A

EULOGY

ON THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER OF HENRY CLAY,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

STUDENTS OF DARTMOUTH COLLEGE,

OCT. 15, 1852,

BY S. G. BROWN, D.D.,

PROFESSOR OF ORATORY, ETC., IN DARTMOUTH COLLEGE.

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DARTMOUTH COLLEGE, Oct. 15, 1852.

PROFESSOR BROWN:

Dear Sir, — At a meeting of the Students, the undersigned were appointed a Committee to request for publication a copy of the Eulogy on the late Henry Clay, pronounced by you this afternoon.

Yours very respectfully,

W. C. THOMPSON.
H. M. BACON.
F. BATES.
F. B. LORD.

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE, Oct. 16, 1852.

Gentlemen, — The Eulogy upon Mr. Clay which I had the honor to deliver before the Students was necessarily prepared in the midst of other pressing labors, and with no expectation of publishing it. If, however, it can contribute to the pleasure of any, I will not hesitate to place a copy at your disposal. With great regard,

Your friend and servant,

S. G. BROWN.

Messrs. W. C. Thompson, H. M. Bacon, F. Bates, F. B. Lord.

E U L O G Y.

WHEN, on the 29th day of last June, the tidings flashed from the Capital, East, West, North, South, everywhere, that the tremulous hand of the great Western Orator was at last still forever, — that the voice which had electrified thousands was forever hushed, — not one could be found, political friend or political foe, who did not feel that a great man had fallen. There remained all, or nearly all, the differerences of opinion respecting the measures he had advocated, which ever divided men; but the strifes of party were forgotten, that all might meet in harmony to commemorate the virtues of the venerable statesman. Not then, for the first time within a few years, had the nation been called to pause in its career before the lifeless remains of one of her greatest men; and it is well to remember, that a call of such significance can, in our day, be repeated but once more.

Our country has beheld two generations of eminent statesmen. The first laid the foundation of the Republic; asserted successfully the right of the Colonies to an independent existence; organized a Constitution, and made one nation out of many states. The second, breathing so much of the spirit of that elder day, from the heart of which it sprung, has for the last forty years been pre-eminent in the state; and only just now, by the inevitable law of nature, is giving up its place to others.

The life of Mr. Clay covered nearly the whole period of our national existence. Born in 1777, the year of the battles of Princeton and Bennington, of Saratoga and Stillwater, four years before the surrender of Cornwallis virtually put an end to the war, he was old enough to understand in some degree the rejoicing with which peace was proclaimed and our independence secured. He lived to see the country extend its boundaries from the Mississippi to the Pacific; its population increase from three millions to twenty-four millions; and its power, from absolute non-entity, grow to be acknowledged and respected all over the world. Towards that prodigious and unexampled increase in every element of material and social prosperity, he might well feel that he had done something; that but for him the fame of the

nation would not shine so conspicuously as it now does; its diplomacy might have been less energetic; its internal affairs less impartially and wisely administered; its eloquence less brilliant; its moral dignity and power less commanding and attractive. Therefore it is well that the natural instinct which prompts us to render our feeble homage to such a memory should not be stifled. Not foolish and unmeaning is it, that the student should pause in the midst of his studies to recall the incidents of that public and splendid career, and consider the elements of that greatness, though he should not venture to anticipate the voice of history in assigning the precise measure of its grandeur and its fame.

I am not unmindful, however, that, with the honor of addressing you on this occasion, there is an attendant responsibility and a peculiar difficulty; — a responsibility, for one would not, on such a theme, speak carelessly and without discrimination; and a difficulty from lack of fresh and original sources of information, and from a natural and pardonable distrust of one's self in speaking with authority of one whose course has been so distinguished, and whose fortune it was to be vehemently enlisted on one side or the other of almost every political question which for fifty years has interested and divided the country.

Henry Clay was born April 12, 1777, in Hanover County, Virginia, — a State so fertile in distinguished men, and a County which prides itself also as being the birthplace of Patrick Henry. His father was a Baptist clergyman, who died when his son was but five years old. His mother, after a second marriage, removed to Kentucky, leaving behind her the boy, who, after spending a little time as clerk in a drug store in Richmond, entered the office of Mr. Tinsley, Clerk of the High Court of Chancery. Circumstances looked sufficiently unpromising for the unfriended lad; yet one might have, even then perhaps, seen the working of these elements which contributed to his future elevation, and which are necessary for success anywhere, — the diligence, fidelity, patience, resoluteness, and self-reliance, without which no external advantages will be of much avail. These qualities attracted to himself the notice of Chancellor Wythe, whose amanuensis he became, and whose instructions proved especially valuable. He subsequently studied the law with more care and formality in the office of Robert Brooke, Esq., then Attorney-General, and afterward Governor of Virginia; and in 1797, at the age of twenty, was admitted to the bar. Without loss of time he followed his friends to Kentucky, where, without reputation or powerful patrons, and

