

## CHAPTER VII - THE SPOILS OF MEXICO

The extent of Jackson's more than monarchical power is well exemplified by the fact that Van Buren succeeded him almost as a king is succeeded by his heir. Van Buren was an apt master of electioneering and had a strong hold upon the democracy of New York. He occupied in the new Democratic Party something of the position which Burr had occupied in the old. But while Burr had sought his own ends and betrayed, Van Buren was strictly loyal to his chief. He was a sincere democrat and a clever man; but no one could credit him with the great qualities which the wielding of the immense new power created by Jackson seemed to demand. None the less he easily obtained the Presidency as Jackson's nominee. Since the populace, whose will Jackson had made the supreme power in the State, could not vote for him, they were content to vote for the candidate he was known to favour.

Indeed, in some ways the coalition which called itself the Whig party was weakened rather than strengthened by the substitution of a small for a great man at the head of the Democracy. Antagonism to Jackson was the real cement of the coalition, and some of its members did not feel called upon to transfer their antagonism unabated to Van Buren.

The most eminent of these was Calhoun, who now broke away from the Whigs and appeared prepared to give a measure of independent support to the Administration. He did not, however, throw himself heartily into the Democratic Party or seek to regain the succession to its leadership which had once seemed likely to be his. From the moment of his quarrel with Jackson the man changes out of recognition: it is one of the most curious transformations in history, like an actor stripping off his stage costume and appearing as his very self. Political compromises, stratagems, ambitions drop from him, and he stands out as he appears in that fine portrait whose great hollow eyes look down from the walls of the Capitol at Washington, the enthusiast, almost the fanatic, of a fixed idea and purpose. He is no longer national, nor pretends to be. His one thought is the defence of the type of civilization which he finds in his own State against the growing power of the North, which he perceives with a tragic clearness and the probable direction of which he foresees much more truly than did any Northerner of that period. He maintains continually, and without blurring its lines by a word of reservation or compromise, the dogma of State Sovereignty in its most extreme and almost parricidal form. His great pro-Slavery speeches belong to the same period. They are wonderful performances, full of restrained eloquence, and rich in lucid argument and brilliant illustration. Sincerity shines in every sentence. They

serve to show how strong a case an able advocate can make out for the old pre-Christian basis of European society; and they will have a peculiar interest if ever, as seems not improbable, the industrial part of Northern Europe reverts to that basis.

Van Buren, on the whole, was not an unsuccessful President. He had many difficulties to contend with. He had to face a serious financial panic, which some consider to have been the result of Jackson's action in regard to the Bank, some of the machinations of the Bank itself. He surmounted it successfully, though not without a certain loss of popularity. We English have some reason to speak well of him in that he resisted the temptation to embroil his country with ours when a rebellion in Canada offered an opportunity which a less prudent man might very well have taken. For the rest, he carried on the government of the country on Jacksonian lines with sufficient fidelity not to forfeit the confidence of the old man who watched and advised him, sympathetically but not without anxiety, from his "Hermitage" in Tennessee.

One singular episode may conveniently be mentioned here, though the incident in which it originated rather belongs to the Jacksonian epoch. This is not the place to discuss the true nature of that curious institution called Freemasonry. Whatever its origin, whether remote and derived from Solomon's Temple as its devotees assert, or, as seems more intrinsically probable, comparatively modern and representing one of the hundreds of semi-mystical fads which flourished in the age of Cagliostro, it had acquired considerable importance in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century. At some unknown date it was carried across the Atlantic, and sprouted vigorously in America; but it does not seem to have been taken particularly seriously, until the States were startled by an occurrence which seemed more like part in what is known in that country as "a dime novel" than a piece of history.

