of Felix Grundy, of Nashville, became a follower and adherent of Andrew Jackson, entered actively, like his neighbors, into politics, became a member of the state legislature, and in 1825, when thirty years old, was elected to Congress, where he served continuously for fourteen years. When the Twenty-fourth Congress met in December, 1835, Polk was elected Speaker of the House of Representatives, a position he continued to hold through that and the Twenty-fifth Congress. During his whole term in Congress he had been a consistent and steady follower of Jackson and Van Buren. He was also a steady opponent of John Quincy Adams, both while Adams was President and when he sat in the House of Representatives.

In 1839 Polk's service in the House of Representatives came to an end, as he was elected governor of his state, a position he held for two years. He was defeated for re-election in the great Whig campaign of 1840, and again two years later; and when the spring of 1844 came he had been more than three years out of office. His name, however, was then beginning to be suggested as a possible candidate for Vice-President, and as such he was addressed by a committee of citizens of Cincinnati opposed to annexation, who inquired his views upon the Texas question. Similar letters had been sent to other prominent men of both political parties. Writing from Columbia, Tennessee, on April 22, almost at the same moment that Clay and Van Buren were expressing their opinions, Polk announced his in terms which had at least the merit of absolute frankness.

"I have no hesitation," he said, "in declaring that I am in favor of the immediate reannexation of Texas to the territory and government of the United States. I entertain no doubts as to the power or expediency of the reannexation. . . . These are my opinions; and without deeming it necessary to extend this letter, by assigning the many reasons which influence me in the conclusions to which I come, I regret to be compelled to differ so widely from the views expressed by yourselves, and the meeting of citizens of Cincinnati whom you represent." [1]

[1] Jenkins's *Polk*, 120–123.

This letter, so different from those of Clay and Van Buren, must have had an important bearing on the action of the Democratic convention.

The first name signed to the letter to Polk was that of Salmon P. Chase, a young lawyer known for his activity in behalf of fugitive slaves, and for his zeal in organizing the Liberty party throughout the United States. The beginnings of this party dated back to the election of 1840, when a few men met at Albany and nominated for President James G. Birney, of Ohio, very much against the wishes of Garrison and the more pronounced anti-slavery advocates. The movement made no impression in that excited campaign; but in August, 1843, a national convention of the Liberty party was again held at Buffalo, and Birney was once more put in nomination for the presidency upon an anti-slavery platform, chiefly written by Chase.[1]

Finally a fourth convention, if it could be so called—for it was really a mass-meeting of people from various parts of the country, representing nobody but themselves—was held in Baltimore on the same day as the Democratic convention, and it put in nomination John Tyler. The hall was decorated with banners bearing the inscription "Tyler and Texas." Tyler, as he subsequently related, had been advised by his friends to take his chances in the Democratic convention, but he had thought it impossible to do so. "If I suffered my name to be used in that Convention, then I become bound to sustain the nomination, even if Mr. Van Buren was the nominee. This could not be. I chose to run no hazard, but to raise the banner of Texas, and convoke my friends to sustain it." [2] The truth was that Tyler was infatuated with the notion that "the banner of Texas" would of itself suffice to rouse the country and carry its bearer triumphantly into the White House. His anxiety and eagerness for re-election were very manifest to those with whom he talked.[3]

[1] Schucker's *Chase*, 47, 69.
[2] Tyler's *Letters and Times of the Tylers*, II, 317.
[3] Meigs's *Ingersoll*, 264–266.

His friends having, therefore, been thus "convoked," duly nominated him and forthwith adjourned. They named no Vice-President, and they adopted no platform. No platform, indeed, was required, for Tyler could stand with perfect comfort on that of the democracy, which embodied all his beliefs and heartily sustained his Bank vetoes and the annexation of Texas.