with a necessarily limited stock of knowledge, he commenced the practice of his profession. A person with his cast of mind would be apt to supply his deficiencies in learning by a quick observation, and, like Patrick Henry, would make a knowledge of the human heart, and adroitness in touching the springs of human action, take the place of familiarity with the principles or technicalities of law. He would be skilled in the art of his profession, rather than profoundly versed in its science. But he early measured himself, and estimated pretty fairly his own attainments and capacity. "I established myself in Lexington in 1797," said he in a speech delivered in that place about ten years since, "without patrons, without the favor or the countenance of the great or opulent, without the means of paying my weekly board, and in the midst of a bar uncommonly distinguished by eminent members. I remember how comfortable I thought I should be, if I could make one hundred pounds, Virginia money, per year, and with what delight I received the first fifteen shillings fee." His success was not long problematical: he entered rapidly upon a valuable practice, which he retained by patient and thorough study; by the decision and intrepidity with which he conducted his cases; and by those remarkable powers of catching

the sympathy, of impressing and controlling the understanding, which began so early to show themselves, and were destined to be felt all over the country. Remarkable as these native powers were, — and in some respects none surpassed him, none equalled him but Patrick Henry, — he was too wise to rely wholly upon them for success. He knew that a basis of large and accurate knowledge, and a thorough discipline of the faculties, were needed by him who aimed at any thing beyond temporary and often injudicious applause; and therefore the evening hours that others spent in recreation, he for the most part spent in diligent labor. However much others felt, or were destined to feel, the magnetism of his genius, he always relied on the stable and permanent elements which are within the reach of diligence and fidelity. Nevertheless, the earlier successes of Mr. Clay, so far as I have seen them noticed, must have depended in a large degree upon those various unrivalled original powers which enabled him to make the bench forget the law, and the jury to love mercy rather than justice.

It should be remembered, for the encouragement of all who are aiming to rival the great orator, or who are obliged, whether they exactly desire it or not, to attempt the practice of the art, that, like Curran, he

was for some time a member of a debating society before he could "screw his courage up to the sticking place" of taking part in the debates; and, when finally induced to speak, he addressed the President as "Gentlemen of the Jury," and, becoming yet more embarrassed by his mistake and the evident recognition of it by his little band of auditors, he could only stammer out again the same familiar form, "Gentlemen of the Jury." What if he had yielded to the diffidence and self-distrust?

Success at the bar soon opened the way for the exercise of his talents in a different sphere. In 1803 he was sent to the Kentucky Legislature, where he became conspicuous by a vehement contest with the Hon. Felix Grundy, then, as afterwards, a distinguished leader in the State. In the course of his professional life a few years from this time, (and the fact itself is one of the best proofs of the esteem in which he was held,) he was applied to by Aaron Burr to defend him from the accusation of being illegally engaged in military operations, on which charge he had been arrested in Kentucky. It was then the prevailing opinion that Burr was a persecuted man, and that his arrest was the result of political hostility. After being engaged as counsel for Mr. Burr, and before the matter was brought before the grand jury, Mr. Clay

was elected to the United States Senate for the unfinished term of General Adair. This rendered it a delicate question with him, whether to proceed in the defence of one virtually charged with treason. Nor was it till Burr solemnly assured him of the innocence of his intentions, and of the approbation of the United States Government, that he consented, and put forth those efforts that resulted in the refusal of the Grand Jury to return a bill of indictment. Subsequently, when the position of Burr was fully disclosed, he felt so indignant at the deceit practised towards him by that distinguished but dishonest man, that he refused to recognize him when they met.

Mr. Clay remained in the Senate at this time but a year, and it is interesting to remember, that the very first speech which he delivered in that body, was in favor of the system which had not then attracted much notice, but which afterwards became so intimately connected with his efforts and fame, viz. the system of internal improvement, — the system, as he understood it, which, in enlarging the resources of particular States, really added to the glory of all, and, by facilitating commercial and social intercourse, would bind more closely together different parts of the country, and so strengthen the union. The actual work which he advocated, — a bridge across

the Potomac, — was of little consequence; but the principle has been thought of sufficient magnitude to divide parties and sections.

In returning to Kentucky, Mr. Clay returned at once to the public service of the State. He was immediately elected to the Legislature, and chosen Speaker of the House. An opportunity was offered, during the session, for rendering to the law of his adopted State a service whose importance cannot be easily exaggerated. A proposition had been brought forward to prohibit "the reading of any British elementary work on law, and reference to any precedent of a British court." So barbarous a proposition, a kind of intellectual non-intercourse act, worthy of China or Japan, strange to say, found in that assembly many advocates. It mattered nothing that the principles of justice are the same for one hemisphere as for the other; or that we, as British colonies, had brought hither English laws and customs, deriving our very principles of liberty from the British Constitution, and being taught by the familiar maxims of English law when and why to resist arbitrary and unjust authority. An intense, but narrow and ignorant, patriotism was appealed to as demanding an utter severance from the ancient sources of legal wisdom, and the utter ignoring and

repudiating of that venerable system of *common law* which it had taken ages to mould and consolidate.

