several days' pressure in a handbag, Lincoln captivated the social and political lions of the metropolis. The aftermath in the Athenæum Club is described as follows: "Lincoln was the hero of the hour. There was no formality, but there was indeed 'a feast of reason and a flow of soul,' which lasted till the 'wee sma' hours.' Mr. Lincoln was perfectly at home. He 'tauld his queerest stories,' and the solemn walls of the club had never echoed to such hilarity. When the party broke up and two gentlemen escorted Lincoln to the Astor House, everyone was pleased with himself and with all mankind." He made a tour through New England and won the admiration of the fastidious East. The Professor of Rhetoric of Yale College heard his speech at New Haven and analyzed its fine rhetoric and powerful logic before his class the next day.

When the Chicago Convention met, Lincoln was no longer a dark horse but a candidate who loomed up so prominently that Seward might well fear him above every other rival. All the political machinery of such occasions was set in motion and his nomination was achieved not "without adroit and astute political skill and management." On the third ballot the long cherished presidential aspirations of the idol of the Empire State were blasted, and by formal motion of Mr. Evarts, Abraham Lincoln was unanimously nominated for the presidency of the United States by the Republican party.

In the election of November 6, 1860, the people ratified the choice of the Chicago Convention, and on December 5th, 180 electoral votes for Lincoln gave him a majority of 57 votes over Breckenridge, Bell and Douglas.

It was one thing, however, to carry a popular election and win the presidency; another thing to reconcile and reward his rivals; to crystallize the strength of the loyal States, to suppress an unprecedented secession which was rapidly sweeping the nation into war, and to steer clear of the enthusiasm of friends and the apathy of foes. The wisdom of his election had to be vindicated by the achievements of his administration.

### III. THE SOLUTION.

Never did a president take the oath of office with greater difficulties before him, and with less means at his command to cope with them. Six States were in open secession, taking steps to organize an independent confederacy and gathering their forces for war. His predecessor, rightly or wrongly, was charged with indecision and treasonable sympathy with the Southern conspirators. The president-himself, was not an experienced statesman and lacked the confidence of even the Republican leaders. The four par-

ties in the campaign had spread the spirit of division over the land and increased sectional jealousy and dissension. The people, in the enjoyment of long years of peace, had forgotten the arts of war. From an empty treasury resources were to be drawn beyond precedent in the history of finance. The trees were still in the forests and the iron in the earth with which a navy was to be built. The regular army was a mere handful of men stationed on the frontiers. Experienced commanders deserted to the Southern cause, and undisciplined officers were to transform a mob into an army in a month. The public opinion of Europe was skeptical or hostile. The North was honeycombed with secessionists as the South was with Unionists. The Ship of State was drifting, and, like Cardinal Newman, when he was fog-bound on the Mediterranean, men looked for the

“Kindly Light amid the encircling gloom.”

The question was, not how to make war, but how to preserve peace. It was not a time for precipitate action, but for cautious deliberation and patient forbearance. The partisan, wise fifty years after the event, complacently outlines an invincible policy and in the solitude of his comfortable library, with the ringlets of a delicious Havana circling peacably above his head, puts his foot on the viper of secession, turns on his heel, and lo! the rebellion is crushed and the Union saved forever. “Was not the South in secession?” he cries. “Did not the governors of the seceded States send military forces to demand the surrender of the feebly-garrisoned federal forts within their domains? Did they not take possession of arsenals, custom houses, mints and other public buildings and property of the United States?” History answers “yes.” But neither the North nor the South was prepared for a declaration of war before every expedient of peace was exhausted. So long

had Southern threats of disunion served as a party menace, that they ceased to terrify the North. Even the recent more formal policies of Southern legislatures and conventions appeared as spectacular manifestations to extort compromise and concession from Northern voters. The people of both sides not only hoped, but believed, that again, as so often before, the quarrel could be allayed by compromise. To this end both the House and the Senate appointed committees to devise measures of reconciliation and peace. But the seven plans before the one, and the forty before the other failed to obtain the assent of the majority. For the same purpose a peace convention, composed of delegates sent by the governors of fourteen States of the Union, sat in the city of Washington from February 4th to February 27th, but the convention adjourned without reaching practicable conclusions. Chapters of history were made almost daily. The issue stood out in bolder relief and in sharper antithesis week after week. Southern senators and representatives gradually withdrew from their seats in Congress. The secessionists, on February 4th organized a provisional Congress; on February 8th formed a provisional government known as the Confederate States of America; and on March 11th adopted a permanent constitution. Men hoped against hope that peace might be restored, but their dearest hopes were blasted and their worst fears realized.

