

CHAPTER XIV.

SENATOR OF THE UNITED STATES

SAMUEL HOUSTON and Thomas J. Rusk were elected Senators of the United States by the legislature of Texas. Houston arrived in Washington and took his seat as a member of the Twenty-Ninth Congress March 30, 1846. It was the great era of the American Senate. It had among its members a larger number of distinguished and able statesmen than it had before or has had since. There were the great leaders, Webster, Clay, and Calhoun, the scarcely less distinguished Thomas H. Benton, and among the others, who had or were to acquire a national fame, were Lewis Cass, John A. Dix, Daniel S. Dickenson, Reverdy Johnson, Simon Cameron, William Allen, Thomas Corwin, and Jesse D. Bright. Houston's advent, from his romantic career and achievements, attracted much attention, and he was at once a marked, although a rather eccentric figure in the Senate chamber. He continued his habit of peculiarity in dress, wearing his broad-brimmed white hat of soft fur, and draping himself in a cloak with a red lining, or in a bright-colored Mexican blanket. He provided himself with a supply of cypress shingles, and filled his waste-basket during the debates

with the shavings that curled from under his sharp knife.

Houston did not manifest any of that false modesty which has created the custom that a new Senator shall be silent during his first session, but at once took his part in the debates. His first speech was delivered just a fortnight after he had taken his seat. It was on the question of the Oregon boundary. He took strong grounds, in agreement with Benton, with whom he allied himself, as the representative of the old Union Democracy of Jackson, and in opposition to Calhoun and the nullifiers and disunionists, in favor of the extreme claims of the United States to the northern boundary. His speech was long, rambling, and discursive, and, if at times forcible in language, indicated that he was not likely to take his place among the leaders of the Senate in logical and legal argument. The Southern members, under the leadership of Calhoun, were not anxious for the extension of free territory at the North, and President Polk, although he had been elected on the platform of "54.40 or fight," was of a much less bellicose temper toward Great Britain than he had been toward Mexico. The motion for which Houston spoke, to give notice of the termination of the joint occupancy of the Columbia River region, was passed by a vote of forty to fourteen, but the question was finally settled, after some not very forcible diplomacy on the part of the United States, by a compromise on the boundary of 49°.

The war with Mexico had been begun before Houston's arrival by the advance of General Taylor's troops upon the Rio Grande. Houston favored the war, at least after it had been commenced, and had always extreme views in regard to the incorporation of Mexican territory into the United States. He was a member of the Committee on Military Affairs, and was, naturally, a good deal consulted in regard to the operations against Mexico. It is charged that he prevented the appointment of General Albert Sidney Johnston to an important command, on account of their old differences in the affairs of Texas, and he doubtless had virtual control of the commissions issued to Texan officers. He reported a resolution for a vote of thanks to the soldiers engaged in the battle of Buena Vista, and for a medal to General Taylor. He was in favor of the vigorous prosecution of the war, and in the Thirtieth Congress supported the bill for the three millions extra credit to carry it on, which was defeated. He made an elaborate speech, in which he defended the character of the settlers in Texas, who had been attacked during the debate, and set forth the claims of Texas to the territory of New Mexico, east of the Rio Grande, under the old Spanish and French treaties. He defended President Polk from the charge of having brought on the war, and argued in favor of giving him a vigorous support. He was strenuous in the advocacy of the claims of Texas, and made a strong speech in favor of incorporating the Texan navy into that of the

United States, about which there had been some difficulty, which was finally settled by an appropriation for the pay of the Texan officers for four years, on the condition that they would relinquish their claims to positions in the navy of the United States. He offered a resolution for the establishment of a protectorate over Yucatan, as he did at a later period one for a protectorate over all Mexico. It was in accordance with his views for the extension of the territory of the United States to the Isthmus of Darien, but it fortunately received little attention. Whatever may be the opinion in regard to "manifest destiny," the adoption of such a scheme at that time would have involved the United States in difficulties and responsibilities of the most serious character, and have been a source of great trouble and weakness. These views did not accord with the usual practical sagacity of Houston, but rather with the filibuster spirit of the earlier adventurers in Texas, whom he had always opposed.

Houston's most important action and speech, which fixed the plan in relation to the extension of slavery that he ever afterward maintained, were on the bill for the establishment of the territorial government of Oregon. The bill contained a provision prohibiting the establishment of slavery, in accordance with the ordinance of 1787 in regard to the Northwest Territory. This was denounced by Calhoun, who declared that Congress had no right to prohibit slavery in a Territory, and openly threatened disunion in

case his doctrine was not accepted. Houston followed Benton in a vigorous reply. He said that he had heard the cry of disunion and nullification before. That cry had reached him in the wilderness when an exile from kindred and friends and sections. But it had rung in his ears, and wounded his heart. Now, however, he was in the midst of such a cry, and he was bound to act as a man conscious of the solemn responsibility imposed upon him. He had heard the menaces and threats of dissolution and disunion until he had become familiar with them, and they had now ceased to produce alarm in his bosom. He had no fear of the dissolution of the Union, when he recollected how it had been established and how it had been defended. Mr. Calhoun and Mr. Butler, of South Carolina, both interrupted Houston's speech. Calhoun denied that the South had threatened to dissolve the Union. Mr. Butler wanted to know if the holding of a Southern convention was treason. Houston replied, "Certainly not." The South could hold all the conventions it pleased, but he would never go into one. He knew neither North nor South. He knew only the Union. Houston's course produced great anger and excitement among the extreme Southerners. He and Benton were denounced by name as traitors at public meetings in South Carolina. But there appears to have been no disapproval of his action at that time among the people of Texas. The large slave-holding element had not become established among the settlers, and they were fresh in

their loyalty to the Union. It was not until the social and political conditions had been changed that the fire-eaters and disunionists gained the control.