A journalist named Morgan, who had been a Freemason, announced his intention of publishing the inviolable secrets of the Society. The announcement does not seem to have created any great sensation; probably the majority of Americans were as sceptical as is the present writer as to the portentous nature of the awful Unspeakabilities which so many prosperous stock-brokers and suburban builders keep locked in their bosoms. But what followed naturally created a sensation of the most startling kind. For on the morrow of his announcement Morgan disappeared and never returned. What happened to him is not certainly known. A body was found which may or may not have been his. The general belief was that he had been kidnapped and murdered by his fellow-Craftsmen, and, indeed, it really seems the natural inference from the acknowledged facts that at least some one connected with the Brotherhood was responsible for his fate. A

violent outcry against Masonry was the natural result, and, as some of the more prominent politicians of the day, including President Jackson himself, were Masons, the cry took a political form. An Anti-Masonic Party was formed, and at the next Presidential election was strong enough to carry one State and affect considerably the vote of others. The movement gradually died down and the party disappeared; but the popular instinct that secret societies, whether murderous or not, have no place in a Free State was none the less a sound one.

I have said that Van Buren's election was a sign of Jackson's personal influence. But the election of 1840 was a more startling sign of the completeness of his moral triumph, of the extent to which his genius had transformed the State. In 1832 the Whigs pitted their principles against his and lost. In 1840 they swallowed their principles, mimicked his, and won.

The Whig theory--so far as any theory connected the group of politicians who professed that name--was that Congress and the political class which Congress represented should rule, or at least administer, the State. From that theory it seemed to follow that some illustrious Senator or Congressman, some prominent member of that political class, should be chosen as President. The Whigs had acted in strict accord with their theory when they had selected as their candidate their ablest and most representative politician, Clay. But the result had not been encouraging. They now frankly abandoned their theory and sought to imitate the successful practice of their adversaries. They looked round for a Whig Jackson, and they found him in an old soldier from Ohio named Harrison, who had achieved a certain military reputation in the Indian wars. Following their model even more closely, they invented for him the nickname of "Old Tippercanoe," derived from the name of one of his victories, and obviously suggested by the parallel of "Old Hickory." Jackson, however, really had been called "Old Hickory" by his soldiers long before he took a leading part in politics, while it does not appear that Harrison was ever called "Tippercanoe" by anybody except for electioneering purposes. However, the name served its immediate purpose, and--

"Tippercanoe, And Tyler too!"

became the electoral war-cry of the Whigs. Tyler, a Southern Whig from Virginia, brought into the ticket to conciliate the Southern element in the party, was their candidate for the Vice-Presidency.

Unfortunately for themselves, the Democrats played the Whig game by assailing Harrison with very much the same taunts which had previously been used by the Whigs against Jackson. The ignorance of the old soldier, his political inexperience, even his poverty and obscurity of origin, were exploited in a

hundred Democratic pamphlets by writers who forgot that every such reflection made closer the parallel between Harrison and Jackson, and so brought to the former just the sort of support for which the Whigs were angling.

"Tippercanoe" proved an excellent speculation for the Whig leaders. It was "Tyler too," introduced to meet the exigencies of electioneering (and rhyme) that altogether disconcerted all their plans.

Tyler was a Southerner and an extreme Particularist. He had been a Nullifier, and his quarrel with Jackson's Democracy had simply been a quarrel with his Unionism. His opinions on all subjects, political, administrative, and fiscal, were as remote from those of a man like Clay as any opinions could be. This was perfectly well known to those who chose him for Vice-President. But while the President lives and exercises his functions the Vice-President is in America a merely ornamental figure. He has nothing to say in regard to policy. He is not even a member of the Administration. He presides over the Senate, and that is all. Consequently there has always been a strong temptation for American wire-pullers to put forward as candidate for the Vice-Presidency a man acceptable to some more or less dubious and detached group of their possible supporters, whose votes it is desired to obtain, but who are not intended to have any control over the effective policy of the Government. Yet more than one example has shown how perilous this particular electioneering device may turn out to be. For if the President should die before the expiration of his term, the whole of his almost despotic power passes unimpaired to a man who represents not the party, but a more or less mutinous minority in the party.