The adoption of the Democratic platform, the selection of Polk as the Democratic candidate, and the defeat of Van Buren on the ground of his anti-Texas attitude, were alone sufficient to bring the question of Texas to the front. But interest in the subject was immensely increased by the action of the Senate in rejecting Tyler's treaty, almost immediately after the last of the nominating conventions had been held. On June 8, 1844, twelve days after the adjournment of the Democratic convention, the Senate, by a vote of 35 to 16, refused its approval. Every Northern state except New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Illinois voted against the treaty, as did all the Whig senators but one. Of the Democrats, fifteen were in favor of it and seven against it; but the seven included Benton, Wright, and other devoted friends of Van Buren, who were still smarting under his defeat.

Tyler's and Calhoun's opponents probably hoped and believed that this was the end of the annoying question of annexation, for the time being at least; but, if so, they had very much underestimated the resourcefulness and persistence of the President. He had come to the conclusion, weeks before, that Texas could be admitted as a state in the Union by an act of Congress, "under that provision of the constitution of this Government, which authorizes Congress to admit new states into the Union"; and when the treaty was signed he had promised the Texan representatives that if the treaty failed in the Senate, he would urge Congress, "in the strongest terms," to enact a law admitting Texas as a state.[1]

[1] Van Zandt and Henderson to Jones, April 12, 1844; *Tex. Dip. Corr.*, II, 271. This mode of dealing with the business seems to have been first suggested by Henderson, acting Secretary of State of Texas, in instructions to Hunt, Dec. 31, 1836; *ibid.*, I, 164. It had been repeatedly discussed since. It is of interest to note that Hawaii was annexed by joint resolution of Congress, July 7, 1898, after it was found that a treaty of annexation could not command a two-thirds majority of the Senate.

The details of procedure were settled at a conference on Sunday, the fifth of May, between Calhoun and Charles J. Ingersoll, of Pennsylvania, the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives, who was eager in support of annexation. It was agreed, the latter noted in his diary, "that if the Senate reject the treaty of Texas, I am to move it embodied in a bill in the House." The next day he saw Tyler, who approved the suggestion, but promised to let Ingersoll hear from him again.

By the beginning of June the plan had been somewhat modified, and as modified was ready in all its details. On Monday, June 3, Ingersoll talked with Van Zandt, the Texan minister, on the subject, and later with Calhoun. The moment the Senate either rejected the treaty or laid it on the table Tyler was—

> "to send a full open message to the House to serve as an appeal to the people on that subject, when Congress adjourn. . . . The people are to be appealed to everywhere to condemn Clay, Benton and Van Buren's opposition to *immediate* annexation. The then remaining and resulting and all important question is whether Tyler shall convoke Congress in special session early in September, supposing that the minority in which Texas is in both houses may become then a majority by means of popular will on that subject. The plan is all clean and good but for Tyler's desire to be elected President, for which he is fomented by crowds of vulgar fellows, deluding him to get places. But for this the proposed plan is excellent to carry Texas and defeat Clay by the same blow." [1]

On June 11, therefore, three days after the final vote in the Senate, Tyler, after consulting the Texan representatives,[2] published his appeal to Congress and the people. He evidently had an unwavering confidence in the popular desire for expansion. He believed that the people were with him upon this question; that the advantages of Texas could be

[1] Meigs's *Ingersoll*, 268.

[2] Van Zandt and Henderson to Jones, June 10, 1844; *Tex. Dip. Corr.*, II, 284.

made manifest during the course of the presidential campaign; and that the existence of slavery would not prevent the great mass of voters from declaring themselves in favor of annexation. But slavery expansion was the one obstacle which Tyler evidently underrated. Yet neither he nor anybody else seriously doubted that the existence of slavery in Texas was the real objection to annexation, and that all the talk of Clay and Van Buren and their followers as to constitutional questions, or as to the danger of a war with Mexico, or as to international rights and duties, was mere beating of the air. If it had not been for slavery the country would probably not have hesitated; but, as it was, the strongly held and wide-spread objection to any extension of slave territory rendered the fate of the question extremely doubtful.[1]

The President began his message of June 11, 1844, by the statement that the power of Congress was fully competent to accomplish everything that a formal ratification of the treaty could have accomplished, and that therefore his duty would be imperfectly performed if he failed to lay before the House everything in his possession which would enable it to act with full light on the subject.

