The Life and Public Services of George Luther Stearns

by

Frank Preston Stearns

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GEORGE L. STEARNS IN 1863

THE LIFE

AND

PUBLIC SERVICES

OF

George Luther Stearns

BY

FRANK PRESTON STEARNS

AUTHOR OF "THE REAL AND IDEAL IN LITERATURE," "SKETCHES FROM CONCORD AND APPLEDORE," "MODERN ENGLISH PROSE WRITERS," "THE MID-SUMMER OF ITALIAN ART," "FOUR GREAT VENETIANS," "THE LIFE OF BISMARCK," "TINTORETTO," ETC.

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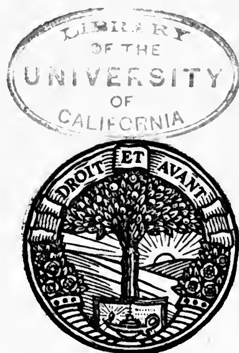

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INSCRIBED TO MY HEROIC BROTHER
HENRY LAURENS STEARNS

171143

"Those who see the half of a matter are inclined to talk, and to say a great deal; those who see the whole feel inclined to act, and speak late or not at all."

PREFACE

At the time of George L. Stearns' death, Whittier and Emerson united in paying their finest tribute to the character and public services of a man whom they considered to surpass all others they had known in magnanimity and disinterested endeavor. This, however, was soon forgotten in the whirl of fresh events, and the new issues which came with them; and another generation came onto the stage to whom his name was no longer familiar. It is hoped that the present biography will do much to restore his former reputation. There were more important men in those days, it must be admitted, but it was the peculiar excellence of Mr. Stearns' work that he repeatedly served to fill a gap in public affairs for which no one else would seem to have been prepared.

This account of him has been compiled partly from documentary evidence and in part from family traditions, which, if not true to the letter, are substantially true; and this is all that can be expected of documentary evidence when it relates to facts which are not before the eye of the writer. Instances of this are Mr. Stearns' speech on the eve of Lincoln's election and the conversation at

the railway station after the Worcester convention. The writer was present on both occasions, and, although he may not remember the exact language, he retains a distinct impression of the statements that were made. The recollections of our youth are much more tenacious and vivid than those of our later years.

Thackeray and other great students of human nature have recognized this tenacity of youthful impressions, but the knowledge of truth comes with experience and the sense of veracity is acquired in much the same manner that a violinist learns to know when his strings are tuned to the right pitch. We know it by the sound.

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The Life and Public Services *of* George Luther Stearns

I

Ancestry and Boyhood

Isaac Sterne, the first representative of the Sterne or Stearns family in America, came from the town of Stoke in Suffolk County, England; and, together with his wife, Mary Barker, of the same place, crossed the ocean in 1630 in the same ship with Governor Winthrop, Sir Richard Saltonstall, and Rev. George Phillips, landing at Salem on the 12th of June.* Finding the land about Salem already preoccupied, he moved to a place now called Watertown, on the Charles River, where he lived until his death in 1671. He was frequently chosen one of the selectmen of the small settlement, and acted as foreman in building the first bridge across the Charles River. He left property valued at nearly three thousand dollars, and a lineal descendant, Mrs. White, recently lived on the ground he cultivated.

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* New England Genealogical and Historical Register.

Coats of arms have no value in America except as historical relics; but in that line they are often interesting and significant. The device now claimed by the Sterne family in England, which is a numerous family in Cambridge, Hereford, and Norfolk counties, is a shield with three Malta crowns on a gold ground divided by a bar chevron. The meaning of the bar is not very clear, but the crosses are such as were worn by crusaders, and naturally indicate that three knights of the Sterne family went to the crusades, and perhaps the one beneath the bar lost his life in them. Among the effects of Dr. Luther Stearns, however, was found a wholly different coat of arms finely engraved on linen paper, so that it must have come from England sometime during the eighteenth century. It represented a shield divided perpendicularly, with a lion and a battle axe on a red field on the right, and on the left three doves on a field divided gold and azure—certainly a brilliant device. Lions were very common on armorial bearings of the Middle Ages, and usually indicated that the original possessor had been knighted for bravery on the field of battle. Doves were the emblem of a gentle nature and modest behavior. No device could better represent the character of the man whose biography we have before us.

English coats of arms are in no sense an indication of noble descent. They merely prove that the families bearing them existed during the feudal period, and bore the rank of knighthood. There is one for almost every respectable family in Great Britain.

The energies of the early colonists were fully occupied with fighting the Indians and wringing their subsistence from a rocky and stubborn soil. This period, which, after all, was essential to the development of the nation, bears a faint resemblance to the Dark Ages of Europe. It was the period of Salem witchcraft, and the not quite unreasonable persecution of the Quakers. It must have been during this time of popular ignorance that so many English surnames became changed in America, as Sayer into Sears, Eyre into Ayer and Ayers, Alcock into Alcott, and Sterne into Sternes, and finally Stearns.*

That the change happened in this manner is evident from a legal document still preserved in the Revere House at Lunenburg, Mass., drawn up and signed in a clear, vigorous handwriting by Rev. David Stearns, who was clergyman of the first parish of that town between 1740 and 1760.

The Stearns family have never shown an inclination for city life, evidently preferring the fresh air and less restricted activity of the country. From Watertown they spread northward and westward, and earned their living chiefly as farmers, teachers, and clergymen—sometimes as all three together.

While David Stearns was preaching strong Calvinistic doctrine at Lunenburg, his second cousin, John Stearns, was fighting as a captain in the French and Indian Wars. With the pay of various small offices, and successful farming, he

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* In his last will Isaac Sterne spelled his name Sternes.

sent four sons to Harvard College, and five of his sons took part in the War of Independence. His most distinguished descendant was Onslow Stearns, who was governor of New Hampshire in 1869, 1870, and was a prominent railroad magnate in New England for some forty years.

More than twenty members of the Stearns family drew a sword or shouldered a musket in the cause of American independence. Foremost among these was Captain Josiah Stearns, who commanded a company of fifty men from Lunenburg. He was the son of Thomas Stearns of Littleton, and nephew to Rev. David Stearns. After the war he became an important person in Worcester County, was repeatedly elected to the state legislature and finally to the council of Governor Samuel Adams for three successive years. He died April 6, 1822, above ninety years of age, and in his epitaph we find the following:

> "He discharged the obligations of a citizen and magistrate with integrity, prudence and fidelity."

He had five children, of whom the eldest, Luther, was the father of George L. Stearns, and the youngest, Thomas, became the father of Dr. Oliver Stearns, a professor in Harvard Divinity School.

Dr. Luther Stearns was born February 17, 1770, and entered Dartmouth College at the age of seventeen. He preferred, however, to graduate at Harvard, which he did in 1791, taking high rank in his class. He was a tutor at Harvard for some years, and finally studied medicine at the same institution. On December 29, 1799, he was married to Miss

Mary Hall, of Brattleboro, Vt., who was then but sixteen years of age. Early marriages in those days were the rule for women rather than the exception; nor do the wives of our grandfathers appear to have been any the worse for it. Miss Hall had influential relatives in Boston, the Boardmans and Lawrences, and this fact probably determined Dr. Stearns to locate himself in that vicinity instead of returning to his native place. He therefore purchased a modest-looking house in Medford, on Main Street, near the Middlesex Canal, which ran fron Boston to Lowell. Both house and canal disappeared some fifty years ago, and Summer Street now occupies the ground where boats were hauled in summer and boys skated in winter.

Dr. Stearns' first child was not born until he had been married more than six years. It proved to be a girl, who was named Elizabeth Hall for her grandmother. His eldest son, George Luther Stearns, was born January 8, 1809, and his second son was born in 1812, and named Henry Laurens after the American Ambassador of that name, who was distantly related to the family.

Dr. Stearns quickly obtained a good reputation as an obstetrician, for which he received an honorary degree from the Medical School in 1811. Although his practice in Medford afforded him a livelihood, he foresaw that it would not be sufficient to educate his children as he desired, and about two years after the birth of Henry he opened a preparatory school for boys, which soon became celebrated, so that pupils were sent to him from the Southern states and the West Indies.

An old settler of Medford once described him to me as a very pleasant man, not much given to jesting, but of a remarkably smooth, even temperament, well suited to his wife, who was a very determined woman, high-spirited, and rather imperious. So it is with two partners in business: if one is inclined to be strict and conservative, the other becomes more liberal and enterprising. Dr. Stearns was noted for his goodness to the poorer citizens of Medford, and every Christmas eve he and his wife made up a number of packages of useful articles, which he afterward carried about the town in his sulky and distributed where they would do the most good.

One of George Stearns' earliest recollections was meeting Judah Touro, a celebrated Israelite of those times, who said to him: "George! where is your father?" "To home, sir," replied the boy. "*At* home, you dog," said the Jew, correcting his grammar.

The life of country doctors is one of the hardest and most unprofitable that a man can live. They may be called up at any hour of the night, and obliged to drive for miles, receiving little or no compensation in return. They are never more than half paid for their services, and their wives never can tell whether they will come home to dinner or supper. It is to be feared that this severe life, united with the duties of his school and an enthusiastic temperament, wore out Dr. Stearns before his time. On April 27, 1820, there was a sharp change in the weather, and the doctor returned to his house with a woe-begone face and a pain in

his side. Another doctor was sent for, who pronounced it pneumonia, or, as it was then called, lung fever. The proper treatment for that disorder had not yet been discovered, and on the following day Luther Stearns was dead.

Mrs. Mary Hall Stearns was not an emotional person, and there were few who ever saw her shed a tear. She went through the funeral ceremonies of her husband with stoical firmness; then she went to bed and was sick for a week. From this time forth she became a power in the community such as the good people of Medford never dreamed of. She engaged a teacher, a Mr. Angier, to carry on her husband's school, she succeeded to his influence in the church, and ruled society like a drill-sergeant. She was of a large figure, broad-shouldered, and walked with a cane like a justice of the peace. Twenty years later it was said that everybody in the village was afraid of her.

It may be suspected that George L. Stearns lost his best friend in his father. He had no reason to complain of any neglect on the part of his mother, but she was not a sympathetic person and could not enter into the spirit of his youthful life, or share his joys and troubles. Moreover, as often happens with mothers, she felt a partiality for her youngest son, who was handsomer and more attractive than George, though not to be compared with him in intellectual ability. The general public, however, usually makes amends for these favoritisms, and the child petted at home is not liked so well abroad.

On the whole, Madam Stearns' children had small reason to complain of her; for she brought

them up in the way they should go, and looked after their interest with a falcon's eye. Originally a strict Calvinist, she became a Unitarian in Dr. Channing's time, when Harvard College and Boston society changed its religious base; but she never assimilated those optimistic theories in the Unitarian faith which approach so closely to fatalism. She may not have believed in total depravity, but she looked on evil as something real and tangible, which we must fight against in others, as well as in ourselves. She did not trust to Providence for the welfare of her children, but kept the reins in her own hand. She paid strict attention to their manners and their morals, for she said that the one was of little value without the other. Especially she inculcated the importance of truth-telling.* Her boys were obliged to be in bed at night and up in the morning at a certain stroke of the clock; not to waste time in dressing, not to make noise in the house nor to interrupt older people, nor to be late at their meals, nor talk at the table. That they should be diligent students was a matter of course. She would prefer to see them dead rather than they should grow up in idle, vicious courses.

Although George found his mother's home discipline rather severe, and it often seemed to him unreasonable, he was thankful for it in the end, and readily admitted that he owed his best virtue to it. In her old age Madam Stearns lamented the indulgent and neglectful manner in which her wealthy neighbor's children were being brought

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* These were her last words to her grandchildren.

up. "They would never come to a good end educated in that fashion," she would say, a veritable prophecy which has long since been fulfilled.

There was neither art nor literature in America at that time. The hardening effect of two wars with Great Britain had crushed out the germs of both, and it was long before they revived sufficiently to sprout again. The earliest American poet, or poetess, Maria del Occident, lived in Medford, but few remembered her name, and fewer her plaintive verses. Madam Stearns knew no literature and wanted no literature. There were few books in her husband's library besides medical works and his college text-books. There was a history of the world in some twenty odd volumes which she occasionally looked into, but as for novels, she had no good opinion of them. Women wasted much time in reading fiction which ought to be spent in knitting and sewing. If she had a peculiarity it was her aversion to poetry. The reading of it, she claimed, had a weakening effect on both mind and body; and as for writing verses, any young man who slipped into that habit was spoiled for all other purposes.

This was partly excusable on account of the fashionable rage for Byron's "Childe Harold," and Mrs. Stearns quickly recognized the danger to youthful minds from the peculiar, fascinating quality of Byron's verse. Nothing describes her better than her own favorite saying, that more than half the sugar that is made is worse than wasted. She was thoroughly real, thoroughly in earnest, free

from vanity and all forms of affectation—an excellent type of the old New England Puritan.

There was no danger of George Stearns taking to verse-making, and his temperament was too active for very hard study. He was not one of the best scholars of the school, and yet he might easily have gone to college had circumstances favored it. He revelled in arithmetic, and when he had reached decimal fractions he began at the end of the book and studied backward; but he did not like languages so well. He learned enough Latin to read Cæsar and Virgil, but he never studied Greek; and as for modern languages, they were not considered of much importance.

His father's death must have made a severe impression on the young boy, for there never was a more affectionate, tender-hearted, and sympathetic person than George L. Stearns. There was no effusive sentiment in him, for his nature was too deep to show itself readily upon the surface, and his regard for his relatives and friends was always expressed in deeds rather than words. That he treated others better than they treated him was a fact that never seemed to occur to him; or, if it did, he brushed it aside as unworthy of consideration. It is said of the poet Schiller that when he was at school he showed a tendency to give away everything he had, even to the buckles on his shoes; and this boy George would certainly have done the same if there had been buckles to give. He fastened his shoes with leather thongs, and to the end of his life he never wore any ornament excepting a modest gold watch-chain.

Although he was shy and sensitive, there was nothing of the milksop in his composition, as those boys at the school who attempted to domineer over him discovered, often to their cost. In 1863, when he was organizing the colored regiments at Philadelphia, the auctioneer, James Furness, said to his brother, Rev. William H. Furness: "That George Stearns was the toughest little fighter we had at school: he never knew when he was whipped." He was not naturally quarrelsome, but on the contrary peaceable and kindly disposed to every one. He even disliked the contention of a common argument; but the exceptional modesty of his nature served as an inducement to the ruder sort of boys to worry and impose on him.

Vicious boys should always be distinguished from those that are simply mischievous. Among twenty-five or thirty schoolboys there will usually be eight or ten who are industrious and well-behaved, and perhaps five or six who are idle, impudent, and knavish. Vicious boys sometimes reform themselves when they reach years of discretion, but they are more likely to end life miserably. There was one boy at Madam Stearns' school with whom George had several collisions; till finally one rainy Sunday afternoon, as George put his head out of the schoolroom window to see if the weather was clearing, this young rascal dropped the sash on the back of his neck (probably intended for his shoulders) so that it tore the skin. George turned round, and, having rested a moment, to recover from the effect of the blow, he pitched into his enemy and gave him such a pommelling

that the fellow never troubled him again. Like Charles XII of Sweden, he learned to fight in self-defence.

He took the cares of life upon his shoulders immediately after his father's death. He looked after his younger brother, and walked to church with his mother on Sundays. He looked out for the horse and the cow, and soon had to take care of these animals himself, as well as do other chores such as boys always dislike. At the same time he knew how to enjoy himself in a boyish way, and was not at all like a premature young man. It was a saying of his in after life, that unless a boy is thoroughly a boy, he will never make a genuine man. The old settler above mentioned said of him: "He was an active, bright-faced boy, full of life, and a swift runner." This last is a curious physiological fact, as George was never skilful with his hands, which were bony and a trifle large for his size. He found writing difficult, and could not learn to play a musical instrument, though he had an excellent baritone voice for singing. At fourteen he often ran more than a mile at a time.

Near the southern boundary of Medford there was a small hill, with quite a large brick house on it built about the year 1800, with the grounds about it laid out in the English style. Nobody, however, liked to dwell there long. It passed from one hand to another, and at the time of which we write the house was unoccupied. George and his schoolmates were fond of going to this vacant place to romp and play their games. Since 1845 it has been the residence of his family. Mr. Stearns confessed

that as a boy he wished he could own it, but never expected to acquire the means to purchase it.

The following incident illustrates the dominant trait in his youthful character. On Christmas Day, 1823, there was uncommonly fine skating on the Middlesex Canal. Some of the older boys suggested a trip to Lowell, more than twenty miles away, and George was ambitious to follow them. A friend of Dr. Luther Stearns' who lived in that city had called recently on his mother and expressed a desire for George's acquaintance. The boy reached Lowell safely enough, was invited to dinner, and his father's friend, seeing that he looked rather tired, advised him to remain over night. The following day, he skated from Lowell to Charlestown, and when he reached his home, his mother noticed a queer expression on his face. She advised him to wash his hands, but soon heard a strange cry from the wash-stand, followed by, "Mother, the bowl isn't large enough!" She ran to him and found he was out of his head. Several feverish days in bed restored him to his usual condition; but he had taxed his strength to its utmost limit, having skated fifty miles in less than thirty hours. It was this enthusiasm, which he carried into whatever he did, that gave him so much success in life, but was also, at last, the cause of his death.

In order to earn money, he sometimes tended the locks on the canal. On rainy Sundays he would go to the garret of his mother's house and read his father's history of the world there. That and Dr. Osgood's lengthy sermons were his only mental nourishment. He was fond of perusing the

history of the Crusaders, without ever imagining that he should one day buckle on his armor and become a crusader himself.

Elizabeth Hall Stearns remains merely a shadow to us. She died of consumption on the 30th of October, 1828. The manner in which young ladies were brought up in New England during the early part of the nineteenth century often proved fatal to the more fragile sort. They wore very thin shoes, and were restricted in such articles of diet as meat and butter, which would have helped to fortify them against the rigor of the climate. Her death must have been a loss to George in many ways, for an elder sister is a great help to a boy socially; but he never talked about her, nor did others who were acquainted with his mother's family.

Henry Laurens Stearns was wholly different from his brother. He might be described as an instance of happy mediocrity. As nature had endowed George with a great deal of character, she seems to have left his brother too little. He was amiable without much force, intelligent without any special talent, and good without being particularly virtuous. So long as he lived with his brother and worked beside him, he continued to prosper as a respectable citizen; but when he separated from George he would seem to have become like a ship without a rudder—drifted onto the rocks, and went to pieces. George must have been fond of him, for he named his eldest son for him.

II

Making the Man

Very slight material now exists from which to form an account of Mr. Stearns' life from his fifteenth to his thirty-fifth year; and this is commonly the case with distinguished men. A Byron or a Schiller may start up suddenly before the public at the age of manhood, and be able to sustain the position he has gained, but he pays for it with a short-lived existence. Hard wood is of slow growth; and the hero of a college class rarely proves a hero in real life. As Lowell says:

> "The man whose boy genius was likened to Pascal's, is lucky at forty if he's not found a bore."

George Stearns was not a genius, but there was an invisible something in him which was gradually forming the nucleus of a heroic nature, quite as valuable as genius.

After teaching Mrs. Stearns' school for over two years, Mr. Angier evidently concluded that he had done enough for her, and having the pupils fairly in his possession, he took them away and set up a school for himself. As he did this without warning or even without asking for an increase of salary, it was looked upon as a very mean proceeding; and twenty years later, when Mr. Angier came to an untimely end in Texas, Madam Stearns considered it a judgment upon him for his ill treatment of her.

George's expectations of a college education were thus nipped in the bud, but this could not have troubled him so much as the loss of income to his mother. He was not fond of study, and in all his life he never evinced the least personal ambition. He did not even trouble himself, as an aspiring young man is apt to, in regard to his moral and intellectual development. He accepted the work that lay before him without considering whether it would be good for him or not.

As it happened, the loss of the school was a decided advantage to him. If George had gone to college he would inevitably have become either a clergyman or a country doctor, and though he would no doubt have succeeded in either of these professions, he was not so well qualified for them by nature as he was for a mercantile life, and he never could have obtained the means for those philanthropic works for which he is now distinguished. His one object in life at this time was to earn money to assist his family, and the shorter the road to this the better. It was decided that the following spring he should go to Brattleboro and serve in his uncle's store.

In the days before railroads, towns like Concord, Keene, and Brattleboro were small commercial centres, and had each its dry-goods, hardware, and grocery stores on a scale like those of a populous city. They were conducted by a different class of men from those who keep country stores at present, and did not suffer from the sharp competition which the railroads have introduced, and which makes the lives of retail dealers a burden to them. It was

a hardware store that was kept by Madam Stearns' brother,* and this fact had a determining effect on George's future line of industry.

He started for Brattleboro one evening in April, 1824, and passed the night at a tavern in West Cambridge, in order to take the Fitchburg stage at daybreak the following morning. The building still exists and has been transformed to a fire-engine house. As Mr. Stearns often passed it in his carriage in later years, he spoke more than once of the loneliness of that night, and the sort of horror that he felt at leaving his family and friends for so long a time.

He was three years and a half at Brattleboro, during which time he returned to his home only for very short summer vacations. No vestige of his life there now exists. The store has disappeared; the Hall family has disappeared; and no person now living there remembers him. He must have written to his mother, but the Stearns family disliked letter-writing, and people who do not care for letters are not likely to preserve them. Brattleboro is a finely situated town, none finer in New England; and its society was of the best, but George's sojourn there must have been a dreary one. He was too young to enjoy general society, and there were no games for boys in those days except such as they could improvise on the moment. His duties were not arduous, but they were very confining. He learned to ride horseback, and per-

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* He may have been a cousin, but my recollection is a brother.

haps also to row a boat. His relatives may have been kind to him, but he does not appear to have made lasting friends. William M. Hunt, the portrait painter, was a boy in Brattleboro at that time, but Mr. Stearns did not remember him although Hunt's father was representative to Congress. George was very glad when, on returning home in August, 1827, his Boston relatives obtained a place for him in a ship-chandler's store on India wharf.

Ship-chandlery, or ship-furnishing, was then an active business. Ships from the United States crossed the ocean in every direction, and a large portion of the shipping in Europe was built in New England. Sea-captains from Lynn and Salem went to China and became rich in a few voyages. The three shipyards in Medford and Madam Stearns' influence there, were presumably used as inducements to obtain George's place for him.

A man who has a long distance to run begins slowly, and it seemed at first as if George might not succeed in his new position. He brought with him from Brattleboro the shyness of the country, which prevented him from understanding clearly what people said to him; and then his handwriting was against him. At the end of a week he was bluntly informed that mercantile life was not what he was made for, and the effect of this may be easily fancied—all his brave aspirations crushed out in a moment! The tears started to his eyes and his face showed such pathetic dejection that his employer was filled with compassion, and instead of discharging him gave him some good

advice in regard to his writing. A month later he showed such intelligence and fidelity in the performance of his duties that they would not have parted with him on any account. It was the crisis of his life.

He lived in Boston in the most economical manner. His chamber was in the attic of a clerk's boarding-house; and there he spent his evenings writing in a copy-book or on sheets of foolscap, and dipping his hands in hot water until he could make his stiff fingers do their duty. In this way he finally acquired a plain, neat, and legible chirography, though not of the best. He had no money to spare for entertainments, and otherwise he spent his evenings in reading or playing cards with his fellow lodgers. On Saturday evening, after putting the shutters on the store, he would walk five miles to Medford and walk back again on Monday morning, leaving his home at half-past five o'clock. He once said: "I should have been glad to walk it every day, if it were only possible, in order to escape that dismal boarding-house."

Handling the materials at the ship-chandler's gave him plenty of exercise, and this was fortunate, for otherwise he would not have thought of taking it.* It was a dull, hard, monotonous grind, but gave him an opportunity to speculate on commercial affairs in general and how the ship-chandler business might be improved in particular. This habit of mental speculation was characteristic of

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* At the age of twenty-four he could lift four hundred pounds with his right arm.

him, and entertained him quite as much as tennis or yachting might have. After two or three years he received a better salary and could afford to take life more comfortably. He liked the theatre, but went rarely and only to the best performances. He hated low comedy, and could not endure bad acting. In his dress, his manners, in all things his tastes were very refined.

Meanwhile the Lawrences and other Boston connections of his mother had not forgotten him. They invited him to their evening entertainments, which, he once said, was very good of them, " for I was a most unprepossessing youth." Probably he considered himself more ill-favored than he really appeared. His features were rugged, but not irregular. He had very handsome eyes, which ladies always admire, and a bright, fresh complexion. He was glad to be remembered, but his serious nature did not find much comfort in fashionable society. His life was not like the lives of the people he met there, and he felt like a stranger among them. Amusements form the staple of conversation between young people of both sexes; and poor George had little or no amusement to talk of. If some of the ladies to whom he was introduced could have foreseen his future prosperity, they might have taken more interest in him. For the present, however, he was only a poor relation. He always remembered one grandiose woman who confused him by talking about scarlet-tanagers, and parti-colored warblers. He could talk well enough with men, provided the subject was a serious one, and he was always an

attentive listener; but once having escaped from the *beau monde,* he felt no desire to enter it again.

He was much more in his element at Dr. Osgood's little church in Medford, to which his mother was proud to walk with him on Sundays. There he soon became a useful and even important personage—superintendent of the Sunday-school, church treasurer, and the like. Dr. Osgood was a veteran from the time of Washington and Hamilton, a vigorous outspoken preacher, who had a telling manner of expounding the moral law and of applying scriptural tenets to modern practices. Neither did he avoid political subjects when he considered that questions of public morality were at stake. George L. Stearns was his best listener.

In 1830 we find his brother Henry also has a niche in the mercantile world and is doing creditably.

George was always the most modest of men, without at the same time being diffident, or like Dickens' character of Tom Pinch. Such persons need encouragement at times to compensate for the hustling they have to endure from the more forward portion of humanity. In 1832 two gay young men who spent the whole of their salaries on dress and amusements occupied the next room to George in his lodging-house. There was only a board partition between their rooms, and one night when they came in late and supposed that George was asleep, he heard one of them say: " Do you know, I envy that George Stearns. See how he devotes himself to business, and what self-control he has. I tell you, he will be an important

man one of these days." Previously to this, George had supposed that they despised his plain, quiet manners and still plainer dress; and nothing that ever was said to his face gave him so much pleasure as this unintentional compliment to his stoical life. He also learned from it what good hearts are often hidden under the disguise of fine dress!

Mr. Stearns had now served for ten years as store-boy, salesman, and book-keeper, when in 1835 he thought he saw an opportunity for making money in the manufacture of linseed-oil, an article much in demand for ship-building. He consulted with his mother's relatives, who thought well of the enterprise, but at the same time offered him no assistance. His neighbor, Deacon Train, proved to be more helpful.

Deacon Train was a prosperous man of business, and the chief pillar in the Congregational church at Medford. He was such a strict old Puritan that he never took notice of any person, high or low, on his way to church; and it was said that he never missed a Sunday service during twenty years, except when under the doctor's care. He had a poor opinion of Dr. Osgood's society, but he recognized in Mr. Stearns the same virtues which had been the secret of his own success. He had several sons who illustrated the old adage in regard to the children of deacons and ministers, and who never came to good. It is possible that he had discovered an inclination for George in one of his daughters, and hoped to have him for a son-in-law in whom he could take some comfort. At all

events he promised to loan Mr. Stearns ten thousand dollars, provided he could obtain an equal sum from some other quarter.

George returned to his Boston relatives and succeeded in borrowing five thousand dollars from them, and that was all. In this emergency Madam Stearns heroically mortgaged her homestead for the remainder—a dangerous thing to do, but the widow felt great confidence in her eldest boy and was willing to risk all she had for his success in life. It was characteristic of Mr. Stearns also to take daring risks; but they suited the times in which he lived.

The oil-mill was built near his father's old residence, and close by the ship-yard of Mr. James O. Curtis. Mr. Stearns' expectations were realized from the first. He found a good market for his oil, and in three years he was able to repay his mother for what she had advanced. He took his brother into partnership and gave him an equal interest in the profits, although he must have been to a certain extent a lay figure.

Such enterprises are no longer possible in this portion of the United States, if they are anywhere in America. Some giant monopoly would crush out the infant industry after it had been fairly started; would have ruined Mr. Stearns and his family; and at last would have bought up his plant for one-half or one-third of its original value. Fortunately for Mr. Stearns, he lived in better times than the present, when it was considered the duty of the old to help the young, for the good of the state, if not for Christian reasons, and when

such piratical methods of business were not in vogue.

There was a lady in Medford with an invalid husband, who came from a very aristocratic Boston family. She had a bright, but rather plain daughter for whom she intended to make a distinguished match; but the daughter was more sensible than the mother and counted her chances in the world's market at their proper value. She recognized that Mr. Stearns was the most promising young man in her neighborhood. He was much too modest to discover her partiality for him, which was plain enough to the gossips of the place; but he did notice her mother's manœuvres to prevent their coming together at places of entertainment. The aristocratic mother lived to see her son wed the daughter of a common tradesman, and her own daughter never was married at all.

Meanwhile Mr. Stearns' hopes were fixed in another direction. We find in the town records of Medford that on December 20, 1835, the engagement was published of Miss Mary Ann Train to George Luther Stearns, and that they were married on the thirty-first of January following by the Rev. Levi Pratt. It was a short engagement, but had been preceded by a long and happy courtship. She has been described as a "cheerful, vivacious young lady" and a suitable contrast to her sober phlegmatic husband. Their happiness, however, was of brief duration. Mary Train Stearns was only twenty years of age, and already frail and delicate. In the spring of 1840 she began to be troubled with weakness of the heart and was ad-

vised by the doctor to go to the hot sulphur springs of Virginia, which served the medical profession in those days very much as Colorado does at present. Mr. Stearns went with her there, together with her father and sister, but she only returned to Medford to die early in October, 1840.

Many a man of ability has spent his life in the pursuit of wealth and made a fortune, to discover in the end that he in and of himself is nothing. Rufus Choate was the most distinguished lawyer of his time, but he was nothing else. He did not even understand politics, and his sense of justice was too deficient to make him serviceable as a judge: he seemed to have no sense of the loftier human virtues. What did it avail James Buchanan to gain the presidency and to lose his own soul?

Mr. Stearns never forgot the duties to his higher nature. The lesson which he learned as a boy in his devotion to the interests of his family broadened with years into an interest in the affairs of state and church. From being an active and useful member of Dr. Osgood's society, he became a prominent layman in the Unitarian organization. He attended anniversary meetings, and collected subscriptions; gave freely himself, and encouraged others to give.

We find him in 1842 helping to support a church in Milwaukee, which was then on the confines of civilization, and writing letters of advice to his young cousin, Rev. William Cushing, who had lately graduated at Harvard, and was settled in

Michigan. He continued in this wholesome work for twelve years or more, until he became absorbed in the deeper interest of the anti-slavery struggle.

The year 1841 was memorable to Mr. Stearns for the installation of Rev. Caleb Stetson over the First Parish in Medford. Vigorous in mind and body, this remarkable preacher served the spirit of his age as Dr. Osgood had before him, but in a very different manner. In Dr. Osgood's time the much-needed virtue was political conservatism and the establishment of society on a sound basis; and after that was accomplished the next movement of humanity was a progressive one—toward religious and intellectual freedom. Mr. Stetson united a keen analytic mind to a fund of good humor and ready wit, not unlike that of Sidney Smith himself. He belonged to a class of reformers who were not so distinguished as the extremists, but who did perhaps quite as much good. He did not separate from the church like Emerson, nor did he oppose the federal constitution like Garrison; for he believed that slavery could be abolished under the Constitution, and that an elevated and spiritual theology could be developed within the Christian church; and time has justified both these opinions. He read the *Dial* and attended Margaret Fuller's Boston conferences, where the brightest intellects of New England were assembled together; but he perceived that there was a large mixture of sentimentality in the transcendental movement, and his practical good sense enabled him to winnow the wheat from the chaff. He preached fear-

lessly what he believed to be for the benefit of his congregation, but he went no further.

With such a man Mr. Stearns could find very great agreement, and they soon became the best of friends. At this period of his life Mr. Stearns owned a fine sorrel mare named Fanny Elssler,* who could make a mile in three minutes; and when Rev. Mr. Stetson wished to go to Boston he had only to call on Mr. Stearns at an early hour and off they would start with Fanny in that two-wheeled vehicle called a chaise. The conversations on these drives were advantageous to both parties, as Mr. Stearns had already a wide range of practical experience of the sort which is most difficult for clergymen to obtain. He cared little for philosophy or the poetic rhapsodies of Margaret Fuller, but the amelioration of society, especially in Medford, was a problem ever present before him.

Another stalwart friend of Mr. Stearns during this bachelor interregnum was Thomas Starr King, then master in the Medford high school. He was a remarkably magnetic man—perhaps too much so for his own good—and always a fine talker. Mr. Stearns himself was slow of speech, he hesitated in the midst of his sentences, and had no choice vocabulary, but he possessed that rare commodity, a logical mind; and the correctness of his reasoning was always interesting to intelligent listeners.

Meanwhile the linseed-oil business was prospering, and in this same year, 1841, Albert Fearing, who had been a partner in the firm where Mr.

* Nearly all American pets in 1840 were named after this danseuse.

Stearns had formerly served his time, now wished to join with him in the ship-chandlery business. This was a grand opportunity, for Mr. Fearing held a high position and it would enable Mr. Stearns to turn over his oil-mill to his brother Henry; but capital was needed for the enterprise. Mr. Stearns went as before to his austere friend Deacon Train, who was, after all, the best friend he ever had. The deacon listened to his proposition and said: "George, my daughter is gone from us, but I shall always consider you as my son; you shall have the money." How rare is such confidence and such consideration!

The firm of Albert Fearing & Co. was located at No. 1 City Wharf, and succeeded so well that in two years George L. Stearns was able to repay Deacon Train the whole of his loan. It was not difficult in that rapidly growing community for men to make money, who owned a little capital and kept their heads balanced; but Mr. Stearns soon became known among Boston merchants as a person of stainless integrity, whose word was as good as his note; and this afterwards saved him where another would have been hopelessly ruined.

After this the linseed-oil business was well managed by Henry L. Stearns; until, unhappily, in 1847, the mill burned down, leaving a tall, square chimney as a monument to the enterprise of the Stearns brothers.

III

Mary Elizabeth Preston

The antislavery conflict in the United States had four distinct stages, or periods. First came the period of moral agitation, in which Lundy, Garrison, and Phillips were most conspicuous. Then, about 1840, the question entered practical politics, and the new cause brought out great statesmen like Seward, Chase, and Sumner. Then came the revolutionary period, the struggle for Kansas, in which John Brown was the central figure; and finally the Civil War, with President Lincoln's proclamation of emancipation.

With the first of these periods Mr. Stearns had no direct connection. To his practical mind the idea of abolishing slavery in America by moral persuasion seemed like a delusion. He perceived what Garrison and his friends did not, that the emancipation of the negroes in the British West Indies was a wholly different affair from what it would be in the United States. The British West Indies are isolated dependencies under the control of a distant government, and the slaveholders in those colonies had no voice in the jurisdiction that was exercised over them. Mr. Stearns was indignant enough at the mobbing of Garrison, but he saw that this was a natural consequence of the antislavery pamphlets which had been mailed to prominent slaveholders. Yet Garrison's position

of abstract right was the most unassailable he could have chosen, and made the most profound and lasting impression on the public mind. It is wonderful what efficacy abstract theories and Utopian ideas sometimes possess in the evolution of history.

Mr. Stearns, however, with his keen sense of justice, believed that every man had a right to the fruits of his labor. It is probable that the murder of Lovejoy had more influence with him than the incisive arguments of Garrison or the poetic eloquence of Phillips; but he had toiled hard himself and he felt for those who labored and were heavy laden. When the Liberty party sprang up in 1840, his resolution was taken. He was the only gentleman in Medford who voted for General Birney, and the only support he received was from an honest carpenter named Japhet Sherman and the night watchman at his mill, whose name was Pullen.* As commonly happens with reformers, he received little encouragement at his own fireside. After the death of his first wife he had returned to live with his mother, who declared that she was astonished and mortified to think of his joining those vulgar fanatics. His brother Henry always sided with his mother, and, in fact, was little more than her echo. With this numerical majority against him in his own home, Mr. Stearns' November evenings could not have been very pleasant, but he was soon to feel the force of public opinion in a more conspicuous manner.

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* This old original Yankee contracted a habit of drinking linseed oil, which never left him.

Madam Stearns had a second cousin named Turill Tufts, an old bachelor who acquired considerable property in the Calcutta trade, and afterwards bought up real estate in the centre of Medford. He was supposed to think well of George and to have made him heir to a portion of this property. Coming in one evening to the Stearns homestead, he expressed his surprise at George's political transition, and, being supported by the old lady, the discussion soon became a heated one. Mr. Stearns disliked contention, but when he had once entered into an argument, the whole energy of his nature was brought out by it, and as Bronson Alcott afterwards said of him, "his words were bullets and on occasion he could use a battery."

Turill Tufts retired from the encounter feeling much aggrieved; and two years later, when he died, and his relatives were called together to hear the reading of his will, Mr. Stearns was the only person in the room who was left without a legacy. While he lived he never forgot the sensation of that day: it seemed as if every eye was turned upon him.

The bulk of Mr. Tufts' property was left to those who needed it the least. His real estate was given to a very distant relative of Madam Stearns; whose son speculated, failed, and lost the whole of it.

During the winter of 1842 George and Henry Stearns were much in Boston society, and we learn that George offered himself in the spring to an unknown young lady who dwelt on or about Beacon Street. She refused him, probably because she did not appreciate him, and it may have been

a fortunate escape. At all events the experience does not appear to have made a deep impression on him.

It was through the medium of Rev. Caleb Stetson that Mr. Stearns finally became acquainted with his life-long domestic partner. On the day of the battle of Bunker Hill a cracker-manufacturer, of Charlestown, named Francis, fearing a general conflagration, moved his family and his effects to Medford, where he remained for thirty years or more. His son continued the business, and invented those hard water-biscuit which were long afterwards known as Medford crackers. *His* son, Convers Francis, became a Doctor of Divinity and Professor of Pulpit Eloquence at Harvard University; his daughter, Lydia Maria, wedded David Lee Child; and another daughter, Mary Rand Francis, married a young lawyer named Warren Preston, and went with him to Norridgewock, Maine, where he was chosen Judge of Probate for the county. They had a son, Francis Warren, who finally became a planter in Porto Rico, and four daughters, of whom the second, Mary Elizabeth Preston, is the one with whom we are now chiefly concerned. She resembled her aunt, Mrs. Child, much more than she did her own mother.

In 1837 Warren Preston left Norridgewock for Bangor, where he had been appointed Judge of Probate Court; and two years later his brother-in-law, Rev. Convers Francis, was made a professor in Harvard Divinity School, while Mrs. L. Maria Child was fast acquiring celebrity. Frequent visits

took place between the families in Bangor and Cambridge, and in June, 1842, Mary Elizabeth Preston was invited by Mrs. Francis to attend Harvard class-day and the commencement exercises. She went, of course, and in the evening after commencement there was a sort of informal meeting of the Transcendental Club at Dr. Francis' house. Theodore Parker, Margaret Fuller, and a number of clergymen were present, including Mr. Stetson. Margaret's talk was brilliant, but she took little notice of Miss Preston. Mr. Stetson and his wife, however, were greatly pleased with her and invited her to an entertainment the following Saturday, with a request that she should remain over the Sabbath with them.

Mr. Stearns must have been absent from this entertainment, for on Sunday forenoon, as they were going to church, Mr. Stetson pointed out the Stearns brothers to Miss Preston with the remark, "Those are the finest young men in my parish; and they are the pillars of my church." After the service was over she was introduced to them and immediately made her choice between the two; but later in life what she seemed to remember chiefly was that they were elegantly dressed. She did not see much of them on this occasion, however, and returned to her native state as heart-free as she left it.

In November Miss Preston came again to visit her aunt and uncle. It was Indian-summer weather, and Dr. Francis took advantage of it to drive over to Brook Farm, where Mr. George P. Bradford, who had taught Miss Preston Latin

in Bangor, had lately enlisted in what was called in the *Dial* the "service of higher civilization." Mr. Bradford looked very thin and sunburnt, but was delighted to see Miss Preston, to whom he confided that milking the cows in November was very chilly business. Dr. Francis found his friend George Ripley throwing turnips into a cart, which he called "the philosophy of Descartes." Miss Preston was amused to see people making life unnecessarily hard for themselves, and on the homeward drive Dr. Francis remarked that he feared his friend Ripley had undertaken a madcap enterprise.

Miss Mary Preston's next visit was to Mrs. Stetson, and there, to her surprise, she saw George L. Stearns lying on the parlor sofa with a pair of crutches beside it. He was in the last stages of recovery from a broken leg, and had come over to Mr. Stetson's for a little consultation on church affairs. About two months previously he was riding out of Boston, when Fanny Elssler suddenly stumbled and fell upon him, close by the ruins of the old Charlestown nunnery. He was carried to his mother's in an ambulance, counting the stones they went over by the way. Two doctors were called, and both declared that the limb must be amputated. Never did Mr. Stearns require greater resolution. He was little acquainted with doctors, but he remembered hearing that Amasa Walker, of Boston, was a surgeon who always tried to save broken limbs. "Send for Dr. Walker," he cried, "and I will submit to his decision." Fortunately, too, he had a mother with a mind of her own. Dr.

Walker was summoned, and decided that the leg could be saved, and it was saved.

This was a thrilling adventure to a young lady of Miss Preston's temperament. She took a chair beside his couch and they were soon left alone. She did not talk to him of scarlet-tanagers, but about the woods of Maine, and its great rivers with their rafts of lumber, and the silver-scaled salmon leaping over the falls at Scowhegan.

Mr. Stearns asked her about Dr. Hedge and the church at Bangor; he found that she agreed with him remarkably in regard to those subjects which were nearest his heart. She felt a happiness which she had never known before; it was the first time she had been in love. They were not engaged, however, until the following May, when Mr. Stearns went on a business expedition to New Brunswick, and during a wretched night in a tavern at Fredericton, concluded to offer himself to Miss Mary Preston, which accordingly he did on the way back to Boston.

When the engagement was announced Dr. Hedge said: "We all congratulate you, Mary, but we are going to lose you much too soon," and Rev. Mr. Stetson wrote her the following letter, dated May, 1843:

"I hasten to congratulate you most heartily and sincerely on the first news I heard on my return from a visit to New York. You will know of course that I can mean nothing else than your engagement to my excellent friend Mr. Stearns. How excellent he is, how full of all Christian graces and virtues, I am sure I need not tell you. The

fact of your present relation to him is the most satisfactory proof of your insight into his character. But you have not yet had time to learn the whole of his worth; it will more and more reveal itself to you, I trust, in many years to come. Mr. Stearns is well adapted to make you a happy wife, both in what he differs from you, and in what he resembles you. In all that is best and highest in both, you will have profound sympathy with each other; and in the strong sense and practical character of one who is a business man, without being a worldly man, you will have perhaps the best complement to the enthusiasm of your own being. On your account I have great satisfaction in the prospect of your union with a man so truly and deeply religious, and I cannot tell you how glad I am that the event, so full of blessed promise to you and to him, will also bring you here to me."

On May 17th Mr. Stearns wrote to his betrothed:

"The past week has been an exhausting one; my business did not suit me, and I became anxious, nervous—yes, these things take too deep hold, and I must hide the spirit of worldliness, that true life may come. I have resolved on it.

"It is Sunday morning, most lovely too. All nature breathes a holy fragrance as if new from the hand of God; yes, it is always new, life evolved from death, the blessed assurance of our future existence, bright and beautiful. I have enjoyed every moment; it speaks peace to my soul. I rose early and took up Browning's first 'Sunday Morning—Spring.' 'How fully does it speak to me!' 'I ask not, shield me, Father, from distress.' That my soul

needs. I have taken a short ride on 'Fanny,' the first since my accident, and returned renewed in spirit.

"Yours affectionately,

"GEORGE L. STEARNS."

"The spirit of worldliness" to which he refers is evidently an anticipation of the coming struggle with his fashionable friends on the slavery question. What was then called Beacon Street society was composed of two distinct elements: the old revolutionary Tories still continued to be what they were in 1776; but the Adams, Quincy, Lawrence, and some other families were much more patriotic and finally came over to the antislavery side. John Quincy Adams was the antislavery hero of his time. The Tory element, however, strongly preponderated; and Mr. Stearns foresaw the treatment he might expect to receive at its hands.

The following letter was written to Miss Preston shortly before their marriage:

"MEDFORD, August 24th, 1843.

"Tuesday evening was passed agreeably in Mr. Stetson's study. I purposely spoke very freely of myself, that he might do the same, and was not disappointed. He is still ill at ease in regard to his position among us, and I almost fear a good offer might tempt him to leave us; still, when we parted I felt more sure of him than ever, and think that eventually all will come out right. He is evidently much annoyed by what has been said, and does not yet see that this is the result of advanced ideas. When I endeavored to show him that no reform could be made with the unanimous consent of the community, and that any one who stepped forward must be prepared to meet the fate of a reformer,—pointing at the same time to much already accomplished among us as a parish and a town, for he has

done quite as much for education, in the improvement of our schools, as he has in elevating the standard of religious instruction in our society—he still looked back, and would not be satisfied unless all could be satisfied with Christ; and thinks if a new field was open to him he would find a way to every heart.

"Affectionately yours,

"GEORGE."

It will be perceived that Mr. Stearns was already in advance of his time, and, like all brave, aspiring souls, wished to lift the laggard world up to his own level. He already foresaw a storm brewing in the First Parish at Medford, although it did not break for some years to come.

Mary Elizabeth Preston was married to George L. Stearns on October 12, 1843, Rev. Frederick H. Hedge officiating. Mr. Stearns went with his bride immediately to Medford, which was enough of a journey in those days; and the manner in which he reached his home was characteristic of his calculating methods.

At that time the only railway station in Medford was at the extreme west end of the town, and the trip in the Boston stage was anything but an enlivening one. Mr. Stearns, however, had a friendly neighbor who drove every day to West Medford, left his carriage under a shed, and then went to Boston by the Lowell railroad. Mr. Stearns took the train to West Medford, borrowed his friend's vehicle, drove with his wife to his mother's house; then returned the equipage and walked back to Medford. It is likely enough that he planned this before he went to Bangor.

The charm of the honeymoon depends on that mutual reserve which the two sexes feel toward one another. When this wears off the apple of discord enters the domestic circle and does not disappear until husband and wife thoroughly understand each other; and woe to the household where they fail to do this.

One of the common trials of a young wife who marries a man of business lies in his long absences from home. Judge Preston was in the habit of running into his house four or five times a day, and his daughters supposed that all husbands did the same. Mr. Stearns left his wife at eight o'clock in the morning and did not return till nearly six; so that she had many long, weary hours, far away from her relatives and her friends. It would seem that she never became reconciled to this, for thirty years later she said: "I did not want him to leave me immediately after breakfast. I wanted him to stay with me, to read and talk." She seemed to think that he might have done this if he had so chosen.

In the spring of 1845 Mr. Stearns purchased the estate on the south side of the town where he used to play when he was a boy. He felt the need, perhaps, of separating himself in a manner from the people with whom he had been brought up for the broader and freer development of his own nature. He also wished to locate himself so that he might look after his mother's interest without having his wife see too much of her. Mr. Stetson congratulated him on his purchase, saying, "George, you will live ten years longer for it, and

the place will quadruple in value." This last prediction proved correct, but Mr. Stearns failed to dispose of it at the right time; and finally it became so expensive that it may almost be said to have been the ruin of his family.

The location was a healthy one certainly, with a substructure of red granite crumbling into gravel, and for seventy years no person had died in that house; but one reason for that was that until Mr. Stearns owned it nobody could live there for any length of time. The family who occupied it before him had a curious experience. They hired two servant girls, and brought them out from Boston, but the next morning there was an ominous stillness about the place. When the family assembled for breakfast, there was no breakfast to be had—and no fire in the kitchen. The girls did not like the location, and had taken French leave. Mr. Stearns had the advantage over his predecessors of being an important man in Medford, and could thus attract society to his little castle, which his predecessors could not.

Mr. Stearns enjoyed farming, but did not find much time for it. Old Mr. Pullen said of him: "I never knew a man who liked so well to see good work as he does." He was fond of holding the plough, and after he wore a long beard this was quite a picturesque sight. In order to reclaim a barren field he sowed it with buckwheat, and then after it was grown ploughed it into the ground, with the bees and hornets buzzing around him. He made a mistake, however, in setting out pear-trees too far from his house, for the Medford boys stole the fruit every year before it was ripe.

GEORGE LUTHER STEARNS

George L. Stearns' way to fortune came through an act of exceptional kindness—a reward of virtue such as we hear of in Sunday-schools, but rarely meet in actual life.

A certain Mr. Loring, who afterwards disappeared in the wild West, pirated a patent for making lead pipe which was owned by the Tatham Bros., in New York. He set up a mill for the purpose in Charlestown, and sold his pipe in Boston, supposing apparently that no one would inquire where it came from; but his duplicity was quickly discovered, and, being threatened with a criminal prosecution he went in his distress to Mr. Stearns as the kindest man he knew of.

Albert Fearing & Co. made use of a great deal of lead, and Mr. Stearns proposed to the firm that they should make an attempt to purchase the patent for New England, and, while they helped Loring out of his difficulty, do a good turn for themselves. He had examined Loring's pipe and found that it could be bent to a greater angle than that of the Boston Lead Co. He believed that its manufacture would prove profitable. The firm decided that Mr. Stearns should go to New York and open negotiations.

Mr. Stearns never tried to overreach anybody. The common mercantile trick of depreciating what a man wants to purchase, he considered the depth of meanness. He went to Mr. Benjamin Tatham and told him exactly what he wished to accomplish. Mr. Tatham was a very shrewd Quaker, and not inaccessible to kindness. He was delighted with Mr. Stearns' frankness, invited him to stay

at his own house, and made a fair bargain with him. Loring's reputation was saved for the present, and it was hoped that he would do better in future.

Mr. Stearns and Governor Andrew have both been criticised for allowing themselves to be deceived by unprincipled men. This is not fair to either of them. They were good judges of character, but they both held the opinion that sinners could be turned from evil ways by kindness and moral exhortation. This may be possible, sometimes, but in every case where Mr. Stearns attempted it, he only received ingratitude, and often sustained a pecuniary loss.

In the present instance he believed Loring had been thoroughly scared, and that of itself ought to be sufficient to teach him better ways. He advised making Loring their agent for the new manufacture, especially as he knew more about it than any one in the firm. This was accordingly done; but either Loring returned to his old practices or was found unsatisfactory in some other way, and in less than a year he was dispensed with. Then Albert Fearing said: " I think, Stearns, you will have to take this new business; if you cannot make a success of it nobody can."

So Mr. Stearns put his shoulder to the wheel, and at first he found it pretty hard to move. There was a good demand for the article, but much of the pipe was spoiled in the making, and this ate up the profits. He found his greatest difficulty in organizing his workmen. One foreman after another had to be discharged.

It was like training men to watchmaking. The molten lead had to remain in the press an exact number of seconds, and was then squeezed out at different rates, according to the sizes of the pipes. Night after night Mr. Stearns drove home from Charlestown between twelve and one o'clock, to find his wife, who had now two babies to care for, weeping at his absence. She told him she had rather live in a cottage all her days than to have him continue in this mode of life. He could not say definitely when the trouble would come to an end, and she feared that there would never be an end to it.

At length, after he was well-nigh discouraged, and his bank-account had run very low, affairs began to take a favorable turn. He came across an Englishman named York, who made an admirable foreman and served him in that capacity for nearly twenty years. It was not long before Mr. Stearns controlled half of the lead trade in eastern New England. He liked the independence of directing business affairs without being obliged to consult with others, so he dissolved partnership with Fearing & Co., taking the lead business as his share of the capital; and, whether by calculation or not, this proved in the end greatly to his advantage.

Mr. Stearns had a decided talent for mechanics, and he arranged the machinery of his mill in the most compact and economical manner. The building was only one hundred feet in length, and a story and a half in height; whereas the Boston Lead Co. had a four-story building of large dimen-

sions, although this was partly for the manufacture of white-lead paint. Mr. Stearns' Boston office was first at 23 Water Street, but after 1856 at 129 Milk Street, a building that was destroyed in the great fire of 1872.

The lead-pipe manufacture is not a fine-sounding profession, and Mrs. Stearns thought so; but we should remember Shakespeare's three caskets in the " Merchant of Venice." In the gold and silver caskets was found nothing but chagrin, and the prize was discovered in the " dull, cold lead." This was emblematic of Mr. Stearns' life. His Kansas work, his support of John Brown, and his organization of negro regiments were all of the same sort. He lived, as it were, under a leaden sky, which only at the close of his life became illumined gloriously by the setting sun.

Bankers are supposed to be at the top of the mercantile world, but the life of a banker, even when he is above the chance of misfortune, is not wholly an enviable one. He is never free from a certain kind of anxiety, and even when his instincts are generous his occupation tends to make him hard-hearted. " Can't you renew my note? " " No, I must have the money," is a dialogue of daily occurrence with him. The agent for a foreign banking house enjoys certain social advantages, but he is practically owned in another country. He can have no freedom of action and little freedom of opinion: he must even be careful how his name appears on subscription lists. The reason why so many manufacturers find their way into political life, is not so much because they have

operatives to vote for them, as that their occupation gives them exceptional independence and encourages a vigorous, manly life.

Mr. Stearns was remarkably well fitted for this description of business. He was rather a nervous man, but had a determined look. His calculations were rapid and his answers decisive. Moreover, most of the plumbers were either English or Scotch, and had not become corrupted by the Jeffersonian fiction of an equality, which practically exists only on the frontiers of civilization. They expected a merchant to be a gentleman, and liked Mr. Stearns the better for his dignified manners. His rival, Mr. Chadwick, used to joke with his customers and try to make himself popular with them, but this generally had the opposite effect from what he intended. They much preferred Mr. Stearns' plain,—"Good-morning, Mr. Lumb;" which he spoke as if he took a real interest in the man. With the New York brokers through whom he purchased his raw material he was always on very friendly terms.

The law of property is, first possession; and secondly possession against the world at large. No individual is permitted to enjoy unusual prosperity if any means can be found to take it away from him. Mr. Stearns' success attracted attention, and in 1847 two New York firms established agencies in Boston, and, while they pretended to maintain the regular schedule of prices, they began secretly to undersell Mr. Stearns. It was not long before some of his faithful plumbers informed him of this. "Mr. Perkins," he said to his chief

clerk, "put down the price of pipe to within half a cent of pig lead." Five thousand dollars went, and he had nearly lost ten thousand when the New York agents came to him on their knees. "I will raise my prices to normal figures," Mr. Stearns informed them, "but the moment I hear of your underselling me, down they will go again." He looked very determined, and as their only chance of success lay in underselling him they soon afterward returned to their own city.

It was about this time that Mr. Stearns became acquainted with Charles Sumner, and a friendship ensued between them, which can hardly be said to have terminated with their death, since it has become a part of the history of their country. Sumner was considered the whitest lawyer in Boston, a man for whom money had no value. On what account Mr. Stearns consulted him is uncertain, but after listening to his case Sumner's first words were, "I advise all my clients not to go to law;" a course which Mr. Stearns followed the rest of his life, for though he sometimes threatened a suit he never went into court.

He could not have shown a clearer sense of character than he did in the choice of his legal advisers. After Sumner went into the United States Senate, Mr. Stearns consulted John A. Andrew; and after Andrew became governor, he consulted William Whiting. When Whiting was appointed solicitor of the War Department, Mr. Stearns went to William G. Russell, who was afterwards offered the position of Chief Justice of Massachusetts, and declined it.

We find that Rufus Choate spent the night at Mr. Stearns' house in October, 1846, after delivering a political address in Medford; so that Mr. Stearns must have been still considered a Whig at that time. It is likely that he was requested to invite Mr. Choate. Mrs. Stearns, who was fond of talking of distinguished people and in quite an interesting way, never but once referred to Choate in my hearing, and then without comment of any kind.

In 1848, however, George L. Stearns joined the Conscience Whigs, and attended the Worcester Convention, where Henry Wilson made the memorable speech which first disclosed his ability as a political leader. Mr. Stearns could not do much speech-making, but he gave liberally to the campaign fund, and probably helped to collect funds for the campaign. The Conscience Whigs did not differ essentially from the Free-soilers, but the name served as a convenient stepping-stone for prominent persons in the Whig party who were strongly attached to it, and did not like to separate themselves from it all at once.

The slow and steady growth of the Republican party in its different phases of Liberty and Free-soil parties, from 1840 to 1856, indicated a very powerful political momentum, and it was only such that could overthrow so strongly grounded and prosperous an institution as African slavery in America. Political parties commonly originate in the union of self-interest with some political theory, and this was true of the Republican party; but the Liberty party was a rare instance of a political

movement founded wholly on principle,—the principle that every man has a right to the fruit of his labor; and this served to give it an energizing element and a moral impetus not unlike that of the Crusades.