It was so in this case. Harrison was elected, but barely lived to take the oath. Tyler became President. For a short time things went comparatively smoothly. Harrison had chosen Webster as Secretary of State, and Tyler confirmed his appointment. But almost at once it became apparent that the President and his Secretary differed on almost every important question of the day, and that the Whig Party as a whole was with the Secretary. The President's views were much nearer to those of the Democratic opposition, but that opposition, smarting under its defeat, was not disposed to help either combatant out of the difficulties and humiliations which had so unexpectedly fallen on both in the hour of triumph. Yet, if Webster were dismissed or driven to resign, someone of note must be found to take his place. Personal followers the President had none. But in his isolation he turned to the one great figure in American politics that stood almost equally alone. It was announced that the office vacated by Webster had been offered to and accepted by John Caldwell Calhoun.

Calhoun's acceptance of the post is sometimes treated as an indication of the

revival of his ambitions for a national career. It is suggested that he again saw a path open to him to the Presidency which he had certainly once coveted. But though his name was mentioned in 1844 as a possible Democratic candidate, it was mentioned only to be found wholly unacceptable, and indeed Calhoun's general conduct when Secretary was not such as to increase his chances of an office for which no one could hope who had not a large amount of Northern as well as Southern backing. It seems more likely that Calhoun consented to be Secretary of State as a means to a definite end closely connected with what was now the master-passion of his life, the defence of Southern interests. At any rate, the main practical fruit of his administration of affairs was the annexation of Texas.

Texas had originally been an outlying and sparsely peopled part of the Spanish province of Mexico, but even before the overthrow of Spanish rule a thin stream of immigration had begun to run into it from the South-Western States of America. The English-speaking element became, if not the larger part of the scant population, at least the politically dominant one. Soon after the successful assertion of Mexican independence against Spain, Texas, mainly under the leadership of her American settlers, declared her independence of Mexico. The occasion of this secession was the abolition of Slavery by the native Mexican Government, the Americans who settled in Texas being mostly slave-owners drawn from the Slave States. Some fighting took place, and ultimately the independence of Texas seems to have been recognized by one of the many governments which military and popular revolutions and counter-revolutions rapidly set up and pulled down in Mexico proper. The desire of the Texans--or at least of that governing part of them that had engineered the original secession--was to enter the American Union, but there was a prolonged hesitation at Washington about admitting them, so that Texas remained for a long time the "Lone Star State," independent alike of Mexico and the United States. This hesitation is difficult at first sight to understand, for Texas was undoubtedly a valuable property and its inhabitants were far more willing to be incorporated than, say, the French colonists of Louisiana had been. The key is, no doubt, to be found in the internecine jealousies of the sections. The North--or at any rate New England--had been restive over the Louisiana purchase as tending to strengthen the Southern section at the expense of the Northern. If Texas were added to Louisiana the balance would lean still more heavily in favour of the South. But what was a cause of hesitation to the North and to politicians who looked for support to the North was a strong recommendation to Calhoun. He had, as he himself once remarked, a remarkable gift of foresight--an uncomfortable gift, for he always foresaw most clearly the things he desired least. He alone seems to have understood fully how much the South had sacrificed by the Missouri Compromise. He saw her hemmed in and stationary while the North added

territory to territory and State to State. To annex Texas would be, to an extent at least, to cut the bonds which limited her expansion. When the population should have increased sufficiently it was calculated that at least four considerable States could be carved out of that vast expanse of country.

But, though Calhoun's motive was probably the political strengthening of the South, his Texan policy could find plenty of support in every part of the Union. Most Northerners, especially in the new States of the North-West, cared more for the expansion of the United States than for the sectional jealousies. They were quite prepared to welcome Texas into the Union; but, unfortunately for Calhoun, they had a favourite project of expansion of their own for which they expected a corresponding support.

The whole stretch of the Pacific slope which intervenes between Alaska and California, part of which is now represented by the States of Washington and Oregon and part by British Columbia, was then known generally as "Oregon." Its ownership was claimed both by British and American Governments upon grounds of prior exploration, into the merits of which it is hardly necessary to enter here. Both claims were in fact rather shadowy, but both claimants were quite convinced that theirs was the stronger. For many years the dispute had been hung up without being settled, the territory being policed jointly by the two Powers. Now, however, there came from the Northern expansionists a loud demand for an immediate settlement and one decidedly in their favour. All territory south of latitude 47° 40' must be acknowledged as American, or the dispute must be left to the arbitrament of arms. "Forty-seven-forty or fight!" was the almost unanimous cry of the Democracy of the North and West.

