

---

THE ANTI-SLAVERY CAREER OF CASSIUS M. CLAY

Author(s): Lowell H. Harrison

Source: *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, October, 1961, Vol. 59, No. 4 (October, 1961), pp. 295-317

Published by: Kentucky Historical Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/23374695>

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*

JSTOR

## THE ANTI-SLAVERY CAREER OF CASSIUS M. CLAY

By LOWELL H. HARRISON

**L**ITTLE ATTENTION has been devoted to anti-slavery sentiment in the South after 1830. Yet even while the northern abolitionists carried on their agitation, men of Southern blood were risking their lives in the perilous task of combating slavery in its homeland. Much of the brunt of this almost hopeless task was borne in Kentucky for three decades on the broad shoulders of Cassius Marcellus Clay.

Slavery existed in Kentucky from the first days of its settlement, and the slave population increased rapidly until it reached 165,213 in 1830, when it constituted 24% of the state's population. Although the total increased thereafter, the percent of slaves declined.<sup>1</sup> While the estimated value of the state's slaves in 1845 was \$52,372,139, this represented a smaller proportion of the total wealth than was true in any other Southern state.<sup>2</sup> Even such irreconcilable opponents of slavery as Theodore Weld admitted that the plight of the slave was less severe in Kentucky than in other parts of the South.<sup>3</sup>

Although slavery interests were dominant in Kentucky, they had to contend with persistent opposition from as early as 1792 when a determined although unsuccessful effort was made to curb the institution by placing restrictions in the first state constitution.<sup>4</sup> About 1830 a pro-slavery reaction became evident. While many Kentuckians apparently desired an ultimate end to slavery through some scheme of gradual emancipation, other factors were working

<sup>1</sup>Asa Earl Martin, *The Anti-Slavery Movement in Kentucky Prior to 1850* (Louisville, 1918), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>J. B. D. DeBow, *Industrial Resources Etc. of the Southern and Western States* (New Orleans, 1852), I, 402; Ivan E. McDougale, *Slavery in Kentucky 1792-1862* (Lancaster, Pa., 1918), p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>Theodore D. Weld, *American Slavery As It Is* (New York, 1839), pp. 202-203.

<sup>4</sup>Robert H. Bishop, *Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky* (Lexington, 1824), p. 96; David Rice, *Slavery Inconsistent with Justice and Good Policy* (Philadelphia, 1792), pamphlet.

to check this sentiment. Kentuckians resented deeply the attempts of outsiders to dictate to them upon a subject so intimately entwined with their social and economic life, and there was also a sense of loyalty to the rest of the South, a feeling that only a united stand would be able to preserve the "peculiar institution" from the assaults of its foes.<sup>5</sup> Had Kentuckians been able to agree upon any one scheme of emancipation there would have been some prospect of success, but the anti-slavery ranks were split into numerous sects.

There was danger that the advocates of freedom might be silenced and that Kentucky might settle into an unquestioning acceptance of slavery. Then Cassius Marcellus Clay appeared in public life as a foe of slavery. It was impossible to ignore the impetuous Clay or his methods, and the history of the anti-slavery movement in Kentucky after 1833 is to a large extent dominated by him.

Clay was born in Madison County, Kentucky, on October 19, 1810, in the same Grecian-styled mansion, "White Hall," in which he died ninety-three years later. His father, General Green Clay, had migrated from Virginia in 1776 and had played an important role in the early history of the state and in the War of 1812. The General acquired extensive land holdings and numerous slaves, and Cassius was reared in the atmosphere of slavery usual for a youth of his position.<sup>6</sup>

After brief stays at several state schools, young Clay entered Yale College in the junior class. Described as tall, big-boned, with enormous strength, yet graceful in his movements, he discovered at Yale that he was a speaker who could command attention.<sup>7</sup> While at college in 1831 Clay attended a speech by William Lloyd Garrison to see just what an abolitionist looked like. Half a century later Clay wrote that "This was a new revelation to me. . . . I then resolved. . . that, when I had the strength, if ever, I would give slavery a death struggle."<sup>8</sup> Actually, Clay's few statements on

<sup>5</sup>Charles E. Hendrick, *Social and Economic Aspects of Slavery in the Transmontane Prior to 1850* (George Peabody College, *Contributions to Education* No. 46, Nashville, 1927), p. 117.

<sup>6</sup>Cassius M. Clay, III, *Speeches, Addresses and Writings of Cassius M. Clay, Jr.* (New York, 1914), p. 9.

<sup>7</sup>James Rood Robertson, *A Kentuckian at the Court of the Tsars* (Berea, 1935), pp. 25-26.

<sup>8</sup>Cassius M. Clay, *The Life, Memoirs, Writings and Speeches of Cassius M. Clay* (Cincinnati, 1886), pp. 55-57. Referred to hereafter as *Life*. A proposed second volume was never published.

slavery at this time were quite mild.<sup>9</sup>

Clay faced a difficult choice after he returned home following his graduation in 1832. One of the wealthiest young men in the state, his prospects appeared bright for a political career. But if he opposed slavery, he would be pitted against friends and neighbors, the doors of political opportunity would be closed, and he would have no guarantee of living long in a community whose most sacred mores he violated. Clay cannot be suspected of sinister motives in making his decision for anti-slavery; he sacrificed more than most of his co-workers did when he decided to raise his voice against slavery in its homeland.<sup>10</sup>

After returning home Clay married Mary Jane Warfield of Lexington, drove one of her disappointed suitors to suicide, and studied law at Transylvania College in preparation for a political career. As soon as he became eligible, in 1835, Clay was elected to the Kentucky House as a representative from Madison county. In his maiden speech he proposed the introduction of free public schools although he admitted that slavery would never be able to sustain itself upon a foundation of free institutions. Yet his views on slavery were still undecided and relatively mild.<sup>11</sup>

Clay was defeated for the legislature the following year because he supported appropriations for internal improvements, but he was returned in 1837 by a large majority. Little is known of his anti-slavery activities during this period. Clay only says "I began to develop my opposition to slavery," and he was never one to belittle his personal accomplishments. A move to Lexington, made because his family disliked country life, interrupted his political career, but in 1840 he was again elected to the legislature despite the handicaps of a new constituency and a formidable rival in the person of Robert Wickliffe, Jr., son of the largest slaveholder in the state.<sup>12</sup> It was the last elective office Clay ever held; his anti-slavery sentiments were becoming so strong as to alienate voter

<sup>9</sup>Cassius M. Clay, "The Man Died but His Memory Lives," in Bennett H. Young (ed.), *Kentucky Eloquence Past and Present* (Louisville, 1907), pp. 113-16; Cassius M. Clay to Brutus Clay, December 4, 1831, in Cassius M. Clay (ed.), "Cassius M. Clay, 'Lion' of White Hall, Some Unpublished Letters of and About," *The Filson Club History Quarterly*, XXXI (January, 1957), 3-22.