The affairs of his church may have interested Mr. Stearns more deeply at this time than the political field. Rev. Mr. Stetson had lately added a new article of reform to his previous catalogue, and one that was likely to cause him serious trouble. Medford, which had long been famous for shipbuilding, was now becoming still more distinguished for its *rum.* Nearly all the rum sold in the United States was supposed to come from Medford, whether it had been manufactured there or not. There were three distilleries in the town in full blast; and the effect was as bad on those who manufactured as on those who drank it.

The ship-building brought a class of honest, industrious, and intelligent artisans to the town, who were among the most devoutly religious citizens of the place; but even they were becoming vitiated more or less by the prevailing laxity of morals. It was much the same in Boston and vicinity. The old Puritan code was being superseded by a new order of things. Startling instances of intemperance in high life had lately been revealed, and Rev. John Pierpont, the "old war eagle," as Theodore Parker called him, had sounded the note of alarm from the pulpit of Hollis Street Church,—for which he was soon afterwards dismissed through the influence of Williams Bros., wine merchants.

Rev. Mr. Stetson was not a man to be frightened

by this example, or intimidated by wealthy parishioners; but, like many reformers, he overestimated his own strength. The adaptation of ends to means is as necessary as the adaptation of means to ends; and the practical reformer is obliged to consider this as much as the practical statesman. Yet the greatest enterprises require a certain recklessness of self (like that of a general on the battle-field), which makes the line between success and failure a very narrow one; and the sympathy of mankind for a heroic defeat often becomes the parent of a glorious victory.

Mr. Stetson had carried his congregation a long way from the place where Dr. David Osgood had left it, and he still hoped for further successes. He attacked the new evil with unusual energy, for nothing is easier than to find arguments against the use of alcoholic drinks. Mr. Stearns was never a believer in total abstinence, and enjoyed his bottle of Haut Sauterne, but he was willing to give this up for the good of the cause, and he supported Mr. Stetson with all his might,—and he supported him alone among the leading members of the parish. Henry Stearns, who had lately returned from Europe in rather a demoralized condition, took the opposite side from his brother; and Dr. Bemis was secretly at work undermining his influence. Mr. Stetson's most determined opponent, however, was a farmer named Hall, who owned a small cider-mill from which he derived an income of perhaps a hundred dollars a year.

Madam Stearns was now old and feeble, but her love of virtue was undiminished. She raised her

voice in Mr. Stetson's behalf, and exerted herself among the ladies of the parish in support of her son George, whom she perhaps recognized at last for his true value. With their assistance he succeeded in preventing the dismissal of Mr. Stetson; but a number of the wealthiest families left the church and founded the Medford Episcopal Society.

It was at this time that Miss Mary Osgood said to Mrs. Stearns: "The silks and velvets have gone, Mrs. Mary, and now you must don your finest apparel for the benefit of the faithful and my father's church." Mr. Stearns, in order to encourage the society, purchased all the pews of the seceding members.

It was all in vain. Mr. Stetson's buoyant nature had carried him through the struggle, but when it was over his health gave way. These events took place during the autumn of 1847, and the following winter, in May, 1848, Mr. Stetson had a slight apoplectic stroke, and was obliged to take a long vacation. In September he returned from the mountains to external appearance a well man, but as soon as he attempted to preach the internal weakness became painfully apparent. After struggling against fate for two months more, he offered his resignation and retired forever from active affairs. He lived for more than twenty years on a Lexington farm, sometimes filling a local pulpit, but feeling only too keenly that his day of usefulness was over. Yet he was a true hero, in his way, and lived to witness the triumph of the antislavery cause, and the success of his favorite disciple. He

had been the soul of Medford society, and after his departure its tone steadily declined.

Among those who filled Mr. Stetson's pulpit after his first illness was a young graduate from Harvard Divinity School named Samuel Johnson, who afterwards became celebrated for his great work on oriental religions. He was a man of singularly pure and elevated character, and had a penetrating baritone voice, which once heard was not to be forgotten. His friends considered him one of the most inspiring preachers of his time, and the Misses Osgood were so much impressed by the spirituality of his first address that they denominated him "the seraph," and always spoke of him by that name to Mrs. Stearns, and other intimate friends. He spent a night at Mr. Stearns' house, in consequence of which Mr. Stearns proposed him to the parish in November, 1848, as Mr. Stetson's successor. The meeting called to consider the subject was rather a stormy one, and the vote resulted in a small majority in Mr. Stearns' favor; a fact which was communicated to Mr. Johnson in the following letter:

(*Fac-simile of original.*)

"Boston, Nov. 28th, 1848.

"Dear Friend:

"We held a parish meeting last evening, and expected to give you a call by an almost unanimous vote; so confident we were, that the opposition would be small, that no endeavor was made by debate to increase our numbers, or in any way to draw the doubtful votes to our side. I almost regret we were so forbearing, but it is past, and we must for the present submit.

"The vote was 24 against and 30 in favor of the call, too small a majority for working purposes.

"We shall now remain quiet, and let the Conservatives have their way. If a clergyman worth having can be found to fill a gagged pulpit, I will relinquish my rights, but not hear him. The Word of God shall not come to *me* through a keyhole.

"What shall we do? Will you be to us the man of God and give comfort to a small but chosen flock, or will you wait until the tide turns again in our favor? Do call and see me when you come to Boston and give me some comfort.

"I know you will not feel this as I do; the world is before you, and if not at Medford some other place will soon be open, but to us it is important, as a decision between life and death.

"Your truly affectionate friend,

"GEO. L. STEARNS."

The minority ruled in this instance, as sometimes happens in politics, and finally brought forward the name of John Pierpont as a compromise. He was accordingly elected, and accepted the call; but the "war eagle" soon discovered that the Medford parish was not an atmosphere to soar in. He found that in order to prevent the society from hopeless disintegration it would be necessary for him to make continual compromises. He preached a vigorous discourse on the Fugitive Slave Bill, where public opinion was strongly on his side; but as a rule his sermons were tame and monotonous. He did not like this himself any more than did Mr. Stearns, who nevertheless went to hear him quite regularly until 1854, when the birth of another child and the subsequent illness of his wife forced him to conclude that the true church was at his own hearthstone, and that he would

Rev. SAMUEL JOHNSON

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serve God best by serving his own family. At this time he used to read the Bible to his two children, who had accompanied him to church the previous year—much to their own disinclination. Their father noticed this, and told his wife that he feared the effect upon them of too early an initiation into religious subjects.

IV

The Hungarians

I have a shadowy recollection, from the winter of 1851, of a rather thick-set man, seated at my father's fireside, whom I was told to call "Uncle Henry;" and also of an uneasy impression which I felt from the manner in which my father spoke of him after he had left the house. Some months later he fell down in a fit, and when he came to himself he was not himself any more. He was taken to Somerville Asylum, where he continued to exist for eight years longer, tenderly cared for and supported by his brother, who conscientiously paid his debts even to persons that held no obligations from him. He was an intimate friend of Abbott Lawrence, and always one of the most popular young men in and about Boston.

On August 22, 1851, the town of Medford was visited by a catastrophe in the shape of a tornado; one of the most fearful spectacles that can be witnessed by human eyes. A strong southwest wind had been blowing all day, and about five o'clock P.M. this increased to a gale, which was particularly violent in the towns west of Arlington. At a quarter past five the funnel-shaped cloud suddenly appeared coming over the southern slope of Arlington Heights, where the track of its devastation may still be observed. A quarter of a mile from Arlington Square it seized a large elm-tree

and snapped off its trunk like a pipe-stem. Another great tree near by was torn up by the roots.

It was at this moment that Mr. Stearns saw it. The wind had blown off a large amount of young fruit, and he had gone out to survey the extent of the damage. The tornado seemed to be coming toward his house, and he ran for his wife. She saw it also, and ran for her children; but it was all over in a minute. The tornado would seem to have moved in the arc of a large circle, constantly tending northward.

At West Medford it lifted a freight-car from the tracks, and carried it some thirty feet. Rev. John Pierpont ran up to shut the windows of his chambers, just in time to see the roof taken off over his head. It swept off a carryall which was standing in front of a barn, and the vehicle was never seen again. It was also said to have picked up an old woman in the street, and to have deposited her in a meadow. Passing to the north of the First Parish Church, it made a broad track in the woods. All this happened within a minute and a half, so that the whirlwind must have travelled faster than a hundred miles an hour. Immediately afterward the wind changed to the northwest.

The tornado had passed within two hundred yards of Madam Stearns' house; and though her son could see from his hilltop that the building was safe, he concluded that he had better go to her at once. She met him at the doorway, and told him that she should have felt aggrieved if he had not come to her; for in truth it seemed as if the day

of judgment was at hand. Nevertheless she did not appear to have been greatly agitated.

Mr. Stearns said afterwards that the tornado appeared to be about a thousand feet in height, funnel-shaped, dusky-black at the lower end, with something like a proboscis, which hooked up trees and buildings. Shingles and branches could be seen whirling about in it, and it danced along like a demoniac creature.

Madam Stearns was now sixty-eight, and she felt her age heavily. Naturally of a robust constitution, the cares which her husband's early death brought on her had greatly diminished her strength. The misfortunes of her son Henry made her gloomy and taciturn, in spite of the devoted attention of George, who was more solicitous of her welfare than ever. He purchased a white horse for her (named Dolly), and when he could not find time to drive her out himself he persuaded his wife to do so. In truth this was no sinecure, for the old lady was sometimes irritable and at other times despotic. She made several calls on her daughter-in-law during the summer of 1852, and on one occasion met Mrs. L. Maria Child, whom she attacked so furiously that Mrs. Child, who as an abolitionist was accustomed to such encounters, confessed afterward that she had never found it more difficult to preserve her temper.

On Thanksgiving Day in 1852 there was to be a ship launched opposite Madam Stearns' house on High Street, and she exerted herself with her old energy to make an occasion of it for her grand-

children. She had her Thanksgiving dinner cooked to perfection, and after that the neighbors' children were brought in to enjoy a share of the nuts and candy. Then the whole party, except the two ladies, went out on the marshes to see the ship launched, soon after four o'clock, in the level rays of the setting sun.

This was Madam Stearns' last Thanksgiving Day. She dragged through a wretched winter, and died the following June, after a painful illness, which she endured in a truly Spartan manner. The funeral ceremony was worthy of her dignified character. She had lived the life of a devoted wife and mother, and she had received in return obedience, devotion, and honor. On such a theme Rev. John Pierpont could be very eloquent, and so he was on this occasion. She was buried in the old Medford Cemetery, where her husband and daughter had gone before her.

It is remarkable the number of calls that were made on Mr. Stearns' generosity during these years, and the way in which he met them. He gave so largely in aid of the sufferers by the Irish famine, that his brother-in-law, Rev. Dexter Clapp, spoke of it as George Stearns' prodigality. In 1849 his father-in-law, Judge Preston, lost his position by a political trick of the Maine legislature, and soon afterward lost the best of his property by a flaw in the title (a strange oversight for a lawyer), and this proved a new and serious responsibility to Mr. Stearns. In 1850 there was a great conflagration in Medford; that portion of the town was destroyed whose inhabitants could least afford

to lose their homes—the ship-carpenters and other mechanics. The fire broke out early in the evening and Mr. Stearns and his clerk, Mr. Collins, who happened to be calling at the house, ran at once to the scene of action, and worked most of the night like common firemen. The day following, he went again with open purse, giving sums for immediate relief, and promising loans for rebuilding to those whom he could trust. One of these loans was not paid till after Mr. Stearns' death.

While Charles Sumner was in Europe, he became acquainted with Mazzini, Louis Blanc, and other revolutionary leaders; so that when the revolution of 1848 broke out Sumner's friends naturally congregated at his office to hear him discuss the news. It was there that Mr. Stearns became acquainted with Frank W. Bird, John A. Andrew, and Dr. S. G. Howe, who had himself been a member of the Internationals and had served as their emissary during the last Polish insurrection. Mr. Stearns' keen philanthropic interest in the liberal tendencies of the time was much augmented by these associations. Sumner said, the rule was that revolutions succeeded in France, but failed elsewhere. Yet he was sanguine, in spite of the rose-colored hue which affairs took on at the start. When, however, Louis Napoleon was chosen president of the French republic, Sumner looked very grave; and after the suppression of the Roman republic by French troops he gave up all hope. "The effect of military glory on large masses of men," said he, "is almost as pernicious as war

itself." He had also known Louis Napoleon personally; and if he underrated his ability, he judged only too exactly of the man's character. He did not believe that Louis was a Bonaparte at all—he did not look like the Bonapartes—and but for his name he would be nothing. The suppression of the Roman republic indicated a bargain between Louis and the Pope.

The Hungarians were not forgotten, but very little was known of them in America. They were supposed to be descended from a Tartar race, and to be somewhat more civilized than the Turks. They possessed no characteristics, however, of Turk or Tartar, except their fine horsemanship. They were one of the first nations to embrace Protestantism, and no other race has adhered to it under such terrible persecution. When Kossuth and his train of fellow exiles came to this country in 1851, people were astonished to see a class of men more elegant and more accomplished than the average English traveller. Kossuth himself was a magnificent type of the statesman and patriot, the Gladstone of Hungary; and, like Gladstone, his failure was inevitable from the first. Learning, literature, art, music, philosophy, all contributed to make him what he was—a complete man. His world-wide celebrity is an instance of the homage which mankind pays to a glorious defeat.

Mr. and Mrs. Stearns went to call on him in Boston, and purchased a number of his ten-dollar certificates, payable five years after the independence of Hungary. After he had gone to New

York Mr. Stearns sent him a more considerable sum and received in return the following letter:

"New York, June 17th, 1852.

"Mr. George L. Stearns and Lady,
"Boston.

"You have honored me today with such a generous material aid for my poor, suffering country, and have done it in such a kind, such affectionate manner that it becomes a necessity to my feelings, not only to express to you my heartfelt, warm thanks, but also to say that you have bestowed to my sad heart the benefit of a moment full of consolation, which does one good, and the memory of which will rest upon me like a ray of joy. God the Almighty bless you.

"Your most obliged and thankful servant,
"L. Kossuth."

Among those who interested themselves at this time in the Hungarian exiles, Henry W. Longfellow, George S. Hillard, and George L. Stearns were the most conspicuous. They were all influential with the solid men of Boston, and succeeded in raising a large subscription for their protégés. A riding-school was organized for General Kalapkur, who, however, proved shortly afterward to be a great rascal. He took advantage of his position to run up debts, and borrowed money in every direction; and, after spending an extravagant summer at Nahant, he suddenly gave his creditors the slip and took a steamer for Europe. The charge of the riding-school then fell upon Colonel Thuolt, who proved entirely satisfactory; and it is difficult

to say whether he or his wife were the finer type of the true Magyar. The memory of Madam Thuolt is still cherished in the Stearns family, and her husband was not only one of the handsomest of men, but bore every mark of the true soldier. The Thuolts were great favorites in Boston society.

Mr. Stearns became intimately acquainted also with Rev. Gideon Achs, Captain Kinizsy, and a pianist named Zerdahelyi, for whom he practically kept open house. They were more cultivated, as well as better educated than the men with whom he had been brought up; so that the advantage was not altogether on one side. He was surprised to find that Mr. Achs was a Unitarian and agreed, point for point, with Rev. Caleb Stetson. He was, moreover, a fine oriental scholar, and gave courses of lectures on Egypt and the Assyrians. Captain Kinizsy was a cavalry officer, and had fought in several engagements and skirmishes, bringing away a scar on his face as the memorial of an Austrian sabre. Mr. Zerdahelyi was the most fortunate of the exiles, for he brought with him a profession by which he could support himself without assistance. He was a friend of Liszt the composer, and considered one of the best pianists in Vienna, but after six months in an Austrian prison his nerves became so shattered that he was never again able to perform in public. He relinquished a large income as a teacher in Vienna to enlist as a Hungarian soldier. There was something very pathetic in Zerdahelyi's expression; a look absent and distracted, such as one could imagine in King Lear. Yet this was more physical than mental. When

the Civil War began in 1861, he wanted to enlist, but failed to pass a medical examination. He then wrote a series of lectures on infantry tactics, which were delivered before the Lowell Institute. He fell in love with a country girl, the daughter of a well-to-do farmer, and, supposing that in a democratic country she would be received by his friends, he married her. Unfortunately, it was discovered that she had served as a waitress in a summer hotel, and this closed even Mrs. Hillard's philanthropic door to her. Afterwards Mr. Zerdahelyi went to Philadelphia, where his wife, being less known, was more favorably considered, and Rev. Samuel Longfellow, who met her there, spoke of her as a superior sort of person,—which she probably was.

These three Hungarians, and sometimes others, were entertained by Mr. Stearns once a week, and after dinner they smoked their cigars, talked politics, and told anecdotes of Hungarian life, reaching far back into the Middle Ages. They could tell something, too, about every prince and potentate in Europe. In this way Mr. Stearns acquired a knowledge of European affairs such as often surprised those who thought they knew more in that line than he did.

After the cigars Mr. Zerdahelyi would play a sonata or two on the piano, and this Mr. Stearns enjoyed as much as any of them. He often went to the symphony concerts, and was one of those solid men of Boston whom the musical fraternity always depended on when the subscription paper went round.

Kossuth had a sister, or perhaps a cousin, married to a rascally Pole named Zulavsky, who played much the same game in America as General Kalapkur. At the end of a year he disappeared, leaving his wife and three boys on this side of the Atlantic. Something had to be done for her; so Mr. Stearns and Mr. Hillard raised a subscription for her. Madam Zulavsky had managed a large estate in Hungary, while her husband smoked and gambled at Vienna; and she thought with the help of her boys she might make a farm profitable in America. Mr. Stearns knew that was not likely in New England, so he went himself to Orange County, New Jersey, and hunted up just the right place for her; looked after the purchase and the mortgage deed, and other details. How much he enjoyed this labor of love, only the disinterested can know.

Madam Zulavsky made a success of her dairy-farm, but she did not live many years. In 1858 her eldest son went over to join Garibaldi in his attack on Naples, and Mr. Stearns gave the second son, named Casimir, a place in his counting-room. It was not long, however, before small sums were missing from the cash-box. As this had never happened before Casimir was naturally suspected, and when Mr. Stearns suddenly charged him with the theft, the culprit broke down and confessed his guilt with great contrition. He alleged that his salary of eight hundred a year was not sufficient to enable him "to live like a gentleman."

Mr. Stearns forgave him, warned him of his future danger, and lectured him on the folly of

dressing like a fop, for which no sensible person would think better of him. In 1861 Mr. Stearns obtained a commission for Casimir in a Kansas regiment, and two years later he received information that his protégé had been convicted of robbing an express-office and sent to the Kansas state prison. The third son, named Ziga, enlisted in a New York regiment, and died of fever in Louisiana.

Among Mr. Stearns' numerous acts of kindness, the following deserves to be recorded for its romantic character.

While Mrs. L. Maria Child was editing the *Antislavery Standard* in New York City, she became acquainted with the distinguished Quaker philanthropist, Isaac T. Hopper, of whom she afterward wrote a biography. He had a son named John, who would seem to have been intended by Nature as a protest against broad-brimmed hats and solemn faces. He was a lawyer by profession, but he might have made his fortune as a comedian. All the world was a stage to him. His acting began at breakfast and only ended at bedtime. He was a whole theatre in himself; and was besides, what actors very rarely are, a remarkable wit. His wit was not a keen, biting satire, nor was it ever coarse, but healthy, good-humored fun, like that in the "Merry Wives of Windsor." Such an irrepressible person could not remain long in the church of William Penn; and it was the acme of John's delight to observe the difficulty with which his father and mother repressed their amusement at his proceedings.

Such men are born to make the world *laugh at itself,* to cure dyspepsia, physical and moral. John could not do this on a large scale, like Fielding and Dickens, but he was invaluable to his friends; among whom there were many who afterwards became distinguished, like Professor Langdell and Minister Choate.

It is not to be supposed that John acquired his acting wholly out of his own head. It is said that when he was sixteen years old his father heard of his going to Wallack's theatre. When questioned as to it, John confessed his guilt with an air of demure simplicity; and when the anxious parent inquired how many times he had been to the theatre he coolly replied: "More than twenty, father; but I am sure I haven't been thirty times." Said Isaac T. Hopper: "John! thou mayest go to the theatre."

Impulsive natures make early marriages, and it increased Mrs. Child's interest in the Hopper family to find that John was in love with a beautiful young lady belonging to a wealthy and high-spirited family in Rhode Island. Unfortunately, the father of his Rosalie had acquired his property in the slave-trade, and the idea of his finest daughter marrying the son of an abolitionist was as hateful to him as death itself. Before John had a fair chance to ask him for the hand of Rosalie, the old gentleman warned him off the premises. This precipitated matters most unexpectedly for all parties. John was not yet in a financial condition to support a wife, but he was wise enough to know that one must strike while the iron is

hot. Miss Rosalie was an even-tempered person, but she had no intention of giving up her lover. A runaway match followed, and John brought his blooming bride to his father's house.

Old Isaac T. Hopper looked very grave; but L. Maria Child was delighted. Here was a genuine romance in the prosaic nineteenth century. The Montagues and Capulets had come to life again. It was Romeo and Juliet without the catastrophe. There was not going to be any catastrophe. It is doubtful if the emancipation of the negroes in 1863 gave her greater satisfaction.

Meanwhile the young couple could not live on nothing a year. Something must be done for them. She would go to Boston and consult her practical nephew, George L. Stearns, the man who helped everybody. This she did, and in her enthusiasm fairly expected Mr. Stearns to take John Hopper into partnership. He could not do that, but he advised a salaried position of some kind, and was confident that sooner or later he could assist him. Mrs. Child brought the young bridal pair to Medford, where with her assistance they became fast friends with the family; so that for eight or ten years visits from the Hoppers in summer and excursions to New York in winter became part of the domestic routine. Mr. Stearns finally obtained the agency of the New England Life Insurance Company for Mr. Hopper, an important position, in which he gave great satisfaction. It only remains to be said that the married life of John and Rosalie Hopper proved to be one of the happiest of which there is any record.

A few years later, Rosalie Hopper's father lost his property in a wild adventure, the moral consequence of the way in which he had made it. Then John became the main support of his wife's family. It is also noteworthy that neither of Rosalie's sisters was married at the time, and if she had not eloped she probably would not have been.

Soon after this Ole Bull, the Norwegian violinist, came to Boston, and Mr. and Mrs. Stearns went to one of his concerts; after which Mrs. Child introduced them to him, and the whole party, including Jennie Barrett, the actress, went to supper at the Tremont House. Mrs. Child wanted Mr. Stearns to invite Ole Bull to Medford, and give him an entertainment worthy of his genius; but Mr. Stearns would not do it. He said to his wife: "I do not like the man or his music;" and the next time he met Mr. Zerdahelyi, he asked him: "How does Ole Bull rank as a violinist?" Zerdahelyi looked grave, and hesitated. "He is certainly a skilful performer," said he; "but he depends for his popularity on stage tricks—like your Democratic politicians—and the music he plays is by no means the best." Mr. Stearns used to say that he liked Zerdahelyi's playing because he put his whole heart into it, and never thought of himself or his audience.

Popularity is not always adventitious, or based on illusions. Mr. and Mrs. Stearns went to hear Jenny Lind when she came, and joined in the general enthusiasm for her. They were both in the hall of the Fitchburg depot on the night when

there was such a crush that it was feared the building would give way. The showman Barnum had sold a hundred tickets more than the hall would hold, and there came near being a riot.

Mr. Stearns unfortunately knew that the floor was suspended from the roof by iron rods, and as it was impossible to escape, he calmed his fears by estimating the weight of human beings in the hall, and the strain which the rods could be expected to bear. When Jenny Lind came forward to sing the uproar instantly ceased, so that one could have heard a pin drop. She sang:

> "And cooing calls the tender dove its mate,"

so that it seemed as if there must be doves perched upon the cornices of the hall.

V

The Fugitive Slave Law

Charles Sumner was the answer that Massachusetts gave to Webster's support of the Fugitive Slave Law. But for that speech on March 7, 1850, it is possible that Sumner would never have entered political life. Until that time he had not been prominent in the antislavery cause,—merely because he could see no way in which he might be useful to it. He did not agree with Garrison, that the Constitution was "a covenant with death," for with the true insight of a statesman he foresaw that it was only under the Constitution that there was any chance of abolishing slavery. He sympathized with the Free-soilers, but that he did not take an active part with them is probably owing to the fact that he was intended by nature for greater affairs. Like George L. Stearns, Sumner belonged to a class of men who are called forth by national emergencies.

Mr. Stearns was too clear-headed and practical for a rhetorician to influence him. He must have admired Webster in his best days, for the well-known engraving of Webster in the United States Senate hung over his fireplace for many years, but he never could reconcile himself to the fact that Webster neglected to pay his debts. He did not believe that this neglect was unintentional. "There are people," he would say, "who are

unable to keep out of debt, and to whom the general public is a sort of almshouse; but Webster was not one of them. A man of his income ought to have been able to live within it."

He had many anecdotes to tell of Webster's impecuniosity; of the unfortunate lady who asked his advice in regard to the investment of a legacy of two thousand dollars, which she had received; of his going into a Boston bank and requesting the cashier to let him have two hundred dollars, which the cashier was afraid to refuse him, and which was afterwards charged to profit and loss; and a story which he once told at Mr. Emerson's in Concord, of a collector who was sent from New Hampshire to make Webster pay some debts he had left behind, and after vainly trying to find the great man at his office, went to his house in the evening, where Webster greeted him so cordially, and introduced him so quickly to a number of distinguished guests, that the man went away without even mentioning his business. To this Mrs. Emerson remarked, with some asperity: "I once sent Webster a hundred-dollar bill as a retainer for the Jackson family, in regard to the French spoliation claims, and that was the last I heard of it. I supposed he rolled it up, and made a stopper for his ink-stand of it."

George S. Hillard, who supported Webster to the last, and wrecked his own political prospects by that course, thought that Webster's imperious manners were sufficient to have prevented his nomination for the presidency, even if he had not lived in Massachusetts. Politicians very naturally asked

themselves, What will such a man do if he once gets into the White House?

The Fugitive Slave Law not only divided the Whig party in the north, but the Democratic party also. The suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* and of trial by jury were measures aimed directly at the root of republican institutions, which alarmed the more conscientious portion of the Democratic party and prepared it for a coalition with the "Conscience Whigs." The first-fruits of this union was the election of Sumner to the Senate, and its final result was the birth of the Republican party.

Mr. Stearns was present at the meeting of the Free-soilers, November 6, in Faneuil Hall, and may have been one of the promoters of it, but he talked so little of his own affairs that it is not possible to say this with certainty. There Charles Sumner made the speech against the Fugitive Slave Law, which gave him the Senatorship. No one knew before that time what a force there was in him, or how useful this retired scholar could make himself. The address was revolutionary, and legal pedants have blamed him for it ever since; but it proved to be the most practicable statesmanship. He said: "We are told that the slavery question is settled. Yes, *settled, settled,*—that is the word. *Nothing, sir, can be settled which is not right.* Nothing can be settled which is against freedom. Nothing can be settled which is against the divine law. God, nature, and all the holy sentiments of the heart repudiate any such false seeming settlement."

This was revolutionary doctrine, for it placed every man's conscience above the law of the land; but it was precisely by this that Sumner showed himself the great political leader. It was the key-note of his political creed, and one from which he never swerved until slavery was practically abolished. It is only in great emergencies, when every patriotic man forgets his own petty interests in his anxiety for the public good, that such a character as Charles Sumner can find a place in political life.

The Fugitive Slave Law affected Mr. Stearns like the blow of an assailant. He purchased a revolver and declared that no fugitive negro should be taken from his premises while he lived. From that time his political activity never ceased. Few vestiges of it now remain from this and the four years following, for the part he acted was a subsidiary one; but it is certain that he was in frequent consultation with the Free-soil leaders, for he was one of the first, if not the very first, to inform Sumner of his intended nomination before the Legislature met in January, 1851. "Nobody could have been more surprised," Mr. Stearns said, "than Sumner was at this suggestion; and it was even difficult to persuade him to become a candidate." He exclaimed: "What are you talking about, Mr. Stearns? Such an idea never entered my head. I am wholly unfit for politics, by taste, education, and all my instincts. It would be impossible for me to make stump speeches and to electioneer, as candidates do. I could not do it, and besides I have marked out a very different

career for myself. I have made up my mind to be a historian."*

Nothing could express more perfectly the simple honesty of Sumner's nature; neither on this occasion nor any other did he make the least effort in behalf of his own interest. He was wholly a stranger to political manipulation; and if he lived at the present day there would be no place for him in public life, however distinguished he might become otherwise. Yet in 1872 William Lloyd Garrison published the statement that Sumner joined the anti-slavery cause late, and evidently from interested motives.

Sumner's election, like the first election of Senator Hoar, was the result of a bargain; but it was an honest bargain. In one instance the Freesoilers pledged themselves to vote for George S. Boutwell for governor, and in the other the Republicans voted for William Gaston. Bargains for this purpose were made all over the state; but such combinations are only possible with a large number of people, where there is an underlying principle to support them. The underlying principle in Sumner's case was opposition to Webster; and in Senator Hoar's case, to General Butler. Masses of men are actuated either by self-interest or opinion, and in voting, the measure of self-interest is commonly a very small one.

Mrs. Stearns never saw her husband return from Boston with such a happy face as on that day. He said: "Sumner is elected; and I believe it is the

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* From an old manuscript of Mrs. Stearns.

beginning of a new era for this country." Mr. Stearns was always a gentleman, but his broad humanitarian sympathies inclined him more strongly to association with men like Sumner, Andrew, and Wilson, than with the more aristocratic Free-soilers, like Charles Francis Adams and E. Rockwood Hoar.

Mr. Stearns' relations with his Beacon Street friends had been cooling for some years past, and his support of Sumner brought them finally to an end. It was the change from conventional society, with its mill-round of compliments and small entertainments, to the conversation of vigorous and original minds. In 1851 Mrs. Stearns gave an evening party to nearly every person in Medford society; but this was the last occasion of the kind for twelve years. After that, Mr. and Mrs. Stearns may be said to have belonged to the society of friends. They only visited their friends, and only friends came to see them, which was much pleasanter than having to entertain people who care little or nothing about you.

One of the last of Mr. Stearns' fashionable callers was Rev. Dr. Parkman, of Boston, a brother of the Dr. Parkman who was killed by Professor Webster; and the circumstances of his visit are worth mentioning as an indication of those peculiar times. He arrived in a somewhat heated condition, and had no sooner seated himself than he addressed Mr. and Mrs. Stearns as follows: "It is truly lamentable to see how this rabid radicalism abounds in the community. I have just left a young man in the Medford stage who did not

hesitate to declare that the whole clergy were no better than a pack of thieves. And this young man emphasized his statements by flourishing a pair of the largest fists that I have ever beheld; so I said: 'Young man, I am grieved to hear you speak of my profession in this manner, but if you will compose yourself, and put down those fists, I will argue the question with you.' Whereupon to my great surprise he informed me that he was a non-resistant; but I never saw such large fists on a non-resistant before." Mr. Stearns had little sympathy with non-resistants, and none at all with stage-coach radicals; and he always enjoyed hearing his wife relate this anecdote of Dr. Parkman, whom he respected for his genuine conservatism.

The Fugitive Slave Bill was a revolutionary measure, which naturally produced countermeasures of the same character. One of these was the organization of a secret society in Boston to assist fugitives and counteract the law. Theodore Parker was president of this society.

The proceedings of this secret society, if they could now be collected, would make a humorous and entertaining volume. Theodore Parker and his friends did not succeed in preventing the rendition of Sims and Burns, but they assisted a good number of other fugitives, and enjoyed some romantic experiences in this kind of work. One slave, who had been returned to his master by the Boston courts, was placed on a coasting bark for transportation to South Carolina. An emissary

of the Sons of Freedom informed Thomas Russell* of it. Russell made out a false writ of some kind, put on a broad-brimmed hat, and went with a few friends to the vessel, where they swore so loudly that the captain mistook them for genuine slaveholders, and delivered up the fugitive to them. They then put the negro on board a yacht, sailed round to Cohasset, took him across the country to Framingham, and sent him off to Montreal the next day.

One morning in May, 1853, a negro was found asleep on the hay in George L. Stearns' barn. He gave his name as William Talbot from Snow Hill, Alabama; and said that he had accompanied his master to Philadelphia to ride a horse at the races; but finding a collier there whose captain wanted a deck-hand, he had shipped to Boston without asking leave. He went to the negro quarters on Joy Street, but he was told that he would not be safe there, and they advised him to go to Mr. Stearns' because he lived in an out-of-the-way place. Mr. Stearns took pity on him, and hid him for nearly a week under the floor of his bathroom, where he must have been much less comfortable than he was in Alabama. After five or six days the officers appeared, walked round the house, and looked in at the windows, but did not ring the door-bell. They evidently had no search-warrant. Fortunately Mr. Stearns' hired man was not an Irishman, but a Scotchman, who showed them a bold front, and gave them biting replies to their ques-

* Afterwards Judge of the Superior Court.

tions; so that they went away no wiser than they came.

That evening Mr. Stearns drove William Talbot to Lowell, and the night following, Talbot was in Montreal. Three years later he returned to Boston, and Mr. Stearns established him as a hair-cutter in Harvard Square.

Philanthropy always produces imitators and impostors. Negroes, however, are very poor actors, and their impostures are easily detected. In the summer following, a most dilapidated negro appeared at Mr. Stearns' door, and begged protection from the slave-hounds. He alleged that he had escaped from Baltimore on a coasting vessel, and was trying to obtain funds to reach Canada. Mrs. Stearns placed him in charge of the cook, and, ordering her carriage, drove around to various friends of the cause, who gave her some twenty dollars for him; but Miss Mary Osgood advised her to make inquiries before she delivered the funds to an unknown person. So she drove to Boston and consulted Theodore Parker, who accompanied her to the antislavery office, where her client was recognized as an old beggar who had worried them for many years. "Don't let it harden your heart," said Mr. Parker, "but sharpen your eyes"—an epigram which often consoled Mrs. Stearns for the loss of her time and her trouble.

Theodore Parker's wise sayings might have furnished a modern book of Proverbs. He was once indicted himself for harboring a fugitive slave; but the district attorney, B. F. Hallet, was in such

haste to have him convicted that he omitted some important phrase in the legal documents, which nullified the prosecution. Mr. Parker was not slow in finding this out, and argued his own case to the entertainment of the court, first on moral grounds, then on what he considered the illegality of the Fugitive Slave Bill, and finally he exposed the flaw in the indictment, which quashed the proceedings against him. As he was leaving the court, Mr. Hallet, who had rather a squeaky voice, said to him: "You have crawled out of a very small hole this time, Mr. Parker," to which Parker replied in a deep bass voice: "I will make a larger hole next time, Mr. Hallet."

I believe there never has been an instance where a person who had once escaped from slavery voluntarily returned to it; though we must, of course, except the noble Virginia freedman who sold himself for the benefit of his master's family after it had become impoverished.

Now we come to the only dark corner in the life of George L. Stearns—a corner in lead. To understand this properly we must recognize that Mr. Stearns had the most acute New England temperament; his mind was never at rest, and required constant nourishment to keep it in good condition. Having perfected his own business in Boston so that it would almost run itself, he looked around like Alexander for new provinces to conquer. Count Rumford, who was certainly a sensible man, once thought he had discovered perpetual motion, and Mr. Stearns believed that he had in-

vented a formula by which he could make his fortune at a single leap. His idea is more likely, however, to have been merely an exercise of ingenuity, for he never cared for a fortune and spent his money as rapidly as he made it. The fact that what he was about to do did not differ essentially from gambling may not have occurred to him, and yet he must have realized that the profits he expected to make would not be like an improvement of property, but would be taken directly from the pockets of others. He never explained his motive for this undertaking, and only once remarked concerning it that life was "too short for regrets."

It is possible that Tatham Brothers led him into it, and he afterward believed it was their treachery that spoiled his game. This, however, is by no means certain. He went to New York in July, 1853, and commenced buying up lead as fast as the cargoes arrived, and borrowing money on what he purchased. This enhanced the price, but in the course of three weeks he came to the extent of his means. He was buying against himself, and as soon as he attempted to sell, his castle of cards tumbled down. The price fell rapidly. He went to the Tathams for assistance, but they would give him none; and within three days he lost all that he owned in the world.

He returned to Boston, but could not bear to face his wife and children. He spent the night at the Tremont House, and in the morning he sent for his friend Peter Butler, who was a speculator, but a very kind man. This was the wisest thing he

could have done. Mr. Butler was shocked at his appearance. Mr. Stearns was lying on his bed half dressed and unshaven. In three nights he had not slept eight hours; he had taken no breakfast except a roll and a cup of coffee. His first words were: "Butler, I wanted to blow my brains out in New York, but I thought of my wife and could not do it." Mr. Butler comforted him and ordered a breakfast, which Mr. Stearns ate with alacrity. They then talked over the situation, and Butler said: "Just lie here, Stearns, and go to sleep if you can, while I go down to State Street and see what can be done for you." There is no medicine like human kindness; and when Peter Butler returned Mr. Stearns looked like another man. There was no one in Boston who could raise money more quickly than Mr. Butler.

This was Peter Butler's statement after Mr. Stearns' death. On his return he could promise Mr. Stearns a sufficient sum to enable him to carry on his business. Mr. Stearns went to Medford and consoled his wife as well as a man could with such a conscience as he had on hand, and two days later returned to New York again.

He called a meeting of his creditors and said: "Gentlemen, if you force me into bankruptcy my property will be sold at a disadvantage, and you will get about fifty cents on the dollar; but I have a good business in Boston which pays fifteen or twenty thousand a year, and if you will give me sufficient time I can liquidate my debts to you, principal and interest."

Then Benjamin Collins, who was his largest

creditor, said: "My son has served his time in Mr. Stearns' counting-room, and I have such confidence in Mr. Stearns, that I will take his notes for one, two, and three years, and consider that my loan is amply secured." After this the other creditors quickly came to terms. The smaller ones were paid off, partly in cash and partly in notes, and the larger ones were secured by mortgages on Mr. Stearns' house and on the mill in Charlestown. Mr. Stearns was left without a dollar of his own, but with the help of Mr. Butler and Benjamin Collins he had saved his business, on which his whole future actually depended.

It was a terrible risk—this doing business wholly on borrowed money; and if he had met with bad fortune, Mr. Stearns would have gone under and sunk beyond recovery.

The three years following, however, were among the most prosperous that have ever been known in America. The gold flowing in from California was of great advantage to people in active business. It lightened the burden of the debtor class, and was equally a disadvantage to their creditors. It was a frugal and economical time for the Stearns family, but they were none the less happy for that. Mr. Stearns was able to meet Mr. Collins' notes as they fell due, and in the spring of 1857 he could tell his wife that the mortgage on their homestead had been discharged; which he said in quite a business-like manner as if it were not very important.

There is no instructor like experience. Whatever may have been the reason, George L. Stearns

arose from this evil adventure a stronger and a better man. When the financial panic of 1856–7 came, he stood the storm like a rock, while his friend Butler, who was very much spread out in his affairs, would certainly have failed but for the assistance which Mr. Stearns rendered him. There were many poetic incidents in the life we are now recording, and this is one of the most significant. It was destined that even this obligation should be requited.

One cold winter morning in 1855, Mr. Stearns' two boys came down to breakfast and found a remarkably thin, spare-looking gentleman warming his hands before the fire; and he said to them with a very pleasant smile: "I lectured in your town last evening, and your father brought me here to spend the night. My name is Emerson." He then noticed an atlas for astronomical study on a sofa, and asked to whom it belonged. "Do you know Sirius and Aldebaran?" he asked. "Do you know that that star in the west which they call Vega is moving steadily northward, and in a great many thousand years will become the polar star?" They thought he was the pleasantest man they had ever seen.

Mrs. Stearns discovered that Emerson had a boy of nearly the same age as her own; and she proposed to him that he should make them a visit, which was happily agreed to, but deferred until the following May, when she wrote to Mr. Emerson on the subject, and received this characteristic letter in reply:

"CONCORD, 28 May, 1852.

"MY DEAR MRS. STEARNS:

"What a lovely memory for any beneficent purpose you have! My little boy is highly pleased with his invitation, but unhappily his vacation does not square with Frank's. Next Saturday, however, is a full holiday; and if you are willing to take the trouble of him, and Frank will run the risks of a new acquaintance, Edward shall go down in the morning train from Concord at 7 o'clock, to be at Porter's at 7.50 A.M. if Frank will meet him there, and if you will be so good as to see that he is at Porter's again at 6.40 in the evening, he will have all the privilege and happiness of the day,—'no duty left, no calling books.' My wife is very sensible of your kind thoughts but is more than usually an invalid in these days.

"With kindest regards to Mr. Stearns and to the young people,

"Yours faithfully,

"R. W. EMERSON."

In June Mr. and Mrs. Stearns were invited to spend the day at Mr. Emerson's, an event which gave them a great deal of pleasure. Mr. Stearns, however, found much more agreement in conversing with Mr. Emerson than Mrs. Stearns did with his wife, who held strict Puritanical views on morals and religion. They noticed that her husband called her "Queeny," and she certainly presided at her table in a highly dignified manner.

VI

THE KANSAS STRUGGLE

THE election of Franklin Pierce in 1852 elicited the remark from Theodore Parker that any man was in danger of becoming President of the United States. Probably no one was as much surprised at his nomination as Pierce himself. He was a modest, amiable man, and sufficiently aware that his abilities were not of the first order. He was not a very important man in his own state. He had served a term in Congress without special distinction. He went to the Mexican War as a captain of volunteers, and his promotion was evidently a piece of political favoritism. He never had distinguished himself in any public capacity, and yet he was elected over General Scott (who was certainly a very brilliant officer) by a majority such as had not been known since the time of President Madison. It seemed as if the southern slaveocracy would accomplish whatever they undertook. They had annexed Texas, and conquered all the territory west of it. They had repealed the Missouri Compromise, and elected a president who was pledged to make that repeal a virtual actuality.

Mr. Stearns voted for Hale and Julian, though the prospect seemed rather discouraging. The Free-soilers had hoped by nominating a stronger man than Pierce in his own state that the general public would appreciate the true character of the

Democratic nominee, and that something might be accomplished in this way; but the result disappointed their expectations. Hale was a better man than Van Buren, but Mr. Stearns learned facts about him afterward which were not altogether to his credit; and yet there are few men at whose door one reproach or another cannot be laid, and those who lead the most immaculate lives are not always the most useful.

Mr. Stearns little thought as he sat by his fireside with his small family about him, and read in the newspaper of the gold discoveries in California, how his own fortunes and those of the republic would be affected by this. Nor did Captain Grant in his tanner's cottage at Galena, Illinois, imagine that the Kansas conflict would finally elevate him to the presidency. It was the gold of California that precipitated the Civil War through one of the most remarkable chains of causes and effects known to history. The war would probably have come without it, but at a later time and in a different manner. It is not likely that the Mexican War would have unsettled the Missouri Compromise, which certainly of itself was a very fair adjustment. Texas was admitted into the union with a proviso that it might be divided into four different states, should circumstances favor this; and although the population in the Northern states increased more rapidly than in the Southern, this might not have brought about a collision for a good many years.

If any further condemnation of African slavery was required, it was the decision of the people of

California on this subject. Never before had a state been settled by such a heterogeneous mixture from all parts of the Union; and yet, when the question of slavery in the state was voted upon, there was found to be less than a score of votes in favor of it. This was the handwriting on the wall which all parties, North and South, should have taken notice of; and probably it was to the Southern mind a prophetic danger which goaded the slaveholders to acts of desperation. They looked for territory which they could seize to counterbalance the loss of California, and Kansas, lying directly west of Missouri, seemed to be their best opportunity. California served them both as an incentive and a pretext.

This would have been not so very unreasonable but for two important facts. In the first place, there was no proviso to prevent territory west of Kansas from being afterwards claimed in the slaveholders' interest; and in the second place, a large number of Northern farmers had already immigrated to Kansas, supposing they would be protected there by the Missouri Compromise. Slave labor killed free labor wherever it came in contact with it, and these farmers would have been nearly ruined if a large slave immigration to the territory had taken place. Moreover the Western farmers hated slavery and believed they were doing God's work by opposing the attempt to thrust it upon them.

Rev. Edward Everett Hale and Hon. Eli Thayer were the first to sound a note of alarm. Thayer founded the Kansas Immigrant Aid Society, in

which he was warmly supported by Hale, the Lawrences, and other influential Bostonians. Mr. Stearns must have also been interested in it, for he made several visits to Worcester at this time to consult with Mr. Thayer, but we have no further evidence of it than this. The movement did not prove as effective as was anticipated by its leaders, and it served as a pretext to the opposition in Congress that the Free-soilers were attempting to gain possession of Kansas by unfair means, although the means was perfectly lawful, and open to the use of both parties. It was natural that the Immigrant Aid Society should give the preference to New England settlers, and the greater number of Kansas immigrants came from the farming populations of Ohio and Indiana, and either knew nothing of Eli Thayer's bounty, or were beyond the reach of it. The immigration was so large in 1855 that it supported a palatial line of steamboats between St. Louis and Kansas City.

A new and strange phenomenon, however, was now rising on the political horizon; namely the American, or Know-nothing party. This also was one of the consequences of California gold, but it also resulted largely from the dissolution of old party lines. The rush to California, and the gold that was pouring in from that direction, had induced a much larger foreign immigration than had ever been known before. These immigrants were mostly Irish Catholics, who were all pro-slavery, and voted the Democratic ticket—many of them before they were properly naturalized. They wanted freedom for Ireland, but objected to its be-

ing conferred on the black man; and it is difficult to account for this, except through the influence of their priests. The very name of liberty has always been hateful to the Church of Rome.

The Fugitive Slave Law divided the Democratic party in the Northern states, as well as the Whig party, but the division was not so perceptible. After the election of 1852, therefore, Franklin Pierce and his pro-slavery cabinet were in doubt as to whom they could trust to fill the minor offices, but the fidelity of the Irish could always be depended on. The consequence was that Pierce's administration favored the Irish at the expense of native Americans; and this was a short-sighted policy, like most of the measures of Pierce's administration, for it excited great indignation among the industrial classes, and resulted in the formation of the short-lived but effective Know-nothing party.

Mr. Stearns did not follow his friend Henry Wilson in joining that party, but he looked upon its successes as a good omen for the future. The day after the November election in 1854 he returned home in very good humor, and recapitulated the number of instances in which the Know-nothings had defeated the "regulars." "It will break down the old boundary-marks," he said, "and that is what we want just now." Wilson afterward declared that he joined the American party for the purpose of breaking it up; but Mr. Stearns thought it more likely that he did this for the sake of popularity—and in fact, it made him Senator. At the same time he always considered Wilson a true

patriot, who placed the interest of his country before his personal interest.

About this time Mr. Stearns began to wear a long patriarchal beard, which became him remarkably, and was imitated by John Brown, and perhaps also by William M. Hunt, the artist. It resulted in his occasionally being mistaken for a Jew; and ladies of fashion stared at him and looked upon it as an eccentricity, which it was not in the least. Previously he had worn only side-whiskers, but from 1850 to 1854 he suffered from bronchial trouble, and his doctor advised him to let his beard grow as a protection to his throat and chest. After this he had no more bronchial trouble, but the beard itself became a problem. Several hair-cutters experimented on it, and he tried it in various styles, but finally concluded to let it grow as long as it would. There was no Hebrew blood in George L. Stearns, but much of the old Hebrew prophetic spirit, and his long beard was well adapted to the essential manliness and independence of his character.

In the spring of 1855 the pleasant little Hungarian club was broken up by the return of Captain Kinizsy to his own country. His father was old and infirm, and the Austrian government had granted a petition for the recall of his son—on condition that he would not correspond with any person in England or America. The Thuolts also went back to Europe, and to an unknown destiny. Mr. Zerdahelyi remained, and discoursed fine music for many years to come; but Rev. Gideon Achs

was obliged to leave Boston for New York, where he earned his living as a photographer's assistant.

Mr. Achs had heard Sumner's speech on the Fugitive Slave Law, and greatly admired it. He could not understand why his good friend George S. Hillard disliked Sumner, and could assist in editing the Boston *Courier.* "What a wicked paper is that *Courier,*" he said to Mrs. Stearns! "If I should see Mr. Stearns praised in the *Courier,* I should immediately say to myself, What evil thing has Mr. Stearns been doing that he receives the approbation of Mr. George Lunt?" *

As the antislavery controversy deepened, those Northern papers which supported the Southern view, were often driven to desperate arguments for their unholy cause. Its aggresive pro-slavery championship finally killed the Boston *Courier;* and when George S. Hillard was left without an occupation Charles Sumner obtained his confirmation by the United States Senate as district attorney.

Captain Kinizsy was detained in London, by the slow process of the Austrian government, for more than two months, and during that time he wrote Mr. Stearns a number of letters, of which the following is an example:

"11 Langham Place, 24 of August, 1855.

"My kind Benefactor:

"When you bade me the last farewell I knew entirely the loss I had by missing my best friend, and only sister: now *I feel it.*

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* Lunt was the managing editor of the *Courier.*

"I found here many friends, among them two whose friendship was proved by the hardest time, and for cheering up my melancholic disposition. Mr. Remeinyi, who is a most extraordinary man, boy, and artist, gave me tunes on his violin, what I never heard as yet. If Ole Bull is a first artist, there is no name in your language for *him*. It is but an accident that I met him here, as he visited London only for the engagement to play at Osborne Castle to the Queen. Count Teleky introduced me to some Hungarian, French, and Russian families, with whom my time, I may say, is running; but still, I confess openly, since my Medford times were *not* 'running' (though it seems to be a contradiction) I could find in them more sweetness and friendship.

"Arriving in London, I went to the Austrian Legation, where I got the answer, that in the course of four weeks I shall have the permission of returning home. . . .

"Yours,

"L. Kinizsy."

Remeinyi was one of the first violinists of his time, and a much truer artist than Ole Bull. He invited Kinizsy to be his guest while he remained in London and made life pleasant for him there. The French victory of Solferino humbled the pride of the Austrian government and ameliorated the condition of Hungary. In 1860 the exiles were recalled, with the exception of Kossuth and a few others, and Rev. Gideon Achs returned to take charge of the same parish where he had preached revolutionary sermons twelve years before.

The Kansas struggle has become an oft-repeated tale, and every historian gives it a slightly different coloring from his predecessor. Rhodes, one of the latest writers, has attempted to make out that

the various governors appointed by Pierce and Buchanan were uncommonly high-minded and judicious functionaries, who were only prevented from bringing about a satisfactory solution for all parties concerned by the disturbances created by John Brown and James H. Lane. He even reprehends the forwarding of rifles by Boston merchants to Kansas farmers for self-protection; and we regret to find a much better writer, Frederic Bancroft, following him in this particular. Six months' residence on the frontiers of the wild West, even at the present time, ought to satisfy any reasonable person that the possession of firearms in that region is a *sine qua non* of personal safety, and both Rhodes and Bancroft ought to be aware that self-protection is one of the inalienable rights guaranteed by the common law. The fact that the Kansas farmers required better firearms than those with which they were already supplied indicates of itself that they went to the territory with peaceable intentions, and without any expectation of unlawful treatment. This is equally true of John Brown, who planned to go to Kansas long before the disturbances which made him celebrated arose there.*

We wonder at this time whether President Pierce's conscience ever troubled him in regard to the proceedings of his administration. When his pro-slavery governor of the territory, Mr. Reeder, notified him that Kansas had been invaded by large bodies of armed Missourians, whom he had no forces to resist, and who burned houses, insulted

* See Appendix A.

women, destroyed the crops, and had even murdered a number of Kansas settlers in cold blood, President Pierce, in return for this information, which he knew well enough beforehand, removed Governor Reeder from office, and appointed a more pliant incumbent in his place.

Governor Reeder's Kansas experience converted him from a Jackson Democrat to an Abolitionist. Soon after his dismissal he came to Boston to consult with the friends of Kansas, and Mr. Stearns invited him to dinner with his wife and daughter—who played on Mrs. Stearns' new piano. Governor Reeder felt more sorrow and pity for Franklin Pierce than anger. He pitied any president who lacked the ability to hold his ground against the great party-leaders. Jefferson Davis was the real president, and it was he that supported the invasion of Kansas; but the most unprincipled man in the cabinet came from Mr. Stearns' own state. Governor Reeder's conversation was very interesting.

Democratic newspapers all over the country either denied these facts, or declared that they were grossly exaggerated, but Dr. Charles Robinson wrote to his cousin, Amos A. Lawrence, in Boston, a detailed statement of the true state of affairs. A meeting was held at Mr. Lawrence's office, attended by George L. Stearns, Dr. Samuel Cabot, and other friends of the cause, and it was decided that first and foremost the Kansas settlers ought to be supplied with efficient firearms. Farmers always keep shot-guns for the benefit of obnoxious animals, but shot-guns have a very limited range, whereas Sharpe's newly invented breech-loading rifle would

be a more effective weapon than most of the Missourians could obtain. A subscription was accordingly raised to purchase Sharpe's rifles, but the first consignment was imprudently forwarded by way of St. Louis; and the Missourians, suspecting the contents of the boxes, opened them and confiscated the weapons.

This not only disgusted, but discouraged Mr. Lawrence, who did not quite like dealing in munitions of war, and he declared that he had done what he could and that he did not believe in trying to save Kansas by revolutionary methods. Mr. Stearns, on the contrary, asserted that a revolution was what the country needed, and that what he had given so far was only a pledge of what he intended to do in the future. He immediately started a new subscription and forwarded the consignment through the state of Iowa, so that it reached its destination in safety. Meanwhile, winter weather proved a better protection to the free-state men of Kansas than any assistance which Mr. Stearns and his friends could give them.

At this time John A. Andrew had a law partner —or perhaps an office partner—named George W. Collamore, who had always voted the Democratic ticket, and vowed he always should do so. He read the Boston *Post,* and would not believe the stories of Kansas outrages; so that he and Andrew had some pretty stiff arguments together on that subject. Finally Andrew said to him: "Collamore, I know you are an honest man, and I will believe anything you say, which you have seen yourself. Now if you will go to Kansas and look

up this subject, and can prove to me that I am mistaken, I will vote for a Democratic president next fall." Much to Andrew's surprise Mr. Collamore said: "Yes, I will go there, and I will bet the expense of my journey against your vote."

Accordingly, when spring came he went, and reached Jefferson City safely enough; but there, as he was waiting for the steamboat to put off, a gang of ill-favored looking men came on board, surrounded him, and asked him whence he came. "I am from Boston," replied Mr. Collamore. "That is what we thought," said the leader of the gang; "and you will oblige us by returning there. We don't want any d—— Yankees in the state of Missouri." "But I am going to Kansas," said Collamore. "So much the worse for you," replied the spokesman. "We don't let any d—— abolitionists go to Kansas by this route; too many of them there now. You will oblige us by leaving the boat." "But I am not an abolitionist," said Collamore; "I am a regular Democrat, and voted for President Pierce." "That makes no difference," said the Missourian; "Yankees can lie just as well as other folks." As Mr. Collamore showed no inclination to obey this mandate, four of them seized him by the shoulders and hustled him down the gangway in the roughest manner, one of them administering a hearty kick, as a parting benediction.*

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* The date of this adventure is now uncertain, but it probably happened in April, 1856. It was narrated to the writer in Lawrence, Kansas, August, 1862, by an intimate friend of Mr. Collamore, there called General Collamore.

This made an abolitionist of Mr. Collamore in less than five minutes. He returned to Boston, where he narrated his adventure in John A. Andrew's office to the great amusement of his friends; but he did not care for their laughter. His mind was made up to fight it out on that line. He went to Mr. Stearns, and informed him that he intended to emigrate to Kansas, with his family, and that he should be happy to serve his committee there in any way that he possibly could.

George W. Collamore was true to his word. He moved to Kansas and built a house in Lawrence, where he became a leading and greatly respected citizen. Of all Mr. Stearns' agents in Kansas for the distribution of rifles, clothing, and other supplies, he proved the most efficient. Mr. Stearns was once heard to say that he wished there were more men in Kansas as honest as General Collamore. In 1863 when Quantrell's guerillas burned Lawrence, General Collamore took refuge in a well, but the wooden shed above it was set on fire, so that he was smothered to death. Mr. Stearns sent for his family, and treated them as if they were their own kindred. To Hamlet Collamore, the eldest boy, he gave a place in his counting-room.