The Secretary of State set himself against the Northern Jingoism, and though his motives may have been sectional, his arguments were really unanswerable. He pointed out that to fight England for Oregon at that moment would be to fight her under every conceivable disadvantage. An English army from India could be landed in Oregon in a few weeks. An American army sent to meet it must either round Cape Horn and traverse the Atlantic and Pacific oceans in the face of the most powerful navy in the world or march through what was still an unmapped wilderness without the possibility of communications or supports. If, on the other hand, the question were allowed to remain in suspense, time would probably redress the balance in favour of the United States. American expansion would in time touch the borders of Oregon, and then the dispute could be taken up and settled under much more favourable circumstances. It was a perfectly just argument, but it did not convince the "forty-seven-forty-or-fighters," who roundly accused the Secretary--and not altogether unjustly--of caring only for the expansion of his own section.

Calhoun was largely instrumental in averting a war with England, but he did not otherwise conduct himself in such a manner as to conciliate opinion in that country. England, possibly with the object of strengthening her hand in bargaining for Oregon, had intervened tentatively in relation to Texas. Lord Aberdeen, then Peel's Foreign Secretary, took up that question from the Anti-Slavery standpoint, and expressed the hope that the prohibition of Slavery by Mexico would not be reversed if Texas became part of the American Union. The intervention, perhaps, deserved a snub--for, after all, England had only recently emancipated the slaves in her own colonies--and a sharp reminder that by the Monroe Doctrine, to which she was herself a consenting party, no European Power had a right to interfere in the domestic affairs of an American State. Calhoun did not snub Lord Aberdeen: he was too delighted with his lordship for giving him the opportunity for which he longed. But he did a thing eminently characteristic of him, which probably no other man on the American continent would have done. He sat down and wrote an elaborate and very able State Paper setting forth the advantages of Slavery as a foundation for civilization and public liberty. It was this extraordinary dispatch that led Macaulay to say in the House of Commons that the American Republic had "put itself at the head of the nigger-driving interest throughout the world as Elizabeth put herself at the head of the Protestant interest." As regards Calhoun the charge was perfectly true; and it is fair to him to add that he undoubtedly believed in Slavery much more sincerely than ever Elizabeth did in Protestantism. But he did not represent truly the predominant feeling of America. Northern Democratic papers, warmly committed to the annexation of Texas, protested vehemently against the Secretary's private fad concerning the positive blessedness of Slavery being put forward as part of the body of political doctrine held by the United States. Even Southerners, who accepted Slavery as a more or less necessary evil, did not care to see it thus blazoned on the flag. But Calhoun was impenitent. He was proud of the international performance, and the only thing he regretted, as his private correspondence shows, was that Lord Aberdeen did not continue the debate which he had hoped would finally establish his favourite thesis before the tribunal of European opinion.

Texas was duly annexed, and Tyler's Presidency drew towards its close. He seems to have hoped that the Democrats whom he had helped to defeat in 1840 would accept him as their candidate for a second term in 1844; but they declined to do so, nor did they take kindly to the suggestion of nominating Calhoun. Instead, they chose one Polk, who had been a stirring though not very eminent politician in Jacksonian days. The choice is interesting as being the first example of a phenomenon recurrent in subsequent American politics, the deliberate selection of a more or less obscure man on the ground of what Americans call "availability."

It is the product of the convergence of two things--the fact of democracy as indicated by the election of a First Magistrate by a method already frankly plebiscitary, and the effect of a Party System, becoming, as all Party Systems must become if they endure, at once increasingly rigid and increasingly unreal.