Mr. Clay was strenuous in opposition, and his speech on the occasion is spoken of as one of the most admirable in argument, illustration, and delivery, which had ever been heard. Yet even that eloquence might have been unavailing, had it not been for an amendment which he skilfully offered by way of compromise, the effect of which was to retain as authoritative all English decisions previous to July 4, 1776. Thus was secured still to the State a treasure for which it might have been well to risk almost a revolution.

But we must pass from these narrower, to the more public scenes of Mr. Clay's life. His field was most evidently to be found in Congress. To the United States Senate he was again returned in 1809, for the unexpired portion of the term of Mr. Thurston, and made himself conspicuous for his remarks in favor of encouraging domestic manufactures. During the next session, he became almost equally distinguished for opposition to the United States Bank. The subject of a Bank was one of the few prominent political subjects on which Mr. Clay's opinions underwent a decided change.

Leaving the Senate at the close of the two years for which he was elected, he was at once sent to the House of Representatives, where he received the signal honor of being elected Speaker of the House, on the very day of first taking a seat as a member of the body. Nor has the House ever contained a greater amount of talent than during the time that he presided over it. There were such men as Webster, and Calhoun, and Cheves, and Randolph, and Pitkin, and Grundy, and Forsyth, and King, and Pickering, and Lowndes, and Gaston, and Quincy, — the leading spirits of the country, most of them young, ardent, enterprising, and ambitious. The fame of his ability as presiding officer, has come down to our own time; and perhaps no one has ever exceeded the tact and skill, the firmness and courtesy, with which he discharged the duties of that difficult post. The fierceness of party spirit at the period of his first election (just preceding the war with England), was such as to require the mind and skill of a master to preserve the order of the House, and prevent an irremediable confusion of business. His manner is reported to have been somewhat stern, and, it may be, occasionally arbitrary, but always dignified and courteous; and to his honor it was said, that, during the many sessions that he presided, — from 1811 to 1825,

two years of absence excepted, — marked though they were by turbulence and strife, very few, if indeed any, of his decisions were reversed on appeal from the chair.

It would be unseemly, on an occasion like the present, to rake open the ashes of forgotten controversies, and fan the embers which smoulder beneath. History has not yet pronounced an absolute decision upon the public measures of those days, or upon the motives of the actors. Let us hope, that, however we may doubt the wisdom of the former, all shall finally agree upon the purity of the latter.

The terrible wars of Napoleon, embroiling every European state, began at last to have their legitimate effect upon us too. Our nation, though true in the main to the advice of Washington, and keeping aloof from entangling alliances, yet could not but feel the effect of the Berlin and Milan Decrees, and the retaliatory Orders in Council, the effect of which was to put our commerce at the mercy of both the French and English cruisers; and, as the English were masters of the seas, as their national safety depended upon preserving that mastery, their interference with our trade was the more constant and the more annoying. Besides this, there was one principle which England maintained, which led to still greater bitter-

ness of feeling, — the principle of "perpetual allegiance," so called; i. e. that a native-born British subject was a subject always and everywhere. Hence, American vessels were searched on the High Seas, and the sailors impressed wherever there was a shadow of suspicion of British origin. The result of this was not only great occasional injustice to the individuals seized, (even if every pretension of England were granted,) but ships were interrupted in their voyages by being deprived of the necessary men, seamen were reluctant to enter our vessels, the merchant-service languished, and irritated and exasperated feeling grew rife between the countries. This principle, it may be stated in passing, has never been formally renounced by England; but it was virtually yielded, nearly ten years since, to the crushing, the absolutely annihilating logic of Mr. Webster, in his correspondence with Lord Ashburton.

Two parties grew out of this state of things, — the one in favor of war with England; the other desirous of peace, believing that war might still be deferred, and, if deferred, perhaps prevented. The responsibility of the actual decision lies very much with Mr. Clay. Mr. Munroe, the Secretary of State, had recently returned from his embassy to several European courts, — latest from England, —

deeply offended at the manner in which the European powers were disposed to treat America, and perhaps somewhat irritated at the want of respect manifested towards himself as the Representative of the nation abroad. The administration of Mr. Madison took its hostile tone, at least in part, from his representations. But, even then, it is doubtful whether war would have been declared, had it not been for the impulsive and vigorous eloquence with which Mr. Clay, throwing into the matter the whole strength of his soul, and assisted heartily by Calhoun and Cheves, urged it upon Congress, and in private pressed a decision upon the Executive. Had the declaration been deferred a month, it probably would not have been made at all, certainly not at that time, because the principal ground on which it was based was removed by England. As it was, the war-party prevailed, and the contest was waged, with what success and honor this is not the place to inquire.

In two years, both parties found themselves ready to negotiate with a view to peace. The commissioners on our side were Messrs. Adams, Clay, Gallatin, Bayard, and Russell, who met the English plenipotentiaries at Ghent, in August, 1814; and on the 24th of December, the same year, after much labor,

the treaty was completed. Whatever was gained or lost, one thing was certain, viz. that the ability of the American Commissioners, far from their government, and obliged to rely in many cases on their own judgment, while their opponents could daily consult the ministry at home, and vary their demands according to circumstances, — their ability and skill, I say, drew forth the encomiums of all who watched the progress of affairs, and were made the subject of compliment even in the British Parliament.