"I regard," he said, "the question involved in these proceedings as one of vast magnitude, and as addressing itself to interests of an elevated and enduring character. A republic, coterminous in territory with our own, of immense resources, which require only to be brought under the influence of our confederate and free system, in order to be fully developed—promising, at no distant day, through the fertility of its soil, nearly, if not entirely, to duplicate the exports of the country, thereby making an addition to the carrying-trade, to an amount almost incalculable, and giving a new impulse of immense importance to the commercial, manufacturing, agricultural, and shipping interests of the whole Union, and at the same time affording protection to an exposed frontier, and placing the whole country in a condition of security and repose—a territory settled mostly by emigrants from the United States, who would bring back with them,

[1] These views are very clearly expounded by the late Professor Garrison in an article on "The First Stage of the Movement for the Annexation of Texas," *Amer. Hist. Rev.*, X, 72–96.

in the act of reciprocation, an unconquerable love of freedom, and an ardent attachment to our free institutions; such a question could not fail to interest most deeply in its success, those who, under the constitution, have become responsible for the faithful administration of public affairs. . . .

"So much have I considered it proper for me to say; and it becomes me only to add, that while I have regarded the annexation to be accomplished by treaty as the most suitable form in which it could be effected, should Congress deem it proper to resort to any other expedient compatible with the constitution, and likely to accomplish the object, I stand prepared to yield my most prompt and active co-operation.

"The great question is—not as to the manner in which it shall be done, but whether it shall be accomplished or not.

"The responsibility of deciding this question is now devolved upon you."

The President's proposal, of course, came too late in the session for anything to be done in regard to it, and within a week Congress adjourned; but Benton in the Senate, in order to make his own position clear, had first introduced a bill and explained his notion of the proper method to be pursued in securing Texas, a result he, or at any rate his constituents, very much desired. He thought that Congress should authorize the President to open negotiations with both Mexico and Texas, but coupled with the proviso that if the assent of Mexico could not be attained "it might be dispensed with, when the Congress of the United States may deem such assent to be unnecessary." Benton's proposal was not taken seriously by anybody, his suggestion that the assent of Mexico should be formally asked, and then dispensed with whenever Congress saw fit, being too obviously futile.

With the adjournment of Congress the presidential campaign was fairly opened, and it was waged with spirit and earnestness all over the country. The Whigs were united and enthusiastic under their strongest leader; the Democrats were divided and doubtful, and Van Buren, Wright, Benton, and others were openly opposed to the one issue upon which their convention had been carried for such relatively unknown candidates as Polk and Dallas. But as

time passed the popular feeling became more manifest and the hopes of the Democratic party revived.

In different parts of the country the contest seemed to turn upon different questions. In the larger cities particularly the "Know-Nothing" issue played an important part. In Philadelphia, in July, there was a serious riot, as there had been in New York at the spring election for mayor, when a Native American candidate was elected. But the Democrats on the whole profited by this agitation.[1]

The tariff also was important, especially in Pennsylvania. Both parties had adopted vague or unmeaning statements in their platforms. Clay was unquestionably the candidate most inclined to a protective policy, and the Democratic newspapers in Pennsylvania, therefore, found themselves compelled to protest that Polk was anything but a free-trader, and that he favored what was lucidly described as "a judicious revenue tariff giving ample incidental protection to all American industries." But elsewhere, and especially in the crucial state of New York, the controversy over Texas was the real and decisive issue.