The aim of party managers--necessarily professionals--was to get their party nominee elected. But the conditions under which they worked were democratic. They could not, as such professionals can in an oligarchy like ours, simply order the electors to vote for any nincompoop who was either rich and ambitious enough to give them, the professionals, money in return for their services, or needy and unscrupulous enough to be their hired servant. They were dealing with a free people that would not have borne such treatment. They had to consider as a practical problem for what man the great mass of the party would most readily and effectively vote. And it was often discovered that while the nomination of an acknowledged "leader" led, through the inevitable presence (in a democracy) of conflicts and discontents within the party, to the loss of votes, the candidate most likely to unite the whole party was one against whom no one had any grudge and who simply stood for the "platform" which was framed in a very democratic fashion by the people themselves voting in their "primaries." When this system is condemned and its results held up to scorn, it should be remembered that among other effects it is certainly responsible for the selection of Abraham Lincoln.

Polk was not a Lincoln, but he was emphatically an "available" candidate, and he won, defeating Clay, to whom the Whigs had once more reverted, by a formidable majority. He found himself confronted with two pressing questions of foreign policy. During the election the Democrats had played the "Oregon" card for all it was worth, and the new President found himself almost committed to the "forty-seven-forty-or-fight" position. But the practical objections to a war with England on the Oregon dispute were soon found to be just as strong as Calhoun had represented them to be. Moreover, the opportunity presented itself for a war at once much more profitable and much less perilous than such a contest was likely to prove, and it was obvious that the two wars could not be successfully undertaken at once.

The independence of Texas had been in some sort recognized by Mexico, but the frontier within which that independence formally existed was left quite undefined, and the Texan view of it differed materially from the Mexican. The United States, by annexing Texas, had shouldered this dispute and virtually made it their own.

It is seldom that historical parallels are useful; they are never exact. But there are certain real points of likeness between the war waged by the United States



against Mexico in the 'forties and the war waged by Great Britain against the Boer Republics between 1899 and 1902. In both cases it could be plausibly represented that the smaller and weaker Power was the actual aggressor. But in both cases there can be little doubt that it was the stronger Power which desired or at least complacently contemplated war. In both cases, too, the defenders of the war, when most sincere, tended to abandon their technical pleas and to take their stand upon the principle that the interests of humanity would best be served by the defeat of a "backward" people by a more "progressive" one. It is not here necessary to discuss the merits of such a plea. But it may be interesting to note the still closer parallel presented by the threefold division of the opposition in both cases. The Whig Party was divided in 1847, almost exactly as was the "Liberal" Party in 1899. There was, especially in New England, an ardent and sincere minority which was violently opposed to the war and openly denounced it as an unjustifiable aggression. Its attitude has been made fairly familiar to English readers by the first series of Lowell's "Bigelow Papers." This minority corresponded roughly to those who in England were called "Pro-Boers." There was another section which warmly supported the war: it sought to outdo the Democrats in their patriotic enthusiasm, and to reap as much of the electoral harvest of the prevalent Jingoism as might be. Meanwhile, the body of the party took up an intermediate position, criticized the diplomacy of the President, maintained that with better management the war might have been avoided, but refused to oppose the war outright when once it had begun, and concurred in voting supplies for its prosecution.

The advocates of the war had, however, to face at its outset one powerful and unexpected defection, that of Calhoun. No man had been more eager than he for the annexation of Texas, but, Texas once annexed, he showed a marked desire to settle all outstanding questions with Mexico quickly and by a compromise on easy terms. He did all he could to avert war. When war actually came, he urged that even the military operations of the United States should be strictly defensive, that they should confine themselves to occupying the disputed territory and repelling attacks upon it, but should under no circumstances attempt a counter-invasion of Mexico. There can be little doubt that Calhoun's motive in proposing this curious method of conducting a war was, as usual, zeal for the interests of his section, and that he acted as he did because he foresaw the results of an extended war more correctly than did most Southerners. He had coveted Texas because Texas would strengthen the position of the South. Slavery already existed there, and no one doubted that if Texas came into the Union at all it must be as a Slave State. But it would be otherwise if great conquests were made at the expense of Mexico. Calhoun saw clearly that there would be a strong movement to exclude Slavery from such conquests, and, having regard to the numerical superiority of the North, he doubted the ability of his own section to obtain in the

scramble that must follow the major part of the spoil.