In all the laborious discussions before reaching the desirable result, Mr. Clay took a full share; and there was one important topic with respect to which his part was very prominent. The treaty of 1783 contained an article relative to the fisheries on the banks of Newfoundland, the shores of Nova Scotia and Labrador, and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The right then conceded, it was contended by the British Commissioners, had been lost by the war, and would not be renewed by England without the grant of some equivalent privilege by the United States. This assumption was resisted from the outset, especially by Mr. Adams; but, the importance of the fisheries being acknowledged by all, Mr. Gallatin proposed, in order to secure them, to give England the right of navigating the Mississippi, — a right which she had claimed

on the ground, (subsequently proved to be unfounded,) that its head waters lay within her American possessions. This proposition of Mr. Gallatin, finally accepted by a majority of the Commissioners, was strenuously opposed by Mr. Clay, who felt more keenly perhaps than the others the danger and impolicy of allowing to any foreign nation free access into the very heart of the country. His opposition was so resolute, — carried even to the extent of refusing his signature to a treaty which should contain such an article, — that both the topics, the fisheries and the navigation of the river, were withdrawn, and reserved for future arrangement. On his return from England, where, after the ratification of the treaty, he had spent some time, enjoying the civilities of its distinguished men, he was received, especially by his adopted State, with hearty congratulations. No time was lost in sending him again to the House of Representatives, where, for the third time, he was elected to preside over its deliberations, and where again he assumed a very prominent position in supporting the administration of Mr. Madison, and defending the policy of the war and the treaty of peace.

The state of the country was such as to demand the careful attention of the government, and the hearty co-operation of every statesman. The finances were

entirely deranged. We were nearly $120,000,000 in debt; there was small market for our agricultural produce; of manufactures we had hardly any; our specie was exported to England, and our banks suspended payment; the government paper, for the redemption of which the faith of the nation was pledged, was depreciated twenty per cent; and distrust and distress everywhere prevailed. As one remedy, Mr. Madison recommended a National Bank. There was comparatively little difference of opinion, as to the most important measures, between the most distinguished members of Congress; and the differences that did exist were not "in accordance with party organization, but from individual convictions, supposed sectional interests, and general public grounds."

We may possibly conclude that the main opposition of parties in later years is not founded on principles immutable as the laws of morality, when we remember that the tariff was supported by South Carolina, and opposed by New England; and that Mr. Calhoun, as Chairman of the Committee on National Currency, recommended, in an elaborate report, the immediate chartering of a National Bank, to which also Mr. Clay gave a full and hearty support.

In the course of the election that followed this

Congress, an incident occurred, which, though I believe it has been often told, illustrates so well the skill, and yet simplicity, with which Mr. Clay could adapt himself to the men he dealt with, that it is worth recalling. During the preceding session, the subject of the compensation of the members had come before Congress; and a bill, granting an annual salary of $1500, instead of a per diem allowance, passed both houses. This was obnoxious to many parts of the country, and to no State more entirely than Kentucky. The unfortunate vote of Mr. Clay was seized upon to turn the current of feeling against him; and of this, notwithstanding his popularity, there was some danger. While canvassing the district, he met an old hunter, once a friend, but now alienated on the ground of this vote. "Have you a good rifle, my friend?" asked Mr. Clay. "Yes." "Did it ever flash?" "Yes; once." "What did you do with it? throw it away?" "No; I picked the flint, and tried it again." "And will you throw me away because you think I flashed on the Compensation Bill?" "No, no!" said the old man, his heart quite touched, and the old love flowing back in full tide; "No, no! *I'll pick the flint, and try you again!*"

Within the next five years happened two important events, — the one connected with the foreign, the

other with the domestic, policy of our government; in both of which Mr. Clay's name and influence were conspicuous. From 1810 to 1820, the Spanish States of South America were agitated with revolutions; struggling, with various success, against the oppressive, yet weak and uncertain, government of Spain. They at last succeeded so far as virtually to establish their independence, and were looking to the United States for recognition. Mr. Clay entered warmly into the matter. His sympathies were entirely with the South American States. "I wish them independence," he said. "It is the first step towards improving their condition. Let them have a free government, if they are capable of enjoying it. At any rate, let them have independence. Yes, from the inmost recesses of my heart I wish them independence." Notwithstanding the interest felt by all in the liberty of those states, many prominent men differed from Mr. Clay's specific views; and the measures which he advocated were not then successful. He did not, however, lose sight of the object, and repeatedly, in following years, pressed it in some form or other upon the notice of Congress, till, in 1822, a vote of recognition, for which he had so long labored, passed the House of Representatives with but a single dissenting voice. Mr. Clay's name became a

watchword in South America. The Mexican Congress voted him the thanks of the nation, and the President of Colombia wrote to express to him the same. Whether the hopes then entertained by sincere and noble-minded men concerning the South American Republics have been essentially realized, we need not stop to inquire.