On that subject the South was pretty generally agreed, although by no means a unit for the Democratic candidate. Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Louisiana were all known to be exceedingly close; and the Whigs hoped that with judicious avoidance of anti-slavery arguments by too zealous orators in the North they might all be carried for Clay. Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina alone were known to be hopelessly Democratic, for some of their more hot-headed citizens were going about declaring that the possession of Texas was infinitely more important than the continuance of the American Union.

The political conditions, therefore, craved wary walking on the part of the Whig leaders. If they advocated annexation, they were going contrary to the declarations of their candidate, and were certain to offend a strong and growing

[1] As to the influence of the "Know-Nothing" movement in the campaign of 1844, see McMaster's *History of the People of the U. S.*, VII, 369-385.

sentiment at the North. If, on the other hand, they took vigorous ground against annexation, they were met by almost a certainty of losing the whole vote of the South. They had hoped, like Clay, to limit discussion to "the old Whig policies," and, like Clay, they were all indignant with Tyler at his having forced a new question into the presidential campaign. But just as politicians can seldom foresee, so they can never control the issues upon which popular elections will actually turn. Whig speakers in the campaign confined themselves, as far as possible and as long as possible, to other questions; but as time went by it became more and more evident that Texas was the real issue. The Democratic platform had made that measure an article of party faith, in spite of Wright and Benton and Van Buren, and these dissatisfied leaders were now all working harmoniously with the rest of the party. Wright, who had declined to be the candidate for Vice-President, had been reluctantly persuaded to run for governor of New York, which brought to the party the support of Van Buren and his friends. Benton, too, had been brought to support the ticket, contenting himself with favoring annexation in general, while reserving his criticisms for the particular measure advocated by Tyler.

These facts did not fail to be noted by foreign observers. The British and French governments early in the year 1844 had agreed to make a joint formal protest against the annexation of Texas by the United States, a project which was abandoned when they were informed that the Senate would in all probability decline to approve a treaty for that purpose. About the first of June, however, Lord Aberdeen had discussed with the representatives of Mexico and Texas, in London, a plan for a joint guarantee of Mexico against American aggression by Britain and France, upon the condition that Mexico would acknowledge the independence of Texas.[1]

[1] See Chapter XXII, above. On May 17, 1844, Lord Brougham, in the House of Lords, and on May 20 Mr. J. Hume, in the House of Commons, had asked questions about the annexation treaty. Aberdeen expressed the opinion that the whole subject involved "quite new and unexampled" questions, and promised "the most serious attention" on the part of the government. Peel,

The British and French ministers in Washington were much alarmed when they learned that these latter proposals were under discussion, for they rightly judged that nothing could more certainly unite the American people in favor of annexation than an attempt by European powers to prevent it. They therefore wrote to their respective governments, urging that nothing should be done publicly, at least until after the presidential election had taken place, as any action by Great Britain and France under the suggested agreement would have the very opposite effect to that intended. "Texas would be immediately annexed and occupied, leaving it to the Guaranteeing Powers to carry out the objects of the agreement as best they might."

"It is scarcely necessary for us to remark," Pakenham wrote, "that, by the rejection of the late Treaty the question of the annexation of Texas must not be considered as disposed of. On the contrary it must be looked upon as the question which at this moment most engages the attention of the American People, and which will form one of the most prominent Subjects of agitation and excitement during the approaching election to the Presidency. In fact it may be said that both questions will be tried at one and the same time: that is to say, if the feeling in favour of annexation should predominate, Mr. Polk, who stands upon that interest, and who has moreover the support of the democratic party, except where anti-annexation feelings may operate against him, will be elected.

"If happily the party opposed to annexation should prevail, Mr. Clay, who has taken a stand in opposition to that measure, will be the man; in which case, although the project must not even then be thought of as abandoned or defeated, there would at least be a prospect of its being discussed with the calmness and dignity required by its importance, and by the interest which other powers are justly entitled to take in it.

