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### BIOGRAPHY OF HENRY CLAY.

The fame of this eminent statesman and his history, are already familiar to many. A condensed view of his brilliant career, I trust, will be interesting to most, if not all, of the readers whose eyes this brief sketch may meet. To know how and why he has risen so high in the scale of being, may excite to emulation. When we consider that Henry Clay has been the architect of his own fortune, has mounted the ladder of distinction by his own exertions, aided alone by his native talent and industry, his biography becomes doubly interesting.

He is a native of Hanover county, Virginia, and was born on the 12th of April, 1777. His father, who was an esteemed clergyman, died when his son was but a child, leaving no means by which he could receive the advantages of a classical education. When but a boy, Henry Clay entered the office of Mr. Tinsley, then clerk of the High Court of Chancery at Richmond, where his embryonic talents began to bud and expand. Naturally amiable in his disposition, urbane in his manners, noble and generous, open and frank, he gained the friendship of those with whom he had intercourse, amongst whom were gentlemen of the highest rank and most extensive influence. At the age of nineteen he commenced the study of the law, and so astonishing was his proficiency, that in one year after, he was admitted to practice. He soon proved to his friends, and to the courts in which he practised, that strength of intellect is not based upon a collegiate diploma, and that talents sometimes shine without receiving an artificial polish from a classic master. American history is rich with such specimens.

Soon after his admission, Mr. Clay removed to Lexington, Ky., where he pursued the study of law some time before he commenced practice. Naturally diffident, he attached himself to a debating society, in order to become better prepared to enter upon his duties as an advocate. It is said his embarrassment was so great when he first appeared before his colleagues in a debate, that he addressed the President, "gentlemen of the jury." In a few moments, however, he became collected, and astonished his delighted audience with a flow of eloquence that at once placed him on the high road to distinction. After remaining at Lexington a year, he took his place at the bar, and was soon favored with a lucrative practice. He grappled fearlessly with the most eminent lawyers, and soon stood at the head of his profession. He gained the respect of the courts and the affection of his clients. Almost contemporaneously with his maturity, his political career commenced.

In 1803 Mr. Clay was elected a member of the Kentucky legislature, where he soon gained an unrivalled influence. He was there surrounded by the ablest men of the state, veterans in legislation, who had been accustomed to consider young members in duty bound to listen and obey, and not to attempt, for a time, any thing beyond the study of parliamentary rules. But they soon became convinced that the soaring mind of the young Virginian moved in an orbit co-extensive with their broadest expanse. He was perfectly at home upon every subject, and guarded, with an argus eye, the interests of his constituents, held subject always to the general good. His political motto has ever been, "my country, my whole country, and nothing but my country."

In 1806, Mr. Clay was elected to the Senate of the United States for one year, to fill the vacancy occasioned by the resignation of Mr. Adair. He there not only sustained the high reputation he had gained at home, but acquired additional fame with each succeeding effort. During that session, he became the bold advocate of the internal improvement system, and has ever remained its firm and faithful friend. His first speech in the Senate was in favor of a bill for the erection of a bridge over the Potomac at Georgetown; and so clearly did he present its prospective advantages, and so fully did he answer the arguments of its opponents, that he obtained the merit of effecting its final passage. During his short stay at Washington, he added largely to his list of admirers and friends.

The ensuing year Mr. Clay was elected to the legislature of his own state, and was chosen speaker by a very large majority. During that session, he had an opportunity, and exhibited forensic powers of the highest order. An attempt was made, and was advocated at first by a large majority of the members, to prohibit the use of, or recurrence to, any English law books, in the courts of Kentucky. This arose from a supposition that the common law was an inexplicable mass, and calculated to mislead rather than inform the understanding. In a clear, lucid, eloquent, and convincing argument, their speaker exhibited its base and superstructure, and showed that it was founded upon principles few in number, simple in their application, plain in practice, and salutary in their results. His effort was crowned with complete success. As their presiding officer, Mr. Clay was respected, esteemed, and honored. Familiar with the rules of legislation, his decisions were prompt, impartial, and generally approved and sustained.