At this juncture, neither Lincoln nor his advisors, either before or after the inauguration, could have had a clearly-defined and irreversible plan of action. The condition of affairs was too intricate and too greatly dependent upon incalculable and uncontrollable contingencies even for the most far-sighted statesman to have been able to move in a straight line and to see the end from the beginning. In the interim from his election to the bombardment of Fort



Sumter, the attitude of Lincoln was one of *prudent reserve*. He was equally great in his determination to stand and wait and in his decision to advance and act. The spirit of his first inaugural is tolerant and irenic, yet firm and resolute. He assures "the Southern States that by the accession of a Republican administration, their property and their peace and personal security are not to be endangered." He declares that he "has no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so and I have no inclination to do so." He reiterates the resolution of the Republican platform, "that the maintenance inviolate of the rights of the States, and especially the right of each State to order and control its own domestic institutions, according to its own judgment exclusively, is essential to that balance of power on which the perfection and endurance of our political fabric depend; and we denounce the lawless invasion of armed force of the soil of any State or Territory, no matter under what pretext, as among the gravest crimes." He emphatically affirms, however, that "no State upon its own mere motion can lawfully get out of the Union," and announces in unmistakable language his purpose to preserve the Union intact. But he adds: "In doing this there must be no bloodshed and violence, and there shall be none, unless it be forced upon the national authority."

In the conclusion of his address he pleads for peace. "My countrymen, one and all, think calmly and well upon this whole subject. Nothing valuable can be lost by taking time. If it were admitted that you, who are dissatisfied, hold the right side in the dispute, there is no single good reason for precipitate action. Indulgence, patriotism, Christianity, and a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land, are still competent to adjust in the best way all our present difficulties."

Further quotations are unnecessary to show that Lincoln did not breathe defiance or thrust the mailed fist into the faces of the secessionists. His purpose was to exhaust "all peaceable measures before a resort to any stronger ones." But he was, at the same time, irrevocably pledged "to hold, occupy and possess the property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imposts." He solemnly declared "that to the extent of my ability, I shall take care, as the Constitution itself expressly enjoins upon me, that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the States." War or no war, these declarations could not be retracted. Men of the South, who heard the inaugural, caught its martial undertone. On March 5th, Mr. L. Q. Washington wrote from the capital to the Confederate Secretary of War: "I was present last evening at a consultation of Southern gentlemen, at which Messrs. Crawford, Garnett, Pryor, De Jarnette of Virginia, and Wigfall of Texas were present. We all put the same construction on the inaugural, which we carefully went over together. We agreed that it was Lincoln's purpose at once to attempt the collection of the revenues, to reinforce and hold Fort Sumter and Pickens, and to retake the other places. He is a man of will and firmness."

His deliberate action and the evidences of his independent leadership appear in the conduct of the transactions relating to Fort Sumter. Major Anderson reported that his provisions would be exhausted in a few weeks, and requested a force of not less than 20,000 good and well-disciplined men to relieve him. Remembering that there were only 17,113 officers and men in the regular army and that these were scattered in small detachments along the western frontiers, it is clear that the request of Anderson could not be granted. The administration was in a sore

dilemma. Lieutenant-General Scott, after consultation with the officers of the army and the navy, reported that "evacuation seems almost inevitable, and in this view our distinguished chief engineer concurs." The cabinet, with the exception of Postmaster-General Blair, agreed with the experts of the army. But after Lincoln's promise "to hold, occupy and possess the property and places belonging to the government," the abandonment of Sumter would be utterly ruinous. "At home it would discourage the friends of the Union, embolden its adversaries and go far to ensure to the latter recognition abroad." With a keen sense of his predicament, Lincoln said: "When Anderson goes out of Fort Sumter, I shall have to go out of the White House." Since reinforcement was an absolute impossibility, the alternative of starving or withdrawal of the garrison presented itself. When the *provisioning* of Fort Sumter was proposed, only three of the cabinet were favorable. Seward was inflexible in his opposition. Lincoln, however, announced that "he must send bread to Anderson." In spite of positive protests from high authority, he ordered the despatch of a relief expedition, but not without due notice to the governor of South Carolina. The assurance was given that if the attempted relief would not be resisted, "no effort to throw in men, arms or ammunition" would be attempted until further notice or in case of attack. Even at this stage he did not play the aggressor toward the secessionists, but acted on the defensive. In his special message of July 4, 1861, he does not leave us in doubt on this point, when he tells us that he "sought only to hold the public places and property not already wrested from the government and to collect the revenues, relying for the rest on time, discussion and the ballot box."