In 1819 Missouri presented herself for admission to the Union; and the questions incident to that event gave rise to the most vehement discussions. A strong effort was made to secure the extinction of slavery, by providing that all children of slaves, born after the admission of the State, should be free at the age of twenty-five. With this provision, a bill passed the House, but was lost in the Senate; and the question was laid over for the next session of Congress. The delay only increased the exasperation of feeling. The State legislatures took up the subject, and passed resolutions on one side or the other. Congress finally passed a resolution, admitting the State without restriction, with the annexed proviso, that, in all other territory ceded by France to the United States under the name of Louisiana, and lying north of 36° 30′ north latitude, slavery should be prohibited. The question was not yet, however, finally settled. The Constitution of the State was still

to be approved by Congress; and the debate was accordingly renewed with increased bitterness in the session of 1820–21. Party hostility rose so high as almost to put an end to the transaction of ordinary and necessary business. Mr. Clay having resigned the Speakership, private business detaining him at home, Mr. John W. Taylor, of New York, a decided opponent to the extension of slavery in Missouri, was elected in his place.

The excitement was still magnified by the fact that the electoral votes for President and Vice-President were to be counted. Fortunately it was understood that the vote of Missouri would not affect the result. At the suggestion of Mr. Clay, who returned to the House about the middle of January, 1821, and when the session therefore was drawing to a close, a committee of thirteen was appointed to consider what should be done. After the deliberation of four days, they presented a carefully drawn report, which, having been discussed with great earnestness, was finally rejected by a vote of eighty-three to eighty. All hope of adjustment seemed at an end, when Mr. Clay, on the 22d of February, again brought the subject forward, by a motion for a committee of twenty-three, appointed by the unusual method of the ballot, to consider whether it were expedient to admit Missouri on the same

footing as the other states; and, if not, what ought to be done. The report of that committee, somewhat modifying the report of the preceding committee, and in favor of the admission of the State with certain restrictions, was finally accepted by a vote of eighty-seven to eighty-one, was passed by the Senate, signed by President Monroe on March 2, 1821, and Missouri became one of the United States.

During the discussions, an incident occurred, which shows the irrepressible fervor and strong feeling with which Mr. Clay conducted his side of the argument; a fervor which was infectious, and often drew tears from the eyes of those unaccustomed to weep. The Speaker of the House (Mr. Taylor) was mild, impartial, and conciliatory; but his very moderation in the midst of universal excitement was sometimes provoking. On one occasion, Mr. Clay, at an evening session, moved that certain members, absent when their names were called, be allowed to vote. The Speaker, bland and courteous, stated that the motion was out of order. "Then," said Mr. Clay, "I move to suspend rule forbidding it, so as to allow the motion to be made." The Speaker, with imperturbable politeness, informed the gentleman that that motion could only be received by unanimous consent. "Then," said Mr. Clay, rising to his full height, and swelling

his voice till the hall rang again, "I move to suspend *all* the rules of the House: away with them! Is it to be endured that we should be trammelled in our action by mere forms and technicalities at a moment like this, when the peace, and perhaps the existence, of this *Union* is at stake?" *

That part of Mr. Madison's administration, which immediately succeeded the war, was termed the "era of good feeling." The joy of peace was universal, and few were careful to inquire whether the professed objects of the war had been gained or not. Besides, nearly all felt a satisfaction at the honors unexpectedly gained by the navy, and felt, too, that the country stood higher in reputation abroad than ever before. In the early part of Mr. Monroe's administration, parties were nearly unknown. At his second election, he received every vote of the electoral college but one; a degree of unanimity to which, in our history, there has been no approach, except in the case of Washington.

At the next election, however, the strifes and divisions became as fierce, as the calmness and union were before remarkable. No election of President having been made by the people, three candidates came before the House of Representatives, — Adams,

* Eulogy by Hon. J. J. Crittenden.

Jackson, and Crawford. Mr. Adams was chosen by aid of the friends of Mr. Clay, and assumed the office with Mr. Clay as his Secretary of State. This gave rise to the charge of a bargain between the two distinguished men; a calumny which it makes one blush to refer to, which none who knew either would believe, and which has long, long since, been entirely put to rest, by evidence which cannot be denied nor resisted. While in office, Mr. Clay's labors were arduous, and of wide consequence. Through him treaties were negotiated with Central America, Prussia, Denmark, the Hanseatic towns, and Austria. He drew up, with great ability and skill, the instructions to the Delegates from the United States to the proposed Congress at Panama. Mainly by his influence, exerted through the Emperor of Russia, Greece received that aid from the North which led to her freedom, and Spain was induced to acknowledge the independence of the South-American Colonies.

There is no time and no need of bringing this brief sketch to a later period, and perhaps the proprieties of the occasion would forbid it. Yet it was during these later years that he gained his great fame in the Senate, displayed the variety and fertility of his powers, and so identified himself with most of the important measures which came before that body, that

no one can fully understand them, without learning his opinions. There, too, he met again those other great statesmen, one from the North, the other from the South, sometimes in union, sometimes in opposition, from whom the Senate derived so much of its reputation for intelligence and dignity and power. And who can forget the lofty bearing with which he marched through those twenty years? — who forget the noise of those fierce encounters which echoed all over the country, when, as one of the prominent leaders of his party, he opposed the measures of the executive, under more than one administration?