In the next Congress in 1849, under the administration of President Taylor, Houston declared himself in favor of the admission of California as a free State. The Southern leaders were greatly excited at the prospect of the loss of the territory for which they had caused the Mexican war. An address was issued for a convention at Nashville to consider the threatened rights and interests of the South. Houston refused to sign the address, and ridiculed the convention. He declared that it was a piece of ridiculous flummery, and that ex-Governor Henderson was the sole representative from Texas in it, and "self-constituted at that." The slavery question was continually coming up in every form. On a resolution to invite Father Mathew, the eminent Irish apostle of temperance, to a seat on the floor of the Senate, objection was made that he had signed a petition against slavery with Daniel O'Connell. Houston supported the resolution, and expressed his profound contempt for the attempt to drag slavery into the question of temperance. At that time Houston had wholly conquered his habits of indulgence in liquor. He said, "I am a disciple of the advocates of temperance. I needed the discipline of reformation, and I embraced it. I am proud on this floor to proclaim it, sir. I would enforce the example upon every American heart that influences or is influenced

by filial affection, conjugal love, or parental tenderness.”

The question of the extent of the boundary of Texas to the north on the Rio Grande, and the claim of the State to a considerable portion of the territory of New Mexico, was renewed by the result of the Mexican war. The United States troops under General Kearney had taken possession of New Mexico, and, after the territory had been ceded to the United States by the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Texas attempted to exercise jurisdiction over it. The legislature passed an ordinance making it a judicial district, and Judge Beard was sent to hold courts in the territory. By order of President Taylor, Colonel Monroe, the commandant of the United States troops, forbade Judge Beard to exercise his functions, and ordered an election for a territorial delegate to Congress. Houston defended the claim of Texas in an elaborate speech, and attacked Taylor for his uncomplimentary references in his reports to the disorders among the Texan volunteers during the Mexican war. The question at one time assumed a somewhat serious phase, as Governor Wood threatened to call out the militia of Texas to take possession of the country. But he thought better of it when he was informed by President Taylor that they would be repelled by force, and that he would go to the scene of disturbance himself, if necessary. Mr. Clay in his famous compromise measures included a provision for the settlement of the claim of Texas to New Mexico by

the payment of a sum of money for the canceling of the debts of Texas, for which the customs revenues had been pledged. In order to avoid a continuance of the trouble this portion of the compromise measure was adopted first. Senator Pearce, of Maryland, introduced a bill fixing the boundaries of Texas and New Mexico, as they now stand, and providing for the payment of \$10,000,000 to Texas. Of this sum \$5,000,000 was to be reserved for the payment of the debts of Texas upon claims filed and audited in the United States treasury. There was a strong disposition in the Texas legislature to reject the proposition, on the ground of the provision compelling the payment of the public debt contracted by the Republic. In the final disposition a portion of this was repudiated. The public debt, which amounted to \$12,436,491, was scaled down to \$6,827,278, by various classifications allowing from twenty to seventy-five cents on the dollar. It was claimed that this was a just and even a generous adjustment, inasmuch as the money had been received in some instances at only two or three cents on the dollar, and there was the usual talk about speculators and Shylocks, who had taken advantage of the necessities of the deserving creditors to obtain possession of the claims. It must be admitted that the ostensible claims for a reduction of the debt on account of the actual value received were very forcible, and the example of Texas will compare favorably with that of the United States after the Revolutionary war, and of States like Mississippi and

Pennsylvania with much less temptation. Nevertheless, it was a violation of the bond, which would not have been permitted on the part of any private debtor, and not justifiable according to the strict letter of the law. Houston defended the action of Texas in scaling the debt in a speech in the Senate. In regard to the relinquishment by Texas to the claim upon New Mexico, he said in a speech at Galveston that "it was the best sale ever made of land of a worthless quality and a disputable title." At Houston's suggestion the sum of \$2,000,000 of the money, remaining after the payment of the debt, was set apart for a public school fund.

As the controversy raged and the excitement grew hot over Clay's compromise bill, Houston offered a resolution that a committee of six Senators be appointed to prepare an address for the purpose of allaying the agitation, but it was not adopted. The various measures embodied in the original bill, for the admission of California as a free State, for the creation of a territorial government in New Mexico without reference to slavery, for the settlement of the Texan boundary, for a fugitive slave law, and for the abolition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia, were finally adopted, one after another. The fugitive slave law, in a more severe form as regards the rights of the fugitives before the courts than as reported by Mr. Clay, and a gross violation of common law, was passed August 26, only twelve Senators voting against it. Houston voted for it, as he did

also for the abolition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia. Although ten Senators from Southern States signed a protest against the admission of California as a free State "as a part of a policy which, if persisted in, would lead to a dissolution of the Confederacy," and there were ominous signs of a growing spirit of slave propagandism and resistance to national authority at the South, the country believed that the terrible question had been charmed down for an indefinite period. But the inevitable conflict had hardly been postponed. A new class of statesmen had come upon the scene, more far-seeing in regard to the nature of the controversy, and more determined to bring it to a decisive issue. Seward, Sumner, and Chase represented the more decided resistance of the North against the spread of slavery, and Jefferson Davis, Clemens, Soulé, and others represented the determination of the South to extend the area of slave territory or dissolve the Union. Webster and Clay, the great champions of compromise, passed away. Benton, who had represented Missouri for thirty years in the Senate, was defeated in his own State, leaving Houston as the sole conspicuous representative of the old Union or Jackson Democracy from the South. In January, 1853, he was reëlected Senator by the legislature of Texas without any formidable opposition.