In April, 1856, Mr. Emerson was again at Mr. Stearns' house—a visit which Mr. Stearns prized more highly than he would that of any president since Washington. He found Emerson fully alive to the danger from the disturbances in Kansas. "It is like setting a fire in the woods," he said; "no one can tell what will be the end of it." He

thought as Mr. Stearns did, that it was a critical period in the history of the republic, and that the turning-point had come, which must decide the nation's destiny for a hundred years. He was eager to hear anything that Mr. Stearns could tell him concerning Kansas affairs, and the character of prominent persons in the territory. It was commonly Emerson who asked the questions in their conversations, and he carried this sometimes to the point of inquisitiveness; so that Mr. Stearns confessed that he felt as if he had been placed in the witness-box; but it was always evident that Emerson's interrogatories did not arise from any idle curiosity, but from a strong desire for accurate information. It was a part of his love of truth.

Charles Reade's novel, "Christie Johnstone," was just then making its sensation in the world, and Emerson praised it highly. Mr. Stearns accordingly purchased a copy the next day, but on reading it expressed surprise at Emerson's judgment. He did not like the style in which the book was written, and when he came to the passage where Christie is described as deceiving Mr. Miller, the fish-dealer, and read the commentary, "No nonsense was uttered about morality in connection with trade," Mr. Stearns closed the book and never opened it again. "Charles Reade," he said, "has very low ideas in regard to mercantile transactions," and he wondered that Emerson could have overlooked such a flagrant statement.

The following letter to Rev. Samuel Johnson enables us to date Mr. Emerson's visit approximately:

"BOSTON, April 10, '56.

"MY DEAR FRIEND:

"Your first note came to me on Tuesday, and the second on my return from Medford, yesterday afternoon. If we three could have gone to Salem I think we should have left Mr. Emerson in the lurch, and passed the evening with you. The temptation was very strong.

"Mr. Emerson gave us his lecture on Beauty, a rich and profitable truth, one that will last forever. Do you know we have concerts every Wednesday afternoon and some good music?

"Truly yours,

"GEORGE L. STEARNS."

VII

The Kansas Aid Committee

The Civil War began in Kansas, and the persons who were chiefly responsible for this were Stephen A. Douglas and Jefferson Davis—names which the muse of history will always write with an averted face.

Civil wars resemble tornadoes, which are caused by a stratum of heated air blowing beneath a stratum of cold air; so when the proper order and condition of affairs in society becomes reversed, civilization makes a violent, convulsive effort to right itself. Woe to the future of the nation where this does not succeed.

In considering the Kansas disturbances of 1855 and 1856, it should be borne in mind that there was no criminal procedure of any value or efficacy west of the city of St. Louis. As late as 1880 it was much the same west of Topeka.

The experience of the present writer may be of some value in this connection. During 1879 and 1880 he lived some six weeks at Abilene, Wallace and Lakin in western Kansas; and for more than a year in the Rocky Mountains. In each of those towns, which contained less than a hundred inhabitants, a homicide had been recently committed. In each case the perpetrators had come originally from Missouri or Arkansas. In two cases the man had been arrested, taken to Kansas City (out of the state), tried, and acquitted. The Wallace homicide or murderer was so impudent as to return to his own town, where he was seized

by a vigilance committee and hung. The Lakin homicide escaped to the Indian Territory, and no attempt was made to recover him. At that time no person had ever been hung for murder in Colorado according to law; although in March, 1880, three murders were committed in the railway train between Denver and Pueblo. A negro porter who shot a negro waiter at Manitou was condemned to two years' imprisonment, and the lightness of the sentence was generally accounted for by the disappearance of a thousand dollars which he had on deposit at Colorado Springs. Under such conditions self-help is the only resource, and if it were not for occasional lynchings society could not be held together at all.

When we add to this general state of insecurity the fact that the national government had turned against the Kansas farmers, and was encouraging the lawless bands of Missourians who were tyrannizing over them, the comfortable citizen of New York or Philadelphia, sitting by his fireside, smoking his cigar and reading the evening newspaper, may acquire some conception of what it was to be a Kansas settler in 1856. Kansas has always been prolific of tornadoes, and it certainly looked as if one was brewing at that time—though not of the physical sort.

There were now two governors, two chief justices and two legislatures in the territory, each of which held the acts of the other as invalid, according to their respective parties. Society was in a state of incipient revolution. As early as April, 1855, Governor Robinson wrote to Hon. Eli Thayer:

"Our people have now formed themselves into four military companies, and will meet to drill till they have per-

fected themselves in the art. Also, companies are being formed in other places, and we want *arms*. Give us the weapons and every man from the North will be a soldier and die in his tracks if necessary to protect and defend our right." *

This sounds fine enough; but, unfortunately, when the time for action came Robinson lacked the courage and address to wield the organization he had created, and the consequence was that on May 20th the Missourians entered Lawrence, burned the hotel, two printing-offices, and various other buildings in value worth from fifty to a hundred thousand dollars. John Brown started for the scene of action with his little band of jayhawkers, but finding the mischief was already done, he returned to his own ranch.

The news of this outrage created a fiery debate in the United States Senate, in which the pro-slavery leaders, especially Douglas of Illinois, and Butler of South Carolina, were driven to desperate arguments in support of their vicious cause—under the well-directed fire of Seward, Trumbull, and Chase. This culminated the following day in the greatest of Sumner's orations, "The Crime against Kansas," in which he satirized Douglas and Butler as the Sancho Panza and Don Quixote of the pro-slavery cause.

Professor Von Holst has devoted one of his longest paragraphs to the disparagement of this oration, but it was really the most impressive speech ever delivered in the United States Senate. It has not

* Blackmar's Life of Robinson, p. 132.

the beauty of form, or the originality of thought, which made Webster's reply to Hayne a landmark in the history of eloquence, and yet it possesses literary merit of a high order. It is doubtful if Webster would have had the courage to deliver it. Nothing less than heroism was required to tell the truth to that bold and confident oligarchy which had ruled the country for fifty years. It was like Mirabeau facing the old French nobility. It requires courage enough to tell the truth concerning public affairs at any time.

Sumner's division of his subject in this oration is like solid courses of masonry; and his Baconian treatment of the unprincipled apologies that were being made for the outrages in Kansas gives the impression of superior intellect as well as rare scholarship. "Thank God for Massachusetts," was his reply to the malignant attack of his opponents on the character and culture of his native state. No wonder if they wanted to kill him.

The assault on Sumner which followed two days afterward is without parallel in the history of popular government. He was struck from behind while peacefully writing at his desk. Preston S. Brooks had all the characteristics of the political assassin, and resembled Wilkes Booth in feature and expression. In a civilized community he would have been imprisoned, and Sumner would have recovered heavy damages, but in the District of Columbia there was no redress.

I still recollect the day on which it happened. The blossoms were falling from a large cherry-tree in the front yard. Miss Augusta King, of Salem,

CHARLES SUMNER

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF
CALIFORNIA

who corresponded with Mr. Stearns for several years, and other ladies were in the house. Mr. Stearns entered with such a serious face that every one felt the shock of an alarm. He said: "Sumner has been struck down by a ruffian, and is lying at the point of death." Miss King, who had been an early friend of Sumner, wept bitterly. All the ladies wept! Then after a time some one said: "What a sermon Theodore Parker will preach about this next Sunday!"

In the evening Miss King's brother brought the news that Dr. Marshall S. Perry, the best physician in Boston, and also Mr. Stearns' family doctor, had started for Washington. This was somewhat cheering, but John King talked in a very discouraging manner. "The South will always get the best of us," he said. "They are united and the North is divided. It is self-interest that makes it so. The wealthy and educated classes are mostly pro-slavery."

Mr. Stearns was irritated, and replied with great energy: "I admit," he said, "that the sky looks dark at present; but I shall never give up hope. The assault on Sumner will make a million of abolitionists; and here I vow to do what one man can, and to devote my life and fortune to this cause." * After the guests had retired, Mr. Stearns told his wife that he had sent a letter to Dr. Perry advising him that if he would go to Washington, his expenses should be paid; but he had not

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* This and other extracts from an old MS. of Mrs. Stearns.

received an answer at the time he left his counting-room.

Dr. Marshall S. Perry was supposed to have saved Sumner's life. There were no antislavery doctors in Washington, and the pro-slavery Whig who was called in, plastered the contusions on Sumner's head so tightly as to threaten inflammation of the brain. Dr. Perry never could be sure whether this was the result of malice or ignorance. Mr. Stearns sent the last bottles of his precious Tokay to Dr. Perry for Sumner's benefit. It was said that Dr. Perry declined to accept any remuneration for his priceless services.

The poet Longfellow records in his diary May 24th: "Great excitement in town, and to-night a great meeting in Faneuil Hall. At dinner—let me record it to his honor—Felton, who has had a long quarrel with Sumner, proposed as a toast, —'The reëlection of Charles Sumner.'"

On June 4th a mass-meeting of the first citizens of Boston was held in Faneuil Hall and presided over by the mayor, Alexander H. Rice. The meeting was called to order by Hon. Thomas G. Carey, a Beacon Street Whig, who had always supported Webster and Winthrop. Senator Wilson was the principal speaker, and made an effective and convincing address; as he always did when he had a good cause to support. He had just returned from Washington, where he had delivered the one great oration of his life, in vindication of his colleague; and now he reviewed the condition of affairs in Kansas fresh from the arguments and debates of the United States Senate. He was ably supported

by Rev. Edward E. Hale, who was one of the earliest public men to recognize the national character of the Kansas conflict. Rev. Mr. Nute and Charles H. Branscomb, of Kansas, were on hand to testify in regard to the outrages of the Missouri ruffians.

It was eminently a political meeting, and a conservative one. No abolitionists like Wendell Phillips or Theodore Parker were permitted to speak. Hon. Samuel H. Walley, who offered the resolutions to the meeting, was as conservative as Edward Everett, but his conservatism was of a different quality. The only one of Sumner's friends who appeared prominently on this occasion was Dr. S. G. Howe, and his name was the last one on the committee to raise funds in aid of the Kansas sufferers. We find also on this committee the names of Patrick T. Jackson, Hon. John A. Lowell, and Dr. J. Ingersoll Bowditch.

It was much better for the purpose in hand that this should have been so; for it placed the object of the convention before the public in a more impartial light than if the names of professional reformers had been connected with it. George L. Stearns was on the floor of the hall, but the man who was to prove the strong leader of this movement and carry it to a final issue, attracted no attention, except perhaps for his long beard and determined expression.

The resolutions were cool and deliberate. Party politics were avoided and no reference was made to the assault on Sumner, although that was felt as an undercurrent, throughout the proceedings, which gave great strength to the cause.

The committee on funds were pledged to make use of them for purely legal purposes; but what were legal purposes in Kansas? There was practically no law there at this time, except the moral law—what William H. Seward had lately called the "higher law."

Chevalier Howe was the invigorating spirit of this first committee. At his memorial services in 1876, Colonel T. W. Higginson said: "No one in the Eastern states, excepting George L. Stearns, accomplished so much to secure free institutions for Kansas as Samuel G. Howe."

When Mr. Stearns was called upon, he not only gave liberally, but offered his services to make collections. It was soon found that he was the best man in Boston to obtain subscriptions for any good purpose, and a vacancy soon occurring on the committee, he was chosen to fill the place. By the last of June about ten thousand dollars had been subscribed, and the rich men declared that they could give no more. Mr. Stearns did not consider this enough, and advised a plan which afterwards secured a much larger contribution.

In almost every city and town in New England there was a plumber or tinman who made purchases of Mr. Stearns once or twice a year. This gave him a kind of agency throughout Massachusetts and portions of the other New England states, and it occurred to him that through the information he could obtain from the shop-keepers, as well as other sources, he might establish a bureau for obtaining contributions for Kansas which would bring within its scope the larger portion of the population.

Kansas Aid committees already existed in Concord, Worcester, and many other places, but having accomplished something, they had already begun to feel that they had done enough. When Mr. Stearns proposed his plan to the Boston committee he concluded by saying: "If we cannot obtain money from the rich, we must apply to those who are not rich. If every Republican voter would give us a quarter, we could raise a hundred thousand dollars." At this time the large majority of wealthy men throughout the United States were pro-slavery.

The committee not only agreed to his plan, but concluded that he was the best man to carry it out. He was accordingly elected chairman, a position which he held until the work of the committee came to an end in 1858. In his testimony, before the Harper's Ferry investigating committee of the United States Senate, Mr. Stearns said:

"In the spring of 1856 I went to the Boston committee for the relief of sufferers in Kansas, and offered my services. I worked for them until June of that year; and then being willing to devote all my time to the cause, I was made chairman of the Kansas State Committee, of Massachusetts, which took the place of the first-named committee, and continued the work throughout the state. In five months, including August and December of that year (1856), I raised, through my agents, about $48,000 in money; and in the same time the ladies in different towns and cities commenced the formation of societies for contributions of clothing, which resulted in sending from $20,000 to $30,000

more, in supplies of various kinds. In January, 1857, our work was stopped, by advices from Kansas that no more contributions were needed except for defence. If we had not been thus stopped, our arrangements then made would have enabled us to have collected $100,000 in the next six months."

Meanwhile Mr. Stearns' Tokay was doing Charles Sumner good. On June 10, George Sumner, who was taking care of his brother in Washington, wrote to Dr. Perry a letter in which he said:

> "At this juncture the Tokay arrived, and, spite of fever, was sipped upon. Whether it was that or the opiate given, or the cheering words of Mrs. Stearns' note (which I now return), certain it is that one or all of these causes worked a marvellous change, and this morning his fever has gone, and he, though weak, is bright as ever.
>
> "This P. M. we shall make another attempt at a short drive, and in a few days I hope he may be strong enough to go to Mr. Blair's country house, seven miles out."

Dr. Marshall S. Perry was attending Mrs. Stearns at this time for sciatic neuralgia, and he brought this letter to Mr. Stearns on his next visit.

Not much could be done for Kansas in the hot weather, however, for too many people were away from their homes. The Hoppers came for their annual visit, and then the whole party went to Beverly Farms, where they could be near the King family. John Hopper was a wonderful swimmer, and entertained them greatly with his jests and aquatic gambols; and there was great hurrahing

for Frémont and Dayton, who had been nominated by the newly formed Republican party; but Mr. Stearns did not altogether like it. He regretted the nomination of Frémont as a show-figure man, who was surrounded by Western adventurers; and he was afterward heard to say that there was no telling what people had to suffer in search of pleasure at the seashore. In fact, he was never at rest except when he was under his own roof, and when he was away from home he wanted to travel continuously.

When September came he again threw himself into the work with boundless ardor. How well I remember those autumn evenings, when we watched for his coming, and guessed at the train in which he would arrive! He was away again at seven in the morning, and often gone for three or four days.

The committee occupied rooms in the Niles Block, School Street, Boston, and in their letter-book of nearly two hundred pages, three-fourths of the letters are in his own hand; nor was this the whole. On the accounts of the committee now preserved in the State Historical Society of Kansas, more than a hundred and sixty towns and cities are represented. He obtained the names of influential citizens in many places of which the committee had never heard, and succeeded in organizing Kansas Aid societies in them. The contributions in clothing nearly equalled in value the cash that was received. His letters are models of clear, concise, direct English,—much better in style than some of our histories.

The following tells its own story:

"STATE KANSAS ROOMS, BOSTON,
"September 10, 1856.

"DEAR SIR:

"Yours of the 1st. inst. is at hand, and in reply I can assure you that Mr. Conway will be with you on Wednesday evening next, without fail; and I trust that you may be able to raise a generous sum, as everything depends on the settlers now in Kansas being sustained.

"Truly yours,
"GEORGE L. STEARNS,
"*Chairman.*

"REV. G. F. CLARKE,
"NORTON."

And this letter also:

"STATE KANSAS ROOMS, BOSTON,
"September 15, 1856.

"DEAR SIR:

"We are about to take up a subscription for Kansas in our state, under circumstances that will insure a large amount, and we want you to give us the next week from Tuesday 23d to Friday 26th. On one of those days we intend to have a mass-meeting of New England at Boston. Do not refuse us if you can possibly come. If you can give us but one day, say which one, but give us as many as you can. Please answer by telegraph as well as by letter.

"Truly yours,
"GEORGE L. STEARNS,
"*Chairman.*"

Governor Reeder, as a conscientious apostate from the Democratic party, was a trump-card for Mr. Stearns' purposes, and Martin F. Conway was a young and effective speaker, and deserves a more lengthy consideration than we have space to give him. He was one of the most brilliant of the band

of reformers with whom Mr. Stearns was associated, but much too fragile physically for the part in life which destiny had assigned him. He was born in Baltimore, and, like John Brown, conceived a horror of slavery in his boyhood from seeing the brutal manner in which unoffending negroes were treated. His refined and sensitive nature rebelled against injustice of any kind. At the age of twenty-one he studied law, philosophy, and government. He read Plato, Aristotle, Locke, and Alexander Hamilton. He succeeded well as a young practitioner, but in 1855 he decided to emigrate to Kansas and try his fortunes with the Free-soil party there. In the autumn of that year, when the Missourians elected a bogus judiciary, the Free-state men chose Conway for their chief justice. Judge Conway became an intimate friend of Mr. Stearns and a frequent guest at his house. With his southern extraction and fresh Kansas experience he was just the best man Mr. Stearns could have obtained to canvass the small cities and towns. We find from the accounts of the committee that Judge Conway was paid various sums amounting to over a thousand dollars from the Kansas Aid fund for his services and travelling expenses.

About the first of October, Mr. Stearns thought he could accomplish something in New York City, and went to Theodore Parker for a letter of introduction to Henry Ward Beecher. This he obtained readily enough, but was rather surprised afterwards, on reading the contents, which ran simply thus,—" Allow me to introduce to you my friend

George L. Stearns, a merchant of Boston and one of the noblest men in it."*

When he came to Rev. Henry Ward Beecher's house in Brooklyn, Mr. Stearns found a dozen or fifteen people seated in the waiting-room. Presently Mr. Beecher came in and went to them in succession, disposing of them pretty quickly. To a man from Stamford, Connecticut, who wanted to engage him to lecture, Mr. Beecher replied: "I lecture for fame, fifty, and my expenses." When he came to Mr. Stearns, he read Parker's letter and extended his hand cordially, saying: "I have heard of your work, sir, and shall be very glad indeed to assist you. Would it be convenient for you to call on me this evening?" With the assistance of Mr. Beecher and Mrs. James Gibbons, the philanthropic sister of John Hopper, Mr. Stearns' expedition proved satisfactory and profitable.

The last of October Sumner returned to Boston, and was accorded a triumphal procession, with the finest cavalcade of young Republicans that Beacon Street ever witnessed. The blinds of Beacon Street windows were mostly closed, but this only added distinction to the occasion; for it replaced the captives in the triumphal processions of Rome.

Mr. Stearns did not ride in the procession on account of the ladies, but he arranged with his wife

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* When Mr. Stearns' son went to Europe in 1869, George S. Hillard gave him a number of letters of introduction, in one of which he spoke of George L. Stearns as "one of the noblest men that ever lived." Two men could not be much further apart than Parker and Hillard.

and Miss King to meet him with the carriage at the Niles Block. While they were waiting at the door, George S. Hillard suddenly appeared coming down the sidewalk. "How do you do, Mr. Hillard," said Mrs. Stearns; "you are going the wrong way." "Where is your horse, Mr. Hillard?" said Miss King. Mr. Hillard bowed, and said as he walked off: "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!"

They obtained a position close by the State-house to view the procession. When Sumner's carriage reached there the band played, "Home, Sweet Home." Mr. Sumner looked pale and weary, but he recognized Mr. Stearns and doffed his hat to the ladies.

The evening after Frémont's defeat, there was a sort of funereal tea-party at Mr. Stearns' house, at which David L. Child, Mrs. L. Maria Child, the Kings, Miss Susan Hale, and other friends were present. Miss Augusta said: "If we only had an educational suffrage, Frémont would have been elected." "Yes," said David Lee Child; "so would Henry Clay in 1844; and the Mexican War would have been prevented." Mr. Stearns, however, did not like to give up universal suffrage. He believed that every man had a natural right to vote. He felt very hopeful in regard to the future of the Republican party. Mrs. Child remarked that her husband wanted to go to Kansas to fight, and that it was all she could do to keep him at home.

About the middle of December the Kansas Aid Committee received an accession of vital force in

the person of Frank B. Sanborn, one of the boldest and most disinterested of the anti-slavery leaders. A son of the old Granite State, he had been strongly impressed while at Harvard College with the philosophy of Emerson, to which he was now intent on giving a practical application. He was teaching a private school in Concord, which had been established by Judge Hoar for the more aristocratic portion of that community, and had served on a local Kansas Aid committee. He now offered his services to the Massachusetts committee gratuitously for the winter, leaving his school in charge of a friend. He was chosen secretary, and from this time his handwriting largely replaces that of Mr. Stearns in the letter-book. He and Mr. Stearns became warm friends; and a more faithful, helpful friend than Mr. Sanborn could not be found anywhere.

After Mr. Stearns became chairman of the committee, about thirty-eight thousand dollars were collected by it; and the contributions in clothing and other materials were estimated worth from twenty to thirty thousand. Of this amount New Hampshire contributed $933.94, and Maine $785.37, while friends in Great Britain forwarded five hundred dollars. In the accounts we find the significant entry of four thousand dollars expended for Sharpe's rifles. In his testimony before the Harper's Ferry investigating committee, Mr. Stearns said:

"Soon after our State committee had commenced work —I think in August, 1856—a messenger from Kansas, who came through Iowa (for the Missouri River was then closed

by the Missourians to all Free-state travellers), came to us asking earnestly for arms and ammunition for defence of the Free-state party. Our committee met the next day, and immediately voted to send two hundred Sharpe's rifles, and the necessary quantity of ammunition—which was procured and sent to the National Kansas Committee at Chicago, to be by them forwarded through Iowa to Kansas. From some cause, which I have never heard explained, these arms were delayed in Iowa; and in November or December of that year we directed an agent to proceed to Iowa at our charge, and take possession of them as our property."

A landscape painter once said that he never could tell whether stones were more round or square; and so it is as difficult to determine whether Mr. Stearns' committee was the same as the Faneuil Hall committee, for its membership was continually changing; but there is sufficient evidence that these rifles were purchased purely for defensive operations. The following spring Mr. Stearns wrote to Judge Conway: "Do not fire until the enemy fires."

After Sumner's reëlection in January, 1857, he was sworn in to the Senate and then went to Europe, where Dr. Brown-Séquard effected a memorable cure upon him, while his vacant chair was more eloquent than the finest oratory. As we now take leave of him for some years, it is only just to mention the hostility of William Lloyd Garrison and some of his friends toward Sumner. This first became publicly apparent in Garrison's imprudent letter, during the political campaign of 1872; but, it was an open secret among the anti-slavery people of Boston for many years before

that. In May, 1857, Mrs. L. Maria Child was invited by Mrs. Maria Chapman to stay at her house during the anniversaries; but at their very first lunch Mrs. Chapman so berated Charles Sumner for "degrading the antislavery cause by dragging it into the arena of practical politics," that Mrs. Child took leave as politely as she could, and went out to visit Mr. and Mrs. Stearns in a white heat of indignation. The strong good sense of Mrs. Child's nature rebelled against such narrow-minded pedantry, and she expressed herself on the subject without reserve. She sometimes wrote to Sumner, and he said of one of her letters, that it was worth being knocked on the head to meet with such genuine appreciation.

Mrs. Stearns always attended the antislavery fairs at Christmas time, and her husband generally went with her. There they would see Mrs. L. Maria Child with her ferret-eyes, seated behind a table of attractive knick-knacks, and Mrs. Maria Chapman, similarly ensconced, on the opposite side of the room. Mr. and Mrs. Stearns made handsome purchases, but their refined taste objected to the women in bloomer costumes and other peculiar-looking persons, who attached themselves to this branch of the movement.

VIII

John Brown

George L. Stearns had been influenced in his life thus far by a number of excellent men, who formed as it were an ascending series from Dr. David Osgood to Emerson and Sumner, and it seemed as if stronger characters than these he would not be likely to meet with; and yet he now came in contact with a man who influenced him more powerfully than either Sumner or Emerson—the plain Western sheep-farmer, John Brown, of Ossawatomie. They met like the iron and the magnet. Each recognized the other at first sight, and knew him for what he was worth.

John Brown was a Cromwellian Ironside introduced in the nineteenth century for a special purpose. He looked at the world with the eyes of a Puritan of the Long Parliament, and judged it accordingly. His ideas of morality, private and public, were not relative but absolute. It was his mission to take up the work of the English Puritans where it had ended with the death of Cromwell—the work of social regeneration. He was essentially an idealist; a much abused word, too often applied to visionary and unpractical persons. Yet, in John Brown's mind everything took a practical and concrete form. George L. Stearns was also an idealist, and yet he was considered one of the most practical business men in Boston. He was

not a thinker but an actor. He had his successes and his failures; so did John Brown. The most practical man may fail at last.

John Brown was a successful sheep-farmer, and was considered a trustworthy and judicious person, not only by his neighbors, but generally by the wool-growers of Ohio. Otherwise they would not have selected him for their agent in the Springfield experiment. Any other man might have failed in that enterprise who had not been trained in the methods of the commission business; but in that particular instance there was a better reason for it. If Brown had succeeded at Springfield he would have revolutionized the wool business in New England. All the wool-growers would have sent their produce to him; and the consequence was that the wool merchants all combined against him for their own security. His previous failure in an Ohio land scheme was due to Henry Clay's sliding-scale tariff, which not only injured the wool trade but prevented immigration. His victory at Black Jack, however, was as brilliant an affair as the Concord fight in 1775; and at the subsequent battle of Ossawatomie he inflicted such severe loss on the Missourians that they never invaded that section of Kansas again.

The state of mind in which John Brown returned from the burning of Lawrence may well be imagined; and that night it was decided that the Doyles and Shermans should be lynched in return for the depredations of the border ruffians, and in retaliation for the various murders that had been committed by the pro-slavery party in Kansas.

Von Holst refers to the Pottawatomie affair as a case of somewhat irregular lynch law.* In character the act resembles Napoleon's execution of the Duke d'Enghien, which his enemies have always made the most of, and which has been feebly defended by his admirers. The best that one can say of it is that the Free-state men at Ossawatomie felt that they and their families could not be safe so long as the Doyles and Shermans remained where they were. John Brown himself said of it, that it was "a fearful thing to do, but necessary to be done." Five Free-state men had been killed, and there was no way of bringing their assassins to justice. There is a point—the boiling-point of the blood—beyond which human nature cannot endure.

Although John Brown's complicity with the Pottawatomie affair was generally believed in Kansas, it did not prevent Lane, Robinson, Conway, and other political leaders of the state from keeping up friendly relations with him. Martin F. Conway, in particular, the first representative to Congress from Kansas, always supported John Brown in a general way.

The little victories of Black Jack and Ossawatomie eclipsed this dark episode for the time being, and made Brown quite a hero in the Northern states. The Missourians, in order to cover their disgrace in being defeated by an inferior force, circulated a report that Captain Brown had been killed at Ossawatomie, and when this was contra-

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* Essay on John Brown in the *Prussian Year-Book.*

dicted Governor Robinson wrote him a congratulatory letter, in which he said:

> "Your course, so far as I have been informed, has been such as to merit the highest praise from every patriot, and I cheerfully accord to you my heartfelt thanks for your prompt, efficient, and timely action against the invaders of our rights and the murderers of our citizens. History will give your name a proud place on her pages, and posterity will pay homage to your heroism in the cause of God and humanity." *

The difference between this statement and Robinson's opinion twenty years later simply indicates the difference between public sentiment in a revolutionary period and that in the reactionary period which invariably follows it.

George L. Stearns hailed the fight at Black Jack as the turn of the tide in Kansas affairs. Mrs. Stearns always insisted that her husband wrote either to Robinson or to Edward Clark, the agent of his committee in Kansas, desiring that John Brown should come to Boston and consult with him; and this is probably true, for it would explain Robinson's anxiety that Brown should remain in Kansas, as expressed in the letter of September 14th, above referred to. We find that Brown was in Chicago during the last week of October, but did not reach Boston until early in January.

Mr. Stearns had heard of the Pottawatomie affair, but he never so long as he lived was aware of John Brown's connection with it. In his testimony before the Harper's Ferry committee he

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* Sanborn's John Brown, p. 330.

said: "Early in January, 1857, John Brown, of whom I had heard but had not seen, came to Boston and was introduced to me by one of our Kansas agents; and after repeated conferences with him, being strongly impressed with his sagacity, courage, and strong integrity, I, through a vote of our committee, made him our agent to receive and hold these arms and the ammunition for the defence of Kansas, appropriating $500 to pay his expenses."

Mr. Stearns invited Captain Brown to take dinner with him the second Sunday in January, 1857, so that they might talk over Kansas affairs at their leisure; and at the table he was asked to give an account of the fight at Black Jack, which he did, with a grim kind of humor very becoming to him. Mr. Stearns asked him what sort of a noise a Sharpe's rifle bullet made, and he replied: "It makes a very ugly noise, Mr. Stearns." Then Miss Augusta King said: "We read a good deal in the newspapers about General Pomeroy, who seems to be an important man in Kansas. Is he a very good general?"

John Brown laughed silently and replied: "I wish the ladies of Massachusetts would make a large military cocked hat, about three feet in length, and a foot and a half in height; and put the tail-feathers of three roosters in it, and send it with their compliments to General Pomeroy." Then he added: "As a rule, Miss King, the higher the officer the less of a soldier. Now I am but a plain captain, and yet I am always ready to fight the enemy. Jim Lane is a colonel, but I have no doubt

he would fight if Governor Robinson would let him. Pomeroy is a general, and there is no fight in him at all." Miss King was delighted with John Brown's wit and sagacity.

After dinner Mr. Stearns' eldest son, twelve years old, went to him and said very innocently: "Captain Brown, I wish you would tell me about your boyhood." This made everybody laugh, and the Captain said in his kindliest manner: "My son, I cannot do that now, for I fear it would weary the ladies, but when I have time I will try to write something for you on that subject." Accordingly, about six weeks later a long letter came directed to Henry L. Stearns, whom he addressed as "My dear young friend." It has since been published in all the biographies of John Brown, and was referred to by James Russell Lowell in the *Atlantic Monthly* as the finest bit of autobiography of the nineteenth century.*

One of Mr. Stearns' objects in wishing to see John Brown was to obtain more definite information concerning prominent Kansas men, and he was not mistaken in believing that Brown could give him this. The Captain seemed to have very clear ideas in regard to Lane, Robinson, and others, and described them like a student of human nature. He spoke of James Montgomery in high terms, as a sound character, perfectly honest, fearless, cool-

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* John Brown was quite right in regard to the character of this boy, who was as magnanimous as his father, and for more than twenty years the mainstay of his mother's household.

headed, and equal to any emergency. Jennison and Preacher Stewart were also brave men, but not so trustworthy. Martin F. Conway he considered the best of the political leaders, but not a man of sufficient force for the rough work in Kansas. Mr. Stearns afterward found these estimates to be quite correct. "Kansas is a wild place, Mr. Stearns," said the Captain, "and people do not live there as they do here in your town of Medford."

Mr. Stearns had hoped to obtain an appropriation from the Legislature to assist John Brown in the defence of Kansas; but large bodies of men act more from instinct than reason, and are proverbially short-sighted. If Atchison and his guerillas had been at the gates of Lawrence it is probable that the honorable senators and representatives would have taken efficient measures for its relief, but as there was no immediate apprehension of danger, and as it was hoped that Buchanan's administration would introduce a change of policy, after a great deal of patriotic speech-making they decided not to grant the appropriation.

Mr. Stearns had been more successful in New York, where the National Kansas Committee agreed to transfer to him for John Brown's benefit a considerable number of rifles which were stored at Tabor, Iowa. On March 4th Brown inserted a letter in the New York *Tribune,* explaining his purposes and requesting assistance by means of local fairs, collections in churches, and the like. He did not obtain much in this manner. Amos A.

Lawrence sent him seventy dollars with a complimentary letter—a small sum for Mr. Lawrence to give. Mr. Stearns foresaw that the main support of John Brown's scheme would come upon himself, and he prepared his mind for this.

Brown was now in the service of humanity, but he was a public servant without a salary. His family had to be supported, and the means for this could not properly be drawn from the funds of the Kansas Aid Committee. Gerrit Smith proposed to purchase a piece of land, with a small house, at North Elba, in the Adirondack Mountains, which could serve as a retreat for Brown himself, if too hard pressed by his enemies. George L. Stearns and Amos A. Lawrence raised a subscription for this purpose, as appears by the following letter:

"Boston, April 29, '57.

"Mr. John Brown,

"Dear Sir:—Your letters to Mr. Sanborn, Mr. Foster, and myself are before me.

"Mr. Lawrence has agreed with me, that the $1000 shall be made up, and will write to Gerrit Smith to-day or to-morrow to say that he can depend on the money from him.

"After you see Mr. Smith write me again if the arrangement is not satisfactory to you.

"I will write you about other matters to-morrow.

"Truly your friend,

"George L. Stearns."

We find on the subscription paper that Mr. Stearns contributed one-fourth of this sum, and Mr. Lawrence nearly one-third. Wendell Phillips and Captain Bertram, of Salem, are among the other names on the paper.

FRANK B. SANBORN

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After all arrangements had been completed John Brown expressed his gratitude in the following letter to Mr. Sanborn:

"TABOR, FREMONT CO., IOWA,
27, Aug., 1857.

"MY DEAR FRIEND:

"Your most welcome letter of the 14th inst., from Salt Forkes, is received. I cannot express the gratitude I feel to all the kind friends who contributed towards paying for the place at North Elba after I had bought it, as I am thereby relieved from a very great embarrassment, both with Mr. Smith and the young Thompsons; and also *comforted* with the feeling that my whole-hearted wife and daughters will not be driven either to beg, or become a burden to my poor Boys, who have nothing but their hands to begin life with. I am under special obligations *to you for going to look after them,* and *cheer them* in their homely condition. May God reward you all a thousandfold.

"Very respectfully your friend,
"N. H. (JOHN BROWN)."

In a statement made by Gerrit Smith to his wife, and signed by him January 3, 1874, he says: "I frequently gave John Brown money to promote his slave-delivering and other benevolent purposes,—in the aggregate, however, only about a thousand dollars. This would have been none too much to compensate him for the self-sacrificing interest in my colony. His dependence for means to execute his Southern undertaking was, as he informed me, mainly on the good and generous Mr. Stearns of Boston."*

This letter effectually disposes of Professor Von Holst's statements in regard to Gerrit Smith.

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* Forwarded by Mrs. Smith to F. B. Sanborn.

With John Brown on one side and Dr. S. G. Howe (already a noted revolutionist) on the other, into this vortex of rebellion against constituted authority; but this much is certain, that he never regretted the fact, and always considered it—as he said in the face of the secessionists at Niagara Falls in 1863—the proudest act of his life, that he gave John Brown the rifles he carried to Harper's Ferry.

While John Brown was in Boston he made a call on William Lloyd Garrison, for whom he had a sincere respect, but he did not meet with an over-friendly reception. Garrison greatly regretted the course that the antislavery movement had taken, and considered the Free-soilers chiefly responsible for it. He thought Sumner's oration on the "Crime against Kansas" was very injudicious; and that it would be better to give Kansas to the slaveholders, than to offer armed resistance to them. John Brown said afterward, that it was difficult to see the difference between Garrison's position, and that of a pro-slavery Democrat.

Wendell Phillips and Emerson, on the contrary, treated him with great respect, and it was the impression which they formed at this time of the soundness of his character and the nobility of his nature, which led them to give him such unqualified support while he was lying wounded in a Virginia jail. Mr. Stearns once confessed that Emerson and John Brown were the only two men whom he really felt to be his superiors.

It was in April that John Brown wrote his sorrowful and affecting farewell to "Bunker Hill

Monument, Plymouth Rock, and Uncle Tom's Cabin." On May 10th Mr. Stearns made a final appeal to the National Kansas Committee in New York City, in which he stated the necessities of the case and John Brown's purposes in the following terms:

"Since the close of the last year we have confined our operations to aiding those persons in Kansas who were, or intended to become citizens of the territory,—believing that sufficient inducements to immigrate existed in the prosperous state of affairs there; and we now believe that should quiet and prosperity continue there for another year, the large influx of Northern and Eastern men will secure the state for freedom. To insure the present prosperity we propose:—

"I. To have our legislature make a grant of one hundred thousand dollars, to be placed in the hands of discreet persons, who shall use it for the relief of those in Kansas who are, or may become, destitute through Border-ruffian outrage. We think it will be done.

"II. To organize a secret force, well armed, and under control of the famous John Brown, to repel Border-ruffian outrage and defend the Free-state men from all alleged impositions. This organization is strictly to be a defensive one.

"III. To aid by timely donations of money those parties of settlers in the territory who from misfortune are unable to provide for their present wants.

"I am personally acquainted with Captain Brown, and have great confidence in his courage, prudence, and good judgment. He has control of the whole affair, including contributions of arms, clothing, etc. His presence in the territory will, we think, give the Free-state men confidence in their cause, and also check the disposition of the Border-ruffians to impose on them. This I believe to be the most important work to be done in Kansas at the present time. Many of the Free-state leaders, being engaged in specula-

tions, are willing to accept peace on any terms. Brown and his friends will hold to the original principle of making Kansas free, without regard to private interests. If you agree with me, I should like to have your money appropriated for the use of Captain John Brown. If not that, the other proposition, to aid parties of settlers now in the territory, will be the next best.

"George L. Stearns."

The following day Mr. Stearns wrote a similar letter to Mrs. James Gibbons, who still continued to assist the cause, and who in return for it had her house pillaged by the New York mob of July, 1863. The last of April he had written thus to John Brown at Springfield, Massachusetts:

"Dear Sir:

"By the enclosed note of the 11th inst., we place in your hands one hundred Sharpe's rifles to be sold in conformity therewith, and wish you to make the proceeds for the benefit of the Free-state men in Kansas, taking an account of your doings as far as practicable.

"Also a note placing a further sum of five hundred dollars at your disposal, for which you can in need pass your draft on our Treasurer, P. T. Jackson, Esq."

There can be no doubt that at this time Mr. Stearns was perfectly sincere in his professions of a defensive attitude in regard to Kansas affairs. Six months later he wrote both to Brown and Conway not to fire "until the enemy fires." If he shared to any degree in such plans of Brown's as might be suggested by the Collinsville pikes, it was with regard to a prospective and indefinite future, not an immediate one.

In the summer of 1857 Mr. Stearns, in order to relieve his mind from Kansas affairs, planned a

family expedition to the White Mountains, which were much wilder and more interesting then than they are now, with railroads running through them in every direction. Starting early in the morning, at Salem they met Mrs. Stearns' sister and her husband, Rev. Dexter Clapp; and at Portland they were joined by her other sister, Mrs. Parsons, and her husband. Mr. T. G. Appleton, with the Longfellow children in charge, was on the train to Portland. But the poet was not with them. Arrived at Gorham, New Hampshire, Mr. Stearns found his former school-teaching friend, Thomas Starr King, now a distinguished clergyman, ready to give him a cordial welcome; and the party were entertained in the evening by a sort of panoramic discourse on the mountains by Rev. Mr. King. Two days later, they all ascended Mount Washington on horseback, except Mrs. Clapp, who was much of an invalid. On their return the same lady asked them if they had seen any bears on the way, to which Mr. Parsons, who had a shrewd Yankee wit, replied: "It is all bare up there." There was not even a superficial ruffle of unpleasantness during the whole excursion.

Nor should we overlook a delightful visit to the Emersons in Concord, on a June evening, and the moonlight ride afterward.

In September Mr. Stearns returned to his Kansas labors with impatient ardor. He wrote thus to Judge Conway:

"Your esteemed favor was received in course. At this distance it is impossible to form a decided

opinion with respect to the propriety of voting or not voting. I am inclined to think you had better vote rather than divide the party, but am open to conviction or correction.

"Our world is now engrossed with the impending financial crash. If it would snap the South as well as the North I would welcome it, so much do I hate the present state of affairs."

The last sentence in the letter to Judge Conway is full of significance; for it suggests the transition from defensive to offensive warfare. Why did Mr. Stearns hate the then existing condition of affairs?

Kansas was like an entrenched camp waiting for the enemy to make an attack; but the enemy did not choose to come. The Missourians, under the protection of the United States Government, could raise their crops, whip their negroes and shoot ducks in peace and security, while the Free-state men across the border were obliged to be on the watch day and night. In the southern counties of Kansas, a band of jayhawkers under the gallant Montgomery had not only defeated the Border-ruffians, but repulsed a detachment of United States cavalry, which was sent to disperse him and his men. Such a condition of affairs is a severe strain on mind and nerves, and if prolonged sufficiently is sure to result in open war. It is like the condition of Prussia in 1869, when it was exposed to the machinations of Louis Napoleon and a possible European coalition. This was only the first year of the administration of James Buchanan, and

three more years must pass before there could be any hope of a change of policy at Washington.

Talking against war is like trying to choke a volcano. In peaceable times nobody wants to go to war; but when the national mind is made up for fighting no amount of eloquence will change it from its purpose. It is true that wars sometimes result from the rapacity of despots, or the intrigues of cabinets, but such wars are becoming more and more rare, while most of the great political collisions of history have had a national and popular character. Wars originate from injustice; or from the arrogance, greed, and foolish prejudices, which result in injustice; and war is often the only means by which a people can obtain justice. Every public speaker who glorifies his own country at the expense of other countries, every legislator who supports measures in the interests of a class or particular section and prejudicial to other classes and sections, every chief magistrate who discriminates unjustly toward foreign countries—sows the seed of future bloodshed, although it may be a hundred years in ripening its deadly fruit. The only preventive against war is to be found in more just and intelligent government, and in the diffusion of a higher quality of political ideas and more impartial statements concerning public affairs.

John A. Lowell, judge of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, and a man so well balanced that it was difficult to say whether he were liberal or conservative, stated his opinion, many years ago, that the attempt of Presidents Pierce and Buchanan to force slavery upon Kansas against the will of its

population was the direct cause of the Civil War, which followed so quickly afterward.

On August 10th John Brown wrote a letter to Mr. Stearns from Tabor, Iowa, in which he said:

"I am now waiting further advice from Free-state friends in Kansas, with whom I have speedy *private* communication lately started. I am at this moment unable to move *very much* from an injury of my back, but getting better fast. I am in *immediate* want of from five hundred to one thousand dollars for *secret service* and no *questions asked.*

"*Will you* exert yourself to have that amount, or some part of it, placed in your hands subject to my order?"

The answer to this appeal was no doubt satisfactory, but appears to have been destroyed—as a letter on such a subject should be.* Yet, on November 7th Mr. Stearns wrote to Captain Brown again cautioning him against too bold and aggressive a policy. He says in his letter:

"Your most welcome letter of the 16th ulto. came to hand on Saturday. I am very glad to learn that after your hard pilgrimage you are in more comfortable quarters with the means to meet present expenses.

"Let me hear from you as often as you can, giving your impressions of passing events in Kansas.

"I have written Whitman, to whom I shall enclose this, that in my opinion the Free-state party should wait for the Border-ruffian moves, and checkmate them, as they are developed. Don't attack *them,* but if they attack you, 'Give them Jessie' and Fremont besides. You know how to do it. But I think both in Kansas and in Congress, if we let the Democratic party *try to* play their game, we shall find they will do themselves more harm than we can do them."

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* It probably referred to the pikes at Collinsville.

Other burdens were now crowding upon Mr. Stearns. The loss of the *Central America* and the failure of the Ohio Loan and Trust Company was the commencement of a financial crash, in which one great corporation went down after another, like the successive detonations in a thunder-storm. Mr. Stearns attributed the catastrophe to the too great extension of credit, and was prepared for it beforehand. Nevertheless he was obliged to leave public affairs to others, and to pay more strict attention to his own business. In mercantile life it is only a heartless man who can escape from the ill-fortune of his neighbors, and in prosperous times the generous merchant receives due compensation for the help he has given, though he must always beware not to become too deeply involved in the affairs of others. His position is like that of a sea-captain in a storm, who has to decide whether he shall sacrifice a portion of his cargo, for fear of losing his ship.

One evening in December Mr. Stearns returned unusually late, and explained his absence by saying that he had been looking over Peter Butler's accounts and trying to make out what could be done for him. Mr. Butler had been speculating in Michigan Central, and was in a pretty tight fix. Mr. Stearns did not feel sure that he would escape bankruptcy. If others would only help, all would be well. He spent nearly a week over Peter Butler's affairs, and at the end of three days he said: "At last I have found a man who will help me about Butler." He said this in a manner he assumed when anything pleased him very much.

Who this good Samaritan was, has been long since forgotten; but with his help and Mr. Stearns', a favorable compromise was effected with Peter Butler's creditors. Mr. Stearns must have loaned him also a large sum of money, for more than five thousand dollars still remained unpaid in 1867.

The following year Charles Francis Adams was nominated for Congress, and at Mr. Stearns' instigation Peter Butler, who also lived in Quincy, assisted to elect him; but after Mr. Adams made his celebrated speech in which he admitted the possibility of peaceable secession, Mr. Stearns regretted his share in this.

IX

Peace and Prosperity

The year 1858 was exceptional in Mr. Stearns' life for the absence of all outward disturbing causes. He was now in his fiftieth year, and a perfectly well man, though not a very strong one. He had achieved a decided success in Kansas, and though far from the applause of the multitude, his work had received due recognition. He counted among his friends some of the most distinguished men of his time. His calm, determined expression, with his long beard, made him a notable figure on State Street, where he was universally respected for his promptness, accuracy, and straightforward dealing. It was the same in New York, where August Belmont, the agent of Rothschild, once said to him: "You have only to show me your note, Mr. Stearns, and I hand it to the cashier." He had left his counting-room on Water Street, and now occupied a larger store at 129 Milk Street, where his plain black and white sign attracted more attention than the gilded names about it. His Water Street office was close to the birthplaces of Franklin and Emerson.

Fanny Elssler had long since gone the way of all horse-flesh, but she was replaced by a pair of Black Hawk mares, which, if not so swift, were quite remarkable for beauty of form. There were few things Mr. Stearns despised so much as fast

driving, and if any one tried to pass him on the road, he would tell the coachman to rein in his horses and let the fool go by. Thomas Goddard, the famous carriage-maker, who weighed every spoke that he put into a wheel, made two equipages exactly alike, one for George L. Stearns, and the other for Charles Francis Adams.

At this time Mr. Stearns had not a white hair in his head. His beard was of a ruddy brown, and his hair of a lighter tint. His face, like that of most mercantile men, rarely changed its expression, and after the Kansas trouble began it became more and more serious. Yet his large hazel eyes were full of kindliness, and at times he seemed as ingenuous as a child. He always wore a soft hat, and would have made an excellent study for Rembrandt. George L. Stearns was not a reflective man in the customary sense. He liked to hear Emerson lecture, but he never entertained himself with general reflections on life and nature. Neither was he an observing man, except so far as observation was essential to the business he had in hand. He illustrated the precept that the one safety in life lies in concentration. But concentration also had its reaction, and in Mr. Stearns' case its tendency was to make him taciturn, and what is falsely called self-absorbed; so that when his public services were over he could hardly be said to have been well acquainted with his own children.

Yet he could solve a problem in human nature when it was placed directly before him. A boy who sometimes came to the house, and was reputed to be much of a Latin scholar, once asked him if it

were not a better sign in a watch to go slow rather than for it to go fast. Mr. Stearns looked at the boy curiously and said: "No; for all depends on the regulator." Afterwards he remarked that this boy might learn his lessons easily, but that there was something the matter with his understanding. "I do not think he will make a practical man;" and this prediction came to be true.

He disliked arguments, and would never enter into one if he could avoid it. He considered them a waste of time and strength. He liked men who spoke their mind out freely, and permitted him to speak his. Of a certain neighbor who was much too disputative, he said: "Friend L. has much to learn, and I am much afraid that he will never learn it."

For all subjects to which he gave his attention he applied the touchstone of reality. He heard Everett's oration on Washington—a perfect work of art in its way—but it did not satisfy him. He considered the men too far apart. Washington was a worker, and Everett only a scholar. Neither was he pleased with Wendell Phillips' more brilliant lecture on Toussaint. He appreciated Phillips' motive in exaggerating the character of a negro patriot, yet he did not like the thing itself. He greatly enjoyed Lowell's "Biglow Papers;" but thought his prose writings on politics had little value. They betrayed a lack of practical experience. He esteemed old Bronson Alcott for his freshness, originality, and cheerful endurance of adverse circumstances. He considered him a shrewder man than was generally supposed, and

respected him especially for having chosen such an excellent wife.

Although a sensitive man himself, Mr. Stearns had little patience with sensitiveness in others. It is doubtful if he reflected on his own character or peculiarities at any time. He only considered his own actions so far as they might be judged from a moral point of view. What others might think of them rarely occurred to him. Mrs. Stearns, although she read Emerson and Wordsworth, was socially ambitious, and would sometimes complain of her husband for not adopting a more stylish appearance, and for not trying to advance his own interests and those of his family. This he endured in the meekest possible manner; and on one such occasion said: "I think, considering all things, I have done very well; and if I have any influence in the world I believe it is because people know that I have no interests of my own to further."

In many respects he resembled Thackeray's Colonel Newcomb. He never could be induced to sit for his portrait; not from any narrow-minded notions on the subject, but because he could not see any sufficient reason for it. For that matter, there was no artist in Boston in his time who could have done him justice.*

He might have been seen almost any Wednesday afternoon in winter at the symphony rehearsals in the Music Hall, either with his wife or Rev. Samuel Johnson. He was so quiet and undemonstrative

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* William M. Hunt could paint a stable-boy, but he never succeeded with the portrait of an intellectual man.

that a stranger might not feel sure whether he was resting himself or listening to the music; but if he had not enjoyed it he would not have been there. He used to be greatly amused with the school-girls who came to the Music Hall to meet their beaux, and with the older women of fashion who came for the purpose of placing themselves on exhibition.

There was nothing he enjoyed so much, however, as Fanny Kemble's dramatic readings of Shakespeare. He once went to hear her twelve nights in two weeks, driving out to Medford after ten o'clock P. M. There never has been another reader like Mrs. Kemble—one who could lose herself in the character she was representing, and at the same time retain a perfect mastery over voice and action; and the range of her impersonations seemed equal to that of Shakespeare himself. Wendell Phillips and every noted speaker in Boston could be found in her audiences.

Mrs. Stearns arranged a handsome bouquet for Mrs. Kemble's table every evening; and when the course was over, at the suggestion of her man of business, Mrs. Kemble presented the table to Mrs. Stearns, and expressed a desire to make her acquaintance, which, however, was prevented by some accident.

Emerson did not like Mrs. Frances Kemble, and he checked Mrs. Stearns' enthusiasm by saying: "Great exaggerated creature; I felt a kind of satisfaction to know that the ocean rolled between us. One simple, unpretending New England girl is worth a dozen of her."

What Emerson probably had in mind was Mrs. Kemble's imperious manners,—breaking car windows for fresh air and the like; but she probably acquired this peculiarity of manner while she was the wife of Senator Pierce Butler of South Carolina. Yet she once candidly admitted that there was a riotous element in her, which could only be controlled by severe repressive regulations. It may have been something in her blood which she could not help.*

Mr. Stearns thought that Emerson was rather severe, and that generally he was too hard on poor human nature. "It is not every one," he said, "who has such cool blood in his veins as Ralph Waldo Emerson." He also considered that Emerson cared too much for formal truth, as opposed to the spirit of sincerity. His leaving the pulpit because it was against his conscience to perform the communion service was a case in point. Mr. Stearns differed from his radical friends on this subject. He said: "I look upon the ceremony as a communion of the members of the church with the Spirit of Christ. Nobody nowadays believes that a miracle is being performed, and that they are really eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus. People may have thought so in more superstitious ages, but the character of the cere-

* Mrs. Kemble's testimony in regard to slavery was invaluable, published in 1862, when the English people were beginning to think that it was not such a bad institution after all.

mony has changed with the times." He thought it helped to unite the society.*

At a children's party given by Mrs. George S. Hillard there was a bright, lively boy named Metcalf, who attracted general attention from the good-humored expression on his face. Mr. Stearns was disgusted, however, to learn from Mr. Hillard that Metcalf's father, who was a Catholic, had destined him to become a priest. "What an instance of parental despotism," he said. "How unnatural and inconsiderate of his son's happiness —such a merry, cheerful boy!"

Mr. Stearns believed it was right for a father to coerce his son in regard to a profession in cases where the latter was too slow in making his own decision, or where he had an inclination for some out-of-the-way occupation, like acting or painting, for which he had not sufficient talent; but he considered it very wrong to determine a boy's destiny before the time had arrived when it became necessary to decide it, and without consulting his wishes in any way. Theodore Metcalf was an excellent apothecary and much respected by the medical profession, but he was a confirmed hypochondriac, which probably accounts for his conversion to the Church of Rome.

Once when Mrs. Stearns referred to the two

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* Zwinglius, the Swiss reformer, wished to have the transubstantiation accepted allegorically, but the more superstitious Luther objected to this. It would seem to have been originally a Greco-Roman rite adopted into the Church to conciliate the pagans.

daughters of a friend in Springfield, who went to Rome alone and became converted there as a natural consequence, her husband said: "My dear, women always like to be in the fashion. That is the explanation of it." He called joining the Catholic Church, "setting one's self back four centuries."

Mr. Stearns' charities were not confined to subscription lists. One day he discovered a barefooted urchin, perhaps ten years old, seated at the foot of one of his trees and weeping bitterly. With some difficulty he elicited from the boy that he lived in Charlestown, that his name was Stark MacGregor, that his mother was dead, and that his father had married another woman who whipped him severely. Mr. Stearns took the boy to his house, had him washed and clothed, and made inquiries, through the foreman of his mill, in regard to the MacGregor family. Stark's statement proved to be well founded, and Mr. Stearns obtained permission from the father to send the boy to a cheap country school; but he proved to be so vicious and intractable that nothing could be done with him, and he found his way at length into a reformatory institution.

Such failures in philanthropy never discouraged Mr. Stearns in his good will toward man; but in his later years he came to the conclusion, after much ingratitude, that it was possible to treat both men and women better than they deserved. He always believed that severity was necessary in the education of children, as well as kindness; and he told Mr. Sanborn that he thought it of no use to whip a stubborn boy, but to a lazy one it might do good.

He thought that boys should be sent away from home for a year or two to prevent them from becoming soft and effeminate; but he regretted having sent his own boys away at a very tender age to a school where they encountered aristocratic blackguard boys, who were quite as vicious in their way as Stark MacGregor.

Mr. Stearns was sometimes very witty, and when he was informed of Stark's final destination he only remarked: "The MacGregor is now on his native heath."

When a member of the Kansas Aid committee said that he wished that some one could be found who would devote his whole time to Kansas, Mr. Stearns replied: "I wish I could find some one who would go without a dinner for Kansas."

He was not a professed philanthropist, and would have repudiated the title, which, indeed, has come to be rather a dubious compliment. Machine charities were not sufficiently human for his liking. He thought it better that a person of comfortable means should take a direct interest in the welfare of the poor. He gave because he could not endure to see others suffering; and it was the same in regard to dumb animals. He could not understand the pleasure his friend Frank W. Bird found in shooting deer in the Adirondacks. He thought he might kill one deer, but if he did he never should shoot another. He never gave presents to the rich, and rarely to his own relatives, excepting his wife. If his boys wanted money he made them earn it by hoeing corn or in some such manner. He disliked Christmas and other occasions on which presents are customarily expected.

The Bird Club

Mr. Stearns never joined but two clubs, the Bird Club of Boston, and the Union League Club of Philadelphia, both political clubs, and the most important of the Civil War period. He had no objection to social clubs—for business purposes and for bachelors, old and young—but they were too often the desolation of married life, and he had no use for them personally. He was first invited to the Bird Club in the spring of 1858, although at that time it could hardly be called a club at all. Mr. Bird himself could not remember exactly when the club originated. Like all permanent and effective organizations it had a natural and spontaneous origin. Long before the election of President Pierce, Frank W. Bird, John A. Andrew, and a few other Free-soilers were accustomed to dine together on Saturdays, to discuss political affairs. There was no formal organization, and how the name of Bird Club came to be attached to their meetings, they never could tell. It would seem to have originated with their political opponents.

In 1854 Frank W. Bird, Dr. S. G. Howe, and others supported a campaign paper called the *Commonwealth,* of which Elizur Wright was editor; and this brought him into the ring. Sumner attended their meetings whenever he was in Boston, and as the Republican party developed the club increased in numbers. In 1855 Parker built his marble hotel on School Street—quite a novelty in its time—and the club engaged a private dining-room there, which they retained until 1863. At

the time of Lincoln's election the club numbered among its members the governor of the state, both senators, four or five representatives to Congress, and two or three ex-governors. There were other members of the club, important in their way, who either held offices or wanted offices.