In 1809, the seat of Mr. Johnston, in the Senate of the United States, became vacant, four years of his term only having expired. Mr. Clay was elected to serve in his place the two remaining years. An important crisis in the history of our country was at hand. War was raging in Europe, and our flag had been repeatedly insulted by the contending parties, under pretence of an improper interference, a course that had been most scrupulously guarded against by our nation. These depredations upon our rights, on the part of England, gathered new strength with each returning year. Negotiation lost its dignity and force, pacific propositions were met with contempt by the British court, and our minister was treated with contumely and disregard. It became evident that we should be under the necessity of measuring swords with the old mother country, before she would cease to infringe our rights. Purely American in all his feelings, Mr. Clay was among the first to urge the necessity of preparing for war. Although he was anxious to avoid an open rupture, yet he was for maintaining the honor and dignity of our government, pure and undefiled, regardless of consequences. At the expiration of his term, in 1811, he was elected a member of the House of Representatives in Congress, of which body he was chosen speaker by a respectable majority. Under the high excitement that then existed, our country on the eve of a war with a nation that had long been mistress of the seas, members differing widely as to the policy to be pursued, it required much nerve, prudence, and wisdom, to discharge, satisfactorily and impartially, the duties that devolved upon him. His talents, however, proved equal to the task; his friends were not mistaken in their choice. He was a warm advocate for increasing the navy, justly considering it the right arm of our defence. It is to be regretted that this policy is not more strictly pursued, and that our maritime force is still far inferior to the resources and magnitude of our expanding Republic.

When Mr. Clay arrived at the conclusion that nothing short of an appeal to arms would save our flag from continued insult, and when war was declared, he urged the necessity of prosecuting it with the utmost vigor and energy. He recommended raising a force without delay, sufficient to repel all invasion, and if necessary, to act offensively, until the pride of Great Britain should be reduced to a common level, and she taught to respect our flag and regard our national rights. He was in favor of having the business done promptly, effectually, and quickly. He was opposed to nursing a job of this kind, and advocated strong and decisive measures.

Mr. Clay was continued Speaker of the House of Representatives until 1814, when he was appointed a commissioner, in conjunction with Messrs. Adams and Gallatin, to meet those of England, at Ghent, for the purpose of negotiating peace and a treaty of commerce. So nobly had he discharged the duties of the chair, and so generally had he won the esteem of the members, that when he took leave of them in a short but affectionate and eloquent address, the big tears were seen, on many a manly cheek, chasing each other in quick succession. An almost unanimous vote of thanks to Mr. Clay, for his valuable services, followed; and the interesting, soul-stirring scene closed, by a silent look, that told the emotions of their hearts, as each member clasped his hand, and took a final leave.

The mission of the commissioners was crowned with success; hostilities ceased, our rights were recognised, our nation elevated, our honor sustained, and the valor of our navy and army placed on the highest pinnacle fame could reach. In the spring following, these commissioners met at London, and completed the commercial treaty, which secured to our country many new and important advantages. Mr. Clay proved himself as skillful in the rules and intricacies of diplomacy, as those of the court of St. James, who had never properly appreciated the strength of American statesmen. In Messrs. Clay, Adams, and Gallatin, England saw a trio of talent, not surpassed by her noblest lords.

Mr. Clay returned from Europe crowned with fresh laurels, and was met by his countrymen with a kind, a hearty welcome, without regard to party. Indeed, nothing so soon neutralizes party spirit in the breasts of true patriots, as a war. However we may differ on matters of policy, every friend of his country will unite in the common cause to repel an invading foe. Peace and prosperity, with all their blessings, are liable to be poisoned by the noxious weeds of jealousy and discontent, which often effect a dissolution of the body politic, which a rupture with a foreign nation would effectually prevent. Civil discord is more fatal than the attacks of other enemies.