On March 4, 1853, Franklin Pierce was inaugurated President of the United States as the flexible instrument of the aggressive Southern element. In

the early part of the session of 1854 Senator Douglas, of Illinois, from the Committee on Territories, reported the Kansas-Nebraska bill, which repealed the Missouri Compromise, to which the country had clung since 1820 as the pledge of peace and security, and opened all the national territory to the chances of slave colonization. Houston rose at once to the height of the occasion. He opposed the bill vehemently and unflinchingly. In a speech, delivered at the night session of March 3, just before the passage of the bill, which marked his commanding power as an orator on a great occasion, and with a prophetic wisdom and prescience, he exposed the follies and dangers of the bill to the country and to the South in particular. He said, in emphatic words, of the peril it would bring to the Union:—

“Mr. President, I cannot believe that the agitation created by this measure will be confined to the Senate chamber. I cannot believe from what we have witnessed here to-night that this will be the exclusive arena for the exercise of human passion and the expression of public opinion. If the Republic be not shaken, I will thank Heaven for its kindness in maintaining its stability.”

He pointed out with much sagacity the special perils which it would bring to Texas:—

“I will give you my reasons why I think Texas would be in the most deplorable condition of all the Southern States. It is now the terminus of the slave population. It is a country of vast extent and fertile

soil, favorable to the culture and growth of those productions which are most important to the necessities of the world, — cotton, sugar, and tobacco. An immense slave population must eventually go there. The demand for labor is so great, everything is so inviting to the enterprising and industrious, that labor will be transferred there because it will be of a most profitable character, and the disproportion of slaves to the white population must be immense. Then, sir, it must become the gulf of slavery, and there its terrible eddies will whirl if convulsions take place.”

He brushed aside the question of the principle of non-intervention, as claimed by the South, and showed that it was as useless in theory as it would be dangerous in practice:—

“I again ask, What benefit is to result to the South from this measure if adopted? . . . Will it secure these territories to the South. No, sir, not at all. But the gentleman tells us, It is the principle we want. I can perceive but one principle involved in the measure, and that principle lies at the root of agitation; and from that all the tumults and excitements of the country must arise. That is the only principle I can perceive. We are told by Southern as well as Northern gentlemen, those who are for it, and those who are against it, that slavery will never be extended to that Territory, that it will never go there; but it is the principle of non-intervention it is desired to establish. Sir, we have done well under

the intervention of the Missouri Compromise, if the gentlemen so call it, in other Territories, and I adjure you, when there is so much involved, not to press the matter too far. What is to be the consequence? If it is not in embryo, my suggestion will not make it so. It has been suggested elsewhere, and I may repeat it here, What is to be the effect of this measure if adopted, and you repeal the Missouri Compromise? The South is to gain nothing by it, for honorable gentlemen from the South, and especially the junior Senator from Virginia, characterize it as a miserable, trifling, little measure. Then, sir, is the South to be benefited or propitiated by conferring upon her a miserable, trifling, little measure? Will that compensate the South for her uneasiness? Will it allay the agitation of the North? Will it preserve the union of these States? Will it sustain the Democratic or the Whig party in their organizations? No, sir, they all go to the wall. What is to be the effect on the government? It is to be most fatal and ruinous to the future harmony and well-being of the country. I think that the measure itself would be useless. If you establish non-intervention you make nothing by that. But what will be the consequences in the minds of the people? They have a veneration for that compromise. They have a respect and reverence for it, from its antiquity and the associations connected with it, and repeated references to it that seemed to suggest that it marked the boundaries of free and slave territory. They have no respect for it

as a compact, — I do not care what you call it, — but as a line defining certain rights and privileges to different sections of the Union. The abstractions which you indulge in here can never satisfy the people that there is not something in it. Abrogate or disannul it, and you exasperate the public mind. It is not necessary that reason should accompany excitement. Feeling is enough to agitate without much reason, and that will be the great prompter on this occasion. My word for it, we shall realize scenes of agitation, which are rumbling in the distance now.”

As to the charge that he was faithless to the South and in alliance with the Abolitionists he replied in manly words: —

“This is an eminently perilous measure, and do you expect me to remain here silent, or to shrink from the discharge of my duty in admonishing the South of what I consider the results will be? I will do it, in spite of all the intimidations, or threats, or discountenances that may be thrown upon me. Sir, the charges that I am going with the Abolitionists or the Free-Soilers affects not me. The discharge of conscious duty prompts me often to confront the united array of the very section of the country in which I reside, in which my associations are, in which my personal interests have always been, and in which my affections rest. Where every look to the setting sun carries me to the bosom of a family dependent upon me, think you I could be alien to them? Never, — never.”