<sup>10</sup>Charles T. Morgan, *The Fruit of This Tree* (Berea, 1946), p. 6; Horace Greeley (ed.), *Writings of Cassius Marcellus Clay* (New York, 1848), p. vi. Referred to hereafter as *Writings*.

<sup>11</sup>*Life*, pp. 69-73; *Writings*, p. 46.

<sup>12</sup>Lewis and Richard H. Collins, *History of Kentucky* (Covington, Ky., 1874), II, 534; *Life*, p. 74.

support. During the 1840 campaign he used some of his strongest language to that date to denounce slavery as "an evil morally, economically, socially, religiously, politically—evil in its inception and in its duration."<sup>13</sup>

Yet he still tried to cling to a moderate position. He defended the legal rights of slaveholders and their claims to freedom of conscience, but the bitter opposition of slaveholders to his mild criticisms helped decide his stand.<sup>14</sup> In 1840 Clay attended the Whig national convention at Harrisburg as a delegate. Although disappointed by the failure of distant cousin Henry Clay to win the nomination, Cassius Clay campaigned through the North in support of William Henry Harrison.<sup>15</sup> The enthusiastic reception that he received may well have contributed to his anti-slavery stand. Clay was always fond of applause, and it was heaped upon him as he appeared before Northern audiences as an anti-slavery Southerner.

The slavery question was brought into the open in the legislature soon after Clay took his seat as a representative of Fayette County. The pro-slavery forces introduced a bill for the repeal of an act of 1833 which forbade importation of slaves except by actual immigrants or by citizens who had inherited slaves outside of the state.<sup>16</sup> He helped defeat the bill, and with its defeat came a deluge of personal abuse. He was denounced by both political parties, assailed from press and platform, and damned from the pulpit. Threats of violence only hardened his determination to stand firm; his reply was that he could not be forced to change his views, and that while he was ready to sacrifice his life, he would not be found "a tame victim of either force or denunciation."<sup>17</sup>

In his arguments Clay stressed the economic welfare of the state. The introduction of additional slaves would lower the value of those already held. The presence of too many blacks retarded both the intellectual and industrial development of the state; Ohio had outstripped her in every respect. Slave labor was ignorant and careless; it made for exhausted lands and the ultimate ruin of the master. Kentucky should not become "the slave of slaves."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Martin, *Anti-Slavery Movement in Kentucky*, p. 95.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 111-12.

<sup>15</sup>Robertson, *Kentuckian at the Court of the Tsars*, p. 27.

<sup>16</sup>Kentucky *Session Laws 1833*, pp. 258-61.

<sup>17</sup>J. Winston Coleman, *Slavery Times in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill, 1940), p. 301.

<sup>18</sup>*Writings*, pp. 59-76.

In the 1841 election Clay was opposed again by young Robert Wickliffe. Their campaign was enlivened by a bloodless duel fought with pistols at thirty feet after Wickliffe had used Mrs. Clay's name in a speech. The action was terminated at the insistence of the seconds, but no reconciliation was possible. Clay then decided to waste no time on future duels, especially since he had reason to believe "that many fools would be continually challenging me." So he announced publicly that while he would defend himself whenever attacked, he would not step upon a field of honor again. A duel was likely to be inconclusive anyway; Clay had more confidence in an intimate encounter in which he had an opportunity of using his favorite weapon, the knife. Wickliffe was elected by a slight majority. Although Clay insisted for the rest of his life that corrupt election judges had secured the verdict, he made no official protest.<sup>19</sup>

The name of Cassius M. Clay was by now well known in the North where numerous papers carried stories of his exploits under such banner heads as "Interesting from Lexington." When the Ohio Whigs toasted their Kentucky brethren at a great barbecue outside Dayton in the autumn of 1842, Clay was one of the speakers selected to address the mass of good Whigs and hungry Democrats.<sup>20</sup> He had begun to bombard editors, including Horace Greeley of the *New York Tribune*, with long, involved defenses of his views or scathing denunciations of supposed slights.<sup>21</sup>

During the next few years Clay faced the issue of slavery personally with somewhat different attitudes. In September, 1843, when his second son, Cassius, Jr., became ill, Emily, the boy's Negro nurse, was suspected of having poisoned him. Although the boy died, no action was taken against Emily until 1845 when another son became ill under similar circumstances. Thereupon Emily was charged with having administered "a deadly poison called arsenick, to wit five grains." Even a pro-slavery jury found the evidence inconclusive and Emily was acquitted. Then Clay aroused a storm of protest by selling Emily, her mother, and a brother under the express provision that they be shipped "down the river."<sup>22</sup> In con-

<sup>19</sup>Collins, *Kentucky*, I, 46; *Life*, p. 82; *Writings*, p. xii; Dr. Elisha Warfield to Brutus Clay, April 27, 1841, in Clay (ed.), "Cassius M. Clay. . . , Some Unpublished Letters of and About," pp. 3-22.

<sup>20</sup>Collins, *Kentucky*, I, 47.

<sup>21</sup>*Writings*, pp. 203-209.

<sup>22</sup>The *Liberator*, May 23, 1845; Coleman, *Slavery Times*, pp. 264-66; *Life*, pp. 559-60.

trast to this action, Clay freed his personal slaves, probably about fifty, valued at some \$40,000. Included in the emancipation were thirteen Negroes purchased at a cost of \$10,000 in order to keep families intact. Most of the freed men remained at "White Hall" where they worked as free laborers at the prevailing wage scale. Since Clay retained in slavery a number of Negroes who were attached to the estate without being his personal property, his emancipation scheme drew denunciation from both pro-slavery and anti-slavery advocates.<sup>23</sup>

Clay further antagonized the Wickliffes in 1843 by supporting Garrett Davis in his campaign for national Representative against Robert Wickliffe. A Sam Brown who boasted that he had fought "forty fights and never lost a battle" was imported to silence Clay. The climax came at the barbecue and political rally held at Russell's Cave, a few miles outside Lexington. When Clay interrupted Wickliffe, Brown shouted that Clay's statement was a "damned lie." He punctuated his assertion by clubbing Clay with a heavy umbrella. Clay drew his bowie knife, but he was seized from behind and dragged backwards a few steps before he could strike. Brown, now armed with a revolver, waved the crowd away; "Clear the way and let me kill the damned rascal!" Clay rushed his foe. Brown coolly held fire until Clay was upon him, then the gun roared. There was no chance for a second shot. Despite the frantic efforts of friends to seize Clay or club him with chairs and sticks, Brown was slashed to bits, before his desperate supporters ended the slaughter by throwing Brown over a bluff into the cold waters of Russell's Cave Spring. Clay flourished his bloody knife and repeated firmly, "That handbill has been proved false, and I stand ready to defend the truth." No one contested his claim. When Clay's friends examined him to determine the extent of his injuries they discovered a small red spot over the heart where Brown's bullet had struck the silver-lined scabbard of the knife which Clay carried in an inside pocket.<sup>24</sup>

Cassius spoke extensively throughout the North in 1844 in an effort to win anti-slavery support for Henry Clay. His efforts linked Henry Clay so closely with the anti-slavery movement that the alarmed candidate was forced to issue a public denial that he had become an outright foe of slavery. Cassius immediately wrote

<sup>23</sup>*Niles' Weekly Register*, LXVI (April 6, 1844), p. 88; *Life*, p. 560.