On his return, Mr. Clay was again elected a member of the House of Representatives in Congress, and remained in that body until the accession of John Quincy Adams to the presidential chair in 1825, by whom he was appointed Secretary of State, the duties of which he performed with great ability and fidelity to the end of his term, when he was elected to the United States Senate. During his whole career, he has ever been a strong advocate of domestic manufactures, internal improvements, and a

protective tariff. His favorite American system he has kept in view, anxious that the boundless resources of our country should be fully developed, and our native land become independent indeed. He preferred raising a revenue from duties on imports, to liquidate our national debt, and meet the current expenses of the government, rather than have recourse to direct taxation, a measure always obnoxious to the people, especially of a republican government. In a country so widely spread as this, embracing such a great variety of soil, climate, and productions; it is not to be expected a unanimity of opinion can exist among our statesmen and legislators, on these important points. Local interests will clash, local jealousies will arise, and local feeling sometimes will cause men of good hearts and honest intentions to lose sight of their paramount obligations to sustain our union. This was strongly manifested in 1832, during the discussion of the tariff bill, when the doctrine of nullification was promulgated by several eminent statesmen of the South. I was then at Washington, and shall never forget the high excitement that prevailed. Nor shall I ever forget, while memory lasts, the services that Henry Clay then rendered to our country. All the horrors of civil war were rolling into thick clouds, ready to burst in fury upon us. The temple of our liberty vibrated, as if shaken by the earthquake of faction, and the torch of freedom grew dim in its socket. Even hope, the sheet anchor of the soul, could scarcely keep the ship of state to its mooring. Amidst this scene of confusion, the storm gathering near, with each returning day, the session nearly closed, despair throwing its coil around many of the stoutest hearts, Mr. Clay appeared with the olive branch of compromise. Calm and dignified, with peace beaming upon his countenance, and the big tears rolling from his eyes, he portrayed, in glowing colors, the necessity of preserving, unbroken, the silken cords of our union, that had been dyed in the richest blood of our fathers. He then presented a bill which proposed the gradual reduction of duties on imports, until they should reach the standard contended for by the South. In this plan, he recognized the payment of the national debt, and the ultimate reduction of the tariff, to a revenue that should only meet the necessary expenses of the government. The brilliancy of that short hour Mr. Clay has never eclipsed. It was the climax of earthly glory, a nobler act than to conquer worlds. The sun of reconciliation rose in all its splendor, the dark clouds of discontent and civil discord vanished, and tears of joy hung on many a cheek, like dew drops in a summer morning. If I remember rightly, this was about the middle of June, and on the 26th, his bill was finally passed by both branches of Congress, and received the sanction of the President, thus saving our country from the greatest of all evils, civil war, that hung over us, like a sword suspended by a single hair. That act alone was sufficient to place the name of Henry Clay on the list of immortal fame, and gives him a stronger claim to the gratitude of his country, than any man now upon the theatre of action. The man who preserves his country from self-destruction, does more than he who leads fleets and armies to triumphant victory. He who possesses the rare talent of calming the raging billows of passion, is worthy of the highest honors that can be conferred. It is a heavenly gift, a shining ornament, a national blessing.

As a mediator to settle personal disputes, Mr. Clay is also remarkably happy and successful. Honorable concession and mutual forbearance he has always practised and inculcated. He has often healed festering wounds between others, by a single application of the panacea of his native good humor and pleasantness. He is emphatically a peace maker.

He has uniformly taken a conspicuous part in every leading question that has been agitated in Congress. His sympathies have always been alive for other nations, whom he saw struggling for liberty.

He was the first who strongly advocated the recognition of the independence of South America. His success in effecting this, unquestionably prevented other nations from entering into an alliance with Spain against the southern patriots. The services of Mr. Clay were highly appreciated by them, and formally recognized by their Congress. His name is interwoven with their history, as their advocate and benefactor.