The Bird Club had no formal organization, nor a very definite membership. Any member could bring in a friend, and if he was found to be congenial, he would be invited to come again. The club never acted together consciously as a political body, and yet when the leading members were of one mind it was a very powerful political machine. While Andrew was governor, the club was almost omnipotent in Massachusetts; and yet it never undertook to do politics for Massachusetts. It never became a clique or faction, nor the advocate of sectional interests. It had a truly national character and was as influential at Washington as at the state-house, and this was owing to the disinterested patriotism of Sumner, Andrew, and Wilson. The club was in all respects equal to the heroic age in which it existed.

The Bird Club was not only a political power in its own time, but it gave its stamp to Massachusetts politics. Governors like Russell and Wolcott have modelled themselves on Andrew; and it is not difficult to perceive the influence of Sumner's example on Senator Hoar and Senator Lodge.

In 1872 the club was divided by the collision between Grant and Sumner, and the larger number of its members, who remained in the Republican party, adopted the name of the Massachusetts

Club, under which title it still exists, and in their clubroom at Young's Hotel hangs a large crayon portrait of George L. Stearns, which was ordered soon after his death.

X

A Conspiracy

At a John Brown commemoration meeting in Boston in 1880, Hon. Thomas Russell made the statement that George L. Stearns came to his house, where John Brown was staying in April, 1857, and gave Brown a check for seven thousand dollars, and that Mrs. Stearns offered to throw in the carriage and horses, and make it eight thousand. Mrs. Stearns seemed to remember the fact, and endorsed it in a letter to Mr. Sanborn.* Further evidence in regard to this transaction, however, is unfortunately wanting. No such sum of money appears to have been drawn by Mr. Stearns from his business at any one time in 1857; and we find Brown writing to James H. Lane, September 16, 1857, and later to F. B. Sanborn, from Tabor, Iowa, as if he was seriously in need of money at that time. It is possible that John Brown returned Mr. Stearns' check a day or two later, with the understanding that Mr. Stearns should supply him from time to time with such sums as he actually needed. There was good reason why he should do so, for he could not have deposited so large an amount in his own name without its attracting public attention, and it would have been equally imprudent to have deposited it under the *alias* of

* Sanborn's "John Brown," p. 509.

Jonas Jones, which he assumed when travelling. He may also have felt conscientious scruples against accepting so large a sum of money from Mr. Stearns.

John Brown's position at Tabor during the summer of 1857 throws some light for us on his order for the pikes at Collinsville. On September 16 General Lane wrote him an urgent letter to come to Kansas and assist in the preparations they were making against an expected invasion of the Missourians; but Brown answered in a dilatory manner and did not come until nearly a month later. It is evident that he also expected an invasion of the Missourians, but intended to act upon it in a way of his own. Tabor is on the northwest border of Missouri, and would have been a fine strategic position for him. In case of an invasion he could have made a descent into Missouri, and have easily stirred up a slave insurrection while the masters were absent. Brown might have been overpowered by the returning forces of the enemy, but the effect in any case would have been tremendous. However, the Missourians never invaded Kansas again until Quantrell's raid in 1863. They were too much afraid of the effect of Sharpe's rifles.

This explanation of John Brown's inactivity during the autumn of 1857, is strongly supported by the testimony of William H. Seward before the Harper's Ferry Investigating Committee, as to what Hugh Forbes confided to him in regard to Brown's plans.*

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* Given at the close of this chapter.

The last of January John Brown started eastward again, and Mr. Stearns, who was in New York City at the time, received a letter from him dated Rochester, February 1, which unfortunately has not been preserved, but the following letter, which he wrote to Theodore Parker, is of great importance.*

"My dear Sir:

"I am again out of Kansas and am at this time concealing my whereabouts; but for very different reasons, however, from those I had for doing so at Boston last spring. I have nearly perfected arrangements for carrying out an important measure in which the world has a deep interest, as well as Kansas, and only lack from five to eight hundred dollars to enable me to do so,—the same object for which I asked for secret-service money last fall."

And again:

"I have written George L. Stearns, Esq., of Medford, and Mr. F. B. Sanborn, of Concord; but I am not informed as to how deeply-dyed abolitionists those friends are, and must beg of you to consider this communication strictly confidential,—unless you know of parties who will feel and act, and hold their peace. I want to bring the thing about during the next sixty days. Please write to N. Hawkins, care William J. Watkins, Esq., Rochester, N. Y."

The important measure referred to can be no other than Captain Brown's intended foray in Virginia, and it is evident that neither Stearns nor Sanborn had as yet any suspicion of that design. Mr. Stearns' reply of February 4 counsels prudent and conservative measures:

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* Sanborn's "John Brown," p. 434.

"My dear Friend:

"Your letter of the 11th inst. was received from Boston to-day. The $500 was furnished you by Whitman at my request. It was done because I thought you needed money for the winter, not because I felt myself under obligation to you, for I had made up my mind then, and still continue to believe that our friends need no aid in defending themselves from all marauders, and that their true course now is to meet the enemy at the ballot-box, and vote them down on every occasion. With the Territorial Legislature in their hands, they can defend themselves against every oppression, and they should do so. If I am correct in my conclusions, the contingency for which I gave you my pledge having ceased to exist, I am no longer bound by it, and it should be returned to me without conditions.* From your last letter to me I supposed you would return it as early as convenient to you.

"If I am in error I shall be glad to be enlightened by you, and hope to receive on my return to Boston an early reply to this.

"I am not, however, indifferent to your request, believing your advice and encouragement to our friends to be of great importance.

"If you can go to Boston you will have a much better chance of success, and I will aid you as far as it is proper that I should do so.

"Colonel Forbes has written several abusive letters to Charles Sumner, and Sanborn, claiming that you had made a positive contract to pay him money, based on promises made to you by the New England men. Is it so?

"Truly yours,

"Geo. L. Stearns."

It is evident from this letter that, although Mr. Stearns' confidence in Brown's character remained unshaken, the communications from Forbes had led him to mistrust his judgment. It is much to

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* This may refer to the draft for $7000.

be regretted that John Brown's second letter from Rochester has not been preserved, for it no doubt contained the explanation in regard to his relation with Forbes, which has never been made public. That Mr. Stearns still continued to reserve his judgment appears from his second reply to Brown on February 12:

"DEAR SIR:

"Your last letter is at hand. I have seen Mr. Sanborn and we have agreed to write to you to come to Boston and meet us here. If it is not convenient for you to meet the expense of the journey we will repay it to you here, or send the money as you may direct.

"Truly your friend,

"GEORGE L. STEARNS."

John Brown did not arrive in Boston until early in March, and then proceeded to communicate his plan, first singly, and afterwards in a general conclave, to George L. Stearns, Dr. S. G. Howe, Theodore Parker, T. W. Higginson, and Frank B. Sanborn. These men may be said to have formed a conspiracy with John Brown against *slavery;* and to them may be added, Gerrit Smith of Peterboro, New York, and Judge Conway of Kansas, who long afterward admitted to Mrs. Stearns that he was cognizant of Brown's designs—a highly honorable confidence.

John Brown's plan at this time was to penetrate with his men into the heart of the Virginia mountains, and form an entrenched camp there, or a series of fortified retreats. He had traversed the ground as a surveyor, in earlier years, and he believed that a portion of the population would be

friendly to him. Then he would descend into the valleys at night, organize insurrections, and induce the negroes to join him. If they were attacked in their strongholds the negroes would have their pikes for self-defence. They could be convoyed northward through the mountains into Pennsylvania. This was near the region where Nat Turner's rebellion originated, and the Virginia negroes were a very intelligent class, many of them being the brothers of their own masters. John Brown believed that if an insurrection was started and held its ground even for a few days, the whole country from the Potomac to Savannah would be ablaze. Even if he failed he would give slavery a shock from which it could never recover.

The weak point in this plan, as may be evident to any one, was that Brown would find it difficult to recross the Potomac in case he should be obliged to retreat. In spite of this, Dr. Howe approved of the plan, and as a Greek revolutionist he was looked upon by his fellow conspirators as an authority. He had seen Turkish armies defeated or baffled, in the mountain passes of Arcadia by a comparatively small number of Greeks, and he believed the same could be done in the Alleghanies; so that, after much discussion and deliberation, it was decided to stand by John Brown or at least give him moral support in his perilous undertaking. In fact, the man was so determined, that the only choice lay between this and breaking with him altogether. John Brown could exert a personal magnetism like that of Webster or Bismarck.

There have been good conspiracies and bad con-

spiracies ever since government began; but in most instances the existence of a conspiracy is an indication of misgovernment. This might even be affirmed of conspirators like Guy Fawkes and Marino Faliero, who have a kind of justification from a party standpoint; but we condemn them because their means were out of proportion to their ends—the remedy was worse than the disease. In such cases the character of the men engaged in a conspiracy is the best justification of its necessity; and where in America could have been found six individuals of more exemplary character, more judicious, or more disinterested than these Eastern supporters of John Brown? They were not visionary theorists, or unpractical reformers, but plain, sensible men, and the bond which united them was an almost Christ-like sympathy for the suffering and oppressed. They certainly had no personal object to gratify in this enterprise, and were far removed from the desire for office which attaches to the ordinary politician.

It is easy enough to say with a fine inflection of the voice that in democratic republics all reforms should proceed according to law and order. So the Missourians attempted to reform Kansas according to "law and order." Unfortunately the historical fact is that democratic republics are more given to revolutions than nations that are governed in other ways. It is also questionable whether the United States of America could be considered a democracy in 1858. It was a democracy in form, but an oligarchy in fact. It had been coming to this for the past thirty years. The slaveholders had

almost complete control over the national government, and managed the affairs of the nation without regard to the true interests of the people. They even stormed that citadel of justice, the Supreme Court, and converted it into a pro-slavery fortification.

In 1860 the American people reasserted their sovereignty, and a revolution came; but it was John Brown who opened the way for it.

Kansas affairs had almost ceased to attract attention in the East; but Mr. Stearns' watchful eyes were upon them still. Advices from his correspondents in the territory notified him that a crisis was at hand. The Missourians had not interfered in the last election, but a legislature had been chosen under the pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution, which claimed to be legally elected, although it received a small minority of votes, and was so recognized by the government at Washington. Daring as Mr. Stearns was, he never trusted to fortune so long as hand and brain would serve him; and accordingly he called a meeting of the Kansas Aid Committee, for the last Saturday of March, and wrote to Mr. Sanborn as follows:

"We have decided to call a meeting of the Massachusetts Kansas Executive Committee on Saturday next at 12 M. to take into consideration the present state of affairs, and what measures we can adopt to aid them if the Lecompton Constitution becomes a law. I hope you will be present."

To which Mr. Sanborn replied:

"Dear Friend:

"It will not be convenient for me to attend the meeting to-morrow, nor do I see what we can do as a committee in

the present state of affairs. If 75,000 people who have sworn to resist the Lecompton fraud cannot do so successfully, we as a *committee* cannot help them. They will yield to the administration or there will be a fight—in either case our present committee could not assist them much. I think the administration will give in—because I believe they *must.* Still, any measures which the majority of the committee should adopt would have my entire coöperation, I have no doubt.

"Yours ever,

"F. B. Sanborn."

This proved in the end to be a true prediction; but what the committee decided on at that juncture we are not informed.

The Boston committee was soon obliged, however, to take measures in regard to a more important affair. Hugh Forbes, having failed to extract hush-money from Mr. Stearns' friends, concluded to revenge himself by giving information of Captain Brown's plans to Wilson, Seward, and other leaders of the Republican party, and, not succeeding in attracting attention to himself in this manner, he finally betrayed Brown's plans to Buchanan's cabinet. Having thus alienated the very persons who might have been willing to assist him in an honest way, Hugh Forbes disappeared in the great abyss of ruined reputations.

The national administration took no measures in regard to Forbes' disclosures, probably thinking that his statements were too incoherent to deserve attention. Neither did Seward, as far as we know, trouble himself about them; but Wilson was worried. Better informed than the others, he knew that John Brown and George L. Stearns intended

serious business, and he was anxious as to the effect of what they might do on the prospects of the Republican party.

On May 11, when Dr. Howe entered his office, he found the following letter on his desk:

"DEAR SIR:

"I write you to say that you had better talk with some few of our friends who contributed money to aid old Brown to organize and arm some force in Kansas for defence, about the policy of getting those arms out of his hands and putting them in the hands of some reliable men in that territory.

"*If they should be used for other purposes, as rumor says they may be, it might be of disadvantage to the men who were induced to contribute to that very foolish movement.* If it can be done, get the arms out of his control and keep clear of him at least for the present. This is in confidence. "HENRY WILSON." *

The difficulty of distinguishing between the acts of the Kansas Aid Committee and of its individual members has already been noticed. Senator Wilson was not aware that Mr. Stearns had purchased the rifles of which John Brown held possession; nor would it do to inform him of this for fear of exciting still graver suspicions. In like manner, to inform all the subscribers to the Kansas fund of this would seem like a piece of supererogation. It was decided, therefore, to go through the form of reclaiming the rifles from John Brown, and then to deliver them to Mr. Stearns as their proper owner. What Mr. Stearns might do with them as a private individual was no concern of Senator

* Sanborn's "John Brown."

Wilson or of any other person. Accordingly, on May 14, Mr. Stearns wrote to John Brown at Chatham, Canada West:

"DEAR SIR:

"Enclosed please find a copy of a letter from Hon. Henry Wilson. You will recollect that you have the custody of the arms alluded to, to be used for the defence of Kansas, as agent of the Massachusetts State Kansas Committee. In consequence of the information thus communicated to me, it becomes my duty to warn you not to use them for any other purpose, and to hold them subject to my order as Chairman of said Committee. A member of our Committee will be at Chatham early in the coming week to confer with you as to the best mode of disposing of them.

"Truly your friend,

"GEORGE L. STEARNS."

John Brown's reply from Chatham was equal to the occasion. He said:

"MY DEAR SIR:

"Your much prized letter of the 14th inst. is received. I have only time to say at this moment that as it is an invariable rule with me to be governed by circumstances, or in other words not to do anything while I do not know what to do, none of our friends need to have any fears in relation to hasty or rash steps being taken by us. As knowledge is said to be power, we propose to become possessed of more knowledge. We have many reasons for begging our eastern friends to keep clear of F. personally, unless he throws himself upon them. We have those who are thoroughly posted up, to put on his track; and we humbly beg to be allowed to do so. We also beg our friends to supply us with two or three hundred dollars without delay, pledging ourselves not to act other than to secure perfect knowledge of facts, in regard to what F. has really done, and will do, until we may ourselves know how we ought to act. None of us here or with you

should be hasty, or decide the course to be taken, while under an excitement. 'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.'"

Like all strong actors in the world's history, John Brown was a strong believer. What could a flippant sceptic, or an English positivist, have accomplished in the defence of Kansas? They would have run at the first fire.

On May 15 Mr. Stearns wrote to Brown again, saying:

"Dear Sir:

"I wrote to you yesterday informing you that a member of the M. S. K. Com. would visit you at Chatham to confer about the delivery of the arms you hold.

"As I can find no one who can spare the time, I have to request that you will meet me in New York City some time next week. A letter to me directed to Care of John Hopper, 110 Broadway, N. Y., will be in season. Come as early as you can. Our Committee will pay your expenses.

"Truly yours, "Geo. L. Stearns."

Meanwhile Dr. Howe had undertaken to quiet Senator Wilson's apprehensions. He wrote to him on the 12th:

"Dear Sir:

"I have just received your letter of the 9th, and I understand perfectly your meaning. No countenance has been given to Brown for any operations outside of Kansas *by the Kansas Committee*. I had occasion, a few days ago, to send him an earnest message from some of his friends here, urging him to go at once to Kansas and take part in the coming election, and throw the might of his influence on the side of the right." *

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* Sanborn's "John Brown," p. 462.

When, however, the Harper's Ferry invasion took place, Wilson considered that he had been grossly deceived, and was very indignant. He even went so far as to say that he did not care if Howe and Stearns were hung for it. He could not have seriously meant this; for a year later he was cordial and friendly to both of them. He never could understand, however, that this whole manœuvre was intended, not to deceive, but to undeceive, him. Wilson had very naturally acquired the notion that the funds of the Kansas Aid Committee would be misappropriated for the revolutionary schemes which Forbes had disclosed. He was not aware that the funds of the committee had become exhausted in the summer of 1857, and that Mr. Stearns had taken the rifles as security or in exchange for money he had advanced to the committee; and this money had been used for a legitimate purpose—namely, the support of Brown on the Kansas frontier. That this transaction does not appear in the records of the committee is easily explained. After the funds had been expended, the treasurer, Patrick T. Jackson, balanced and closed his accounts and resigned his position.

If Senator Wilson had written more frankly to Dr. Howe concerning Forbes' disclosures, he would have placed the conspirators in a pretty difficult position; but since he confined himself to a definite line of argument, Messrs. Howe and Stearns felt justified in meeting him on that ground alone. What they might do as private individuals was another matter.

NOTE.—The only evidence we have of Hugh Forbes' pretended revelations comes from the testimonies of Senator Seward and Secretary of War Floyd, before the Harper's Ferry Investigating Committee, and its character is vague and contradictory. Seward stated:

"He said, further, that in the course of their conversations as to the plan by which they should more effectually counteract this invasion—whether it was then there, or whether it was expected, I did not know—he (Forbes) suggested the getting up of a stampede of slaves secretly on the borders of Kansas, in Missouri, which Brown disapproved, and on his part suggested an attack upon the border states, with a view to induce the slaves to rise and so to keep the invaders at home to take care of themselves. He said that in their conversations Brown gave up and abandoned his own project as impracticable, and that soon after the disturbances in the territory became quiet and ceased, and there was no longer anything for him to do there. He was penniless and Brown refused to pay him anything. He could not stay; he could not get back to New York."

Floyd stated that he had received an anonymous letter dated Cincinnati, August 20, which contained the following passage:

"I have discovered the existence of a secret association, having for its object the liberation of the slaves at the South by a general insurrection. The leader of the movement is 'Old John Brown,' late of Kansas. He has been in Canada during the winter, drilling the negroes there, and they are only waiting his word to start for the South to assist the slaves. They have one of their leading men (a white man) in an armory in Maryland—where it is situated I have not been able to learn. As soon as everything is ready, those of their number who are in the Northern States and Canada are to come in small companies to their rendezvous, which is in the mountains in Virginia. They will pass down through Pennsylvania and Maryland, and enter Virginia at Harper's Ferry. Brown left the North about three or four weeks ago, and will arm the negroes and strike the blow in a few weeks; so that what-

ever is done must be done at once. They have a large quantity of arms at their rendezvous, and are probably distributing them already."

Both Seward's and Floyd's statements have a kind of value; for the former substantiates the explanation we have already given in regard to John Brown's position at Tabor, Iowa, in the autumn of 1856, and the latter agrees closely with the original plan, which, as has been stated, Brown placed before the Boston conference in the following spring.

XI

Building a House

John Brown did not keep the appointment with Mr. Stearns in New York. As Mr. Stearns told the Investigating Committee of the Senate in February, 1860: "I was in New York and he did not come there;" and when the examiners asked: "Did you have any communication with him on the subject of these arms, after the date of these letters on the 14th and 15th of May?" he replied: "Once only, when I asked him where they were, and he told me that they were stored in Ohio; exactly when I cannot recollect." Mr. Stearns had performed his part of the obligation, and John Brown kept the arms without making further inquiries.

It may be wondered how much Charles Sumner knew concerning this enterprise, in which his most intimate friends were engaged. It is probable that he knew nothing directly, and indirectly suspected a good deal. Sumner was not more bold than he was prudent, and the reserve which he maintained after his return from Europe was as statesmanlike as were the vehement utterances of his preceding term. The two greatest heroes of the antislavery struggle never met but once. It would seem to have been during Brown's first visit to Boston, and previous to Sumner's departure for Europe, that James Redpath went with Brown to

RESIDENCE OF MAJOR STEARNS

call on Sumner at his house on Hancock Street; and we only know further that Sumner brought out the blood-stained coat which he was wearing when Brooks assaulted him—a spectacle stimulating enough to the daily current of Captain Brown's ideas. Sumner was, nevertheless, too well versed in history not to recognize the value which irregular political methods often have. Like Garrison, he was a man of peace, but he did not allow his philanthropy to get the better of his judgment.

George L. Stearns was now in his fiftieth year, and he had never yet spent money on himself, and little on his own family. His life had been an incessant labor for the benefit of others, in which, indeed, he had found great enjoyment; but now that Kansas affairs were progressing favorably and his mill-wheels were rolling as steadily as ever, he concluded to build himself a new house, and there could be no more pleasant diversion for a person of his constructive faculty.

The growth of his family would soon make this a necessity, for the old brick mansion in which he lived, though spacious enough on the ground floor, was much too narrow and contracted in the upper story. One evening in June he sent for his carpenter, and the two sat down at the dining-room table together.

They seemed to find the problem a difficult one, for after discussing till nearly ten o'clock the carpenter finally said to Mr. Stearns: "In order to do what you want, you will have to tear away every stick of timber that is in this house; and if

you are going to have this new-fashioned hard finish, you had better consult an architect."

Mr. Stearns never had any work done by contract. He told his wife: "If I should have this house rebuilt by contract I should not feel that the lives of my wife and children were safe while I was away from home. It is the contract system which makes bad flues and leaky roofs. I prefer to be cheated in my pocket rather than on the work that is done for me."

His choice of an architect was fortunate. At the antislavery fairs Mrs. Stearns had become acquainted with Mrs. Follen, the widow of Professor Follen of Harvard College, who, as his wife always insisted, had been dismissed from the University for expressing antislavery sentiments. In fact, there was no other cause to be assigned for it, for he was one of the ablest instructors there. Mrs. Follen's son was an architect and came from a family of architects—the Cabot family, who had introduced a style of domestic architecture which was known by their name. Charles Follen had studied in Paris and Berlin, and Mr. Stearns liked him. He preferred a young man who would be willing to adapt himself to his own ideas rather than a man of established reputation, who would attempt to patronize him. He did not wish for a fashionable architect.

Charles Follen was a man of the most perfect good taste, which he indicated in his dress, manners, and conversation. He made such a success of Mr. Stearns' new house that he afterward obtained a number of orders from wealthy Bos-

tonians in consequence of it. Gentlemen called at Mr. Stearns' office and asked permission to bring their wives to look at it. Mr. Follen accomplished this favorable effect by using the best materials without the least luxury of ornament. There were no ogee curves, no white ceilings, and no marble fireplaces. The work began in September and continued all winter; and meanwhile the Stearns family lived in a neighboring cottage in quite an humble and economical manner. George L. Stearns did not return to his own roof until the following May.

He had paid small attention to the fine arts, but he now displayed remarkably good taste in such matters. A bronze clock was wanted for the library, and the one he selected—a figure of Minerva with the dial upon her shield, made perhaps by some youthful French genius—could not be surpassed for grace and elegance.

The house was never sufficiently appreciated on account of Mrs. Stearns' objection to large parties. The uncertainty of her health may have been the chief reason for this. Of distinguished guests there were enough, and most of the celebrated men and women of the eastern cities crossed its threshold sooner or later. It was an oasis of refinement and culture, where poets, orators, painters, and statesmen came together to exchange ideas, and mutually benefit by one another's influence. At that time there was no other house like it, in or about Boston, except the poet Longfellow's.

Not long after this Mrs. Child published a story in which a rich young man was represented as emigrating to the West, where he preferred to

live in a log cabin like his neighbors, rather than to excite their jealousy by a display of superior wealth. Mr. Stearns thought the story might be intended for his benefit.

As he obtained his wealth by means of a monopoly, he felt it as a sort of duty to return to the world what he extracted from it in that manner. Emerson complained to him that the water-works which he had introduced into his house at Concord cost much more than he expected—nearly twice as much as the estimates. "Why did you not come to me?" said Mr. Stearns; "I could have saved you a large part of the expense." Emerson had not thought of that; "he wanted to employ a Concord man." Mr. Stearns explained to him that plumbers, carpenters, and masons were obliged to greatly underestimate the cost of their work, for if they did not, some sharper would be certain to do so and get their job away from them. That men should be obliged to deceive in order to earn an honest living was a new idea to Emerson, and one which he evidently did not relish.

A prodigy now appeared in the sky which interested Mr. Stearns not much less than its discoverer. Donati's comet first became visible to the naked eye in the last days of August, 1858, as a small star in the handle of the great dipper. From that it grew apace, until by the first of October it filled the western sky from the horizon nearly to the zenith. Its broad cimeter-shaped tail was computed to be nearly eighty millions of miles in length. It was the largest, as well as the most perfect, comet that had appeared since 1680, and the pre-

diction of astronomers that it would never return to the sun again, or only after thousands of years, increased the awe with which it was regarded.

That Mr. Stearns should have gone out every evening to look at it was only what most others did, but he also read everything that he could find concerning comets, and was much impressed by the fact that the popular superstition in regard to large comets was not without inductive evidence; for all the great comets that have appeared have been closely followed by devastating wars. Mr. Stearns thought that there might be some occult influence in cometary matter—which is much lighter than the air we breathe—apart from the visual effect upon the mind. Yet this was a purely speculative theory. Mr. Stearns was not a superstitious man, and paid no attention whatever to signs and omens.

In September, 1858, the Massachusetts Kansas Aid committee wound up its affairs, finding no further occasion for its existence; and the secretary, Mr. Sanborn, submitted a report which did not differ essentially from the statements already made. This left Senator Wilson without any further ground for complaint.

The Lincoln and Douglas debate in the autumn of 1858 attracted less attention in the East from the fact that it was considered practically immaterial whether Douglas was defeated or not. Very few went to the same length as Horace Greeley, who openly supported the election of Douglas as a piece of political *finesse,* but it was easy for the shrewder sort to see that Douglas was in the posi-

tion of an engineer who cannot escape the explosion of his own mine. He had brought forward the Kansas-Nebraska Bill as a means of gaining the presidency, and now it was exactly that measure which proved the greatest obstacle to his ambition. I never heard Mr. Stearns speak of this debate, either then or later.

Meanwhile John Brown was waiting in Kansas for cold weather to come. In the second week of December he invaded southwestern Missouri and carried off twelve or fifteen slaves, with a number of horses and other small property, to compensate, as he claimed, for the arrears of wages due to them. One of the slaveholders who threatened them with firearms was shot by Kagi, John Brown's best man and a perfect daredevil. Brown was obliged to traverse the whole extent of eastern Kansas with his living booty, and a pretended attempt was made to arrest him; but it would seem to have been merely a pretense, for the sheriff and his *posse comitatus* fled at the first sight of Brown's approach. In like manner the citizens of Tabor, Iowa, issued a protest against Brown's proceedings; but this did not prevent him from selling his horses there in spite of their defective title, and dividing the proceeds among his fugitives. The indignation of the Western farmers at the attempt to force slavery upon Kansas was so great, that they were ready to condone anything in the way of retaliation.

This affair produced great excitement in the Southern states, which, however, quickly subsided; and in the North it did not attract so much attention as might have been expected. The Republican

papers naturally avoided the subject, and Kansas had long since become treacherous ground for the Northern Democrats. The Governor of Missouri offered a reward of two thousand dollars for the apprehension of Brown, who made no attempt to conceal his identity, so that from this time forth he became practically an outlaw. Yet no effort was ever made to arrest him.

The second Monday in January, 1859, there was a notable skating-party at Concord on Walden Pond, which on that day was smooth as a mirror. Mr. Stearns was present, enjoying the exercise as he might have done thirty years before on the Middlesex Canal. He spent most of the afternoon skating and talking with Emerson and Thoreau; and the fact is significant of future events. Nine months later, when John Brown was lying in a Virginia prison loaded with ox-chains, Emerson and Thoreau were the first to come forward and say to the astonished world: "He is not a madman, but a saint."

John Brown and George L. Stearns met and parted for the last time in May, 1859. Brown's movements were always very secretive, and Mr. Stearns suddenly came upon him dining at the Bird Club, and who introduced him there Mr. Stearns did not know. They were together only for a few hours and no business of importance would seem to have been transacted between them. When John Brown was about to leave for Canada he gave Mr. Stearns the pearl-handled bowie-knife, which

had been presented to H. Clay Pate, by his fellow-citizens, and which Brown had taken from him at Black Jack, and said: "I am going on a dangerous errand and we may never see each other again. I wish you would accept this as a parting gift." He had come to Boston to say farewell to his friends—those ideal friends whose acquaintance had been the longing of his hard, laborious life, and whose encouragement was his chief consolation. At this very time Wasson was composing:

"Oh, happy dreams of such a soul have I,
And softly to my heart of him I sing,
Whose seraph pride all pride doth overwing,
Soars unto meekness, reaches low by high,
And, as in grand equalities of the sky,
Stands level with the beggar and the king."

XII

Harper's Ferry

"How cautiously most men sink into nameless graves, while now and then one forgets himself into immortality."
Wendell Phillips.

Mr. Stearns' house was not finished until June, and he spent most of the summer enjoying the comfort of it, planting elms on his avenue and the like. George S. Hillard came out from Boston to spend an evening on his piazza and "drink the cup that cheers but not inebriates;" and in spite of their political differences, which were steadily growing more divergent, they made a very pleasant occasion of it. Mrs. Hillard agreed with Mr. Stearns, as did also her brother, Dr. Estes Howe, of Cambridge, who was a member of the Bird Club and came to taste Mr. Stearns' Hungarian wine.

One day Mr. Stearns came home with a red duodecimo in his hand. It was Helper's "Impending Crisis." "Here is a book," he said, "written by a Southerner against slavery as a practical institution, from the white man's standpoint. He proves by facts and figures that it is an economical injury to the Southern states. The book is creating a great sensation. Horace Greeley has got hold of it and is making the most of it." Mr. Stearns usually laughed when he spoke of Horace Greeley, on account of his original ways and methods, but he really held him in great respect.

It is safe to presume that Mr. Stearns was not insensible to the unfairness of Helper's comparison between the North and the South, in which he failed to consider the differences of climate, local industries, and commercial advantages; but Helper was equally correct in his argument that slavery prevented immigration to the Southern states—which was one of the chief sources of prosperity in the North—and that it placed the lower middle class of the South at a great disadvantage. The better sort of artisans had to be imported from the North, and carried back with them the wages they had earned.*

That such treachery should have originated in their own midst was highly exasperating to the slaveocracy, and the Southern press could not be blamed for describing Helper's book as an incendiary and revolutionary publication; but the whole country was now in a revolutionary condition, and smoking as it were with subterranean fires, which would soon break out into a general conflagration. No wonder that it was so.

The antislavery agitation of Lundy and Garrison was revolutionary; for they proposed to have property taken from its owners without compensation.

The mobbing of Garrison in Boston, and still

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* Henry C. Carey, the political economist, told Mr. Stearns that he once went to the Virginia delegation at Washington and said to them: "The people of your state do not know their true interests. Virginia ought to be one of the great manufacturing states of the Union; but you all have a nigger so close to your eye that you can't see a mountain if it is a little way off."

more, the murder of Lovejoy at Alton, Ill., were revolutionary acts; for they were directed against the fundamental principles of free institutions.

The Mexican war was revolutionary, as all wars for conquest are and must be.

The Fugitive Slave Bill was revolutionary; for it suspended the right of habeas corpus and of trial by jury.

The personal liberty bills passed by the legislatures of Northern states were revolutionary; for they nullified the action of the national government.

The Kansas-Nebraska Bill was a revolutionary act; for it was a forcible dissolution of a legal contract contrary to the wishes of one of the contracting parties.

The attempt to force the antislavery settlers in Kansas to leave the state was another revolutionary act; and the counter-movements of John Brown and his Boston friends were necessarily revolutionary.

The Dred Scott decision was revolutionary; for its object was to overturn the very citadel of justice.

Men do not exist for government but *vice versa;* and the abuse of official power during the administrations of Pierce and Buchanan had brought the government of the United States into such contempt with honest men that obedience to it was no longer considered a virtue, and a large proportion of the people in the Northern states were ready to welcome a direct and open resistance to it.

Hay and Nicolay, in their Life of Lincoln, make the remark in reference to John Brown's raid, that

in a " republic all reforms should proceed according to law and order." Webster held a different opinion; and not only Webster, but Blackstone. In his reply to Hayne the former said: Such resistance is not only acknowledged to be just in America, but in England also Blackstone admits as much, in the theory, and practice, too, of the English constitution. " We sir, who oppose the Carolina doctrine, do not deny that the people may, if they choose, throw off any government when it becomes oppressive and intolerable. We all know that civil institutions are established for the public benefit, and that when they cease to answer the ends of their existence they may be changed. But I do not understand the doctrine now contended for to be that which, for the sake of distinction, we may call the right of revolution."

Whether Blackstone and Webster are higher authorities than Hay and Nicolay can be safely left to the decision of the reader; but Webster's admission of the right of revolution and the violability of government acquires additional force from the fact that it was made in an argument in support of the authority of government against nullification. That there should always be a difference of opinion in regard to the justification of revolution, revolutionary attempts, or single revolutionary acts, is unavoidable, for no rule or measure can be laid down by which they can be judged. Every man must decide according to his own conscience.

It will be seen that Webster's " right of revolution " does not differ essentially from Seward's " higher law," although Webster at the time could

not discover this even above the Alleghanies. John Brown justified his own acts by the Golden Rule and the Declaration of Independence.

In the morning papers of October 19, it was reported by telegraph that a band of lawless ruffians had seized Harper's Ferry, Virginia, and were masters of the town. The next morning, Tuesday, came the news that John Brown was wounded and captured, and that all his men were either captured or killed.

George L. Stearns went at once to Dr. Howe's office and found him very much agitated. There were domestic reasons for this. The man with a family of young children cannot be so indifferent to his personal safety as an unmarried man might be. He wanted Mr. Stearns to go with him to Montreal. They went together to consult John A. Andrew, who took the matter quite coolly, and promised to look up their case over Sunday. Mr. Stearns then wrote letters to Jennison and Stewart, the two boldest jayhawkers in Kansas, advising them to draw on E. B. Whitman for funds to go to the relief of John Brown, if they thought they could possibly help him to escape.

On Monday Mr. Stearns received the following letter from John A. Andrew:

"My dear Sir:

"I went over the subject last evening, canvassing the books and cases with great care, occupying some four hours. Enclosed is my conclusion. I see no possible way in which any one can have done

anything in Massachusetts for which he can be carried *to any other state.* I know nothing for which you could be tried even *here.*

"Yours very truly,

"J. A. ANDREW."

This was certainly in favor of Messrs. Howe and Stearns, but the practical side of the matter still remained to be considered. Governor Wise of Virginia might apply to Governor Banks for Howe, Stearns, and Sanborn as accessories under the Virginia law, and in that case the question was whether Banks would give them up. He was not supposed to be friendly toward the Bird Club, and Andrew thought he would do anything for the sake of popularity.* The names of the conspirators were already in the newspapers, and public opinion was more strongly inclined against them at this time than it was afterward. It was decided, therefore, that they had better take themselves out of the way until the excitement should have subsided. Mr. Stearns and Dr. Howe accordingly left for Montreal the next morning; while Mr. Sanborn visited John Brown's family at North Elba, which was the kindest thing he could have done. Theodore Parker was in England and out of health; nor did he live very long after this.

* Governor Banks wrote a letter to Mr. Stearns some seven months later, which he directed to "Rev. George L. Stearns, Milk Street," concerning which Mr. Stearns remarked, "Banks knows perfectly well who I am." Governor Banks knew who Mr. Stearns was much better than he realized the dignity of his own office.

There would seem to have been an idea of predestination in John Brown's mind with regard to the attack on Harper's Ferry. He evidently felt that, whether he succeeded or failed, living or dead, the result would be the same. Sanborn, and Gerrit Smith, were the only two of his supporters who became fully cognizant of his Virginia plans, and they both endeavored to dissuade him from the attempt; but he was not to be dissuaded. When he first disclosed his plan to his own men at Kennedy Farm, every one of them protested against it. John Brown resigned, was reëlected, and had his own way. After he had captured Harper's Ferry, and there was yet time to escape, Kagi advised leaving the place at once, but Brown would not go. He seemed to be actuated by an impulse, which he did not understand himself.

John Brown failed at Harper's Ferry!

While I am writing I hear a nursery-maid under my window teaching a small boy to sing:

> "John Brown's body lies mouldering in the grave;
> His soul is marching on."

What other national hero has ever found a place in such a song as that? *—"his soul is marching on." It belonged to the war period and is no longer sung except as a reminiscence of the war; but, no one who heard it rise up from the camp-fires of the army of the Potomac would consider John Brown's life a failure. He failed as Leonidas did

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* John Brown's Song was also sung by American German soldiers in the war of 1870.

at Thermopylæ and General Warren at Bunker Hill; but not otherwise.

The justification of John Brown is an historical one. All great revolutions have been preceded by similar attempts on the part of individuals in whom the spirit of the age has concentrated itself as a special force, and they serve to prepare the mind and brace the nerves of the general public for the coming struggle. The attack on Harper's Ferry was immediately compared to the Boston Massacre in 1774, in which a colored man, Crispus Attucks, was the ringleader, and lost his life in the cause of American independence. The Thirty Years' War, which saved religious freedom in Germany, was begun by throwing the Pope's legates out of the castle window at Prague, and the perpetrators of this vigorous protest were all put to death for it.

How often did we hear after the bombardment of Fort Sumter, even from old pro-slavery Democrats: "Would that John Brown were alive again."

There is, however, another ground of justification that is worth considering, and that is the character of the men who came forward in John Brown's defence during his imprisonment. That Wendell Phillips should have broken loose from the traditions of the Boston antislavery society was much to his credit; but Phillips was an abolitionist by profession. Emerson, on the contrary, never came before the public but twice in his life to speak on practical questions of the day—once in regard to the Fugitive Slave Bill, and again on this occa-

sion. He was generally considered the wisest American of his time; cool headed, judicious, and temperate, but perfectly fearless in the cause of truth and justice. He had known John Brown personally, and recognized the incorruptible nature of the man. In his opinion such a character could not go far wrong. In a speech at Salem, in the first week of January, 1860, he signalized the attack on Harper's Ferry as one of the great events of the century; and seven years later he said to a proud Boston audience: "You may call John Brown a fanatic if you choose, but he was the grandest event of the war." Heroism was Emerson's favorite subject of discourse; and when the hero came he knew him.

John A. Andrew was a man of an entirely different stamp. He had little in common with Emerson, and was often opposed to him. He was at the top of his profession, a skilful politician, as well as a practical statesman. While John Brown appealed to Emerson's love of justice, Andrew admired him for his humanity and his hatred of oppression. Andrew was the great war governor of the East, and became as popular with the old Boston Whigs as he was with the Free-soilers, but he always insisted that John Brown, considered from his own standpoint, was in the right.

Samuel E. Sewall, another noted lawyer, prudent and deliberate, as a lawyer should be, said twenty-five years later: "I think John Brown accomplished twice as much for the emancipation of the negroes as any other person, not excepting President Lincoln."

It was Rev. Edmund Sears, a conservative Unitarian, who wrote the lines,

> "John Brown shall tramp the quaking earth
>   From Blue Ridge to the sea:
> Till the dark angel comes again,
>   And opes each prison door;
> And God's great charter yet shall wave
>   O'er all his humble poor."

But even he was eclipsed by Rev. Jacob M. Manning, pastor of the Old South Church of Revolutionary memory, who had married a wife in South Carolina and knew what slavery was from personal observation. He considered it so great an evil that any and all means were justifiable to extirpate it.

Mrs. L. Maria Child offered to go to the wounded man and care for him in his prison; and she had the courage to do it; but John Brown would not permit it.

Such was the verdict of New England; but all through the Northern states, clergymen, journalists, and others who had access to the public ear gave the same moral support and encouragement. William D. Howells wrote the most spirited poem of his life on the hero of Harper's Ferry; and Victor Hugo sent his testimonial of admiration from abroad.

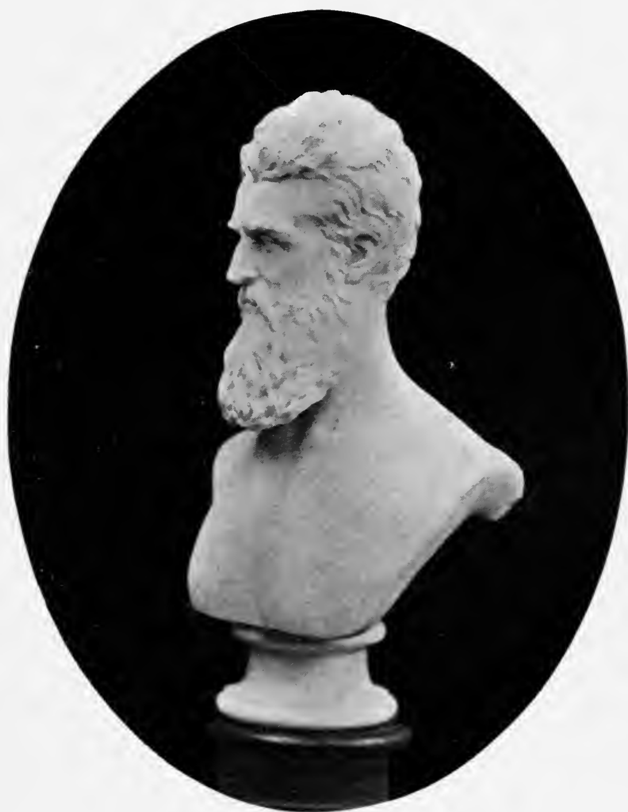
What John Brown went to Harper's Ferry for, was to assert the principle that what is originally wrong cannot be made right by prescription of time or legislative enactment. This was a new principle and marks an epoch in the progress of civilization.

At this same time the people of Kansas were organizing a state government with an antislavery constitution and Martin F. Conway was chosen delegate to Congress to obtain the admittance of the state into the Union. Kansas was irretrievably lost to the slaveholders, and with Kansas all the remaining territories of the United States; for slavery could not well be forced into the territories north of Kansas, while the arid regions of Texas, New Mexico, and Colorado were wholly unsuited to slave-labor, which can only be made profitable in gangs with an overseer. Kansas had proved the key to the slavery question in the whole western hemisphere; and the fortunate solution of this problem should be credited in the largest measure to the strong fighter John Brown in the West; and, as Colonel Higginson has said, to the strong worker and financier George L. Stearns in the East. Next to these on the roll of honor we may mention General Jim Lane and Martin F. Conway, who gave Kansas a political organization; but, as Emerson would say, there have been many who were deserving.

It is not to be presumed for a moment that Mr. Stearns would neglect any possible measure which might bring relief to his imprisoned friend. What he did in this way will probably never be known. He was always reticent in regard to his own affairs, and especially so concerning Harper's Ferry. My recollection is that both Stewart and Jennison went to Virginia, and that the latter succeeded in obtaining an interview with Brown, disguised as a Methodist minister, a habit which he could affect with

remarkable skill. It must have been an interesting meeting; but Brown had given his promise to the jailer that he would make no effort to escape, and the only way he could have been rescued would have been by main force. The 25th of November, Governor Wise notified President Buchanan that he had information of an extensive conspiracy in the Pennsylvania mountains for the purpose of rescuing John Brown. That such an organization existed there is highly improbable; but neither is it likely that Governor Wise was the victim of a groundless hoax. The governor was too wise for that; and the fact would seem to indicate an attempt on the part of Stewart and Jennison to recruit a rescuing party in that region.

Edwin A. Brackett the sculptor (who represented Margaret Fuller in a marble group, "The Shipwrecked Mother and Child") was inspired with a strong desire to make a portrait bust of John Brown, and consulted with Mrs. Stearns, who commissioned him to go to Virginia for the purpose, trusting that her husband would approve of it afterwards. At first the old Puritan objected to having the measurements taken, but when Mr. Brackett informed him whence he came, John Brown said: "Anything Mr. and Mrs. Stearns desire I am well pleased to agree to." Mr. Brackett saw him at a fortunate time, when the expression of his face was sublimated by suffering and spiritual tension, so that the result was better than might have been expected. The bust was too much idealized to be a very exact likeness, but as a type of moral grandeur it stands on a par with Craw-



Mr. STEARNS' BUST OF JOHN BROWN

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF
CALIFORNIA

ford's Beethoven. When Charles Sumner beheld it in Brackett's studio he exclaimed: "You have made something more like Michael Angelo's Moses than any work the sun shines on;" and when Mrs. Brown came to Boston after her husband's death and suddenly saw the bust in the Athenæum gallery, surrounded by casts of the Roman emperors, she recognized it at once, and burst into tears. It was the only work of Brackett's on which he carved his name.

The bust now stands in the hall of Mr. Stearns' house in Medford, where it is destined to remain. A great many casts were made of it when it was first placed on exhibition; and when Jarvis, the art critic, saw it he remarked: "If that bust should be dug up in a ruin two thousand years from now, some one of the workmen would say, 'I wonder what old Greek god that was.'" Mr. Stearns would sometimes stand before it in a sort of reverie. Nobody knew what he was thinking, but he once said: "It seems as if the old man was really alive."

No historian has given an adequate account of this period, when revolution was, so to speak, in the egg; and perhaps none ever will. One of the remarkable signs of the time was the organization of a meeting in aid of the wife and daughters of John Brown, presided over by John A. Andrew, a lawyer at the top of his profession, a man of conservative tendencies, but with a heart full of sympathy for oppressed humanity. The ostensible purpose of their meeting served as a color to express sympathy and encouragement for the old

hero himself. Never was there a more respectable and intelligent audience assembled in Boston. Fanatics and non-resistants were conspicuously absent. Hon. Thomas Russell occupied the next seat to that of Mrs. Stearns, applauding with all his might.

Andrew opened the meeting with a brief but pithy and emphatic address. Rev. Jacob M. Manning followed him with a comparison between John Brown and Crispus Attucks, "the black man who died for the white race, and the white man who was about to die for the black race." He said in his earnest, telling manner: "I should not have advised Crispus Attucks to stir up public excitement as he did, but we all recognize now, that his death was one of the stepping-stones to American independence. Neither should I have advised John Brown to make the attack on Harper's Ferry. I should have counselled him against doing it, but I am far from regretting that it was done." This from the pastor of the Old South Church made a deep impression.

Wendell Phillips had also come with the intention of comparing John Brown to Crispus Attucks, and, having the wind taken out of his sails by Rev. Mr. Manning, he was obliged to revise his address while he sat on the platform. His ready wit was equal to the emergency, and the speech which he made on this occasion served as a nucleus to the magnificent oration which he delivered the following week in Brooklyn. It was fortunately free from those harsh personalities which so often marred Wendell Phillips' addresses.

As soon as the meeting closed Phillips came down from the platform and said to Mrs. Stearns: "Where is your husband?" "Still in Canada," she replied. This was the commencement of his acquaintance with Mr. Stearns' family.

His address at Brooklyn on Harper's Ferry was the greatest of his orations, and was irradiated by a poetic brilliancy which makes it exceptional in American oratory. The Academy of Music was crowded, and Hon. Thomas Corwin, reputed the best public speaker in Ohio, occupied a seat on the platform. "What if John Brown failed," said Phillips; "every man meets his Waterloo at last—but he did not fail. Witness the alarm he has created in the South, and the consternation of Southern sympathizers with slavery.

"Virginians are as brave as ever. It was not our gray-haired old man entering at Harper's Ferry that made them tremble. It is the John Brown in every man's conscience that the South is afraid of."

Even the Richmond *Whig* admitted that Brown had potentially made an end of slavery. Phillips said:

"History will date Virginia's emancipation from Harper's Ferry. True, the slave is still there. So, when the tempest uproots a pine on your hills, it looks green for months—a year or two. Still, it is a timber, not a tree. John Brown has loosened the root of the slave system; it only breathes—it does not live,—hereafter."

On the day of John Brown's execution, December 2, there was a memorial service in the town

hall at Concord, in which even Hon. E. R. Hoar, Judge of the Supreme Court, took an active share.* Mrs. Stearns attended it, and, calling on Mrs. Emerson, was invited to spend the day. Mr. Emerson looked very grave and serious; and his wife, who subscribed to the *Antislavery Standard,* was more than that. " Are you not going to have the bells tolled? " she said to her husband on his return from the town; and it was difficult for him to persuade her that it would not be wise to attempt so much. Such a public demonstration he thought ought to be spontaneous.

That same day Mr. Stearns escaped from Dr. Howe and went to Niagara Falls, where he spent the afternoon, listening to the dirge of the cataract. There he repeated the vow he had made at the time of the assault on Sumner, to devote the rest of his life and fortune to the liberation of the slave.

The second of December came on Friday, and during that whole week there was beautiful Indian-summer weather until Saturday, when it became cloudy and raw. The next day there was a severe snow-storm, and on Monday evening, just before midnight, Mr. Stearns suddenly appeared at his home, to the great rejoicing of his wife, children, and servants.

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* His brother, George F. Hoar, since United States Senator, wrote a sympathetic and commendatory letter to a similar meeting at Worcester.

XIII

The Investigating Committee

While Mr. Stearns was absent his brutal coachman had neglected the steam furnace so that his house came near being blown into the air. Automatic filling boilers had not come into use, and this man, not having the fear of his employer before his eyes, neglected the furnace so long that every drop of water evaporated from it. A catastrophe was probably prevented by young Harry Stearns, whose interest in mechanics taught him what the trouble was, and he had the fire drawn instantly. If the clumsy coachman had let the water into the boiler there would have been a terrible explosion; and as it happened the mop-boards in the room above were cracked by the heat.

After discharging this incubus and having the boiler tested again, Mr. Stearns' next thought was for John Brown's family. He arranged with Mr. Sanborn to have two unmarried daughters placed at the school in Concord, Mr. Sanborn teaching them gratis, while Mr. Stearns provided for their board in a private family. They were good girls, but with a dreary expression, as if their lives had been hard and joyless. Mrs. Brown also came to Boston to visit her husband's friends, and showed herself to be well worthy of him; a sober, kindly woman, religious and industrious. Her brother-in-law, Frederick Brown, also came. The men of

the Brown family were of a powerful physique, and with strong, rugged features.

John A. Andrew had been constituted treasurer of the fund for Mrs. Brown's benefit; but after Mr. Stearns returned he transferred his collections to the latter, as the person who would be able to apply them to the best advantage. On December 14 he wrote Mr. Stearns a friendly letter, setting this forth in a complimentary manner, and giving an exact account of the amounts he had received, and the sources whence they came.

The amount was afterwards nearly doubled by private donations, and so long as Mr. Stearns lived the Brown family wanted for nothing which they really needed. Four sons still remained: John Brown, Jr., who had a family of his own and became a vine-grower on Put-in-Bay Island, in Lake Erie; Jason Owen, who afterward was injured by the bursting of a cannon; and Solomon, who finally emigrated to California with his mother and sisters. After Mr. Stearns' death, Mr. Sanborn took the responsibility on himself, and watched over the family of his old friend with a truly fraternal solicitude.

Mr. Stearns was now a marked man, and old merchants whom he had known from boyhood passed him on State Street without recognition; and he sometimes heard himself cursed by others of the meaner sort who had nothing to hope or fear from him. He even found it necessary to keep his accounts with a bank which had an abolitionist for a cashier. Frank Bird was a trifle cool to him, and when Senator Wilson came home for

the holidays and discovered the drift of public opinion, he gave Mr. Stearns a rather biting compliment, which met with an equally sharp rejoinder. A majority of the Bird Club, however, stood by him,—and then there was Andrew, who, having once set his foot down in a position, never drew it back. Judge Russell always stopped to speak with him when he met him on the street, and to inquire after the Brown family.

The partial ostracism of Mr. Stearns did not last long. He was too valuable a man to the Republican party, both on account of his contributions and his practical good sense; and the first gun fired at Fort Sumter made a complete end of it. Wilson was greatly afraid that the Harper's Ferry affair would have an injurious effect on the presidential election, but Mr. Stearns thought the contrary and could give a reason for his opinion. He found that his customers, plumbers and tinsmiths, had a great admiration for John Brown, and even looked on him as a national hero. "Those are the men," Mr. Stearns said, "who carry our elections, and not college graduates, of whom a large proportion never go to the polls." When Republican Congressmen were in need of moral iron, they could always obtain it by half an hour's conversation with George L. Stearns. Revolutionary times require firm-hearted men, and bold measures.

Stearns and Howe did not expect to escape further trouble from their association with John Brown, for on December 5 Senator Mason had moved for the appointment of a committee to investigate the Harper's Ferry raid; to which Trumbull

of Illinois promptly offered as an amendment, that the proceedings at Liberty, Missouri, where a government arsenal was plundered by the Border-ruffians, should also be investigated. The amendment was rejected, but it served to indicate the direct connection between the two events. The first meeting of the committee took place on the 16th of December, but its proceedings were so desultory that Dr. Howe was not summoned to appear before it until the last week of January, and Mr. Stearns three weeks later.

They decided to go and face the music, although this was not absolutely necessary; for Judge Hoar had informed Mr. Sanborn that even if an attempt was made to take them by force, they could be rescued with the help of a writ of *habeas corpus,* and he believed that the Boston courts would sustain the writ. The Senate Committee evidently considered Sanborn the most important witness, and they were quite right in that, for he knew more of John Brown's plans than the others; and they had a notification served on him in person. He concluded, therefore, to try Judge Hoar's experiment. Mr. Stearns was the last important witness examined, and this placed him in a more difficult position than the rest, for it subjected his statements to a cross fire from the evidence that had already been taken; although he enjoyed the benefit of Dr. Howe's previous experience.

Mr. Stearns went to New York February 20, with his wife and youngest son, whom he left in John Hopper's kindly charge, and then proceeded to Washington. He was summoned before the

committee on the 24th; and, calling on Sumner before he went to the Capitol to be examined, the Senator said to him: " Tell them the whole truth, Stearns."

Mr. Stearns did not follow this advice to the letter. He spoke his mind out boldly enough on certain points, but common prudence dictated that he should be as reticent as possible concerning his own affairs. His answer to the fourth question of the examiners indicates this. When asked in what way he made John Brown's acquaintance, Mr. Stearns replied: " I was introduced to him by one of our Kansas men, meeting him accidentally." This was no doubt true, but even if he had not himself sent for John Brown, the Boston committee must have done so. Brown could not have made his easterly journey without money, and where did he obtain it? Not from Gerrit Smith, for he brought a letter of introduction to Mr. Smith. It is most likely that he was in search of Mr. Stearns when they first met.

When the examiner asked him, " How was it that your committee were in possession of firearms? " Mr. Stearns replied:

" I have made a statement on paper, which, as I am unaccustomed to speak in public, or even to give evidence, for it is very seldom that I have been in courts as a witness, I would ask the permission of the committee to read as evidence, because it would be a clearer and more condensed statement than I could make in any other way."

After some discussion the examiners permitted him to read his statement, a portion of which has

been given in the account of the Kansas Aid Committee. He also said:

"About this time,* on his representing that the force to be organized in Kansas ought to be provided with revolvers, I authorized him to purchase 200 from the Massachusetts Arms Company, and when they were delivered to him in Iowa, paid for them with my own funds; the amount was $1,300. At the same time I gave him, by a letter of credit, authority to draw on me at sight for $7,000 in sums as it might be wanted, for the subsistence of 100 men, provided that it should be necessary at any time to call that number into the field for active service in the defence of Kansas, in 1857. As the exigency contemplated did not occur, no money was drawn under it, and the letter was subsequently returned to me."

In regard to Colonel Forbes he stated:

"About May, 1858, I saw a letter from Henry Wilson to Dr. Howe, and also one or two from a Mr. Forbes. I had never heard of Forbes until I saw his letters, which were so coarse and insulting in their language, and incorrect, in ascribing to others what I had done, that I concluded he was an adventurer whose only aim was to extort money; but at Dr. Howe's request, I wrote the letter to John Brown, dated May 14, 1858, of which he forwarded to you a copy. In addition to what I have before stated, I raised money and sent an agent to Kansas to aid the Free-state party in the Lecompton election, and again for the election in 1858."

* The Summer of 1857.

The examiners then endeavored to trace out the course of events by which the rifles finally came to Harper's Ferry, but did not succeed better than others who have attempted this. Mr. Stearns finally led them to the expected interview at Mr. Hopper's in New York; and when they were informed that Brown did not appear then they asked him: "Did you have any communication with him on the subject of these arms after the date of these letters on the 14th and 15th of May?" And he replied: "Once only, when I asked him where they were, and he told me that they were stored in Ohio." This answer appears to have baffled them, for they gave up the chase and turned the subject to John Brown, Jr.'s visit to Boston, in the summer of 1859, the object of which, if it had a definite object, was never revealed, even to Mrs. Stearns.

The examiners next asked him: "Did he speak of his father, and say where he was, or what he was engaged in?" Mr. Stearns replied: "No, sir."

When they questioned him in regard to the pikes, he said:

"I think I heard him say something about pikes, but whether it was that he had ordered them to be made, or what he said about them, I do not recollect. I think I heard him say something about pikes."