<sup>24</sup>Morgan, *Fruit of This Tree*, p. 47; Coleman, *Slavery Times*, p. 306; *Life*, pp. 82-85.

his cousin that he would quit his activities if the public interpretations of Henry's stand were correct. Henry replied soothingly that he had issued his statements because the Whig cause in the Upper South was being endangered; Cousin Cash should continue his good work. Unfortunately, his letter fell into the hands of cynical Democrats who circulated it as additional proof of Whig duplicity.<sup>25</sup> The net result of Cassius Clay's efforts is doubtful. The similarity of names caused considerable confusion; Cassius was sometimes thought to be Henry's son, and their speeches were frequently interchanged.<sup>26</sup> Cassius alienated many Whigs who attributed their defeat to his intended aid; he and Henry were distinctly frigid in their relations for some time; and the abolitionists attacked him because he was still so conservative.

Perhaps his most consistent stand during this period was on the Texas question. Cassius Clay never wavered in his opposition to what he declared was a gigantic slaveholders' conspiracy. As early as December, 1843, he declared that annexation would give Mexico just cause for war and the North sufficient reason to dissolve the Union. Slavery should be restricted to its existing limits. The Texans had no claims upon the United States, for they had deserted their country to go there.<sup>27</sup>

By early 1845 the formative years of Clay's career had about ended. In January of that year he issued a final conciliatory *Address to the People of Kentucky* in which he pointed out that he was a Kentuckian with a deep love for the state and an earnest concern for her welfare. He could not stand by silently while a handful of men dragged her to destruction. Even a casual comparison with free states revealed the unprofitableness of slavery. "Then let us, having no regard to the clamours of the ultras of the North or the South, move on unshaken in our purpose. . . . Give us free labor, and we shall indeed become the garden of the world! . . . Kentucky must be free!"<sup>28</sup> It was an honest appeal, a powerful appeal, but it made little impression upon the people of the state. Then Cassius Clay moved into a direct assault upon the citadel of the foe.

<sup>25</sup>Calvin Colton, *Life of Henry Clay* (New York, 1855), II, p. 430; *Life*, pp. 100-102.

<sup>26</sup>Robert M. McElroy, *Kentucky in the Nation's History* (New York, 1909), p. 418.

<sup>27</sup>Cassius M. Clay, *Speech against the Annexation of Texas* (Lexington, 1844), pamphlet; *Writings*, pp. 138-45.

<sup>28</sup>Cassius M. Clay, *Address to the People of Kentucky* (Lexington, 1845), pamphlet.



Open warfare began in 1845 when a prospectus announced that Clay would publish in Lexington the *True American*, a paper devoted to the cause of emancipation. Clay realized that the venture would probably be a financial failure, but he was prepared to supply the deficit from his still considerable fortune. The prospectus announced a policy of advocating gradual, constitutional emancipation with the paper open to discussion of the question from every viewpoint. Appeal would be "to the interests and the reasons, not of the passions of our people." Planters who were well acquainted with Clay's truculent temperament viewed the paper as a direct challenge to the established order. When their criticism caused T. B. Stevenson of Frankfort to resign as editor, Clay assumed the burden of that position.<sup>29</sup>

The office and press of the *True American* were housed in a three-story, red brick building at No. 6, North Mill Street in Lexington. Aware of the possibility of violence, Clay transformed the building into a fortress and armed it with rifles, shotguns, a dozen cavalry lances, and two small brass cannon. In event of defeat, there was a trap door in the roof for defenders and a keg of powder which could be exploded from outside the building for the invaders.<sup>30</sup>

The first issue of the paper appeared on June 3 and was sent to 300 Kentuckians and 1700 out-of-state subscribers. The lead articles repeated the same arguments that the editor had advanced for years. His primary appeal was to the economic self-interest of the people with emphasis upon the welfare of the laboring, non-slaveholding element. Small shopkeepers were asked to compare the purchases of 200 free men with those of 200 of Wickliffe's slaves.<sup>31</sup> The wage laborer was told that he was impoverished by the competition of unpaid workers; if the blacks were free, "they would require wages; which would prevent you from being underbid as you now are." Clay denied that the freed slaves would constitute a major problem. The whites already greatly exceeded the blacks, and the civil law could control the Negro as closely as a slave code.<sup>32</sup> Although he was a member of the Colonization

<sup>29</sup>*Life*, p. 106; *Writings*, pp. 211-12.

<sup>30</sup>Coleman, *Slavery Times*, p. 307.

<sup>31</sup>Martin, *Anti-Slavery Movement*, p. 115; *True American*, June 10, 1845. For a more complete discussion of Clay's economic views see David L. Smiley, "Cassius M. Clay and Southern Industrialism," *The Filson Club History Quarterly*, XXVIII (October, 1954), pp. 315-27.

<sup>32</sup>*True American*, June 17, 24, July 1, 1845.

Society, Clay opposed its goal as a remedy for the problem. Freed blacks had done nothing to justify banishment; but he was willing to accept removal of the Negro if freedom could be obtained only upon that condition.<sup>33</sup>

The new editor was careful to deny any connection with the abolitionists, although his subscription list and the praise of the abolitionist press appeared somewhat contradictory to most Kentucky observers. It was more dangerous, Clay maintained, for the slaves to read the pro-slavery papers than the *True American*; the latter preached the necessity of submission to due process of law while the former were filled with gory accounts of suggestive outrages. The *True American* was careful to advocate only constitutional means of ending slavery; existing laws had to be obeyed until they were changed by a majority of the people. While Congress could and should end slavery in the territories, the states had exclusive control over slavery within their borders. The solution for Kentucky lay in a constitutional convention which would provide for gradual emancipation.<sup>34</sup>

Clay overlooked few appeals which might win a convert to the cause. Kentucky women were advised to give up their slaves. "Make up your own beds, sweep your own rooms, and wash your own clothes—throw away your corsets and nature will form your bustles. . . ."<sup>35</sup> He did almost ignore appeals to moral and humanitarian sentiments, for Clay had little faith in their effectiveness. It was for his lack of moral interest that he was most severely condemned by the abolitionists.