Suffering Greece also roused his tenderest sympathies. He urged, with all the powers of his unrivalled eloquence, the propriety of sending a commissioner to that classic land. He was strongly in favor of having the public lands appropriated to the advancement of internal improvements and education. He has been a zealous advocate for the colonization of free negroes. On the great national or Cumberland road, a beautiful monument has been raised, inscribed "HENRY CLAY." His talents were daily appreciated by Presidents Madison and Monroe, the former of whom offered him a mission to Russia, and subsequently a place in his cabinet, both of which he declined. Mr. Monroe offered him the proud station of minister to the court of St. James, and a place in his cabinet, which he also declined. He had found, by experience, that he could serve his

country better in the legislative halls, than in other situations.

Having always stood at the head of leading measures that have divided the people of the states into distinct parties, he has had strong and influential political opponents, who, although they esteemed him and acknowledged his superior talents, have twice successfully opposed his election to the presidential chair.

Like a majority of great men, he must be gathered to his fathers before full justice will be done to his merit and patriotism. From his tomb, fresh laurels will spring up, and mingle their odour with the evergreens of enduring fame. The bitterness of party spirit will be lost in the grave, and posterity will award to him that praise which thousands now withhold from the very fact that he is a great man.

For native eloquence, Mr. Clay stands unrivalled in our country, if not in the world. For elegance and ease in action when speaking, I have never seen his equal. His figure is tall and erect; his voice clear, rich and melodious, filling a greater space at the same pitch than any other I ever heard. His countenance is animated and pleasing, and his manner always happily adapted to the subject. His arguments are usually well arranged, logical, and to the point. Under excitement, he is sometimes personal, hurling at his antagonist the keen lance of satire, but, like the flint, he emits a spark by collision, and then is cool again. He appears never to retain any ill will against any person. In private conversation, he is interesting, agreeable, and always full of life and cheerfulness. In his manners, he is affable, gentlemanly, and highly accomplished; at the same time so plain and easy, that a farmer or mechanic, unaccustomed to company in high life, feels himself, in a few moments, perfectly free and relieved from all embarrassment in his presence. He is frank, affectionate, and warm-hearted; a faithful friend and a generous enemy.

He possesses much of the milk of human kindness; his heart is always moved at the misfortunes of the human family, individually and collectively, and where he can, he relieves their wants with a liberal hand. In his private and domestic relations, he is respected and esteemed, and sheds the rays of happiness, harmony and peace through every circle in which he moves. When he takes his final exit to "that country from whose bourne no traveller returns," taking him all in all, our country will probably never look on his like again. His merits have raised him in life, may glory enshrine him in death.

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### THE RESUMPTION OF SPECIE PAYMENTS.

The expediency, or rather, the inexpediency of a speedy resumption of specie payments is very ably discussed by Mr. Biddle, President of the United States Bank of Pennsylvania, in a letter addressed to the Honorable John Quincy Adams, and published in the National Gazette of April 7th.

The argument is divided into seven distinct heads of which we can only give the following summary.

I. The causes of the suspension of specie payments are still in full force.

II. The credit system of the United States and the exclusively metallic system, are now fairly in the field face to face to each other; and one or the other must fall.

III. The disorders of the country lie too deep for superficial remedies, and palliatives irritate without curing. Congress, and Congress alone, can apply adequate relief.

The situation of the banks now is compared with what it was at the last resumption of specie payments. As this is the argument which has the greatest force in it, we give it entire.

IV. Compare the situation of the Banks at the last resumption and now. After a suspension for nearly three years, Congress applied all its power to induce, to persuade, and to assist the Banks in their efforts to resume. They passed the resolution of 1816, authorizing the receipt of the notes of specie-paying Banks. But this alone was insufficient; and at the same time they established the Bank of the United States, with a capital of thirty-five millions. The Bank called a Convention of State Banks, and agreed that if they would resume specie payments, it would.

1. Assume all their debts to the Government of the United States.

2. Discount to those who had payments to make to the Government, the whole amount of their bonds; and in addition,

3. Discount to those not indebted to the Government two millions in New York, two millions in Philadelphia, one and a half million in Baltimore, and half a million in Richmond;—and,

4. Would sustain the resuming Banks in case the resumption brought them into difficulty.

The Bank at the same time imported, at an expense of more than half a million, the sum of seven millions of specie; and two months after the resumption its discounts reached twenty millions. Compare with this statement our condition now.