"Q. 'When?'

"A. 'That must have been in May, 1857.'

"Q. 'Do you know whether he told you that he had ordered any pikes to be made in that region of country?'

"A. 'No, sir, I do not.'

"Q. 'Do you remember in what connection he spoke of having pikes at all?'

"A. 'He might have spoken of them as being useful for military purposes.'"

As Miss Edgeworth says in her story: "Lawyer Case with all his cunning was not a match for simple Susan."

When they inquired as to the purposes to which he supposed John Brown would apply the funds which had been placed at his disposal, Mr. Stearns said:

"Knowing that the man had an idea that he was engaged in a work that I believed to be a righteous one, I gave him money to enable him to live or to do whatever he thought right. When I first talked with John Brown regarding Kansas affairs, he told me that it was the worst possible policy for a man to reveal his plans. I recollect his taking several scraps of newspapers from his pocket and saying, 'The United States government immediately disclose their orders to their military officers. Before the orders leave Washington, they are published all through the papers; well, now, that is not the way; if a man is to do anything he must keep his plans to himself.' Respecting that, I never inquired of him afterwards about his plans, and he never revealed them to me."

Upon further inquiry in regard to the use of firearms which he had placed in Brown's possession, Mr. Stearns said:

"No, sir; I did not suppose they would be put to any such purpose as it has since appeared they were put to."

This certainly was not the exact truth; but, considering the various phases of activity through which John Brown had passed, it is not surprising that Mr. Stearns should have said it. Perhaps what he really meant, or was thinking of, was that he did not suppose the rifles would be used for offensive operations, like the attack on Harper's Ferry. If Mr. Stearns made a slip here, he soon recovered himself, however. In the cross-examination by Collamer of Vermont we find the following statement:

"Q. 'Had you ever any intimation of that kind (that he would make an inroad into the slave-states)?'

"A. 'No, sir. Perhaps I do not understand you. I did suppose he would go into Virginia or some other state and relieve slaves.'

"Q. 'In what way?'

"A. 'In any way he could give them liberty.'

"Q. 'Did you understand that he contemplated doing it by force?'

"A. 'Yes, sir; by force, if necessary.'

"Q. 'Will you explain in what manner, by force, you understood he contemplated doing it?'

"A. 'I cannot explain any manner, because, as I say to you, I never talked with him on the subject.'"

In conclusion Senator Collamer said:

"'Then I ask you, do you disapprove of such a transaction as that at Harper's Ferry?'

"A. 'I should have disapproved of it if I had known of it; but I have since changed my opinion. I believe John Brown to be the representative man of this century, as Washington was of the last—the Harper's Ferry affair, and the capacity shown by the Italians for self-government, the great events of this age. One will free Europe and the other America.'"

This last reply has been often quoted, and after the war began was looked upon as a veritable prediction; for even if the attack on Harper's Ferry did not lead directly to the emancipation it was at least the beginning of the end, and though Europe is not free to the same extent as America, yet the consolidation of Italy led directly to the liberation of Hungary and the constitutional governments of Austria and Germany.

Mr. Stearns afterwards complained that whereas Senator Mason treated him with great politeness, Collamer was rough and surly to him. Mr. Stearns was too little acquainted with the courts to be aware that this was a common legal artifice in the treatment of witnesses; that Mason was courteous and respectful in order to draw him out and give him a false sense of security, while Collamer's harshness was intended to make him reserved and reticent. In Mr. Stearns' case, however, it had just the opposite effect. Collamer's harshness irritated him, and he was naturally suspicious of the friendliness of the slaveholder. He always admitted, however, that Senator Mason was a very pleasant man, and when Mason was captured by Commodore Wilkes and imprisoned in Fort Warren Mr. Stearns expressed a wish to visit him, but refrained from doing so from fear of the newspapers.

An incident occurred near the close of the investigation, which afterwards excited a good deal of amusement in Boston. The chairman had been inquiring about John Brown's last visit to Boston and his entertainment at the Bird Club, when Jef-

ferson Davis, who had not hitherto manifested much interest in the proceedings, suddenly braced up, and asked Mr. Stearns:

"'What kind of a house is this Parker House?'

"A. 'It is one of the best eating-houses in the town.'

"Q. 'Are select dinners given there?'

"A. 'Yes, sir; it is a place where everybody goes for a good dinner. If a literary club wish to dine, they go to the Parker House; if a political club wish to dine, they go to the Parker House.'

"Q. 'Is it a place where fine and expensive dinners are given?'

"A. 'A place where you can get the rarities of the season, and cooked in the best of manner.'"

When Jefferson Davis went to the White Mountains the following summer, he stopped in Boston, and went to the Parker House to see what it was like. He also purchased a waterproof of C. F. Hovey & Co., who were among Mr. Stearns' best friends; and it must have been the same waterproof that he was captured in, when he attempted to escape in disguise after General Lee's surrender.

When the proceedings were over all the committee left the room except Mason. He handed Mr. Stearns a bright Sharpe's rifle and asked with a smile if he had ever seen it.

"Mason. 'Did you not see it in Massachusetts?'

"Answer. 'They were not made in Massachusetts.'

"Clerk. 'Those rifles were made in Connecticut by the Sharpe's Rifle Co.?'

"Stearns. 'Yes, they were boxed up there and sent direct to Chicago.'

"Mason. 'Doesn't your conscience trouble you for sending these rifles to Kansas to shoot our innocent people?'

"Answer. 'Self-defence. You began the game. You sent Buford and his company with arms before we sent any from Massachusetts.'

"Mason. 'I think when you go to that *down below,* the *old fellow* will question you rather hard about this matter and you will have to take it.'

"Answer. 'Before that time comes I think he will have about two hundred years of slavery to investigate, and before he gets through that will say, "We have had enough of this business. Better let the rest go."'

"He laughed and left the room." *

John A. Andrew's testimony before the committee was magnificent. Perfectly fearless, he answered Mason and Davis in such plain terms that they must have wished they had let him alone. He had never met John Brown but once. He had given him twenty-five dollars, and he did not regret it. When Jefferson Davis asked him if he approved Brown's kidnapping negroes in Missouri, he said:

"The transaction to which you refer is one which I do not, from my point of view, regard as justifiable. I suppose Captain Brown did, and I presume I should not judge him severely at all for that transaction, because I should suppose that he might have regarded that, if not defensive, at least offensive warfare in the nature of defence—an aggression to prevent or repel aggressions. And I think that his foray into Virginia was a fruit of the Kansas tree. I think that he and his associates had been educated up to the point of making an unlawful, and even an unjustifiable, attack upon the people of a neighboring state—had been taught

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* A letter from Mr. Stearns to Dr. S. G. Howe.

to do so, and educated to do so by the attacks which the Free-state men in Kansas suffered from people of the slaveholding states. And, since the gentleman has called my attention again to that subject, I think the attack which was made against representative government in the assault upon Senator Sumner, in Washington, which, so far as I could learn from the public press, was, if not justified, at least winked at throughout the South, was an act of very much greater danger to our liberties and to civil society than the attack of a few men upon neighbors over the borders of a state. I suppose that the state of Virginia is wealthy and strong, and brave enough to defend itself against the assaults of any unorganized, unlawful force."

His testimony in regard to John Brown's personal magnetism is most valuable:

"I do not know whether anybody else gave him any money or not. I sent him $25. I did it because I felt ashamed, after I had seen the old man and talked with him and come within the reach of the personal impression (which I find he very generally made on people) that I had never contributed anything directly towards his assistance, as one whom I thought had sacrificed and suffered so much for the cause of freedom, and of good order and good government, in the territory of Kansas. He was, if I may be allowed to use that expression, a very magnetic person, and I felt very much impressed by him. I confess I did not know how to understand the old gentleman fully."

Martin F. Conway also had some interesting

statements to make, in his half humorous manner, concerning the Emigrant Aid Society:

"I remember when I first thought of going to Kansas I heard of this Emigrant Aid Company, but I did not know the nature of it, and I thought it a good idea, and I wrote to Mr. Thayer about it to see what advantages I could get in my emigration to Kansas by connecting myself with it in some way, but his answer was very brief and unsatisfactory. I learned then that it was simply a company for the purpose of making money by speculating in land, putting up saw-mills, and building hotels, and taking land as a consideration, and holding the land for the profit they could make on it in the end." *

"Mr. Davis. 'Did it not send out emigrants?'

"A. 'It sent out no emigrants. I was told that I could get my ticket to go to Kansas at less price, a few dollars less in price, by means of it; that is, it would make me acquainted with this man, that man, and the other, and we would all go out together, and, by going out together, we would get our tickets at a lower price. I did not know they could do me any particular favor by making me acquainted with this man, that man, and the other; that did not strike me as particularly advantageous in my case; and as for the small reduction in the price of fare, that was nothing.'"

This is so much like Conway that one can almost hear his voice.

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* Hon. Eli Thayer's interest in Kansas affairs ceased as soon as the fighting began.

At the end of Governor Charles Robinson's testimony we find this unfavorable comment by the Senate Committee:

"By direction of the Committee, portions of the testimony of this witness, being hearsay only, and deemed irrelevant to the inquiries before them, are omitted."

This is of more importance, as Robinson was unfriendly to John Brown.

On his way home Mr. Stearns wrote to Dr. S. G. Howe, at Philadelphia, February 27:

"I am so far on my return from Washington, where I had a good time. The Com. were civil and did not press me at all. I answered freely and they took all I said in good faith.

"On reading my testimony, which took an hour and a half, I did not want to change a word, but made some additions; such as, 'I have since changed my opinion,' etc. I was before them three hours, from eleven until two.

"I saw a good deal of Sumner; he made me free of his room at all hours and was of great use to me. He is preparing a speech and will do justice to this affair, including the Senate Com. He said: I feel now perfectly easy with regard to slavery: it has received its death blow. This is not a quotation, but the spirit of his remarks.

"Saw Adams, Burlingame, Wilson; nothing said worth reporting.

"Washington, as it is to-day, is the meanest hole in creation, and Congress the meanest part of Washington. The members of both parties are split up into petty cliques, each intent on grinding its own little axe and trying to prevent all the others from using the grindstone. If they are our *representatives*, we are indeed of a low type.

"Ever yours,

"GEORGE L. STEARNS."

On returning to Boston Mr. Stearns received this letter from Senator Sumner:

"SENATE CHAMBER, 2d March, '60.

"MY DEAR SIR:

"With mortification I confess that I have lost your bill with your receipt.

"On receiving it I placed it carefully in one of my drawers, and remember afterwards taking it out and folding; but I have not seen it since; nor can I find it. I suppose it must have been destroyed with other papers of less value.

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"I congratulate you upon your successful visit to this Slave-pen.

"Ever faithfully yours,

"CHARLES SUMNER."

On the 16th of March Sumner wrote again:

"Here are the wages of your testimony!

"I am obliged for your suggestion. Have faith. I believe when in active health, I have never done less than was expected of me. I hope not to fall short hereafter.

"I have twice visited Hyatt in jail. He is serene and tranquil, determined to stay there at least five years, if before then he is not discharged.

"Half of our Republicans need conversion to first principles. Lawyers are strong in defending a point, already occupied. They will find any required number of reasons for their cause. But they are not leaders where great principles are in question. Ask Mr. Sewall if I am not right."

To this Mr. Stearns replied on March 22:

"DEAR SIR:

"Please accept my thanks for the check, which came to hand yesterday, and also for the *Globe*. I will try to have your Speech published in our *Republican papers*.

"It is the only one that hit the mark. Hale hit Fessenden, but overshot the question; all the rest are Republican and Democratic talk. In the meantime public opinion is slowly taking the right direction, one of the Judges of the S. J. C. declaring openly that the Senate is wrong, and another that the court would like to hear an argument on it, especially before any decision has been had elsewhere. They will be sure to have the opportunity.

"Truly your friend,

"GEORGE L. STEARNS."

After the United States marshal had served a summons on Frank B. Sanborn, the latter went off for some time, but returned to his school early in March, and a few weeks later there was a serio-comic attempt to kidnap him and carry him to Washington by force.

There was an old barn close to the school-yard owned by a man named Conant, who was a trusty follower of their cause. In this, two United States marshals secreted themselves, and watched Mr. Sanborn, as he came and went, through the cracks in the boards. Shortly after nine in the evening, they were joined by two assistants with a hack from Boston, and proceeded to Mr. Sanborn's house, which was on the opposite side of the way. Mr. Sanborn answered the door-bell himself; was immediately seized, and dragged to the carriage. To force him to enter it, however, was more difficult, for he was six feet four inches in height

and a strong, vigorous man. His sister, Miss Sarah Sanborn, followed quickly after them, and, seizing the whip, gave the horses such a cut that it was impossible to keep the carriage still. Mr. Sanborn's nearest neighbor, who was fortunately a blacksmith, hearing the cries of murder, now ran to the rescue; and three young ladies of the school, who boarded with his wife,* ran through the village ringing door-bells and calling on the people. In this manner a crowd was quickly collected, including Mr. Sanborn's largest boys, who ran in a body to his rescue. One of them was a Southerner, named Mason, who had often cursed his master for an abolitionist, but was now foremost in his defence. The cause of the marshals seemed hopeless, but they still held on to their prisoner. In less than twenty minutes Emerson appeared, although he lived half a mile away; and immediately after Judge Hoar came holding up the promised writ of *habeas corpus.* Before this mandate of the law, the officers were compelled to give way. They took the bracelets off Mr. Sanborn's wrists, and left the town followed by the execrations of the populace. It was a pleasant spring evening, and nobody was hurt.

The case was tried in Boston the next day, April 4, before the Supreme Court. John A. Andrew and Samuel E. Sewall were counsel for Mr. Sanborn, and Chief Justice Shaw, not liking to try conclusions with the United States Senate, gave the case to them on a technicality of irregular pro-

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* Called "the Bigelow girls" from the blacksmith's name.

cedure. His decision occupies four pages closely printed in Gray's Reports, and was so circuitous that Mr. Sanborn, who could read Greek at sight, could not tell at the close whether he or the marshals had gained the case, until Wendell Phillips, who had been in attendance all day with Walt Whitman, came to him and said: "That means that you are discharged." A fine precedent for lawyers to wrangle over.

A carriage was in readiness for him outside the court-house, which conveyed him to a station on the Fitchburg railroad, beyond the city limits, for fear that a second attempt would be made to arrest him. That evening an enthusiastic meeting was held in the town-hall at Concord, where Wentworth Higginson, who suddenly appeared at the right moment, made a vigorous address, congratulating the people of the town on their successful resistance to the slave-power, and spirited assertion of the higher law. The indictment of the United States marshals for felonious assault, and the presentation of a revolver to Miss Sarah Sanborn, closed this afterpiece to the Harper's Ferry raid.

Among Mr. Stearns' papers there is an undated letter from Wendell Phillips referring to this affair, which Mr. Sanborn thinks must have been written in the court-room during the trial. This is quite possible, although the expression in it "Now if Concord will stand by her son" would seem to refer to an earlier date and some prearrangement on the part of Sanborn's friends. In the former

case it is probable that the letter referred to the provision against an attempt to rearrest Sanborn. It runs:

"DEAR FRIEND:

"Your idea and suggestions to Andrew were new to me. I doubt not he gave them due consideration—and I hear a part of your plan at least has been adopted. Now if Concord will stand by her son we shall force our Supreme Court to a decision—at least on State Rights if not the Senate's power.

"Yours respectfully,

"WENDELL PHILLIPS."

In the summer of 1860 Wendell Phillips visited the family of John Brown at North Elba, where he seemed to those poor lonely souls like an archangel dropped from the skies. John Brown's grave is at the foot of an immense boulder, and Phillips engaged a stone-mason to cut Brown's name on this rock in letters a foot high. This is the old hero's monument, and one that will last as long as the pyramids.

NOTE.—The technical point in the case of Sanborn vs. Silas Carleton was simply that an arrest made by order of the United States Senate must be performed by an officer of the Senate, and not by an officer in some other branch of the government.

XIV

The Great Election

Even the Harper's Ferry raid and the fate of John Brown were now being eclipsed by the national conventions for presidential candidates, which preceded the most important election that has ever been held in America. The Democratic convention came first, and Charleston was appointed for its meeting in order to conciliate the South Carolinians, who had already indicated a centrifugal tendency; but the Northern delegates, who went there ready to make any concessions short of reopening the slave-trade, were treated so coldly and such violent antagonisms arose that it seemed like the tower of Babel come again, and Caleb Cushing, a well-seasoned presiding officer, finally declared that his strength could hold out no longer. Many Southern delegates left the convention and the remainder adjourned to meet at Baltimore two months later.

There was great rejoicing at the Bird Club over the political smashup at Charleston, and John A. Andrew compared Douglas to the Nessus shirt which destroyed Hercules. Bright prospects of the Republican party began to lift the gloom which had settled on Mr. Stearns' face ever since December 2. Sumner felt confident that any candidate which the party should nominate would be elected. It was generally believed that Seward would be the man. Lincoln was not even thought of. As for the governorship it was admitted that Banks

could obtain a renomination, if he desired it. He was a remarkably good presiding officer, and this made him the *beau ideal* of ward politicians and their country cousins. It was regretted that he was not in harmony with the senators and leading representatives of the state.

Mr. Stearns did not wish to keep his new house all to himself, so he invited David A. Wasson to spend a year with him. Mr. Wasson had long been out of health, and the doctors believed that a comfortable home and perfect freedom from care would do much to restore it. He had been Mr. Stearns' candidate for the First Medford Parish against the pro-slavery Tebitts; and Mr. Stearns had felt an interest in him ever since. Mr. Wasson was living in Concord at this time, but in spite of Emerson's friendliness, he did not find the social atmosphere there favorable to him.

As Judge Conway said, Wasson was a genius, and one of the finest in that heroic age, when geniuses were as common as they are rare at present. The measure of his intellect may be estimated by the fact that his critics always compared him with Emerson; and if he had enjoyed Emerson's early advantages, especially the inheritance of property, he might have surpassed Emerson. The son of a poor shipbuilder on the coast of Maine, his early life was too severe for a sensitive nature and artistic temperament, and his health gave way under the strain. The best of his poetry is fully equal to the best of Emerson's or Matthew Arnold's; while his prose ought more properly to be compared with John Locke's, though he was a deeper thinker, more of a seer than Locke. His

DAVID A. WASSON

OF THE
UNIVERSI
OF
CALIFOR

frequent use of homely phrases interfered with his popularity somewhat; but he wrote the philosophical articles for the *Atlantic Monthly* in its palmy days, when it was edited by Lowell and James T. Fields, and he has had no successor in that line who deserves to be named with him. Unfortunately it was not the custom at that time to sign magazine articles, so that he missed the celebrity which might have given him an enduring place among American writers. His essays were read by thousands who never knew his name.

A number of them were written at Mr. Stearns' house, and a moral essay on Rest and Motion is supposed to have been intended for Mr. Stearns' benefit. There was not much rest in Mr. Stearns' life, certainly. His wife, writing to Mrs. Emerson, compared herself to the tender of an express locomotive—one that made no stops. Wasson also addressed the following sonnet to Mr. Stearns, which is not, however, one of his best:

"G. L. S.

"By all the purest love I bear my kind,
By all the hope I have of human weal,
By all of duty, resolute and leal,
That ever may my sprit bless and bind,
Am I to thee drawn closer and affined,
Thou mankind's lover, whom to name my friend
Were prodigal, as on myself to spend
A public wealth for myriads designed.
I near thy spirit as Missouri bears
His waters to his brother stream, not through
Fondness, as wooed of thee, or thee to woo;
But never is my heart on noble cares
Rightly intent, but whither it repairs
Thy soul with earnest tide is flowing too."

He also composed sonnets on Sumner and Seward, comparing the two, much to the advantage of the former.

Mr. Wasson agreed remarkably well with Mr. Stearns on religious, political, and social subjects, and he exemplified his views to an extent which Mr. Stearns was unable to do. Yet, there was a tendency to divergence between them which grew continually wider, though it never resulted in actual antagonism. These two men illustrated Goethe's celebrated saying: "Thought broadens, but weakens; action strengthens, but narrows." Mr. Stearns recognized Wasson as the broadest mind he had ever met, but his mode of life was such that he could not adapt himself to Mr. Wasson's breadth. His mind was no longer open to conviction; and on the other hand Wasson's habit of weighing the *pros* and *cons* of a subject gave an appearance of indecision, which Mr. Stearns mistook for weakness. Neither did he approve of Wasson's feminine friendships, which are one of the emoluments of a man of refined tastes. A certain Boston lady who came occasionally to see Mr. Wasson gave Mrs. Stearns great annoyance; but it was impossible to prevent this, for her father was one of Wasson's most helpful friends. What made the matter worse, she was a noted flirt.

What Mr. Stearns did like was Mr. Wasson's perfect sincerity, his keen penetration, and absence of all eccentricity. He did not believe in Alcott's vegetable diet, in Emerson's naturalism, or in Thoreau's idea of turning human beings back into oak trees. With all his advanced thought and

progressive tendencies, Wasson had a thoroughly sound, healthful nature. He was one of the best talkers of his time; not so brilliant as Lowell or Wendell Phillips, but rising to higher flights, and his fund of good material was simply inexhaustible.

Mr. Stearns had long desired to make a journey to Kansas, and to see the country and its people with his own eyes. The present time seemed a favorable opportunity, and so he set forth the last of April, taking Philadelphia *en route*. On May-Day he wrote to Mrs. Stearns from that city:

"I had no time to write last evening, and so you will not get this until Thursday. My first move yesterday was for Peter and Susie Leslie. He has gone to Broad Mountain and will not be home until Friday, but Susie was delighted with my offer to take him with me; thought he would go, if his engagements will permit. If Howe and Bird both fail me, I will try to get him or some one else here to go on. Have no doubt of success.

"*Later.* Frank Bird has just arrived. Dr. Howe too sick to travel, and we leave here to-night or to-morrow noon, probably to-night. To-day I have spent the morning with J. Miller McKim. He approves of my plans, and thinks after the elections are over that national aid can be obtained here for them. Approves of aid to M—— and operations in that quarter at once.

"Now I have only time to say that I hope you got safe and comfortably home. My enterprise looks well to-day, and that keeps up my spirit.

"Your loving husband,

"GEORGE L. STEARNS."

It may be imagined that Mr. Stearns received a cordial welcome in Kansas. He might have had a public ovation, but he avoided constitutionally

everything in that line. He disliked holiday speeches by himself or others. The important men of the territory crowded about him—there were so many of them—and entertained him in such homely manner as they could. It was fortunate that he could drink whiskey cocktails; and perhaps it would have been better for his health to have taken more of them; but he was always abstemious. An eye-witness afterward recorded an interesting conversation concerning John Brown between General Jim Lane and Mr. Stearns, but the extract has disappeared and it cannot be recalled. Governor Robinson was not to be found anywhere and evidently avoided Mr. Stearns. The eighth of May Mr. Stearns wrote to his wife:

"Yesterday a black man was kidnapped from this place, which set the people in some commotion, but the real abolitionists are the exception. Have seen most of the latter class. They are a sturdy race.

"Ames, the United States marshal who was shot at Topeka, was the same who previously tried to arrest Montgomery and there has been no second attempt, as I supposed, to arrest him. All is quiet here, and I do not think there will be any trouble in this territory this year. It is generally understood that it was an attempt on the part of the marshal to get some money, instead of which he got a ball.

"Conway is here, but will leave with us for Chicago to attend the convention. I never saw him in so good health as at present. I am glad I came out here, and hope some time to come again with you. I think in another year we can accomplish it. They are having a fearful drought here. It has hardly rained at all since last September. Their winter wheat all dried up, and the corn does not even swell in the ground. If it continues there will be a famine here.

Of course all is dust, but it is not troublesome to me, at least as it would be to you. I send you samples of it in this paper, which was clean when I began to write.

"May 9. So busy last night that I forgot to put this in the mail. My visit has been eminently successful, but not exactly as I supposed. I stay here to-day to get letters from home. Hope to get one from you."

A veil of mystery hangs over Mr. Stearns' Kansas expedition. That he attempted to form some kind of organization there is evident; but he does not appear to have confided this even to his wife. It is noticeable that Judge Conway accompanied him to Chicago; and at the Republican convention Conway first voted for Chase, and afterward for Lincoln.*

At this time Emerson asked me: "What do you hear from your father in Kansas?" I replied: "He finds it a very beautiful country." "No," said Emerson, "it is *not* a beautiful country; for that you must have woods and mountains, and there are none in Kansas." Mr. Stearns looked at the subject from a less poetic point of view. He foresaw in the fertile prairies of the West a great opportunity for struggling humanity.

He wrote to Mrs. Stearns from Chicago, May 17:

"I have to-day two letters from you and one from Frank—your letter, May 9 and Frank's May 12, and have telegraphed that I am here and will leave for Philadelphia to-night.

* We find that Lincoln paid the expenses of one Kansas delegate to the convention. See Herndon's "Lincoln," iii, 458.

"I found on arrival at Lawrence some earnest men, who are desirous to use active measures if they could have the means. Among them a Mr. Stewart, who tells me he formerly lived with Mr. Henry A. Page. S. has several colored people on his farm, one a good-looking young girl who, when her master tried to take improper liberties with her, knocked him down and ran off.

"He, with others I saw, assured me that it was the wish of the majority of the people of Kansas to make it a 'free state' for blacks as well as whites, and they would do so if the means could be procured to effect an organization.

"If I had returned home my work would only have been half developed, and of course half done. I now feel confident that we can make the whole of Kansas a place of rest for the 'panting fugitive,' and *that* done, Missouri, Arkansas, and the Indian Territory can be cleared of slaves.

"Montgomery is a splendid man. I will tell you lots of stories about him when I get home."

Not one word concerning the Republican convention. In truth Mr. Stearns felt little interest in its proceedings. The Republican party had taken a backward step, and its leader, Seward, the champion of the higher law, who seemed providentially appointed, had reversed his record in order to adapt himself to the times. Chase was Mr. Stearns' candidate, but he knew politics too well to expect his nomination. Yet he might have remained to see the game played out, with his friend Bird, had it not been for his wife, who suffered not so much from loneliness as from a continual fear that something dreadful might happen to him.

Mr. Stearns brought home with him a humorous saying of old Tom Benton's concerning Stephen A. Douglas, which was widely circulated at the time, but now long since forgotten. Benton said: "Mr.

Capt. JAMES MONTGOMERY of Kansas

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Douglas wants to be President, sir; he can't do it, sir. His coat-tails are too near the ground, sir." Mr. Douglas' short figure did not suit the fashion of the day at all.

When Mr. Stearns was asked how he liked the nomination of Lincoln, he said: "My only objection to him is that he has always supported the Fugitive Slave Law. He may do, however, as well as another." Wasson was very much pleased with it and said: "I nominated Lincoln for the Presidency nearly two years ago. He made some remarks concerning the Declaration of Independence in his campaign with Douglas, with which I agreed thoroughly, and I said then that he was the man we ought to have for President." This interested Mr. Stearns very much, and the two gentlemen discussed Lincoln and his candidacy for some time, finally concluding that if he had been born in New England or Ohio he would have been a good Free-soiler.*

The attempt has been made to show, though not to prove, that Lincoln's nomination in 1860 was the result of a great popular movement. It is true that this happened in 1864, when he was renominated in spite of the opposition of the leading politicians of his party. In 1860 Lincoln was comparatively unknown east of Ohio, except to politicians; and the secret of his nomination was the principle in American politics, now sufficiently well known,

* What Lincoln said was, that he did not believe our forefathers intended that men were equal in all respects, but that they ought to be equal before the law.

that a candidate with a short record has a better chance for election than an old party-leader. This is the reason why Clay never could be elected, and why Sherman of Ohio never could be nominated. No matter how high-minded a statesman may be, in course of years he is obliged to change his tactics and adapt himself more or less to outward conditions. He is fortunate if he is not obliged to contradict himself. What he says at one time will offend one class of people, and at another time another class. It is impossible to please everybody, and if he becomes a presidential candidate his speeches are so many witnesses against him, which the opposition are not slow to take advantage of.

About the middle of June Mr. Stearns wrote to Judge Conway inviting him to come to Boston to consult with him concerning Kansas affairs, which evidently gave him uneasiness. It is a pity that this letter should have been lost, for we may judge from Conway's reply that it contained matter of importance. On the 17th instant the latter wrote to him from Baltimore:

"Your kind favor of the 15th is at hand. I have no business requiring my presence in Boston at this time; so that if I visit it, I must do so at your account. This, I shall, of course, be glad to do, as much for the pleasure it will afford me personally, as for the accommodation it may be to you.

"Should Douglas be nominated by the convention now in session in this city the South will bolt, and Lincoln be elected President; in which case I do not think a movement to prevent his inauguration at all improbable. What would become of Kansas in the confusion which would follow such a proceeding, God only knows. Should Douglas not be

nominated, but if the convention unites in some other candidate, Guthrie for example, then Lincoln would not probably be elected, but the Democratic candidate instead. The result of this would be that the present application for Kansas' admission would be discarded, and new proceedings instituted for another state organization founded on Democratic principles."

The infatuation of the Northern Democracy for Douglas almost seems to have been providential. The Southern delegates at Baltimore offered them Seymour of New York, who, if more pro-slavery, was also a more substantial man than Douglas, and a decided improvement on Pierce and Buchanan,—but the opportunity was lost. General B. F. Butler distinguished himself by refusing to sit in a convention where the slave-trade was openly advocated.*

The movement to make John A. Andrew governor originated with Frank W. Bird and Henry L. Pierce, and George L. Stearns quickly joined it. He subscribed to a fund for the purpose, and influenced such people as he was in contact with. His mill-hands elected Andrew delegates in one of the Charlestown wards. It was now that the organization of the Kansas Aid committee came to be of good service; for it was a foregone conclusion that the men who served to help Kansas would be just the ones to support Andrew. These were applied to in various ways, personally and by letter, with a

* This was the first step in General Butler's transformation to the antislavery cause, in which, to tell the truth, he was always consistent.

result more than satisfactory. The nomination of Andrew was not a popular movement, but the rank and file of the party seized on it with alacrity; and it was carried through over the heads of the more mercenary class of politicians, who feared the stout, curly-haired man as a determined enemy to the lobby interests of the state-house.

The last of June Chevalier Howe said to Mr. Stearns: "Let us take our boys to New York to see the Great Eastern;" and so they did. The Great Eastern was a mammoth steamship, the largest ever built, and had just made its first trip across the ocean. We went to the Fifth Avenue Hotel (brand new and very fine), where Rev. Gideon Achs soon made his appearance. Mr. Achs remarked there was no other street in the world like Broadway,—so many miles of costly buildings,—though the architecture was not so good as it might be. Dr. Howe and his son * appeared the next morning, and the whole party went to view the big steamer, which Mr. Stearns and the doctor examined from stem to stern. Afterward we went to an ice-cream saloon on Broadway, where Dr. Howe assured us we could get the real article; and when we were somewhat cooled off the doctor said: "Well, Stearns, what do you think of her?" "I think she is too big," he replied. "If a man is going to increase his business he should do it gradually and not at such a long jump. I have known a number of failures from that cause."

Meanwhile Stephen A. Douglas was energeti-

* Now Professor Henry M. Howe of Columbia College.

cally stumping the Northern states, in favor of squatter sovereignty. Wasson met him in August on the Bangor steamboat, and did not like him better for a close acquaintance. He had a red, coarse-featured face, and made a speech at every landing where the boat stopped. He always said: "I take this applause as intended to be a recognition of the great principle of squatter sovereignty." To an educated person this sounded ridiculous enough.

Mr. Stearns attended the Republican convention at Worcester in September, and sat as a delegate from some town in the western part of the state. He could not obtain an election in Medford, where even Republicans were tinged with the pro-slavery element of the place. John A. Andrew was nominated without difficulty, and a series of uncompromising resolutions were adopted, which rang through the country like the sound of a bugle. Frank Bird and his friends carried everything before them; but it was the spirit of old John Brown that nominated the governor of Massachusetts.

At the same time Governor Banks performed a statesman-like act for which he should always be credited. He summoned all the militia of the state to meet in a muster on Concord plains, where they were drilled a suitable time and then marched around the old monument on the battle-field, with the governor at their head. This was evidently intended as a warning to secessionists.

For the next six weeks Mr. Stearns was a busy man. He was not only active in Boston, but went

to New York to consult Horace Greeley, concerning whom there was a general feeling of apprehension since the Chicago convention. A great effort was being made to defeat Andrew. Beacon Street* and Harvard University were aroused, and the Bell and Everett torchlight procession in Boston rivalled that of the Lincoln wide-awakes. The whole community was in a state of the severest tension, and yet it was one of the most orderly elections on record.

On Saturday evening before the November election Mr. Stearns had just returned from the Bird Club, when a long procession of torches was seen winding its way toward the house. They filled the front yard, and a large part of the field beyond. Three cheers were given for George L. Stearns. He came out, and thanked them for the compliment. Then the candidate for state senator invited him to join them in the procession; and a hollow square was formed for Mr. Stearns, the senator, and the representative from Medford. They proceeded to an open field on Ship Street, where hot coffee and crackers were provided, and the senator and representatives made speeches, and then Mr. Stearns was called on. Standing on a wooden box, he spoke very much as follows—in his hesitating manner:

" I consider this to be the most important election that has ever taken place in our country. On Tuesday next it is going to be decided whether we

* Yet Andrew governed so wisely that in four years he became the favorite of Beacon Street.

are a nation of free men, or to be ruled by an oligarchy of slaveholders, as we have been for the past twenty-five years. It is as important as that battle which was fought over there by our grandfathers." He pointed to Bunker Hill Monument, which nobody could see owing to the darkness. "Now," he said, "I have good news to tell you. I was with Senator Wilson this afternoon and he assured me there could be no question but that Lincoln and Hamlin would be elected." That naturally caused great applause, so that it was some minutes before Mr. Stearns could proceed. Then he said: "I have great confidence in Mr. Wilson's statement, for he is a very careful man, who does not like to be found in the wrong. I can also tell you, that we are going to have the best governor that has ever sat in the state-house at Boston, and I do not except Hancock and Adams." After a few more remarks, Mr. Stearns retired amid general applause.

I can see him now standing there with his long beard against the dark sky, surrounded by the flaring torches, his face full of earnestness and determination.

The following Tuesday Mr. Stearns did not return until after eleven o'clock. He walked into the house like a young man and said: "Abraham Lincoln is elected President. Pennsylvania, Indiana and Illinois have all gone Republican. At the last moment Wilson had a panic in regard to New York; but twenty minutes later news came in that the state was carried by a large majority. The only funeral is that Burlingame has been defeated."

Anson Burlingame was candidate for Congress in one of the Boston districts, and his defeat was the net result of the Bell and Everett movement. It proved, however, to be the making of his fortune.

The next morning, seeing that everybody in the house, even the servants, looked unusually happy, Mr. Stearns said: "While we have good reason to rejoice at this victory we ought to remember that there are thousands of others who are grievously disappointed." This evidently referred to the Federal office-holders who would lose their places with the change of administration; and he realized only too well what it meant for a man to have his bread taken away from him.

Vanity Fair was the American *Punch* of those days, and shortly after the election it published a cartoon of a masked headsman standing by his block with an axe on which was the word "Rotation." Underneath was the sentence, "The Fourth of March—a hint to office-holders." When this was shown to Mr. Stearns he seemed to shiver all through, and said: "Ah, that is truly terrible."

XV

Civil War

South Carolina had already adopted a belligerent attitude before the end of November; but the embers of civil war were still smouldering in Kansas, and ready at any moment to burst into a flame. The following extracts from a letter from Captain Montgomery to Mr. Stearns, dated Mound City, Kansas, November 20, 1860, throw more light on the Pottawatomie lynchings than all the commentaries that have been published in regard to that dubious subject:

"In the winter of '59, after the second expulsion of Border-ruffians, a county meeting, duly advertised and largely attended, composed mainly of Democrats and conservative men, Bob Mitchell himself among them, passed a series of resolutions sustaining the jayhawkers, and condemning to perpetual banishment those violent men, who had been forcibly expelled. The resolutions passed unanimously, even Bob Mitchell voting in the affirmative.

"In fact, it was plain to the common sense of every man that if it had been necessary to *drive* them out, it was necessary to *keep* them out. Such were their habits, and the violence of their character, that it were vain to think of living with them on peaceable terms. Our 'Free-state' Democrats are, to-day, more venomous and less disposed to forgive and forget than their Border-ruffian brethren.

"Cowardly and sneaking, they are the men to *plan* the schemes for assassination which they depend on the 'Border-ruffians' to execute. Striking in the dark, and keeping their names and numbers concealed, they hoped

to stampede the whole antislavery force of the territory. Of the existence of this 'dark lantern fraternity,' we have incontestable evidence.

"We are in possession not only of their plans, but even their *private signals,* and, as in the case of More, we have evidence sufficient to warrant handling several of them individually.

"We have had several additions to our colored population within the week, while several of our Democratic friends have left the country. A friend observed to me yesterday: 'The Democrats are leaving and the *Black Republicans* are coming in.'"

The lynching of More and Scott in the autumn of 1860 did not differ essentially in character from the Pottawatomie lynching in 1856. It is not to be supposed for a moment that Mr. Stearns approved of such proceedings, but he recognized more clearly than some of our historians do, that there was no law of any value on the borders of Kansas, and that the only justice that could be obtained was at the muzzle of a rifle. We may judge of the human material with which Montgomery had to deal by the secessionist who told General Grant in a St. Louis horse car, that they had already strung up half a dozen Union men in his county.

The pusillanimous behavior of President Buchanan was now the universal topic. *Vanity Fair* caricatured him as a candle burning out, as a toad with its mouth sealed up, and in various other guises. Mr. Stearns said to John A. Andrew: "Let us go to Washington and survey the ground for ourselves." This was just what Andrew wished to do himself before he entered on the duties of governor; so in the middle of

December they started, dining and discussing the situation with leading Republicans in New York and Philadelphia by the way. That winter Mr. Stearns read the *New York Herald* more than any other paper, because he said he wanted to know what the enemy was doing; and he had only reached Philadelphia when he found this paragraph in it:

> "Governor-elect Andrew of Massachusetts and George L. Stearns, of John Brown notoriety, have gone to Washington together. It is believed the object of their visit is to brace up weak-kneed Republicans."

The *Herald* was quite right. Messrs. Andrew and Stearns used very bracing language to all members of the party who seemed to require it. Firmness was the word; and they made good use of it, even to Charles Francis Adams, who held the traditional notion of his family that it would be better for the United States to be smaller rather than larger. On December 23, Mr. Stearns wrote to Dr. S. G. Howe:

"Dear Friend:

"Yours of 20th is at hand. I will see the persons you have named and be ready to report as soon as I have returned home. Stone, I have no doubt, will be an acquisition of great value, but we shall want an editor of equal ability. Some persons here say that we must have $10,000 pledged to secure success, and my present plan is to pay a manager and editor each a moderate salary and one-half the profits, the other half to go to the guaranty fund, or

be used in extending the paper. To succeed we must play a bold game. Andrew appears as well as usual. We are having a right good time. You will see all the Washington gossip in the papers before this reaches you, and I shall only give the impression it has made on me, which is that if any Republican members vote for concession or compromise they are politically dead. If a majority of the party vote for it, the party is dead. I have to-day seen a number of leading men and all their talk was a resolution for the impeachment of the President.

"We are told Lincoln says no friend of his will propose either dissolution or concession. Wilson says: 'They meet us with long faces, and we laugh at them and tell them to go.' In the Senate Committee of Thirteen, all the Republicans voted against the compromises; which, as there would be no compromise without them, was understood to be fatal. When they came to the Fugitive Slave Law, Wade told them that, as they were going out of the Union, there was no need of voting on that, for it would then die of itself. If this goes on much further I think we may expect the immediate abolition of slavery, even if it requires an ocean of blood. If war with the Cotton States comes, I am sure of it.

"Yours faithfully,

"GEORGE L. STEARNS."

Few realized at this time the abyss that was yawning beneath the republic. On Christmas eve Mr. Stearns wrote to William L. Robinson, of Boston:

"I am well satisfied that the Southern Party determined to secede, to see if they could not break up the Republican Party, which they hoped to do by a Northern Panic. They expected to break our banks, paralyze our industry, fail our merchants, and starve our operatives. That this was and is their game is evident by their constant endeavors, both in public and private, to induce the Northerners to make some proposition as a bribe to induce them to remain in the Union.

"They have *failed*. Their plan is exposed, and the effect will be to consolidate the Republican Party more closely than it could be done by any other means. Neither will they be able to secede or break up the Union. It is confessed by the leaders of the Southern Party, they have now lost control of the movement. It is now in the hands of the masses and they tremble before the *storm* they have raised. If any proof of this was wanting, the fact that eminent Southern men of strong conservative tendencies are now most inveterate Fire-eaters, advocating extreme measures that their private judgment condemns, is conclusive on this point.

"Here the leaders are sad; they see the signs of recuperation at the North and the daily depreciation and distress at the South; therefore they are anxious for a compromise. But they will not get it. First, because a compromise is not possible in the nature of things; and secondly, because the Republican Party are fully determined not to make one. An effective compromise is not possible when the parties have no faith in each other, and this is the case with the Northern and Southern parties.

"Do you ask, What shall we do? I answer, *Keep quiet.**

"I told you a short time since that no act of Congress or resolution of a convention could be of any avail to settle this controversy. That is in the hands of the Lord. To-day I believe it more firmly than ever."

Mr. Stearns returned from Washington delighted with Governor Andrew. "If he were in the Senate," he said, "he would take the place of both Sumner and Wilson." He did not, however, count on Sumner's physical endurance, which was one of the elements of his success; and he was almost shocked afterwards to find that Andrew did not appreciate Emerson: he appreciated the character of the man, but not his intellect. Andrew might have made a great jurist, but he lacked imagination.

One result of their expedition was Governor Andrew's order to have the equipment of the state militia placed on a war footing. Massachusetts regiments were the first to march through Baltimore.

The Crittenden compromise now hove in sight—an impracticable attempt to bridge the yawning chasm with rotten planks. Crittenden, the natural successor to Henry Clay, was an honest and patriotic Kentuckian; but the game had been long since played out. Nevertheless, it was reported in Bos-

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* This watchword explains Sumner's attitude during the winter of 1861. Perhaps it originated with Sumner.

ton that Sumner would support the measure for the sake of consistency to his avowed peace principles. Mr. Stearns wrote to know if this were possible, and received the following telegram in reply:

> "I am against sending commissioners to treat of surrender by the North. Stand firm."

Two days later this was followed by a memorable letter:

WASHINGTON, 3d Feb., '61.

"MY DEAR SIR:

"There are but few who stand rooted, like the oak, against a storm. This is the nature of man. Let us be patient.

"My special trust is this. *No possible compromise or concession will be of the least avail.* Events are hastening which will supersede all such things. This will save us. But I hope to see Massachusetts in this breaking up of the Union ever true. God keep her from playing the part of Judas or—of Peter! You may all bend or cry pardon—I will not. Here I am and I mean to stand firm to the last. God bless you!

"Ever yours,

"CHARLES SUMNER."

One has to study the *Congressional Globe* in order to realize how practical a statesman Sumner was. During the war period his hand was everywhere, and always effectively. No one certainly understood the slavery question better, if any so well. His course from 1850 till the close of the war was a straight line to his object; and all others,

even President Lincoln himself, were obliged to give way before him.

It is well known that it was considered essential for the safety of the President-elect that he should enter Washington in disguise. Long before that Mr. Stearns had become anxious in regard to Sumner's safety, and the last of January he wrote to preacher Stewart of Kansas to arrange with him to go to Washington and watch over Sumner as a private detective. This was just the work which Stewart liked, and Mr. Stearns afterward learned that, although he did not neglect his duty to the senator, Stewart lived a wild life in Washington and narrowly missed going to jail himself. This continued until after Lincoln's inauguration.

At the same time Mr. Stearns wrote to Caleb J. Pratt, of Lawrence (and probably to others in Kansas), urging an organization of state militia for fear of an invasion of the secessionists from Missouri.* Mr. Pratt replied that there was a militia company in Lawrence, but that it would require a thousand dollars to place it in an efficient condition. Whether or not Mr. Stearns provided this sum is unknown.

The following letter in Mr. Stearns' own writing was probably written to Sumner, but is without date or address:

"Of what use, then, will it be for the Republicans to debase themselves by offering propositions of settlement to Jefferson Davis and his friends? He knows well enough

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* It was the German element in eastern Missouri that prevented this, and saved the state to the Union.

that should the leading Southerners accept any of the terms offered, and then, going to Charleston or New Orleans, tell the mob that they have settled the dispute, and from that time they must be quiet, for the United States authority would again be extended over the South, that they would hang them, as abolitionists. Will New Mexico give them fresh lands, and cheap slaves? Or will any constitutional guaranty perform the same office for them? These have been promised to the Mexicans. They will require them at the hands of their leaders, and if the promise is not fulfilled, they will take their recompense where they can get it."

One compromise failed after another, until finally, on the 3d of March, the mere shadow of a compromise in the shape of a constitutional amendment prohibiting the interference of Congress with slavery in the states where it already existed was passed by the dubious majority of a single vote. As Congress had never undertaken such an interference and as no one, not even Sumner, had ever proposed it, this amendment amounted to nothing, and was never ratified by the legislatures of the states. The next day Lincoln became President, and the Union was divided—never to be restored except by *force.*

For Lincoln and Seward to have permitted the secession of the slave states was simply impracticable. The capital of the nation would no longer be safely located, on the border of a foreign state. It would have been necessary to remove it further north; and this would have been so humiliating that no people with a just feeling of national pride could or would have endured it. Moreover, a government which permits its authority to be disputed

by one portion of its subjects loses the respect of them all; and a government that is not respected soon goes to pieces.

The first month of Lincoln's administration was taken up in making appointments. This was the more important as Buchanan's office-holders were not only tainted with disloyalty, but in numerous cases very corrupt. His postmasters had been in the habit of opening letters, and his officials in the custom-houses enriched themselves at the public expense. In 1861 civil-service reform meant a clean sweep of the broom; and though many excellent men suffered from this there was no time for discrimination.

President Lincoln gave Sumner the disposition of the most important offices in Boston, and if all United States senators, and cabinet officers, had been like Sumner, there never would have been occasion for a civil-service commission. He never proposed a personal friend for an office, and it is doubtful if he ever consulted his own interest in an appointment. Frank W. Bird might well have been made collector of the port in consideration for his services to the Republican party, but Mr. Bird did not ask it and Sumner appointed instead Mr. Goodrich, a worthy merchant of the city who had failed in the panic of 1857. Mr. Stearns had a hand in this. Sumner was slow and conscientious in making his decision. The third week of March Mr. Stearns went on to Washington again. Sumner greeted him cordially, and immediately asked his advice. Mr. Stearns advocated Goodrich for collector and Dr. Palfrey for postmaster of Bos-

ton; and both were appointed.* He gave Mr. Stearns the disposal of a number of minor offices in the custom-house and the navy-yard.

On his return through New York Mr. Stearns called on Perkins and Schmidt to purchase lead. When they asked him, "Are we going to have peace or war?" he said: "I think it will be war. If there is a fight going on in the street between two draymen, there will be three persons who will want to see it out, where one will wish to stop it." "Bullets are made of lead, Mr. Stearns," said Mr. Perkins, laughing.

If Mr. Stearns had expended his energy during the war on money-making, like Commodore Vanderbilt, he might easily have become a millionaire. He did not, however, neglect his own affairs during these patriotic excursions. His chief clerk wrote him a letter every day while he was absent, to which Mr. Stearns replied by telegraph, if necessary.

The war was precipitated by Seward's refusal to receive the rebel commissioners. This was equivalent to a withdrawal of diplomatic relations, and the attack on Fort Sumter ensued as a matter of course.

On the Sunday following this event Mr. Stearns went to Boston to consult with Governor Andrew in regard to the unprotected condition of Kansas. Going to State Street to learn the news, he found Fletcher Webster on the balcony of the old state-

* Dr. Palfrey never knew this until the writer informed him of it in 1878.

house speaking to a large audience, in which nearly everyone wore a silk hat. Beacon Street was rallying to the support of the government. Judge Russell told Mr. Stearns that Webster intended to raise a regiment, and Mr. Stearns was glad to know it.

The territorial government of Kansas had neither means nor authority to enlist troops, and applications to the government at Washington produced no results. Finally a delegation of Kansas men composed of James H. Lane, George W. Collamore, Judge Ewing, and others determined to go to Washington, and Mr. Stearns agreed to meet them there the second week of May. At the same time Mr. Stearns was doing his utmost to secure Judge Conway's reëlection. On May 4 the latter wrote to him from Lawrence, Kansas:

"Dear Sir:

"I have drawn upon you at sight for $300, by draft of date 3d May, in favor of Geo. W. Collamore, Esq. My prospects of a reëlection are becoming much more favorable, and it is now highly probable that I will be successful.

"I have just received a noble letter from Senator Sumner which will be of good assistance to me.

"Very truly yours,

"M. F. Conway."

Mr. Stearns started for Washington the morning of May 6, going first to Albany to see Governor Morgan of New York. He did not find much satisfaction, however, in Governor Morgan, whom he described in a letter to his wife as too much like a certain character in A Midsummer Night's Dream—"a politician of the Thurlow Weed school."

The same night he left for New York in a sleeping-car—such as they were in those times—and lunched the next day with John Hopper, at Delmonico's. Such a dinner as that was; for Mr. Hopper could talk with any man of his time. He said: "Last week I went to my old oyster-dealer to get some Virginia oysters, and he told me, 'I cannot give you Virginia oysters; the rebels have seized my schooner, and *hung my captain.'* What do you think of that? I tell you, Stearns, it would be better to let those devils go, if we did not have to live alongside of them. As it is, we must either crush them out, or be crushed ourselves." "I consider non-resistance an unmitigated humbug," said this scion of Quakerism in conclusion. Mr. Stearns was sanguine that the rebellion would be suppressed.

In the afternoon he was off to Philadelphia, where he had a good night's rest; and this was fortunate, for the next day, when he started for Washington, the train had a battery of flying artillery on board, and somewhere in Delaware it stuck on an up grade, and he did not reach Annapolis—charmingly quiet and peaceful old city—until midnight. At Annapolis junction there was another detention, and Mr. Stearns walked up and down the platform talking politics with a very gentlemanly New Yorker who had divided his lunch with him on the boat. It was two in the morning when Mr. Stearns reached Willard's Hotel, only to find its southern ell in a bright blaze. A score of fire-zouaves were trying to extinguish the flames, and performed wonderful gymnastics

on the walls and roofs. It was a strange sight to see weary travellers registering their names in a house that was on fire. Mr. Stearns said: "There is no rest for me here"—two o'clock A.M.—and then, seizing his valise, started for another hotel.

The zouaves put out the fire, and next morning Mr. Stearns returned to Willard's, where he met the Kansas delegation and held a council with them. Nothing had as yet been accomplished. Washington was all excitement and confusion; and only the most pressing matters could obtain attention. Seward was inaccessible, and Cameron could only make general promises. They concluded to go to Montgomery Blair, the postmaster-general, whose brother was operating against the rebels in Missouri. Blair was found to be fully alive to the necessity of protecting Kansas, and promised to speak of the matter at the next cabinet meeting. In the evening of May 10, Mr. Stearns wrote to his wife:

> "We are well, and I have the satisfaction of not coming here for nothing. There is a hitch on in the arming of Kansas men that I am trying to remove. There are B. movements here that I shall probably control, and in other ways I am making myself useful to my country.
>
> "This is the place for rumors, but nothing more is known here than in Boston. There is a daily expectation of an attack by one party or the other, but I do not think either party will risk a great battle."

On the 16th he wrote again:

> "Yesterday afternoon, in furtherance of my plans, I went to Silver Spring to see old Mr. Blair. He received me very cordially, and, talking about the war, I asked him, 'What

news from Missouri?' He told me that he was afraid his son Frank had gone to Jefferson City with troops, and there was danger that the Missourians would rise and be too strong for them, but he hoped to hear that Jim Lane had gone to Arkansas with two regiments of Kansas troops to make a diversion. When I told him that no troops had been equipped in Kansas, and Jim Lane was sick at Altoona, Pennsylvania, on his way to Washington, he said something should be done immediately and we must go to the President. I then laid before him the requests of Collamore and also of Stewart, for regiments, and we agreed to meet at ten to-morrow and see what could be done."

Old Frank P. Blair, the contemporary of Jackson and Benton, was unable to keep his appointment to see the President, but he wrote a letter to his son urging vigorous action. Montgomery Blair exerted himself to such purpose that the Kansas delegation obtained authority to raise two regiments mainly at government expense, and the promise of a field battery.

Mr. Stearns returned to Boston, talking half the night with John M. Forbes in a sleeping-car; and the following Saturday he told the Bird Club that it was easier to obtain a foreign appointment than to persuade the government to accept a regiment of volunteers.

At this same time the so-called Confederate Government found great difficulty in recruiting regiments. It was only able to concentrate about twenty-five thousand troops at Bull Run in July, and this was not enough to gain a decisive victory.

George S. Hillard and most of the old Whigs were satisfied by this time that the country was going to destruction. A wealthy friend of Hil-

lard's purchased an immense tract of western land for the security of his children. Mrs. Hillard did not like to believe this and wrote to Mr. Stearns for advice and encouragement. He replied to her June 10:

"My dear Mrs. Hillard:

"It is so many thousand soldiers; so many million negroes; and so many hundred millions of dollars. My mind is confused with it all, but I trust we shall live through this distracted condition of affairs and see blue sky again.

"There was a man who lived in Medford, who was called Bill Hall. He traded with the West Indies, and it was 'molasses and niggers' and 'niggers and molasses;' and he did not feel quite sure which was which; but he had an idea that if the niggers were liberated he should lose his molasses. There are a good many like him in the city of Boston, but the time is approaching when they will be obliged to discriminate between negroes and molasses, and recognize that the negro is a man and not a kind of merchandise.

"Yours faithfully,

"George L. Stearns."

Two days later he was off to Washington again to see about the Kansas regiments, for which Sumner fortified him with this letter to the Secretary of the Treasury:

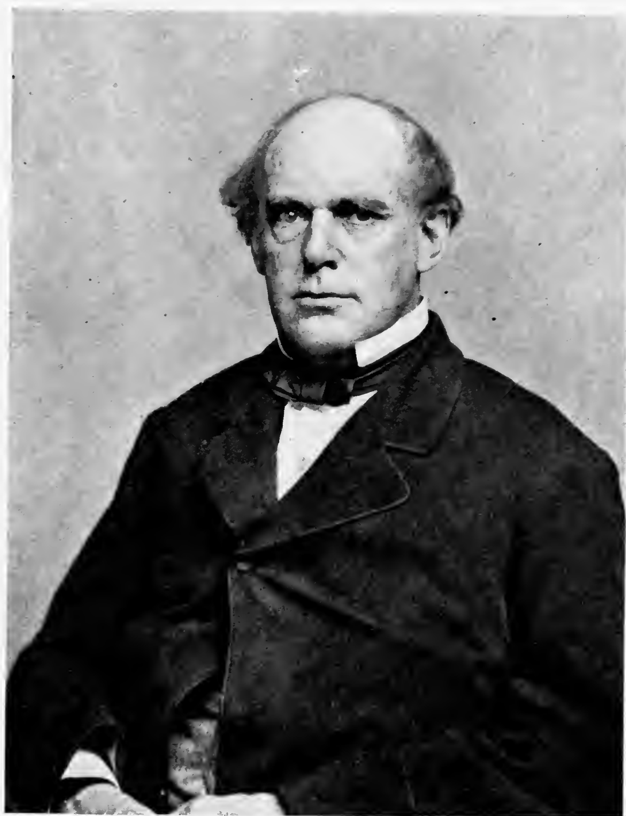
"Boston, 11th June, '60.

"My dear Chase:

"Mr. Stearns, the devoted friend of Kansas, one of our most earnest, generous, and noble friends, whose purse has been always open and his mind always active for the good cause, has occasion to see you. I commend him cordially.

"Ever yours,

"Charles Sumner."



SALMON P. CHASE

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James H. Lane had recovered from his illness at Altoona and was meditating great designs. He wanted to be made a major-general with three brigades, and attack the Southern Confederacy in the rear. George W. Collamore was to be his brigadier-general. Mr. Stearns liked the plan. We have no account of his interview with Secretary Chase, but on June 17 he wrote to Mrs. Stearns:

"I wrote you a long letter last night. To-day I have obtained for Collamore an order from the Secretary of War for three Kansas regiments, including all their supplies, to be furnished by the United States. Of one William A. Phillips is to be colonel, and Stewart one of the captains. It will be the crack regiment of that state. I have also laid my plan for sending off the fugitives. F. P. Blair, Sr., approves and will aid the enterprise, remarking it will never do to return them to bondage. I am happy."