Although most of the articles and editorials in the new paper were moderate in tone, Clay was occasionally goaded into violent outbursts. Irascible old Robert Wickliffe was soundly chastised in the initial issue after he had been outspoken in opposing the new venture. When ex-Governor Metcalfe belabored Clay as a traitor to his section, the editor sneered that "we were born into the circle to which he has at length in spite of many vulgarities which attest his origin, forced his way. . . ." After an Alabama preacher called upon the Lord to silence the paper through mob action, Clay turned his wrath upon ministers who "shed crocodile tears over the miseries of men. . . while they uphold this evil institution. . . ."

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, June 17, 1845.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, June 24, July 15, 22, 1845.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, June 17, 1845.

When he was in the right, Clay asserted, the pistol and knife were as sacred to his cause as the gown and pulpit.<sup>36</sup>

There were hints that the paper would be suppressed even before publication started, and opposition increased with each issue.<sup>37</sup> In June the *Lexington Observer and Reporter* queried openly, "Slaveholders of Fayette, is it not now time for you to act on this matter yourself?" Before the paper was a month old the editor had received an ominous warning from the "Revengers" that "The hemp is ready for your neck. Your life cannot be spared. Plenty thirst for your blood—are determined to have it."<sup>38</sup> As Clay's influence grew, even John C. Calhoun in South Carolina became concerned over the "poison, attempted to be disseminated by C. M. Clay," and asked that an article be prepared to counter Clay's influence.<sup>39</sup> The *True American* might have been tolerated had it been unsuccessful; its growing influence condemned it.

The anticipated crisis came when the Lexington readers scanned the August 12 issue. Clay had been ill for a month with typhoid, and the editing had been done from bed or by unskilled friends. The lead article, presumably written by a Carolinian slaveholder, was concluded in these words:

But remember, you who dwell in marble palaces, that there are strong arms and fiery hearts and iron pikes in the streets, and pains [*sic*] of glass only between them and the silver plate on the board and the smooth-skinned woman on the ottoman. . . tremble! for the day of retribution is at hand, and the masses will be avenged!<sup>40</sup>

The outraged citizens considered the implied appeal to slave lusts a flagrant violation of the most sacred taboo of a slave community.

Two days later a handful of men, among them Thomas F. Marshall, whom Clay had helped defeat a few weeks earlier for a Congressional seat, ended a discussion of the problem by calling a private, non-partisan meeting to frame a remonstrance which might forestall mob or individual action, either of which would probably lead to bloodshed. Considerable embarrassment developed at the meeting that afternoon when Clay unexpectedly staggered

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, June 3, July 1, 15, 22, 1845.

<sup>37</sup>J. Speed Smith to Brutus Clay, July 12, 1845, in Clay (ed.), "Cassius M. Clay. . . , Some Unpublished Letters Of and About," pp. 3-22.

<sup>38</sup>*True American*, June 17, 1845.

<sup>39</sup>J. Franklin Jameson (ed.), "Correspondence of John C. Calhoun," *American Historical Association Annual Report 1899* (Washington, D. C., 1900), II, 667-68.

<sup>40</sup>*True American*, August 12, 1845.

into the courthouse to defend himself. So weak that he had to lie on a bench, he still found strength to denounce the committee for being composed largely of personal enemies with but one Whig present. The group refused to accept his explanation or to continue the discussion in his presence, so Clay finally left.<sup>41</sup>

In an extra issue the following day Clay rejected a request that he discontinue publication in order to ensure the peace and safety of the community. He challenged the right of "thirty despots" to dictate to his conscience, and he appealed for aid to the laborers of all classes "for whom I have sacrificed so much. . ." This answer was almost as bad as the original article, for Clay's foes immediately assumed that he was appealing to the slaves for aid. The committee called a mass meeting of all interested citizens for the following Monday morning in the courthouse yard. A letter which appeared in a local paper on August 16 neatly summarized the prevailing thought: "Mr. Clay is a fanatic and an incendiary . . . the madman must be chained."<sup>42</sup>

The second of Clay's handbill extras appeared the same day, and a third was issued on the morning of the mass meeting. Their tone was moderate, as Clay tried to dispel any taint of abolitionism. While he refused to "abandon a right or yield a principle," he did declare himself willing to take advice about the future conduct of *True American*.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, as far as his illness permitted, he prepared his office and its arsenal for a last-ditch defense. His mother wrote for him to consider his cause carefully, for he had acted imprudently, but "If you prefer death to dishonor, so do I."<sup>44</sup> A bloody battle seemed in the making.

More than 1,200 people assembled before the courthouse on Monday morning. They must have had difficulty in recognizing Clay's handiwork in his letter which was read to open the proceedings. For Clay, pathetically reminding them of his illness, avowed the deepest respect for "a constitutional assemblage of citizens," a group entirely different from the one which he had treated with such contempt the previous week. The offending article would never have appeared had he been able to edit it personally. "I cannot say that the paper from the beginning has been conducted in the

<sup>41</sup>*History and Record of the Proceedings of the People of Lexington and Its Vicinity in the Suppression of the True American* (Lexington, 1845), pp. 1-2. Referred to hereafter as *Proceedings*.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 6-9, 13-17; *True American*, Extra No. 1, August 15, 1845.

<sup>43</sup>*True American*, Extra No. 2, August 16, 1845; *Proceedings*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>44</sup>*Scioto Gazette*, August 28, 1845; *Life*, p. 109.

manner I could have wished," he admitted; in the future "I shall admit into my paper no article upon this subject for which I am not willing to be held responsible. . . ." The trouble was actually being agitated by selfish men seeking political gain. Clay concluded by announcing that his defenses had been removed, and the office was defended only by law. "You will so act, however, I trust, that this day shall not be one accursed to our country and state."<sup>45</sup>

Ignoring both his explanations and promises, the meeting continued according to plan, climaxed by Marshall's able speech which justified suppression because the safety of the people was paramount to freedom of the press. Six resolutions were then adopted which declared the determination of the people to remove Clay's press, peacefully if possible, by force if necessary. A Committee of Sixty was authorized to seize the equipment and ship it to Cincinnati.<sup>46</sup>

While the crowd was gathering for the meeting, Clay's opponents had quietly eliminated his legal right of self-defense. With no notice to Clay and with no hearing of the facts, Police Court Judge George R. Trotter issued an injunction suspending operation of the *True American* and seizing its plant. The writ was served at Clay's bedside; with tears in his eyes, he handed his keys to the city marshal. When the Committee of Sixty reached the office the keys were surrendered to them after the mayor gave formal notice that their action was illegal but that he could not resist them.<sup>47</sup> The committeemen resolved to hold themselves responsible for any damage that might be done. Printers were put to work dismantling Clay's new press while his desk and personal papers were sent to his home. A politely worded letter informed him that his equipment had been shipped to Cincinnati with all charges paid.<sup>48</sup>

When the committee members were arraigned on a riot charge Judge Trotter told the jury that it could free the defendants if they felt the *True American* was a public nuisance. To the surprise of no one, the verdict was "not guilty." Two years later, after his return from the Mexican War, Clay sued the leaders of the committee for

<sup>45</sup>*Cincinnati Gazette*, August 22, 1845.