"According to this view of the question it seems to us, My Lord, that the Govts. of England and France have everything to gain by the success of Mr. Clay: and accordingly that whatever might in any way unfavourably affect his prospects ought by all means to be avoided." [1]

more bluntly, said they would not follow the example set by other countries in the publication of diplomatic documents in the newspapers.—(Hansard, 3 ser., LXXIV, 1227, 1330.)

[1] Pakenham to Aberdeen, June 27, 1844; E. D. Adams, 178.

Aberdeen was convinced by this exposition of the popular sentiment in the United States, and at once proposed to France a postponement of the project, to which Guizot very readily agreed.[1]

One obstacle to Democratic success was, quite obviously, the candidacy of Tyler. Slender as his following might be, it divided the ranks of those who favored annexation, and to that extent tended to favor Clay's chances; and as the campaign progressed the Democratic leaders more and more strongly urged Tyler to withdraw his name. General Jackson wrote to a friend, evidently for Tyler's eye:

"Mr. Tyler's withdrawal at once would unite all the Democrats into one family without distinction. This would render our victory easy and certain, by bringing Mr. Tyler's friends in to the support of Polk and Dallas,—received as brethren by them and their friends—all former differences forgotten, and all cordially united once more in sustaining the Democratic candidates." [2]

The President yielded at last, and on August 21 published a letter addressed "to my Friends throughout the Union," withdrawing from the contest. He had been led, he said, to accept the nomination because he had been threatened with impeachment for having negotiated the Texan treaty, and for having adopted precautionary measures to ward off any blow which might have been aimed at the peace and safety of the country.[3] A large proportion of the Democratic party had exhibited hostility and "the most unrelenting spirit of opposition," and he had felt himself in honor bound to maintain his position "unmoved by threats, and unintimidated by denunciations." He had also had some hope that "the great question of the annexation of Texas" might be controlled by the position he occupied. But since he had accepted the nomination for President the action of the House of Representatives, in passing reso-

[1] Aberdeen to Cowley, July 18, 1844; Cowley to Aberdeen, July 22, 1844; *ibid.*, 181, 182.

[2] Niles's *Reg.*, LXVI, 416.

[3] Chancellor Kent had expressed the opinion that Mr. Tyler's course in reference to Texas and the sending of military forces to the border, laid him open to impeachment.

lutions approving his vetoes, had gone a long way toward justifying and upholding his policy; and since the adjournment of Congress the language of the press and the people had still further expressed approbation of the acts of the administration. To a great extent, therefore, his reasons for becoming a candidate had been removed.

With respect to the Texas treaty, he declared that when it was made he had anticipated receiving the support both of Clay and Van Buren; because when Clay was Secretary of State to Mr. Adams, and when Van Buren was Secretary of State to General Jackson, each in his turn had attempted to obtain the annexation of Texas.

"If it had been charged that the administration was prompted by the ambition of securing the greatest boon to the country, and the whole country, in the acquisition of a territory so important in itself, and so inseparably connected with the interest of every State in the Union, I would have plead guilty without a moment of hesitation. . . . I believed, and still believe, that the annexation of Texas would add to its strength, and serve to perpetuate it for ages yet to come; and my best efforts, while I remain in office, will be directed to securing its acquisition, either now or at a future day." [1]

Against this now reunited Democracy most of the Whig speakers failed to offer any effective opposition. They were hampered by Clay's declaration that neither the annexation of Texas nor the extension of slavery were in themselves objectionable, so that their opposition could not be directed to the thing itself, but only to the manner in which it was proposed to be done—obviously not a very effective issue for a national campaign.

Of all the leading men in the Whig party Webster was the only one who had fully realized the importance of the Texas question, or who perceived clearly that the party had put itself into a false position. Upon this point his record was quite clear.