And, pausing here for a moment to gather up some of the results of our brief survey, on what characteristics shall we fasten? What public or private virtues are those which an impartial judgment will select as the elements of his power? He was not a scholar, like Mr. Adams, to whom languages and sciences were early familiar; for he inherited, as he said, nothing but ignorance and indigence, and he was compelled to labor for his support, without the advantages of education; but he was amply read in civil and political history, not only of our own, but of foreign lands, and fully possessed of the varied knowledge necessary to the important stations he was called to fill. Without the judicial calmness, the resistless

weight, the massive thought of the New England Statesman, or the ingenious and subtle analysis, the philosophic temper, the close, compact, and comprehensive logic of the South Carolinian, he had more ardor and enthusiasm than either; a boldness resting upon strong convictions; and a passionate warmth which enabled him to act directly upon the generous impulses of men, to impart confidence to the timid, to fix the vacillating, and to inspire the dull with zeal. Said one who knew him well, in words most fitly chosen, "His conversation, his gestures, his very look was magisterial, persuasive, seductive, irresistible." We may notice among the most prominent qualities of his character the utter fearlessness with which he proposed and advocated his measures. He was formed by nature to be a leader, and bore himself like a king, and it is no wonder that he was sometimes thought to be imperious and exacting; for who of those acting with him was capable of meeting the fierce shower of argument and invective, and wit and ridicule, with which he supported his own side, or endeavored to discomfit his opponents? A mind, too, of that quality and temper is generally disposed to see for itself, and to rely upon its own judgments; and therefore he sometimes seemed to bear with more equanimity the assaults of enemies than the moderate

opposition of friends. But whatever he attempted he did boldly, and in sight of all. He never tried to foist a measure through in secret. It was *his* way, with a chivalric daring, to court opposition, and challenge the power of his antagonists. No matter who the opponent might be, he bated no jot of resolution. There was an audacity in his courage, which won for him the sympathy even of those who differed from him. It was the eagle dashing with tremendous swoop full into the face of the lion. It was the knight touching the shield, not of the weaker partisan, not of Ralph de Vipont, or the Hospitaller, but striking till it rung again the armor of Bois Guilbert, or Front de Bœuf.

But to this courage of a strong arm and a dauntless heart were added sagacity, skill, and adroitness, equally admirable. There was an undercurrent of delicate and subtle wit and humor, which touched, even before it was perceived, and left its private mark where no public eye saw it. There was the gentle insinuation, where a bold appeal would not have been effective; and irony, which all could feel, but no one could readily take offence at. The power of his eloquence depended far more than that of most orators on those points which cannot be recorded; the glance of the eye, the motion of the hand, the firm or yielding

position of the body, interpreting and vivifying the words. His form seemed to dilate to a superhuman height, rising, as one said of him on a certain occasion, "forty feet high" in indignant remonstrance; it was tremulous with emotion in pathetic appeal; it was firm and motionless as a rock, when he settled himself upon the foundation of some cherished principle. None ever possessed a more entire mastery of the sympathy of an audience. It was a strange, but universally acknowledged power of his,—that inexplicable magnetic attraction, by which he drew to himself personally so many who came within the sphere of his influence. There are some whose nature it is to repel. Cold and indifferent, apparently if not really, of however great capacities, you yet shrink from them, as from balls of ice. They convince your understanding, but hardly move your heart. You reverence them; but the currents of feeling will not flow forth at their word. With Mr. Clay it was otherwise, and it was quite dangerous for those who would preserve their independence to come within the magic circle where he held such delightful sway. His friends could not dissent from him, even when they wished; for, if he did not overpower them with arguments, he would win them by those fascinations, which none but a passionless mind, or one of highest vigor and inde-

pendence, could be sure of withstanding. Thus it was that no political leader could ever boast of a larger number of followers, bound to himself by personal attachment. Thus it was that he realized so fully the picture of the poet, drawing towards the close of his career, with "that which should accompany old age, as honor, love, obedience, troops of friends."

There was in Mr. Clay a remarkable versatility, which enabled him to use freely weapons of different kinds with almost equal readiness. He could concentrate his ample political knowledge in arguments of close texture and great weight. He could overwhelm with unsparing invective, or corruscate and play about a theme with most subtle and charming irony. Thus perpetually adapting himself to the subject, the occasion, and the men, inflexible in purpose, resolute even to audacity, and well nigh inexhaustible in resources, he was beaten off on one side, only to return with an assault, still more ingenious and vigorous, on another; or, failing wholly in that predetermined body of senators which he oftenest addressed, he had the satisfaction still of carrying with him multitudes of his countrymen, with a heartiness of confidence, and an enthusiasm of devotion, of which any leader might be proud. It was generously said of him, that the love of country made him "more

impartial between conflicting interests and sections than any other statesman who has lived since the Revolution. With very great versatility of talent, and the most catholic equality of favor, he identified every question, whether of domestic administration or foreign policy, with his own great name, and so became a perpetual Tribune of the people."