His apprehensions of the evils which would follow the passage of the bill were no less than a prophecy for the country and himself: —

“I had fondly hoped, Mr. President, that, having attained to my present period of life, I should pass the residue of my days, be they many or few, in peace and tranquillity; that as I found the country growing up rapidly, and have witnessed its immeasurable expansion and development, when I close my eyes on scenes around me, I would at least have the cherished consolation and hope that I left my children to a peaceful, happy, prosperous, and united community. I had hoped this. Fondly had I cherished the desire and the expectation from 1850 until after the introduction of this bill. My hopes are less sanguine now. My anxieties increase, but my expectation lessens. Sir, if this repeal takes place I will have seen the commencement of the agitation; but the youngest child now born, I am apprehensive, will not live to witness its termination.”

In conclusion, he made an appeal for the Indians who were to be dispossessed from the territory, and whom none of the other statesmen, who were struggling for or against the extension of slavery, had thought it worth while to consider. His views on the policy of treating the Indians had more than a temporary bearing. He said: —

“Mr. President, I have very little hope that any appeal that I may make on behalf of the Indians will do any good. The honorable Senator from Indiana

says in substance that God Almighty has condemned them, and made them an inferior race; that there is no use in doing anything for them. With great deference to that Senator, for whom I have never cherished anything but kind feelings, I must be permitted to dissent from his opinions. He says they are not civilized, and they are not homogeneous, and cannot be so with the white race. They cannot be civilized! No! Sir, it is idle to tell me that. We have Indians on our western borders whose civilization is not inferior to our own. . . . They have well-organized societies; they have their villages and towns; they have their state houses and their capitols; they have females and men who would grace the drawing-rooms or salons of Washington; they have a well-organized judiciary, a trial by jury, and the writ of habeas corpus. These are the people for whom I demand justice in the organization of these territories. . . . But the honorable Senator from Iowa characterizes the remarks which I made in reference to the Indians as arising from a feeling of 'sickly sentimentality.' Sir, it is a sickly sentimentality that was implanted in me when I was young, and it has grown up with me. The Indian has a sense of justice, truth, and honor that should find a responsive chord in every heart. If the Indians on the frontier are barbarous, or if they are cannibals and eat each other, who are to blame for it? They are robbed of the means of sustenance; and with hundreds and thousands of them starving on the frontier,

hunger may prompt to such acts to prevent their perishing. We shall never become cannibals in connection with the Indians, but we do worse than that. We rob them first of their native dignity and character; we rob them next of what the government appropriates for them. If we do not do it in this hall, men are invested with power and authority who, officiating as agents or traders, rob them of everything which is designed for them. Not less than one hundred millions of dollars, I learn from statistics, since the adoption of this government, have been appropriated by Congress for purposes of justice and benevolence toward the Indians; but I am satisfied that they have never received fifteen millions beneficially. They are too remote from the seat of government to have their real condition understood here; and if the government intends liberality or justice toward them, it is often diverted from the intended object, and consumed by speculators. . . . Now I should like to know if it becomes us to violate a treaty made with the Indians when we please, regardless of justice and honor? We should be careful if it were with a power able to war with us; and it argues a degree of infinite meanness and indescribable degradation on our part to act differently with the Indians, who confide in our honor and justice, and who call the President their Great Father, and confide in him. Mr. President, it is in the power of the Congress of the United States to do some justice to the Indians by giving them a government of their

own, and encouraging them in their organization and improvement by inviting their delegates to a place on the floor of the Senate and House of Representatives. If you will not do it, the sin will lie at your door, and Providence in his own way, mysterious and incomprehensible to us though it is, will accomplish all his purposes, and may at some day avenge the wrongs of the Indians upon our nation. As a people we can save them; and the sooner the great work is begun, the sooner will humanity have cause to rejoice in its accomplishment."

The bill was passed, Houston and John Bell, of Tennessee, being the only Senators from Southern States who voted against it. Benton was not in his accustomed seat in the Senate, but from his place in the House of Representatives he inveighed against the measure, and protested against the political madness which precipitated it upon the country.

One of the incidents connected with the controversy in the Senate, which showed Houston's courage and manliness, was in relation to the treatment of the petition of three thousand clergymen of New England, which had been presented against the passage of the Nebraska bill. An attempt was made to reject the petition, on the ground that it was insulting to the Senate in pronouncing its action "immoral" and in invoking the vengeance of the Almighty upon the advocates of the bill. Senator Douglas made a violent attack upon it, declaring it an "atrocious falsehood," an "atrocious calumny," and that its

signers had "desecrated the pulpit and prostituted the sacred desk." Senators Mason, Butler, Badger, and others denounced it in very severe terms. Edward Everett, who had presented the petition, made a feeble and apologetic defense, which avoided the point at issue in the character of the memorial. While Douglas was speaking, Houston cried out to Sumner, the other Massachusetts Senator, "Sumner, don't speak, don't speak; leave him to me." Sumner replied, "Will you take care of him?" "Yes," said Houston, "if you will leave him to me." His purpose in taking the place of Sumner, he said, was that Douglas should have no opportunity to sustain his charge that the memorial was the work of Abolition confederates. In his remarks he vigorously defended the character of the petitioners and the rights and duty of clergymen to express their opinion on political subjects. He was sharply criticised for making use of the expression of "vice-gerents of God" in regard to them, but he explained it as simply meaning that they were the ministers and aids of the Almighty. As Houston had no sympathy with the Abolition sentiments of the petitioners his course was the more honorable and manly. During the troubles in Kansas which followed the passage of the bill he was silent, and, doubtless, only regarded them as the fulfillment of his prophecies of evil. He was equally silent in regard to the attack upon Sumner in the Senate chamber. He had seen such methods of carrying on political controversy before, and given an

example of it in his own person, so that he was hardly in a position to reprimand it severely. But he must have been revolted at the mingled brutality and cowardice of Brooks's attack upon an unarmed and unprepared man within the walls of the Senate chamber.