Then the government agreed to receive

for all dues the notes of the Bank of the United States—now all Bank notes are refused and discredited. Then the Government endeavored to sustain the Banks—now it is striving to destroy them. Then it established a new and vigorous Bank capital—now it refuses to create a new Bank, and seeks to cripple those in existence. Then we had two hundred and sixty Banks—now we have nearly nine hundred.

In short, what reliance have the Banks now with the Executive hostile to them? What protection like that of the late Bank of the United States have they to sustain them? None whatever.

The only circumstance not wholly unfavorable in the comparison, is the low rate of exchange with England. But nothing general or permanent can be inferred from this circumstance, which frequently occurs, and on the present occasion is wholly accidental in New York, from the unusual condition into which her measures of extreme rigor have driven every thing. If under ordinary circumstances, while other things underwent no depression, exchange on England should decline, it might be inferred that England owes to the United States more than we have yet drawn from her. But it is not exchange alone that has fallen. Exchange on England has not fallen in New York as much as the internal exchanges of stocks or real estate, or home trade have fallen. This fact seems decisive as to the cause. But can this depression continue? Certainly not. These rigorous measures are understood to be only preliminary—only preparations for expansion by the Banks of New York, which is to restore ease and confidence. Well, the moment this ease and confidence return, all things will rise, and exchange of course among the number. Besides this unusual condition will work its own remedy, as all irregularities are cured by their own excesses. To sell every thing and to buy nothing is impracticable, and when the English have bought all the produce we have to spare, we must of course buy from them what manufactures they have to spare. As soon as the proceeds of our industry are realized in England—while we have gradually exhausted our supply of English goods—our own merchants will convert their profits into a fresh supply to be brought over; or, if this process be too slow, the English manufacturers themselves will send their own goods for sale. In either case the exchange will recover its equilibrium, and of course will rise here, for between two such countries as America and England, a permanent inequality of exchange, as a basis of the metallic currency of either, is impossible.

V. The state of the country is unfavorable to a resumption of specie payments; being such that the contraction of issues and accommodations by the banks, necessary to a resumption, would occasion immeasurable ruin and distress in the community. This is shown by reference to facts.

VI. The month of May is the worst season of the year for resuming, on account of the state of domestic exchanges and the non-reception of the avails of the cotton crop from Europe.

VII. The determination of the New York Banks to resume in May, is no rule for Pennsylvania or any other State, because it arises from the limitations by the act of the Legislature of New York, which compels their banks to resume, or forfeit their charters.

Mr. Biddle's advice to the banks generally founded on this state of the case, is thus expressed.

On the whole, the course which in my judgment, the Banks ought to pursue, is simply this:

The Banks should remain exactly as they are—preparing to resume, but not yet resuming.

They should begin, as the Bank of England did, under similar circumstances, by paying the small notes, so as to restore credit to all the minor channels of circulation—but not make any general resumption until they ascertain what course the Government will pursue, employing in the meantime their whole power to forward the crops to market. The American Banks should do in short what the American Army did at New Orleans, stand fast behind their cotton bales until the enemy has left the country.

These are my opinions very deliberately formed, and very frankly expressed. They are thus set forth, not to influence the course of others, but to explain my own.

The Boston Journal publishes an account of a woman near Sault de St. Marie, who on the 31st of Jan., fearing from the unexpected absence of her husband that he had been frozen on his way home, started in pursuit of him with her infant in her arms.

There is reason to believe that she proceeded about two miles with her child in her arms, and then finding some difficulty in proceeding further, she retraced her steps, and had arrived within a few rods of the wigwag, when she was overcome with the cold that she was unable to proceed further, and was found frozen standing in an erect posture in the snow. Her little child was found at a distance of about twenty yards, and fully enveloped in clothes which the mother had stripped from her own person, in order to prolong its life! Both were dead.

The husband was safe, and had been kept from home by drunkenness.