<sup>46</sup>W. L. Barre (ed.), *Speeches and Writings of Hon. Thomas F. Marshall* (Cincinnati, 1858), pp. 198-209; *Daily National Intelligencer*, August 26, 1845.

<sup>47</sup>William H. Townsend, *Lincoln and His Wife's Home Town* (Indianapolis, 1929), pp. 131-32; Coleman, *Slavery Times*, p. 310; Collins, *Kentucky*, I, 51.

<sup>48</sup>E. Polk Johnson, *History of Kentucky and Kentuckians* (Chicago, 1912), I, 175.

damages. After a change of venue to Jessamine County had been granted, he was awarded a judgment for \$2500.<sup>49</sup>

Most Kentucky papers applauded the action of the Lexington meeting with only an occasional objection. The *Louisville Journal* feared that the illegal action might set a dangerous precedent for limiting freedom of expression.<sup>50</sup> Most Southern papers gave unqualified approval of the action; one New Orleans editor was surprised only that hot-tempered Kentuckians had abstained from personal malice after the provocation they had received.<sup>51</sup> Northern press reaction was generally favorable to Clay, but it did not approach the degree of unanimity of Southern opinion. One New York paper declared that Clay was but a front for Northern abolitionists and only a plea of insanity would provide excuse for his writings.<sup>52</sup> The *Boston Times* contained one of the harshest condemnations: "More inflammatory language was never used by any demagogue; a more direct appeal to the basest passions was never uttered; a more cowardly attempt at kindling the flames of revolt was never made. . . ."<sup>53</sup>

Many subscribers to the *True American* must have been amazed when issues began to reach them again in early October. Clay edited copy in Lexington, but the printing was done in Cincinnati where his press had been reassembled. There was a note of grudging respect in the *Observer's* announcement of the reappearance. "There is no man, we believe, but C. M. Clay, who would again attempt this rash procedure. He is . . . deaf to the entreaties of friends, the remonstrances of foes, or the solemn enunciation of public feeling. . . ."<sup>54</sup>

No article appeared to match the sensational one of August, and Clay walked the streets of Lexington unmolested. His moderate discussions followed the pattern of those in the earlier issues with his chief appeals being directed to the economic welfare of his readers. He continued to annoy the abolitionists by insisting that

<sup>49</sup>William E. Connelley and E. M. Coulter, *History of Kentucky* (Chicago, 1922), II, 812; Townsend, *Lincoln and His Wife's Home Town*, p. 170; J. Speed Smith to Brutus Clay, February 20, March 9, 1847, in Clay (ed.), "Cassius M. Clay . . . , Some Unpublished Letters Of and About," pp. 3-22.

<sup>50</sup>*Louisville Journal*, August 21, 1845, in *Cincinnati Gazette*, August 23, 1845.

<sup>51</sup>New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, September 3, 1845, in *The Liberator*, September 26, 1845; *Washington Weekly Union*, August 21, 1845.

<sup>52</sup>*Morning Courier and New York Enquirer*, August 23, 25, 27, 1845.

<sup>53</sup>*Boston Times*, in the *Liberator*, September 5, 1845.

<sup>54</sup>In *The Liberator*, October 31, 1845.

slavery was legal in the Southern states and could be ended only by a scheme of gradual emancipation.<sup>55</sup> The last issue he edited denied any association with the abolitionists. "They have no more right to come here and declaim against slavery," he declared, "than we have to go to Russia and denounce despotism of the same sort there."<sup>56</sup>

Clay had never really enjoyed the mechanics of editing, and he realized that he was far from being an ideal journalist. It was with a sense of relief that he quit the task after the May 27, 1846, issue and rode toward Texas and the Mexican War at the head of a company of Kentuckians. Despite the cancellation of many local subscriptions, the paper had reached 3400 subscriptions.<sup>57</sup> Brutus Clay, Cassius' brother, was left in charge, and John C. Vaughan, a South Carolinian, was brought from Ohio to do the editing. Brutus was no believer in his brother's views, and when anti-slavery subscriptions declined in protest of Cassius' participation in the Mexican War, Brutus and Mrs. Clay ceased publication of the *True American*.<sup>58</sup>

Soon after his return home in 1846 from another Northern speaking tour Clay astounded and dismayed his anti-slavery associates by volunteering for the Mexican War despite his opposition to the annexation of Texas. He rationalized his decision by declaring that while the war was unjust, all parties were required to help the nation win once war was declared. Privately, Clay explained that he enlisted in order to achieve a military reputation and influence which would gain a more respectable hearing for his future assaults upon slavery.<sup>59</sup> Garrison hoped that "he may be among the first to perish on the Mexican soil. . .," since Clay obviously loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.<sup>60</sup>

At the conclusion of a Lexington speech defending his action, Clay dramatically draped a bedroll across his shoulder, buckled on his canteen, and stepped into the ranks as a private, "giving practical

<sup>55</sup>*True American*, November 4, 25, 1845, in *Writings*, pp. 337-40, 352.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, May 27, 1846, in *Writings*, p. 473.

<sup>57</sup>*The Liberator*, December 5, 1845.

<sup>58</sup>Paul Seymour to Mrs. Mary Jane Clay, October 22, 1846, in Cassius M. Clay (ed.), "Cassius M. Clay, 'Lion' of White Hall, Some Unpublished Letters Of and About," *The Filson Club History Quarterly*, XXXI (April, 1957), 122-46. Several letters in this collection deal with the final closing of the *True American*.

<sup>59</sup>*Writings*, pp. 446-70, 475-76, 483-86; A. W. Campbell, *Cassius Marcellus Clay: A Visit to His Home in Kentucky* (Philadelphia, 1888), p. 4.

<sup>60</sup>*The Liberator*, June 19, July 10, 1846.

illustration of that equality among men which I have ever advocated." To his dismay, he was almost permitted to remain a private when Governor Owsley failed to commission him from the ranks. Captain James S. Jackson, a personal friend of Clay's, called the company together and resigned. Then, in the same courtyard where Clay had been denounced as a "damned nigger agitator," he was elected unanimously to fill the vacancy.<sup>61</sup>

Clay enjoyed the long trek to the war zone, but his dreams of military glory faded soon after his arrival when a scouting party of which he and thirty of his men were a part was surrounded by a superior Mexican force and forced to surrender at Encarnacion in January, 1847. When an officer escaped and the Mexicans, fearing a general break, threatened to massacre the prisoners, Clay averted disaster by ordering the Americans to lie down as evidence of their good faith. With a cocked pistol at his breast he pleaded, "Kill the officers—spare the soldiers!" Clay remained with the men throughout their months of captivity and shared their discomforts and dangers until the entire group was exchanged. The soldiers' reports of his actions led to a public reception in his honor upon his return to Lexington, at which time he was presented with a jeweled sword.<sup>62</sup> While his war record never developed a popular following, it did win for him a more respected hearing.