"Time," he wrote in 1843, "has already shown how really inconsiderable were the grounds upon which the leading Whigs in Congress

[1] *Letters and Times of the Tylers*, II, 342–349.

went into their crusade against the President. Time has already shown how unimportant, practically and really, the measures were which threw them into such a flame. Who cares anything now about the bank bills which were vetoed in 1841? Or who thinks now that, if there were no such thing as a veto in the world, a Bank of the United States, upon the old models, could be established?" [1]

As a member of Tyler's cabinet he had been made well aware, from his conversations with the President, of the latter's views in regard to Texas, and after his retirement from the cabinet a long and friendly interview with Upshur had put him in possession of the hopes and intentions of the administration. Webster indeed had long felt deeply distressed at the prospect he foresaw of the danger to the Union arising out of the Texan controversy, and early in 1844, although he believed that all New York and New England were opposed to the annexation of Texas, he expressed the opinion that strong efforts ought to be made to arouse the North upon the subject. A spring election being about to take place in Connecticut, he declared that if it was in his power he would make the Texas question a leading feature of the contest. "If I had the means," he said, "I would send men to Connecticut who would run through the State from side to side, with their arms stretched out, crying Texas! Texas!" But he was quite unable to make his friends in Massachusetts see that there was a real probability of annexation being accomplished.[2]

In the course of the presidential campaign, therefore, Webster boldly proclaimed himself against annexation upon anti-slavery grounds alone. He protested that he wished Texas well, but was opposed to taking over such a vast extent of territory into the Union so long as slavery existed there. "It has always appeared to me," he said, "that the slavery of the blacks, and the unavoidable increase both in the numbers of these slaves, and of the duration of their slavery, formed an insuperable objection to its annexation." [3]

While Webster thus stood upon the solid ground of opposition to annexation because annexation involved the exten-

[1] Curtis's *Webster*, II, 208. [2] *Ibid.*, 230–235. [3] *Ibid.*, 244.

sion of slavery, Clay appeared unable to take any clear or consistent position. During the progress of the campaign he wrote no less than six letters on the subject, which his Democratic opponents made the most of, and which brought him few friends and lost him many votes. Thurlow Weed, then the shrewd and efficient editor of an important Whig newspaper, had cautioned Clay, even before the nominating convention, to write no more letters. Weed felt sure that the election was likely to turn upon the question of admitting Texas as a slave state, and he believed that upon this issue Clay had nothing to gain by courting the South and everything to lose by alienating the North. Before the Whig convention met, Weed therefore wrote that the outlook for Mr. Clay was as propitious as his most sanguine friend could wish, but the danger was that designing men would endeavor to get something from Clay to misrepresent, and there was no need of his writing his opinions on all sorts of subjects. Clay, he said, had been forty years before the public; his views and principles were sufficiently well understood, intelligent men knew perfectly what they were; and on the Texas question, which was the only new one before the people, he had expressed in his Raleigh letter convictions which were satisfactory to the people. Clay thereupon promised he would write no letters, and a week after the convention he wrote to Weed: "I am sure you will be pleased to hear from me that I am firmly convinced that my opinion on the Texas question will do me no prejudice at the South." [1] But in spite of his prudent resolutions Clay could not remain silent.

On the first day of July he wrote to a Mr. Miller, of Alabama, to explain that when he had referred in his Raleigh letter to "a considerable and respectable portion of the confederacy" opposed to annexation, he had *not* meant the abolitionists. What he had there said was based upon the fact that the states of Ohio, Vermont, and Massachusetts had declared against annexation, that the legislature of Georgia had declined to recommend it, and that other

[1] Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, II, 119.

states were believed to be adverse to the measure. The idea of his courting the abolitionists was perfectly absurd. Personally he could have no objection to the annexation of Texas, but he feared it might result in a dissolution of the Union. The Texas question "was a bubble blown up by Mr. Tyler in the most exceptionable manner, for sinister purposes, and its bursting has injured no body but Mr. Van Buren." [1]

On July 27 Clay wrote again to Miller that, far from having any personal objection to the annexation of Texas, he would be glad to see it if it could be secured "without dishonor, without war, upon the common consent of the Union, and upon just and fair terms. I do not think the subject of slavery ought to affect the question, one way or the other." And in later letters he tried again and again to define his position, but without being able to make it clear to the comprehension of ordinary voters.