Calhoun, however, was as unable to restrain by his warnings the warlike enthusiasm of the South as were the little group of Peace Whigs in New England to prevent the North from being swept by a similar passion. Even Massachusetts gave a decisive vote for war.

The brief campaign was conducted with considerable ability, mainly by Generals Taylor and Scott. Such army as Mexico possessed was crushingly defeated at Monterey. An invasion followed, and the fall of Mexico City completed the triumph of American arms. By the peace dictated in the captured capital Mexico had, of course, to concede the original point of dispute in regard to the Texan frontier. But greater sacrifices were demanded of her, though not without a measure of compensation. She was compelled to sell at a fixed price to her conqueror all the territory to which she laid claim on the Pacific slope north of San Diego. Thus Arizona, New Mexico, and, most important of all, California passed into American hands.

But before this conclusion had been reached a significant incident justified the foresight of Calhoun. Towards the close of the campaign, a proposal made in Congress to grant to the Executive a large supply to be expended during the recess at the President's discretion in purchasing Mexican territory was met by an amendment moved by a Northern Democrat named Wilmot, himself an ardent supporter of the war, providing that from all territory that might be so acquired from Mexico Slavery should be for ever excluded. The proviso was carried in the House of Representatives by a majority almost exactly representative of the comparative strength of the two sections. How serious the issue thus raised was felt to be is shown by the fact that the Executive preferred dispensing with the money voted to allowing it to be pushed further. In the Senate both supply and condition were lost. But the "Wilmot Proviso" had given the signal for a sectional struggle of which no man could foresee the end.

Matters were further complicated by a startlingly unexpected discovery. On the very day on which peace was proclaimed, one of the American settlers who had already begun to make their way into California, in digging for water on his patch of reclaimed land, turned up instead a nugget of gold. It was soon known to the ends of the earth that the Republic had all unknowingly annexed one of the richest goldfields yet discovered. There followed all the familiar phenomena which Australia had already witnessed, which South Africa was later to witness, and which Klondyke has witnessed in our time. A stream of immigrants, not only from every part of the United States but from every part of the civilized world, began to pour into California drunk with the hope of immediate and enormous gains.

Instead of the anticipated gradual development of the new territory, which might have permitted considerable delay and much cautious deliberation in the settlement of its destiny, one part of that territory at least found itself within a year the home of a population already numerous enough to be entitled to admission to the Union as a State, a population composed in great part of the most restless and lawless of mankind, and urgently in need of some sort of properly constituted government.

A Convention met to frame a plan of territorial administration, and found itself at once confronted with the problem of the admission or exclusion of Slavery. Though many of the delegates were from the Slave States, it was decided unanimously to exclude it. There was nothing sentimentally Negrophil about the attitude of the Californians; indeed, they proclaimed an exceedingly sensible policy in the simple formula: "No Niggers, Slave or Free!" But as regards Slavery their decision was emphatic and apparently irreversible.

The Southerners were at once angry and full of anxiety. It seemed that they had been trapped, that victories won largely by Southern valour were to be used to disturb still more the balance already heavily inclining to the rival section. In South Carolina, full of the tradition of Nullification, men already talked freely of Secession. The South, as a whole, was not yet prepared for so violent a step, but there was a feeling in the air that the type of civilization established in the Slave States might soon have to fight for its life.

On the top of all this vague unrest and incipient division came a Presidential election, the most strangely unreal in the whole history of the United States. The issue about which alone all men, North and South, were thinking was carefully excluded from the platforms and speeches of either party. Everyone of either side professed unbounded devotion to the Union, no one dared to permit himself the faintest allusion to the hot and human passions which were patently tearing it in two. The Whigs, divided on the late war, divided on Slavery, divided on almost every issue by which the minds of men were troubled, yet resolved to repeat the tactics which had succeeded in 1840. And the amazing thing is that they did in fact repeat them and with complete success. They persuaded Zachary Taylor, the victor of Monterey, to come forward as their candidate. Taylor had shown himself an excellent commander, but what his political opinions might be no-one knew, for it transpired that he had never in his life even recorded a vote. The Whigs, however, managed to extract from him the statement that if he had voted at the election of 1844--as, in fact, he had not--it would have been for Clay rather than for Polk; and this admission they proceeded, rather comically, to trumpet to the world as a sufficient guarantee from "a consistent and truth-speaking man" of the candidate's lifelong devotion to "Whig" principles. Nothing further than the above