Clay soon became involved in the struggle to send anti-slavery delegates to a state constitutional convention called for Frankfort on October 1. Clay was, of course, pleased with the call for a convention; it was precisely the constitutional method of dealing with slavery he had long advocated, and he felt that the anti-slavery forces had some chance of success. He perhaps made a mistake by suggesting that the emancipationists should abstain from presenting any specific plan in order to prevent disunity within their ranks.<sup>63</sup>

Clay was in part responsible for an anti-slavery convention which met in Frankfort late in April. Presided over by Henry Clay, the 156 delegates from twenty-four counties represented an aggregate holding of more than 3,000 slaves. Cassius Clay's suggestion of not presenting a definite plan was adopted, but a series of mild resolutions called for candidates who would seek to halt all slave

<sup>61</sup>*Writings*, p. 476; *Life*, pp. 117-18.

<sup>62</sup>*Niles' Weekly Register*, February 27, November 13, 1847; *Life*, pp. 148-66; [No author] *Encarnacion Prisoners* (Louisville, 1848), pp. 35-36.

<sup>63</sup>Stephen B. Weeks, "Anti-Slavery Sentiment in the South," *Southern History Association*, II (April, 1898), 87-130.



importation and to provide for a system of gradual emancipation. Cassius endangered the acceptance of the resolutions by condemning them as being too weak and by insisting that the non-slaveholders be reached by direct agitation, but they were finally approved as they stood.<sup>64</sup>

Undeterred by threats, Clay ranged the Bluegrass in an effort to win support for the anti-slavery cause. Legend has it that he deliberately arranged to speak at a small Bluegrass community where he had been warned an anti-slavery speech would mean death. Clay appeared at the appointed hour, an old grey carpetbag on his arm. Unattended, he walked down the aisle of the crowded courtroom and faced the hostile audience. "For those who support the laws of our country," he announced in an even voice, "I have this argument," and he placed a copy of the Constitution on one end of the table. "For those who believe in the Bible, I have an argument from this," and he laid a copy of the New Testament on the opposite end. "And for those who regard neither the laws of God or man, I have this argument," and he slammed down two long pistols and a bowie knife before him. Then he proceeded to speak without incident.<sup>65</sup>

Clay, now living again at "White Hall," was a convention candidate for Madison County with Squire Turner as his chief rival. As the contest wore on, tempers flared and debates became more personal. On Friday, June 15, a regimental muster was held at Foxtown on the Lexington-Richmond turnpike. At the political rally which followed, Clay interrupted when Turner launched into a vicious, sarcastic denunciation of Clay. As Clay stepped away from the speaker's stand, Cyrus Turner, oldest son of Squire Turner, called him a liar and struck him. Clay drew his knife but lost it when another of the Turners clubbed him and several Turner supporters seized his arms. Another Turner thrust a revolver in Clay's face, but it misfired three times. Dazed, reeling, half-blinded with pain, Clay shook off those holding him, seized his knife by the blade and wrested it away from the man who held it. Someone slashed Clay's stomach with a knife, but he pushed back his intestines with his free hand and buried his own blade to the hilt in

<sup>64</sup>Thomas D. Clark, *A History of Kentucky* (New York, 1937), p. 299; Robert J. Breckinridge, *The Question of Negro Slavery and the New Constitution of Kentucky* (Lexington, 1849), pp. 2, 7.

<sup>65</sup>Townsend, *Lincoln and His Wife's Home Town*, p. 191; Morgan, *Fruit of This Tree*, pp. 96-99; *Life*, p. 185; Rev. Philo Tower, *Slavery Unmasked* (Rochester, 1856), pp. 247-49.

Cyrus' abdomen. Sure that he was dying, Clay raised his bloody blade and bellowed, "I died in defense of the liberties of the people!" Both wounded men were carried to a nearby house; neither was expected to live. They became reconciled before Turner died thirty-four painful hours later.<sup>66</sup>

Inactivated for several months, Clay was unable to play a prominent role in the remainder of the campaign. Although the anti-slavery advocates polled more than 10,000 votes, they did not elect a single candidate who was an open advocate of their views. Clay felt that chances for success were dimmed by the over-zealousness of the abolitionists. An attempted escape by forty-two slaves, including one from Clay's estate, could not have aided the pro-slavery group more had they staged the incident.<sup>67</sup> In its final form the new constitution retained most of the old slavery provisions and added some new safeguards designed to make emancipation even more difficult. Cassius Clay and his co-workers had failed to achieve the chief aim of their agitation.

After the election of 1848 Clay severed connections with the Whig party. The ambiguous Whig stand on slavery attracted many of the largest slaveholders in the state, and Clay could no longer associate with them in the same party. When he ran for governor in 1851 on a gradual emancipation platform, he polled only 3,612 votes of over 100,000 cast, but it was generally believed that he secured enough anti-slavery Whig votes to throw the election to Lazarus W. Powell, the Democratic candidate.<sup>68</sup>

By the early 1850's Clay concluded that he must seek support from the non-slaveholders who lived in the mountains south and east of the Bluegrass. His chief assistant for a time in this task was John G. Fee, a Kentucky abolitionist preacher. Although opposed to violence, Fee was so outspoken in his beliefs that several churches had requested his departure. Fee and Clay had corresponded as early as 1846; when Clay needed assistance in the mountain area, he invited Fee to preach there and organize a church if he saw

<sup>66</sup>The *Liberator*, July 13, 1849; Green Clay, "He Fought for Freedom with His Bowie Knife," *Courier-Journal Sesquicentennial Edition*, January 1, 1942; Morgan, *Fruit of This Tree*, p. 54.

<sup>67</sup>"Negro Slavery at the South," *De Bow's Review*, VII (November, 1849), 387-88; Collins, *Kentucky*, p. 57.