Then and always the only real and substantial objection to the annexation of Texas was the objection to the extension of slavery, an argument which the national parties dared not urge; and it was this which had for years held back the American government from moving in the matter. The argument that there was no constitutional power to add new territory to the Union could hardly be sustained since the purchases of Louisiana and Florida. Nobody was much interested in the controversy whether the constitutional power to annex a foreign country resided in the legislative or in the treaty-making power. The argument that Mexico possessed any rights in the matter must have seemed very hollow to those who remembered her utter impotence during the eight years that had elapsed since San Jacinto, and who reflected that during those years Texas had probably doubled in population, and that Mexico had steadily gone backward in wealth and the elements of civilization. A serious war with Mexico was out of the question, unless indeed the United States should attempt a war of conquest.

On the other hand, the advantages of acquiring a country like Texas, inhabited by a population which was substan-

[1] Colton's *Clay*, IV, 491.

tially similar to that of the United States, having a similar form of government and similar ideals, were too obvious to be disregarded. President Tyler, in his message to the Senate accompanying the treaty, can hardly be regarded as overstating the facts when he said that there was no civilized government on earth having a revolutionary tender made to it of a domain so rich and fertile, so replete with all that could add to national greatness and wealth, and so necessary to its peace and safety, that would reject the offer.

The course of the Whigs, and especially Clay's efforts to please the Southern vote, now afforded an obvious opening for the Liberty party. They had been making little progress before Clay's Texas letters appeared, but they instantly seized upon his expression that under certain circumstances he would be glad to see Texas annexed. Henry Clay, they proclaimed, was at heart like all other slave-holders, and did not care whether slavery was voted up or voted down; and there was immediately an accession of confidence and strength to their party which was mainly drawn from the faltering Whig ranks. From the middle of the summer the hopes of the Democrats correspondingly rose, as the Whigs became more and more discouraged. The letters of William H. Seward convey a striking impression of the growing discouragement in the progress of the campaign. At Rochester, where he was to speak, he was appealed to by the local Whig managers to make "a tariff and Texas speech" to the naturalized voters, who were said to be all against the Whigs. From Rochester he went to Geneva, where he met "that letter and found everybody weeping and despairing." Clay was jeopardizing and would perhaps lose the state. "That last letter," he wrote, "will do its mischief unnoticed and unthought of. The former ones irritated our friends but they have become inured; and they complain not of the last, because complaint is unavailing. But the effect will be calamitous."

Seward also, like Webster, protested that Texas must not come in "until she casts off the black robe that hangs around her, and thus renders herself worthy of adoption by the American sisterhood"; but he saw, nevertheless, that "the party is struggling like a strong man. We shall see whether they are too deep in the morass to extricate themselves." [1]

When the election came at last Seward's fears were seen to be fully justified. His party could not extricate itself from the morass, and the result turned entirely upon the vote of the state of New York.

Of the New England states, Maine and New Hampshire went for Polk. Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut went for Clay. So did New Jersey, Delaware, and Ohio. Pennsylvania, Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois were for Polk. Of the Southern states, Clay carried Maryland, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Tennessee, the remainder going for Polk. Leaving out New York, the vote in the electoral college was 134 to 105 in favor of the Democratic candidate, and if New York's thirty-six votes had been given to Clay he would have been elected. But by a plurality of only 5,106, out of a total vote of nearly 500,000, Polk carried the state, giving him 170 votes in the electoral college, as against 105 for Clay.[2]

The Liberty party had acquired the balance of power, and had used their power to defeat the Whigs. There can be no question that it was Clay's attitude on the Texas question, and especially the declaration that the subject of slavery ought not to affect the question one way or another, which cost him the election. Birney's supporters were drawn almost entirely from among the Whigs, and if Clay had received but one-half of the Birney vote in the state of New York he would have been elected President.