Houston distinguished himself during his whole senatorial career by his defense of the rights of the Indians. He was indignant at the system of mismanagement, robbery, and oppression which characterized the treatment of them by the government, and in repeated speeches he urged a more humane, intelligent, and practical method of dealing with them. He was almost alone in Congress in defending their rights. The professional philanthropy of the time was almost entirely enlisted in the cause of the negro, and the practical politicians regarded the Indian as a nuisance when he could not be made a prey. A great interest was involved throughout the entire West in getting possession of the Indian lands, and was energetically pushed by its representatives in Congress. Houston's own people were not in sympathy with him, and public opinion was indifferent where it was not hostile. But he spoke out in manly terms on every occasion, and it was to him that the delegations of Indians who visited Washington appealed for advice and assistance. Mr. C. Edwards Lester in his rhetorical pamphlet, "Sam Houston and his Republic," gives a somewhat overstrained, but probably essentially true account of the meeting of a

delegation of prairie Indians with Houston in Washington:—

“During the latter part of June, 1846, General Morehead arrived in Washington with forty wild Indians from Texas, belonging to more than a dozen tribes. We saw their meeting with General Houston. One and all ran to him, and clasped him in their brawny arms, and hugged him, like bears, to their naked breasts, and called him ‘father.’ Beneath the copper skin and thick paint the blood rushed, and their faces changed, and the lips of many a warrior trembled, although the Indian may not weep. These wild men knew him, and revered him as one who was too directly descended from the Great Spirit to be approached with familiarity, and yet they loved him so well they could not help it. These were the men ‘he had been,’ in the fine language of Acquiquosk, whose words we quote, ‘too subtle for on the war-path, too powerful in battle, too magnanimous in victory, too wise in council, and too true in faith.’ They had flung away their arms in Texas, and with the Comanche chief, who headed their file, had come to Washington to see their father.”

In a speech on the treatment of the Indians, December 31, 1854, Houston said, “I never knew a case when a treaty was made and carried out in good faith which was violated by the Indians,” and with one of his vigorous expressions, “I might have hated the Indians if I had a soul no bigger than a shell-bark.” In an elaborate speech, January 29, 1855,

against increasing the army he contended that the military methods were not the best way of dealing with the Indians, and gave many instances of un-called-for severity, injustice, and corruption by army officers. He gave his practical views of how to deal with the Indians:—

“Withdraw your army. Have five hundred cavalry, if you will, but I would rather have two hundred and fifty Texas rangers (such as I could raise) than five hundred of the best cavalry now in service. I would have one thousand infantry so placed as to guard the United States against Mexico, and five hundred for scouting purposes. I would have five trading-houses from the Rio Grande to the Red River for intercourse with the Indians. I would have a guard of twenty-five men out of an infantry regiment at each trading-house, who would be vigilant and always on the alert. Cultivate intercourse with the Indians. Show them that you have comforts to exchange for their peltries; bring them around you; domesticate them; familiarize them with civilization. Let them see that you are rational beings, and they will become rational in imitation of you. But take no whiskey there at all, not even for the officers, for fear their generosity would let it out. Do this, and you will have peace with the Indians. Whenever you convince an Indian that he is dependent on you for comforts or for what he deems luxuries or elegances of life, you attach him to you. Intercourse and kindness will win the fiercest animal on earth,

except the hyena, and its spots and nature cannot be changed. The nature of an Indian can be changed. He changes under favorable circumstances, and rises to the dignity of a civilized being. It takes a generation or two to regenerate his race, but it can be done. I would have fields around the trading-houses. I would encourage the Indians to cultivate them. Let them see how much it adds to their comfort; how it secures to their wives and children abundant subsistence, and then you win the Indian over to civilization; you charm him, and he becomes a civilized man."

In attending to the confederacy which was said to have been formed by the tribes of the Sioux nation, he said: —

"Theirs is not a confederacy to assail the whites, but to protect themselves. I justify them in doing it. I am sorry there is a necessity for it; but if I were among them, and they proposed a confederacy to repel cruelty and butchery, I would join them, and he would be a dastard who would not!"

These were words in a different and nobler strain than those which the Senate was accustomed to hear about the incurable barbarism of the Indians, and the "sickly sentimentality" of doing anything with them, except rob them of their lands and butcher them if they resisted.