<sup>68</sup>*Life*, pp. 212, 217; Collins, *Kentucky*, p. 62.

fit.<sup>69</sup> It would have been difficult to find another cause containing two such diverse characters. Clay was moderate in views but violent in manner; he obeyed laws until they could be changed, and he compromised when he could gain nothing more. Fee, who prayed for mobs as he was dragged from the pulpit, had no respect for laws he judged unjust. He was embarrassed when Clay strode into one of his difficult meetings, displayed two pistols, and roared, "This preacher is going to have a fair hearing!" Fee reproved Clay for swearing and drinking; they spent a considerable portion of their time in personal disputes. Yet for three years the ill-assented pair continued their work. Fee built his church on land donated by Clay, and soon afterwards an academy, the fore-runner of Berea College, was established which admitted both whites and Negroes. A small, anti-slavery colony was established.<sup>70</sup>

The personalities involved were too strong to be coupled for long under one yoke, and Clay gradually became convinced that his cause was being hurt by Fee's radicalism. Clay, after 1854, wanted to organize a state Republican party, but he felt that Fee's uncompromising views were discouraging mild anti-slavery men.<sup>71</sup> The open break came in 1856 when the two men disagreed publicly over the question of obeying the Fugitive Slave Act. By the time they concluded their debate, as Fee later expressed it, "There was manifest confusion in the crowd."<sup>72</sup> Clay withdrew his support from the Berea settlement, and most of the abolitionists were forced to flee to Ohio after John Brown's raid had excited Kentucky tempers. The pro-slavery group talked of expelling all Republicans, but Clay warned that he would be somewhat more difficult to remove, and he was not molested.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>69</sup>Arthur W. Spaulding, *The Men of the Mountains* (Nashville, 1915), p. 99; John G. Fee, *Autobiography of John G. Fee* (Chicago, 1891), p. 88; John G. Fee, *Non-Fellowship with Slaveholders the Duty of Christians* (New York, 1851), pp. 52-62.

<sup>70</sup>Fee, *Autobiography*, pp. 91-92, 122; Edwin Rodgers Embree, "A Kentucky Crusader," *American Mercury*, XXIV (September, 1931), 98-107; Morgan, *Fruit of This Tree*, pp. 8, 90; William G. Frost, *From Servitude to Service* (Boston, 1905), p. 54.

<sup>71</sup>J. T. Dorris (ed.), John C. Chenault, *Old Cane Springs* (Louisville, 1936), p. 14; William G. Frost, *For the Mountains* (New York, 1937), p. 61; Robertson, *Kentuckian at the Court of the Tsars*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>72</sup>Fee, *Autobiography*, pp. 102-104.

<sup>73</sup>Emerson D. Fite, *The Presidential Campaign of 1860* (New York, 1911), pp. 19-20; *Life*, pp. 236-37, 250-56; F. Garvin Davenport, *Ante-Bellum Kentucky* (Oxford, Ohio, 1943), pp. 55-56.

During a visit to Springfield, Illinois, in the summer of 1854 for an anti-slavery meeting, Clay met Abraham Lincoln for the first time. Long afterwards, Clay proudly declared, "I flatter myself that I sowed good seed in good ground, which, in the providence of God, produced in time good fruit." As Clay recalled, he did not meet Lincoln again until they rode the same train toward New York where Lincoln delivered his Cooper's Union address. Once again, Lincoln listened silently as Clay propounded his views on the great issues confronting the nation.<sup>74</sup>

Clay threw his tireless energy into the forwarding of the Republican party. In 1856 the Republicans nominated a complete state ticket, but the new party suffered from public reaction to the slave insurrection panic which started in Tennessee in 1856 and spread throughout much of the South.<sup>75</sup> In the national Republican convention that year he received three votes for vice-president, probably because of a letter to the convention which was so well received that it was ordered printed.<sup>76</sup> Clay took an active part in the campaign. Hinton Helper asserted that the best speech of the entire campaign was delivered by Clay in the New York Tabernacle on October 24. In it, Clay, describing himself as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness," declared that slavery and liberty could not coexist; one or the other had to die.<sup>77</sup>

During the last years of the decade Clay was a national figure and a power in the Republican party. He served on the National Committee which selected Chicago as the site for the next convention. Clay, hoping that the convention might turn to him as a compromise candidate, suggested to several party leaders that he would be receptive to such a draft.<sup>78</sup> Other than himself, Clay's personal choice was at last narrowed down to Lincoln, although

<sup>74</sup>Allen T. Rice, *Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln* (New York, 1886), pp. 293-94; *Life*, p. 233.

<sup>75</sup>Harvey Wish, "The Slave Insurrection Panic of 1856," *Journal of Southern History*, V (May, 1939), 206-22.

<sup>76</sup>John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln* (New York, 1890), II, 35; George W. Julian, "The First Republican National Convention," *American Historical Review*, IV (January, 1899), 313-22.

<sup>77</sup>Cassius M. Clay, *Speech before the Young Men's Republican Central Union of New York* (New York, 1856), pamphlet.

<sup>78</sup>Reinhard H. Luthin, *The First Lincoln Campaign* (Cambridge, 1944), pp. 20-21, 114-16; "The 1860 Presidential Campaign: Letters of Cassius M. Clay to Cephas Brainerd," *The Moorsfield Antiquarian*, I (May, 1937), 104-10.

Clay claimed that he was offered the post of Secretary of War in return for supporting Edward Bates.<sup>79</sup>

Clay stated later, "I did not go to the Convention," but a legend persists that he was present and played a decisive role in securing Lincoln's nomination. According to A. G. Proctor, one of the delegates, the border states selected Clay to present their views to the other delegations on the evening of the second day. Clay warned the Kansas delegation that the South was preparing for a great civil war. "Mr. Lincoln was born among us, and we believe in him," Clay urged. "Give us Lincoln . . . and . . . we will transfer the line of border warfare from the Ohio to the region beyond the Tennessee . . . . Do this for us, and let us go home and prepare for the conflict."<sup>80</sup>

When Lincoln was nominated the following day Connecticut gave two votes to Clay on the second ballot and one on the third. When the convention assembled in an evening session to nominate a candidate for vice-president, Hannibal Hamlin of Maine received 194 votes, Clay 101½, and all others 165½. Although the packed gallery was chanting, "Clay, Clay, Clay," Hamlin received a clear majority on the next ballot, and George D. Blakey of Kentucky moved that the choice be made unanimous.<sup>81</sup>

Since Kentucky was hopelessly lost to the Republicans, Clay spent most of his election efforts north of the Ohio. A series of talks were so well received in Indiana that Lincoln requested him to make a swing through Illinois.<sup>82</sup> Even during this campaign Clay could not drop his own political hopes. Near the end of August he voiced a personal hope: "I cannot come East unless on the very eve of the election. I can do more West: where the Boys talk of '64 strongly!"<sup>83</sup>

When Lincoln had been elected, Clay returned to the rolling acres of "White Hall" and waited confidently for a call to Washington. Clay believed that Lincoln had promised to make him Secre-

<sup>79</sup>*Life* pp. 244-48; Edward C. Smith, *The Borderland in the Civil War* (New York, 1927), p. 56.

<sup>80</sup>Walter B. Stevens, "Lincoln and Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review*, X (January, 1916), 63-119.

<sup>81</sup>Townsend, *Lincoln and His Wife's Home Town*, p. 286; Horace Greeley, *The American Conflict* (Hartford, 1869), I, 321; *Life*, p. 249.