remark and the frank acknowledgment that he was a slave-owner could be extracted from Taylor in the way of programme or profession of faith. But the Convention adopted him with acclamation. Naturally such a selection did not please the little group of Anti-War Whigs--a group which was practically identical with the extreme Anti-Slavery wing of the party--and Lowell, in what is perhaps the most stinging of all his satires, turned Taylor's platform or absence of platform to ridicule in lines known to thousands of Englishmen who know nothing of their occasion:--

"Ez fer my princerples, I glory      In hevin' nothin' of the sort.      I ain't a Whig,  
I ain't a Tory,      I'm jest a--Candidate in short."

"Monterey," however, proved an even more successful election cry than "Tippercanoe." The Democrats tried to play the same game by putting forward General Cass, who had also fought with some distinction in the Mexican War and had the advantage--if it were an advantage--of having really proved himself a stirring Democratic partisan as well. But Taylor was the popular favourite, and the Whigs by the aid of his name carried the election.

He turned out no bad choice. For the brief period during which he held the Presidential office he showed considerable firmness and a sound sense of justice, and seems to have been sincerely determined to hold himself strictly impartial as between the two sections into which the Union was becoming every day more sharply divided. Those who expected, on the strength of his blunt avowal of slave-owning, that he would show himself eager to protect and extend Slavery were quite at fault. He declared with the common sense of a soldier that California must come into the Union, as she wished to come in, as a Free State, and that it would be absurd as well as monstrous to try and compel her citizens to be slave-owners against their will. But he does not appear to have had any comprehensive plan of pacification to offer for the quieting of the distracted Union, and, before he could fully develop his policy, whatever it may have been, he died and bequeathed his power to Millard Fillmore, the Vice-President, a typical "good party man" without originality or initiative.

The sectional debate had by this time become far more heated and dangerous than had been the debates which the Missouri Compromise had settled thirty years before. The author of the Missouri Compromise still lived, and, as the peril of the Union became desperate, it came to be said more and more, even by political opponents, that he and he alone could save the Republic. Henry Clay, since his defeat in 1844, had practically retired from the active practice of politics. He was an old man. His fine physique had begun to give way, as is often the case with such men, under the strain of a long life that had been at once

laborious and self-indulgent. But he heard in his half-retirement the voice of the nation calling for him, and he answered. His patriotism had always been great, great also his vanity. It must have been strangely inspiring to him, at the end of a career which, for all its successes, was on the whole a failure--for the great stake for which he played was always snatched from him--to live over again the great triumph of his youth, and once more to bequeath peace, as by his last testament, to a distracted nation. God allowed him that not ignoble illusion, and mercifully sent him to his rest before he could know that he had failed.

The death of Taylor helped Clay's plans; for the soldier-President had discovered a strong vein of obstinacy. He had his own views on the question, and was by no means disposed to allow any Parliamentary leader to over-ride them. Filmore was quite content to be an instrument in the hands of a stronger man, and, after his succession, Clay had the advantage of the full support of the Executive in framing the lines of the last of his great compromises.