In 1856, there was a movement for the nomination of Houston to the Presidency. The General Committee of the Democracy of New Hampshire issued

an address, urging his nomination as "The People's Candidate," on the ground, mainly, of his opposition to the Nebraska bill and the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. A campaign biography, in the usual style of extravagant eulogy, was published, and Houston made a sort of electioneering tour in some of the principal cities in the North, delivering addresses on the political condition of the country and on the Indian question. This was the period of the brief existence of the Know-Nothing party. Whether Houston ever definitely joined it is not known, but he was in sympathy with its opposition to the easy naturalization of foreigners, and was possibly ready to become its candidate for the Presidency if it exhibited itself in any degree of national strength. He had voted in the Senate for an allotment of lands to the Hungarian refugees, but he was not carried away with the popular admiration for Kossuth. When Kossuth was received by the Senate the following account of his meeting with Houston was given in the newspaper report:—

"Among the incidents of the reception it may be mentioned that when the martial figure of General Houston approached Kossuth there appeared to be a special attraction in the person of the hero of San Jacinto. Mr. Houston said, 'Sir, you are welcome to the Senate of the United States.' Kossuth feelingly replied, 'I can only wish I had been as successful as you, sir.' To which Houston responded, 'God grant you may be, sir.'"

Later, he expressed his opinion of Kossuth in very unflattering terms, accused him of cowardice in retreating from Hungary without striking a blow, and of living in splendor and luxury while his people were "left to bite the dust, or gnaw the file in agony." The very different treatment which he and the people of Texas had received, in comparison with the wild enthusiasm over Kossuth and Hungary, evidently rankled in his thoughts.

He was promptly accused of his affiliation with the Know-Nothings, and of his presidential aspirations, and gave a rather equivocal denial of them both in the course of a running debate in the Senate. As to the Know-Nothings, he said, "I know nothing," but he concurred in many of the principles attributed to them. He would require "every person coming from abroad, before being received here, to bring an indorsement from one of our consuls, and produce evidence of good character from the place whence he emigrates, so that when he comes here we may receive him into full communion, with all the rights guaranteed to him by the laws which may exist at the time of his immigration." He declared that he would not vote for any bill to prohibit Roman Catholics from holding office. In regard to the Presidency, he said, "When the Senator from Iowa supposes that I would cater for the Presidency of the United States he does me great injustice. I would not cater for any office under heaven. But, sir, I know one thing; if it were to be forced upon me I would make a great

many changes in some small matters." At the convention of the "American" party in Baltimore, February 22, 1856, which nominated Millard Fillmore for the Presidency, Houston received three votes. Whatever relations he may have had with the Know-Nothing party he afterward abandoned, and denounced it. In a speech at Nacogdoches he declared the party dead, and buried face downward beyond the hope of resurrection.

Houston was undoubtedly aware that his opposition to the extreme Southern element was fatal to his political ambition. As in the case of Benton, he was more bitterly hated and violently attacked on the ground that he was a traitor to Southern interests than if he had been a Northern antagonist of slavery. Henry A. Wise and others made themselves conspicuous by diatribes against him in public meetings in Southern cities, and, although Houston made no public reply in the Senate or elsewhere, it is not likely that he repressed his tongue in private comment on his adversaries, or that they were not made aware of his opinion of them. In the Democratic Convention of 1856, a "Northern man with Southern principles" was nominated, and the Southern conspirators secured four years more in which to make their preparations for disunion. In the mean time, the extreme element had been gaining political power in Texas. The feeling of the danger to slave property and of antagonism to the North had been sedulously cultivated, and the wealthier planters, who had grown up among

the original settlers, acquired the political control. They were joined by the old enemies and rivals of Houston, and violent attacks were made not only upon his so-called apostasy to the South, but his past career in Texas. It is probable that Houston realized that his course would cost him his seat in the Senate, and there are some indications that he was willing that it should be so. At least, he made no such determined attempt to retain his place as Benton had done in Missouri. With his strong hold upon the people of Texas, and his wonderful power in a personal campaign of stump-speaking, he might have defeated the combination against him, and rallied the people to his support, as he did later, in 1859, when he swept the State against a still more formidable opposition. But he made no special effort to be re-elected, and left the canvass to his opponents. It is possible that Houston did not feel entirely at home in the Senate, where he could not be the undisputed leader, as he could be in a popular assembly, and really had a longing for the ease and tranquillity of private life, such as sometimes comes over the strongest men of action after a life of stress and excitement. At any rate, he was defeated for reëlection to the Senate in the Legislature of 1857, and Lewis T. Wigfall, a rampant fire-eater, was chosen in his place. His colleague, Senator Rusk, with whom he had been on the most affectionate and friendly terms, committed suicide by shooting himself at Nacogdoches, July 5, 1857, from grief at the death of his wife. Houston

was nominated as an independent candidate for governor, but manifested little interest in the campaign, and was defeated by the regular Democratic candidate, Hardin R. Runnels. The vote stood 32,552 for Runnels, and 23,628 for Houston. It was the only time in which Houston was ever defeated in an election by the people of Texas.

After his defeat Houston continued the performance of his duties in the Senate without sign of discomfiture. On April 20, 1858, he offered a resolution for the appointment of a committee of seven to inquire into the expediency of the assumption by the United States of a protectorate over Mexico, and supported it in an elaborate speech. He described the hopeless condition of Mexico, and urged the measure as a legitimate extension of the Monroe Doctrine. It was an impracticable scheme, which would have eventually compelled the United States to take possession of the country, but it is probable that Houston hoped that it would arouse a spirit of national pride throughout the United States, which would divert attention from the sectional quarrels. He said, speaking of the era of the promulgation of the Monroe Doctrine:—

“At that glorious epoch there was a broad, towering spirit of nationality extant. The States stood in the endearing relation to each other of one for all and all for one. The Constitution was their political textbook, the glory of the Republic their resolute aim. Practically, there was but one party, and that party

animated by but one object, — one upward and onward career. As if in atonement for the wrong inflicted upon the country by the angry Missouri Compromise, which was then fresh in every mind, there seemed to be no circumscription which everywhere within our embraces displayed itself. May we not trust, Mr. President, that a similar result will ensue from this still more angry Kansas controversy, and that the benign influence of such results will be as durable as creation?"