But there were other elements of his character, which give him a claim upon the regard of his countrymen. He was truly a philanthropist. Among the very earliest of his efforts were those put forth in the State of his adoption, in favor of so altering its fundamental law as within a few years to free all slaves born within its limits. Happy had it been for Kentucky, the most fortunate day in her distinguished history, had his efforts succeeded. Her vast energies might have been quadrupled, and her resources developed tenfold, under the stimulus of intelligent free labor. His care for that depressed race never failed him. For many years he took a lively interest in the Colonization Society, and lent it all the aid of his counsels and influence. In its dark days, and before it had, as now, so amply vindicated its claim to the sympathy of the world, so that it argues no foresight to approve it, and no special benevolence to contribute to its support, he proved himself its faithful ally. He

presided over the meeting held in Washington, December 1816, which resulted in the formation of the society; and he became subsequently its president. Like all friends of it, he was exposed from some quarters to the most bitter and violent attacks, down to the time when the actual existence on the benighted shores of Africa of a free republic, prosperous, and acknowledged by the most powerful nations, almost made calumny itself ashamed to calumniate.

But it is by his merits as a statesman that Mr. Clay will ultimately be estimated; nor are we perhaps removed far enough from the principal measures which he advocated, to give a candid judgment. But that he was enlarged in his views, looking before and after, liberal and hopeful, anticipating the immense growth and possible power of the country, the *whole* country; that he represented in a large measure, as well as directed, the free and generous American spirit, all may allow. A patriot to his heart's core, devoted to the Republic because he thoroughly believed the principles on which it was founded, the great object of his life was, on the one hand, to preserve the Constitution inviolate, and, on the other, to give all its powers their fullest and freest scope. One cannot write the story of his life without giving almost a history of the last war with England, of the United

States Bank, of a protective tariff, of the practical and working relations of the slaveholding states to the free states, nor, indeed, without writing substantially the civil history of the country for the last forty years.

In nearly all the great and exciting questions during those years, his voice has been heard, never feebly, never timidly. His last overwhelming labor in the Senate was in striving to compose the sectional divisions of the country; — his last labor in private, remonstrating with that illustrious, grief-laden exile, for whom, as for whose country, there is no future; lest his moving eloquence, of sorrow and of feeling all compact, should make us forget the simple but invaluable policy which hitherto has controlled us, and lead us off into some foolish and fruitless crusade for liberty.

That Mr. Clay was ambitious, we grant; that he was disappointed at the result of the election, which gave the highest office to an opponent comparatively unknown, instead of to himself, it would be foolish to deny. Who, in such a case, would not be? That he bore the disappointment with as much magnanimity and fortitude as any one in similar circumstances would be likely to manifest, is perhaps equally true. It was not an ordinary object that he aimed at;

and he was not an ordinary man, no political adventurer hoping for some lucky turn of the wheel, or trusting to audacity or craft for station; but one who had grown old in the state, who felt in his lofty spirit that he had capacities equal even to that position, and to any emergency. For such a man to find another preferred to himself brings with it a deep and lasting disappointment, almost as if there were a touch of dishonor in it. Nor can I sympathize with the talk which we sometimes hear, that the chair of the President of the Republic bestows no honor on him who occupies it. High station anywhere confers conspicuity at any rate; enrols the name of its possessor on the page of history; and, though it does not alter his character, gives scope to his powers, or gibbets his imbecility. To be sure, in rejecting a candidate for high office, a people may but mark their ignorance or degradation, and a great man out of favor may still be one of the grandest spectacles in the world. Cicero was as truly the consummate orator, the profound philosopher, the true patriot, rich in all the experience of a life of extraordinary vicissitude and ripe with wisdom, still deserving the veneration of his countrymen, when, borne down by his foes, he stretched out his aged head from the litter for the knife of the assassins, as when triumphing over Catiline, and

receiving universal applause in the Senate-house. Pericles would have remained Pericles, without a rival for sagacity, for courage, for large views, for statesman-like projects, for ample and liberal knowledge, and his fame still the possession of all time, though he had failed somewhat of his high political success; and Cleon was only Cleon, the unprincipled demagogue, though at the head of the Athenian state.

But we are not yet sunk so low that it is out of our power to confer honor. Whether it shall continue to be the policy of the country to choose for the most exalted stations those who are foremost in the state, intellectual "kinsmen and heirs" of those who formerly administered the Republic, — of Washington or Jefferson, of Adams or of Jackson, — we cannot affirm. But I hazard nothing in saying that it will speak but little in favor of the power of republicanism to develop, or reward, or employ the highest and best minds, if it should become the settled policy of the nation, that age and weight of character, and political wisdom, to say nothing of eminent services in the state, must yield to any factitious element of success.