<sup>82</sup>Luthin, *First Lincoln Campaign*, p. 197; Bess V. Ehrmann, *The Missing Chapter in the Life of Lincoln* (Chicago, 1938), pp. 3-4.

<sup>83</sup>"The 1860 Presidential Campaign: Letters of Cassius M. Clay to Cephas Brainerd," pp. 104-110.

tary of War, a post which he desired.<sup>84</sup> When no call came, Carl Schurz and Salmon P. Chase were among those appealed to for assistance. By his own admission, Clay never reminded Lincoln of the supposed promise until 1862 when Clay returned to the United States from Russia. Then the President replied, "Who ever heard of a reformer reaping the rewards of his work in his lifetime? I was advised that your appointment as Secretary of War would have been considered a declaration of war upon the South." In 1861 Clay assumed that the jealous Seward was responsible for the slight.<sup>85</sup> Lincoln finally resorted to a diplomatic post to appease his sensitive supporter. The positions in Great Britain and France had already been filled, and Clay indignantly spurned the offer of Madrid before agreeing to accept the position in Russia.<sup>86</sup>

The new minister arrived in Washington to pick up his credentials in April at a time when the city was terrified by rumors of a Southern invasion. Clay immediately offered his services to Secretary of War Cameron either as an officer to raise a regiment or as a private in the ranks. Mr. Cameron ventured that it was the first time he had ever heard of a Foreign Minister volunteering for the ranks. "Then," said Mr. Clay, "let's make a little history." Clay and senator-elect James H. Lane of Kansas each enrolled a company. Clay patrolled the Navy Yard and the streets while Lane maintained guard in the White House. Clay later declared that he had "almost dictatorial power for a time in Washington."<sup>87</sup> Within a few days regular troops reached the city, and Clay felt free to continue with his mission to Russia. However, he assured Lincoln that if he were needed to give confidence to the Union army, he would return, and he lingered long enough to give General Scott detailed advice on how to conduct the war.<sup>88</sup>

Clay halted in London to lecture the English on their attitude toward the war, much to the dismay of Charles Francis Adams, the American minister. Clay's warning that the English could not afford

<sup>84</sup>David M. Potter, *Lincoln and His Party in the Secession Crisis* (New Haven, 1942), pp. 156-57; *Life*, p. 303.

<sup>85</sup>Chester V. Easum, *The Americanization of Carl Schurz* (Chicago, 1929), p. 317; "Diary and Correspondence of Salmon P. Chase," *American Historical Association Annual Report, 1902* (Washington, D. C., 1902), II, 492; Lucille Stillwell, *John Cabell Breckinridge* (Caldwell, Idaho, 1936), p. 97; *Life*, pp. 302-303.

<sup>86</sup>Robertson, *Kentuckian at the Court of the Tsars*, pp. 34-36.

<sup>87</sup>*New York Times*, April 19, 1861; Rice, *Reminiscences of Lincoln*, pp. 301; *Life*, pp. 272-77.

<sup>88</sup>*Life*, pp. 263, 270-72.

to offend the North drew a tart reply from the august *Times*.<sup>89</sup> Even after Clay arrived in Moscow, much of his attention was directed to events at home. Despite angry protests from Secretary of State Seward, he persisted in forwarding lengthy suggestions to national civil and military leaders. As early as June he suggested that he should not remain in Europe when officers were so urgently needed in Kentucky. Clay later decided to remain at his post, but by then his successor had been appointed. Lincoln had clutched at the opportunity of getting Secretary of War Cameron out of the cabinet without an open break by sending him as close to Siberia as was possible.<sup>90</sup>

When Clay landed in the United States in 1862 with a major-general's commission in his pocket, he plunged into the swirl of war-time politics as if he had never been absent. His goal now was to use military necessity as the justification for destroying slavery within the Confederacy. It was foolish, he contended, to continue the war if the cancer of slavery remained intact. The South could never be conquered with the sword in one hand and the shackles in the other.<sup>91</sup> The Washington correspondent of the New York *Evening Post* was one of many upset by Clay's views. "We did hope," he complained wistfully, "that Mr. Clay would return from abroad with higher and more temperate views . . . or that at least he would return no more extreme than he went."<sup>92</sup>

Clay's views on slavery created a problem in assigning him to an active post. Convinced that General Halleck and Secretary Stanton were trying to get rid of all anti-slavery generals, Clay protested successfully to the President when he was assigned to serve under General Butler in the yellow fever region of Louisiana.<sup>93</sup>

Clay tried to impress upon Lincoln the need of emancipation in order to win European sympathy. The President feared that such a move would drive Kentucky into the Confederacy, but then, according to Clay, Lincoln told him to go to Kentucky and sound out the legislature on the subject.<sup>94</sup> When Cassius Clay arrived in the Bluegrass he found it threatened by an advance of General Kirby

<sup>89</sup>Charles F. Adams, *Charles Francis Adams* (Boston, 1900), p. 187; London *Times*, May 20, 1861.

<sup>90</sup>Robertson, *Kentuckian at the Court of the Tsars*, pp. 105-106, 138; Don C. Seitz, *Lincoln the Politician* (New York, 1931), pp. 279-80.

<sup>91</sup>Townsend, *Lincoln and His Wife's Home Town*, pp. 329-30; *Life*, pp. 306-309.

<sup>92</sup>New York *Evening Post*, August 14, 1862.

<sup>93</sup>*Life*, pp. 304-305, 315.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 301-304, 310.

Smith. Lew Wallace gave Clay command of the defense of Richmond, but General Nelson arrived in time to assume command, absorb defeat in a bloody little battle, and deny Clay his chance for military glory. Clay then urged the state legislature to accept Lincoln's proposal of compensated emancipation; he also advocated forfeiture of slave property for all rebels after the South was given a final chance to return to the Union. Clay was always convinced that his report to Lincoln was decisive in encouraging the President to issue the Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862.<sup>95</sup>

Somehow unable to get a suitable command or to secure a return to Russia, General Clay still remained in the public eye with an endless flow of open letters, speeches, and public quarrels. In them he continued to press for an end of slavery with compensation for the masters who had remained loyal to the Union. The *Daily National Intelligencer* finally begged the Senate to confirm his pending re-appointment to Russia as soon as possible to get him out of the country.<sup>96</sup>

The appointment was at last confirmed, and Clay returned to Europe where he remained until 1867. It was during this absence that slavery was ended in Kentucky by the ratification of the thirteenth amendment. Consummation had come at long last for the ideal for which Cassius Marcellus Clay had fought for three decades. Clay has been, and probably rightly, classed as a minor figure in American history. Despite his efforts, Kentucky retained her slaves to the very last. Yet he fought for the ground over which other men trod to reach higher fame, and their paths were smoother for his efforts. He was a crusader for freedom, and he fought a good fight.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 301, 310-12; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, September 1, 1862.

<sup>96</sup>*Daily National Intelligencer*, March 5, 1863.