The country, however, was too much excited for any such panacea, and its results would only have been mischievous even if it had been adopted.

On January 12, 1859, Houston advocated the southern route for the Pacific Railroad through Texas and asked for the preliminary surveys. In the course of his speech he alluded to the peace and harmony which would exist between the North and South, and he was accused by Senator Iverson, of Georgia, with being a candidate for the Presidency, and with catering for Northern votes. He replied: —

"If every political party of this Union were to tender to me this day the nomination for the Presidency I would respectfully decline it. I have higher, nobler, tenderer duties to perform. I have to create a resting-place for those who are dear to me as the people of this Union, and who form part of them. These are the duties I have to perform. If there is aught of public service that remains to me unfinished I am not apprised of it. My life has been meted out to

sixty-five years; and forty-five years of that life devoted to my country's service, almost continuously, should entitle me to an honorable discharge. I claim that discharge from my country. I claim that, having performed every duty which devolved upon me with fidelity, I ought to be permitted to retire from this chamber in accordance with my heart-felt desires, with a constitution, thank God, not much impaired, and with clean hands and a clean conscience, to the retirement where duties are demanded of me as a father. So the defeat which has been spoken of was no disappointment, and by way of explanation that the gentleman may be more perfectly satisfied, I will say that had my lamented and honorable colleague, General Rusk, remained with us, by the providence of God, on the 4th of March last I should have vacated my seat, and retired to the walks of private life."

In conclusion, with that personal self-appreciation which was seldom wanting from his speeches, he accused Senator Iverson of playing the part of the ass in kicking the face of the dead lion. On February 23, 1859, he presented the resolutions of the Texas legislature, impeaching John C. Watrous, United States district judge, and supported them in a long and somewhat vindictive account of the charges against him. On February 26, he delivered his last speech to the Senate. It was a circumstantial review and defense of his conduct as commander-in-chief during the war of independence in Texas, and a retort upon the personal character and conduct of some

of his accusers. In bidding farewell to the Senators he said that he had felt it his duty to cultivate kindly personal relations with every one of them. His last words were the expression of a prayer that "the perpetuity of the Union might be secured to the latest posterity."

It was true that Houston had not carried into the Senate his habit of personal quarrel on political questions, which he had too often manifested, or readily responded to, in the turbulent and passionate rivalries and controversies of Texas. He had grown calmer since the days when he had struck down Stanberry in the streets of Washington, and the sober and decorous atmosphere of the Senate doubtless exercised a restraining influence upon him. There is no instance in which he did not thoroughly maintain the proprieties of debate, and his tone toward his fellow-Senators was that of the dignified and impressive politeness which no one knew better how to exhibit. He was a solitary as well as a peculiar figure in the Senate, having no share in the counsels of his party, and alienated by his political course from the representatives of his own section. He had not the education, the training, or the capacity for the argumentative debates on questions of law and technical legislation, which were necessary to command a leading place in the Senate, and, although his shrewd and practical common sense was often exhibited in matters of detail, it was only from his position and his fervid utterances against disunion that he attracted

national attention, and manifested his wisdom as well as his courage. His reverence for the example of Jackson doubtless gave his mind its original bias, but he perceived with a clear vision the folly of the South in precipitating the conflict, in which it was sure to be overwhelmed, and his love for the Union was enlightened wisdom as well as patriotic passion. On the question of slavery he said, "I am not the enemy of slavery; neither am I its propagandist, nor will I ever be." He was a slave-holder, and accepted the institution as a part of the social system in which he found himself. But his conscience revolted against its iniquitous principle, and his practical sagacity doubted its continuance. His strength and friendship lay with the industrious yeomanry, who cultivated their own lands, and he had no sympathy or affiliation with the oligarchy of rich planters, who were leading the South to ruin. In the Senate, he was the last representative of the hardy frontiersmen who had built their cabins in the primeval forest, or turned the soil of the virgin prairie, and he saw with regret the growth of that class at the South who were monopolizing the land for great plantations, and were creating an aristocracy of wealth, based on slave labor. To him and to Thomas H. Benton is due the credit of representing the true welfare of the South, and with courage and wisdom resisting the tendencies which were leading it to destruction, and to the social and industrial decadence which would have followed, even if there had been no civil war.