The following day he wrote again:

"All my work prospers. The Governor is anxious to get rid of the slaves, and I expect will facilitate their exodus.

"Collamore has left for Kansas with authority to raise and fully equip three regiments, which equipment is so much extra. They do not grant it to others.

"Blair wants me to go to Fort Munroe and see Butler about it. This will take three days more, and then for our dear home.

"Jim Lane means to be in New Orleans by December."

Jim Lane never reached New Orleans, preferring a United States Senatorship to military glory; but this organization served to form a wing of General Sigel's army at the battle of Pea Ridge,

the first decisive Union victory of the war. Mr. Stearns wrote again on June 22:

"Only think of Colonel James Montgomery, United States volunteers; Captain John E. Stewart, same service. If Stewart had asked me for it he would have been Colonel Stewart, altho' I think it better as it is."

During Buchanan's administration Montgomery and Stewart were both outlaws. Now by a sudden change of fortune's wheel the outlaws were on the other side of the fence. Mr. Stearns wrote from Washington, June 24:

"Success attends me everywhere. I left Saturday P.M. for Fortress Monroe. Mr. Blair gave me a letter of introduction to General Butler, concluding with, 'I like him and think you will.'

"This put me in direct communication with him, and we had a free talk on the way to Newport News and back. He took me with him in his despatch-boat. Butler's views coincided with Blair's, and mine so *far*. He says that the freedmen must be removed when they press on him, but that is not yet. They more than earn their rations. There are about 350, including 60 women and children, there; but have not increased lately, because, the masters having first run away from the neighborhood of our troops, the slaves remain and live on the best of the rebel plantations, and work or play as they choose. As he keeps those who come to him at work they prefer to live at home in the absence of their masters, and do as they please. He says there is now $250,000 worth of sweet potatoes in the ground near Norfolk, and no market for them. These will keep the slaves until the cold weather; then we must take care of them.

"I have had a long talk with Sumner to-day, or rather I talked to him an hour, he listening attentively, and then, being interrupted, we adjourned it to this evening. The result of this conference you will learn on my return home."

Much that Mr. Stearns said and did was confided to his wife alone, and is buried with her. It was only by rare chance that she committed anything to paper. He was silent enough at home, but the man whom Sumner would listen to for an hour, must have been worth hearing. We may judge from the context that this conversation related to the welfare of the "contraband," who would be certain to be liberated on the advance of the Union army to Richmond; but whatever plans Mr. Stearns had at this time were either checked or retarded by the defeat at Bull Run.

On July 12 Judge Conway wrote to him:

"I have no doubt of Mr. Chase's recommendation as to the duty on lead being adopted by Congress. I shall vote for *all* Mr. Chase's recommendations, and I suppose the members generally would do the same."

Congress had met on the Fourth of July and had immediately admitted Kansas into the Union, giving seats to Lane and Conway as senator and representative. It will be noticed that Conway, who owed his election to Mr. Stearns and was in a measure his political man of business, intended to vote for the duty on lead, although he must have known that duties on raw material are to the disadvantage of manufacturers. That Mr. Stearns should have wished to learn as soon as possible which way the wind would blow was natural and proper, but he did not believe in the theory that the public welfare is best served by every man's pushing his own personal interest,—rather in the

Roman maxim that a great nation can only be supported by great personal sacrifices.

Ten days later came the news of the defeat at Bull Run; and while others were mourning over it Mr. Stearns said: "It is the first step toward the emancipation. If we had won a decisive victory, in less than six months the rebellious states would be back in the Union, the government would be out-voted in Congress, and we should have all our work to do over again."

A just account of this battle has never yet been given to the public. Dr. Ropes, who wrote the best statement of McClellan's campaign, has given a very inadequate one of Bull Run. It is doutbful if his figures are correct. General Sherman, who took part in the battle, calls it one of the best planned and the worst fought engagements of the war. The Confederate plan was similar to that of Waterloo on the British side; and yet they were unable to carry it out. Few prisoners were taken, and no serious pursuit was attempted.

XVI

Watching for the Hour

George L. Stearns, always sanguine, never despaired of the Union cause. In the darkest hours of the war he would say: "The North is sure to conquer in the end on account of its industrial superiority. There is much more danger that some compromise will be patched up and the work left half done." With a born diplomatist and political match-maker like Seward for secretary of state there was always danger of this; but the best friends of the cause at this time were the slave-holders themselves. They might have obtained peace at any time by returning to their allegiance and accepting a compensation for their slaves; but the ingrained superstition that slavery was essential to living in a warm climate prevented their doing this.

The reverse at Bull Run had a decidedly conservative effect on the administration, which reacted also upon Congress. It is possible that Wells and Cameron were afraid for their personal safety. This tendency was aggravated by the appointment of General McClellan to the command of the army of the Potomac. He had already declared his intention to put down slave insurrections with an iron hand, and this was sufficient to indicate his political proclivities. His house in Washington soon became the focus of a political

movement which was intended to upset the Republican party. "This," said General Sherman long afterward, "was fatal to Mr. McClellan's success;" but Lincoln and Seward could not help being conscious of it, and it placed the administration in a most trying position.

Congress adjourned in August, and Conway returned to Kansas, whence he wrote Mr. Stearns a rather doleful account of the condition of affairs. Under date of August 18 he says:

> "An attack by the Southern force is daily expected on Fort Scott, which has been made the depot recently of large supplies of provisions. The place is but poorly defended, and will probably fall into the hands of the enemy. We have not arms enough. The Government has been too slow. Our military is in a very backward state. Lane is at work, doing his best to hasten their organization. He is now on his way to Fort Scott. Many persons charge Governor Robinson with having thrown obstacles in the way of the organization of Lane's brigade, which I think quite likely." *

A month later Mr. Stearns wrote to John G. Whittier, urging him to exert his poetic genius again in the cause of emancipation, and received this reply, dated September 13:

"DR. FRIEND:

"Owing to absence from home, I did not see thy letter until last evening.

"It would have given me pleasure to have attended your meeting of the 10th inst.

"I presume I should fully agree with you as to

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* Appendix A.

the duty and expediency of striking more directly at the real cause of the war. As heretofore I shall use all my endeavors to this end. If the present terrible struggle does not involve emancipation, partial or complete, it is, at once, a most wicked and the most ludicrous war ever waged.

"Thanking thee and thy friends for the invitation, I shall be happy to coöperate with you to the extent of my power.

"Thou wast deeply interested in John Brown, I think. Let me call thy attention to a poem, 'Our First Martyr,' by Miss Phœbe Cary, of New York, in the last *Independent*.

"Very truly thy fd.,

"JOHN G. WHITTIER."

Mr. Stearns' political activity during the next nine months is only to be gleaned from the letters of others. His own letters were widely scattered, and an attempt to collect them would have been almost futile. It was a period of watching and waiting, and though always ready to apply his hand where there was work to be done, there would seem to have been little opportunity for this. Judge Conway wrote to him from Washington, November 1:

"Our Administration is undoubtedly pro-slavery. Its object is to bring the old elements into power, which used to exist North and South as the Whig party, espewing the 'Wooley Head' faction and taking in the 'Silver Grey.' Lincoln is an old Kentucky Whig, and Seward has gone over. They are pro-slavery; but talk about placing slavery where 'it will be in the course of ultimate extinction,' which is an utter fallacy."

This was the prevailing view of the administration during the autumn of 1861. What President Lincoln's real opinions were at that time, not even his private secretaries would seem to have known. He had a wonderful faculty for keeping his own counsel. It may have been the best policy that he could have pursued. Seward's proclamation to foreign powers that the war was not an antislavery war certainly injured our cause in England, but it helped the Union cause in the Northern states. An army had to be raised and a large portion of the recruits must be taken from the Democratic party. General McClellan was of the opinion that not less than six months would be required for this. Perhaps the administration was also waiting and watching.

The struggle on the slavery question was never more intense than during the next twelve months. Early in December Conway made his maiden speech in Congress, boldly affirming that the war never could succeed, nor the Union be restored again, except on antislavery lines. Mr. Stearns wished to have the speech printed and distributed broadcast. On Christmas Day Conway wrote:

"My speech will appear *in extenso* in the *Daily, Tri-Weekly,* and *Weekly Tribune.* It will be in the next *Weekly,* and perhaps to-morrow's *Daily,* but this latter is not certain.

"One thousand copies of the *Daily* (in wrappers) will be sent to me for franking, of which I will send you the greater portion.

"The expense will be $275."

In February Mr. Stearns published another

speech for Conway; not as a personal favor, for Conway himself would have resisted that, but for the good of the cause. During most of the year 1862 Mr. Stearns kept a clerk busy circulating documents and addresses by Sumner, Phillips, Andrew, and others, but his private affairs were now requiring more attention from him. Business was good, but the suspension of specie payments made the future look dark and dubious. Mr. Stearns never read a political economy in his life, so he escaped the dangers of that misleading influence. His simple good sense and love of veracity indicated that the safe course for him was to keep his business continually on a gold basis. Others took the risk of a rise or fall and sometimes lost, but Mr. Stearns preserved the even tenor of his way without paying much attention to the index of the gold board. When the superintendent of the Lowell railroad asked him how he managed his affairs in such troublesome times, he said: "I take an account of stock often, and then I purchase gold equal to the material on hand. In that way I secure myself against both good and evil fortune."

The hopefulness of the abolitionists and Free-soilers at the outbreak of the war had now changed to an almost painful condition of doubt and uncertainty. They looked upon Seward as a traitor, and they thought they saw in McClellan a second Jackson or Taylor, who, if successful, would be carried into the presidential chair by a popular wave in 1864. For this reason they redoubled their exertions. Beecher fairly thundered in his Brook-

lyn pulpit; Greeley wrote his most fiery editorials; Boston Music Hall resounded with applause at Phillips' fearless eloquence; while every antislavery editor throughout the North clamored for the emancipation. Sumner, Wade, and Wilson stood like rocks in the Senate, and there were few who dared to interfere with them. Governor Andrew went to Washington and interviewed the President himself.

Charles W. Slack, a member of the Bird Club, was highly useful at this time in preserving the organization of Theodore Parker's society. With this body as a nucleus, Boston Music Hall was filled every Sunday by an audience for which Mr. Slack obtained the ablest speakers and preachers. These Sunday gatherings could hardly be called religious services, for politics and negro philanthropy were the universal theme. The orthodox James H. Manning was followed by Lucretia Mott, a Quaker preacher of Philadelphia. It was a free political church, and more than once Wendell Phillips was obliged to enter it surrounded by a body-guard of his younger friends. Mr. and Mrs. Stearns attended these meetings whenever the weather permitted and usually had seats on the platform. When springtime came they often invited the speaker with other friends to their house to dinner. There was no small table-talk on such occasions; for these feasts were more like Platonic *symposia* of art and literature, in which both Phillips and Garrison were as much at home as they were in forensic discussions. On one such occasion, when Lucretia Mott was the orator of the

day, Garrison illustrated some statement with a quotation from one of Wordsworth's poems; Mrs. Stearns continued the quotation, and Phillips finished it, gracefully remarking that Mr. Garrison could have repeated the whole poem if he had chosen to do so. On another occasion Emerson remarked after Phillips had left the room: "This man is such a perfect artist that he ought to be walking in every gallery of Europe, and yet here he is fighting out these hard battles."

Once Mr. Stearns unintentionally played a practical joke on Wendell Phillips. Having filled his own carriage in Boston, he hired a one-horse affair to bring out some other guests, and in the evening gave it in charge to Mr. Phillips and Theodore Tilton to return to the city, but neglected to tell them whence he obtained it. He remembered this twenty minutes later, but concluded that Phillips would find his way out of the difficulty, and so he did. After laughing and joking with Tilton about their being sent on a fool's errand, Phillips examined the whip, and found the name of the stable on its handle.

General Sherman's criticism of engineer officers, that they naturally took to earthworks and defensive operations, applied perfectly to General McClellan, who was an able organizer, but by no means eager to fight a battle. He had been in command now for more than nine months, without accomplishing anything toward the suppression of the rebellion. Yet he had already become a popular hero in the imagination of the Democratic

party, as well as in that of many good Republicans, and was even spoken of as the American Napoleon. Public opinion is not far wrong in its admiration for military genius for rare qualities of mind and character are required to command a large army with success, but there is always danger of this admiration being misdirected. The real merit of a conqueror is to be estimated by a critical examination of the obstacles he has overcome. As Balzac says, the general public judges only by results.

Mr. Stearns was rarely mistaken in his opinion of public men, and he had already come to the conclusion that McClellan was neither a military genius nor a very judicious person in other affairs; but he recognized the danger to the Republican party from the McClellan craze. George P. Bradford, an old Free-soiler and friend of Emerson, came to dine with Mrs. Stearns, and expressed a great admiration for McClellan. Mr. Stearns told him that if he knew anything about McClellan he would not talk as he did; but he thought to himself, if a man like Mr. Bradford had such ideas, what can we expect from the average voter? Frank Bird informed him that a strong movement was already being organized to defeat Sumner and Andrew. Many disaffected Republicans had joined it, and it was supported by a large amount of capital. If Democratic candidates failed they intended to bring forward Judge Hoar, or Judge Thomas, as a compromise against Sumner, who was hated like Aristides for his uncompromising love of justice,—something that is very disagreeable to those who look only to self-interest.

On the second Sunday in June Mr. Stearns drove to South Boston and held a long consultation with Dr. S. G. Howe. "There is not a newspaper in Boston," said the Chevalier, "that will publish one of Sumner's speeches, or say a good word for him." * "Then," said Mr. Stearns, "we must have a paper of our own and I will put a thousand dollars into it as a sinking fund." "I cannot do that," replied Dr. Howe, "but I will give three hundred." It was arranged that the paper should be called the *Commonwealth,* and that James M. Stone, a rather high-minded politician of Charlestown, should be editor.

On leaving the house Mr. Stearns noticed Lord Byron's helmet, which had been presented to Dr. Howe in Greece—the finest reward he could have received for his services. The doctor took it down from the place where it hung, and showed it to him. Mr. Stearns did not think he should like to wear it. "You could not wear it," said the doctor, "for your head is too large. Frank Sanborn tried to put it on, but he found it was too small for him. Byron had a high forehead, and a beautifully shaped head, but its circumference was narrow." Byron's head was shaped like a woman's.

Rev. Moncure D. Conway preached a sermon in Cincinnati at this time which struck the right key-

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* The *Advertiser* of that time was under the control of Harvard University, and the *Transcript,* which has since been so fearless in the cause of human rights, was edited by a man who might truly be called a slave of the quill.

note and attracted general attention. "Launch out into the deep," he said to the administration, "and no longer drift among the shallows." Soon afterward he came to Boston, and Mr. Stearns arranged with him to assist Mr. Stone in editing the *Commonwealth,* while preaching and lecturing in Boston and vicinity. He gave a finer literary quality to the *Commonwealth* than any other journal in Boston could brag of, but Mr. Stearns soon discovered that M. D. Conway did not properly belong to his circle. He professed to be an Emersonian, but was really a disciple of Tom Paine; that is, he belonged to the eighteenth century, instead of the nineteenth; and besides this, he was continually running into extravagances of one kind or another. He would slight a friend one day, and the next day ask a favor of him. As Wasson said, he was a man with his feet in a large number of quicksands; and Mr. Stearns was not sorry when an opportunity occurred for sending M. D. Conway to England to represent the Union cause there as a native-born Virginian. Excepting on the slavery question two men could not differ more widely than did M. D. Conway and George L. Stearns; and much the same might be said of Conway and Emerson.

It is now universally admitted that McClellan's plans for his Yorktown campaign were interfered with, and that he did not have the fair chance that he should. It is more than probable that General Hitchcock, the President's military adviser, was responsible for this. He dined at Mr. Stearns'

house in April, 1862, and gave Mr. Stearns the impression that he was more of a philosopher than a soldier. Mr. Stearns afterward referred to several remarks of his, which indicated an unbusiness-like character. At the same time it is only fair to question whether this possibility was not included in General McClellan's plan. In fact, there is a statement in one of McClellan's letters, which indicates that President Lincoln had raised this very objection to it. McClellan's Yorktown plan resembled Napoleon's first Prussian campaign, but with this difference. Napoleon uncovered the road to Paris to the enemy contrary to all the rules of war, but Paris was six hundred miles away. McClellan uncovered Washington when he was less than two hundred miles away. The same course of events took place when Grant came upon McClellan's ground, and the National Capital was only saved by the heroism of General Sheridan. McClellan possessed the valuable quality of inspiring his men with confidence in himself, but he was not often to be seen on a battle-field.

Mr. Stearns thought he was too slow; but it was impossible at that time to find out the truth in regard to military movements, for the Democratic papers distorted events in one way, and the Republican papers in another. The ill success of McClellan's attempt on Richmond did not diminish his popularity. Instead of a conquering hero he was now looked upon as the martyr of political intrigues. Pope had proved a decided failure, and the difficulty was to find a general who could

fill McClellan's place. August 7 Mr. Stearns wrote from John Hopper's office in New York:

> "I am safely here, and have met General Doubleday. He is rather too lymphatic for a general, but for all that may be the best man to be had. He is yet in doubt as to his course; is afraid that the War Department would not give him the command. I shall probably get useful information and hear some history from him about McClellan and others. If so you shall have it."

One would like to know what General Doubleday thought of McClellan, but exactly those facts of history which would be most interesting are the ones which have to be concealed from us. "Why," cries Ruskin, "this cruel reticence of great minds?" Neither Grant, Sherman, nor any foreign military authority, has given a decided opinion in regard to General McClellan.

Mr. Stearns once repeated a saying in regard to McClellan, which was attributed to Secretary Stanton, at a time when the army was supposed to have been embarrassed by the bad condition of the roads, —that there was "more mud within than without."

During the spring and summer of 1862, Mr. Stearns was in continual consultation with Governor Andrew concerning the organization of regiments, temporary loans required for the purpose, and various other matters. The First Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteers was sent into camp close by Mr. Stearns' house, and became a regular afternoon entertainment for Medford society. One day the governor said to him: "Where can we get red gravel for the walks on Boston Common?" "In my cow-pasture," said Mr.

Stearns. The governor laughed and sent for it, and the big hole his men dug is still to be seen. Andrew was very fond of apples, so that he even kept them on his desk at the state-house. Mr. Stearns noticed this, and kept him well supplied. "You seem to have everything on that hill of yours," said the governor.

Mr. Stearns wanted to make a dinner-party for Sumner, but the Senator preferred a quiet afternoon under his grape-vines. On this occasion he told a curious story of Secretary Seward, substantially as follows: Mrs. Putnam, a lady-like colored woman of Boston, had named her son for Edmund Quincy, who generously offered to educate the boy. This could only be done in Paris, however, and as passports were necessary at that time to leave the United States, Mrs. Putnam wrote to Sumner for one, and Sumner considered it advisable to carry the application to the State Department himself. He showed the application to Seward, who said rather nervously: "Why do they describe his hair as woolly?"

"Probably," replied Sumner, "because it is. His grandfather was a slave."

"Well, this is rather awkward," replied Seward; "this is the first application we have had for a passport for a negro."

"I do not see that that makes any difference, Mr. Secretary," said Sumner. "Mr. Putnam has a right to it as much as you or I."

Mr. Seward moved about uneasily. "Well, you ought to know how it is," he said. "The New York elections are approaching, and if the news-

papers find out about this, there is no telling what use they will make of it. Now if you could write me a request in your own name for this colored person, it would simplify the case for me very much."

Mr. Sumner had no objection to doing that, but he could not see the occasion for it. However, he finally wrote a brief note of request and handed it to the secretary of state. Mr. Seward rang for a messenger, to whom he delivered Putnam's application, saying: "Take this to the passport clerk, and request him to make out a passport for Mr. Sumner's *friend.*"

Mr. Stearns thought this was the smallest business he had ever heard of.*

The first number of the *Commonwealth* appeared early in September, 1862, boldly advocating the emancipation of the slaves as a war measure, the removal of General McClellan as an incompetent commander, and the reëlection of Andrew and Sumner. Strange to relate, these three objects were accomplished within the next four months; although it is not to be presumed that the *Commonwealth* exercised much influence on the two former.

Thousands of copies were printed, and those which could not be sold were distributed to members of the legislature, country judges, and the like. If the truth is to be told, Senator Sumner

* Edmund Q. Putnam afterward married an English lady of independent fortune, and was well received in European society.

franked a thousand copies of the first number, though he did this without any definite knowledge of its contents. Mr. Stearns said: "It is an abuse of the privilege, but the whole franking system is an abuse. Where Sumner franks a thousand copies of a speech, Stephen A. Douglas would frank five thousand."

Immediately after this the summons for a people's convention appeared in the leading Boston papers, signed by a host of respectable and many worthy names, at the head of which appeared that of Professor Joel Parker of the Harvard Law School; and, to judge from the preamble, the United States of America had never been in such great danger as it was now from the prospect of negro emancipation.

At the meeting that was held by these gentlemen in Faneuil Hall the speeches were so dolorous that one would suppose the day of judgment was close at hand. Lack of confidence in the administration, state and national, was the keynote of the addresses.

In the midst of such political festivities came President Lincoln's preparatory proclamation, threatening the Southern states with emancipation, unless they returned to their allegiance. This was like a thunderbolt clearing the sky. All parties seemed to feel better for it; but it gave the Republican party a firmer basis and a more definite purpose; it gave a rallying-cry to the Union soldiers, and steeled their nerves to better fighting. It cleared away the mists and dubious spectres with which the nation had so long been afflicted.

XVII

Emancipation

Mr. Stearns said that General McClellan was his own worst enemy. If he had pursued the same course that General Grant did, he might have come out of the war with flying colors, and perhaps have succeeded to the presidential chair. One cause of General Grant's success was his unfailing modesty. He believed in the good old proverb, " Every man to his trade." He never interfered in affairs which did not appertain to his profession, but devoted himself to his special business of fighting the enemy without lending his ear to the plans or suggestions of designing politicians. Whatever the government ordered him to do, that he performed to the best of his ability—a true servant of the state. After the battle of Shiloh he was virtually superseded, and we know how badly he felt at this, but he showed no sign of irritation or resentment. He went straight onward working and fighting, and in course of time he had his reward. McClellan protested publicly against the antislavery policy of the government, and had to be removed. There was no other course now open to the administration.

Mrs. Lincoln happened to be in Boston at the time of McClellan's removal, and shortly after the news arrived Sumner called upon her at the Parker House, and her first words to him were:

"I suppose you have heard the news. McClellan is dismissed, and I am thankful for it. Mr. Lincoln told me that he was going to do it before I left Washington. I know you are glad of it, and so am I."

Mr. Sumner repeated this to Mr. Stearns and Dr. Howe *verbatim* shortly afterwards; and it is one of the few authentic facts which we possess concerning Mrs. Lincoln's politics. It was perhaps fortunate for Lincoln that he did not have a wife who troubled herself much about public affairs, and who was consequently beyond the reach of cabinet and congressional intrigues. He could forget the cares of state in the privacy of domestic life. A wife like L. Maria Child or Julia Ward Howe would not have suited him at all.

It was considered a decided advantage that Senator Sumner's friends obtained an invitation for him to address the State Republican convention. Mr. Stearns and Mr. Bird met Judge Conway and Mrs. Howe at the Worcester depot. Wendell Phillips joined them at noon. Mrs. Howe was in great spirits, called the occasion a political spree, and drew an excellent likeness of Frank Bird in a note-book. The electric flashes of her wit played about the heads of all the company. Mr. Stearns and Mr. Bird found enough to do at the convention. Andrew was renominated by acclamation; but time was required to prepare the resolutions. At three P.M. Sumner appeared on the platform.

There was an air of triumph in his manner. His address had the character of a letter of advice to the administration. He sketched in broad outlines

the opportunities and duties of the President and the several members of his cabinet. He said: "We have forty-six major-generals, and more than two hundred brigadier-generals, but the best general of them all is general emancipation." He timed his speech so exactly that when he closed there was only fifteen minutes in which to catch the afternoon train for Boston. We all hurried to the street; and lo! there was Sumner standing by the carriage-door to assist Mrs. Howe.

The train, however, was somewhat late, and while they were standing on the platform Wendell Phillips asked Judge Conway, if he thought there was any chance that the slaveholders would accept President Lincoln's offer, but Conway replied: "No; they will never do it. They are the proudest people in the world; and besides that they drink too much whiskey." Then, turning to Mr. Stearns, he said: "You can have no idea of the extent to which the common slaveholder depends upon whiskey. Why, sir, I do believe, that if it were not for whiskey, this rebellion would never have taken place." Mr. Stearns remarked that Judge Curtis of the United States Supreme Court had admitted to him that the reason he resigned his position was because he was so often called upon to drink ardent spirits in Washington that it became simply intolerable. Mrs. Howe observed that neither Judge Conway nor Judge Curtis belonged to the cold-water delegation.

A few days later Mr. Stearns reported that Jefferson Davis' Cabinet was in favor of accepting

President Lincoln's offer, but that Lee's army would not listen to it.

The compromise party also met in convention at Worcester and nominated General Devens for governor. He was called a conservative Republican, but did not appear to have any very definite politics. His nomination, however, pointed directly to the unseen hand that was guiding this movement. General Devens was afterwards made attorney-general by President Hayes through the mediation of William M. Evarts.

Mr. Stearns considered the nomination a weak one. He had no fear of Andrew's election, but thought there was more danger of timid Republicans deserting Sumner at the last moment. The eyes of the whole country were now turned on Massachusetts, for Sumner was the recognized leader of the emancipation policy at Washington, and his defeat would simply mean that the people of the North did not intend to support the government in its new departure.

The November election, however, resulted in fifty thousand votes for General Devens and eighty thousand for John A. Andrew. The state legislature was so strongly Republican that it left Sumner's reëlection beyond the possibility of doubt. As soon as he was satisfied of this, Sumner walked down to Mr. Stearns' office and said: "If there is any one, Stearns, to whom I am indebted for this result more than another, it is yourself." Such was the end of the People's party, so called; and Harvard University was more gloomy than ever.

Looking back on the past, one cannot help wondering why a majority of the respectable and well educated people of Boston should have desired to perpetuate slavery, and should have opposed the one stainless character that has been known in American politics. In 1851 Sumner said to Caleb Cushing: "I will not leave this chair where I sit to secure my election to the United States Senate."

A Boston firm for whom Mr. Stearns had obtained a lucrative government contract, from which they probably had derived a larger profit than they deserved, sent him a cheque for two thousand dollars, which he returned with a note saying as politely as possible that to partake in such transactions was as culpable as theft.

During the autumn, Emerson, Wendell Phillips, and Moncure Conway dined together repeatedly at Mr. Stearns' house to discuss public affairs. This was supposed to be chiefly for the benefit of Phillips, who showed a dangerous leaning toward General Butler's influence. The conversation on these occasions was very brilliant. When Emerson was animated the keenness of his criticism levelled all before it, and Conway's rich wit was more refreshing than the champagne. It was noticed that Phillips, who never took wine, was particularly fond of a kind of dessert which was served with wine sauce. "Do not take too much stock in General Butler, Mr. Phillips," Conway said to him once, noticing the emphasis in which the latter had used Butler's name. Mr. Stearns was always the Jarno of the entertainment, the

severe enunciator of practical methods. He was of good service to Phillips at this time, for he could often give him information that was not to be obtained from other sources.

At length the first of January arrived, and the celebration in the Music Hall, during which Emerson recited his "Boston Hymn," has become historical. When he repeated the verse—

> "Pay ransom to the owner
> And fill the bag to the brim.
> Who is the owner? The slave is owner,
> And ever was. *Pay him.*"

he spoke the last two words with such energy and emphasis that the audience felt something like an electric shock. Then a gentleman came forward and announced that the proclamation had been issued. Three cheers were given for William Lloyd Garrison; but nothing was said of Benjamin Lundy, who was the first of all the abolitionists and one of the most influential.

That same evening there was a great celebration at Mr. Stearns' house in Medford. All the prominent abolitionists and Free-soilers were invited, and those, like Dr. Howe, who were unable to attend, sent their wives and daughters. The house was thronged with brilliant men and charming women. Brackett's bust of John Brown was placed on the landing of the staircase, and Wendell Phillips unveiled it with a speech so graceful, exquisite, and timely, that it seemed more like a beautiful poem than a prose address. Emerson repeated his "Boston Hymn," and Mrs. Howe

recited her " Battle Hymn " in a weird, penetrating voice, which affected the whole company.

Emerson and Alcott remained over night, and talked philosophy with Mrs. Stearns until a late hour. J. B. Smith, a colored caterer, who made a fortune in providing class day entertainments at Harvard, would never send Mr. Stearns any account for this occasion; and was with difficulty persuaded to accept a cheque for a hundred dollars.

About the middle of January, Garrison surprised his former friends and supporters by publishing an editorial in the *Liberator* congratulating the abolitionists on the success of their long effort, but also presuming that their work was nearly at an end, and that the future of the freedmen could be safely intrusted to President Lincoln and his Cabinet. The Boston *Advertiser* praised this confession of the veteran philanthropist, but Mr. Stearns, Frank Bird, and Dr. Howe did not like it at all. Mr. Bird attributed it to Senator Wilson's influence, and his growing jealousy of General Butler; and Mr. Stearns said that Garrison evidently seemed to think that the negroes were already liberated, although the greater part of them still remained in slavery, and would continue so unless the rebellion could be suppressed; and this was not yet certain.

Strangely enough, soon after this Wendell Phillips came to Mrs. Stearns to beg a subscription for the benefit of the *Liberator*. "Why," said she, with her native wit, " if the slavery conflict is at an end, what need is there for publishing the *Liberator?* " "Well," said Phillips, " you know

it is Garrison's occupation; and at his age there is nothing else that he could do." Mr. Stearns thought it rather hard that he should be assessed for the benefit of the opposition; but Phillips himself was in the same position, and they both paid the money. Garrison's motive for this change of base might perhaps have been traced back to the commencement of the Kansas struggle.

Garrison had his triumph on the first of January; and Phillips had his the last of January, when he was invited to Washington to deliver an oration on the duty of the hour, which he gave with such satisfaction to his audience that he was requested to give his lecture on "Toussaint l'Ouverture," and after that on "The Lost Arts" on succeeding evenings.*

Mr. Stearns and Frank Bird took advantage of this feeling to bring a little radical influence to bear on President Lincoln. They went to Washington and, joining forces with Wendell Phillips and Hon. Oakes Ames, invited Sumner to go with them to the White House and press the appointment of General Frémont as military governor of North Carolina; but Senator Sumner made it a point never to interfere in military affairs, and thought they would do better without him. Accordingly they went with Mr. Ames as an introductor.

At this time all the Union generals with the exception of Hooker and Saxton were either proslavery like Rosecrans, or still on the fence like

* If I remember correctly.

Thomas and Sherman. General Stanley, who commanded in North Carolina, was a noted admirer of McClellan, and opposed like him to the new policy of the government. Why was he retained? If he could be replaced by General Frémont, or some other friend of the cause, colored regiments might be organized there, that would coöperate with the Union people in the mountains, and a diversion be created in the rear of General Lee's army, which might prove dangerous to his communications. The liberation of the slaves in North Carolina alone might seriously embarrass the rebels in Virginia.

The objection to Frémont was always that he was surrounded by a gang of California speculators; but these would not be likely to follow him to North Carolina, for there was no material there for them to work upon. Military judges informed Mr. Stearns and his friends that the plan was practicable.

President Lincoln complimented Wendell Phillips on his fine oratory, and Mr. Phillips gracefully returned the compliment. He then explained the object of the conference; but Mr. Lincoln made objection at once to the appointment of Frémont, who he said was "too much bespattered with the mud of reform." Then Mr. Bird took up the argument, and proposed the removal of the military governor of North Carolina on political grounds. Mr. Lincoln said: "General Stanley called on me after I had written my proclamation of emancipation, and I showed it to him. He said he thought he could stand that." "Mr. President,"

said Moncure Conway, " we don't want a man who can stand it; but one who rejoices at it, who will enforce it, and make it a vital reality." Then President Lincoln remarked: " Suppose I should put in the South these antislavery generals and governors, what could they do with the slaves that would come to them? " * And Mr. Stearns replied: " We would make Union soldiers of all who were capable of bearing arms; " and so he did not long afterwards. Lincoln, however, was inexorable, and after some further discussion the company took their leave.

Late in the evening Mr. Stearns went alone to see Senator Sumner, who was not surprised at the result of their mission. " Why a man," he said, " like General Stanley, who is opposed to the policy of the government, and would vote against Lincoln if he had the opportunity, should be retained at Newberne, is more than I can understand. By the way, Mr. Stearns, I hear you propose to give a dinner-party. Now, let me advise you. Dr. Johnson was once invited to a dinner, and afterward, when asked how he liked it, said: ' A good enough dinner, but not a dinner to invite a man to.' "

Mr. Stearns never could understand this cutting remark. The strange part of it was that he was accustomed to giving dinner-parties, whereas Sumner was not. When Mr. Bird was absent from their club, Mr. Stearns usually presided in his place, and could probably have given Sumner points on the etiquette of the table.

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* Conway's Memoirs, i, p. 381.

The dinner took place, notwithstanding. Mr. Stearns invited all the Republican senators, except Sumner, and the more prominent members of Congress, together with Phillips, Bird, and Moncure Conway, who reported it at Concord a few days later as a great success. Three years afterward John W. Forney said to Mr. Stearns, who complimented him on a similar occasion: "It does not equal your little dinner, major."

On their return to Boston Mr. Stearns said of Lincoln: "It is of no use to disparage his ability. There we were, with some able talkers among us, and we had the best position too; but the President held his ground against us;" and Frank Bird said: "I think he is the shrewdest man I ever met; but not at all of a Kentuckian. He is an old-fashioned Yankee in a Western dress."

Abraham Lincoln was almost the type of the traditional Yankee; cool headed, shrewd, circumspect, full of native wit, and almost indifferent to fortune, either good or evil.

Emerson had also been to Washington to lecture, and had his experience to narrate. He called on Mr. Lincoln, and found him very congenial. An American captain had been captured in the slave-trade, condemned for piracy, and an effort was being made to have him pardoned as the last of his tribe. What did Mr. Emerson think about it? Emerson replied that considering the condition of the country he felt that this was not a case in which the supreme penalty of the law should be set aside. Shortly afterward I believe the captain was hanged.

Emerson compared President Lincoln to Hon. Samuel Hoar, the father of Senator Hoar, and this indicates that he recognized the New England element in the man.

Now for the first time Mr. Stearns began to write on finance, and this he continued to do intermittently for the next three years, publishing letters on the subject in the *Commonwealth* and Boston *Advertiser*. He never read a work on political economy, and thus escaped the insidious theories of that still uncertain science; but he understood the chain of cause and effect as well as any economist of his time. Gold had now risen to a hundred and seventy or more, and the business situation was growing serious. The government was expending a million of dollars a day, and the efforts to raise this amount disturbed the values of all commodities, tempted the wildest speculation, and was rolling up an enormous debt.

Mr. Stearns was satisfied that the government was pursuing very expensive methods for obtaining money, and while he was in Washington he had an interview with Secretary Chase on the subject, and urged the importance of a foreign loan, but without meeting with much success. He thought that Chase looked at the question too much from a political standpoint. On his return to Boston he wrote a long article for the *Commonwealth,* in which he said:

" Legal tender notes have these advantages over loans. They save to the Government a large annual interest, which, payable in specie at the present rates, amounts to ten per cent. per annum. They

are well adapted to the wants of the people, and in time will become the exclusive currency of the nation; because they are everywhere as good as the coin they represent,—a convertibility that cannot attach to the circulation of any local institution. They strengthen the ties that bind us to the Government, for the whole nation will be interested in their ultimate redemption."

Then, after explaining the disadvantages of this form of loan, and emphasizing the fact that the country could only absorb a certain amount of it, he continued:

"I would, therefore, propose that the Government send a competent agent to Europe to negotiate a monthly loan of $30,000,000, payable in twelve months and secured by a sufficient deposit of United States bonds with state endorsement if necessary. (I think for this purpose Massachusetts would endorse for $5,000,000, and afterwards $15,000,000 could be obtained from the other New England States.) The endorsement of the states would give European capitalists confidence in our ability and determination to pay at maturity of the loan. With the authority to draw bills on London for $30,000,000 per month, you can control the foreign exchange market, and through it the price of gold. Exchange on London could be forced down to 20 or 25 per cent., and the outflow of gold thus stopped would soon bring coin to a corresponding price."

If the young French Republic immediately after

the German conquest could borrow five hundred millions of dollars from European bankers, it stands to reason that the United States of America could have done the same in 1863; for two years of warfare had already proved that even if the Northern states did not succeed in conquering the Southern rebels, there was at least no danger of their being conquered by them. Louis Napoleon was astonished to find that the mercantile Yankees were a nation of soldiers.

Mr. Stearns sent a more detailed statement of his plan to John J. Cisco, United States subtreasurer in New York, who wrote thus in reply to him:

"UNITED STATES TREASURY,
"NEW YORK, Feb. 9, 1863.

"DEAR SIR:

"I have to acknowledge receipt of your favor of the 5th inst. and with it a copy of a very able letter on financial matters which you have done me the honor to address to me.

"The views advanced by you are very suggestive and certainly worthy of serious consideration. I have communicated the letter to the Secretary of the Treasury, inviting his special attention to it. Herewith you will find an extract from the money column of the *Herald* of this date referring to it.

"Very respectfully yours,
"JOHN J. CISCO."

This was the statement in the New York *Herald:*

"A prominent Boston merchant has transmitted to Mr. Cisco a financial scheme which deserves more attention than most of the plans emanating from amateur financiers. The writer shows clearly that the only reliable source of the government at present is the continued issue of paper money.

Starting from this standpoint, he argues that the chief evil to be apprehended from the use of paper money is the export of specie to foreign countries. This danger can be obviated, in his opinion, by the negotiation in London, at regular intervals, of a sufficient amount of United States bonds to keep the balance of trade in our favor. At the present rate of exchange we could afford to sell bonds in London so low as to tempt investors and speculators; and even if, in order to secure a sale, we were compelled to accept prices lower than the market value here, the loss would be unimportant in view of the advantage of keeping our specie at home. A sale of $30,000,000 of bonds in the course of a year would probably keep the balance of trade in our favor. The scheme has been transmitted by Mr. Cisco to Mr. Chase, and will probably receive careful consideration."

By this plan not only the premium on gold, but the high rate of interest prevailing at that time, might have been greatly reduced; but the value of an inflated currency depends on credit.

XVIII

The Colored Regiments

Alexander Hamilton urged the employment of negro troops during the War of Independence, suggesting that their freedom might be offered them in return for patriotic service; but his advice was not received favorably. The colored men, however, took part in a number of engagements and distinguished themselves, especially in the fight at Redbank, New Jersey.

The first colored regiment in the Civil War was organized by General Hunter at Beaufort, South Carolina, in May, 1862, without permission from the government; and some said, perhaps unjustly, that Hunter was removed from his command on that account. It was reorganized by General Saxton the following August, and accepted by the Secretary of War. A short time afterward the Rev. T. W. Higginson, who had led the attack on Boston court-house in the attempt to rescue Anthony Burns, was commissioned as its colonel.

In September, George L. Stearns, being aware that Senator Sumner was preparing a speech to be delivered at the Republican state convention, went to him at his house on Hancock Street and urged that he should advocate the general enlistment of colored troops in it; but Sumner said decisively: "No; I do not consider it advisable to agitate that question until the proclamation of emancipation has

become a fact. Then we will take another step in advance." At a town meeting in Medford, held in December, Mr. Stearns made a speech on the same subject, and was hissed for his pains by the same men who were afterwards saved from the conscription of 1863 by the negroes whom he recruited.

Lewis Hayden, the colored janitor at the state-house, always claimed the credit of having suggested to Governor Andrew to organize a colored regiment of Massachusetts volunteers. As soon as the proclamation of emancipation had been issued the governor went to Washington for a personal interview with the secretary of war, and returned with the desired permission. Mr. Stearns went with him and obtained a commission for James Montgomery, who had defended the Kansas border during Buchanan's administration, to be colonel of another colored regiment in South Carolina. Colonel Montgomery arrived at Beaufort about the first of February.

Governor Andrew formed the skeleton of a regiment with Robert G. Shaw as colonel, but was able to obtain few recruits. There were plenty of sturdy negroes about Boston, but they were earning higher wages than ever before, and were equally afraid of what might happen to them if they were captured by the Confederate forces. Colonel Hallowell says: "The Governor counselled with certain leading colored men of Boston. He put the question, 'Will your people enlist in my regiment?' 'They will not,' was the reply of all but Hayden. 'We have no objection to white officers, but our

self-respect demands that competent colored men shall be at least eligible to promotion.' " By the last of February less than two companies had been recruited, and the prospects of the Massachusetts Fifty-fourth did not look hopeful.

When Governor Andrew was in doubt he usually sent for Frank W. Bird or George L. Stearns; but this time Mr. Stearns was before him. To the governor's question, "What is to be done?" he replied: "If you will obtain funds from the Legislature for their transportation, I will recruit you a regiment among the black men of Ohio and the Canadian West. There are a great many runaways in Canada, and those are the ones who will go back and fight." "Very good," said the governor; "go as soon as you can; and our friend Bird will take care of the appropriation bill." A handsome recruiting fund for incidental expenses had already been raised, to which Mr. Stearns was, as usual, one of the largest subscribers.

He arrived at Buffalo, New York, the next day at noon, and went to a colored barber to have his hair cut. He disclosed the object of his mission, and the barber promised to bring some of his friends together to discuss the matter that evening. The following evening Mr. Stearns called a meeting of the colored residents of Buffalo, and made an address to them, urging the importance of the occasion, and the advantage it would be to their brethren in slavery and to the future of the negro race, if they were to become well drilled and practiced soldiers. "When you have rifles in your hands," he said, "your freedom will be secure."

To the objection that only white officers were being commissioned for the colored regiments, he replied: "See how public opinion changes; how rapidly we move forward. Only three months ago I was hissed in a town meeting for proposing the enlistment of colored troops, and now here we are. I have no doubt that before six months a number of colored officers will be commissioned." His speech was received with applause; but when he asked, "Now, who will volunteer?" there was a prolonged silence. At length a sturdy-looking fellow arose and said: "I would enlist if I felt sure that my wife and children would not suffer for it." "I will look after your family," said Mr. Stearns, "and see that they want for nothing; but it is a favor I cannot promise again." After this ten or twelve more enrolled themselves, and, having provided for their maintenance until they could be transported to the camp at Readville, he went over to Niagara on the Canada side to see what might be effected in that vicinity.

While dining at the Clifton House it happened that there were at the same table a number of secessionists, who, having by chance escaped from the Confederacy, were in no hurry to return South again. Having discovered that Mr. Stearns was from Boston, they talked to each other about the "cowardly Yankees" and "nigger" abolitionists in such loud tones as were evidently intended to taunt and exasperate him. Having endured this for some time he finally turned to his companion and said in a clear, strong voice, "Mr. ——, I consider it the proudest act of my life that I gave

good old John Brown every pike and rifle he carried to Harper's Ferry." Such a retort was more than his tormentors had looked for; they seemed abashed by it, and soon left the room. A few days later he returned to Boston to arrange his affairs for a more prolonged absence.

In less than a week he was again in Buffalo, organizing a recruiting bureau, with agencies in Canada and the Western states as far as St. Louis —where there were a large number of refugees who had lately been liberated by Grant's campaign at Vicksburg. Mr. Lucian B. Eaton, an able lawyer and prominent politician of the city, accepted the agency there as a work of patriotic devotion. Among Mr. Stearns' most successful agents were the Langston brothers, colored scions of a noble Virginia family; both excellent men and influential among their people. All his agents were required to write a letter to him every evening giving an account of their day's work, and every week to send him an account of their expenses. Thus Mr. Stearns sat at his desk and directed their movements by telegraph as easily as pieces on a chess-board. The appropriation for transportation had already passed the Massachusetts Legislature, but where this did not suffice to meet an emergency he drew freely on his own resources.

The weather in Buffalo during that March and a part of April was rainy, damp, and dismal to an extreme; but Mr. Stearns did not seem to notice whether the sun shone or not. He had no acquaintances in the city, and entertained himself in the evening with writing a pamphlet on currency and

banking, the bill for establishing national banks being at that time before Congress. This he had published and circulated among bankers and other prominent individuals, besides sending a copy to every senator and representative in Congress. In it he pointed out certain dangers to which the scheme was open, and may have helped to guard against them. Whether Mr. Stearns realized the inestimable blessing which the national banks would prove to this country is uncertain; but he recognized that according to this scheme, as with most of Secretary Chase's plans, the government was going to obtain funds at very usurious rates. A group of capitalists might obtain a charter for a bank, and then make use of the paper money which they received from the government to purchase more bonds, and with these obtain more paper money; and so continue until they realized a yearly profit of thirty or forty per cent. on their original investment. During the first ten years of their existence the national banks made enormous profits.

One morning a broad-shouldered, cheerful looking gentleman entered his room and introduced himself as Samuel Wilkeson. He said: "I hear you are recruiting colored regiments for Governor Andrew. Now I am a black Republican myself, and I wish you all success. I know everybody in Buffalo, and if I can be of service to you at any time please inform me." This was a cheerful commencement, and a lively conversation followed. Mr. Wilkeson was as good as his word, and better than a mercantile agency. Mr. Stearns could not

have found a more helpful friend. He called every day to learn how affairs were progressing, and to talk over the news from the seat of war.

By the last of April recruits were coming at the rate of thirty or forty *per diem,* and Mr. Stearns telegraphed to the governor: "I can fill up another regiment for you in less than six weeks"—a hint which resulted in the formation of the Massachusetts Fifty-fifth, with Norwood P. Hallowell, a gallant officer who had been wounded at Antietam, for its commander.

The governor, however, appears to have suddenly changed his mind, for on May 7 Mr. Stearns wrote to his wife:

"Yesterday at noon, I learned from Governor Andrew by telegram that he did not intend to raise another regiment. I was thunderstruck. My work for three months would nearly, or quite, fall to the ground. I telegraphed in reply: 'You told me to take all the men I could get without regard to regiments. Have two hundred men on the way; what shall I do with them?' The reply came simultaneously with your letter: 'Considering your telegraph and Wild's advice, another regiment may proceed; expecting it full in four weeks. Present want of troops will probably prevent my being opposed.' I replied: 'I thank God for your telegram received this morning. You shall have the men in four weeks.' Now all is right.

"If I had received a refusal to accept more men, my plans were all laid. I should have gone to Washington to-morrow morning, having recalled my transportation agent from the West to take my place here, and have presented a clean-cut plan to Stanton for raising colored regiments, North and South, which I have no doubt he would have accepted. Now I go on with my work again."

The surgeon-general had detailed one Dr. Browne for duty at Buffalo, to examine Mr. Stearns' recruits, and if found fit for service by him there was presumably no need of a second examination. This, however, did not suit the medical examiner at Readville, who, either from ill will or from some unknown motive, insisted on rejecting every sixth man that was sent there from the West. Thus there was entailed an immense expense on Mr. Stearns, which he had no funds to meet, and he was obliged to negotiate a private loan of ten thousand dollars, without knowing in the least how or where he was to be reimbursed. Remonstrances to Dr. Browne were of no avail, for he declared that if he were to exclude a larger number he did not know by what rule he should do it. Out of a lot of twelve recruits sent back from Readville, eleven passed inspection by another medical examiner in Buffalo. Having satisfied himself that the error was not on his side of the fence, he wrote a letter of complaint to Governor Andrew, setting forth the facts as stated above, and adding this almost pathetic account of himself:

"I have worked every day, Sunday included, for more than two months, and from fourteen to sixteen hours a day. I have filled the West with my agents. I have compelled the railroads to accept lower terms of transportation than the Government rates. I have filled a letter-book of five hundred pages, most of it closely written."

This letter is dated the Mansion House, Buffalo,

May 8, 1863, and on it is the following endorsement:

"This letter is respy. referred to Surgeon Genl. Dole with the request that he would confer with Surgeon Stone and Lt. Col. Hallowell. It is surprising, and not fair nor fit, that a man trying, as Mr. Stearns is, to serve the country at a risk should suffer thus by such disagreement of opinion.

"JOHN A. ANDREW."

Shortly after this he returned to Boston for a flying visit, and was met in the street by a philanthropic lady, who said: "Where have you been all this time, Mr. Stearns? I supposed you were going to help us organize the colored regiment. You will be glad to know that it is doing well. We have nearly a thousand men." Mr. Stearns made no reply, but bowed and passed on. Her ignorance was the more surprising since she frequently went to the camp at Readville and was well acquainted with the officers there. Neither did the adjutant-general make mention of Mr. Stearns' exceptional services in his report on Massachusetts in the Civil War.*

A week later we find Mr. Stearns writing again to his wife from Buffalo:

"I comfort myself with the belief that this is our appointed work. I did not seek it; it sought me out. You did not

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* Likewise the Editor of the *Century* refused to publish any account of Major Stearns' work among his Civil War contributions. He probably did not know who Major Stearns was.

seek it, but the divine spirit within you impelled the work which was so contrary to all your ideas of a happy life; and now we fully understand each other and the work that is before us. A sweet peace has come to my soul, so sweet that I welcome the sadness that comes with it.

"I have no news of importance to write you except that Casimir has plead guilty to the theft, and has been sentenced to four years and six months' hard labor in the state prison of Kansas. How terrible the career of one so young and gifted. He writes that he could endure it if he was not obliged to work in the streets of Leavenworth with a ball and chain attached to his leg. My heart bleeds for him. With a career of useful and honorable service open to him, he has sacrificed all to a mean and pitiful vanity."

About the first of June the Fifty-fourth was ordered to South Carolina. The regiment was reviewed on Boston Common by Governor Andrew and marched in silence around the Public Garden. Suddenly Dr. Henry I. Bowditch rushed out of his office on Boylston street and called for three cheers for the Massachusetts Fifty-fourth. Then for the first time patriotism rose above prejudice, and the crowd responded with a good will. That evening there was a Union meeting in the Tremont Temple, and congratulations were showered on Governor Andrew; but Wendell Phillips arose and said: "We owe it mainly to a private citizen, to George L. Stearns of Medford, that these heroic men are mustered into the service,"—a statement which astonished a good many.

The governors of the Western states had never considered their colored population as of any importance, but now when it was being drained off to fill up the quota of Massachusetts troops

they began to think differently. The governor of Ohio advised Governor Andrew that no more recruiting could be permitted in his state unless the recruits were assigned to the Ohio quota. Andrew replied that the governor of Ohio was at liberty to recruit colored regiments of his own; but the Massachusetts Fifty-fifth, having now a complement, it was decided not to continue the business any further, and Mr. Stearns' labors at Buffalo were thus brought to an end about the middle of June.

Wendell Phillips wrote to Mr. Stearns, June 19:

"Dear Stearns:

"Yours recd. and communicated to Sanborn. We congratulate you—your success seems full.

"I forward the official document as requested with two remarks. 1st. Mr. Jay Browne is no 'friend' of mine. He knew me and wrote me, and, as in duty bound, I forwarded his letter to Andrew. 2d. I remember well our understanding, a wise one, that you had nothing to do with commissions, and I had nothing to do in recommending any one to you."

Mr. Stearns believed, like Bacon, that the precincts of the court of justice, and every corner thereof, should be swept clean; and he lived up to this. In the eighteen or twenty colored regiments that he organized, he never asked a single commission for any of his friends.

After a hasty visit to his home he went to Washington with the intention of offering his recruiting organization to the general government. He arrived at Willard's Hotel in the afternoon, and at the dinner-table met Mr. Fred Law

Olmstead, the chief of the United States Sanitary Commission, and always one of his warmest friends. He explained the object of his visit, adding that he proposed to call on Secretary Stanton that evening. "I will go with you and introduce you," said Mr. Olmstead. Secretary Stanton had been watching the course of public opinion and was prepared for the occasion. He said to Mr. Stearns: "I have heard of your recruiting bureau, and I think you would be the best man to run the machine you have constructed. I will make you an assistant adjutant-general with the rank of major, and I will give you authority to recruit colored regiments all over the country." Mr. Stearns thanked him and replied that there was nothing which he had so much at heart as enlisting the black men on a large scale; for no people could be said to be secure in their freedom unless they were also soldiers; but that his wife was unwell and had suffered much from his absence already, and he did not feel that he ought to accept the offer without her consent. In answer to the question, how funds for recruiting were to be obtained without any appropriation by Congress, Mr. Stanton said they could be supplied from the secret-service fund.

When Mr. Stearns and Mr. Olmstead were alone on the street again the latter said: "Mr. Stearns, now go to your room, and *sleep if you can.*"

There is no question as to Secretary Stanton's patriotism or ability. More than any other man in the government at that time, he placed his shoulder to the wheel. He doubtless died of his

exertions during the war, as Stearns and Andrew did. He was, however, of an impulsive nature with a tendency to exaggeration, and made rash promises which he afterward revoked without regret or apology. The whirlwind of affairs in which he lived may be sufficient to account for this. Both General Sherman and Mr. Stearns had the same experience with him.

Having returned to Medford, and obtaining his wife's consent to a more prolonged absence, he ordered his recruiting bureau to report at Philadelphia, where we find him writing again to Mrs. Stearns on June 26:

> "Yesterday General Hunter was here on his way to Princeton. I had a long talk with him. He says Montgomery is a natural soldier and a splendid man; indorsed fully all I said of him. That —— is a good drill officer but in fight fails to take advantage of his position.
>
> "Philadelphians are much excited about the raid, or invasion of their state, but it does not penetrate my rooms. We open camp here to-day with our company."

Two weeks later Mr. Stearns returned to Boston, and, arriving early in the morning, found the north end of the city in the possession of a mob, infuriated at the idea of being drafted to fight for the "niggers." There was no way for him to reach his home except by a circuitous route in a carriage.

He went to the Parker House, enjoyed a good breakfast, ordered Ward's fastest span of horses, and went up to see Governor Andrew. As soon as he entered the governor's room Andrew called out to him: "Stearns, you are just the man I want.

There is a first-rate militia company in Woburn, and I cannot get word to them because the wires are all cut. Will you drive out there and give my order to the captain?" This was exactly what Mr. Stearns would like to do, and while the order was being made out the governor spoke of his plans for suppressing the riot. "I expect we shall have to shoot some of them, but I hate to do it," he said. "Poor misguided creatures! Who are the leaders that have set them on to do this?" Mr. Stearns thought it might have been planned before the rebellion commenced. An hour and a half later the Woburn company was notified, and taken in a special train to East Cambridge.

The following Monday Mr. Stearns, having found that his son was to be examined to enter Harvard College, drove the boy in his buggy to the college gate, and as he left him said: "Remember, not only while you are in college but all through life, that a man is known by the company he keeps."

The New York riot was a far more serious affair than the one in Boston. Every colored man that fell into the clutches of the mob met his death, and one negro was roasted alive in Madison Square. Archbishop McCloskey made a speech to the rioters in which he indirectly expressed his sympathy with them. A number of houses were sacked, and among them that of Mrs. James Gibbons, the sister of John Hopper and the most philanthropic woman in the city. Her friends rallied to her support, and Joseph Choate, late United

States Minister to England, wrote to Mr. Stearns in her behalf, saying:

"This last calamity to the house and family of Mrs. Gibbons (the sacking of her home by the recent riot) presents a fit opportunity for her friends and those of her children to bear a testimony to the esteem in which they hold her. We propose, therefore, to give her a *benefit.*

"Mrs. G., as you know, has spent her whole life in unrewarded devotion to that same wretched class of people who have now so ruthlessly destroyed her home, and she has spent twelve months of the last sixteen at her own expense in nursing our sick and wounded in the hospitals, utterly regardless of her own interests, and now she returns to find her home a desert, and literally has hardly where to lay her head. It is high time, therefore, for her friends to show her that her good works have not been all in vain. Besides, I know that unless something of the kind is done, the family will actually suffer from the recent loss."

It is not likely that this appeal was made in vain. John Hopper himself died of apoplexy the year following at his summer residence on the Hudson, while in a fit of exasperation with some Irishmen.

Mrs. Stearns at this time had an Irish cook, whose brother worked in a boiler-shop at East Boston, and it was learned through her six months later that the rioters had marked the houses of all the antislavery people, and that they had intended to come to Medford and burn down Mr. Stearns' house, and kill him if they could find him.

Mr. Stearns wrote to his friend, Dr. W. J. Baner of New York City, dated July 17:

"You have been called to a fearful ordeal, but one I trust necessary for the future stability of our government and civilization,—the result of New York City legislation

for the past ten or twenty years. Nothing could cure the evil but a full appreciation of its effects on the property of your citizens. You have men among you always ready to inflame the passions of the ignorant and debased, but too *cowardly* to publicly control the element when roused to fury. Those men must be unearthed and the punishment due to their crimes meted out to them, as a warning in the future, or you will be called to do the work over again, perhaps under still more trying circumstances.