Far be it from us to presume to measure swords with the brilliant essayist of the last *Cliosophic*. He would be rash,

indeed, who would rush into the lists to try his strength with one whose blade is so keen and whose stroke so true. It is only as a victim of circumstances, from which we would fain run away, but by which we are inextricably entangled, that we venture to consider the relation between the policy of Buchanan and of Lincoln before the attack on Sumter. Who could fail to admire the chivalrous gallantry of our distinguished townsman when he cited the notable historians of America and found them arrayed against him like a wall of adamant? We have found, however, another son of Pennsylvania who has championed the cause of the ill-fated Buchanan. He was never in political sympathy with him, nor did any personal affection warp his judgment. Mr. A. K. McClure, thirty years after Buchanan's retirement, wrote: "It will surprise many at this day when I say that Abraham Lincoln took up the reins of government just where James Buchanan left them, and continued precisely the same policy toward the South that Buchanan had inaugurated, until the Southern leaders committed the suicidal act of firing on Fort Sumter."

To do justice to this view we must not forget the epoch-making effect of the assault on Anderson. It clarified the vision of our statesmen and changed the whole problem in the North and the South. Then, too, a comparison between antipodal men like Buchanan and Lincoln is almost impossible without doing injustice to both. Their parentage, early training, intellectual and social characteristics, political allegiance and official experience were as far apart as the East is from the West. In the critical period before the election and the inauguration of Lincoln days were years and months decades. No one can tell what Buchanan would have done two months later; or Lincoln, three months earlier. The former, however, has put himself on record, in a letter to Mr. Baker, April 26, 1861, saying: "The

attack on Fort Sumter was an outrageous act. The authorities of Charleston were several times warned by my administration that such an attack would be civil war and would be treated as such. If it had been made in my time, it should have been treated as such." This *ex post facto* utterance is confirmed by his much condemned answer to the South Carolina commissioners. He declined to reinforce the forts in Charleston harbor, "relying on the honor of South Carolinians that they will not be assaulted while they remain in their present condition." He assumed, also, that he, as president, had no power to take action; that the whole dispute was to be submitted to Congress. But he said in unequivocal language, "if South Carolina should take any of these forts, she will then become the assailant in war against the United States."

The two presidents agreed in pursuing a policy intended to preserve peace rather than to precipitate war. On account of the insufficiency of the army and navy, both considered an attempt to reinforce Fort Sumter futile. Lincoln, however, determined to *provision* it. Both still believed that the Union could be preserved intact and the breach could be healed by peaceable measures. Both, accordingly, showed long-sufferance toward a rebellious people, which was born not of traitorous sympathy nor of cowardly indecision, but of a magnanimous determination to save the South from the consequence of her blind folly, and the whole nation from the horrors of an internecine war.

The truth of history and justice to two distinguished men require a statement not only of points of agreement, but, also, of points of difference. As men, they must be placed under two incomparable categories. Buchanan, leaving office, enfeebled by age and distracted by ruthless criticisms, belonged to a passing era. Lincoln, entering

office in the maturity of manhood and borne up by the enthusiasm of a party lately come into power, belonged to a new order. Buchanan was a loyal Democrat, Lincoln a Whig and a Republican. Buchanan not only stood for non-interference with slavery where it was, but for its right to go where it was not. Lincoln disclaimed any intention to abolish slavery, but he was unalterably opposed to its extension into new territory. Buchanan was in sympathy with the doctrine of State Rights, the Lecompton Constitution and the Dred Scott Decision. Lincoln won his presidential spurs in waging unremitting war against these measures. Buchanan was not an avowed opponent of slavery. Lincoln considered it a necessary evil and hoped for its extirpation. Buchanan was elected before secession by a solid South; Lincoln was elected by an almost solid North and inaugurated after secession. Buchanan was the victim of a treacherous cabinet; Lincoln chose his advisors in full view of the situation. Buchanan had to meet secession in its incipiency with a nation perplexed and dumfounded; Lincoln came into office after the Confederate States had formed a provisional government and sentiment was rapidly crystallizing on both sides. Buchanan received the South Carolina Commissioners and held that the initiative for the settlement of the trouble was vested in Congress and not in the executive. Lincoln, warned by Buchanan's experience, ignored the commissioners of the Confederacy and affirmed his right to defend and protect the government. Buchanan denied the right of states to secede, but also of the Federal government to coerce; Lincoln denied the right to secede and claimed the constitutional right to coerce.