Mr. Clay was ambitious, but it was an ambition which had a noble end, and which used honorable

means; the ambition of one conscious — and who did not echo that conviction? — that he was equal to the station to which he aspired, and that in his hands the honor of the country was safe. Pardon me, if I tread incautiously a hair's breadth beyond the limits of the neutral territory, where we are bound this day to stand; but let us not forget that desire for eminence may sometimes be a virtue, as well as sometimes a crime, — may spring from noble, generous, benignant, patriotic purposes, as well as from grovelling and selfish ones; and to aspire is necessary to the life of a truly great mind. We may accept the testimony, strong but not inconsiderate, of a distinguished colleague and friend, the last voice that has reached us from those multitudinous eulogies which the veneration of the country has prompted. "In him," says Mr. Crittenden, "ambition was a virtue. It sought only the proper, fair objects of honorable ambition; and it sought these by honorable means only, by so serving the country as to deserve its favors and its honors. . . . I knew him well; I had full opportunity of observing him in his most unguarded moments and conversations, and I can say that I have never known a more unselfish, a more faithful or intrepid representative of the *people*, of the people's rights, and the people's interests, than Henry Clay."

He was not without political mistakes and misjudgments. Who is so? Many who for years have been his warm friends could scarcely forget his support of the war in 1812. Many, even of those who usually went with him, were dissatisfied with the compromises, whether with Missouri or South Carolina, and would have rather chosen, especially in the latter case, that with a President of such indomitable energy, and with nine-tenths or ninety-nine hundredths of the people in his favor, the battle should have been fought and the question for ever settled, instead of being temporarily quieted, only to vex the country again under other and perhaps less fortunate auspices. Many, even of his partisans, doubted the judiciousness of some of his measures, though the end in view was felt to be good.

He was not without personal faults, and these were magnified and made conspicuous by his station and habits. Naturally impetuous, he could not easily brook opposition. Naturally a leader, he could not at once yield and follow. He was not always great, not always magnanimous, let impartial and severe criticism say, if she must say it; yet, giving up half that blind friendship might claim with great show of fairness, there is still left that which, portioned out, would make a score of common men, — mag-

nanimous virtues, fame which will never be destroyed, powers of which the country that nurtured him will always be proud.

The end of this distinguished man was not sudden nor unexpected. He did not drop upon the floor of the Capitol without a warning, but went slowly down, step after step, through weeks and months, towards the "insuperable threshold." What, then, were his feelings? we instinctively ask ourselves. What, then, his judgment of himself and of the objects of human pursuit? So it is that our inquiries are forced, by the very craving of our natures, to those themes which we are but too anxious ordinarily to avoid. All honors are worthless, all joy hollow and unsatisfying, which cannot endure the test of the last hour. And all that we call great upon earth, what is it then? The warrior of fourscore, whose titles exhaust the herald's nomenclature; the statesman, whose words are caught up and pondered throughout half the world, — how are they weighed in the same balances with the poor and insignificant!

Happily in this case we have reliable testimony. Several years before his death, Mr. Clay was admitted to the communion of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and, so far as we can tell, honored that profession. His confession of faith, during his illness,

was ample; and his hope, to the end, humble, but fixed and sure. The account of his religious feelings, given by his clergyman, is modest, decisive, and satisfying. On the evening before he died, a friend, sitting by his bedside, heard him murmur, — his mind wandering to the early years and the familiar scenes to which affection links us so fast, — "*My mother, mother, mother;*" and then again, "*My dear wife;*" and then again the brief prayer of contrition, "*Lord, have mercy on me.*" And so "the silver cord was loosed, the golden bowl broken, the wheel was broken at the cistern, and the pitcher at the fountain. The dust returned to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God who gave it."

We are, indeed, on the verge of another age; the fathers, where are they? As I said at the beginning, there is but one of "the first three" remaining, whose public life, no less than his wisdom and experience and honor, links us with the fathers of the Commonwealth; and when *he* goes, — long, long may it be before that day! — and that which we venerate lives only in memory, we shall indeed have started on a new career. Those will be new times, when the visitor from States far north and far south, beyond the Rocky Mountains and the Sierras Nevadas, shall go,

of a winter, to the capital of the Republic, and miss from their familiar places, the elastic form, the familiar smile, and cheerful recognition of the great orator of the West; the compact frame, the brilliant eye, the rigid countenance of the cast-iron Southerner, and the ample majesty of brow and massive frame of our own most gifted New Englander. Yes, it was well and feelingly said in that still-honored body to which they all so lately belonged, — "The great lights of the Senate have set. The obscuration is not less palpable to the country than to us, who are left to grope our uncertain way here, as in a labyrinth, oppressed with self-distrust." * Who among us is equal to the mighty questions which are springing up for us to solve? But it is not for us to despair. Providence will bring to pass its great designs, though the instruments on which we have relied are taken away.

> "God doth not need
> Either man's work, or his own gifts."

The lives of our statesmen should be for the instruction of those who come after; and especially let us honor — for that becomes us — the ample virtues, the courage, the independence, the knowledge,

* Mr. Seward.

the truth, the patriotism of him whose life and services we have imperfectly considered. "His faults lie gently on him."

> "Though from an humble stock, he undoubtedly
> Was fashioned to much honor from his cradle.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Exceeding wise, fair spoken, and persuading;
> Lofty and sour to them that loved him not;
> But to those men that sought him, sweet as summer.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> And, to add greater honors to his age
> Than man could give him, he died, fearing God."