"When the rebellion broke out here I was with our Governor. I told him it was rebellion (not riot), organized by Jeff. Davis, when here in 1860, and only controlled by circumstances till the present time. What I have been talking in private to my friends for two years is made manifest, and if we would have peace and quiet in the future, we must have the leaders arrested and punished.

"Fortunately for Boston and all New England, a dose of canister on the first night fired into a dense crowd, which is said to have killed and wounded more than fifty, settled the affair, and we have been safe here from that moment."

The result of the draft riots was to greatly strengthen the hands of the administration.

XIX

Assistant Adjutant-General

The last thing Mr. Stearns expected was to become an army officer with shoulder-straps and a sword, and he confessed that he did not like the feeling of it. He purchased the simplest regalia that he could obtain, and Secretary Stanton was obliged to notify him that all officers who called at the War Department were expected to appear in full uniform. He never wore his sword, except on such occasions.

When he returned to Philadelphia, the 9th of July, he found the regiment already half filled by his efficient corps of assistants.

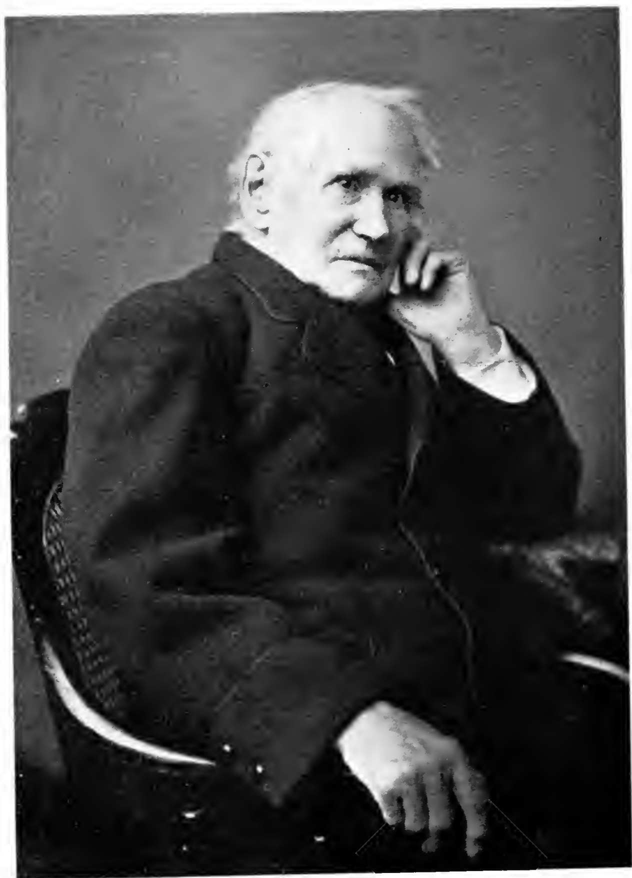
The battle of Gettysburg had stirred Philadelphia to its depths, and its citizens were prepared to welcome any measures that promised a vigorous prosecution of the war. Mr. Stearns was the man of the hour, and never before had he been treated with such consideration. He was at once enrolled among the members of the Union League, the parent of all the union league clubs in the country; and not composed, like the one in Boston, of pro-slavery Whigs, who black-balled all candidates who had been distinguished in the antislavery movement. A recruiting committee was formed from among the most prominent men in the city, who rented the house at 1210 Chestnut Street for their headquarters. Conspicuous among them was

Hon. William D. Kelley, who served as a member of Congress from that time till 1895. Distinguished men and fashionable ladies went daily to Camp William Penn to witness the evolutions of the colored regiment. Fine equipages filled the road thither every afternoon. Mr. Stearns was elected an honorary member of several Philadelphia clubs, and invited to Henry C. Carey's vespers, as the Sunday evening meetings of that distinguished writer and his friends were called. They drank Rhine wine together and discussed public affairs.

He wrote to Mrs. Stearns on July 12:

"As you like poetical avenges I will give you one of the amusing sort. Yesterday at the Union League Club a new-made friend said: 'I am going to have you introduced at —— Club; it is the most exclusive here, and by courtesy you will have admission for a month. I have a particular reason for this. You know the T——ms, and I do too. They are men who think all mankind ought to bow down to them. They can't understand why you should have this appointment, and Bill sneers a little at it, but is evidently annoyed. He is a member of the Club and I want you to meet him there.' So I have promised to be introduced as soon as my accomplished Major Hunt arrives. Won't I have fun! Last evening I went to a most enthusiastic meeting of colored men, and made a short speech, reminding them of the divine compensation of John Brown's advent at Harper's Ferry, in return for Captain Pate's raid, and Colonel Montgomery in South Carolina in return for Buford.

"We have a camp at Chelten Hills, nine miles from the Continental; a beautiful location I am told. I named it Camp Wm. Penn. The Quakers wince, but I tell them it is established on peace principles; that is, to conquer a lasting peace."



HENRY C. CAREY

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Americans, in spite of their republicanism, are as fond of titles and respect them as much as any other people. As soon as Mr. Stearns received this important appointment many old Boston Whigs who had not noticed him for twenty years bowed when they met him on the street, and the father of one of the blackguard boys who had hazed Mr. Stearns' sons at school—probably for political reasons—stopped to speak with him, and to inquire concerning the progress of his work, which was so important for the republic.

Fine weather does not often last more than a few days at a time, and in the midst of these festivities suddenly came Secretary Stanton's order reducing the pay of colored soldiers from thirteen to eight dollars a month. This was a breach of contract, and the men had a right to their discharge, if they wished it; but that, of course, was not permitted them. Such an action could only be excused on the ground of extreme necessity. The Massachusetts Legislature promptly voted to pay the deficiency to the Fifty-fourth and Fifty-fifth regiments; but the one at Philadelphia was in organization, and Mr. Stearns found himself in the position of a man who has made promises which he is unable to fulfil. They were few, even among Boston merchants of that time, who would have been so much troubled by this as he was; but his sense of commercial honor was almost a romantic one. "The word of a merchant, your Majesty," said the Prussian capitalist who ransomed Berlin when it was captured by the Russians. Mr. Stearns felt so badly that he talked of resigning, and bringing

a lawsuit against the government for the benefit of his recruits. Hon. William D. Kelley and two other gentlemen of the committee went with him to Washington to see Stanton and to endeavor to persuade him to revoke the order. Kelley was one of the most persistent debaters who ever sat in Congress, and he argued the question with the secretary of war for more than an hour, to the great disgust of the latter; but Stanton was as firm as Napoleon ever was. Mr. Stearns never had another pleasant interview with him.

The secretary's argument was that some white regiments had complained of being placed on an equality with negroes, and that it interfered with recruiting white soldiers. Major Stearns wanted to appeal to the President, but Judge Kelley warned him that it would be useless to do so.

The next morning some one remarked to Mr. Stearns that it was exceedingly hot weather even for Washington, and his reply was: "Yes, but the fever within is worse than the heat without." He paced across his room for some time, evidently in great mental perturbation. At length he said decisively: "I will go and consult with Olmstead."

He found Mr. Olmstead friendly and sympathetic. He said to him: "I am unable to keep my word to these men I have recruited, and I see nothing for me now but to resign and give up the whole business." Mr. Olmstead spoke of Secretary Stanton in no complimentary terms, but he advised Mr. Stearns to continue with his work, and endure all he could for the good of the cause, not to be worried by evils for which he was in no way

responsible. Mr. Stearns returned to Willard's with a more cheerful countenance.

Worse news was yet in store for him. Late in the afternoon Judge Kelley came in with a newspaper and with eyes ferret and fiery—"Have you heard it, Major?" he said. "The Massachusetts Fifty-fourth has been repulsed at Fort Wagner and cut to pieces. Colonel Shaw and half the officers are killed." Mr. Stearns grasped the paper and sank into a chair. I never at any time saw him so agitated.

There was a colored regiment in process of formation at Baltimore, and another was supposed to be organizing at Fortress Monroe. Both were nominally under Mr. Stearns' supervision, and he inspected the former on his return trip to Philadelphia, and sent his son to investigate and report on the latter. Not the trace of a colored regiment could be discovered at Fortress Monroe, but there were scores of Union officers lounging and smoking on the piazza of the Hygeia Hotel. Mr. Stearns thought that business economy had better begin by reducing the number of officers rather than the pay of the soldiers.

Immediately on his return to Philadelphia he wrote the following letter to Governor Andrew:

"To His Excellency John A. Andrew.

"Dear Sir:—Last week a deputation from my Philadelphia committee visited Washington to confer with the Government in relation to colored troops. Most prominent in the conference was the question of 'pay and bounty the same as white troops.'

"To-day they send to Washington a memorial setting forth their reasons for asking that colored troops be placed

in every way on the same footing as white. You will see by reference that the conscription law makes no difference in pay, and the committee think that should control the earlier legislation.

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

"My heart bleeds for our gallant officers and soldiers of the 54th. All did their duty nobly. I am told that three companies of the 54th saved the Maine regiment engaged in the battle.

"I have the honor to be

"Very respectfully,

"GEORGE L. STEARNS."

Mr. Stearns evidently did not intend to give up the fight for equal pay. He was not accustomed to express his feeling in words, but the Fort Wagner disaster was for the time being a crushing blow to him.

Mr. Stearns wrote to his wife from Baltimore July 26:

"I am still perplexed as to the mode in which I can best carry out the work intrusted to me. It is so difficult to attach my mode of rapid working to the slow routine of the Department that I sometimes almost despair of the task and want to abandon it. Indeed, yesterday I went to Olmstead and asked his advice. He was so clearly of opinion that I must continue to work in the hope of better times, that I abandoned the idea, and came here to see Colonel Birney. Birney is a son of the old abolitionist, an able man and sound to the core. He is raising a regiment here with good success, and is just the man for the work. My next work will be here, and when I get through it I trust my future sailing will be plain and rapid.

"I have had a short interview with Mr. Chase, who was very gracious; too short for me to form an opinion of him. He is much interested in my work, for it aids his plans, and will see me again.

"Hugh McCulloch, to whom I wrote my letters on currency, is very much pleased with them. He made an objection which I am at his request to answer. It will probably lead to a correspondence on that subject."

No private business could succeed if carried on after the manner of the national government at that time; and this was not the fault of Lincoln's administration at all, but of the whole course of Jackson democracy from 1829 to 1861. The clerks in the various departments did not hold their positions from the heads of those departments, but from outside politicians who had no connection with the government business, and as a consequence they were saucy and insubordinate. They found it for their interest to delay and obstruct the procedure of business in order to give the impression that they were overworked, and in that way make their positions more secure, and if possible of greater importance. As Carl Schurz has stated, they form rings for mutual protection, by which they often succeed in overawing chiefs of bureaus, and even cabinet officers. Secretary Stanton found as much difficulty with his own subordinates as Mr. Stearns did; and the evil, though somewhat abated by civil-service reform, still continues.

Every one leaves Philadelphia in August that is able to do so, but Mr. Stearns kept fast to his work, going steadily onward like an ocean steamer through all kinds of weather. The middle of the month Secretary Stanton ordered him to Nashville, Tennessee, where a large body of negroes had collected in the rear of General Rosecrans' army.

Mr. Stearns hailed this new departure with satisfaction, and on August 17 he wrote to his wife:

> " Stanton has waked up and ordered me to plump myself down in Tennessee, right in the centre of the accursed institution, and go to work. Having sent Fred Douglas there to stir up, I suppose, he wants me to organize and utilize the batch. Well, it is what I came here to do and as that is undoubtedly the best place to do it, I am most happy to go. McKim said I could not reasonably expect to be obliged 'to rough it at the Continental' *all* the time.
>
> " My new place for work is to the South what Buffalo was to the West and East—a centre from which to radiate, and I have determined either to burn slavery out, or be burnt by it myself.
>
> " Yesterday I went out to camp with Morris L. Hallowell and stopped a few minutes to see Lucretia Mott. She accepts very gracefully the present state of affairs, but looks forward to a state of society when war will be unnecessary. So do I, but told her that this war was a *civilizer,* not a *barbarism.* The use of the musket was the first step in the education of the black man. This she accepted. She is a great woman. If you want to know how great she is draw her out on principles not on specialties."

Mr. Stearns had found himself continually embarrassed in his government service from lack of sufficient funds, and the continual delay in having his accounts audited. The auditor of the War Department repeatedly took exception to expenditures that were absolutely necessary, and he was obliged to advance large sums from his own capital in order to provide for the current expenses of his agents. Remonstrances to the secretary of war were of little avail, and Mr. Stearns began to feel that Stanton's grand promises were coming to an unfavorable end.

In this emergency he returned to Boston and held a conference with Mr. John M. Forbes and other friends; and they all agreed that he ought to be better supported in the work of recruiting than he had been. A subscription was immediately set on foot, and in a few days a recruiting fund of about thirty thousand dollars was raised and placed in charge of Mr. R. P. Hallowell. This may justly be called a patriotic subscription, for the money was not given, as in all other instances, in aid of state or local enlistment, but for a benefit shared in by the whole country.

September 5 we find him in Nashville, whence he wrote:

"Left Louisville on Friday morning and arrived here at 6.30 P.M. Have seen Governor Andy Johnson. He is well disposed, understands the subject, and will co-operate and advise me. His aid will be very valuable. From him and others I got the following information. For years a large number of persons in this state, many of them wealthy slaveholders, have entertained feelings hostile to slavery, but did not dare to share their thoughts with any man. Many were afraid to think on the subject.

"September 6, 1863. I had a long talk with several influential men here last evening—I think it will result in an effort on their part to destroy slavery in Tennessee. They are in terrible earnest."

Andrew Johnson was the vainest man of his time, and his vanity was continually driving him about in a circle. Mr. Stearns' varied experiences with him have an historical value. On the 10th he wrote again:

"I opened a letter from you this morning and lo, it was dated 30th August. Probably it had strayed to Rosecrans

at Chattanooga and back here. It breathed the old tale of suffering sadness. Such is our life. One day I am successful, and consequently happy. Then, something adverse casts me down, and I have to nerve myself up to the work.

"Governor Johnson is afraid of me (or rather was) and opposed my work, and I have been laboring to bring him over to the faith, and think I have succeeded, but can't tell yet. If I do it will be a great gain, for then we will try to settle the slavery question at Washington before Congress meets.

"The Governor showed me recent letters from Lincoln and Chase that were very encouraging, Lincoln looking to Tennessee for the key-note of his policy for bringing back the slave states; and I should not be surprised if I was to shape that policy, and the whole affair be settled before it was thought of at the North."

On the 21st of September he wrote again:

"This is a gloomy day in Nashville, for the army of Rosecrans has been brought to a stand, and is in peril. He is, however, a brave commander and will do his best. We are not in any danger here, being 100 miles from the seat of war, with an almost impassable country between, and troops enough here to guard us from any guerilla attack that might be made.

"If you could understand the nature of my work you would say, 'Stay and do it.' I am already looked up to by those poor people as their guardian, and they are very grateful. I am offered fruit and carriage rides, and other demonstrations, which are gratifying to me. Yesterday they impressed some men for work, and in the process shot a slave, who, I learn, will probably die. I am doing all I can for him, and am taking measures to prevent a recurrence of those painful scenes. I am busy to-day for I have just commenced recruiting."

Mr. Stearns represents the confidence that was felt in General Rosecrans among the military men at Nashville; and the defeat at Chickamauga ought

not to be laid to Rosecrans' fault. After the battle at Gettysburg a vigorous prosecution of the war might have brought it to an end in six or nine months; but Meade, who was a purely defensive commander, kept maneuvering with General Lee in Virginia, while the energetic Grant was retained in Mississippi against his will, in the vain hope of effecting a premature reconstruction. This gave the Confederate armies time to recuperate, and finally their whole force was hurled on General Rosecrans. It was only his bravery, supported by the military genius of General Thomas, that prevented the Union forces from being swept back to the Ohio River, and Major Stearns with them. Grant's fine victory of Chattanooga compensated for much of this, but six months at least were added to the duration of the war.

On October 4 Major Stearns wrote to John M. Forbes:

"Your letter of the 25th is at hand. Its suggestions are very valuable and will receive immediate attention. I shall send a copy of it to Governor Johnson for his information.

"As I intimated to you in Boston, the difficulties of raising colored regiments are not material but political, and will now fully explain my meaning.

"I went to Buffalo in February last; the public mind was unprepared for the work, and we had no success until it was shaped and led to a full expression in favor of it. Then our success was marked.

"For this vast work we want funds. This is the centre from which operations can be carried on in all directions, and, unless removed, of which I have no fear, I shall probably winter here and urge on the work. All government interference with the slave, except to put him in the army, demoralizes him. It is so here and everywhere. We must

urge the government to enlist as many as they can, and *let the rest alone.* To remove them from their homes is the worst policy. I am taking the able men, and leaving the old men, women and children. The latter will be wanted for labor, and will be well treated, because they will run off if they are badly treated. Next spring there will be a demand for labor on the farms and they will be paid, because others will hire and pay them if the owners do not pay them."

On January 8 Major Stearns would be fifty-five years old, and yet he was doing the work of a young man. Typewriting had not been invented, and he wrote all his letters with his own hand. One evening he wrote to his wife: "It is now half past nine and my work for the day is over." Twenty pages of letter paper would be a fair average for his day's labor; and besides this he was obliged to attend personally to inumerable details, which were constantly interfering with more important affairs. Serious questions concerning the rights and legal position of the freedmen were continually arising and these required a cool head and a clear understanding for their solution. His position at this time was fully as difficult and important as was that of the governors of the states of Ohio and New York.

Edward Bartlett, of Concord, Mass., who was one of his staff in Nashville, said afterwards that he never saw a man who could despatch so much business in a day as George L. Stearns. He writes: "I shall never forget the fine appearance of the first regiment we sent off. They were all picked men, and felt a just pride in wearing the blue.

As fast as we obtained enough recruits they were formed into regiments, officered, and sent to the front. When men became scarce in the city we made trips into the country, often going beyond the Union picket line, and generally reaping a harvest of slaves. These expeditions brought an element of danger into our lives, for our forage parties were fired into by the enemy more than once; but we always succeeded in bringing back our men with us. The black regiments did valuable service for the Union, leaving their dead on many a Southern battle-field. Mr. Stearns was a noble man, courteous, with great executive ability, and grandly fitted for the work he was engaged in."

All this time Major Stearns was managing his affairs in Boston by letter and telegraph. He had advanced his chief clerk, William J. Bride, to a limited partnership in order to expedite matters with greater facility; and although Mr. Bride deserved this it afterwards resulted in serious consequences to his family, which would not have happened but for Mr. Stearns' public services.

He made good solid friends in Nashville; men like Dr. Bowen, afterwards United States senator, who had read Plato and Emerson,—staunch Union men, who hated slavery and while they groaned over the calamities, which had befallen the Southern states, looked upon them as the just retribution for a vicious condition of society. They assured Major Stearns that in all the large southern cities there were men who held similar views, but they were in a small minority and did not dare to speak their minds.

He wrote again to John M. Forbes on October 18:

"Yours of the 11th is at hand. I don't wonder that you feel discouraged from your point of view, but let me tell you that the President, while apparently taking one step back, really takes two forward; as you will see by the order enclosed for your private use. If you have time to read all the letters I have sent to Mr. Wellman, you will understand some of the difficulties I have had to remove. There were others, which, as I could not make you understand unless you were here, I have not reported. All are now out of my way and the track clear. Let me sketch to you the policy of the leading slaveholding Union men of this state. They see clearly that their political and social existence *here* depends on the abolition of slavery and the control of the state by the Union men. Therefore they have entered most heartily into my plans for the organization of colored regiments and are daily in consultation with me.

* * * * * * * * * *

"Urge the government to repeal all laws that create a distinction between the colored and white soldier, full pay being as necessary to enable the former to support his family as it is to the latter; to continue the present military government of this state until the change of public sentiment will enable them to control it. This control will be necessary if the state is declared a territory, and therefore nothing will be gained by such action, while it will shock the feeling of those who having fought for the perpetuity of the Union would find it virtually dissolved."

Unfortunately Mr. Forbes did not preserve the copy of President Lincoln's order, which would be valuable to us now as evidence in regard to the character of that remarkable man. The national government waxed hot and cold in regard to the colored regiments according to circumstances. After the defeat at Chickamauga Major Stearns

was warmly supported and encouraged in his work, but after General Bragg had been defeated and driven over the mountains, the government relaxed its efforts again.

A young Ohio officer, General James A. Garfield, was attached to General Rosecrans' staff at the time of Chickamauga, and being relieved from active service by Rosecrans' retirement, he came to Nashville and made Major Stearns' acquaintance there. They became warm friends, and when the Major was in Washington the following winter, Garfield introduced a bill in Congress at his instance to ameliorate the legal position of colored soldiers. Major Stearns saw much of Garfield during the two succeeding winters, and always esteemed him as the most high-minded, liberal, judicious, and altogether satisfactory person in the House of Representatives.

Amos A. Lawrence was as active and helpful now as in the early Kansas struggle,—before he became alarmed at the revolutionary apparition; but at this time and during the next two years John M. Forbes was Mr. Stearns' most efficient co-worker. It may have been at the time the recruiting fund was raised that Major Stearns brought him a subscription list which he had headed himself with two thousand dollars. Mr. Forbes drew his pen through the figure two, saying: "You are not going to do that, Stearns. If any one gives two thousand dollars I shall do it, and not you." He was now in Washington and had very considerately written to know if he could serve Major

Stearns there, or the good cause in any manner. Major Stearns replied:

"Your favor of the 11th is at hand. Having got through (thank God) with the political operations of this department, I am now quietly pursuing my legitimate business.

"I have to-day started three regiments, the 4th, 5th, and 6th, of this department, which we think will be filled rapidly.

"Don't want anything from Mr. Stanton, except permission to go home for a few days, and to be let alone for six months. If I get that, I shall be happy.

"A letter from Dr. Bowen tells me he has left Washington for Boston, and will return to Washington again. You will find him if he is in Washington at the New York *Times* or Cincinnati *Gazette* offices, and if you do not know my friends Whitelaw Reid of the *Gazette,* and Samuel Wilkeson of the *Times,* use this as a letter of introduction."

Under date of November 22 the Major wrote to his wife:

"I am waiting for the blessed moment to arrive when I can say I am bound for home. Not hearing from the War Department I telegraphed Mr. Stanton yesterday, 'Four regiments filling rapidly, my work is in perfect order. I ask leave to return home for a few days.'

"I hope to get an answer to-morrow, and hurrah for home and home joys and comfort. But only for a few days. The longer I remain here, I am more convinced that the country needs all the help her citizens can give to put down this unholy rebellion. Burnside is in a dangerous position and we fear will be beaten by Longstreet. If he is, Kentucky will have to take it, and the war be prolonged. To be sure it would be a pleasure to have Kentucky paid off for her sordid meanness, but, as a whole it would be disastrous, and we could not afford to pay the price."

What answer Secretary Stanton made to Major Stearns' request is uncertain. He did not return

to Boston at this time, but four weeks later went to Washington to see Stanton himself. Accidents always happened when the master was away, and Mrs. Stearns was entertained at Thanksgiving by the burning of the gas-house, caused by a drunken Irishman who dropped his pipe into a large can of oil. Julian Hawthorne, who was then a freshman at Harvard College, and a frequent visitor at Mr. Stearns' house, distinguished himself in his efforts to suppress the conflagration and prevent it from spreading to the main building. The story of the Montagues and Capulets is continually being repeated in real life; and Hawthorne's son always liked the Stearns family, while Emerson's son evidently preferred more orthodox society.

The battle of Chattanooga, November 23, may have decided Major Stearns to remain at Washington. All the wounded were brought there who could be transported, and among them was a handsome colored youth, very nearly black, named George Williams, now widely known as the historian of the negro race in America. He was placed in a tobacco warehouse; a close, warm and unfavorable place for him to recover in. Major Stearns heard that he was wounded, sought him out, and had him conveyed to a more comfortable lodging.

The greatest difficulty which Major Stearns found in persuading the colored people to enlist was the fear of what might happen to them, if they were captured by the enemy. They fully appreciated what he told them, that this was the golden opportunity for their race, but a large portion of

them were afraid that they would be burned alive. This did not happen, so far as we know, but they were often treated in a very savage manner, not only by the rebels, but by proslavery Union officers and men.* The officers of colored regiments were heroic men indeed, for they often fared worse than the private soldiers. Charles Follen, the architect of Mr. Stearns' house, went with him to Tennessee, and was captured there by the Confederate cavalry. He was compelled to run all day by the side of a horse, and so much injured by over-exertion that he died a few years later of paralysis.

In the middle of December Major Stearns wrote out his report as recruiting commissioner, including with it an improved plan for future operations. He then started for Washington, and wrote to his wife from that city, December 17:

> "I arrived here at 1 P.M. yesterday. Thirteen hours from Philadelphia. Thus I am two days later than my time.
>
> "The Secretary received me kindly and seems disposed to let me take my own time to return; but I shall know better to-morrow. M. C.s are anxious for information, and I was busy all last evening with them. They are radical enough, and disposed so far as I can see to adopt wise and just measures for the advancement of the negro. I shall leave as soon as possible for home, but fear you will not see me until Monday or Tuesday."

On the 18th he wrote again:

> "I saw Mr. Stanton yesterday. He asked me if I was satisfied. I said 'Yes.' He replied: 'Well, I am satisfied if you are.'

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* Some of them were massacred in this manner in the crater mine at Petersburg.

"My report requires more time than I expected, for it naturally extends to the entire policy of our government for the Southern States. Our friends here want to do all they can for the negroes, and are anxious for information. This will keep me a day or two longer than I intended.

"Per contra Mr. Stanton allows me to take my own time for returning."

The last sentence is printed in italics on account of its importance; for it places Secretary Stanton in a self-contradictory position in regard to his attitude toward Major Stearns three weeks later. At this time he was as friendly and amiable as could be desired.

Major Stearns had left Captain R. D. Mussey in charge of his affairs at Nashville, an excellent man and true friend to the cause, who wrote to him on the 24th:

"Mr. McKim has been gathering various facts about the colored population here from conversations with them in my room, and from such slight visits out as his cold will permit.

"I was very much pleased to receive your letter of the 18th this evening. I most devoutly hope that the Secretary will give you the authority desired."

It is plainly apparent from this extract that Major Stearns' subordinates considered the recommendations in his report essential to the continued prosecution of the work.

On the same day Major Stearns wrote to Thomas D. Eliot, member of Congress from New Bedford:

"The negroes can take care of themselves if protected in their rights.

"Colonel Littlefield says: 'The negro is fully capable of taking care of himself. The soldiers of negro regiments will save more of their money than white soldiers.' I have never seen a negro soldier drunk; from what I have seen of them in Nashville, I fully concur with the opinions expressed."

On Christmas morning Major Stearns reached his home before his family had assembled for breakfast.

Major GEORGE L. STEARNS

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XX

Major Stearns Resigns

George L. Stearns brought no Christmas presents with him, but his own presence was the best Christmas gift that his family could have received. It was pathetic to see them cling to him, as if they intended never to let him go from them again. How many thousands of such meetings there were in those heroic times, and what poet or painter has ever done them justice!

Major Stearns remained two weeks in Boston attending to his private business, and discussing public affairs with Amos A. Lawrence, John M. Forbes, and others. He served as a useful mediator between these practical business men and the professional politicians. On the 8th of January, his fifty-fifth birthday, he again reached Washington, and called the next day on the secretary of war; but Mr. Stanton was too busy to see him. The same thing happened three days in succession. On the fifth day he went to Mr. Colfax's reception, and in the anteroom met Mr. Stanton. To Major Stearns' "Good evening," he replied in a gruff tone: "When are you going to Tennessee?" Major Stearns replied, "As soon as I have had a conference with you." "Call on me to-morrow," he said, "and I will try and find time to talk with you."

Major Stearns agreed to do so, but the next morning wrote to his wife:

"A pleasant party made me forget it for the time, and I enjoyed myself; but returning to my room I passed a sleepless night. All his past roughness, and want of consideration came up, and was revived again and again. I do not care for his haughty manner. But to be obliged to watch and wait the temper of a man, who would not be tolerated in any decent society, if he behaved as he does to those under his authority, I cannot and will not. Besides I think I can do as much good in a private way as in this; much more to my comfort and satisfaction.

"What will come of it I don't know. I do not think he will make any concessions and do not desire he shall, for now my sense of duty is satisfied. I have no desire to continue in public life."

The same day he sent in his resignation to the secretary of war, saying in it:

"Entering the service at your request and from an ardent desire to serve our country in this war, I declined all compensations for my services, and have the satisfaction of knowing that in all the business intrusted to my care, no error, indiscretion, or neglect of mine has caused loss to the service."

The secretary of war replied on the same day:

"Sir:

"Your note of yesterday tendering your resignation has been received. Although I very much regret that the Department will lose the benefit of your efficient services in the important field to which you have been assigned, I am conscious that the pay is inadequate, and that the sacrifice on your part is so great, that I have no right to insist on your remaining in service any longer than is perfectly agreeable to yourself.

"Thankful for the aid you have rendered, I shall always be happy to serve you.

"Yours truly,

"War Department, "Edwin M. Stanton,
"Washington City." "*Secretary of War.*"

The sense of honor, which makes the school-boy fight when he feels himself ill-treated, lays the foundation of manliness in his character. Much has been said of late in disparagement of the sense of honor, both national and individual; but it should be remembered that without this, and its belligerent consequences, the United States of America would not now exist. If George L. Stearns had not been a fighter, he could not have raised his family from the depressed condition in which it was left by his father's death. In the interview at Speaker Colfax's reception, Secretary Stanton bordered closely on a breach of military etiquette. On a somewhat similar occasion when a high Prussian official attempted to domineer over the youthful Bismarck, the latter said to him: "I want you to understand, sir, that in polite society, Herr von Bismarck is as good as Herr von anybody else;" and if Major Stearns had replied to Secretary Stanton: "Sir, this is a meeting of gentlemen," he would have been commended by all who heard him. It was not without reason that he passed a sleepless night, and the next day he took his resolution with firmness and good judgment.

He had already found difficulties enough in dealing with the War Department, and now that the secretary had become unfriendly to him, his position would be simply unendurable. What had

caused Secretary Stanton's change of front? The secretary knew very well that Major Stearns was not needed in Nashville, and the best proof of this is that after his retirement he retained Captain Mussey in command there. Major Stearns had constructed a recruiting machine, which like his lead business would almost run of itself. He had set the wheel to rolling and a slight touch was all that was necessary to guide it. There was no reason why Major Stearns should return to Tennessee, unless he could carry on his business there on a larger scale.

It is possible that Mr. Stanton may have had a confused idea in his mind that Major Stearns was neglecting his duties by a too prolonged absence from headquarters; but if this was the case, why did he not notify him to that effect in the regular way? No: it was evidently the recommendations in Major Stearns' report that had caused the secretary of war to change his tone. Mr. Stearns always wished to do what he undertook on the largest possible scale; and he had a plan of organizing sixty or seventy colored regiments to be placed under the command of an antislavery general. He wished to organize the labor of the freedmen on a definite basis, and under government protection, so that they should no longer be left to the mercy of greedy contractors and to the despotism of subordinate commanders. How important this was may be judged from the following extract, which he afterward published:

"The Government has not kept its faith with the colored man anywhere. When I went to Nashville, colored men,

free and slave were hunted daily through the streets, and impressed for labor on fortifications, railroads, and in hospitals, and although promised ten dollars per month, it was rarely paid, and many of them worked twelve to fifteen months without any pay.

"Let me give you one case of several that came under my notice. When our army occupied Nashville, in August, 1862, calls were made for slaves to work on the fortifications. About twenty-seven hundred were employed. A large number ran from their masters. Many Union men sent their best hands, and some were impressed. These men working in the heat of the autumn months, lying on the hillside at night in the heavy dews without shelter, and fed with poor food, soon sickened. In four months about eight hundred of them died; the remainder were kept at work from six to fifteen months without pay. Then all who were able-bodied were forcibly enlisted in the Twelfth United States colored troops. Many of them had families who were destitute of the necessaries of life."

Such pitiless expositions could not have been pleasant at the war-office, although Stanton himself could hardly be held responsible for them. "The contract system," wrote Napoleon to his brother Joseph, "makes nothing but thieves;" and it probably caused the death of more Union soldiers than were killed on all the battle-fields. Major Stearns' plan included a general social reorganization of the Southern states, and for that the administration was not prepared.

In answer to a letter of inquiry from Rev. Samuel Johnson concerning this affair, Mr. Stearns stated:

"Mr. Stanton did not treat me worse than he does others, but, the want of co-operation on his part, and the absence of that tone that makes intercourse between gentlemen

satisfactory, determined me not to continue longer as a government official."

Major Stearns was now in fighting trim; and he would seem to have had some difficulty with Senator Wilson. He wrote to his wife January 23, 1864:

"I believe I wrote you that Senator Wilson had behaved badly to me. I wrote him a sharp letter, and he made so full and free amends, saying he was very sorry as soon as he had said it, that I at once resumed my old relations with him.

"The political complications here are most subtle: No one knows where he is or who, or what statement to depend on. Unless you can divine the past of a man you cannot tell his motives of action, or whether he is deceived by others. President, Cabinet, M C.s, Senators, all are alike. There is no safe place but outside, with nothing to ask, and nothing to give.

"The next battle appears to be coming between Lincoln and Chase. Fremont is said to be working underhand for Butler; so the latter may be in the ring, but I think not. Wilson says the whole government is so mean that it would go to pieces were it not for the great cause that underlies and props it up. This is true. We must trust in God, and the great heart of our people that never goes far wrong.

"I am writing in my parlor, the windows open, and the bright sun making everything cheerful; but my thoughts are sad; for Washington is gay while the country mourns, and I feel as if men high in power were dancing over the graves of our slaughtered heroes. I try to get away from it, but my thoughts like a bent bow, spring back to their normal condition; for the distress of the country has become normal with me and I can think of nothing else.

"This is wrong, I know. The good God still watches over us, is guiding our footsteps through 'the valley of the shadow of death,' and will bring us out, tho' with much tribulation."

Major Stearns may be excused for feeling somewhat misanthropic at this stage of affairs; but Senator Wilson's statement is memorable, and evidently refers to the treatment of the colored soldiers.

Two days later the Major wrote again:

"G. W. Smalley says Greeley is getting more aggressive, and disposed once more to take the lead. He told us that through Edmund Kirke the negroes had communicated last August, a plan for a general insurrection, to be aided by our armies, and five of our commanders had promised to aid it, but Lincoln refused on the ground that a servile insurrection would give a pretext for foreign intervention. He also said that Lincoln had pardoned a notorious rebel who assassinated a New York soldier, and that there is great indignation about it here."

He was in Cincinnati on the 20th and wrote:

"In the cars we met Brady, the photographer. Phillips introduced me, and he asked for my picture, which I promised on my return. As he wants it for his gallery it will be well done, and then I will get some extra copies for you.

"Brooks of the *Express* gives up slavery; says it is dead, and he will not contend against it. Another sign of democratic reaction. The New York *Herald* complains that Phillips stands on its platform, and here I learn there is a plan for a radical democratic party.

"On my way I have again gone over all the past year, both before and since my connection with Mr. Stanton. I can see how it might have come to a different result if I could have had his confidence, but that was impossible. Everywhere I find men who were immediately placed in a false position with him, and those who had no favors to ask have seldom approached him again. This is very significant. He is not like Seward and Chase."

Brady's photographic gallery contained nearly

all the celebrities in the country, but Major Stearns cared so little for this, that although he passed through New York City again and again, it is doubtful if he remembered either Brady or his photographs.

From Louisville he wrote to Mrs. Stearns, February 27:

"You did right to give $50 to the draft fund. One advantage we shall get from the call of 500,000 men is that Kentucky is now forced to send her proportion and can only do it by giving a portion of her slaves. 'All things work together for good to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.' And don't we believe in his principles?

"My affairs here are in the best condition, and will be easily closed; but I fear I have been hasty in setting Tuesday next as the day of my departure.

"Yesterday in the cars the Missouri delegation sang the John Brown song. One proposed that they should serenade Prentiss with it to-morrow night. How it would startle the people of this proud city to hear it sung in the stillness of night. I mean to try and have it done. It would be a good joke at least."

The next letter is dated Nashville, March 4, and he says in it:

"Although the delay is painful to me, and more than that to you, yet I am engaged in most important duty which I trust either here or at Washington will result in stopping the abuse of colored men.

"I am going this morning to General Grant to have a talk with him, and hope he will do what Secretary Stanton ought to have done long ago. I want an order securing to colored troops the same treatment that is accorded to the white troops."

No record of this interview with Grant has been discovered, but after Mr. Stearns returned to

Boston two weeks later, he stated that Grant agreed with him cordially in regard to the colored regiments, and promised that the abuses complained of should be remedied so far as he had power to do it. He said that Grant was the most direct and decisive person that he had become acquainted with in the government.

The only recognition that Major Stearns received for his exceptional services was an invitation to dine with the Atlantic Club, which we may suppose was suggested by Emerson. What he noticed on that occasion was that those literary celebrities seemed to be much more interested in politics than in their own profession; although their ideas on that subject were more theoretical than practical. Feeling very modest in such fine company, he said little at first, but when Longfellow questioned him in regard to the antagonism between Congress and the Executive it soon became apparent how much more he knew concerning Washington affairs than the rest of them, and after this he became the centre of conversation,—though he also perceived that there were those present who did not like to believe what he said.

Mr. Stearns was now a civilian again, and was very glad to escape from his uniform; but the title of Major still adhered to him, and he was never able to shake it off, much as he would like to have escaped from that also.

He kept so quiet about the interview at Colfax's reception, that it did not find its way into the newspapers until the last of April. Then he was immediately attacked for it in the *Antislavery Standard,*

—the last place that one might have expected. The writer, who was an old Garrisonian,* said:

"Am I not sorry that he has resigned? I should be if I were not certain that the work can now go on without him; but I tell you what I am sorry for; I am sorry that the Major's friends have given newspaper publicity to his reason for resigning."

There was a malignant spirit in this, an attempt to underrate Mr. Stearns' services, which was more than he could brook. He replied to it in a lengthy statement, in which he reviewed the whole subject of negro recruiting. He said:

"The reason why we have so few colored men in our army to-day is, because they have been treated unfairly; and so far as I know, nearly all representations of these abuses have been allowed to pass unheeded. We might have had two hundred thousand colored men in our army to-day, if they had been dealt with in good faith and treated properly.

"The War Department commenced recruiting negroes as soldiers in Massachusetts, Hilton Head, and New Orleans, with the promise of the same pay, clothing, and treatment, as to white soldiers; and when I was commissioned to recruit, that understanding prevailed throughout the country. I commenced recruiting colored men for the Government in Philadelphia on these terms, and when I accidentally learned at the War Department, that a decision had been made some time before to pay but ten dollars per month, without clothing, I was obliged to discharge all my recruits and commence anew.

"Of the Fifty-fourth and Fifty-fifth Massachusetts, I recruited thirteen hundred men, who were induced to leave Pennsylvania and the West, because they were to enter the service on the same terms as white soldiers. It was

* J. Miller McKim.

not a question of pay, but of equality. They believed, and had a right to believe the representations made to them, and the Government was bound in *honor* either to comply with or abrogate the *whole* contract; but it stood by silently, allowed the fraud to go on, then repudiated the promises of its agents, but kept the men."

A good majority, however, of the old abolitionists rallied to Mr. Stearns' support, and his ill-natured critic was placed in the vocative. It only remains to be noticed that his successor at Nashville, Captain Mussey, was soon promoted to be a brigadier-general, and that Mr. Stearns' appointment in June, 1863, was never sent to the Senate for confirmation till 1868.

His resignation came at the right moment, and the manner in which it happened is of small consequence now. He had started the movement, and given it such an impetus that men of moderate ability could still carry it forward. The importance of his work cannot easily be measured. *Without the regiments which Major Stearns organized at Nashville, General Sherman's march through Georgia would not have been possible.* It was no longer easy to obtain white volunteers. With a population ten millions less than that of France, the Northern states were maintaining an army much larger than the one which accompanied Napoleon to Moscow. General Thomas' right wing, at the battle of Nashville, was formed almost entirely of colored regiments. They were ordered to make a feint attack on the enemy, in order to withdraw attention from the flanking movement of his veterans on the left; but when the charge had

once begun their officers were unable to keep them in check, the feint was changed into a real attack and contributed largely to the most decisive victory of the whole war.

Founding the Nation

The war-spirit made strange comrades, sometimes. In 1864 Charles W. Slack and a committee of Theodore Parker's Society called on Rev. Jacob M. Manning of the Old South Church, and invited him to become the pastor of their society. His reply was: "You know not what you ask." They agreed on the slavery question and the radical difference between Parker and Manning on religious subjects did not occur to Mr. Slack and his friends. It was in some such way that George L. Stearns became associated with Charles Eliot Norton and J. Miller McKim in founding the New York *Nation*. Mr. Stearns' object was, of course, to obtain a newspaper that would take elevated views of political subjects, and especially advocate liberal and unprejudiced legislation for the benefit of the freedmen. He urged this to his coadjutors with his customary frankness, and they permitted him to suppose that they agreed with him.

However, if any doubts existed on this point in the minds of Norton and McKim they must have been dissipated by the circular which was issued to the stockholders by the committee duly appointed for the purpose. The second proposition in this circular reads as follows:

"The earnest and persistent consideration of the condition of the colored race at the South, as a matter of vital

interest to the nation at large, with a view to the removal of all artificial distinctions between them and the rest of the population, and the bestowal on them, as far as education, security, and justice can do it, of an equal chance in the race of life."

It was not until May, 1865, that a sufficient amount of stock was subscribed to place the enterprise on a sound basis. About ninety thousand dollars was raised, of which Mr. Stearns contributed one-seventh, or ten thousand dollars more than any other stockholder. It is safe to presume that without his assistance the *Nation* would never have existed.

Early in April, 1865, I met R. W. Emerson in the railway train going from Concord to Boston. My impression is that he came into the car after I did and took the next seat to me. After some inquiry about my studies he said: "I hear that your father contemplates a newspaper venture together with Mr. Charles Eliot Norton. I said 'Yes,' that it was true he did. 'I should not think,' he continued, 'that Mr. Norton would be quite the man to harmonize with your father's ways of thinking and working. He is industrious and a good deal interested in literary matters. Mr. Lowell likes him, and when he was editor of the *North American Review,* wished to have him for a colleague.'" Mr. Emerson then said a good deal more about Mr. Norton, which I do not recollect, and ended at length as he began with doubting if he and my father could permanently agree.

This information surprised Mr. Stearns greatly, for he supposed that Mr. Norton agreed with him

as closely as Emerson did himself; but it was now too late to profit by this warning. However, Mr. Norton's opinions would not make much difference, if the right editor was secured. The position was first offered to George William Curtis, and if he had accepted it, there can be no doubt that the result would have been satisfactory and harmonious to all concerned; but Mr. Curtis was receiving ten thousand a year for the mediocre business of editing an illustrated weekly, and felt that he could not surrender it for an uncertainty. Mr. Stearns then proposed Whitelaw Reid, who was warmly supported by Mr. Forbes and accepted by the stockholders; but Mr. Reid—to Mr. Stearns' keen disappointment—also declined. He considered his health precarious, and had decided to try his fortune as a cotton planter in Louisiana.

Then Mr. Norton brought forward Edwin L. Godkin, whom he introducted as an Englishman, as a writer on the New York *Times*, and the correspondent of the London *Daily News*. Mr. Norton enlarged on the advantage of his early training on an English daily newspaper; but Mr. Stearns was influenced in his favor by the fact that Mr. Godkin had written a biography of Kossuth, which seemed to indicate a progressive tendency in the man, and a liking for liberal ideas.

Mr. Godkin, however, was really the son of an editor in Dublin, and thoroughly Irish by education and sympathy. If he considered the Duke of Wellington an Irishman, he must have considered himself one. On the concealment of this fact depended all the subsequent trouble which Mr.

Stearns encountered in this undertaking. Three months later Mr. Stearns said: "If I had known Mr. Godkin was born in Ireland, I would never have accepted him for an editor."

I was present at a dinner at the Brevoort House in New York, the last of May, 1865, to which Mr. Stearns invited Wendell Phillips and E. L. Godkin. The conversation was chiefly concerning the reconstruction of the Southern states and the political position of the negro race there, and Mr. Godkin assented substantially to everything which Mr. Stearns proposed. I do not recollect that negro suffrage was brought forward on that occasion, but Mr. Godkin certainly agreed that there were rights, such as the ownership of land, to testify in court, and the practice of the liberal professions, which the colored people did not then possess in the Southern states, and which they certainly ought to have. It was a most harmonious meeting. Mr. Phillips remarked to Mr. Godkin that there would be no one on the *Nation* who could give an opinion on a constitutional amendment; to which Mr. Godkin replied that he could readily obtain one from Joseph Choate, or some other first rate lawyer.

It will be remembered that in 1863 Mr. Stearns raised a large subscription in Boston to assist our improvident government in the work of organizing colored regiments. After Mr. Stearns had resigned his position in 1864 about one-third of this subscription remained unexpended, and at a meeting of the contributors it was decided to leave this sum in the hands of the committee of which R. P.

Hallowell was treasurer, with permission to make use of it in the line of the original purpose for which the fund was raised.

Mr. Godkin somehow became aware of this fact, and at the last moment sent Wendell P. Garrison (who was to be assistant editor of the *Nation*) to Boston to obtain this fund on the ground that it could not be better employed than in the subscription to a periodical that was intended to advocate the removal of all artificial distinctions between the colored people and the rest of the population of the South; and the balance of the recruiting fund was converted into stock of the *Nation* upon this understanding.

Emerson's prediction proved to be true enough. Godkin did not wait till the second issue of his paper before throwing off his mask. The first number of the *Nation* was published in July, 1865, and contained a cynical attack on the supporters of civil rights for the colored people, which included, besides Mr. Stearns and the whole Massachusetts delegation in Congress, a majority of the stockholders of the paper. Names were not mentioned, but the opposition was no less pronounced and incisive. William Lloyd Garrison spoke of it in my presence as "the objectionable paragraph"; and it was estimated to have cost the *Nation* a thousand subscribers. Remonstrances to Godkin were of no avail, and Charles Eliot Norton supported him in a course which had neither legal nor moral justification. An article shortly appeared in the *Nation*, written by an old pro-slavery Harvard professor, on the rights of belligerents—intended for the

benefit of the states recently in rebellion; and in August Senator Sumner wrote to Major Stearns:

> "Has not the time come to launch your letter to the President? Blow upon blow—line upon line—precept upon precept; this is the rule.
>
> "Meanwhile suspend the *Nation.* It does more hurt than good. Is there a single person that it has inspired—strengthened or instructed in the good cause. *Not one.* But it has given help to the other side—in every number. An argument to show that Equality is not essential to the Republican idea is in the worst vein of copper-headism. How long? Oh! How long?
>
> "CHARLES SUMNER."

Major Stearns was not the man to endure this with impunity. I can bear witness that for more than six months he tried every method of conciliation; but Godkin continued to be Godkin, and Norton supported him. Then Mr. Stearns determined to fight. A majority of the stockholders had always been on his side, and by instituting legal proceedings, he compelled Norton, Godkin and McKim to buy up the *Nation* for the balance of cash that remained from the original subscription in the treasury: about forty-three per cent. In less than a year Godkin had sunk over forty thousand dollars.

E. L. Godkin never attempted any explanation or justification of his conduct, except that he had received autocratic control of the paper from its trustees, with Mr. Stearns' approval; but this did not justify him in deceiving the Boston and Philadelphia stockholders as to his future intentions. He also advanced the singular theory that

an editor was not responsible to his stockholders but to his subscribers. Yet Godkin was a lawyer and must have been aware that the manager of any corporation is responsible in certain respects to its stockholders. Mr. Stearns consoled himself with the reflection that with such an editor the *Nation* would have a small circulation and still less political influence; but this perverted *dénouement* placed him in a trying position toward those gentlemen who had subscribed to the stock on his recommendation.

XXI

Reconstruction

In January, 1864, Mr. Stearns met with his first serious sickness. Having voted for Lincoln for the second time, he went to New York to further his new enterprise; when he was suddenly taken ill. He was dining with his metal-broker, Mr. Schmidt, at the time, and Mr. Schmidt said afterward he was afraid that Mr. Stearns would die before he left him on the Boston train. He was in a stupor the next morning when the conductor aroused him, and helped him to a carriage. When he reached his house, he only said: "Home at last!" and did not speak again for nearly a week. His pocketbook had been stolen on the train, and he had no money to pay the coachman.

It was a wonder that he recovered. Dr. Perry, who saved Sumner, came to his death through a surgical operation, and during Mr. Stearns' long absences his wife had employed a homœopathic doctor who served well enough for Mrs. Stearns' headaches, but was not the physician for a serious case. It is also to be feared that he was neglected. His son, not hearing anything about him for several days, walked over from Cambridge between recitations. He found his father in bed, and he turned his eyes toward his son, but could not speak. He was alone in the house. After some time the chamber-maid, an excellent woman, came in, but

she could say nothing definite in regard to Mr. Stearns' condition.

Yet, Mr. Stearns rallied, and as soon as he was able to look out for himself, he improved steadily. He was always his own best doctor, but he could not give himself the rest he required. In six weeks he was again at his business. About the first of the new year he even joined in a desperate effort to obtain a place for Governor Andrew in President Lincoln's cabinet. He was assisted in this by every loyal son of Massachusetts, as well as by prominent public men in other states, but Lincoln would not listen to it, although Andrew as a judicious manager of public affairs was now considered without a superior in the United States. Mr. Stearns believed that it was owing to the opposition of Seward, who disliked to have anyone near the President who might counteract his own influence.

It was indeed strange that the merciful and conciliatory Lincoln should become the victim of an insensate conspiracy of revenge, but it only shows the importance of official position in the eyes of the vulgar. The Southerners congratulated themselves that the act was committed by a Northern man,—that their section was in no way responsible for it; but William Robinson in his letter to the Springfield *Republican* blamed the venomous editorials in the Richmond papers. There are always two parties to an assassination; those who instigate the act consciously or unconsciously, and the poor self-deluded, self-besotted fool, who commits it. The assassination of McKinley was traced directly

to the incendiary harangue of a political virago at Detroit. Mr. Field, the Boston theatre manager, said of Wilkes Booth, that he was " a bad actor and a pestiferous fellow,"—more respectable than Guiteau, but otherwise much like him. How newspapers and public speakers can be kept within proper limits in such matters it is difficult to determine.

Reconstruction was now the problem before the country, and such a momentous one that both politicians and editors shrank from it as if it were something dangerous and even deadly to the touch. Historical precedents were of small value in dealing with this subject, for never before had a nation been placed in an analogous position. The restoration of the Union by Lincoln's administration was not only a civil war, but a war of conquest. There had been desolating civil wars in England and France, but they were wars of classes and parties, without fixed or definite geographical lines. In the reconstruction of the Southern states it became necessary to consider them, both as an original part of the Union and as conquered territory. Under such conditions nothing could be more perilous than a hasty and injudicious reconstruction.

There were those who perceived this, but uncertainty prevailed in their councils; and the majority did not perceive it. It was now that Charles Sumner proved himself the great statesman, and George L. Stearns was not a foot behind him. Led by the instinct of justice and humanity they came out boldly with the assertion that negro suffrage was the only practicable solution of the problem.

Already, in the last days of Congress, Trumbull of Illinois had introduced a bill for the reconstruction of Louisiana on a basis of ten thousand loyal voters. What shallow statesmanship! how dangerous a precedent! On such a basis three hundred thousand voters in the Southern states might have wielded a power equal to that of the whole North, minus the state of New York; and yet a majority of the Senate was found to be in favor of it. For three days and nights Sumner with a little help from Wade and Wilson, fought that bill with all the weapons of parliamentary warfare, and finally succeeded in preventing its adoption. It was a feat of human endurance unparalleled by Gladstone or Canning.

As already stated, Mr. Stearns' chief object in founding the *Nation* was to advocate reconstruction, with just conditions for the colored people. He had not seen much of Sumner since his Washington dinner-party in 1863, but now they came together and worked hand-in-hand for the common cause. It was like a meeting of old friends.

There is a valuable saying of Frederick the Great that, "Nothing which is not simple is of any use in war;" for this is invariably true in dealing with large bodies of men. If an ingenious scheme of reconstruction had been devised especially adapted to the peculiarities of the negro race, it is doubtful if it could have passed through Congress, and even if this happened, whether it would have become a practical success. The procedure of history is not like the rolling of a wheel, but of an uneven stone.

Keeping this fact in view, we may conclude that there were only three general forms under which reconstruction could be considered. The rebellious states might be restored to the Union as they were before the war, leaving the colored people at the mercy of their former masters; or the colored people might be placed, like the Indian tribes, under the protection of a National Bureau with United States courts for the adjudicature of cases between whites and negroes; or the colored man could be enfranchised and placed on a political equality with the whites.

The first plan might be called the inhuman method; and yet it was supported by Seward, Trumbull, and many old Free-soilers, as well as by Garrison and his immediate followers. The second plan was open to the grave objection that a Democratic Congress might abolish the Freedman's Bureau by refusing to grant appropriations for it; and something very much like this happened in 1877. The third plan was, therefore, in spite of certain disadvantages, the only practicable one.

The important question at that moment was on which side of the fence President Johnson would station himself. While he was in Tennessee, and the Confederate army only one hundred miles away, Mr. Stearns found Andrew Johnson very decided and out-spoken, in regard to the necessity of negro rights; and at this time he felt a good deal of confidence in him,—although he never quite liked his face. Senator Sumner had the same experience with him, as appears from the following letter,

written to Mr. Stearns from Washington, May 4, 1865:

"My dear Sir:

"The more I think of our case, I feel the importance of the discussion in the article to which I called your attention. *In the question of colored suffrage the President is with us.* His present doubt is with regard to the way of bringing it about.

"This opens the great question which I have tried to discuss; and my only anxiety now is lest there may be a failure to employ proper means. The President wishes the movement to come directly from the people in their respective localities. It will be, however, prompter and better every way, if it is guided and organized under *Federal power;* and if possible, by *act of Congress.*

"Very faithfully yours,

"Charles Sumner."

This letter has rare historical value. On the 11th instant Sumner wrote again:

"For a long time I have followed our great question *very closely.* At this moment it labors most on the process of reconstruction. Any discussion, which can postpone this till Congress meets, will help negro suffrage. Without such postponement the cause is endangered."

And again:

"I am glad that the good work is proceeding.

"A strong paper is needed. On the suffrage question our victory will be easy. I know the field. The President is with us.

"I am to speak in Boston 1st June, and shall not forget our cause."

During the month of May, Mr. Stearns was chiefly occupied with the affairs of the ill-fated *Nation.* The first of June he went to Concord

with Mrs. Stearns to call on the Emersons, and to try to interest Mr. Emerson in the cause of negro citizenship. They were well received, and he found Emerson favorably disposed to the object of his visit; but at the same time he felt a difference in his manner, an aristocratic reserve, which he had never noticed before. He had a more cheering reception at the Alcotts', where the young people were playing croquet, a new game then, which seemed to interest him greatly. He found Mr. Alcott very much in earnest in regard to political subjects, and with some fine plans of his own for the new era that was opening to an emancipated republic.

On the drive homeward Mr. Stearns said: "I think Emerson has finished his work, and little more is to be expected from him. On the other hand Alcott is looking forward to a new field of activity and I believe his best days are yet to come."

Mr. Stearns' prediction proved to be true. From this time Emerson would seem to have illustrated the reactionary effect which children sometimes have upon their parents; and many pleasant places that had known him formerly saw no more of him henceforward. A year later, when his friends and followers started a magazine called the *Radical,* which in literary ability was fully equal to the *Dial* (formerly edited by Emerson himself), he declined to give it his support, and although he had a large quantity of unpublished manuscripts he would never allow the editor to make use of any of them. His Phi Beta Kappa oration in 1867 was

so much of a panegyric that it seemed as if the millennium must be at hand. As he grew older, he became more censorious and less sympathetic. Many of his truest friends regretted to see this change in him, although similar instances among celebrated writers have not been uncommon.

Mr. Stearns, however, discovered a new friend and valuable ally at this time, who arose like an Aldebaran on his horizon. At a certain party in Cambridge connected with the affairs of the *Nation,* he met James Russell Lowell, who seemed to be surprisingly ill-informed concerning public affairs, and also Prof. Parsons of the Harvard Law School, whom he found to be no university fossil, but a live man with a heart in him, and a mind of his own. They had such an agreeable conversation together that the professor invited Mr. Stearns to call at his house and continue their discussion. This Mr. Stearns did a few days later.