Long after these statements are torn to shreds in the discussion of the coming hour, the question as to what both *should* have done will remain an insoluble crux for

the statesmen, the military officers and the historians for generations to come.

The second stage of Lincoln's administration opened with the firing on Fort Sumter—the shot which “echoed around the world” and “brought all the free States to their feet as one man.” The time for patient forbearance and peaceable adjustment had expired. For Lincoln there could be but one policy, and that was the successful prosecution and speedy termination of the war and the restoration of the Union. Happily for the unification of the North, he kept inviolate his promise to his dissatisfied countrymen in the inaugural, that “the government would not assail them, and that there could be no conflict without being themselves the aggressors.” The secessionists, blind to their own interests, became the “assailants of the government, and forced upon the country the distinct issues, ‘immediate dissolution or blood.’” In the words of Emerson the attack on Fort Sumter “crystallized the North into a unit and the hope of mankind was saved.” Party limits were abolished. Mr. Douglas, supported by a million voters, voluntarily interviewed the president and pledged his support of the administration. Ancient feuds and bitter prejudices were forgotten under the impulse of a new enthusiasm and in the presence of a common danger.

The declaration of war was attended by problems innumerable. An empty treasury had to be replenished. Neither the army nor the navy was prepared for efficient service. New officers had to be appointed and stationed. The neutrality of foreign powers had to be maintained, if their sympathy could not be won. The border States had to be conciliated and kept loyal to the government. The depressing effects of disastrous defeats had to be counteracted. The slow progress of the war chilled the first outburst of enthusiasm and cries were heard from North and

South for a cessation of hostilities. The president was the target of caustic criticisms, from domineering and disaffected members of his cabinet, arrogant military officers, a hostile minority in Congress, omniscient editors of metropolitan papers and partisan demagogues. But Lincoln attained heroic proportions in his treatment of Northern opposition and Southern rebellion. He took immediate and vigorous steps to meet the situation. His call for 75,000 militia and an extra session of Congress; his proclamation of a blockade of Southern ports, and a demand for 42,000 volunteers, with an increase in the regular army and in the naval forces, all followed in rapid succession in less than twenty days after Anderson capitulated. Men like Seward, Chase, Stanton and McClellan, who were firmly convinced that they were the agents of Providence for such a time as this to save the country from a well-meaning but incapable Executive, were quickly disillusioned and did obeisance to one who towered above them all. The different schemes of terminating the war, either by recognizing the insurgent States as an independent confederacy, or by granting a temporary truce for subsequent negotiations, or by restoring them to the Union with compromising concessions, were not for a moment considered by the Executive. His undaunted spirit inspired the second resolution of the Republican platform of 1864: "Resolved, That we approve the determination of the government of the United States not to compromise with rebels or to offer them any terms of peace, except such as may be based upon an unconditional surrender of their hostility and a return to their just allegiance to the Constitution and laws of the United States."

He could not be coerced by reckless radicals, restrained by timid conservatives, or disarmed by nerveless moderatists. With an almost overwhelming sense of responsibility,



with a heart-rending sympathy for his bleeding countrymen, with malice toward none and with charity for all, with a firm conviction of the righteousness of his cause and with an unfaltering trust in the truth and justice of the Almighty Ruler of the nations, he was guided in word and deed by the dictates of his reason and conscience. He was not an agent of his cabinet or the servant of his party, but the ruler of a divided nation, whose sole purpose was the healing of divisions and the restoration of peace and prosperity. His practically unanimous nomination for a second term and sweeping victory at the polls, were not only a splendid vindication of his statesmanship, but a magnificent expression of supreme confidence in his matchless manhood by the American people.