In the rough, those lines were as follows: California was to be admitted at once, and on her own terms, as a Free State, Arizona and New Mexico were to be open to Slavery if they should desire its introduction; their Territorial Governments, when formed, were to decide the question. This adjustment of territory was to be accompanied by two balancing measures dealing with two other troublesome problems which had been found productive of much friction and bitterness. The district of Columbia--that neutralized territory in which the city of Washington stood--having been carved out of two Slave States, was itself within the area of legalized Slavery. But it was more than that. It was what we are coming to call, in England, a "Labour Exchange." In fact, it was the principal slave mart of the South, and slave auctions were carried on at the very doors of the Capitol, to the disgust of many who were not violent in their opposition to Slavery as a domestic institution. To this scandal Clay proposed to put an end by abolishing the Slave Trade in the district of Columbia. Slavery was still to be lawful there, but the public sale and purchase of slaves was forbidden. In return for this concession to Anti-Slavery sentiment, a very large counter-concession was demanded. As has already been said, the Constitution had provided in general terms for the return of fugitive slaves who escaped from Slave States into the Free. But for reasons and in a fashion which it will be more convenient to examine in the next chapter, this provision of the Constitution had been virtually nullified by the domestic legislation of many Northern States. To put an end to this, Clay proposed a Fugitive Slave Law which imposed on the Federal Government the duty of recovering escaped slaves, and authorized the agents of that Government to do so without reference to the Courts or Legislature of the State in which the slave might be seized.

The character of the settlement showed that its author's hand had in no way forgotten its cunning in such matters. As in the Missouri Compromise, every clause shows how well he had weighed and judged the conditions under which he was working, how acutely he guessed the points upon which either side could be persuaded to give way, and the concessions for which either would think worth paying a high price. And in fact his settlement was at the time accepted by the great mass of Union-loving men, North and South. Some Northern States, and especially Massachusetts, showed a disposition to break away under what seemed to them the unbearable strain of the Fugitive Slave Law. But in dealing with Massachusetts Clay found a powerful ally in Webster. That orator was her own son, and a son of whom she was immensely proud. He had, moreover, throughout his public life, avowed himself a convinced opponent of Slavery. When, therefore, he lent the weight of his support to Clay's scheme he carried with him masses of Northern men whom no one else could have persuaded. He proclaimed his adherence of the Compromise in his famous speech of the 10th of May--one of the greatest that he ever delivered. It was inevitable that his attitude should be assailed, and the clamour raised against him by the extreme Anti-Slavery men at the time has found an echo in many subsequent histories of the period. He is accused of having sold his principles in order that he might make an unscrupulous bid for the Presidency. That he desired to be President is true, but it is not clear that the 10th of May speech improved his chances of it; indeed, the reverse seems to have been the case. A candid examination of the man and his acts will rather lead to the conclusion that throughout his life he was, in spite of his really noble gift of rhetoric, a good deal more of the professional lawyer-politician than his admirers have generally been disposed to admit, but that his "apostacy" of 1850 was, perhaps, the one act of that life which was least influenced by professional motives and most by a genuine conviction of the pressing need of saving the Union.

The support of a Southern statesman of like authority might have done much to give finality to the settlement. But the one Southerner who carried weight comparable to that of Webster in the North was found among its opponents. A few days after Webster had spoken, the Senate listened to the last words of Calhoun. He was already a dying man. He could not even deliver his final protest with his own lips. He sat, as we can picture him, those great, awful eyes staring haggardly without hope into nothingness, while a younger colleague read that protest for him to the Assembly that he had so often moved, yet never persuaded. Calhoun rejected the settlement; indeed, he rejected the whole idea of a territorial settlement on Missouri lines. It is fair to his sagacity to remember that the mania for trying to force Slavery on unsuitable and unwilling communities which afterwards took possession of those who led the South to disaster could claim no authority from him. His own solution is to be found in the "Testament" published

after his death--an amazing solution, based on the precedent of the two Roman Consuls, whereby two Presidents were to be elected, one by the North and one by the South, with a veto on each other's acts. He probably did not expect that the wild proposal would be accepted. Indeed, he did not expect that anything that he loved would survive. With all his many errors on his head, there was this heroic thing about the man--that he was one of those who can despair of the Republic and yet not desert it. With an awful clearness he saw the future as it was to be, the division becoming ever wider, the contest more bitter, the sword drawn, and at the last--defeat. In the sad pride and defiance of his dying speech one catches continually an echo of the tragic avowal of Hector: "For in my heart and in my mind I know that Troy shall fall."

He delivered his soul, and went away to die. And the State to which he had given up everything showed its thought of him by carving above his bones, as sufficient epitaph, the single word: "CALHOUN."