Theophilus Parsons, the son of a chief justice of Massachusetts, was a man of conservative tendencies, a friend and admirer of Webster, but as stout a patriot as old John Adams. He always considered the Fugitive Slave Bill a political blunder, and was not surprised at the consequences of it. He was not a hide-bound conservative, but a growing man at sixty, and Mr. Stearns found great agreement with the plan of reconstruction which he expanded before him. He urged the professor to write out his statement and publish it; there was no time to be lost,—it was needed that very moment.

Professor Parsons did not know where he could publish it. He was not in " the ring; " the *North American Review* was closed to him; and as for newspapers there was too much uncertainty about them. Mr. Stearns rose and walked the floor. " There must be a way," he said. Then suddenly: " Write out your statement. My friends and I will call a meeting in Faneuil Hall and I will obtain fifty of the best names in Boston for vice-presidents; and you shall be president of the meeting."

No sooner said than done. Everybody fell into line as if by magic. Forbes, Endicott and Atkinson were delighted with the plan. Merchants like Alpheus Hardy and Henry Lee, who would not speak to Mr. Stearns in 1859, signed the call for the meeting. It is doubtful if they realized altogether what would be the outcome of it; but so much the better. Never was Webster supported by a more solid phalanx. Mr. Stearns considered it important that no prominent abolitionist should appear on the list.

Mr. Stearns also wrote to Emerson inviting him to make a speech on this occasion; but Emerson replied:

" My dear Sir:

" I feel much complimented at the request of yourself and friends to address an audience in the old Cradle of Liberty, and if it is humanly possible for me to be in Boston on that day, I will certainly attend the meeting; but experience has taught me that I should not trust myself to speak on subjects in which I have so deep an interest, and for which I feel so strongly as the cause you advocate.

" Yours faithfully,

" R. W. Emerson."

We notice that the poet Whittier was one of the vice-presidents of this meeting, and that James Russell Lowell was also asked, and declined to allow the use of his name. Mr. Stearns was one of the last to sign the call.

The meeting was held on the 21st of June, and Faneuil Hall was crowded. Professor Parsons' address was nearly equal to the best of Webster's orations,—so clear was his thought, so cogent his reasoning, and emphatic his delivery. In the beginning he reviewed the cause of the Civil War, which he attributed to the condition of society in the slave states:

"Slavery, with its effect on what would otherwise have been the laboring class of whites, resulted in a system which is substantially oligarchal. It gave to the masters the advantages of oligarchy, and trained them personally in its habits, sentiments and passions. Slavery and oligarchy do not rest on political economy; but have their sources in the pride and passions of men. They are, therefore, if circumstances at all favor them, an ever-present danger. The Southern people came to consider themselves as moulded, by their training and position, into a master race, not only over their slaves, but in their relations with their fellow-citizens of the free states, whose political equality and free labor they had come to despise. To support their system, in national politics, they invented and used, as a most effectual weapon, the dogma of State Supremacy, which they disguised under the name of State Rights."

THEOPHILUS PARSONS
Professor in Harvard Law School

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF
CALIFORNIA

He declared the supremacy of the national government in terms which created great enthusiasm, and prepared his audience for what was to follow:

"The right of this republic to be a sovereign, among the sovereignties of the earth, must be put beyond future dispute, abroad as well as at home. *We have paid the fearful price, and we must not be defrauded of the results.*"

He then pointed out the dangers of a hasty reconstruction, such as Trumbull attempted:

"Let us now, fellow-citizens, look at the dangers which attend an immediate restoration of the rebel states to the exercise of full state authority. Slavery is the law of every rebel state. In some of these states free persons of color are not permitted to reside; in none of them have they the right to testify in court, or to be educated; in few of them to hold land, and in all of them they are totally disfranchised. But, far beyond the letter of the law, the spirit of the people and the habits of the generations are such as to insure the permanence of that state of things, in substance. If slavery should be abolished in form, their spirit and habits, their pride and passions, will lead them to uphold their oligarchal system, built upon a debased colored population, and intrenched behind state institutions, over which the nation cannot pass in peace. Their personal relation with the colored people, as masters over slaves, being changed in law, they will look upon them in a new light, as a class to be feared, and as the cause of their defeat and humiliation. They will not tax themselves to give to the freedmen an education. They will

not permit the continuance within their states of philanthropic agencies for colored people, from the free states. They will not encourage Northern immigration, with systems of small free-holds and free labor; nor will capital and labor go there from the free states under present auspices."

"The public faith is pledged," he said, "to every person of color in the rebel states, to secure to them and their posterity forever a complete and veritable freedom." Then finally:

"And we declare it to be our belief that if the nation admits a rebel state to its full functions with a constitution which does not secure to the freedmen the right of suffrage in such manner as to be impartial and not based in principle upon color, and as to be reasonably attainable by intelligence and character, and which does not place in their hands a substantial power to defend their rights as citizens at the ballot-box, with the right to be educated, to acquire homesteads and to testify in courts, the nation will be recreant to its duty to itself and to them, and will incur and deserve to incur danger and reproach proportioned to the magnitude of its responsibility."

This address was loudly applauded, and other speakers followed in a similar vein. A committee was appointed consisting of Richard H. Dana, John G. Whittier, George L. Stearns and four others, to have Professor Parsons' address printed, and a copy sent, with an appropriate introduction, to President Johnson.

How different is such clear comprehensive reasoning from E. L. Godkin's ambiguous paragraph

in the first number of the *Nation*.* It was the policy outlined at this Faneuil Hall meeting which was afterward adopted by Congress, and which gave the tone to Southern reconstruction.

Immediately after this, Mr. Stearns commenced an undertaking of great magnitude of which he did not live to see the completion—nothing less than a bureau in which were to be represented all the important freedom-loving and patriotic persons in the country. The same class of people whom he had lately called together in Boston were to be looked for in other places, and organized into a league to advance the cause of good government, and especially of a progressive reconstruction. Within three months he obtained more than two thousand names of correspondents in different parts of the country—men who promised to assist him in this work.

On July 2 he wrote to Captain Cochrane, who had been his private secretary at Nashville and who loved him like an own son:

"I am busily engaged here in organizing the Radical force of the country for future operations. My correspondence from all states of the Union is larger than that I had at Nashville, and I employ six to ten clerks in my various operations, besides those in my regular business. I send out

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* This is the text of the objectionable paragraph: "The negro's success in assuming a prominent position in the political arena, seems to be in the inverse ratio of the earnestness with which it is sought to suppress him, and put him out of sight. Everybody is heartily tired of discussing his condition, and his rights, and yet little else is talked about, and none talk about him so much as those who are most convinced of his insignificance."

10,000 newspapers and 3,000 pamphlets per week to single names, and am making preparations to double the number.

"As to those old affairs I have buried them root and branch, for I could not understand the conflicting stories I received."

The general acceptation of the word "radical" is of a person who goes to extremes, but Mr. Stearns' use of it was a constructive one. He wished to remodel society on a broad radical basis of equality before the law; and in this sense the first Napoleon was as much a Radical as Mr. Stearns.

He had already assisted with Governor Andrew and others in organizing a company for the development of Southern industry with Northern capital. They began with cotton raising in Tennessee, and for the first year this proved a good success; but the second year the result was a loss, and after Mr. Stearns' death the enterprise came to an untimely end, chiefly through the traitorous conduct of President Johnson.

The conduct of the old abolitionists after the close of the war resembles that of the horses which Cortes and his followers left behind them in Mexico; that is, they divided themselves into two factions, and fought one another with as much acrimony as they had contended against the slaveocracy. Garrison considered that the negro was now liberated, and could be safely left to work out his own salvation; and he maintained this in spite of the assassination of Lincoln and Trumbull's plan of reconstruction. Phillips agreed with Senator Sumner and Professor Parsons that the most

important moment in the history of the negro race was at hand, and that without citizenship the negro could have no genuine freedom. Garrison wished the Antislavery Society to be dissolved; and Phillips advocated its continuance until civil rights for the colored people had been secured. It is most remarkable that Garrison should have objected so strongly as he did to the continuation of the society, if any considerable portion of its members desired it.

Mr. Stearns believed that this old organization was worth preserving in the present crisis, and went to New York on purpose to support Phillips, who with his assistance carried the day. As Phillips afterward said to Mrs. Stearns: "It was the Major that did it;" but many of those who voted against Wendell Phillips on this occasion would never speak to him again on the street,—for a mere difference of opinion.

In the second week of August Salmon P. Chase, who was now chief justice, came to Boston, and Mr. Stearns invited him to meet Professor Parsons, Wendell Phillips and other gentlemen at dinner. The chief justice had read the Faneuil Hall address and said very complimentary things to Mr. Parsons concerning it. The question of reconstruction was thoroughly discussed. Professor Parsons was especially anxious that the colored people should obtain possession of land: he wished those large orligarchical estates in the South could be broken up. The chief justice wished so too, but he did not see how it could be done under our

form of government. " I am far," he said, " from being a monarchist; but governments like those of Prussia and Italy can accomplish changes at a single stroke which in our republic require a long time to develop. I should look upon an agrarian law as a very dangerous precedent, as dangerous as monarchy itself."

Professor Parsons admitted the difficulty; and Mrs. Stearns said: " Those who till the soil come to own the soil." The chief justice smiled and replied: " It ought to be so, Mrs. Stearns, but in a majority of instances it has not proved to be the case." *

President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation next came under discussion. Wendell Phillips thought the document was too lengthy, he could wish that every slave in the United States would have been liberated in one grand sentence. The chief justice smiled again. " I respect your philanthropy," he said, " but you do not realize the difficulties we have to contend against in Washington. I agree with you that in most cases legal documents are unnecessarily lengthy. Last winter I purchased a house in Washington, and wrote the deed myself. The register of deeds called my attention to the fact that it only made half a page on his books; whereas the other deeds were from one to two pages in length."

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* Nothing could illustrate better the reactionary tendency of the legal profession than this statement from a chief justice of the United States. The greater part of the land in France is owned by those who till the soil, and so it is in large portions of Prussia. It is a tendency of the age.

Mrs. Stearns remarked: " I like the last paragraph of Lincoln's proclamation in which he says: " By doing justice to the black race, we insure freedom for the white." To the surprise of everyone the chief justice replied: " I wrote that paragraph, Mrs. Stearns. When President Lincoln read his proclamation to us, he asked the opinion of each of his cabinet in regard to it, and when he came to me I said: 'Would it not be well, Mr. President, to add a clause concerning the moral character of this grand act of statesmanship?' 'Yes, I think it would,' replied Mr. Lincoln. 'Have you any statement in your mind, at this moment, which you would like to make on that point?' I said, yes, I had. He handed me a piece of paper, and requested me to write it down,—which I did with the result that you know."

After this, with genuine politeness, the chief justice made some inquiries of Mr. Stearns in regard to his experiences in Tennessee; concerning which it is only necessary to remark that Mr. Stearns found the "peculiar institution" on close inspection to be much worse than he had ever imagined it.

Soon after this Mr. Stearns went on another journey to Washington, where on September 20 he wrote a letter to Hon. E. C. Cabell, of Memphis, Tennessee, on the southern labor problem, in which he said:

" Sir:

" I have read carefully your letter in the *Tribune*, and agree with you in the advantages of soil and climate, which the Southern States offer to white immigrants.

"I also fully reciprocate your desire that all ill feelings arising from past differences may be forgotten. If therefore, I dwell in this letter mainly on the errors of the Southern section, it is not because I believe the North free from complicity in this great crime, but for the reason that a statement of Northern delinquencies would complicate the subject. It is enough that the whole country has grievously sinned and is now paying the penalty. Let us all hasten to make the necessary atonement and endeavor to repair the wrong. It is essential for the prosperity of our country that as speedily as possible the North and South should learn that injustice to one section is injury to the whole, because it retards civilization; that the denial of civil rights to a portion of our citizens strikes at the foundation of good government, and that the refusal of fair compensation to a portion of our laborers degrades labor everywhere. To speak in plainer terms, the refusal of Southern landholders to pay their colored fellow-citizens a fair price for their labor, because they are not wholly of white blood, *degrades the labor of Southern white men, and prevents them from acquiring habits of thrift and industry.*

"It is in vain, therefore, that you call on other laborers to enter your fields and till your bountiful soil, so long as you refuse just compensation to those that now are ready to work for you at fair wages. Begin at home with the laborers you have around you; call them together and say you are ready to give them the same wages, as prompt pay, and as kind treatment for their skilled labor as you must give to the unskilled and unacclimated labor of the North, and you will find they will return to your farms, railroads and all other employments requiring manual labor, 'with alacrity.'

"In making this statement I do not depend on the reports of others. I have employed laborers at the South as well as at the North, and have now men and women in both sections of the country at work for me, not of one class only, but of all classes, skilled and unskilled, native and foreign labor, and I tell you from experience that the colored man labors as well as any race in the world."

This letter occupied a column of the New York *Tribune,* and was extensively copied. Mr. Stearns used to tell a story of Abbott Lawrence, the father of his Boston friend, who was an importer of dry goods. A customer one day asked him: "How is it that you, Mr. Lawrence, who have so much business, always seem to be at leisure;" to which he replied, "I decide every question quickly; and pay my clerks all they are worth." This is a principle which political economists would seem to have neglected.

On his return from Washington Mr. Stearns, not having succeeded with the *Nation,* established a paper of his own in Boston called the *Right Way,* for the special purpose of advocating the rights of the freedmen. Professor Crosby, of Salem, well known for his Greek grammar, wrote forcible editorials for it, and would take no pay for his services. A Cambridgeport * man, named Thayer, conducted the business part of the undertaking in an admirable manner. It is doubtful if Mr. Stearns ever solicited subscriptions for it, and he had to bear the chief expense himself. He was determined to carry through this work at any sacrifice. Copies were mailed every week to all Republican senators and members of Congress, to the members of Mr. Stearns' bureau, and to prominent public men all over the country. It would not be easy to estimate its influence on reconstruction; for the policy it advocated was the one finally adopted.

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* A place designated by Mr. C. E. Norton as "the abomination of desolation."

XXII

A Perfidious President

What Secretary Seward's motives were in supporting Andrew Johnson may always remain a mystery. There can be no doubt that Stanton and McCulloch held their places in his cabinet from patriotic motives—in order to make the best of a dangerous situation. Whether Seward did the same we cannot tell; but it is only fair to interpret his action in the light of his earlier and nobler services to the republic.

Charles Sumner did not return to Boston till late in August, and the occasion of his long stay in Washington would seem to have been for the purpose of retaining the influence on the President which he had gained so quickly after Lincoln's assassination. He frankly confessed to Wendell Phillips, Dr. Howe and Mr. Stearns, that he had not succeeded in this. Johnson had gradually cooled toward him, and had become more and more reserved on the subject of reconstruction. He could not tell whether Seward had captured Johnson, or Johnson Seward. He believed that Johnson would Tylerize his administration. Seward and Welles would go with him, as they no longer had anything to hope from their own party. Sumner looked for stormy times.

Wendell Phillips was ready to believe this, but George L. Stearns was not. He quickly discovered

a different reason for the President's coolness towards Sumner. He knew the prejudice which Tennessee people felt toward Puritanic New Englanders,—a prejudice which he escaped himself by his more rugged nature and cordial, open-hearted manners. He knew that no description of person could be more antipathetic to President Johnson than a fastidious Harvard scholar; and he concluded that Sumner would have shown better tactics to have left the President alone. This would seem to be more than reasonable; and yet the sequel proved that Sumner was right.

Mr. Stearns was determined to see Johnson himself, and went to Washington the last of September for that purpose. The President received him cordially, and they talked freely on politics for more than an hour. When Mr. Stearns referred to the reports that he, Johnson, intended to desert the Republican party, the President said laughingly:

" Major, have you never known a man who for many years had differed from your views because you were in advance of him, claim them as his own when he came up to your standpoint? The Democratic party finds its old position untenable, and is coming to ours; if it has come up to our position I am glad of it."

They then proceeded to the question of reconstruction, and Andrew Johnson confessed that his position in the White House was somewhat different from what it was in Tennessee. He said:

" Our government is a grand and lofty structure; in searching for its foundation we find it rests on the broad basis of popular rights. The elective

franchise is not a natural right, but a political right. I am opposed to giving the states too much power, and also to great consolidation of power in the central government.

"If I interfered with the vote in the rebel states, to dictate that the negro shall vote, I might do the same thing for my own purposes in Pennsylvania. Our only safety lies in allowing each state to control the right of voting by its own laws, and we have the power to control the rebel states if they go wrong. If they rebel, we have the army and can control them by it, and, if necessary, by legislation also. If the general government controls the right to vote in the states, it may establish such rules as will restrict the vote to a small number of persons, and thus create a central despotism.

"Another thing. This government is the freest and best on the earth, and I feel sure is destined to last; but to secure this, we must elevate and purify the ballot."

This sounds like the talk of a professor of political science at the present day. It was not what Mr. Stearns hoped for, and yet he considered it better than nothing. He returned to Willard's Hotel and wrote out a statement of the conversation *verbatim;* then sent it to Andrew Johnson for his approval. The President replied as follows:

> "I have read the within communication and find it substantially correct.
>
> "I have made some verbal alterations.
>
> "A. J."

After his return to Boston, Mr. Stearns called a meeting of Sumner and his friends at Dr. Howe's

office, and read his statement to them; but to his surprise everyone of them was opposed to his publishing it. Sumner said: "If the President had anything to say, Stearns, he would have said it to me, not to you." Mr. Stearns thought this very weak reasoning, and he argued that his statement would serve as an entering wedge for negro suffrage; for which the general public was not yet altogether prepared. It would pin Andrew Johnson down to a definite policy, and in course of six months they might get something better from him. Sumner, however, did not agree to this. He foresaw that he was going to have a hard tussle, and he considered any action that tended to make the President popular would be so much to his own disadvantage. He was not to be blamed for this; but at the same time it would seem that Mr. Stearns saw the situation more clearly.

He published the account of his interview, "meagre and unsatisfactory," as he called it in his letter of introduction, on October 24, and it was hailed with satisfaction from Maine to Tennessee. It cleared up the cloudiness of the political situation for the Republicans and disconcerted the Democratic leaders, who were now claiming the President as their man, and at the same time were vehemently opposing colored suffrage. The Cleveland *Leader,* General Garfield's newspaper, said of it:

"We do not see how radical men, even though they may individually prefer to go further, can quarrel with the position of the President. It places him very clearly among the friends, rather than the enemies, of Negro Suffrage.

His opposition to the universal application of the principle is one of expediency solely, and he favors its moderate assertion at first, as a means of avoiding a war of races. His views, if adopted by the South would afford a practical solution of the suffrage question which would do away with the greatest difficulty in the way of reconstruction, and ultimately result in the extension of the suffrage to every negro worthy of its exercise."

It was credited with producing a favorable effect on the election, which followed ten days later, and General Francis C. Barlow wrote to Mr. Stearns from New York: "You have helped us to carry New Jersey." It is highly probable that the publication did serve as an entering wedge in the popular mind in favor of colored citizenship. It certainly did not injure Senator Sumner, or the cause he was supporting; although many of the old Free-soilers attempted to prove this, and even attacked Mr. Stearns for stating that President Johnson appeared in excellent health. They wanted to make out that he was intemperate.

Mr. Stearns' statement concerning himself in this letter is also worth quoting. He said:

"You are aware that I do not associate much with men in political life, but rather with those who, representing the advanced moral sense of the country, earnestly labor for the good of our people, without hope of, or even desire for office or other immediate reward. The latter class desire earnestly to understand your plans, and, if possible, support your administration."

It is possible that the Bird Club took offence at this; for they were all office-holders now, excepting Dr. Howe and Mr. Stearns. The associates whom he refers to are evidently Professor Parsons, Wil-

liam Endicott, Edward Atkinson, and other supporters of the Faneuil Hall meeting.

The second week of November Mr. Stearns was taken sick again—an illness from which he never wholly recovered—and he knew little of politics until the last of December. He attributed his illness to the opposition of his friends in regard to the Andrew Johnson letter, and he certainly felt this very keenly; but his whole system, nervous and muscular, had been overwrought with the exertions of the past six months. He was now close to his fifty-seventh birthday, and he had been working like a man of thirty.

Meanwhile Congress had met, and after the President's second message was read, Sumner rose from his desk and characterized it as a "whitewashing document." He stood alone in the Senate that day; but in three weeks' time every Republican member of Congress had come over to his side. It was the most brilliant triumph of his life.

Andrew Johnson not only betrayed the party that elected him, but his own friends and supporters in Tennessee. Dr. Bowen repudiated him at once, and was soon afterward elected United States senator on that basis. Old Governor Brownlow, when he came to Boston the following April to speak in Faneuil Hall, called the President a "black-hearted recreant, and a blood-thirsty miscreant to boot." Mr. Stearns heard him say it, and had the speech reported for his newspaper, the *Right Way*, which all this time was being steadily circulated. Andrew Johnson was helping Mr. Stearns to row his boat.

Only two of Mr. Stearns' friends took notice of his illness at this time,—Wendell Phillips and Dr. S. G. Howe. The former came to the Evergreens to find out concerning his condition, and the latter, who so rarely entered any house but his own, wrote Mrs. Stearns this friendly and sympathetic letter:

"Dear Mrs. Stearns:

"I hear, with much concern, that your husband has been, and is, quite ill; but I cannot get any particulars. I am ailing, or I should go out.

"If he is seriously ill, please let me know; especially if you think that I can be of any use by watching, or in any other way.

"Give my kind regards to him, and believe me

"Very truly yours,

"Saml. G. Howe

"Dec. 12, '65."

Dr. Howe certainly was not the cold, calculating and prosaic American of whom De Tocqueville speaks. His wife once referred to him as a "heart of flame cast on the ice fields of a century." No wonder if his friends were fond of him.

At the next symphony concert which Mr. Stearns attended, Mrs. Maria Chapman, the "born duchess," came up to him in the outer hall and extended her hand, saying: "I am thankful, Major Stearns, to see you on your feet again; for I feel that the country is safer for it."

While he was convalescing Mr. Stearns was continually thinking over the political situation, and he summed up the result of this on January 20 in a long letter to Thomas Dawes Eliot, member of

Congress from New Bedford, in which we find the following statement:

"Yours of the 15th inst. was received in course.

"I hope about the first of next month to be in Washington, but in the meantime will state what course the Radical members of Congress ought to pursue, particularly since the glorious vote of Thursday has developed and strengthened the true sentiment of Congress and the country.

"It is now evident, that no legislation however just and stringent will coerce the Rebel Majorities into decent action, witness Gov. Brownlow's recent speech to the colored school in Nashville, and the popular demonstrations everywhere at the South.

"We must hold them by the strong arm of power to prevent expatriation of loyal white men, and the murder of loyal blacks.

"Government must do this by the passage and enforcement of just laws, and in aid, public opinion must be informed and concentrated.

"To enable us to do this I propose the following plan of organization:

"An Association of Radical Members of Congress, not exceeding ten members of the Senate, and thirty of the House who shall agree to support each other when certain specified measures are brought forward; any differences of opinion to be settled in private.

"These measures to form a series culminating in impartial legislation for all colors, conditions, and classes.

"From this appreciation in Congress, others in the Northern States would eventually arise in support of these measures, and a newspaper as their organ be established in Washington if desirable, or what would I think be more effective, certain leading newspapers, East and West, could be induced to give their constant support without any expense to the association.

"It would be necessary to use decided efforts to establish and extend these Associations in the larger cities, but that done, they would spring up spontaneously in the smaller cities, towns and villages. For this latter purpose, the

Right Way with its circulation of over 60,000 would be invaluable, and it would also give a consistent support to the measures agreed on.

"The extensive distribution of speeches and other matter calculated to enlighten and inform the public mind could be made by the associations in the various states.

"I have submitted this plan to Gov. Andrew and Hon. James M. Stone, Speaker of the House of Representatives; they approve and will support it."

During the past three months John C. Hamilton of New York, the last surviving son of Alexander Hamilton, had written a number of letters to the *Right Way* supporting Mr. Stearns' position in regard to negro citizenship, and quoting largely from the writings of his father. Mr. Stearns wrote to him expressing his satisfaction at this, and his desire for a personal interview.

On February 2 Mr. Stearns took the morning train to New York, and he had just seated himself to dine at the Brevoort House, when John C. Hamilton came in, and invited him to dinner the following day. A pleasant conversation ensued, and immediately after Mr. Hamilton had left, J. Miller McKim appeared. He wanted to know if some compromise could not be effected between Mr. Godkin and the Boston stockholders of the *Nation*. Mr. Stearns replied very severely: "No compromise is possible with such a man as Mr. Godkin. He has disappointed us repeatedly, and either he must resign or the Boston stockholders will claim their capital." Mr. McKim retired with an expression of discomfort.

The next evening at Mr. Hamilton's, Mr. Stearns made quite a lengthy discourse on the

character and peculiarities of the colored race. He called the negro the " Yankee of the South," and alleged that though he was not so intelligent as the Southern white, he was much more skilful as a mechanic, and more practical in the small affairs of life.* He told some amusing anecdotes of the peculiar effect of slavery on white people, which caused great merriment. J. C. Hamilton showed him the bust of his father by a French artist, which he declared was the only worthy likeness of the great statesman; and a letter from President Washington thanking Alexander Hamilton for the copy of a farewell address, presumably the one he delivered. This bust of Hamilton resembles those of Scipio Africanus.

This last journey to Washington was almost like a triumphal procession. Mr. Stearns was besieged in New York and Philadelphia with distinguished callers and invitations, and his parlor at Willard's Hotel became a *rendezvous* for senators and representatives. He gave no more dinners, and did not usually offer them cigars; but still they came. On the day after his arrival he was introduced on the floor of the Senate, where Trumbull, Wilson, and a number of other senators formed a circle about him, and he discussed his plan of organization with them for nearly two hours. Wilson considered the Republican party to be in a dangerous

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* The best coachman the Stearns family have ever had is a black negro named William Eliot,—and a man who can be trusted with the care of carriage horses certainly ought to have the right to vote.

situation, between Andrew Johnson and an unpopular movement,—that is, negro suffrage. He thought they would surely lose the state of New York; and so they did. "Don't cry baby yet, Senator," said Mr. Stearns; for which Wilson probably did not like him any the better. The dull proceedings of the Senate were going on all this time.

He went to a party at Colonel Forney's, to which all the senators and the Republican members of the House were invited. Old Thaddeus Stevens, unable to stand long, was seated in a corner of the large hall, with a brown wig on his head, jet-black eyes, and a face of parchment. When Mr. Stearns addressed him, he said gruffly: "The note is protested Major, and comes back on the indorser,"—referring to Mr. Stearns' October letter about the President. Mr. Stearns replied laughing: "Well, the indorser is good;" and the audience evidently thought so too. Mr. Stearns made no indorsement of Andrew Johnson in the October letter, and that Thaddeus Stevens should have thought so was characteristic of a man who always insisted that the price of gold could be regulated by legislation. What impressed Mr. Stearns most strongly in this congregation of legislators was their powerful physiques. He concluded that bodily strength was the first essential to success in political life.

He was also cordially welcomed by Chief Justice Chase, who at once referred to the October letter and said: "I believe that at the time you saw him, Johnson was really sitting on the fence, and now he has tumbled over into a ditch on the wrong side.

Well, he is too big a fool to laugh at." He said that no person of importance went to the White House that could possibly avoid doing so; and that the President's only associates were news reporters; that he was supposed to write a good many newspaper articles himself.

Chase felt very badly in regard to Seward. He had lived and worked beside him for twenty years, and now he hated to meet him anywhere; but he added, "We must not look on him as a traitor. So long as he remains in the cabinet we have not much to fear from the President."

When Chase began to discuss the next presidential nomination, Mr. Stearns said: "I would advise you, Judge, to think as little about that as you can. The nomination of a president is like a thunderbolt: no one can foresee where it will strike." There could be no better exemplification of this truth than the fact that General Grant's name was not mentioned by either of them. At the Democratic convention of 1868 Chase received the half of a vote.

General Garfield was one of the most frequent visitors at Mr. Stearns' rooms. He was greatly interested in the tariff and liked to discuss that subject with Mr. Stearns as a practical and unprejudiced person. George L. Stearns held catholic views on the subject of free trade and protection; but he deprecated a general change in the tariff until after the return to specie payments. He felt an exceptional interest in this brilliant and high-minded young statesman destined to so tragical a fate.

Mr. Stearns called on Hugh McCulloch, the secretary of the treasury, and they had a long discussion together on the return to specie payments. Mr. McCulloch's financial ideas were derived neither from experience nor reasoning, but from writers on political economy,—a dubious authority, as Mr. Stearns afterwards remarked. He believed the only method to bring down the price of gold was to contract the currency. Mr. Stearns told him that if he contracted the currency he would create disturbance at the mercantile centres and cause distrust; and this would tend to raise the price of gold instead of lowering it. Two years later when Secretary McCulloch tried his favorite scheme it had the effect that Mr. Stearns predicted.*

Mr. Stearns remained in Washington until late in March, endeavoring to make his new organization a success. He found difficulty, however, in raising funds for its expenses. Jay Cooke, who had promised him five hundred dollars, begged off with three hundred, and John M. Forbes had become too much Godkinized to render him much further assistance. He was greatly pleased to receive an unsolicited contribution from the author

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* At that time the present writer published a letter in the Boston *Advertiser,* proving by figures that the price of gold did not depend on the amount of currency, but on the good credit of the government. In 1869 when Congress enacted to have the United States bonds payable in gold, the price of the metal soon after declined twenty points in spite of the predictions of political economists.

of "Two Years Before the Mast," and a letter which said:

"My dear Stearns:

"I cannot afford much, but let my little check do its tiny work for circulation of your excellent documents.

"Yours truly,

"Richard H. Dana, Jr."

Mr. Stearns succeeded in forming the framework of his organization, and in filling this in at certain points and places; but he found, as General Garfield told him, that he would have to run the machine himself in order to make it effective. It was a work like his recruiting business, and he had no longer the means nor the physical strength for it. He returned to Boston to concentrate his energies on more pressing affairs. On April 6 he wrote to Miss Jane Swisshelm, a noted philanthropist of Washington:

"Dear Madam:

"Your esteemed letter of the 3d is at hand. Please let me know how many papers you will want and when the subscriptions expire; for I wish to serve you if I can properly do so.

"It is the purpose of the *Right Way* to oppose the policy of reconstruction adopted by the President, as dangerous to the peace of the country and subversive of good government. But in doing this we intend to avoid all personal criticism, because we do not believe that to be the most effective means.

"We have entire faith in the judgment of the masses, when founded on sound knowledge, and therefore aim to place before the people facts and arguments pointing in the right direction. Any aid you can give us by writing letters from Washington will be very acceptable."

Mr. Stearns did not live to see negro citizenship enacted, but no one except Sumner made such strenuous exertions in its behalf. Mr. Pierce, in his life of Sumner, gives the credit of its accomplishment wholly to the Massachusetts Senator, and it is true that all the legislation to that end originated with him and was mainly supported by him; but Sumner's influence did not extend much beyond the halls of Congress and it was Mr. Stearns' patriotic bureau and the circulation of the *Right Way* which influenced public opinion in this direction and thus enabled Sumner to take the position he did; and Mr. Stearns accomplished this almost alone.

Negro suffrage has come to an end in the Southern states owing to the inherent weakness of the national government; but it served its purposes for the time being, to protect the colored people and to give them a foothold on the outskirts of society. It proved a failure in South Carolina, as universal suffrage will always prove a failure where the illiterate outnumber the educated; but the administration of Governor Moses was not more corrupt, vulgar and besotted than that of the Tweed ring in New York City at the very same time. It proved a failure in Louisiana, because there the national administration made use of it in a flagrantly partisan manner. It certainly did little harm in other Southern states, while in Pennsylvania and Ohio it has proved an element of stability, and a support to the national credit.

XXIII

Rest at Last

It was time that Mr. Stearns returned to his home. During the war the lead companies in New York had been making immense profits, and while George L. Stearns had been spending his money to save the country, they had been rolling up wealth. Now that the war fever had abated the natural reaction took place, and business began to languish. Unfortunately for the others the New York Lead Company was a stock company, and the besetting sin of such corporations is the desperate efforts they make to maintain their dividends at all hazards. The New York Company began to cut prices, and to encroach on the territory of its neighbors. This resulted in a "lead war," which raged for nearly three years, until those engaged in it had lost nearly all the money that they had previously made.

Since January Mr. Stearns had been living on his capital; and this at first gave him no uneasiness, because he did not believe the lead war would be of long duration. While he was in New York, however, the following May he made successive calls on the different manufacturers, and attempted to bring about a reconciliation; but he found such bitterness of feeling and determined animosity among them, that he concluded the trouble was a deep-seated one, which only time and experience

could remedy. On his return to Boston he tried to obtain funds to carry on his work, of educating the public up to negro citizenship, by speculating on the price of gold. His business required him to make continual purchases of gold, so that what he did now was merely an amplification of his general practice. It is doubtful if he would have taken this risk on his own account.

A photograph taken of Mr. Stearns at this time shows him in a depleted physical and nervous condition. He has a haggard look in it, and his eyes a fixed expression, indicating plainly a state of nervous tension. Rev. Samuel Johnson met him on the street, when he was perhaps somewhat fatigued, and was shocked at his appearance. He warned Mr. Stearns that he was exhausting his vitality, and that he ought to go off on a journey and leave his affairs to take care of themselves. "Go to Switzerland with your wife, and spend the summer there." Mr. Stearns was not the man to neglect advice from such a source; but he knew that his wife would not cross the ocean; and what rest could he find if he went alone? He determined to stay at home, and keep as quiet as his restless disposition would permit. What he had accomplished seemed of little value to him. He looked forward continually to fresh victories.

One small comfort which he enjoyed at this time was his son's success in fighting and defeating the Harvard Faculty. Three members of the class of 1867 had established the first college newspaper at Harvard, but this was suppressed by the Faculty for mild criticism of the reserved and frosty man-

ners of certain professors. Thereupon Stearns and Peckham and Fox of the same class published the same paper under a different name at the *Right Way* office in Boston, and appealed to the Board of Overseers for support. Their arguments were too strong to be resisted, and free college journalism was then and there established. Mr. Stearns was very much pleased. He helped to defray the expense of the first number of the *Advocate,* as the paper was called, and offered to give further assistance; but this did not become necessary.*

Mrs. Stearns was more of an invalid this summer than at any other time in her life. For days she remained in her room with darkened windows, —the trouble being perhaps more with her homœopathic doctor than herself. On July 10 her husband wrote her this note from his office in Boston:

"My dear little sick girl:

"Hamlet will take this out to you at 11.30, with a bunch of Hamburg grapes to alleviate the tedium of this sultry day; and when I return at 3 p.m. I shall hope to find you much improved by them. There is no news, no politics, no business. All the world stagnates, and perhaps it is better for us just now that it is so.

"Your loving husband George."

A husband could not be more devoted than he was. Frank Bird wanted him to go to the Adirondacks and fish trout, and this would have been as good a remedy for him as Switzerland, but

* This periodical still continues to flourish, and counts among its past editors many distinguished names,—Senator Lodge and President Roosevelt.

he could not be prevailed upon to leave his wife,—except for patriotic reasons. He even sent away his youngest son (who was a perpetual teaser) for the summer, in order that she might enjoy more perfect rest. Mr. Stearns belonged to that class, of whom Dr. Holmes speaks, who never know that they are sick until they are dead.

Early in September a convention of Southern loyalists and their Northern friends was held at Philadelphia, and Mr. Stearns was invited to attend it. Not feeling able to go, he wrote them a letter, which was received with great applause and reported in all the Republican papers. His excoriation of President Johnson is, however, the most interesting portion of it now. He said:

> "So long as he remained in Tennessee, keeping at bay the rebels who surrounded and threatened him on all sides, Andrew Johnson was emphatically a 'Radical,' holding the doctrine that ex-rebels should be excluded from all share in the Government; and when Mr. Lincoln's amnesty proclamation was received at Nashville, he declared that the Unionists would be driven from the state if rebels were allowed to resume their rights of property and franchise by taking that oath. He immediately issued a stringent proclamation of his own, requiring, in addition to the oath prescribed by Mr. Lincoln, one of his own, which excluded all who had given aid and comfort to the Rebellion. Under these proclamations the first municipal elections were carried by the Union men, none others, whether pardoned or not, being allowed to vote."

And again he paints the Andrew Johnson of 1866:

> "Thus we have before us two Andrew Johnsons,—one as Military Governor of Tennessee, supporting the loyal

Mrs. MARY E. STEARNS IN HER GARDEN

Unionists there, and being supported by them in return; the other as President of the United States, surrounded by rebels and other enemies of the Republic, receiving their support and giving them aid and countenance in return. Immediately after the passage of the constitutional amendment for the admission of states lately in rebellion, the President's influence was used to defeat its adoption in the Legislature of Tennessee, by withdrawing a number of members sufficient to prevent a quorum, although the President had reason to believe that its ratification would be followed by the admission of her delegation to Congress. The aid given by his order to rebels concerned in the New Orleans massacre stands in terrible contrast to the care and kindness extended by him to colored people in Nashville two years ago."

Mr. Stearns was in New York City at the time of the November elections, and may have gone there to assist the cause. Connecticut went Democratic, and a number of Republican congressmen in trivial communities also lost their seats,—not that their constituents loved Johnson more, but because they liked negro suffrage less. Mr. Stearns wrote to his wife two days later:

"Connecticut has gone to the bow-wows and nobody cares for her. I suppose Wilson will consider that his gloomy predictions have been verified, but I am not dissatisfied with the election. We cannot expect public opinion to recognize the rights of the negro at a single jump. It will require time; and meanwhile the Republicans have a solid two-thirds majority to oppose Andrew Johnson in both houses of Congress."

The result verified Mr. Stearns' arguments on the floor of the Senate nine months before; and perhaps no other person's hand was so conspicuous in this. He was obliged, however, to discontinue

the further publication of the *Right Way* from lack of sufficient funds. Fresh reverses had come upon him. A sudden decline in the price of gold in September had cost him ten thousand dollars; and about the same time he learned that his Southern plantations, which had prospered so well the preceding year, were now a complete failure. Several small investments, which he had made to assist his friends, also turned out badly. Fortune had set herself against him, and George L. Stearns began to feel poor.

Now for the first time he consulted with his sons, and they agreed with him that it would be well to dispose of the Medford estate and live in a more economical manner for the next few years. The revolutionary period had passed, and there was no reason why the Stearns family should not return to society again. Mrs. Stearns, however, opposed this so strongly that he decided to relinquish the design. He took his son away from the Scientific School, and placed him in charge of the Medford estate with directions to run it in an economical manner, and make the green-house pay for itself, if possible. He remarked that this would do the boy more good than studying.

This may have seemed hard to him after so much generosity, but such is the common fate of the brave and generous; and he had kept the vow that he made at Niagara Falls on December 2, 1859. He had kept it through eight years of incessant toil.

So, the autumn passed away and winter came on —a winter that has not yet turned to spring.

Wendell Phillips came to dine with Mr. Stearns on New Year's Day, 1867, and a pleasant occasion it was. There was a slight air of melancholy in his manner, which with his personal beauty and gift of speech, made him a very attractive companion. They talked about Emerson; and Mr. Stearns remarked that the finest point in his character was its perfect equipoise. "Yes," said Mr. Phillips, "I think it is to that chiefly that he owes his success; and yet he always seemed to me to over-estimate the importance of his native place. I am fond of Boston, but I do not consider it the greatest city in the world."

Then I said: "Mr. Emerson was the first person to inform me that Judge Hoar's son had failed in the Harvard examinations, and he spoke of it as if it were a local calamity. When I asked him about another school-mate who was examined at the same time, Mr. Emerson said: 'He is only an Acton farmer's boy: nobody cares for *him.*'"

Mr. Stearns looked at Mr. Phillips, and Mrs. Stearns said:

"That is not much like—

> 'The musing peasant lowly great
> Beside the forest water sat.'"

"No," said Mr. Phillips, "it is not; but the crowning honor of Emerson is that after having talked about heroism for so many years, when the hero, John Brown, came he knew him."

He spoke of Webster as the admiration of his youth, and of Whittier's ballads as the most genuine American poetry. He envied him his "Bar-

bara Frietchie"—he wished he could have written that himself.

It was Mrs. Stearns who suggested the Cretan expedition. Crete had been excepted from the treaty which liberated the other Greeks from Turkish rule, and now it was in a state of frantic rebellion. That Mr. Stearns should have seized on this idea and encouraged it, would seem to indicate a kind of desperation in the precarious condition of his affairs. But it may have been the instinct of self-preservation that was leading him. If he could go to Europe with Dr. Howe, he would have an entertaining companion and a devoted friend, who would care for him by day and by night. If they could have taken the next steamer to England all might have been well.

Howe had already thought of the Cretans, but alone and at his age he felt as if it would be too much of an undertaking. "We should make a strong team," he said in reply to Mr. Stearns' proposition. They went to New York together and succeeded in raising a considerable sum there for the Cretans; although Mr. Stearns did not feel able to give anything himself. All prospects for their expedition seemed to be favorable, when, in less than two weeks, information came to Mr. Stearns which decided him to remain in America.

A dreamy young clerk, named Shaw, in the employ of the New York Lead Company, had invented an ingenious process for lining lead pipe with tin. He found that by placing a cylinder of tin, chilled to a certain temperature, inside the lead press the two metals could be made to unite

in a favorable manner, and could be squeezed out together in a solid composition. Mr. Shaw formed a company with two friends, and sent samples of the new pipe to the various dealers.

As soon as Mr. Stearns saw it, he recognized that if this new invention proved a success, and there seemed to be no reason why it should not, it would revolutionize the lead business in both America and Europe. It would obviate the danger of lead poisoning, and the greater tenacity of the tin would enable it to bear a heavier pressure for the same weight than ordinary lead pipe. Under such circumstances it would not be prudent for Mr. Stearns to leave the country and he begged off from the Cretan expedition much to Dr. Howe's regret.

He went to New York again and sought out Mr. Shaw. The Tathams and others had disparaged his invention, but Mr. Stearns praised it to its full value. Mr. Shaw and his friends were glad to have Mr. Stearns for an ally, and it was agreed to form a large stock company which should operate in all the principal cities. Much time was spent in testing the new pipe, and Mr. Stearns went to New York repeatedly during the winter.

On the afternoon of April 4 Mrs. Stearns received a telegram saying that her husband was seriously ill with pneumonia at the Brevoort House. She went to him that night, taking her Boston doctor with her. This, however, proved an unfortunate circumstance; for Dr. Payne immediately offended the New York doctor, whom Mr. Stearns had engaged with the last words he could speak,

and supplied his place with an aged homœopath named Bayard, who only came once a day and took little interest in the case. He did nothing for Mr. Stearns, except to leave him a little tasteless medicine, probably belladonna; and after lingering for four days in this manner, on April 9, at five o'clock in the afternoon, George L. Stearns ceased to breathe. The case was not a severe one, and a little champagne or brandy might have saved him.

To the last he thought of others more than of himself. The day before his death, he noticed that the weather was fine, and he wanted his wife to go out to walk in Washington Square. He never complained, nor showed the least fear of death. Like John Brown, he died in absolute faith of an immortal life.

Dr. Howe was in Athens with Judge Conway, when he received the fatal intelligence, and he said at once: "If Stearns had come with us this would not have happened."

The funeral services were performed at Mr. Stearns' residence in Medford, and Rev. Samuel Longfellow officiated in a manner which plainly showed how deeply he felt the loss of his friend. His prayer was like a religious poem. Then Emerson was requested to speak, which he did in his deliberate philosophical way. He referred to Mr. Stearns' "romantic generosity;" and considered him fortunate to die before he became old for a number of reasons, and among others because "he would not live to see his sons waiting to occupy his shoes." It was a relief to the assembled mourners when Theophilus Parsons arose, and said with

true warmth of feeling: "Major Stearns' life and character were a revelation to me. I had been so accustomed to see public services united with personal ambition, that I had almost come to think that the two were inseparable; but in Major Stearns I found a man who wanted absolutely nothing for himself. He did not even wish to be praised for what he accomplished. In him I have lost my truest friend, and America her best patriot."

Fifty mourners accompanied George L. Stearns to his last resting place in Mt. Auburn cemetery.

Rev. E. C. Towne, who was pastor of the First Parish church in Medford at the time, gave a memorial service the following Sunday, and invited R. W. Emerson to assist him.

Emerson at first declined on account of the distance, but immediately afterward accepted because he considered it "a duty that could not be set aside." After briefly reviewing Mr. Stearns' public services, he said:

"I have heard, what must be true, that George L. Stearns had great executive skill, a clear method, and a just attention to all the details of the task in hand. Plainly he was no boaster or pretender, but a man for up-hill work, a soldier to bide the brunt; a man whom disasters, which dishearten other men, only stimulated to new courage and endeavor.

"I have heard something of his quick temper: that he was indignant at this or that man's behavior, but never that his anger outlasted for a moment the mischief done or threatened to the good cause, or ever stood in the way of his hearty co-

operation with the offenders, when they returned to the path of public duty. I look upon him as a type of the American republican. A man of the people, in strictly private life, girt with family ties; an active and intelligent manufacturer and merchant, enlightened enough to see a citizen's interest in the public affairs, and virtuous enough to obey to the uttermost the truth he saw,—he became, in the most natural manner, an indispensable power in the state. Without such vital support as he, and such as he, brought to the government, where would that government be? When one remembers his incessant service; his journeys and residences in many states; the societies he worked with; the councils in which he sat; the wide correspondence, presently enlarged by printed circulars, then by newspapers established wholly or partly at his own cost; the useful suggestions; the celerity with which his purpose took form; and his immovable convictions,—I think this single will was worth to the cause ten thousand ordinary partisans, well-disposed enough, but of feebler and interrupted action.

"Almost I am ready to say to these mourners, Be not too proud in your grief, when you remember that there is not a town in the remote State of Kansas, that will not weep with you at the loss of its founder; not a Southern state, in which the freedmen will not learn to-day from their preachers that one of their most efficient benefactors has departed, and will cover his memory with benedictions; and that, after all his efforts to serve men without appearing to do so, there

is hardly a man in this country worth knowing who does not hold his name in exceptional honor. And there is to my mind somewhat so absolute in this action of a good man, that we do not, in thinking of him, so much as make any question of the future. For the Spirit of the Universe seems to say: 'He has done well; is not that saying all?'"

This is valuable as indicating the side of George L. Stearns' character that appealed chiefly to Emerson; but it was a small part of the man. Emerson made his life deliberately a work of art: Mr. Stearns was never aware how noble, how magnificent * his own life was. Whittier was one of the few who appreciated this, and in the *Atlantic Monthly* for May, 1867, he published this admirable poem:

"G. L. S.

"He has done the work of a true man,—
Crown him, honor him, love him.
Weep over him, tears of woman,
Stoop manliest brows above him!

"O, dusky mothers and daughters,
Vigils of mourning keep for him!
Up in the mountains and down by the waters,
Lift up your voices and weep for him!

"For the warmest of hearts is frozen,
The freest of hands is still;
And the gap in our picked and chosen
The long years may not fill.

"No duty could overtask him,
No need his will outrun;
Or ever our lips could ask him,
His hands the work had done.

---

* Helen Hunt, the poetess, spoke of him as "that magnificent Mr. Stearns."

> "He forgot his own soul for others,
> Himself to his neighbor lending;
> He found the Lord in his suffering brothers,
> And not in the clouds descending.
>
> "So the bed was sweet to die on,
> Whence he saw the doors wide swung
> Against whose bolted iron
> The strength of his life was flung.
>
> "And he saw ere his eye was darkened
> The sheaves of the harvest bringing,
> And knew while his ear yet hearkened
> The voice of the reapers singing.
>
> "Ah, well!—the world is discreet;
> There are plenty to pause and wait;
> But here was a man who set his feet
> Sometimes in advance of fate,—
>
> "Plucked off the old bark when the inner
> Was slow to renew it,
> And put to the Lord's work the sinner
> When saints failed to do it.
>
> "Never rode to the wrong's redressing
> A worthier paladin.
> Shall he not hear the blessing,
> 'Good and faithful, enter in!'"

What celebrity is equal to such a requiem as this! George L. Stearns was the Sir Galahad of the antislavery struggle—the stainless knight on whom alone the mantle of purity could rest with ease and grace. He was a true poetic subject, and there was no other to whom these verses would apply in such full measure.

When a chief dies in an Indian encampment his neighbors seize on everything he owned, unless his squaw, or widow, has some strong relative to

GEORGE LINDSLEY STEARNS
Grandson of George Luther Stearns

OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF
CALIFORNIA

protect her; and something much like this happened after Mr. Stearns' death. Powerful capitalists seized on his business, and the citizens of Medford voted away a piece of land, which belonged to his estate, for the benefit of a man who kept a trotting park. His sons, whom he had left without the means of studying a profession, were never able to obtain the smallest clerkship in the city which their father had so much honored. "Take care of my wife and children," said Arnold Winkelried, when he threw himself on the Austrian spears at Sempach; and what encouragement can a patriotic man have to sacrifice himself for his country, unless this is remembered. There were many similar cases in those days.

Mr. Stearns' public work was not of a character to attract the public eye. There were no impressive dramatic effects in it, like the mobbing of Garrison or the assault on Sumner; and it is these chiefly that make men celebrated. Andrew, Chase, Sumner and Wilson soon followed him to the grave; and a new generation came upon the stage who knew him not. His name was not mentioned in the crop of ephemeral histories which sprang up after the Civil War; and a biographical sketch of him, which Mr. Sanborn sent to Appleton's Cyclopædia, was returned on the ground that Mr. Stearns was a private citizen,—that is, because he had no title. In the war papers published by the Century Company, the work that Major Stearns did was ascribed entirely to others. A well written, dignified biography might have prevented this, but for some unaccountable reason Mrs. Stearns

objected to having one published, and would never permit it so long as she lived.

Time, however, winnows the wheat from the chaff. In 1897 a monument was erected on Boston Common to the memory of Colonel Shaw, the commander of the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts regiment, who was killed at Fort Wagner, and at the celebration of that occasion Booker T. Washington, the eloquent colored president of Tuskegee College, made an address in which he attributed the credit of organizing the colored regiments where it properly belonged, to George L. Stearns.

Following close upon this Joseph H. Smith, one of the veterans of the Fifty-fourth, started a movement to have a tablet placed in the state-house at Boston, commemorative of Major Stearns' services and sacrifices for the republic. This was supported by prominent Republicans, and carried through at once,—as appears by the following resolution:

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

In the Year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Ninety-seven.

RESOLVE

To Provide for a Tablet in Memory of the late Major George Luther Stearns.

Resolved, That the state house construction commissioners are hereby directed to cause a tablet, suitably inscribed, to be placed in Memorial Hall or in such other part of the state house as they may determine, in honor of the late Major George Luther Stearns, for the purpose of commemorating the part taken by him in securing the enlistment of

colored troops, and the other valuable services rendered by him to the United States and to this Commonwealth in the war of the rebellion.

House of Representatives, May 12, 1897.
Passed. JOHN L. BATES, *Speaker.*
In Senate, May 13, 1897.
Passed. GEO. P. LAWRENCE, *President.*
May 14, 1897. *Approved* · ROGER WOLCOTT.

Governor Wolcott, with characteristic courtesy, sent Mrs. Stearns a copy of the Resolve together with the quill with which he signed it. The secretary of state, however, invidiously neglected to notify the state-house commissioners in due time, so that the act was permitted to lapse, and the tablet was not set in position. The government of Massachusetts was thus openly defied, until in 1901 the legislature reënacted the former Resolve.

The tablet bears this inscription:

IN MEMORIAM
GEORGE LUTHER STEARNS

A Merchant of Boston
Who illustrated in his life and character
The nobility and generosity of
Citizenship.
Giving his life and fortune for the
Overthrow of slavery and the
Preservation of *free* institutions.
To his unresting devotion and unfailing hope
Massachusetts owes
The fifty-fourth and fifty-fifth regiments
of colored infantry,
And the federal government ten thousand
colored troops,
At a critical moment in the great war.
In the darkest hour of the republic
His faith in the *people* never wavered.

GEORGE LUTHER STEARNS

Of him, Whittier wrote:

"No duty could overtask him;
No need his will outrun;
Or ever our lips could ask him;
His hands the work had done."

"A man who asked not to be great;
But as he served and saved the state."

Born in Medford, Massachusetts, January 8, 1809.

Died April 9, 1867.

APPENDIX

A

Charles Robinson was the first state governor of Kansas, but he retired from office with a somewhat clouded reputation,* and his evidence before the Harper's Ferry investigating committee was so irrelevant and transparently concocted that a large portion of it was thrown out by a vote of the committee. The most singular part of this is that Robinson was the first prominent person in Kansas to solicit arms from Amos A. Lawrence and others in Boston, and to endorse John Brown five months after the lynching at Pottawatomie. We notice that Professor Blackmar has omitted this letter to John Brown from his biography of Governor Robinson, which hardly seems fair to Kansas history; but we are obliged to him for informing us (p. 280) that Robinson represented to the government in September, 1861, that the chief danger to Kansas arose from the fact that General Lane, who was then senator, had command of the United States forces at Fort Scott. Lane's character was not much better than Robinson's, but he was decidedly the ablest man in Kansas, and it was wholly owing to him and George L. Stearns that there was an army for the defence of Kansas. Under the circumstances there was no one else that President Lincoln could appoint, and Robinson's

* Blackmar's biography, p. 288.

letter to Frémont can only be considered as a mischievous intrigue. The present writer spent the summer of 1862 in Kansas and at that time Robinson was at loggerheads with all the prominent men in his own party. Although he professed peace principles, and a conciliatory policy, he was exactly the reverse of this himself. He was not only contentious, but his sharp criticism of others sometimes gave great offence. He reflected so severely on Judge Conway in a public address that Conway undertook to horsewhip him for it; but Robinson being a much larger and stronger man took the whip away from him, and treated him otherwise in a forbearing manner. Robinson was a useful man in his way.

B

Mrs. Anna S. Eldredge, the granddaughter of Jefferson's physician, relates that shortly after Lincoln's inauguration General George H. Thomas went to visit his family at Norfolk, Virginia. He had two sisters there, one of them considered a person of rare intellect, but his wife kept such close watch over him that they never found the least opportunity to discuss politics with him, or to bring him under their influence. She was a good wife for the Union cause, for if the army in Northern Virginia had been commanded by Thomas instead of Lee, affairs might have proved worse than they actually did. General Lee made a stubborn resistance, but as Lord Wolseley has remarked, his offensive movements were not successful.

Mrs. Thomas came from Troy, New York.

C

There is a point of view from which Wendell Phillips' course after 1870 appears both intelligible and consistent, though whether it was judicious, every man must decide for himself. Phillips was a true prophet in one respect at least. He foresaw the reactionary spirit against the negro race in America; he predicted it and strove to provide against it. In this he soon stood almost alone. Garrison had long since given up the cause; George L. Stearns was dead; Sumner and Greeley became involved in the San Domingo controversy; but Phillips pursued his object with the absolute devotion of the idealist, who recognizes no obstacle between himself and the end he has in view. There was only one prominent public man who could sympathize with him in this movement, and that one only from interested motives. No man was ever more severely inflamed with the presidential fever than General B. F. Butler, and no one held a slighter chance of attaining the position; but he had a scheme for doing this by means of negro votes at the South, and the labor movement at the North. Both he and Phillips were decidedly socialistic, and they may have both been as sincere in this as Henry James, W. D. Howells and other excellent men. Phillips at least had seen wealth and education ranged on the side of oppression, and he had begun to feel that real virtue was only to be found among those who labored and were heavy laden. "Tyranny," he said, "is the offspring of luxury and idleness;" and he was not far wrong.

Under such conditions that he and General Butler should come together was natural enough. Those who were present at the Harvard Commencement dinner in 1883, could testify what an appearance of virtue and philanthropy General Butler could assume; and Wendell Phillips was rather a credulous person. When his friends complained to him of Butler's character, he said: " When we are on a ship in a storm, we do not want a saint for a captain, but a bold navigator. I believe Butler to be the only man after Grant has retired, who will have the courage and ability to deal with this question." When Hayes became President by means of an unavoidable bargain which included the withdrawal of the United States troops from the Southern states, and prevented another civil war, Phillips perceived that the game was lost, and would seem to have lost all self-control. He would not believe that the bargain was unavoidable; he called Carl Schurz a Swiss hireling, and applied other opprobrious names to General Devens. It would seem after this as if his mind became slightly unbalanced, for he squandered all his property in foolish speculations, such as would have horrified him in earlier life. The one valid charge against him is his use of bitter personalities. In private life he was the perfect type of a gentleman, and a more graceful finished orator never walked on to a stage. He had the heart of a hero, but his judgment was not equal to his courage.

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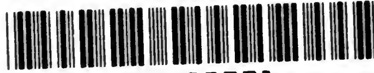

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