"The country owes much of its misrule and misery," wrote Thurlow Weed, "to the action of minorities,—well-meaning, patriotic, but misguided minorities. . . . The election of Mr. Polk means that Texas will be annexed to the United States. In all rational probability, this gain to the slave power insures permanent slave supremacy in the administration of the government. Such, at all events, was the known and avowed object of the annexation. That question, and that ques-

[1] Seward's *Life of Seward*, I, 723–729.

[2] The popular vote in New York was, for Polk, 237,588; for Clay, 232,482; and for Birney, 15,812.

tion alone, produced the nomination of Mr. Polk. It was that upon which the Presidency hung, first in the nominating convention, and then at the ballot-boxes, where the people ratified the act of the convention. This is the precise truth, to deny which is both dishonest and unwise." [1]

But if Clay's defeat was thus due to the anti-slavery spirit of a minority, Polk's support can hardly be said to have been due solely to slavery. It was rather due to the Western spirit of expansion, which was unwilling to put bounds to the growth of the nation, and therefore welcomed annexation. The slave states were by no means unfriendly to Clay. Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky, and Tennessee together gave 286,278 votes for him, as against 277,615 for Polk; and in the electoral college the votes from these states stood, 44 for Clay and 27 for Polk. South Carolina, which was dominated by Calhoun, was in an exceptional position. Her nine electors were chosen by her legislature; but if she had held a popular presidential election there would probably have been nearly 50,000 majority for the Democratic candidates.[2]

On the other hand, all the Western and Southwestern states, with the single exception of Ohio, were for Polk. Ohio gave Clay 5,940 plurality, but Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana together gave Polk a plurality of over 50,000.[3] The total popular vote was 1,337,243 for Polk, 1,299,062 for Clay, and 62,300 for Birney. Adding the estimated vote of South Carolina, it may be said that Polk received about 90,000 more votes than Clay and 30,000 more than Clay and Birney combined.

The results of the congressional elections were even more decisive in favor of the Democrats than the result of the presidential election. The new House of Representatives stood about 120 Democrats to 72 Whigs.[4]

[1] Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, II, 124.
[2] Pickens to Calhoun, Nov. 6, 1844; *Amer. Hist. Assn. Rep.*, 1899, II, 990.
[3] 283,423 for Polk 232,860 for Clay. See Stanwood's *History of the Presidency*, 223.
[4] Vote for Speaker when the 29th Congress organized.

CHAPTER XXV

THE BANISHMENT OF SANTA ANNA

During the period when the terms of the Texan treaty of annexation were under discussion and the presidential election in the United States was in progress Mexico was enjoying an interval of quite unusual tranquillity. The chronic revolution in Yucatan was for the time being at an end, and, notwithstanding the urgency of Almonte's appeals for an invasion of Texas, not a Mexican soldier crossed the frontier. But the political barometer was steadily falling.

The ominous calm which prevailed was, for the first six months of the year, in part the effect and in part the cause of Santa Anna's prolonged absence from the capital. Following his usual custom, he had gone to Manga de Clavo in the autumn of 1843, before Congress met, and he did not return until the following month of June. He had been duly elected President in the meantime, in spite of a sullen and growing opposition, for no one else had yet shown himself strong enough to take and hold the place.

The government during these months was intrusted to the incapable hands of General Canalizo, who managed to preserve order, in spite of the menacing aspect of foreign affairs on the north and a chronically empty Treasury at home. Tornel continued as Minister of War and Bocanegra as Minister of Foreign Affairs, and they brought at least a considerable experience into the cabinet of the President *ad interim*. But the dictatorship of Santa Anna during the previous two years and a half had made him and all about him excessively unpopular. The extraordinary ostentation he had introduced gave rise to the most injurious suspicions of corruption, which extended to all his intimate friends;