Even the want of time will not permit us to omit the consideration of the consummate act of his life, by which more than by any other his name will be remembered forever—the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln was theoretically and morally an inveterate foe of slavery. His whole nature instinctively revolted from it. The practice of involuntary servitude he could not reconcile with his conception of Divine Justice, human equality and democratic government, but as a broadminded and farseeing statesman he was no advocate of immediate and arbitrary abolition. The responsibility of the existence of slavery he did not lay upon the South alone, but upon the whole country. In his annual message, December 1, 1862, he pleads for compensated emancipation on the ground that in a certain sense “the liberation of slaves is the destruction of property—property acquired by descent or by purchase, the same as any other property.” Then he generously distributes the burden of responsibility. “It is no less true,” he says, “for having been so often said that the people of the South are not more responsible for the original intro-

duction of this property than are the people of the North, and when it is remembered how unhesitatingly we all use cotton and sugar and share the profits of dealing in them, it may not be quite safe to say that the South had been more responsible than the North for its continuance. If, then, for a common object this property is to be sacrificed, is it not just that it will be done at a common charge?" Neither the Republican party nor its successful candidate dreamed of interference, directly or indirectly, with the institution of slavery in the States where it existed. In the political platform and in public utterances care was taken to distinguish Republicanism from abolitionism. While Lincoln more than once declared that slavery was the cause of the war, he none the less resented the imputation of the opposition, that war was waged to free the slaves. According to Mr. Davis, "the South did not fight for slavery but for equality." It is equally true that the North did not fight against slavery but against secession and for the Union. In reply to the anti-slavery zealots, among whom was the impatient editor of the *New York Tribune*, Lincoln clearly defines his position: "My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing the slave, I would do it, and, if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do it. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union, and what I forbear I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union."

Emancipation was forced upon the president, as commander-in-chief of the army and navy, by the necessities of war. In a short time the Federal camps were filled with forsaken and fugitive slaves. What was to be done with

them? The Government could neither return them to their masters nor keep them in bondage. The insurrectionists were encouraged and comforted in the hope that the border slave States, still loyal to the Union, would eventually cast their lot with the Confederacy and turn the tide of war in its favor. The ardent abolitionists impatiently urged liberation, while loyal and good men of all parties strenuously opposed such an extremity.

The scope of vision, the sense of justice, the subordination of personal views to the general welfare, the self-restraint and firm resolution of Lincoln, never stood out in bolder relief than in the solution of this momentous question. He studied and pondered the whole subject long and well. He guarded himself against the importunities of enthusiasts and was heedless of the fears and warnings of the opportunists. At last he was convinced that the hour had come and he resolved on liberation. He was not primarily actuated by moral motives but by military policy. Emancipation was a war measure. Still he moved cautiously and with a view of winning rather than alienating the slave holders. He pleads in vain for compensated emancipation. He peremptorily revoked General Hunter's unauthorized order of military emancipation. He signed the bill abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia. He authorized the employment of contrabands in the army. He prepared a draft of a preliminary emancipation proclamation, giving due notice to all the States, whether in or out of the Union, that they might obtain the benefits of compensation. Only two members of his cabinet approved this measure. But with the impressive tone of a father addressing his son, he told them that he had not called them together for advice on issuing the proclamation. That matter was decided. But he desired their criticism and suggestions on the form of the document. Accepting the recommendation of Mr.

Seward, that the publication of it should be postponed until it would be supported by military success, he patiently waited for reports from the field. The fulness of time was at hand when the victory of Antietam revived the drooping courage of the North. After a second conference with the cabinet and a few slight modifications, the preliminary proclamation was announced, September 2, 1862. The die was cast. The Confederate States gave no sign of repentance and spurned the generous offer of compensation. True to his announcement, on January 1, 1863, he signed the final edict of freedom and the shackles fell from 4,000,000 bondmen forever. The decisive vote of the people in the next election, the series of successful battles under the leadership of Grant, Sherman and Sheridan, and the rapid disintegration of the Confederacy, not only ratified the proclamation but enabled the Thirty-eighth Congress to make it a part of the organic law of the land, as inscribed in the Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution.

Perhaps the crowning act of his life, the full bloom of his generous, unresenting, pardoning and philanthropic soul, was a tentative message addressed to Congress, recommending that the slave States be offered a compensation of four hundred millions of dollars, upon condition that all rebellion should cease before April 1, 1865. Then the backbone of the rebellion had been broken. When men were thirsting for vengeance on a defeated foe; when they were about to lay stripes deep and long on the bare back of a rebellious people; then Lincoln had "charity for all and malice toward none." The cabinet, however, to a man disapproved the plan. With an expression of surprise and sorrow, coming like a cloud over his face, he folded and laid away the paper, and with a deep sigh he added: "You are all opposed to me and I will not send the message." His lenient policy was rejected. The war was fought to the

bitter end. The plans for the reconstruction of the impoverished, distracted, humiliated and embittered South, which were ripening in his mind, were defeated by the assassin's hand. When Lincoln fell, the rebellious States lost their most faithful friend—a friend who groaned and agonized in his soul because of their apostasy, and travailed and prayed for their return to the government of their fathers. When Lincoln fell, the great genius of American democracy breathed his last and one of the most distinguished sons of the race passed into the realm of the immortals. When the stricken chief lay cold in death, the leonine Stanton, who had borne with him the burdens of war, spoke the judgment of history: "There lies the most perfect ruler of men that the world has ever seen."