Mr. Oliver Dyer, in his book of reminiscences of Washington, "Great Senators of the United States," gives an interesting account of Houston's appearance and manners in the Senate in 1848:—

"It was not without apprehension that I first approached General Houston, and looked him over, as he stood in an ante-room of the Senate chamber, talking with his colleague, Senator Rusk. I was not disappointed in his appearance. It was easy to believe in his heroism, and to imagine him leading a heady fight and dealing destruction on his foes. He was then only fifty-five years old, and seemed to be in perfect health and admirable physical condition. He was a magnificent barbarian, somewhat tempered with civilization. He was large of frame, of stately carriage and dignified demeanor, and had a lion-like countenance, capable of expressing the fiercest passions. His dress was peculiar, but it was becoming to his style. The conspicuous features of it were a military cap and a short military cloak of fine blue broadcloth with a blood-red lining. Afterward I occasionally met him, when he wore a vast and picturesque sombrero and a Mexican blanket, — a sort of ornamented bed-quilt, with a slit in the middle, through which the wearer's head is thrust, leaving the blanket to hang in graceful folds around the body.

"Like other men of his class General Houston was a hearty drinker, but he seldom showed the effect of his potations. It seemed to me as though his wild life had unfitted him for civilization. He was not

a man to shine in a deliberative assembly. It was only at rare intervals that he took any part in the debates, and when he did speak his remarks were brief. His principal employment in the Senate was whittling pine sticks. I used to wonder where he got his pine lumber, but never fathomed the mystery. He would sit and whittle away, and at the same time keep up a muttering of discontent at the long-winded speakers, whom he would sometimes curse for their intolerable verbosity. Those who knew him well said that he was tender-hearted, and had a chivalric regard for women; that he would make any personal sacrifice to promote the welfare of a lady friend, — a reputation that was directly in line with his alleged conduct toward his wife. It was a matter of common jocose remark that if 'Old Sam Jacinto' (that was Houston's nickname) should ever become President, he would have a cabinet of women.

"General Houston impressed me as a lonely, melancholy man. And if the story of his early life was true he might well be lonely and melancholy, in spite of his success and his fame; for that blow which smote him to the heart at the zenith of his splendid young career, and dislocated his life and drove him into the wilderness, must have inflicted wounds that no political triumphs or military glory could heal."

Somewhat singularly, considering their marked contrast in education and temperament, Houston appears to have attracted the regard and approval of Charles Sumner. In a letter to John Bigelow, February 3,

1851, Sumner wrote: "I am won very much by Houston's conversation. With him the anti-slavery interests would stand better than with any man who now seems among the possibilities. He is really against slavery, and has no prejudices against Free-Soilers. In other respects he is candid, liberal, and honorable. I have been astonished to find myself so much of his inclining."

During his early residence as a Senator in Washington, Houston "experienced religion," as it is termed. In an account of his conversion given by Rev. G. W. Simpson, his pastor in Washington, it is stated that "one Sunday, the tall form of Sam Houston, as he was familiarly called, draped in his Mexican blanket as a shield against the blasts of winter, was seen entering the sanctuary of the Baptist Church near the City Hall. Approaching the pastor after the service he said that respect for his wife, one of the best Christians on earth, had brought him there. He attended regularly thereafter, and kept up his habit of whittling toys for children in his pew. He paid close attention to the sermons, and was in the habit of giving abstracts of them in the weekly letters which he regularly wrote to his wife on Sunday afternoons. After a few months a sermon on the text, "Better is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city," moved him to a sense of his spiritual needs, and his thoughts and reading became more and more of a religious character. He was much influenced by a book by one Nelson on "The

Cause and Cure of Infidelity," and gave copies of it to his friends. Finally, he made an open profession of religion, and received the ordinance of baptism by immersion at Independence, Texas, in 1854. His reading of the Bible was continuous and earnest, and its phraseology and imagery found frequent places in his speeches. His pastor relates an anecdote in somewhat exaggerated phraseology of his reconciliation with a personal enemy under the influence of an appeal to his religious sentiment:—

"Calling early after his arrival to see him, an hour was spent in conversation on his profession and the grounds which had led to it. On rising to leave, the pastor was followed as usual to the door, and, as often happened, the General asked: 'Brother S., is there anything I can do for you?'—his reference being to claims of humanity sometimes presented to him. The reply was, 'No, General, I have no tax upon you at present.' Immediately, however, the recollection was awakened that the next Sabbath was the season for the Lord's Supper, and that with one of the leading brethren of the church General Houston had formerly a trying and yet unsettled controversy in his official capacity as the head of a Senate committee. At once, prompted by the recollection, the pastor added, still holding his hand, 'General, I recall that statement in part; I have nothing to ask of you as a man, but I have something to ask of you as a Christian pastor.' Fixing his keen eye, as he looked down, upon mine, he meekly but firmly asked,

‘What is it, Brother S.?’ ‘General,’ was the reply, ‘you know the alienation between you and Brother W. You will meet at the Lord’s Supper next Sabbath evening; you ought not to meet until that difficulty is settled. Now I wish you after service on Sunday morning to let me bring you two together, and without a word of attempt at justification on either side, I wish you to take him by the hand, and say with all your heart that you will forgive and forget and bury the past, and that you wish him to do the same, and hereafter to meet as brothers in Christ.’ The fire began to glow in his eyes, his brow to knit, his teeth to clench, and his whole frame shook with the struggle of the old man within him; but in an instant the man whose passion had been terrible, indeed ungovernable, on so many a bloody battle-field, was changed from the lion into the lamb. He meekly replied, ‘Brother S., I will do it.’ And what he promised was done, and in an air of majestic frankness and nobleness of soul such as moved every beholder.”

At the conclusion of his term in the Senate, Houston returned to his home in Texas, possibly with the hope that his later years might be spent in peace and freedom from public care.