He solved the problem which baffled American statesmen for a century. He transformed the Declaration of Independence from a political theory to a national fact. He exalted the Constitution as the supreme and inexorable law of an indissoluble Union. He convinced the supercilious and skeptical monarchies of the world that government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth. He broke the bonds of slavery and preserved the integrity of the nation.

We have traced his life from the cabin in the Western forests to the executive mansion at Washington, from the first sentence scribbled on a shovel by the hearth to the second inaugural, from the abolition sentiment uttered before the auction block in New Orleans to the Thirteenth Amendment. We have watched the successive steps in his career and read nearly all his recorded words, observed his treatment of men, friends and foes, and traced his administration of affairs in the dark days of the war until he died a martyr to the cause for which he lived. We have a feeling akin to that of the traveler who stands for the first

time before a towering peak of Switzerland. As his eye follows the outline of the monarch of the plain from base to summit, and his soul is lifted from the ephemeral to the eternal, he forgets the common clay, the flinty rock and the barren sides in the contemplation of the massive grandeur of the cloud-capped peak. Lincoln stands before us against a background of the vast and dim unknown, of the earth earthy yet with the glow of heaven on his brow, defying analysis, classification and interpretation—an incomparable and solitary personality.

When the fields of a nation were tinged with blood, when the demons of war stalked with hellish glee over the ruins of blooming gardens, golden harvests and thriving hamlets, and the cry of the widow and orphan filled the land, when victory was in his grasp and the plaudits of an exalted people were breaking forth—then Lincoln reveals the secret of his life in the words of his great second inaugural: "Fondly we hope, fervently do we pray that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth built by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil, shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.' With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive to finish the work we are in—to bind up a nation's wounds and care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphans; to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations." Did ever Jewish prophet or Christian apostle, ancient father or modern reformer, utter a sublimer faith in Divine Providence and plead with a

tenderer love for Christian charity? But the feeble accents of sober prose must yield to the keener vision, the finer touch and the subtler tones of the poetic muse, to give due honor to America's great emancipator:

"When the Norn Mother saw the Whirlwind Hour  
 Gathering and darkening as it hurried on,  
 She left the Heaven of Heroes and came down  
 To make a man to meet the mighty need.  
 She took the tried clay of the common road—  
 Clay warm yet with the genial heat of earth,  
 Dashed through it all a strain of prophecy,  
 Tempered the heap with touch of mortal tears;  
 Then mixed a laughter with the serious stuff.

The color of the ground was in him, the red earth,  
 The tang and odor of the primal things—  
 The rectitude and patience of the rocks;  
 The gladness of the wind that shakes the corn;  
 The courage of the bird that dares the sea;  
 The justice of the rain that loves all leaves;  
 The pity of the snow that hides all scars;  
 The loving kindness of the wayside well;  
 The tolerance and equity of light  
 That gives as freely to the shrinking weed  
 As to the great oak flaring to the wind—  
 To the grave's low hill as to the Matterhorn  
 That shoulders out the sky.

And so he came.

From prairie cabin up to Capitol,  
 One fair ideal led our chieftain on,  
 Forever more he burned to do his deed  
 With the fine stroke and gesture of a king.  
 He built the rail pile as he built the State,  
 Pouring his splendid strength through every blow.  
 The conscience of him testing every stroke,  
 To make his deed the measure of a man.

So came the Captain with the mighty heart;  
 And when the step of earthquake shook the house,

Wresting the rafters from their ancient hold,  
He held the ridgepole up and spiked again  
The rafters of the Home. He held his place—  
Held the long purpose like a growing tree—  
Held on through blame and faltered not at praise—  
And when he fell in whirlwind, he went down  
As when a kingly cedar, green with boughs,  
Goes down with a great shout upon the hills,  
And leaves a lonesome place against the sky."

—MARKHAM.